



**FRIEDRICH NAUMANN  
STIFTUNG** Für die Freiheit.  
Middle East and North Africa



# ISLAM IN THE WEST

Conference Proceedings  
29-30 September 2019



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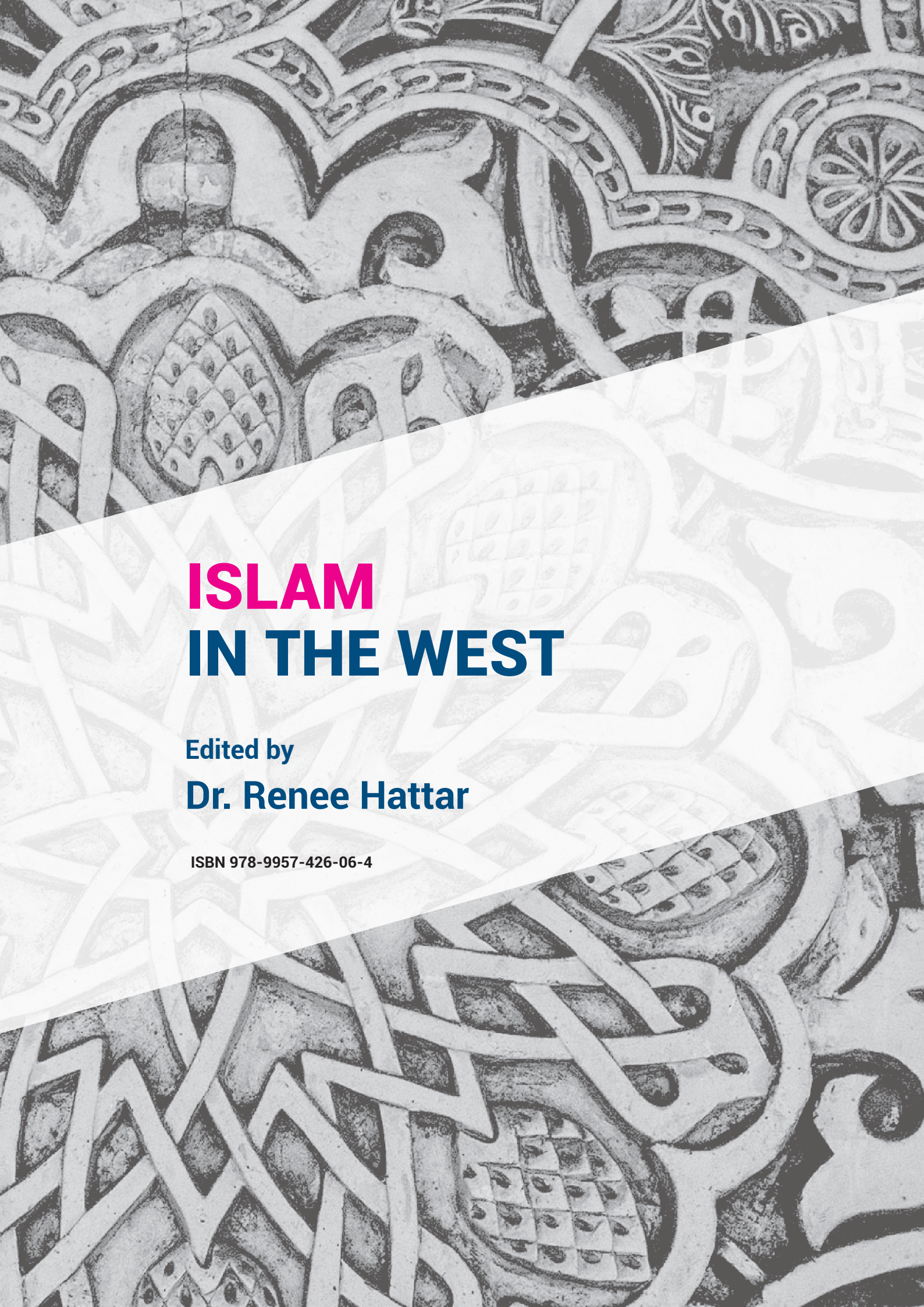
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ISBN: 978-9957-426-06-4

National Library Deposit Number: 2020/06/1666

Printed in Amman, Jordan





# **ISLAM** **IN THE WEST**

Edited by  
**Dr. Renee Hattar**

ISBN 978-9957-426-06-4



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Dear Reader,

The publication you are holding in your hands contains fifteen distinguished articles written by experienced scholars from all over the world who participated in the international conference "Islam in the West". This conference was the first of its kind in the MENA Region co-sponsored by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (FNF) and the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies (RIIFS) under the patronage of HRH Prince El-Hassan bin Talal. The conference took place on the 29th and 30th of September, 2019.

All in all, a very lively debate took place on subjects that tackled distinct practices, interpretations and beliefs of Islam in the West as a phenomenon as such and on the challenges faced by Muslims in Western (political) systems. This fruitful interaction can of course only partially be retraced with the papers of this compendium. But every single contribution offers something very important: it deepens the insight on the dilemmas of religious and cultural identity, social integration and political loyalty.

The title "Islam in the West" was therefore chosen wisely, but it was equally imprecise or broad, since both concepts are abstract as well as very personal and subjective. I am therefore very tempted to introduce this publication with some abstract but also some very personal thoughts. I have been living in the "Middle East" for almost a decade, but as a simple "Westerner", I still do not feel adequately equipped to elaborate on the concept of "Islam". Of course, academic literature is full of attempts to define both; the concept of "Islam" and especially "The West". The Munich Security Conference tackled the relevance of "The West" in their recent 2020 report. Being a child of "The East" (East Germany that is), I indeed ask myself personally, what it is, that makes me particularly "Western"? What is this sphere that I supposedly belong to?

Generally speaking - in the thinking of Francis Fukuyama, "The West" is a civilizational development, which has achieved a sort of post-historical state of political organization. However, given the current consolidation of authoritarian rule even in Europe, this thinking seems to be largely obsolete by now. An even broader suggestion would be to follow Samuel Huntington's understanding of a cultural community, in the sense of a society threatened by internal divisions and external pressures, that needs to consolidate in order to fend off these threats. But wouldn't this apply to almost any other society as well? Certainly, and with reference to the notions around Huntington's and Fukuyama's thinking, "The West" is often seen from a postcolonial perspective. But since this aspect of superiority of "The West" often is associated with being "better" than "the other", it is far from my world view. I would,

however, succumb to the superiority of democracy and human rights in this respect, whenever they are not used to justify suppression and intervention in "non-Western" societies, as this was occasionally the case in the past. This leads us directly into the dimension of stereotypes, which we can find on both ends of the spectrum. While "The West" may see "the rest" as a monolithic bloc, so may non-Western cultures regard countries in the West as interchangeable. The term is therefore in itself not only problematic, the main question is whether the term "The West" is (still) accurate - especially if commitment to liberal values should be central to the definition of this concept. Recent developments, such as mass surveillance, the use of illegal drone strikes, attacks on liberties such as those of the press in "Western" countries and failures of the liberal international community to act on major crises, such as in Syria, put into question whether "The West" remains a powerful international point of reference - let alone a peaceful force.

Again, I am saying all of this against the background of my experiences working for a "western" liberal Foundation in various parts of the MENA world over the past decade: After associating with liberals in Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and all over the Arab World.

### **"I HAVE COME TO APPRECIATE THAT WE ARE ALL CONFRONTED WITH FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT POLITICAL, SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL CHALLENGES"**

and, therefore, are forced by circumstance to develop specific answers to the aphorism which essentially refers to "living between worlds".

For me, this is what the essence of our conference and of this publication is: Living between worlds is essentially something very personal. After East Germany ceased to exist and the two Germanys reunited with each other, I became - without realizing - a stranger "in the West" myself. I moved from my East German hometown of Leipzig to the former capital of West Germany, to work with the German Parliament in Bonn. Quickly I had to learn that in one place I was the "East German", while in the other, I was the "West German".

What sounds benign now, was at that time the sudden questioning of the security of my identity even within - what I believed was - the same national society, which supposedly was based on the same social and cultural reference points. How severe must this conflict be for someone, when it touches the inner conviction of a person, the essence of their spiritual existence: their religion? "We are at an era of peak globalisation, where individual lives are interconnected worldwide and where

norms and rules are contested on a daily basis." The spirit of individuals and the legal codification of national states may not follow the rapid physical mobility we are able to exercise today. That's why our debate was so necessary - and certainly should not end there. To discuss this very important subject of personal dilemma and the subsequent questions of loyalty to values and systems, not from the point of view of an outsider but from within the region that is considered mostly "Islamic" from "the West", was eye opening and yet only the beginning of future discussion, as it also corresponds with mutually understanding each other.

I personally and wholeheartedly thank the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies and especially the work and dedication of Dr. Renee Hattar and Dr. Wajih Kalso to ensure the success of the conference it deserved. This compendium of proceedings aspires to contribute to the discussion and I very much hope to continue this debate to further the arguments. We certainly invite you to join this debate.

**Dirk Kunze**

Regional Director for Middle East and North Africa  
Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom

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## Introduction

This volume is a collection of papers prepared by highly distinguished researchers, scholars, and leaders from many Arab and European countries, and represent civil organizations, religious institutions, policy-makers, decision-makers, and academics. The growing population of Muslim immigrants in the West is creating an increasing political and social debate in Western countries, and at the same time is an element of confusion and perplexity among Muslim immigrants who experience identity crises as a result of explicit and implicit conflict between two norm and reference value systems, and are suffering adaptation hardship to a new environment different in its norms and social traditions from their original family bonds and accustomed social relations. This has hindered and complicated Muslim integration in the new social order, and has kept Muslims relatively isolated from the political system, due to deficiency of their political experience and lack of knowledge and education about the new environments and their relevant governance, and also due to legitimacy doubts of the hosting political system in the mind of the new Muslim residents.

All of the above problems make it hard for Muslims to adapt positively and efficiently in their new residences and can cause them to restrict their activities and daily engagements in pursuing better financial life conditions and can cause them to preserve his original identity and traditions in a highly conservative mode. Such situations create a negative attitude in Muslims towards legal systems and can make them doubtful of the political process and compel them to stay away from any public activity. This leads Muslims in the West to live isolated lives and separate them from the indigenous local individuals and communities. What made things worse is the abrupt emergence and outgrowth of Islamic fundamentalism that had the capability to infiltrate Muslim communities in the West and had the capacity to reshape their religious beliefs and attitudes.

On the other side, a stereotype-based perception of Islam among many Westerners is commonly practised and promoted by Western media and political rhetoric, in addition to the anti-Islamic campaigns launched by fundamentalist Western political forces and societal organizations, all contribute to isolating Muslims in the West. It corners them into a defensive position that compels them to continually prove their loyalty to the state and country they live in, and justify their different beliefs, practices and lifestyle, thus striving continually for acceptance and recognition.

From the above-mentioned thoughts, we identified:

- a. A problem of communication and interaction between Muslims in the West and their surrounding environment.
- b. A predicament of social integration shaky and loyalty to the governing state.
- c. A state of identity conflict between the inborn previous identity and the newly acquired identity.

Such problems lead to a state of isolation and alienation of Muslims in their new homelands and can become a fertile ground for antagonistic behaviour and radical beliefs against the host country. Such serious issues are rarely monitored, observed, or examined. Infrequent attempts are made to deal with it in a transparent and objective fashion and approach, and away from political polarity and religious ideological polemics. Further study must be conducted on the phenomenon of "Islam in the West." Also, platforms must be instituted to engage social, political, and religious leaders and actors, in the manner of open dialogue, to reach a common understanding and agree on common guidelines to encounter and deal with issues positively.

This conference was an unprecedented to attempt tackle the above-mentioned issues,

### **"BY CREATING A SPACE FOR OPEN DIALOGUE WITH THE PURPOSE TO DISCUSS, EXPLORE, ANALYSE, AND UNDERSTAND THE MANIFOLD ASPECTS OF THE "ISLAM IN THE WEST" PHENOMENON."**

This was carried out by engaging a wide number of experts and leaders from the West and from the Arab world. The conference was successful in bridging the gap between Muslim and Western positions and perceptions about this phenomenon and disclosed the unknown and hidden sides of it that would enable policy-makers to plan and structure more influential strategies and creative policies to manage it appropriately. The papers that were presented demonstrated the numerous dimensions of the "Islam in the West" phenomenon, focused on crucial topics that led to a thoughtful understanding of Islam in the West and opened the way for a rich academic path toward further analysis and exploration.

The following topics were central to the presentations and the discussions that followed:

1. Common Islamic practices and beliefs in the West;
2. Muslims' attitudes against Western culture and values;
3. The legitimacy of social integration and political loyalty;
4. The stereotypical perception of Muslims and Islam in the West
5. Newly developed Islamic views about political loyalty and integration in non-Muslim societies;
6. The role of religious leaders and institutions in dealing with the above-mentioned problems, initiating positive and productive projects to motivate Muslims to become more active social actors and deeply engaged citizens;
7. The policies expected and required from policy-makers to facilitate Muslim integration in the new Western environment;
8. Civil society roles and responsibilities;
9. Successful initiatives and efforts experienced by Muslims and non-Muslims.

We, the research team of RIIFS, are proud to introduce this volume to academic scholars and students to stimulate further explorative work on this new discipline, to policy-makers for effective and comprehensive approaches, and to social actors and civil activists for more palpable and tangible initiatives.



Keynote speech by

**HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal**

Chairman of the board of trustees of the RIIFS

## DECLARATION OF EUROPEAN MUSLIMS

In February 2008, European Muslims issued a declaration which stated that "Europe is a common continent of many faiths, nations, languages, cultures and customs; and is proud of its road from Slavery to Freedom, from Mythology to Science, from Might to Right and from the Theory of State to the Legitimacy of State as well as Europe's commitment to the basic values of Human Rights and Democracy." It also stated that "European Muslims want to be part of a European life and prosperity as well as social, political, cultural and moral development of European societies."

I shall be drawing on the experiences of the great anthropologist, Clifford Geertz, who lived from 1926 to 2006, and I would like to recommend what he describes as "thick description" as a way of providing enough context so that a person could think outside the culture he comes from. I want to remind you that in talking about 'us' and the 'other' we may be the 'other' in making sense of his or her behaviour. Political theory, which presents itself as addressing universal and abiding matters concerning power, obligation, justice, and government in general and unconditioned terms, the truth about things as at bottom they always and everywhere necessarily are, is in fact, and inevitably, a specific response to immediate circumstances. However cosmopolitan it may be in intent, it is, like religion, literature, historiography, or law, driven and animated by the demands of the moment: a guide to perplexities particular, pressing, local, and at hand. That is why I prefer to speak of convivial rather than cosmopolitan.

The growing domestic tensions in many countries arising from large scale, culturally or religions, armed and impassioned religiopolitical movements in various parts of the world, and the emergence of the new centres of wealth and power in the Middle East, Latin America and along the Asian edge of the Pacific Rim have but added to the general sense of motion and uncertainty. All of these developments, and others introduced by them such as ethnic, civic walls, linguistic separatism and the multiculturalization of international capital, have not produced a sense of a New World Order. Islam is represented by institutions in the west, Islam makes bonds we are told; Al-Sukuk Al-Islamiyya, Islam made banking; Al-Sayrafa Al-Islamiyya, Islam made leasing; Al-Ijara Al-Islamiyya, but whereas we are called as a principal tenant of Islam to perform Zakat, Philanthropy, which is a universal concept and a pillar of faith to the needy, it is strange that we have not yet been able to perform what I have called for, and many others like me, for decades, efficiently in creating an International Universal Zakat Fund for Philanthropy and Social Solidarity. I have reasons that I can explain this phenomenon with, if and when asked.

I believe in the four most fundamental values of the Holy Qur'an, Justice ('*adl*), Benevolence (*ihsan*), Wisdom (*hikmah*) and Compassion (*rahmah*). To know is to love, we are told repeatedly

in sacred texts — mutual awareness and knowledge, the often-heralded fruits of education, help to humanise the other in creating a better understanding of his or her fears and concerns, and eventually leads to empathy among former adversaries. Of course, a lot of psychology and rehabilitation goes into rehabilitating adversaries today, a lot of trauma counselling but I would like to suggest that those of us here are selecting a subject wherein we have already won or lost the battle; either we are in a state of apathy, anaesthetized by everything that happens or we are in a state of mild curiosity.

## SO, I AM HERE MAYBE TO TEST THE STATEMENT "TO KNOW IS TO LOVE."

In the Caucasus, for instance, Christian Russia backed Muslim Abkhazia against Christian Georgia, while Muslim Iran played off Christian Armenia against Muslim Azerbaijan. The list continues; Ossetians against Georgians (both Christian); Lezgins against Azeris (both Muslim); Circassians against Karachai (both Muslim). In Lebanon, savage battles raged between Christians and Druze, all of whom knew each other sufficiently well already but the most savage of all battles often took place within each sect. In the Balkans, tiny Jordan maintained 15,000 soldiers over the period of our involvement in peacekeeping, and we are remembered by a School in Mostar built by the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization. In the Balkans, for each conflict pitting Muslims against Christians, there was another conflict involving co-religionists — for instance, Moldovans versus Russians; Hungarians versus Romanians; Macedonians versus Greeks and Serbs versus Croats. The recent advances towards peace and civility, fragile as they are, in South Africa, the recent rupture of talks between the Israelis and the Palestine Liberation Organization or, in a rather different way in Northern Ireland, (The Good Friday Agreement) are all landmarks awaiting space but they probably could not have occurred, and certainly not so quickly, if the distance between local dispute and global confrontation was still as so short as it was before 1989; the fall of the Berlin Wall presented us with a new reality.

In 1998 at Oxford, we held a *conversazione*, entitled *The Arab Image in the West*. I believe in the noble art of conversation, which is a two-way stream, talking and listening to the other. I am sure that it is so tiresome for someone coming from the West to have to defend his President or his Prime Minister and someone coming from my country having to defend Arabs and Muslims as if the whole weight of this responsibility is on our individual shoulders. But the fact is the generalizations do not serve our purpose of building trust in our respective public opinion. The premise of the meeting was that the "Arab (Muslim) world was viewed with mistrust in Western public opinion. Europeans and Americans sometimes associate the Mashreq with some of their greatest fears. These perceptions have served to justify the severance of diplomatic relations, the application of economic sanctions even the use of military force. It is as though different rules apply to the West's conduct of relations with Arab states from those with the rest of the world. This may be attributed largely, to existing preconceptions and prejudices."

Let me turn to **Disassembly** — similarity and differences among peoples — concepts like tradition, identity, religion, ideology, values, nation, indeed including even culture, society, state or people themselves. Surely we are not reduced, now that the stark opposition of “East” and “West” has been exposed as the ethnocentric formula it always was (East is Moscow, the West is Washington, and every place else — Havana, Tokyo, Belgrade, Paris, Cairo, Beijing, Johannesburg — is derivatively located). So we have today the phenomenon “Polarity in Relations; if you are capable of identifying the dotted line or even the straight line with the polar capitals of the global world then you will feel you are safe because there are no master-narratives for globalization when it comes to identity, tradition and culture or about anything else. There are just events, persons, and passing formulas, and those are inconsonant. We must content ourselves with diverging tales in irreconcilable idioms, and not attempt to enfold them into synoptic visions. Such visions (this vision has it) are not to be had, trying to achieve those leads only to illusion — to stereotype, prejudice, resentment and conflict.

I recall my friend, Professor Cherif Bassiouni, speaking on the subject of:

### The Muslim “They”

There is no more Jewish, Christian, Hindu, male, black, “they” than there is a Muslim “they.” People adhering to great faiths cover the globe and are from all national origins, skin colours, genders, and cultures. The 1.8 billion Muslims in our world today fall into all of these categories and there is as much commonality among them as there are differences. The Chinese Uyghurs, Afghans, Persians, Iranians, Nigerians and the Bosnians are different even though they are Muslims.

Samuel Huntington proclaimed, “the great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict (in the years immediately ahead) will be cultural not primarily ideological or primarily economic.” He says that “the clash of civilisations, will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilisations, however, are clearly defined in their distances of separations (Christian and Islamic, Confucian and Hindu, American and Japanese, European and African).” Are these, as Huntington suggested, the fault lines between civilizations? Or do we live, as my dear friend Professor M. Melitz from the University of the Black Sea in Romania, once said “in a world of 10,000 cultures... The next world war if there is one will it truly be a war between civilisations”? Is there anything civilized about the death and destruction and pillage that is brought on a human scale in our respective locals? Charles Taylor talks of “deep diversity,” plurality of ways of belonging and being, and that what we can draw from them, or from it, is a sense of connectedness, a connectedness that is neither comprehensive nor uniform, primal nor changeless but nonetheless real... Maybe that is one of the themes of this colloquium; how to develop connectedness.

### Identities

American Indian, Israeli, Bolivian, Muslim, Basque, Tamil, European, Black, Australian, Gypsy, Ulsterman, Arab, Maronite, Hispanic, Flemish, Zulu, Jordanian, Cypriot, Bavarian and

Taiwanese — who, or perhaps exactly what they are — simply do not form and structure. A half-century ago there were no Beurs or Bangladeshis, but there were Peranakans and Yugoslavians; Italy did not have a ‘Moroccan problem’ and Hong Kong did not have a Vietnamese one. Even those identities that persist as both Austrians and Americans have cause to know, as do the Poles, Shi’is, Malays, and Ethiopians, alter in their bonds, their content, and their inner meaning.

Forgive me for relating to Shi’a in this reference but the Shi’a is not a nationality but it seems to me after the American involvement in Iraq we all speak too glibly of Sunni, Shi’a and Kurd, and I was delighted to host, last year, a meeting with the ATF on the Four Pillars of Ummah in the Mashreq — First Pillar, Turk (we did not say the Turkish because we did not speak of the migration of Turks to German in the 18th century where they established in southern Germany a wonderful Mosque which represented the Mathahib). Second Pillar, Furs (not the Persians of the pre-Islamic history or Persians of Sunni or Shi’a). Third Pillar, Arabs (Let us remember that the Arabs in the Mashreq represent only 5 per cent of the world population, so when we talk about Turkey, Iran and Iraq we talk about 260 million people; when we talk about the Arab Mashreq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, Iraq we talk about 70 million people). The Germans stabilized post-1989, the V4 countries (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary) because they wanted a stable presence between Russia and Western Europe. My question today to all of you is, can we not speak of the Mashreq — the Levant or should we not speak of the Levant? Recognizing that no single country (not Jordan, not Palestine, not Syria, not Lebanon, not Iraq) can in and of itself and certainly not the Palestinians address the basic life-given themes, not even drinking water, without a transcending view. The time has come to talk of “we-ness,” respect, and develop an intra-independence and respect for another’s identity.

### What is a Country if it is not a Nation?

The words we use these days to refer to what we take to be the elementary building blocks of the global political order — “nation,” “state,” “country,” “society,” “people” — have a disturbing ambiguity built into their range, intent, and definition. On the one hand, we use them interchangeably, as though they were synonyms. ‘France’ or ‘Hungary,’ ‘China’ or ‘Cambodia,’ ‘Mexico’ or ‘Ethiopia,’ ‘Iran’ or ‘Portugal’ are all of these at once nations, states, societies, and peoples.

Think of Bright’s pub-and-plough populist “the nation in every country dwells in the cottage,” or if we look to the suitable poet of the Arab Badiya we might find somebody talking about the Nation in the Bedouin Tent. Tennyson’s sword-and-sceptre hieratic, “Let us bury the Great Duke (that is Wellington) to the noise of the mourning of a mighty nation.”

### What is Culture if it is not a Consensus?

Cosmopolitanism and parochialism are no longer opposed; they are linked and reinforcing. As the one increases so does the other. Capital is mobile; without a diaspora so is labour. When the Arabs arrive at the Canadian and German borders, they are algorithmically weighed; their ecological footprint, their economic footprint, their talents and abilities are assessed in

relation to the possible assimilation within the host country. Why is it that the decisions are taken about Palestinian Refugee funding or about The United Nations Refugee Agency working with Zakat? Why is it that cultural norms and institutional self-determination of Muslims by Muslims cannot be effected in the context of putting our cultural face on the map?

## Multiculturalism

Cultural Identity – inrush of Maghrebian immigrants who want to cook with cumin and wear headscarves in school, a German struggling to come to terms with the presence of Turks in a descent-defined *Hinterland*, or a United States trying to remember itself in a multi-ethnic, multiracial, multi-religious, multi-linguistic, multicultural, whirl, as it does to so many more brutally torn places such as Liberia, Lebanon, Myanmar, Colombia or the Republic of South Africa. The back porch of Europe is burning; is this the last stand, or are you here to tell us that there will be European think tanks who want to build bridges and develop a genuine “Terramedia,” middle ground with Muslims whether they are in the South or in the East based on respect for the other and not only the race for resources?

The capacity of Liberalism, well you know more of Berlin and Michael Walzer, or Friedrich von Hayek and Robert Nozick and social-democratic liberalism than I do. The commitment of liberalism is to state neutrality in matters of personal belief, its relative individualism, its stress on liberty, on procedure, and the universality of human rights. The prospect of a new synthesis – not that there ever really was an old one – seems quite remote.

## God has 99 Names: To Teach Citizenship

As moderator for the World Conference for Religions and Peace for six years, I visited Sweden and went to an exhibit in a poor area in Stockholm, Ringaby, where racial violence had been characteristic for some time. The exhibit was entitled “God Has 99 Names.” A young Jewish individual showed us around the Muslim exhibit (a Swedish citizen), and a young Christian individual showed us around the Jewish exhibit (a Swedish citizen). A young Muslim showed us around a Christian exhibit (a Swedish citizen).

I will be travelling to Florence to commemorate eight centuries since the meeting of St Francis and Sultan Al-Malik. I believe the bottom line in today's media terms was let us agree on conversation, not conversion and let us work for eight centuries on finding a synthesis on human understanding of each other to avoid Jihad and the holy war and the crusades of the past.

I shall also be calling on his Holiness the Pope, who is kindly agreed to receive me for the third or fourth time to talk about the all-important Summit of Education next year. Now let me remind you that as we say in Arabic “Morals start with Brain/ Mind then with Religion” so education in religion alone is not enough without educating the mind.

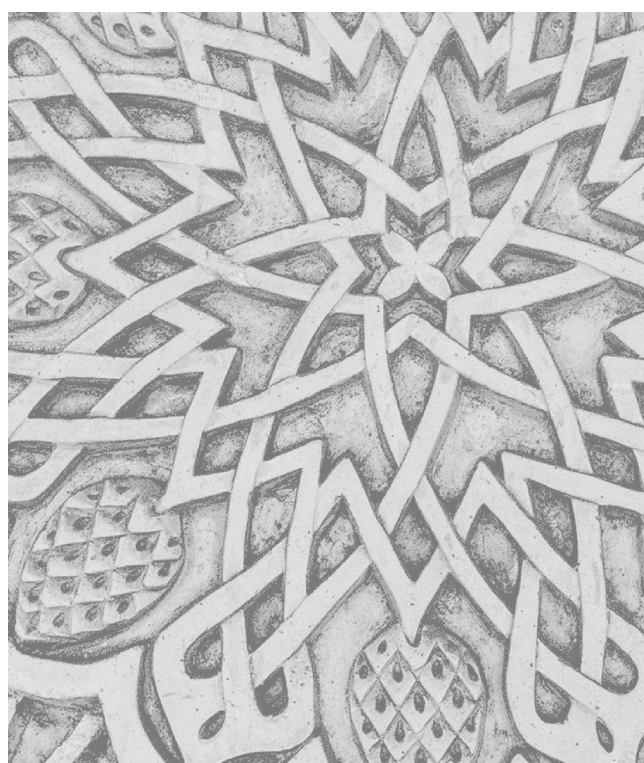
## Heritage of Andalus and Sepharad

The heritage of synergy and symbiosis has always brought out the best in Muslims and Europeans. In Rome, I would like to walk in the footsteps of Philodemus of Gedara, born in 110

B.C. and a Jordanian by today's definition because he came from Gedara-Um Qais, which was then a part of Coele-Syria. Philodemus was an influence on Horace's *Ars Poetica*. The Greek anthology contains thirty-four of his epigrams – most of them love poems. I would also remember Nicomachus of Gerasa-Jerash, (16 to 120 A.D.) was an important ancient mathematician best known for his works *Introduction to Arithmetic and Manual of Harmonics* in Greek. Perhaps the Jordanian Teachers Union should take some inspiration from early positive thinking. Algebra was imported into Europe from Arabic countries by Fibonacci and he is celebrated again towards the end of this year. So, I wonder whether Guglielmo Libri in his *Histoire des Sciences Mathematiques en Italie* (Libri, 1838-1841) who recognises that algebra entered into Europe by means of the Latin translations of Al-Khwarizmi's *Al-jabr* could not be invoked in our conversations. The fact is that if Arabs and Persians participated in translating the texts of the ancients, I think that we are owed in return some intellectual generosity as we focus on our common cultural roots.

## The Refugee Question and Weighting

At one of the most acute moments of the refugee crisis facing Europe in 2015, an algorithm, or weighting formula, for the relocation of refugees was proposed. The key was based on the size of population or member states (40 per cent weighting); total GDP (40 per cent); the average number of asylum applications per 1 million inhabitants over the period from 2010 to 2014 (10 per cent) and the unemployment rate (10 per cent). Whilst the refugee crisis continues to haunt the politics of European Union member states, regional host countries of Syrian refugees (Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey) need, with the technical help of the international community, to develop and adopt an appropriate weighting mechanism for the footprint of refugees. If Arabs and Persians participated in translating texts of intellectuals, I hope we can all participate in interpreting our cultural roots.











# Papers



## TOWARDS A COMMON HOUSE: BEYOND CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS, AND IDEOLOGICAL BOUNDARIES

**Dr. Rocio Daga**

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Germany

### Abstract

The high Islamic culture of the Middle Ages was appreciated in Europe. However, gradually the image of the 'evil' Muslim as the foreigner was forged. The ideology of national identity based on one religion, one language and one ethnicity put an end to the interaction among cultures from the middle of the fourteenth century onwards. Ideologies of the nineteenth century such as Darwinism, Positivism, and Utilitarianism further damaged the image of Islam. Islam was classified as a 'backwards' religion. On the other hand, Islamist thinkers were influenced by Western ideologies and thought of themselves in Western categories, while misusing words such as '*dimma*' and '*jihād*.' Recently, the term 'terrorist' was associated with Islam until the media took responsibility to distinguish them. Islam is a religion with many values, and in a globalised world, religions and societies should learn from each other and should perceive a relationship with the 'Other' as a social good.

### Keywords

Citizenship; *Dimma*; *Jihād*; Transfer of knowledge; Cultural and religious boundaries; Islamism; Islam.

### Introduction

I will start by explaining my own path in deconstructing the negative image of Islam. I lived in Cairo for three years while undertaking my PhD in Arabic and Islamic Studies. There, I was able to experience the goodness of the people on many occasions, to such an extent that words are not adequate enough to express it. However, my own experience was in contradiction with the image of Islam and Muslims coming from the mass media and I did not have any rational arguments against this negative image. Furthermore, I was doing research on Islamic Law, *fiqh*; another source for a negative picture of Islam, since it is as if someone would study European medieval laws and wanted to make a picture of the present society through it. By studying *fiqh* in its historical context, I was able to harmonise my experience regarding Islam and to offer rational arguments to deconstruct the negative image.

There is a need to study Islam and any religion in its historical context. Furthermore, we should take into account that many religious schisms and theological disagreements arose as the consequence of certain historical and political conflicts that had an impact on the development of theology in a particular religious group. I am convinced that the religion of Islam arose — among other things — as a reaction to the misdeeds of the Byzantine and Persian Empires. There was a meaning for the rise of Islam as there was a meaning for the rise of Protestantism in the West. Today we should recognise the value of these religious traditions beyond misrepresentations. I will start by making a

distinction between 'Islam' written in capital letters and 'islam' written in small letters. One is the political entity that took shape especially starting with the Umayyad Abd al-Malik (647–705), who introduced Arabic as the language of administration and lasted until the end of the Ottoman Empire. The other term, 'islam,' refers to the religious experience of the people living in Islamic countries, a religion that had its roots in Judaism and Christianity and incorporated elements of other traditions, such as pre-Islamic Arabian traditions.

Without relativizing one's own religion, we should be conscious of the role of rules and dogmas. These should not be taking the place of God, the infinite Good for mankind, who is compassionate with human beings. In Roman Catholic theology, a distinction is made between the content of the faith and the faith as lived by each person: *fides qua* and *fides quae*. Therefore, Roman Catholics believe that everyone can be saved in their own religious tradition. Born in a given religious tradition, each person has the responsibility of being righteous in the way he or she best knows, and only God knows one's heart!

### Unpacking Terminology: *Fiqh* in its Historical Context

The Umayyad and Abbasid Empires in the Middle Ages inherited many things from the Byzantine and the Persian Empire. The Islamic Empire inherited the role of religion as 'citizenship' from Byzantium. Byzantines did not consider non-Christians living within their borders as having the same rights or full citizenship as Christians. The same political solution was used by Islam regarding Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians by giving them *dimma* status.

As Robert Hoyland mentions:

All states make some distinction between categories of people living within their borders and accord to them different rights...In the Greco-Roman world, such people (called *metoikos* in Greek, *peregrinus* in Latin) were not allowed to hold public office, own land, or marry a citizen. The promotion of Christianity to the state religion gradually changed this situation and increasingly the distinction was between Christian and Non-Christians... The same model took hold in the Arab Empire.<sup>1</sup>

The problem of citizenship versus confessional citizenship debated nowadays can be explained and resolved only if we consider its historical origin. Indeed, Ghannouchi is aware of this and has recognised the *dimma* status as a political solution rather than a religious issue. However, he would not be prepared to abolish the *dimma* status, because, in this way, the identity of the nation and the high values would be preserved.<sup>2</sup>

*Jihād* is a word charged with many meanings and it is quite misused. If we read the classical texts of *fiqh*, it is clear that *Jihād* is the duty of an institution and *farkifāyya*,<sup>3</sup> the institution of the Armed Forces. *Fard kifāyya*, collective duty, means that a group

<sup>1</sup> R. Hoyland, *In God's Path*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015, p.197.

<sup>2</sup> L. Klevesath, 'Religious Freedom in Current Political Islam: The Writings of Rachid al-Ghannouchi and Abu al-'Ala Madi', in A. Cavulcak et al. (ed.), *Demokratie und Islam: Theoretische und empirische Studien*, Wiesbaden, Springer, 2014, pp.56-7.

<sup>3</sup> Ibn Rushd, *Bidāyat al-Mujtāhid*, Bayrūt, Dār al-Kutub al-Islamiyya, vol.1, p.380.



in society fulfils a duty for the rest of the members of society, who are exempted of it. This can be in the fields of education, defence, and so forth. In a state of emergency, the ruler would call everyone into the army, and then *Jihād* would be an individual duty: *fard'ayn*. However, with Sayyid Qutb and Abd al-Salam Farag, *Jihād* has been defined as an individual duty only: *farg'ayn*. The original meaning of collective duty, *farg kifāyya*, which points to institutional duty, is not mentioned anymore. This is just a misuse of the classical term by taking it out of the legal context, *fiqh*, and placing it out of the legal system. Hence, it is necessary to understand how this terminology, which has a historical context, is misused for political reasons.

## Al-Andalus

The image of Islam was not always negative in Europe. The high culture of al-Andalus, a place where Muslim and Jew life and culture flourished — the Golden Age of Jewish culture — produced a transfer of knowledge into Europe. The Renaissance did not begin in Italy in the fourteenth to the fifteenth century, but in Baghdad in the tenth century, as Rosenthal has argued. Europe learned sciences, philosophy and literature from the Islamic world, which gathered and transmitted knowledge from India to al-Andalus. As Mercedes Garcia Arenal, Professor for Arabic Studies at Consejo Superior de Investigacion Cientifica, Spain, said on the occasion of receiving the National Price of Research in Humanities: "Islam has been interwoven in the history and culture of Europe more than it is commonly thought."

The Toledan historian Sa'īd al-Andalusī<sup>4</sup> has revealed that the Caliph Al-Hakam II granted patronage to scholars of medicine and 'ancient sciences,' searched for books in Egypt and Baghdad, and built a university and libraries in Cordoba. Thus Cordoba became one of the world's leading centres of sciences, medicine and philosophy. The School of Translators of Toledo would transfer later this knowledge into Europe. The transmission of scientific knowledge was an important factor for the birth of universities in Europe. Treatises of agriculture, astronomy, medicine, philosophy were translated in the Toledo School during the twelfth to the thirteenth centuries. Gerard of Cremona translated books such as Ptolemy's *Almagest*, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, al-Khwarizmi's *On Algebra*, al-Kindi's *On Optics*, al-Farghani's *On Elements of Astronomy*, al-Farabi's *On the Classification of the Sciences*, and more. The astrolabe was first imported by Gerbert of Aurillac, later Pope Sylvester II. In the field of Literature, al-Ma'arrī would influence works such as the *Divine Comedy*, while the Spanish novel *El Quijote* was influenced by Arabic literature and terminology.

In the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas read Ibn Rushd and al-Gazālī, scholars who left their imprint on the concepts and methodological reasoning of Catholic theology. The collection of documents of the Cathedral of Toledo<sup>5</sup> proves that there was no rejection of Arabic and Islamic culture from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries in the Iberian Peninsula. Christians, Jews, and Muslims of Toledo kept writing their legal documents in

Arabic for 250 years after the conquest of Toledo in 1085 by the Christian king. Arabic was written and spoken in Toledo for more than 300 years after the conquest of the city by a Christian ruler. A marriage contract in Toledo gives testimony of the entanglement of cultures; the legal wife is called *zawja al-sunniyya*, and the contract is signed according to the Catholic *Sharī'a*, *aš-Sharī'a al-kathūliyya*.

However, gradually the image of the 'evil' Muslim as the external enemy and foreigner was forged. The ideology of national identity based on one religion, one language, and one ethnicity put an end to the interaction among cultures, starting gradually from the middle of the fourteenth century onwards. Spanish or Romance took the place of Arabic and Latin (the language of the administration) and forced conversions to Christianity were implemented. In 1567, Philip II prohibited the Arabic language and the religion of Islam, which led to the second revolt of the Alpujarras. Moriscos, allied with the Ottomans, rebelled in the area of the mountain of Granada and fought hard until their final expulsion in 1614. The new converts obtained permission to practise *taqiyya*. A *fatwa* from Oran allowed Muslims to eat pork and drink wine in order to escape the Inquisition. Crypto-Muslim identity remained until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Granada.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, the ideology of a nation-state based on one language, one religion, and one ethnicity, the threat of the Turks in the Mediterranean Sea, and the European expansion to the Americas were the major contributors to negative changes of perceptions regarding Islam. After the fifteenth century in Europe, communication between the two parts of the Mediterranean — East/West and North/South — almost ceased. Various narratives started excluding Jews and Muslims from European identity. The rhetoric of modernity relegated them to a secondary position as mere translators of antiquity.<sup>7</sup> As a result, the task of constructing an inclusive understanding of the multicultural legacy of Europe should be a project in the future.

## Orientalism and Ideologies of the Nineteenth Century

The ideologies of the nineteenth century increased the damage to the negative perception of Islam by Europeans. Ideologies were employed by expansionist European powers to justify colonialism. These included Positivism, promoting the triumph of science over metaphysics including religious belief, Utilitarianism, postulating the maximum benefit for the maximum people, and Darwinism, the survival of the fittest. European politicians and intellectuals classified the 'Other' — in this case, Islamic culture — as unable to build a civilisation. They also classified Islam as a regressive religion.

Renan published *The Future of Sciences* in 1890, confessing in it his faith on the progress of reason and his belief in science as the only possible means for a better humanity. He deified science from an evolutionary perspective, viewing it as a

<sup>4</sup>E. Levi-Provencal, *La civilisation Arabe en Espana*, Madrid, Espasa-Calpe, 1980, pp. 84-5; 121.

<sup>5</sup>A. Gonzalez Palencia, *Los Mozárabes de Toledo*, Madrid, 1930.

<sup>6</sup>E. Soria Mesa, *Los moriscos que se quedaron. La permanencia de la población de origen islámico en la España Moderna* (Reino de Granada, siglos XVII-XVIII), *Vínculos de Historia*, 1, 2012, pp. 205-230.

<sup>7</sup>E. Arigita, *Revisiting the Past: Towards an Inclusive Understanding of the Multicultural Legacy of Europe*, *A Mosaic of Cultures: Understanding the Past*, pp. 1-9. Academia.edu

messianic religion of progress, and anticipated it replacing Christianity. A metaphysical deification of history and the deterministic opinion that the laws of historical progress could be discovered by the methods of modern science had taken over.<sup>8</sup> Renan described Islam as unable to produce a high culture or create a 'civilisation'; a term which had special connotations in France, which had produced a great civilisation according to the ideology of this period. The Semitic culture was portrayed as a sensual culture, characterised as incapable of abstraction and reasoning, which were conditions to produce science and high civilisation. Al-Afghānī answered these attacks on Islam by affirming its rationality as a religion without miracles or hierarchy and argued that it was capable of producing science and civilisation. Abduh described the functional role of religion, saying that if Muslims did not obtain material success and well-being, this was because of their false practice of the religion of Islam. This was in response to the French Foreign Minister Gabriel Hanataux, who declared that "Aryan religions promoted civilisation because they elevated the human to the level of the divine... Semitic religions kept humans beings under the authority of a God, and thus unable to realise their true potential... Thus, Islam would be the cause of the backwardness of its people."<sup>9</sup>

Al-Bannā and Quṭb continue this line of thought in another historical context, that of anti-colonial struggle. They defined Islam as a comprehensive system, religion, *dīn*, being just a part of the system of Islam. Quṭb fuses the holistic concepts of civilisation with the theological category of the Unity of God, *tawhīd*.<sup>10</sup> His goal is similar to that of the French intellectuals, to achieve a great civilisation: "If Islam is again to play the role of the leader of mankind, then it is necessary that the Muslim community be restored to its original form."<sup>11</sup> He dealt with religious categories as a non-expert in *fiqh*. Influenced by socialist ideas, especially by the thoughts of Mawdūdī, he developed a political vocabulary that it was Islamic in shape and socialist in meaning. He used Mawdūdī's term *hakimiyyat Allāh*, a neologism with origin in the Urdu language which was never found in classical Arabic sources. *Hakimiyyat Allāh* could be equated to the socialist idea of Sovereignty of the People, *jāhiliyya* with the socialist idea of Alienation and *jihād* the parallel to the revolution of the proletariat. Indeed, similarly to the idea of the proletarian revolution, he considered *jihād* to be the necessary and unavoidable step toward the achievement of a just Islamic society. The harmonious society of the *salaf*, the pious predecessors, to be reestablished, is not but the Utopia of communism, reverted towards the past and not towards the future.

The Middle East started to think about itself with categories from the West. Victims of the political and economic interests of the West in the area, they tried to find solutions in the framework of Western thought. Identity and self-value faded. 'Solutions' were found in the revolutionary politics of militant parties in Western countries, such as communists and anarchists.

Meanwhile, the Western narrative and the media dealt with the struggle for independence as an act of Arab enmity. Later, the struggle for the liberation of Palestine and the fight against corrupt governments were labelled Islamic terrorism; a useful label during the Cold War for keeping Western interests in the area. It has taken a while for the discourse of the media to change. After the second Iraq War, the discourse was unsustainable; the injustice of a random war destroying a whole country under the label of bringing democracy to the region made clear that the West had created the negative image of the Arabs for their own interests.

## Present and Future

The reencountering of Islam and Europe in a globalised world and the refugee crises are challenges for Europe. Religion can play a positive role. Pope Francis has spoken of migration as a sign of the times, as a message from God warning Europe of the decadence of a culture based on materialism and the economic exclusion of others. Friendly relations with Islam is also one of his priorities. The declarations and encouragement of Pope Francis have helped many people to accept and welcome the arrival of refugees and have changed views regarding Islam. However, a new 'religion' — nationalism — kept the rhetoric focussed on enmity. Under nationalism, the nation is defined by one language, and one imagined ethnicity with religion playing no role. This leaves no room for solidarity with the 'Other.' Rich countries should take responsibility for helping poorer countries through new economic structures, fair trade, and partnership. How can one justify the borders of one's own country today in a globalised world? Is the economy confined to the borders of the country where it originated?

Nevertheless, Germany has gone through a process of acceptance and appreciation of Muslims and their religion in the past five years. Many Germans had compassion for victims of war and helped them. Volunteer work has saved the so-called crisis of refugees; food and warm clothing have been provided, German classes have been offered, and paperwork with the administration was patiently done. The well-organised state initiative was supplemented by a huge amount of volunteer work. Syrian presence in Germany has helped many people to appreciate Arabs and Islam. German people expressed their surprise regarding the kindness of Arab people, realising the peacefulness of Arabs and their generosity and courtesy.

Integration is happening. Many refugee children are attending the most difficult types of school in Germany, where optimal grades are required. Many Syrians with academic degrees have certified their degrees in Germany or joined further studies for the right qualification. Still, cultural boundaries remain. The native language influences thinking; many feelings and thoughts such as the warmth of family relationships cannot be translated into a foreign language. This causes great frustration for immigrants, which can even end in violence when human communication is broken. The warmth of feelings in relationships can be lost, and one can perceive the other's words as a sign of hostility or arrogance, even if not intended. The German language is used to give information in the most precise way. The Arabic language, on the contrary, is used to establish a relation and immerse oneself in this relation, to express something that it

<sup>8</sup> D. Jung, *Orientalists, Islamists and the Global Public Sphere. A Genealogy of the Modern Essentialist Image of Islam*, Sheffield, Equinox, 2011, pp. 106; 108; 114.

<sup>9</sup> A. Tayob, *Religion in Modern Islamic Discourse*, London, Hurst, pp. 60-61.

<sup>10</sup> D. Jung, *Orientalists, Islamists and the Global Public Sphere*, p. 217.

<sup>11</sup> Sayyid Quṭb, *Milestones*, New Delhi, Islamic Book Service, 2016, p. 9.



is beyond the mere uttered words and the precise meaning of it. The Arabic language has a different function than that of the mathematical language of Wittgenstein.

Culture shock was waiting for Syrians in Germany. Muslims, as well as Christian Arabs, found Germans inhumane; apart from helping with practical things, many Germans never had time to establish a relationship with refugees. Indeed, the reencounter is that of a functional society versus a society based on family relations. German society is structured around work, leaving that no time for relations. A society that only values what it is functional and effective, and which prioritizes punctuality, quick action, order, and silence is quick to dismiss those who do not conduct themselves in the same manner. German relationships are on functional bases; a person is not judged according to moral and personal values such as generosity and compassion as in traditional societies, but rather according to civic values. This does not mean that a functional society does not have value in itself, but I describe the cultural shock experienced by those from different backgrounds.

What about religion? In 2010, the German Ministry of Education established Islamic Theological Studies at public universities for imams and teachers of religion. This has served as a model for other countries in Europe. Germany has quickly reacted to adapt many Islamic rules. For instance, dietary restrictions have been accommodated, and the legal status of the veil has been debated and socially accepted, with only the question of its place in the civil service remaining. Different understandings of family and family structures present a challenge to the newcomers to Germany and to German law. 'Urfi marriage without civil registration has been accepted, even if it is a disadvantage for the woman. A polygamous marriage abroad is recognised by the law and women are granted their share of the inheritance. It is difficult for newcomers to accept that fourteen-year-olds have the right to choose their religion. An eighteen-year-old is a complete independently person in Germany in all aspects of life, especially if the young woman or man supports him or herself.

## Conclusion: Towards a Common House

In Germany and in Europe in general, there was no clear distinction in the language of the media regarding Muslims, Islamists and terrorists ten years ago. The word 'Muslim' had no specific definition, and the most frequently used related word was 'terrorist.' However, the media have taken the responsibility of removing this negative image of Muslims. The distinction between Islamists and Muslims has been clarified, and the word 'terrorist' is used less frequently. Islamism is defined as a political ideology with origins in the West. This knowledge is widespread in academia and is spreading slowly to the general public and the media. It is less known that *jihād*, the only way to reach the just Islamic State, is parallel to the Revolution of the Proletariat. As in Quṭb's thought, it is the unavoidable and necessary step in order to reach the just Islamic society and State. Arabs had started to think about themselves with Western categories since the nineteenth century. Indeed, extreme Islamism is but a kind of secularism, since the ruler

of the state replaces the individual in the praxis of his/her religion and religion becomes an external rather than an internal phenomenon.

Arab and Islamic societies have a lot to offer regarding values, especially values that are threatening to disappear in Western societies. Family values are an example; the solidarity and cohesion of members of a Middle Eastern family is a valuable example for Europe, though it can be an obstacle for the development of the individual person. Realities of Western and Arab countries should be taken into account as a corrector for each other. Arab societies are characterised by a cradle of values that can help the West to reencounter itself again. Generosity, time for each other, patience, compassion, warm-hearted, helpfulness, personalisation in relations instead of formal relations; all are values of such societies. The relationship with the 'Other' should be perceived as a good, because we should learn from one another. Islam is not a synonym of *Sharī'a*, or least of all, of *fiqh*, the latter not being properly understood except in its historical context. There are many opportunities to interact. Religion should bring people together and not separate them; it should open us towards the Infinite. Politics, on its part, should guarantee the respect for the other and freedom in the public sphere, promoting the relationship between individuals and communities.

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## MUTUAL PERCEPTIONS AND RELATIONS: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

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### Abstract

- A. A. Mutual perceptions: Christian writings from the eighth century of John of Damascus and Theodore Abu Qurrah consider Islam to be very dangerous for four reasons: it is a distortion or a schism of Christianity; it admits algebra and denies human freedom; it promotes spreading religion by the sword; and it encourages engaging in worldly pleasures. Interestingly, some of these accusations or impressions were made in the lecture of former Pope Benedict XVI at the University of Regensburg in 2006. At the same time, or at the same era, in 8th century, Christians were asked by Muslims to recognize the prophecy of Muhammad (PBUH) as his name appeared and was proclaimed in the Torah and the Bible, to reconsider the falsification of the Scriptures, and to recognize Islam as an Abrahamic religion. In the ninth century appeared the literary type: the response to Christians.
- B. Relations: Since the seventh century, relations between the Caliphate and the Byzantines were marked by war, but commercial and cultural relations did not cease. The translation movement was famous, and its manuscripts came from the Byzantines, and the Andalusian experience created excellent partnerships.
- C. The present: As for the mutual perceptions in the present, things differed a lot as the great science of Orientalism appeared. It provided different knowledge on Islam for 150 years. The Arabs and Muslims immersed themselves in examining the possibilities of adapting to the modern world created by the West, and many of them were fascinated by it. In recent decades, however, mutual attitudes have returned to negative because of the thesis of the clash of civilizations, the rise of terrorism, and the rise of Islamophobia. On the other hand, relations are normal between countries. Millions of Muslims live in the West, affected by the rise of terrorism and Islamophobia. But the future will certainly be better.
- D. Future: After the events of recent decades, judgments about perceptions and relations are no longer possible or on a straight line. But there are promising phenomena: Muslim-Christian dialogue has made significant progress with the issuance of dozens of documents of partnership between Islamic institutions, Christian churches, and other religious bodies in the last decade. There are no longer major problems between the countries and institutions of both parties, after the suppression of terrorism. But Arab and Muslim civil actors are not active, including in ideas and initiatives.

### Keywords

Christian, Muslim, East, West, Mutual Perceptions, Relations.

### Introduction

It is not appropriate in such a short space to dive into the past. However, it is useful to meditate briefly on how the visions that became mutual began. We know what the Koran says about the Jews and Christians, who are often referred to as the 'People of the Book.' This expression considers them as members of the three religions of Abraham. Let us have a look at this Ayah, 136, from Surat Al-Baqara (chapter two):

Say ye, "We believe in God; and in what was revealed to us; and in what was revealed to Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the Patriarchs; and in what was given to Moses and Jesus; and in what was given to the prophets—from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we surrender." There is a criticism in the Koran of the behaviour of the priests of Judaism, of Christian doctrines, and an invitation to Jews and Christians to recognize the prophecy of the Prophet Muhammad, all while still praising the morals of Christians. This is the Koranic vision of the other two religions. There is development, in the Koran itself, however, in relation to the two religions. The most prominent developments in the life of the Prophet (PBUH) is turning the direction of the qibla or the direction of prayer from Jerusalem to Mecca. Then the gradual emergence of the provisions of the dhimmis (the religious minorities recognized in Islamic Law) in and after the life of the Prophet.

Wars occurred in the Prophet's life with the city's Jews, and they were evacuated. As for the other wars, they were not with the Christians, but rather with the Byzantine Empire and its Christian subjects. It is known historically that less than a century after the death of the Prophet, the caliphate state eliminated the Sassanid Empire, taking control of the Levant, Egypt, and North Africa to Spain, those were under the control of Byzantines and controlled the Mediterranean, Red Sea, and parts of the Indian Ocean. The fronts remained with the Byzantines for more than a thousand years, until the Ottomans took control of its capital in 1453 AD. When that happened, European Catholics, with the support of the Roman papacy, waged wars called crusades, during which they controlled for nearly two hundred years vast areas in the Levant and its coasts, including Jerusalem. But as long as we talk about mutual visions, and we knew the view of the Koran, then we have to pay attention to the other Christian vision of Islam and Muslims in the early years. Islam and the Koran appeared in the seventh century AD, and then the Koran collected around the year 655 CE. The conquests continued after the death of the Prophet (PBUH) in 632. From this period, after the year 650 AD, we have got the news in the Greek, Syriac, and Hebrew languages. As for regular introductions or responses, we should wait until approximately the mid-eighth century.

The most famous presenters or respondents (those who wrote about Islam) are two. The first is John Damascene, who considered Islam a heresy. Another theologian, Theodore Abu Qurra, came immediately after him. Both men wrote in Greek, but Abu Qurra began writing in Arabic as well. Introducing Islam



and responding to it was common to both of them. They wanted to introduce and correct doctrines due to conflicts between Christian groups, and the emergence of the problem of icons. However, Islam was present, insistently, due to the takeover of the Levant, Iraq and Egypt by the Caliphate State, and the entire population is Christian, Orthodox, Jacobites, and Nestorians.

In addition to the political domination of the state, there was a law for the *dhimmis*, and there was a new Holy Book consistently arguing them and making many demands from the position of power. Therefore, making the Christians firm on their religion must have been one of the goals of these theologians so that they would not fall under the temptation of the new religion. Thus, they spread their propaganda against Islam. According to these theologians, the most important disadvantages of the new religion was that it was a pernicious distortion of Christianity in terms of its adoption of Abrahamic concepts, but it was not Abrahamic because it did not recognize the deity of Christ. Issues raised included mixing correct information with false ones, Islam's approval of spreading religion with the sword, and encouraging its followers to rush into sensual pleasure, such as marrying more than one woman, the matter of maids, and the perception of pleasure in paradise.

In the two-volume study published by Professor Adel Theodore Khoury in 1969 on Byzantine theology and Islam in the ninth century AD, it appears that the writings of John Damascene and Abu Qurra formed the basis of the position of Byzantine theologians on Islam throughout the Middle Ages. This position was mostly repeated in the works of Thomas Aquinas and Martin Luther, with a double dose against the Turks who were threatening Europe in his days. The evidence of the depth and duration of these impressions is that Pope Benedict XVI repeated some of them in his famous lecture at the University of Regensburg in 2006, despite the remarkable changes that occurred in the position of the Catholic Church regarding Islam and Muslims in the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Also, in the ninth century AD, a literary genre was created by Muslims in response to the writings of the Christians.

## Relationships

Theological visions are not unique in expressing relations between civilizations, nations, and states, even in what has come to be called medieval ages of a religious nature. In the ninth and tenth centuries, the Muslim caliphs and philosophers started a translation movement from Greek through the Syriac language, or directly. For two centuries or more, the translation of medical, astronomical, philosophical, and Greek texts was from Syriac Christians and Orthodox, some of whom were proficient in the three languages. Most of the Greek manuscripts were taken from the Byzantines. Sometimes this was done with the permission of the authorities on both sides.

For quite some time, and contrary to the historian Henry Perrin's view, the trade relations between the eastern and the western Mediterranean had not been ended. Byzantine, European, Muslim and Chinese merchants were partners in it, and the four parties benefited from each other in technical matters and maps of the seas and in the exchange of goods. This peaceful trade remained until the beginning of the sixteenth

century when it was suspended by the Portuguese guns for a period of time. As for the experience of Andalusia, it was an influential experience in awareness and reality, as a civilized, cultural, and social partnership was established between Jews, Christians and Muslims. In addition to the shared life, the translation movement flourished as the achievements of Islamic civilization (including translations from Greek) were translated into Latin by Hebrew or directly. Usama bin Munqeth's diaries indicate that even during the Crusades, relations developed between the two parties. It is not far from that the positivity in the narration of the Crusades towards Saladin's personality and works.

## Relationships and the Evolution of Views

Before arriving at the time of the mutual estrangements in the present, we have to go through two centuries, the centuries of the modern world system in the West and the East, according to European and Western domination in the world. However, the relations of domination were multidimensional. In terms of the military takeover and the establishment of the global market between the centre and the parties, there was a growing European knowledge of Islam and the Arabs, not only through governance and the market but rather through a scientific focus on knowledge of Islamic civilization through what became known as 'Orientalism,' as well as the Arabs and Muslims' attempts to use and apply the products and achievements of the great European progress experience. As for Orientalism, Europeans who specialize in the languages, civilization, and cultures of Islam have, within a century and a half, been collecting, publishing, and studying thousands of historical, religious, literary, and scientific achievements of Islamic civilization. Despite the growing knowledge, as has already been said, there are still some arrogant statements regarding the Koran, Islam and the Arabs. But this did not prevent the occurrence of changes in vision and in the possibilities of thinking about other relations between European civilization and Islamic civilization. Had it not for the thousand-year decline theory domination over the vision of Islamic civilization, other visions could have emerged with broad perspectives on both sides or parties.

The most prominent example of what we are talking about in terms of mutual perceptions is that Muslims are the ones whose visions have changed, or most of them their visions are of European and the Western ones. For a hundred years, Muslim thinkers have come to think about how to adapt and benefit from Europe in all areas of life: in the state and its organizations, in society and its progress, in learning new science, and in engagement in the new world system. There were those who spoke according to Ibn Khaldun's saying: that "*the defeated is fond of imitating the dominant*" and those who spoke of the shock of the West or the shock of modernity, but there was almost unanimity that there is no exit from dependency and political and cultural colonialism except by learning from the experience of those who got advanced and following their paths; and if not to fully embrace their experience, then at least in order to gain immunity that helps to live in their world, without joining it, or continuing to fear it.

## Transformations of Reality, Awareness, and Vision

There is a belief among large groups of Arab and Muslim intellectuals today that the West has radically changed in the last four decades in the fields of seeing Islam and acting against it. This is true, but grievance has two sides or faces. Islam has exploded in our face and in the face of the world. In 2002, I was a visiting professor at Harvard Law School, and some professors from other fields were attending my lectures out of curiosity, including a Chinese mathematics professor. When I explained the causes of the identity explosion and recalled the effects of colonialism, the Chinese professor asked me: *What do you think, was colonialism less severe for us Chinese? Do you know the Opium War in the 1840s? So did we take revenge by attacking the World Trade Center, just as young men of you did?* Yes, those who rebelled are few, but the effects of their rebellion in the name of Islam are terrifying and enormous. Since the 1960s and 1970s, overwhelming cultural pessimism has dominated religious peoples, and the thesis of the complete system that should be applied has emerged. In order for it to be implemented, the global system that prevents this must be broken. As for revolution in the name of Islam, there is a catastrophic failure in the experiences of national states in the Arab and Islamic worlds. The variables of reality in the Arab and Islamic worlds, religion, and countries, has produced, among other things, Huntington's thesis in the clash of civilizations, and the saying that Islam has bloody borders. As our cultures dominated, without the proper ability, the religious and state renewal in the rifting structures of the national state, religious and cultural identities rose in the West.

In less than two decades, violent youth movements invaded our homes and Western homes, and the whole world was busy combating Islamic terrorism. On the margins of these massive events that struck countries, urbanization and countries, Islamophobia emerged, and the devastation increased in 2003 or 2004, and the French Parliament passed a law banning headscarves in schools and the public domain. So I published an article in the Lebanese newspaper — *Al-Mustaqbal* — on the issue. President Chirac denounced this to President Rafiq Hariri, who was annoyed and sent me to have a discussion with Chirac. President Chirac told me: "We are a secular state, and we consider these phenomena among Muslims in France as precursors to violence," and "Believe me, I want to protect you from yourselves. There are large numbers of intellectuals, and not only from the general public, who now regard the Koran as the origin of this contraction and extremism." I said: "We do not want to be afraid of the world, nor to frighten it!" The President laughed and said: "But we are afraid of you, and this is an old-new awareness, that reality along the path may not support, but this stubbornness requires struggle and reform on the part of clergy and intellectuals. With you." When I mentioned something to him about the failure of the national state in our homes, he said: "There is some truth in it, because the situation in Malaysia, Indonesia and Turkey is better than the situation with you Arabs!"

## Mutual Perspectives and the Future

It is no longer easy, by any measure, to undertake prospecting in a complex field such as mutual perspectives — especially because of the clouded cultural and cultural/political

atmosphere in the West and the even more clouded atmosphere in the Levant. But I would like to review the efforts made in the last decade by religious authorities in the Arab world to change in the Islamic field and the field of vision for Islam. Those efforts began in Jordan at the 'Common Word' meeting in 2007, and at the same time, the late King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz launched his initiative to the dialogue of religions and cultures. When violent and terrorist incidents worsened, the Arab religious authorities issued dozens of statements and declarations against extremism and terrorism, as well as partnerships with international religious bodies such as the Vatican and the World Council of Churches, and even with other Asian Buddhist and Hindu religions.

In this regard, I would like to mention: Al-Azhar Conferences and the emergence of the civil state and citizenship issues in it, up to the Human Brotherhood Document signed by the Sheikh of Al-Azhar with Pope Francis, and Marrakesh Conferences between the Forum for the Promotion of Peace and the Moroccan Ministry of Endowments for Minorities, then the document issued by the King of Morocco with the Pope and the Mecca Document Released by the Muslim World League. These documents fulfil all the demands that the Muslim reformers raised during one hundred years, in terms of religious and human brotherhood, in terms of religious commitment to peace, tolerance, and the denial of violence at all, also in terms of comprehensive citizenship based on equality, justice, human rights, and the civil, democratic, and constitutional state. With these dialogues, declarations, and covenants, Arab Religious Institutions have taken place around the world, preaching religious reform, which everyone has been demanding of it from Muslims.

Arab religious institutions are formal institutions, so will they have significant impacts on Arab and Islamic societies, and Muslim societies abroad? In fact, the institutions have not only made statements, but have developed training workshops, changed educational programs and mosque sermons, and linked relationships and follow-ups with the outside. It is hoped that the institutions will remain engaged in this activity and that their efforts will not end with diminishing violence. This is because Islamic thought generally needs this renewal and compatibility with the values of the world. However, the institutions still need to be qualified, whether in terms of ideas and specialization, or in terms of belief in national and international action, and a conviction of follow-up and continuity.

There is work still awaiting Arab and Muslim intellectuals, in terms of dismantling the bonds between religion and the state, and in terms of cooperating with religious institutions in order to achieve reform and guide the young university generations. If the religious institutions and civil and cultural community bodies have been rushed calling for religious reform and taking religion out of the state's core, they have also pushed to demand a national state based on citizenship, the protection of the basic rights of citizens, and the empowerment of democracy. This is all very important in combating extremism by involving young people on the one hand and changing the world's view of Arab and Muslim countries on the other hand.



We have a very important fourth front in changing the Western view of the Arab and Muslim worlds. It is represented by millions of Muslims who are proliferating in Europe and around the world. The pressures of identity and privacy and their rituals dominated among these old and new circles. Amidst the current difficult circumstances, the Muslim elite will have to enter into a greater transformation of mentalities, loyalties, and contemplation of destinies. A third of Muslims in the world live in societies where they are considered minorities, and a deep sense of citizenship and their rights must be matched by a deep sense of responsibilities and duties as well. Mutual visions only change in extended ranges. In crises, old sensibilities, whether real or artificial, always wake up. If we always put in our awareness and our calculation that fear and intimidation are both a bad and ineffective weapon, then we can hope for a better future for Islam and Muslims in the West and the world: "Such days (of varying fortunes) We give to men and men by turns."



## ISLAMIC STUDIES IN THE WEST FROM ORIENTALISM TO THEOLOGY: GERMANY AS A MODEL

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### Abstract

One of the largest and oldest cultural factors of convergence between the East and the West in general and between the West and Islam, in particular, is the factor of academic studies, which Western universities adopted at the beginning of the last century concentrating on Islamic studies, Muslim culture, and the Arabic language and its particularities. The objectives of the past were characterized by colonialism and weak objectivity, which were accompanied by many, often armed, conflicts. In the present, these objectives are described with strict scientific methods and objective handling. Between the past and the present are decades influenced by a number of historical factors, at the forefront of which is the dialogue of civilizations. There is an urgent need in the West for Muslim academics, teachers, and imams who are not expatriate (local, not imported) who have knowledge of the culture of the state and the specificities of its heritage. Hence, Western universities were filled with departments and institutes that have diversified their studies of the East in general and of Islam in particular, which is considered as a shift in the relationship of Islam and the West at the scientific level, especially after the establishment of Islamic theology institutes with a dogmatic method. With models and examples from Germany, I will examine this historical development between Islam and the West on a scientific level.

### Keywords

Orientalism; Orientalist; Islamic Studies; Islamic Theology; Arabic Studies.

### Introduction

One of the largest and oldest factors of cultural convergence between East and West in general, and between the West and Islam in particular, is the factor of academic studies that have touched Islamic Studies, Islamic civilization, and the Arabic language and its characteristics in Western universities since the seventeenth century. From here onwards emerged the term 'Orientalism.' The objectives and contents of Orientalist Studies were diverse, and so were the tours of Western travellers in our Islamic world. Their most important aim was to pave the way for colonialism and proselytizing. Some of these objectives eventually served the Arabic and Islamic cultural heritage through scientific discussions, from which some were fair and equitable, and some others were offensive and arbitrary.

Orientalism has long characterized East-West relations for centuries, during which many stereotypes of the East have emerged. Perhaps the most important criticism against this

science was what the intellectual Edward Said<sup>12</sup> mentioned in his famous book *Orientalism*, where he analysed how the West "manufactured" the idea of the East as a fixed and unchanging identity. When Edward Said writes of Orientalism, he refers to the balance of power that existed in the past between the colonial West and the colonial East. He sees that the West was dominant and superior, and determined the directions and the subjects of the studies, while the East was busy resisting the West politically rather than studying it. So, there was, for example, no equivalent science through which the East could study the West — i.e., 'Occidentalism' — as if the East realized that the West could not be simplified to that extent. Dr. Rudi Paret posed the same question in his book about Arab-Islamic Studies and he wondered whether Muslims in the present era could study the West.<sup>13</sup>

### Orientalism and Germany as a special case

Orientalist schools have varied according to their origins in the West. Many scholars believe that Orientalism in Germany escaped the subjectivity of many of its French and English counterparts. German Orientalism focused on linguistic sciences and provided solid scientific analyses of the Arab-Islamic heritage, and was not politicized, as Germany was not a colonial power. As for French and English Orientalism, some of its scholars fell into the trap of serving the colonial powers, presenting a somewhat false picture of the Arab and Islamic world, while Germany remained "mostly conservative of impartiality and scientific spirit. If some deviation in opinion or any scientific mistakes appears in some German Orientalist studies, then this cannot be generalized in all studies."<sup>14</sup> Since 1921, Germany has been holding an international conference every three years called "Orientalistiktag" the first of which was held in Leipzig.

In addition, the scientific spirit of neutrality and logic prevailed over the Oriental Studies in Germany, which were characterized by depth and comprehensiveness. They catalogued Arabic manuscripts and ancient texts. Mentioned below are the most famous German Orientalists who influenced the history of Orientalism in general and the Arab studies and Islamic history in particular, like Wustenfeld (1899-1808), who wrote more than 200 books in Oriental Sciences, including translations of some important historical books, such as *Athar al Buldan* (History of Lands) and *Akhbar Qibt Masr* (History of the Copts); Johann Jakob Reiske (1774-1716), who is considered the founder of Arabic studies in Germany; Brockelmann Carl (1956-1868), who received his doctorate in philosophy and theology, and whose most famous books are *Tareekh al Sho'oub al Islamia* (History of Islamic Nations) and *Tareekh al Adab al Araby* (History of

Arabic Literature); Julius Wellhausen (1918-1844), Professor of Islamic History and Islamic Schools of Thoughts. One of his most important works is the study of the *History of Tabari*; Theodor Noldeke (1930-1836), Professor of Islamic History at the University of Tübingen.

In the field of Philology, some other orientalist can particularly be mentioned. The most significant of them are Freitag (1788-1861) who wrote the Latin-Arabic dictionary in four parts, Fischer (1865-1949) who developed a dictionary of classical Arabic, Hans Wehr (1909-1981) who published his famous Arabic-German dictionary of contemporary Arabic, and Dr Ullmann who started work on the huge dictionary of classical Arabic at the University of Tübingen in 1931. Fortunately, thousands of Arabic and Islamic manuscripts have found their way into German libraries. Perhaps if they remained in place, they would have been demolished. Researchers in the development of German Orientalism argue that philology is no longer merely dictionaries and Lexicons, but

"أصبحت جزءاً سياسياً من المنهج السائد باعتبارها عمدة التاريخية منذ أواخر القرن الثاني عشر الهجري (الثامن عشر الميلادي)، وقد نهينا جوزيف فان إس في دراسة بعنوان (من فهلوزن إلى بيكر، ظهور اتجاه التاريخ الثقافي في الدراسات الإسلامية) إلى الانجاز الحقيقي لفهلوزن وبيكر وهارتمان وشاخت وكاله وغيرهم في الربع الأول من القرن الرابع الهجري (العشرين الميلادي)، في أنهم انتقلوا بالتخصص بالتدريج من التاريخية إلى سوسولوجيا الإسلام، كما أن أعلام الدراسات السامية والاستشراقية (العربية والفارسية) إنما استندوا في نشراتهم للمصادر العربية والفارسية إلى ما بلغه علم نقد النصوص لدى التاريخانيين الذين كانوا يكتبون التواريخ الشاملة استناداً إلى نشرات نقدية جديدة لأعمال المؤرخين والفلاسفة اليونان والرومان."<sup>15</sup>

"has become a fundamental part of the mainstream as the main pillar of historicism since the late twelfth century AH (eighteenth century AD). In his study entitled *From Wellhausen to Becker, the Emergence of the Trend of Cultural History in Islamic Studies*, Josef Van Es referred to the contributions of Wellhausen, Becker, Hartman, Schacht and Kahle and others in the first quarter of the fourteenth century HA (twentieth century AD), in that they gradually changed the orientalist tendency from History to the Sociology of Islam. The most prominent scholars of Semitic and Orientalist Studies (Arabic and Persian) also depended on the science of textual criticism developed by the historians who wrote comprehensive autobiographies based on new critical publications of the Greek and Roman historians and philosophers."

In the midst of all these advantages and disadvantages that surrounded the science of Orientalism in Western countries, a new term emerged holding a new, positive Western approach to Islamic affairs at the academic level, namely 'Islamic and Arabic Studies.' The term was used as the title for a number of institutes concerned with the study of Islamic sciences and the Arabic language. This led some to ask if there was a new Orientalism in Germany. Some argued that Orientalism in its violent form does not exist in Germany: "Researchers

<sup>12</sup> Edward Said was born in a conservative Christian family in Jerusalem in 1935. He started his education in Cairo in 1941 at a British Council school. Then, he moved to Cairo School for American Children in 1946, before moving to Jerusalem with his family to continue his education at St. George's School. Said graduated from Princeton University in 1957, where he studied humanities. He graduated with a degree in literature from Harvard University. His thesis on Joseph Conrad influenced his scientific structure and intellectual personality. Said worked as a professor of comparative literature at Columbia University in 1963. Edward Said died at the age of 67 in September 2003. He wrote several books, most notably his book *Orientalism* in 1978, translated by Dr. Kamal El Deeb in 1981, and Dr. Mohammed Anani 2006. (Al-Dhafiri, Turki bin Mohammed, *Al-istishraq 'ind Edward Said "Orientalism at Edward Said"*, Jeddah, Al-Taasil Center for Studies and Research, 2015, pp. 15-32.

<sup>13</sup> Bart, Rudy, *Arabic and Islamic Studies in German Universities*, translated by Mustafa Maher, Cairo, National Center for Translation, 2011, p. 18.

<sup>14</sup> Compare: Abdullah, Raed Amir, *German Orientalists and their efforts towards Arab-Islamic manuscripts*, Mosul University, Journal of the Arts of Mesopotamia, 2013, p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> Al-Matwari, Mohammed Saadoun, *German Orientalism and its Role in Oriental Studies*, Research published in the Journal of Orientalist Studies, Third Issue, Iraq, Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, 2015, p. 214.



are pursuing their studies in universities and institutes known as Islamic studies, which publish many magazines and bulletins dealing with these studies. Today the number of those Researchers reach 150 approximately." <sup>16</sup>

This important historical development related to the new term 'Islamic and Arabic Studies' reflects two things: Firstly, the specialization in the study of Islam as a religion, and not merely the East as a major civilization, as well as the interest in the Arabic language as an indispensable tool in the study of this religion (Islam), which considers the Holy Koran as its core and centre. Secondly, the development of teaching and research in academic institutions, which went directly to specialized Islamic sciences such as Islamic Law, Hadith and even philosophies of these sciences such as the principles of jurisprudence, the history of legislation and the terminology of Hadith. It is noteworthy that many professors who teach at Islamic and Arabic Studies institutes in Germany do not like – or rather refuse – to be called 'Orientalists,' indicating that what they teach is different from what Orientalism once was. Here is the logical question: What is the difference between 'Orientalism' and Islamic and Arabic Studies in the German context? More precisely: What is the difference between the teaching content and research orientation in the Orientalist institutes currently in Germany, such as the Orientalism Department in Freiburg and Cologne, and the content of the syllabuses and the perspectives of research in other Islamic and Arabic institutions present in many universities, such as the institute located in Münster? No matter what the differences are, the relevant part is that this development can be considered to be a great enrichment in the relationship between the rich East that embraces the Islamic religion and its Arabic language, and the West with its desire to learn of this religion more deeply.

This enrichment is manifested in the wide variety of subjects that have become available to the students who wish to study Islam, after having the opportunity for studying more specialized content in the institutes of Islamic Studies such as principles of jurisprudence and Hadith and Islamic Law. For example, Professor Schöller was appointed as a 'Chair Professor' for the subject of Hadith in Münster, which therefore granted students an opportunity that wasn't available before to study the subject. On the other hand, Professor Johanna Pink, for example, on the Orientalist side, is interested in the interpretations of the Koran issued in Southeast Asia and held a number of agreements with universities in Indonesia and Malaysia and also with Al-Azhar University in Egypt.

### The Study of Islamic Theology in Germany

The third and final development of the relationship between Islam and the West in the new millennium on the level of academic studies and research happened in 2010, when the German government announced the establishment of five institutes of Islamic Studies or so-called 'Islamic Theology Studies,' <sup>17</sup> thereby adding further depth to the richness I referred to previously. This led the professors working in the institutes

of Islamic and Arabic Studies to question the feasibility of this decision and to repeat the question asked by Orientalists in the past about the difference between the content provided by the old institutes and the new theological institutes, especially after the presence of three types of institutions dealing with the study of Islam and its sciences.

The aim of establishing these theological institutes was for German Muslim professors to train Muslim scholars, in order to counter the recruitment of teachers and imams from abroad who are not fluent in German language and are not sufficiently familiar with German culture, history and heritage. But the second question posed by scholars of Islamic studies was the extent to which research studies offered by theological institutes would be characterized by a rigorous scientific methodology, especially the research methods that many Muslims have reserved to apply to their sacred texts, such as the historical monetary approach.

The debate and controversy in the German scientific community led to a 2012 conference inaugurated by a number of ministers and attended by a large number of professors of Islamic Studies and Theology to discuss "The Relationship of Islamic Studies with Islamic Theology" (*Das Verhältnis zwischen Islamwissenschaft und islamischer Theologie*). In her speech, Gudrun Krämer asked a clear question: Does the study of Islamic theology offer us something that Islamic studies does not? (*Was leistet die islamische Theologie, was die Islamwissenschaft nicht leistet?*).<sup>18</sup> What is new is that the institutes of Islamic Theology have become obligated to adopt programs to graduate imams of mosques, and teachers of Islamic religion in schools, as did the institute Münster. These programs were not offered by either Oriental or Islamic Studies Institutes. It is also good that the Institutes of Islamic Theology present a contemporary theological vision of the Islamic religion which has received a great resonance in the German intellectual circles, which was reflected in a large number of the publications issued by these institutes.

I would like to emphasize that there is a strong and deep relationship between Islam and the West at the academic level, accompanied by events that push for further development not only at the level of establishment of new institutes and renewal of curricula, but there are modern events affecting this academic relationship such as extremism, hatred speech, the issue of integration, the niqab, mixed swimming lessons in the schools where Muslims learn. All these subjects imposed themselves on the scientific research arena in all institutes dealing with the study of Islamic affairs. These institutes that no longer focuses the Orientalism, which studies the Far East, but raise the banner of Islamic Theology which deals with the Islamic religion in Europe. At the level of dealing with Islamic sciences, the distance between East and West has shrunk.

### Conclusions

1. Academic studies and research have been one of the most important factors affecting the relationship between East and West since the sixteenth century.

<sup>16</sup> Rawabit-Center for Research and Strategic Studies, *Colonial Orientalism and Contemporary*. Was the German model different? in: <https://rawabetcenter.com/archives/99922>.

<sup>17</sup> Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (German ministry of education and research), *Islamische Theologie*: in: <https://www.bmbf.de/de/islamische-theologie-367.html>.

<sup>18</sup> Khorchide, Mouhanad and Schöller, Marco, *Das Verhältnis zwischen Islamwissenschaft und islamischer Theologie*, Münster, agenda Verlag, 2012, P. 119.



2. Orientalist Studies carried out by the West aimed primarily at serving political colonialism and religious proselytizing.
3. German Orientalism was largely neutral compared to other European countries such as France and England.
4. German Orientalism was interested in the sciences of the Arabic language, the editing of Islamic historical manuscripts, and the history of the Koran, leaving a great heritage which signifies a scientific bridge between East and West.
5. German universities established institutes of Islamic and Arabic Studies that specialized in the study of the sciences of Islamic religion in order to critique historical religious texts and pay attention to the interpretation of the Koran.
6. A number of German professors working in Islamic and Arabic Studies institutes refused to be described as 'Orientalists,' indicating that they distanced themselves from the negative connotations of the term.
7. The establishment of Islamic theological institutes in Germany, in which only Muslim professors and Muslim students teach and study, indicates a very positive development in the history of the relationship between East and West concerning of Islamic and Arabic studies.

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## CAUGHT 'IN-BETWEEN': MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE AMONG MUSLIM REFUGEES IN GERMANY

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### Summary

The spread, speed, and scale of current global refugee and migration flows challenge and impact existing legal systems at an unprecedented level. Refugees often lack formalized documentation such as marriage contracts, death certificates, or divorce certificates, either because they have not been officially registered or because documents have been lost during the displacement process. This paper examines the impact of the lack of documentation on refugees' lives and their socio-legal identities in Germany. The paper particularly examines Muslim women's social and religious practices in Germany and the extent to which its legal system protects the rights of women. It questions existing simplistic emancipatory discourses that create a dichotomy between subordination and resistance within gender relations among refugee communities in Germany. It illustrates how women navigate between Islamic jurisprudence and existing German legal structures to manage marital issues within their refugee context. This could lead women, however, into an 'in-between' space where their marital issues are neither in line with traditional religious opinions nor with the existing legal regulations of the state, thereby challenging and imposing changes on both.

The author's studies on Iraqi and Syrian refugees in Germany, with a focus mainly on marriages and divorces, found that many refugees do not have their official documents. Islamic marriage practices are not part of the German legal system. Any marital practices need to be undertaken through official routes in Germany courts. Religious marriage contracts are regarded as private concerns that have no legal binding. Refugees and/or migrants contracting marriages (or divorces) outside of the German legal system face various challenges and rely mainly on the support structures of Muslim and community-based organisations in order to access legal information, resources and services. Generally speaking, refugees in Germany as well as the German government face challenges in coping with the Muslim martial practices on the one hand, and with German legal systems and requirements on the other hand.



## MUSLIMS IN ITALY: DILEMMAS, CULTURAL IDENTITY, SOCIAL INTEGRATION, AND POLITICAL LOYALTY

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### Abstract

Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) established his State in Medina after Hijra.

My research was based on the best sources I found about the demography of the city at the time of Hijra, where population of Medina was of 15,000- 25,000 inhabitants. The number of Muslims at best was 4000, including the "hypocrites." Jews of Bani Qaniqa' counted 2800, while Jews of Bani Quraithah counted 3000, and the Jews of Bani Nadhir 2800. Other Jewish groups and a few Christians counted about 400, which means that Jews and Christians in total were about 9000 inhabitants. In other words, the proportion of Muslims was only between 16 per cent to 26 per cent of the total population yet the State of the Messenger of Allah (the greatest state in history) was founded.

The State of the Prophet did not invade lands and was not imposed by the sword, but rather through creating treaties with the Jews, in which it was agreed not to pay tribute, and pledged to respect freedom of religion and to jointly defend the city if subjected to external aggression.

I repeat, the State of Islam and Muslims was founded with a minority. Muslims were a minority but the State was founded on agreements between the people of one country and constitutions which preserved freedoms, established justice, and embraced the other. It is according to this that all civilized countries in the world are established now.

### Keywords

Islam, Imams, Italy, Religious Discourse.

### Introduction

Italy has many characteristics which make it different from its fellow states in the European family, as this country, which tends away from Europe towards the south coast of Mediterranean, is characterized by its climate and social warmth, which makes it more compatible with the Arab world than cold Europe. But it means more than that. It is a great museum that witnesses to the heritage of European continent, and it is the citadel of Catholic Christianity, as well as its cultural openness and cultural pluralism that Italy has known throughout its long history. If the modern Islamic presence in this Mediterranean country originated in the context of the Muslim migratory regiments of recent decades, then the Italian people themselves remain the most capable European people to understand the phenomenon of migration and the necessities of absorbing the immigrants in the new community, especially since millions of Italians have emigrated to the countries of Western Europe, especially Germany, France and Switzerland, as well as those

who went to the new world and settled in the United States of America looking for better opportunities in life. Therefore, there were no fundamental difficulties in waiting for hundreds of thousands of Muslim immigrants in Italy, as Italian society is more open and warmer than many other European societies, as the predominant Italian facies also seemed to accommodate migrants with darker skin and black hair.

In spite of all this, more than 1.8 million Muslims are dispersed over Italian lands of an area of 300,000 km and make up only 3 per cent of the population of fifty-eight million people. This percentage appears modest compared to many countries of the European Union, which is attributed to the preference of Muslim immigrants to other European countries ahead of Italy in the level of welfare, job opportunities and income levels. Also, the Italian colonial experience was limited in comparison with its other European counterparts. Concerning the nature of Italian society, "Italians are really peoples and not a single people, and they did not own a unified country. While the language unites them, the different dialects and characteristics reveal the differences between them." Italy can be divided into the north along the Alps, the south by the Mediterranean, while the heart of the country is represented by Rome and the Vatican, in particular, by the Muslims of Italy; from the pioneers of students to the flow of immigrants, we can map the growth features of institutional work among Italian Muslims in the twentieth century. In the 1970s, there were concrete activities among the students coming from the Arab world, which led to the formation of the Muslim Students Union at the end of the seventies, that took the city of Perugia as its headquarters, as the most attractive city for international students to study in Italy. Soon, branches of this union were established in the various Italian universities, and by the end of the eighties, this student formation included twenty branches in the whole country. By 1988, a law had been issued that made it possible for foreigners to obtain legal residence permits in Italy, and a large number of immigrants would flow into it, seeking work in the country. The numerical size of the Islamic minority was revived by this, especially with the large numbers of expatriates from the Arab Maghreb (Northwest countries of Africa). It is noted that the Union of Muslim Students in Italy was unable at that time to accommodate these groups and provide the necessary services to them, given that they were originally formed for the care of the student, which until the law was passed, was the backbone of the local Islamic existence. In line with the evolving variables, an end was put to the Muslim Students Union, through which a broad institutional entity is formed, which is the Union of Muslim Associations and Communities in Italy.

Under the broad institutional umbrella fall a major network of mosques and houses of prayers and specialized institutions that are spread out in the cities of Italy and its villages. The Union lobbied actively to achieve the recognition of Islam in Italy. Italy currently has almost a thousand and four hundred mosques in which the Islamic rituals and public prayers are held, although the number of notable mosques, which include comprehensive specifications of the Islamic worship houses, do not, in fact, exceed the number of fingers of one hand. The biggest issue of concern to the Union of Muslim Organizations and Communities in Italy since its inception has been to achieve

recognition of the Islamic religion by the state. The Union applied formally for this purpose in 1990 with a proposed draft for this recognition and its provisions. Despite the obstacles that hinder the recognition of Islamic religion in Italy, we hope that the matter will be achieved soon, although the conditions in recent years have started to change, especially with the emergence of extremist parties hostile to Islam, Muslims, and the other in general, laws and people in general preserve freedoms and religious pluralism.

The coexistence between the members of society and even between the human peoples is a noble goal pursued by all religions and heavenly messages and invoked by the rational and wise in the rest of the world. Supporting a culture of communication, dialogue, cooperation and integration, and working hard to remove barriers and causes of conflicts and divisions, is evident in the existing societies. It is of great importance in light of the global openness between peoples to spread the principles of positive co-existence and strengthening the culture of communication, dialogue, cooperation and complementarity, and working hard to remove barriers and the causes of conflicts and divisions. It is a great responsibility shared by politicians, intellectuals, media professionals, religious scholars, teachers, curriculum developers and others.

In this context, my modest contribution to this great message - by focusing on the aspect of Islamic discourse and its role in promoting the values of shared living - is this research presented to the "Islam in the West" conference. The responsibility of imams, preachers, and Islamic institutions in the West is multiplied by the size of the Islamic presence, which has become an integral part of European society. It is imperative to make this presence more positive and interactive, and more communicative and reassuring for European societies, especially in light of the Islamophobia campaigns. In this regard, we must recognize that Islamic discourse in general and in the West in particular, still requires a lot of revisions and systematic bold criticism, and the need for continuous updating and development in the means, contents, vocabulary, and interests, whether it is the discourse addressed to Muslims in the centres and mosques or the public discourse addressed to public opinion. There should be complete clarity and consistency in this discourse.

## First Topic: The Most Important Requirements for Islamic Discourse in the West

### Discourse Should Be Humanitarian

Today, our most urgent need is to rediscover the human dimension in Islam and review our heritage and our sciences to observe the place that man has occupied in terms of being a human. The messengers were sent for man's sake, as were the Holy Books. There is a rule of a discourse that almost portrays Islam as just a set of laws and provisions, that have almost lost its flexible and mobile humanitarian meaning in real life. The Koran's humanitarian meaning flexible and mobile in real life; the whole Koran is either a dialogue with a human being or a talking about humans; as Dr. Yusuf al-Qaradawi says, this is not just a surah or a specific surah, but the entire Koran.

Evidence of Islam's concern for man includes the fact that the word 'human' is mentioned in the Koran sixty-three times, and the word "people" was mentioned two hundred and forty times, in addition to other uses that go in the same direction as the Sons of Adam (Bani Adam) as follows: {Verily We have honoured the Sons of Adam} and {O Sons of Adam} and others. What is meant by the Sons of Adam (Ibn Adam) is the human being. Evidence of the Koran's concern with mankind is also that in the first (Ayahs) verses of the Koran that were revealed to the Messenger of Islam, Muhammad, Peace Be Upon Him, five verses of Surat Al-'Alaq, the word 'man' mentioned in two of them. Its contents are all concerned with human affairs. These Ayahs are 1- {Proclaim! (Or read!) in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created} 2- {Created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood} 3- { Proclaim! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful} 4- {He Who taught (the use of) the pen} 5- {Taught man that which he knew not}.

The Koran was concluded, as in the arrangement of its Suras, with a surah bearing a name of people (Surat al-Nas), and the speech of the Koran on the human or oriented to human, addresses the human being in terms of his humanity, not in terms of his form, nor in terms of his size, his social status, his colour, his money or other considerations. One of the blooming fruits of Islam's humanity is the principle of human brotherhood, a principle that Islam decided on the basis that all human beings are children of one man and one woman, included by this common single sonship, and the connecting kinship. Allah Almighty says in His Holy Koran: Chapter 4:

{O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed Allah is ever, over you, an Observer}.

The Prophet (PBUH) approves this brotherhood and confirms it every day. Imam Abu Dawood narrated and Imam Ahmad narrated in his Musnad (chain of narration) on the authority of Zaid Bin Al-Arqam said: "I heard the Prophet (PBUH), used to say after his prayer: I bear witness that all servants are brethren," as narrated by Aby Dawood and Ibn Al-Arqam. Also, "a bier passed before the Prophet (PBUH) and he stood up. He was told that he (the dead man) was a Jew. Upon this, he remarked: "Was he not a human being or did he not have a soul?" Therefore, Islam considers the assault on life as an assault on all humanity. Also, it considers the saving of any life as the revival of all people. This is clearly decided by Allah in the Holy Koran: Chapter 5: {if anyone slew a person — unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land — it would be as if he slew the whole people: and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people.}

Talking about the human dimension in Islam is tainted by a major insufficiency in Islamic discourse in Europe. Perhaps some of the preachers have reviewed these aspects only in speaking to non-Muslims, whether in the media or through the joint gatherings. It looks more like a showcase of the image of Islam and its marketing to people, while the most important thing is for this dimension to be present in the Islamic discourse among Muslims themselves, and to be directed for Muslims



before others to correct concepts and educate people on the approach of the Holy Koran. The need of Muslims for this is higher than that of others.

The Islamic discourse should focus, in its human dimension, on all, just humanitarian issues, as the issues of the vulnerable Muslims have stopped many preachers, and they have addressed it, demonstrated for it, were in solidarity with it, and they have called and recited Qunut (Invocation in Prayer) for it, in return for the neglect of many of the humanitarian issues that many human beings of non-Muslims live or suffer from. The Islamic institutions of Italy had a wonderful experience with the victims of the (L'Aquila) city earthquake in Italy in 2009, which resulted in the death of 308 people, as well as the destruction of many homes and displacement of hundreds, even thousands. Many institutions, led by the Union of Islamic Commissions and Islamic Relief organized relief and assistance operations for the affected people, along with Italian civil society organizations. These initiatives have left their impact on the popular and official level at the time.

### **Discourse Should Avoid Generalization and the Context Must Be taken into Account in Texts That May Be Understood to Be Against Coexistence**

The general plan and approach of the Ayahs (verses) of the Noble Koran and the Sunnah of the beloved chosen (PBUH), is directed towards cooperation in goodness with all people and calls for communication, dialogue, and good character. However, there are those who leave those texts together and adhere to texts contained in special contexts or special meanings and attempt to use these partial texts to destroy whole assets in the Islamic curriculum in its dealings with non-Muslims. Whenever there have been communication and dialogue initiatives with religious or civil society institutions, some of these texts have appeared in the face of the advocates of these initiatives that may have appeared in special contexts, or for meanings other than the meanings employed by them.

For example, Allah Almighty, in the Holy Koran said in Chapter 2: {Never will the Jews or the Christians be satisfied with thee unless thou follow their form of religion. Say: The Guidance of Allah, that is the (only) Guidance. Wert thou to follow their desires after the knowledge which hath reached thee, then wouldst thou find neither Protector nor helper against Allah}. In addition, Ahmad Bin Ali Al-Wahidi mentioned the Ayah 120 in Chapter 6 that reads, {Never will the Jews or the Christians be satisfied with thee}. Interpreters said: "They were asking the Prophet (PBUH) for the truce and assuring him that if He agrees for the truce and gives them time, they will follow and agree with Him. Therefore, Allah revealed this Ayah." Ibn Abbas mentioned regarding the Qibla (the direction to which Muslims pray) that the Jews of the city and the Christians of Najran were hoping that the Prophet (PBUH) would pray to their Qibla. When Allah changed the Qibla to Kaaba, it was difficult for them to do so, and despaired of Him (the prophet) agreeing to their religion, so Allah Almighty revealed this Ayah.

Ahmad bin Ali bin Hajar Al-Asqalani mentioned what Allah Almighty said in the Holy Koran: Chapter 2, Ayah 120: {Never

will the Jews or the Christians be satisfied with thee unless thou follow their form of religion}. I said that al- Jabari's narrated this that reads, "Ibn Abbas said they would like the Prophet to keep praying to Al- sakhra (the first qibla)." Muqatel said that the Jews were among the people of the city and the Christians of the people of Najran who called the Prophet to their religion and claimed that they were guided and then this Ayah was revealed. Also, Allah Almighty said in Chapter 58:

{Thou wilt not find any people who believe in Allah and the Last Day, loving those who resist Allah and His Messenger, even though they were their fathers or their sons, or their brothers, or their kindred. For such He has written Faith in their hearts, and strengthened them with a spirit from Himself. And He will admit them to Gardens beneath which Rivers flow, to dwell therein (forever). Allah will be well pleased with them, and they with Him. They are the Party of Allah. Truly it is the Party of Allah that will achieve Felicity}

This Ayah was revealed in the Battle of Badr and in a well-known warlike atmosphere, and it talks about people who have declared war on Allah and His Messenger and seek to eliminate religion and its people by any means, even though the term (affection) that is forbidden in the Ayah has mentioned itself in another place that is not forbidden. Allah Almighty said about marriage: {And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquillity with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who reflect}.

It is known that the wife of a Muslim can be from the people of the book, however, Allah Almighty has approved the affection that He forbade in the previous Ayah, which confirms the necessity of putting every text in its context and applying it to the situation that it means, and that is like many of the texts of the Koran and the Sunna that were revealed in the stages of war and military confrontation. However, there are those who make these texts as established rules only through which the relationship of Muslims and non-Muslims is determined. Some have blocked each door for any kind of rapprochement and dialogue with the concept of *al-wala' wal-bara* (loyalty and disavowal). This principle was exaggerated until it has become a hard sword in front of every promoter of peace and a beneficial messenger for people. Today, many of these meanings need to be revised in light of the pure texts of revelation, away from the influence of historical conflicts on the interpretations of some scholars of these texts, and what the most magnificent about Ayahs of the Koran is that they lucidly and eloquently illustrate the differences in dealing between warriors and fighters and moments of conflict and between natural situations which is not a war. In this regard, Allah Almighty said in the Holy Koran: Chapter: 60, Ayahs 8-9:

{Allâh does not forbid you to be kind and good and to deal justly with those who have not fought you because of your faith and have not turned you out of your homes. In fact, Allâh loves those who are equitable. Allâh only forbids you to make friends with those who have fought you because of your faith and who have turned you out of your homes, and have a betted your expulsion. Indeed, those who make friends with them are really the unjust}

## Discourse Should Not Be Trapped in History and the Past

Fleeing reality, its treatments, challenges, and hopes feature many of the topics of Islamic discourse, unfortunately, where many preachers deal with historical issues or talk about the markers of the Day of the Resurrection and what is the afterlife, etc. Despite the importance of these topics, they should be of a moderate proportion and not turn into a kind of entertainment or recreation for the recipient. Perhaps the state of weakness and humiliation that the nation suffers from has a major role in that, leading some to flee towards the past or towards anything unrealistic, so that when many preachers address the problems of Muslims and handle the situation of the nation. They often rush to recall history and its glory, and what the Islamic nation used to be in the past, or they are heading towards the conspiracy theory and shift the blame and burden onto the nation's opponents and its enemies, as if what is required is merely to search for excuses and justifications that mitigate responsibility for Muslims, or as if the timer had stopped at a certain historical stage, until the biography of the Prophet (PBUH), which spanned twenty-three years between his mission and death, and which was full of events, attitudes and experiences, had been reduced to seventeen or twenty-five days, which is the total of the invasions of the Prophet (PBUH). I do not mean by my words to underestimate the importance of these events and invasions and the necessity to study them and to take lessons and learn from them, but I mean the necessity to study the biography of the Prophet and his life as a whole and in all its aspects.

Unfortunately, many of the preachers in the West were unable to overcome this situation, as they are still under its influence, either because of the recent residency in Europe, or because of the influence of the lectures, orations, and lessons in the Islamic world. While Muslim preachers and speakers of Muslims and those responsible for Islamic advocacy work in the West must produce a special discourse that fits with their European reality, guided by the texts of revelation and contributes to interacting with reality positively and beneficially. It is not locked onto texts devoid of their intentions and spirit, nor trapped to the past, nor is it ideal to convey the wonders of the first predecessors of the Ummah (nation) in the area of worship and asceticism. This makes those experiences seem fanciful and elusive so that they can be remembered as a genre of stories with which the recipient lives in a spiritual and emotional ideal state of the moment of hearing, making it abstract from its reality, accompanied by the impossibility of benefiting from it or applying it in his environment.

## The Portraying of Corruption Should Not Be Overrated in Society, Nor Should Self-Flagellation

Some like to portray European societies as societies that are abstract from virtue and exaggerate their obscenities and vices, which subconsciously diverges a sense of the values of coexistence, and creates a negative view. It makes the relationship between Muslims and the rest of the community confined to necessity, based on mistrust, caution and accusation, and some exaggerate the presentation of Western societies as ideal societies. On the other hand, some get tough on their Muslim audiences, exaggerating the self-flagellation,

describing Muslims as backward and ignorant, lacking order and lacking respect for appointments, and this remains a continuous and frequent approach to discourse. It is more like a lash in which recipients are flogged. This approach in discourse ultimately leads to, in an indirect way, deepen the gap, reinforce a sense of value, behavioural, and civilizational alienation, as well as a sense of inferiority, and this inevitably has a negative role and impact on the societal coexistence.

## Avoid Being Overly Detailed in Islamic World Issues

There is no doubt that interest in Muslim issues is important, but to be in control of the preachers' speeches in Europe and their writings and activities reinforces the separation of the Muslim population in terms of a conscious sense from their reality and their relevance to this reality. Those who scrutinize social media pages and centre speeches find this remarkable, even the prayers in the Qunut (Invocation in Prayer), speeches and various occasions, which are moments of spiritual proximity, transport the Muslim, raise him up and take him down, around the Islamic world dealing with his wounds. But it is almost devoid of a prayer of good to the European countries in which the preachers reside. This also affected the association of new generations of children of Muslims residing in the West with Islamic discourse, imams and preachers.

## Promoting the Role of Ethics as Self-Imposed Duties

Ethics in Islam occupied a large area until it became a religion of tolerance and treatment. The Prophet (PBUH), summarized his mission on the task of fulfilling the high moral values; "I was sent to uphold and complement ethical values." The Muslim's moral responsibility may increase depending on the location and position he occupies and the influence of those morals on the environment surrounding him in a positive and negative way. In the case of Muslims in Europe, there is no doubt that their behaviour is largely attributed to Islam, whether those morals were positive or negative, especially in light of the smear campaigns targeting Islam and the Islamic presence in Europe. However, exaggeration by many preachers focusing on ethics, taking into account the European community, may have negative effects on the recipients of Muslims over time, because it makes the Muslim feel that he is living continuously under the control of the community. It makes him lose the sense of spontaneity in his behaviours and conduct and causes him to practice costly behaviours and ethics that are not unconvincing, awaiting the moment to be freed from this censorship. So the practice of morality is the result of external motives other than the self-motivation that Islam wants and builds in the souls of its companions. We want a discourse that directs the Muslim towards the right manners as a practice that brings him closer to Allah Almighty, wherever he is, regardless of who is watching and monitoring him.

## The Second Topic: The Discourse of Coexistence within the Approach of the Prophets through Koranic Stories

### The Importance of Koranic stories in Jurisprudence of Da'wah (the call to Islam) and Islamic Discourse

That great hospitality in the Holy Koran did not appear out of thin air or merely entertaining of news from previous nations, and that space occupied by Koranic stories was it was only a clear indication of its importance, as it approximately occupied a third of the Koran in terms of the number of Ayahs and in terms of meanings. Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah has been asked on the interpretation of the saying of the Prophet (PBUH) in Surat al-Ikhlās (it is equal to a third of the Koran), and he replied: "It has few letters." As for directing that, a group of scholars said: "According to the meanings of the Holy Koran it is divided three thirds: one third for monotheism, one for stories and the last third is for enjoining the right (Ma'ruf) and forbidding from evil deeds (Munkar)." That is the vast amount of stories full of attitudes, events, and dialogues, especially the prophets' dialogues with their people and their methods of calling to Islam requires ceasing and reflection, from more than one side and from more than one angle, then take the proper methodology, lessons and benefit from it in the experiences of different preachers through the ages. The most important of those aspects that have not been studied and researched properly in a manner commensurate with its size in the Holy Koran, aspects of the jurisprudence of the call to Islam, methods of dialogue and language of discourse.

The Ayahs of the provisions on the matter of commands and prohibitions have taken the most attention from scholars, interpreters and jurists, although interest in them is undoubtedly required, it should not be at the expense of others. The Holy Koran has the same value, amount, and importance as it is the words of Allah Almighty, and the method of the divine guidance to all of humanity in all its meanings, provisions and connotations. To clarify the matter further by comparing the Ayahs of the provisions with the ayahs that talk about the stories, we will find that the number of Ayahs ranges between one hundred and fifty and five hundred in most estimates. This is because the scholars differed among each other in determining the number of Ayahs of the Holy Koran into four famous sayings.

The First View: The number of Ayahs of provisions is five hundred, which is the view of Muqatel bin Suleiman, Imam al-Ghazali, Fakhr al-Din al-Razi and Ibn Qudamah al-Maqdisi. Ibn al-Jazzi said: "The provisions of the Holy Koran are the ones of commands, prohibitions, and jurisprudential issues. Some scholars said that the Ayahs of the provisions are five hundred Ayahs. Qutb al-Din Al-Rawandi of the Imamate said: "In the Holy Koran, there are nearly five hundred Ayahs that deal with the statement of main jurisprudential provisions and the sources of Islamic legislation from the practical point of view, which the scholars have called to be (the ayahs of provisions), talking about them, explaining them and interpreting them using the Holy Koran Jurisprudence."

The Second View: The number of Ayahs of provisions is one hundred and fifty. The Third View: It is two hundred Ayahs, which is the view of Abi Al-Tayyeb Al-Qanawji. He said: "it has been said: It is five hundred Ayahs, and this is not true. Rather, it is two hundred Ayahs or close to that." The Forth View: The Ayahs of the provisions are not limited to a certain number, but according to the knowledge of the jurist and the mujtahid (the one who devise shari'a provisions on new religious matters). This is the view of Ibn Daqiq Al-Eid quoted by Al-Zarkashi, Al-Shawkani, Al-Qarafi, and Al-Sanani.

In the interpretation of the Ayahs of provisions, many books and volumes throughout the Islamic ages have been written, beginning from the book called *The Interpretation of the Five Hundred Ayahs*, attributed to Muqatel bin Sulayman, to the book called *Provisions of the Koran by al-Razi* and *The Provisions of the Koran* by Abu Bakr ibn al-Arabi, and Al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Koran (the Compiler of the Koran's Provisions by al-Qurtubi, while on the other hand, the number of Ayahs that contain Koranic stories far exceeds the number of Ayahs of provisions. They are more than a thousand Ayahs, however, it has not received a tenth of the attention given to the Ayahs of provisions.

It is true that predecessors wrote about the previous nations' stories as historical events in the history books but addressing these stories by the Koran is considered the most important and worthwhile to study, research and draw lessons, including the provisions of the jurisprudence of the call to Islam, discourse and dialogue as the call to Islam is the important foundation that prophets came for. A number of successors have written about these stories and what is learned from these stories of the Koran, including our scholar Dr Abd al-Karim Zaidan, who wrote a book called *What is Learned from the Qur'an and Other Stories*, but they remain very limited and modest writings. The topic still needs to be further studied, researched and survey, and then there are important aspects which only get attention in references in some books here and there.

### The Speech of Prophets to Their Peoples

Those who scrutinize the prophets' dialogues with their peoples and the methods of their call to Islam will find many important meanings that preachers can benefit from, especially in Western countries, in developing their Islamic discourse. The most important of these meanings that we must give attention to are as follows:

### The First Requirement: Proximity and Affiliation Discourse

The Prophet was not a separate entity from his community when he was speaking to his people and calling them to Islam, or as if he was coming from another world, but rather to address them as one of them, and to affiliate to them calling the bond of affiliation to one tribe or one community (O people). For example, Allah Almighty said in the Holy Koran, Chapter 23:

And We sent Noah to his people and he said, `O my people! worship Allâh alone. You have no God other than He. Will you not then guard against evil and seek (His) protection?



Also Allah Almighty said in the Holy Koran, Chapter 7:

And to Thamûd (We sent) their brother Sâlih. He said, `O my people! worship Allâh, you have no other god than Him. A clear proof has already come to you from your Lord. Here is a she-camel (let loose for the cause) of Allâh, a sign for you. Let her alone to pasture in Allâh's land and do her no harm or a woeful punishment shall overtake you.

Another example is in Chapter 11:

And (We sent) to (the tribe of) 'Ad, their kinsman Hûd (as a Messenger). He said, `My people! worship Allâh (Alone). You have no one worthy of worship other than He. You are but fabricators (of lies by assigning partners with Him in His sovereignty).

Also Allah Almighty said in Chapter 7:

And to (the people of) Midian (We sent) their brother Shu'aib. He said, `O my people! worship Allâh for you have no one worthy of worship other than Him. A clear proof (to this effect) has already come to you from your Lord, so give full measure and (full) weight, and do not cheat people of their goods, nor create disorder in the land after the fair ordering therein. This indeed is best for you, if you are true believers.

Indeed, the Prophet of Allah Lot (PBUH), adding to the previous examples, and talks about the daughters of his village by saying "my daughters." In this regard, Allah Almighty said:

And (on hearing the news of the strangers' arrival) his people came (as if) driven on towards him and before this, they were given to evil practices. He said, `My people! these are my daughters. They can be purer (guarantee against any conspiracy on my part) for you and take Allâh as a shield (against His punishment) and do not disgrace me in the matter of my guests. Is there not among you any right-minded man?

What manifested through the contexts is the call of endearment and a reminder of the bond and relationship that requires the speaker's interest to those addressing them and requires for listening by the addressee to the speeches after the call. This appears when the chieftain addresses the members of his tribe when he wants to gather them to discuss a matter saying: (My tribe...) or the words of the ruler and kings: (my dear people), or the father's saying: (my children) and so on....

Then the Koran comes to determine this affiliation in many places by referring to the human fraternity between the Prophet and his people as in the previous Ayahs. For example, {And to Thamûd (We sent) their brother Sâlih.} {And to (the people of) Midian (We sent) their brother Shu'aib.}, and other Ayahs, despite the difference of religion and belief often between the Prophet and his people, and despite the lack of followers from their peoples, however, the difference in religion did not negate the relationship and ties of kinship, the homeland bond and did not come to eliminate these relationships.

The most wonderful of those calls and that speech are from the prophets, how kind and affectionate they were, and how much they carried fine words, and of the meanings of proximity, despite what they faced from lies and cynicism and harm in many cases. Today, what preachers need most is to draw on these experiences, trace their effects, and learn from their methods. Allah did not mention these methods to us and repeat them ten times except for us to learn from them. Today, what preachers need most is a speech that the recipients feel is close to them, relates to them, takes care of them and makes them feel a sense of belonging. These melt the barriers and bring the recipients closer and give the call to Islam and gives the preacher opportunities of proximity, reconciliation, and influence in society.

### The Second Requirement: The Prophet Speaks the Language of His People

Allah Almighty said: Chapter 14, Ayah 4:

And We sent no Messenger but (he spoke) in the language of his people so that he might make (all Our Messages) clear to them, yet Allâh leaves in error those who wish to remain in error and guides him who wishes to be guided (to the right path). And He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.

Ibn Katheer said: "This is from Allah's kindness of His creations: He sends down messengers to them from them speaking their languages to understand what they want and what they sent to them," as Imam Ahmad said: "Wakee' told us on the authority of Omar bin Dhar said: Mujahid said: On the authority of Abu Dhar said: The Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) said: "Allah Almighty did not send a prophet except in the language of his people." Thus, it turns out that the wisdom of Allah required that to send a messenger for every people or nation in their language in order to have the argument against them, and this is an indication of the importance of mastery of the language by preachers in Europe and the West since it is not enough to master the language. But rather, when Allah Almighty said: (We sent no Messenger but (he spoke) in the language of his people), implies in its semantics: language, mental, cultural background, etc.), as the preacher may have mastered the language of a people, but he was not able to know their mentality, understand their way of thinking and influence them, and attract them but not to be influenced or being attracted by them. Therefore, it is important here to point out the necessity of writing about Islam in the mindset of a European Muslim, and it is not enough to translate books written in other environments.

### The Third Requirement: To Show Sentimental and Emotional Aspects

Although the prophets' speeches and dialogues with their people were full of rational evidence, these speeches and dialogues did, in contrast, hold a great deal of feelings, sentiment, and emotions that the prophets of Allah to show with their own people, despite their denial, which prompts the Muslim and the preacher in particular to exhibit this behaviour, since he calls to Islam with the spirit of the mentor and compassionate who scared for his people.

Allah Almighty said in the Holy Koran, Chapter 46, Ayah 21: And make mention of the kinsman of `âd (- Hûd, a Messenger of God to them), when he warned his people (living) in wind-carved sand-dunes (in Hadzramût, south of Arabia) to whom Warners had already come before him and after him (saying), 'Worship none but Allâh. I, indeed, fear lest the agony of a dreadful day should befall you.'

Also, Allah said in the Holy Koran: Chapter 7: Ayah 59: {Surely, I fear lest there should befall you the punishment of an awful Day.}

There are many examples in the Holy Koran and the expression of fear over them is a sign of love resides in their hearts towards their people, and care for them, despite what they deny of their disbelief. Thus, where is the Islamic discourse today of this spirit that the prophets carried towards their people? Unfortunately, we find patterns of preachers who talk without having their away emotions in their speech, as if they are talking to opponents and enemies who have nothing but hatred and loathe... Allah being my saviour.

### **The Fourth Requirement: Interacting with their Reality, Facing its Scourges, and Working to Address It**

Those who scrutinize the approach of the prophets in calling their people to Islam as presented by the Holy Koran find that the discourse of the prophets was interacting with the issues of their societies. It is a discourse that lives the reality and deals with it, directs it, and recognizes its anomalies and correct them. It was not a rigid discourse that is isolated from the interactions of reality and its issues. For example, the prophet Lot (PBUH), corrects behaviour and morals in his nation, confronts the spread of obscenities, vice and social deviations.

Allah Almighty said in the Holy Koran: Chapter 29, Ayahs 28-29:

{And (We sent) Lot. Behold, he said to his people, 'You indulge in such an obscenity as is unprecedented and unsurpassed in the whole world.' {Is it not true you approach men (lustfully) and commit highway robbery? (Is it not true also) you commit indecent action in your gatherings?' But his people had no response to make, (yet) they said, 'Bring upon us the punishment of Allâh if you are of those who speak the truth.' The Prophet Saleh (PBUH) faces corruption and corrupters. In this regard, Allah Almighty said in the Holy Quran: Chapter 26, Ayahs 150-152:

Take Allâh as a shield and obey me\* And do not obey the biddings of those who exceed the bounds\* Who create disorder in the country and set not (things) in order (to promote security and peace).

Also, the Prophet Shu'aib (PBUH) conveys the command of Allah in property and selling practices, to give full measure and not to be those who give less (to use the scale of weight according to Islam provisions and Allah's commands), and to know the right of Allah in their property (Zakat: compulsory charity; and Sadaqa: voluntary charity). Allah Almighty said in the Holy Quran: Chapter 26, Ayahs 177-183:

(Recall) when Shu'aib (PBUH) said to them, 'Will you not guard against evil?\*' Indeed, I am to you a Messenger, faithful to (my) trust\* Therefore take Allâh for (your) shield and obey me\* And I ask no reward from you for it (- the services I render). Surely, my reward lies with the Lord of the worlds alone\* Give full measure and be not of those who give short\* And weigh with even and balanced scales\* And do not defraud people of their things. Do not go about acting corruptly, creating disorder in the country.

The prophet Moses (PBUH), cured his tyrannical people represented by Pharaoh, freed them from his enslavement and fought and struggled in the face of this unprecedented political, religious and social tyranny. Allah Almighty said in the Holy Quran Chapter 26, Ayahs 15-22:

(The Lord) said, 'That shall not be, go then both of you, with Our Messages and We are assuredly with you listening (to your prayers)\* Go to Pharaoh both of you and say, "We are bearers of a Message from the Lord of the worlds\* (Who commands you) to send the Children of Israel with us\* (So when Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh) he said (to Moses), {Did we not bring you up among us when you were a mere babe? And you stayed with us many years of your life\* And you have surely committed an act (of homicide), and you are of the ungrateful\* (Moses) said, 'Indeed I did it (then inadvertently and) as I was lost (for the love of my people and was in a perplexed state of mind)\* So I fled from you when I apprehended (injustice from) you; then (it came to pass that) my Lord granted me knowledge and (right) judgment and made me (one) of the Messengers\* And this insignificant favour (of your bringing me up) that you (so tauntingly) remind me of (can be no reasonable excuse) for you have enslaved (the whole community of) the Children of Israel (for no fault of theirs).

Although the prophet Joseph (PBUH), was unjustly imprisoned and stayed for a few years in the prison, but when he felt — thanks to what Allah taught him to interpret and express visions (dreams) — the warning of a major economic crisis that affects all of the Egyptian community at that time, he did not ignore this crisis without providing assistance to the state that oppressed and imprisoned him, and society that failed him. Our Prophet Joseph (PBUH) did not ignore this issue, preoccupied with his call to Islam, indifferent to anything but the issues, as many of the preachers do not do so today, but he cared for the concerns of his people and presented his famous 'Economic Rescue Plan' for the next fifteen years. When he had the opportunity to choose one of the files of governance and management in the country of Egypt, he took the lead and deservedly managed the most important and difficult file that represents what our scholars call due to time, it is the economy file, and he had what he wanted and Allah Almighty destined to his plan the success. Today, Islamic discourse in Europe is concerned with directing and activating the capacities of Muslims residing in these countries to play their role in developing and servicing societies and placing their distinct emphasis in them as a religious and national moral imperative.



### The Fifth Requirement: The Miracles of the Prophets Fit with the Finest Art of Their Time (the Means of the Call to Islam)

The Divine wisdom is that every prophet is concerned with a miracle similar to the well-known workmanship in his time, and which scholars often do frequently of his time because that is faster to believe and to have the argument against them, so it was wise for Moses (PBUH) that Allah Almighty granted him the miracle of magic wand and white hand when magic prevailed in his time and many witchcrafts. Sorcerers were the quickest people to believe and were submissive to this proof when they saw the wand turned to a snake, and grabbed what they were falsifying, and then returned to its first state. They knew that this was outside the bounds of magic and believed that it was a divine miracle, and they declared their faith in the Pharaoh's council and did not care for Pharaoh's wrath and warning.

Greek medicine was popular in the era of Christ (PBUH), and the doctors came up in his time with the wonder of wonders. Medicine had a brilliant visibility in the Levant because it was a Greek colony. At the time that Allah Almighty sent his prophet, Christ, the wisdom wanted to make his proof something similar to medicine. Thus, one of his miracles is to bring forth the dead, and to heal the blind and the leper, so that the people of his time would know that this is something that goes out of the power of mankind and it is beyond nature. As for the Arabs, they excelled in rhetoric, excelled in eloquence, and reached a climax of the arts of literature, until they held forums and established markets to compete in poetry and rhetoric. The man when was able to speak well is his craft. They wrote best seven hangings of poems of old poetry with gold water on Al-Qubati (tapestry) and then were hung on the Kaaba, then it was said that this the gilded tapestry of so and so and it is the finest of his poetry. Arab men and their women cared about literature, and Al-Nabigha Al-Dhebiani was the judge among the poets. He comes to Okaz forums in the season of poetry competitions, and a red leather tent was pitched for him. Then, the poets came to him, and present their poems to him to judge among them. Therefore, the divine wisdom required that the Prophet of Islam is granted the miracle of the oration and the eloquence of the Koran. Thus, every Arab knew that this was from Allah's words and that the rhetoric the prophet came with was out of the capabilities of mankind's rhetoric, and every Arab without stubbornness admitted that.



### BETWEEN EXPECTATIONS AND REALITIES: THE EXPERIENCES OF A YOUNG ARAB-MUSLIM IN FRANCE

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#### Abstract

This study aimed to shed light on the experiences of a young, Jordanian Arab Muslim man who lived in his country for twenty years and then went to France for eight years; a European country that is completely different from his country in customs, traditions, culture, and outlook. This experience constituted a chance for this young man to examine his religious, cultural, and human preconceptions about the 'other.' He also examined his political and ideological ideas about 'political Islam' and its terms of reference, understandings and effects, and towards 'secularism' as a social and humanitarian political concept prevalent in Europe in general and France in particular.

The article explained the selection process for France as a destination for studying, and confronted what human studies call 'cultural shock,' and compared 'social reality' with 'acquired ideas' in the basic reference and familial society. It also compared the dimensions of religious outlooks with secularism. The study identified the importance of personal experiences for encountering the 'other' in contexts such as Europe, America, China, Russia, India, and Africa. It stressed the benefits of creating independent ideas and objective and balanced behaviour, with the need to form personal experiences in order to be a reference among other references, to refer to in curricula, literary novels, and academic articles. This contributes to eliminating 'sacred ignorance' towards the other, and creates a foundation for social, human, and political relations between the peoples of the world based on respect, human solidarity, and the march towards a world of shared human values in the future.

#### Keywords

Islam, France, Jordan, Personal Experiences, Oneself and the Other, Preconceptions, Political Islam, Secularism.

#### Introduction

To live in a tribal, religiously and politically conservative society like Jordan for more than twenty years, then predestination leads you to continue studying in a country like France with its wide freedoms, deep rationality, multiple cultures, and humane vision derived from the French Revolution, this means that you have touched — or, you have been acquainted — in one way or another with the relationship of 'ego' with the 'Other'; with its coexistence, competition and conflict. Therefore, I may not turn away from the truth if I say that the dream of living in the 'Other' Western world is a dream shared by most of the youth of the Arab world and perhaps the Islamic world, despite all positive or negative forms of 'Early Feeding' towards this world, whether religiously, culturally, or politically. Hence, the experience of travelling to 'the Other's Space' and its world and living in it,

whether American or European, including French space, is considered one of the most important places and spaces that a person can examine his thoughts, visions, and personal facts on the real world, especially if the other's space is totally different in terms of culture, religion, economic power, technological progress, the culture of freedom and democracy, and so on.

Through my personal experience, which spanned more than seven years, I was able to form a 'perception' about myself, and the visions, pictures and attitudes it possesses towards the other 'French' space with whom I lived in all moments of daily life of the workplace, study, and worship, and others. In this article, I will try to frame my personal experiences in a more holistic context by describing and analysing the social, political, and religious framework that accompanied me during these years in order to understand how an Arab or Muslim youth 'integrates' — or does not 'integrate' — into a new society, by answering questions such as: *Why did you chose a country such as a as France? Did you experience a cultural shock? How has my experience in the French city of Bordeaux affected my political awareness? What is the sense of French racism? What is the extent of the presence of 'political Islam' in French society and state? Could 'secularism' be a positive opportunity for Muslims?*

### First: Why France?

As is typical of Jordanian students, I was not thinking or even expecting to go to France at all. My thoughts were that I would go only to either the United States of America where the majority of Jordanians go or to go to Britain, which was a second common option. As for France, it absolutely was not on my mind! So, what happened when I changed my mind and went to France? By good fortune, in 1988, when I was about to finish my studies in Journalism and Media as a senior student at Yarmouk University in the city of Irbid, which is located 90 km north of the Jordanian capital, I met with some high school friends who to spread out to study in different universities and academic disciplines. While we were discussing general political issues, one of my friends described the diaries of a mutual friend who studies in France, Assem Al-Omari. He recounted how he studied the French language in the morning, then he went to the beaches of Cannes, Nice, and Monaco to read the French newspapers in preparation for entering into a master's program at the Faculty of Law. In the evenings, he went to the cinema to see the last cinematic works of Brigitte Bardot, Jean-Paul Belmondo, Gerard Depardieu, Rumi Schneider, and others! This is how it was described, and this gave me a bright image of student life in France. Therefore, I began translating certificates, obtained a placement test from Dijon University in eastern France, and submitted the file to the French embassy in Amman. Indeed, after a few days, I got my visa faster than I expected! My journey in France began not just with language, but also with my 'civilization path' in a foreign country, with everything seeming strange to me: customs, traditions, behaviour, concepts, religion, culture, everything!

### Second: Cultural Shock

I do not think that I was culturally shocked in the absolute meaning of this word, as happened to the famous Egyptian writer and intellectual reformer Rifa'a Al-Tahtawi, who visited

France in 1826 and stayed there for 5 years until 1831, and wrote a book entitled *Takhlis al-Ibriz fi Talkhis Bariz* in 1834. He described all areas of French political, social, religious and economic life in comparison with his country, Egypt, thereby inaugurating the process of searching for intellectual and cultural modernity in his country and the Arab world. He combined his Islamism and patriotism, and contributed to the translation movement, and focused on education for girls; this made him 'Conveyor of Enlightenment.'<sup>19</sup>

I can also claim that I was not shocked like Imam Muhammad Abdo, Grand Mufti of Egypt, who visited France in the 19th century and famously said: "I found in France Muslims without Islam and found in my country Islam without Muslims". He revealed the difference between France as characterized by justice, human rights and freedom, and between his country, a struggling state of economic backwardness, political tyranny, and class struggle.<sup>20</sup> The reason I did not get experience the same cultural or civilizational shock that these two intellectuals experienced when I arrived in Paris is due to two factors. The first is that through the French films and series that were broadcasted on Channel Two on Jordanian TV or on Israeli TV (sometimes), I could feel the pleasure watching these bold films with its ideas, smart at technical processing, and enjoyable in its interesting style based on adventure and excitement without vulgarity! The second is that I had an early experience going to Italy after high school (Tawjihi) in 1984; i.e. at the age of 18 years to study architecture where I lived for several months in Perugia, 170 km north of Rome, to learn the Italian language. However, I did not stay there for personal reasons which led me to return to Jordan directly and to get enrolled in the press and media department at Yarmouk University.

Thus, based on my self-acquired perceptions through the media, especially television and cinema, in addition to my experience travelling to Italy for several months, I did not fall into the 'trap' of the cultural and civilizational shock as someone who had no idea of the country he was travelling to, or of the people that he would deal with for the first time. However, I cannot say that I am absolutely immune against cultural shock because cultural shock is not a single experience but rather a group of different political, social, religious and cultural experiences. I survived cultural shock of a political dimension but I have fallen into the pitfalls of the social and religious cultural shock! Indeed, as soon as I arrived in Orly Airport in Paris in the summer of 1988, the owner of Vivid Pictures greeted me, on behalf of France, and my childhood friend and school mate, Asim Al-Omari. I was taken to his residence in the 'French International University City,' which was built in 1925. I sat down to contemplate this theoretically closed city, which is actually open culturally, and academically, as it includes the so-called International Houses: the Lebanese, Indian, and Brazilian houses, and others, which are buildings in which students live close to 6000 thousand students, from these countries or some other countries if there is room, at a reasonable price. In this university city, I learned the first lesson

<sup>19</sup> Solé, R., *Ils ont fait l'Égypte moderne*, Paris, Éditions Perrin, 2017, pp. 61-75.

<sup>20</sup> El-Desouky, A., 'Islam without Muslims and Muslims without Islam,' 23 August 2012, *Al-Yaum Al-Sabe3 Newspaper*, Cairo. <https://www.youm7.com/story/2012/8/23/%D8%A5%D8%B3%D9%84%D>



in pluralism and human diversity through this beautiful and broad academic space as it seemed to be a positive vision of humanity to the world in which we live.

Since my friend Asim realized that I was eager to see the capital of light and beauty, he hosted me in Paris for three days. We attended the birthday party of his Japanese colleague in a very small room not 200 meters away from the Eiffel Tower in the presence of ten people of nine different nationalities; all of them together and joyful and were spontaneous, enjoying the moment and the opportunities available to them! Then I set out to see the most important tourist places in Paris; the Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triomphe, the Latin Quarter and the Sorbonne, among others. Sometimes we stayed up late until five o'clock in the morning in the cafes and restaurants. We asked ourselves about a French man passing by in the street. *Is he returning from a party or is he going to work in the cold atmosphere of Paris?* This was a second new lesson I learned in seeing the social contradictions in Paris, the capital of light and beauty; the capital of workers, with those who live to have fun, and those who work in search of a living to eat and live in dignity and pride.

### Third: Bordeaux and Deep Political Awareness

After enjoying Paris, the capital of beauty, art and creativity, or as it was called by the Dean of Arab Literature, Taha Hussein: "The City of Jinn and Angels,"<sup>21</sup> I headed to the city of Bordeaux in southwest France, which is about 590 km from the capital, Paris. There, a friend of my friend in Paris greeted me, KH, hosted me for several days, pending finding suitable accommodation for me. My friend in Bordeaux was following an organized Islamic current, the Muslim Brotherhood, and therefore he did not hesitate to invite me to pray at the Al-Huda Mosque in the middle of old Bordeaux near the old Saint Michael Cathedral, and introduced me to many brothers from the Arab East: from Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, and Iraq, as well as from the Arab Maghreb (Northwest Africa): Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria.

Everyone showed interest in helping me to find housing, and some even invited me to live with them, but I did not agree because I wanted my own housing. The situation remained like this for several days as I accompanied these men in prayer and met more Muslim brothers. Soon after some time passed, I could not keep up with my friend by going to the mosque constantly, as I was not originally 'religious' the way he expected or wanted me to be, and my desire was to get to know the city of Bordeaux, its streets, and its own people. Hence, I felt that I was no longer a welcomed person who deserved help and service; this disturbed me a little, but it made me happier because this aggressive behaviour towards me reflected my friend's disappointment — and perhaps also the disappointment of others at the mosque — and attempt to put me, in the Religious Party 'cage,' and add me as a new Muslim 'Brother of Faith'!

Yes, Arab students — including myself — were vulnerable to be caught up in the currents claiming Islam by pretending to

provide services such as housing, work, and money under the slogan 'Compassion among Muslims,' which ultimately drives many new or needy students to adopt their views and ideologies on man, society, state, and God. Thus, my political knowledge and awareness of the tools of attraction for political Islam based on exploiting the conditions of people have increased, especially concerning young people and their immediate living needs, and then starting a later stage in the process of brainwashing and political conditioning organized in order for this young man or that young woman to become a member of their group and convinced and ready to defend the Islamic religion with courage!

In 1992, I encountered an incident which confirmed the impact of these Islamic jihadist currents on the Arab and French youth generation alike, directing them in a wrong and violent way. I had a Palestinian friend named A.S. from Jerusalem who was sent by some friends to help him to enrol at Bordeaux University after I had stayed there. We got to know each other a little and we shared some activities, such as going to the markets, libraries, playing football, etc. One day, he told me that he was summoned by the French Intelligence for review, so I told him to not be afraid; "Their intelligence is not like the intelligence of the Arabs; this is France." The days passed when he came to my apartment one day with a blond French friend, so I was happy internally that this the Palestinian youth began to adapt to the French atmosphere and to meet French friends. I started preparing coffee for them. Suddenly, this Frenchman pulled out a pistol out of his pocket and put it on my head, saying, "Listen ... leave my brother alone or I will kill you!" I explained to him that I am not against him and that he is a friend of mine! He replied, "My brother knows that you are communicating with the French intelligence and complaining about him ... so I am warning you." Later, I knew that this blond Frenchman had joined the Muslim Brotherhood group, and he was defending his weak companions from them against me!

Hence, I say that my previous personal experience intersects with what French writer Viamta Wiener mentioned in her book entitled *The Hidden Face of the Muslim Brotherhood in France*<sup>22</sup> in 2005 on the large size of the Muslim Brotherhood in French society, and how it has gained legal facilities from a number of French government officials in various eras, without them knowing how serious it is, and without them realising the truth of its commitment.

### Fourth: French Racism

I was very surprised when I heard from some Arabs, especially from friends from the Maghreb, that there was French racism towards Arabs and Muslims. I did not experience this phenomenon. How could I accept that idea when I saw that Arabs from Morocco or the Arab Mashreq with French nationality, and who conducted their business in stores in their names or under Arab names, and whose children studied at the university like the rest of the French students? Did I not see what they saw? Did the nature of the relations I formed with a class of 'enlightened' French students prevent me from seeing

<sup>21</sup> Zuhair, A., 'Paris, Taha & Al-Tahtawi, Paris, Shaaban and Gharafi,' *Rai Al-Youm Newspaper*, August 19, 2014, London. See the link: <https://www.raialyoum.com/index.php>

<sup>22</sup> Venner, F., *OPA sur l'islam de France: les ambitions de l'UOIF*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 2005.

what my Moroccan brothers saw in their real and practical dealings with the French? Is it because as a foreigner, I did not have the experiences of a citizen who wants to obtain his deep and permanent rights, contrary to my needs as a simple foreign student? All are legitimate questions and realistic and logical, but truly speaking, during more than seven years, I did not feel any aggressive behaviour or racism from the French. Was it because I did not compete with them for work? Or was my positive attitude due to the bright images of France and Europe, their progress, modernity, and political development, that I had been building in my mind through my readings and the media? I do not know, but a certainty thing was that I was treated equally alongside French students at the University of Bordeaux first and then at the University of Paris II, which was considered a stronghold of the far right-wing at the end of the eighties and mid-nineties of the last century. University fees, health insurance, travel cards in buses, metro and trains, and (APL) housing support were the same for students, whether French or foreign.

Thus, the comparison is important between the higher educational system that I experienced in France (I think that all of Europe has the same privileges with the exception of Britain, especially after the coming of Madame Thatcher to power in 1979 and pursuing an extremely liberal policy) and the university educational system in my country or in the Arab world. The French system is very advanced, developed, and positive, and represented an important lesson for me in the equality of students, regardless of gender, religion, colours, or languages. Therefore, I would say, there may be some form of implicit or hidden racism among some French people, especially towards Arabs and Muslims, but according to my experiences, this behaviour – if it happens – will be condemned and legally punished. The issue of racism is related to the nature of the state, its role and values that based on democracy, the state of institutions and law, justice and equality, and there is no complacency in this regard on the part of the French state because any complacency in implementing the law will lead to dangerous repercussions on the state itself and on its political, legal, and moral balance in the medium- and long-term.

Perhaps one of the reasons for the narrow mindedness of some French people is the poor economic and social conditions that France is experiencing these days. There is an approximately 10 per cent unemployment rate, and there is a public debt that reached more than 99 per cent of the total production of the French state in 2018, as compared to 55.8 per cent in 1995. All of this creates a state of tension which can cause the French to hate and everything that is foreign, especially Arabs and Muslims, and which drives some French people to vote for the far right-wing. This is what is happening, unfortunately, not only in France but also in the majority of European countries in general.

### **Fifth: Political Islam and the Opportunity of Secularism**

At the beginning of my life in France, I was surprised at the extent to which a 'secular' country like France tolerated the Islamic currents on its territories and even offered its members all the facilities in housing, work, meetings, and obtaining

citizenship, which is completely opposite to what is granted to them in their Middle Eastern or North African countries. Was the goal of the French state to give a civilized lesson to these Islamists on how to deal with political reality if they ever came to power one day? Or was the goal to use these Islamists as a policy lobbying in the moment of need to achieve political goals related to security and France's supreme national interests vis-a-vis their home countries? I cannot be certain here, even if I notice that mosques were constantly guarded and respected by French security during Friday prayers (which gather the largest number of believers) or in activities related to Ramadan or other occasions.

On the other hand, I was surprised by the preacher of a mosque who fled his country for political and economic reasons and found refuge in France ending his Friday sermon saying: "Oh God, destroy the Jews and Christians, make their women widows, make their children orphans, and make them a spoil for Muslims", or perhaps "he prayed that the Disbelievers die," or "Muslims are required to be careful, not to commit transgressions in the land of vice and debauchery" and things like that! What made me more confused was that I was completely certain that the competent French intelligence and services were fully aware of what this imam and that mosque said, through the high-tech methods they possess! Perhaps for this reason – and certainly others – Mr Nicolas Sarkozy, in his capacity as President of the Republic, later demanded the establishment of so-called 'French Islam'<sup>23</sup> in order to adapt and integrate with the values of secularism sponsored by the French Republic of 'freedom, brotherhood, and equality,' which represents the motto of the French state in its various institutions. I have been constantly wondering about the nature of the relationship between the secular French state and the Arab and Islamic communities in France. If France were not a secular country, open to the other – regardless of its long colonial history and its desire to achieve its existing political, economic and cultural interests today – what would be the fate of Arabs and Muslims in France?

I would imagine that if France were 'religious state' in the eastern perspective of religion, that is, creating a space of formal religious practices in dress, movement, eating and drinking, it would not allow family reunification the Arabs and Muslims, and would not have set large budgets to integrate them. Even so, there is a long way to go and the potentialities observed are relatively modest by what is required. The establishment of the French Council of Islamic Doctrine (CFCM)<sup>24</sup> under Nicolas Sarkozy as the Minister of the Interior in 2003 is notable. It meant that in present-day France, which is based on the secular law of 1905, there is a political will to frame Muslims in institutional work that operates inside the republic and not outside it, and that it represents Muslims before the state and its institution. When I also saw how the French Interior ministers received the representatives of the Arab and Muslim communities, I recognised the intelligence of the French authorities in finding a direct contact with their Arab and Muslim citizens to address their living and existential issues.

<sup>23</sup> Nicolas Sarkozy pour un islam (de France)", L'OBS, Paris, 16 Octobre 2002.

<sup>24</sup> Zeghal, M., "La constitution du Conseil Français du Culte Musulman : reconnaissance politique d'un Islam français, ?" *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, 129, 2005, pp. 97-113.



Unfortunately, I was always frustrated by some Arabs and Muslims who did not open their minds to see what surrounds them 'outside the box.' I saw Arabs carrying their personal, tribal, and religious experiences and identity problems in exile, and even more than that, they unfortunately transmitted their internal problems and struggles amongst themselves from their Arab countries to France. For example, I found it insane when Algerians and Moroccans struggled amongst each other, in the process of choosing the muezzin (the person who calls for prayer at the mosque) or choosing the imam from their countries, fiercely and in the name of God! Perhaps the conflict over the Paris Mosque, which was founded in 1924 by Moroccans and Algerians, takes a political direction influenced by the policies coming from the capitals of their countries, which reflects, necessarily, the religious and social presence of Arab and Muslim communities on the one hand, and the French religious climate directly.

## Conclusion

Now, nearly a quarter of a century after I returned from France to Jordan, I still feel that my academic, human and cultural experiences in France are still reverberating in my mind, my memory, and my soul. I have become dependent on these experiences in my personal reflections, my intellectual visions, and my political analyses, and they give extra strength to my personality, my pen, and my humanity. I feel that they make me different from my other colleagues, and I am proud of that! If there are lessons learned from my experience, I can summarize it through my practical impression of 'mutual views' between Arabs and the West, or 'Ego' and the 'Other,' which necessarily reflect on the 'collective conscience' of individuals (including myself):

1. Certainly, there are points of difference and divergence of opinions between our Arab and Western worlds, including France, on real issues such as Palestine. Personally, I have always been approaching this problem as an Arab and Muslim, and I have a position on the displacement of the Palestinian Arab people throughout the world. Replacing it with the Jewish people who are also coming from different parts of the world to achieve the idea of 'a land without a people for a people without a land' is Zionism. In France, we encountered a 'fatal choice' in the process of support and political bias. The French currents and left parties, generally, support the rights of Arabs and Muslims in France and defend them, their issues, and their daily needs. However, at the same time, France was closer to Israel than the Arabs and adopted Israeli stances, as usual. On the other hand, while I supported the 'traditional right party' in its French policy towards the Arab world in Syria, Iraq, Egypt, and others, I found that this same 'right' adopted tough and harsh internal policies towards Arabs and their presence, and this division was a case of real suffering for the Arabs who live in the West in general and France in particular.<sup>25</sup>
2. According to my experience between the Arab-European world, there is one and only way to get rid of human illusion towards the Other, especially in France's relationship in particular, and Europe in general, with the Arab world. This is communication and outreach. Wherever there are forms

of collective and individual communication, especially academic, there will be solutions to outstanding problems and making sincere and realistic images between parties. Communication is an important means of understanding the Other, his feelings, culture, emotions, and interests. This is the beginning of spreading true peace among peoples after the establishment of human experiences between man and man.

3. If it is necessary to refer to a lesson that I have learned from France, then there is no doubt that the values of tolerance and understanding with everyone on all issues without exception through dialogue, logic, and reason are among the most important values that have been constantly implanted in my thinking and behaviour. This does not mean that I have learned nothing from my family and country. I have learned from my family to read the Koran with love and to see people from the perspective of one good for all, and that we and many neighbours, friends, and colleagues from neighbours have Christians and partners in the homeland, where we were not asking questions about our beliefs because we learned, in nature, we are Arabs, Jordanians, and citizens. This is how we were in the Arab world, including Jordan, until the poisons of extremism and Wahhabi and Salafi jihadist terrorism entered into our worlds through their 'holy wars' in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya, and so on, and they are still fighting and bringing death, destruction, and displacement.
4. From my personal experiences in France for more than seven years, I did not feel like a foreigner at any point in my academic, social, or humanitarian life, whether it was on the street, in metro stations and on the trains, at the university, with my teachers, or in the churches where I enjoyed architecture, music, colours and human space towards the sky. This is a point recorded for the French civilization based on reason, humanity and secularism. Its ideas are not far from what Rifa't Al-Tahtawi expressed in the 19th century from the people of Paris, saying: "Among their qualities is the love of strangers and the tendency to socialize with them."

In one word, I can express my position towards France, which lost one of its most important political and cultural icons represented by former President Jacques Chirac almost a month ago, by saying that France did not lose Jacques Chirac alone, but rather the whole world, including the Arabs who knew him — including me — when he was defending the dignity of citizens in France, regardless of their religion, colour, and ethnicity. May God have mercy on this man, who really represents the second part of 'Ego' to the 'Other' and vice versa! The question remains as follows: Are personal and private experiences sufficient to build a relationship between peoples and nations on the basis of equality, respect and solidarity? Perhaps, but the certain thing is that the human will, especially political will, is capable of making miracles in this world, which needs a lot of calm and stability after storms, wars, and conflicts!

<sup>25</sup> Al-Shalabi, J. "Civilized lessons for an Arab youth in France" (Europe Day File). *Ad-Dustour Newspaper*- Jordan, May 5, 2005.

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## THE COMPATIBILITY OF THE ISLAMIC VALUE SYSTEM WITH WESTERN LIBERAL-DEMOCRATIC VALUES

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### Abstract

The issue of the presence and/or influence of religion in the political sphere have been the subject of a longstanding historical debate. The dilemma has become exacerbated in the last decades as western societies have rapidly shifted from almost homogeneous to totally heterogeneous. The absorption, integration or assimilation of a new population with different historical, cultural and religious background have opened the door to new fields of research and created new societal and political challenges. The growing number of Muslims and consequently the impact of Islam in the west raised a number of interrogations for decision-makers accustomed to secular liberal-democratic values. The purpose of this paper is therefore to explore the compatibility of the Islamic system of values with Western liberal-democratic values.

### Keywords

Value system, Islamic Values, Secular Values, Liberal Values, Democratic Values, Western Values.

### Introduction

The issue of the presence and/or influence of religion in the political sphere has been the subject of a longstanding historical debate. The dilemma has become exacerbated in the last decades as Western societies have rapidly shifted from almost homogeneous to totally heterogeneous. The absorption, integration or assimilation of a new population with different historical, cultural and religious background has opened doors to new fields of research and created new societal and political challenges. The growing number of Muslims and consequently the impact of Islam in the West raises a number of interrogations for decision-makers accustomed to secular liberal-democratic values.

A *modus vivendi* always has to be reached in order to maintain stability, predictability and public order. This objective is made harder when a society has to find a consensus between different, opposing and sometimes conflicting values. But what might seem evident at a first glance might be a bit more complex after closer observation. The purpose of this paper is to explore the compatibility of the Islamic value system with the Western liberal-democratic value system. In order to have a clear vision of the situation, a number of questions should be properly addressed. In the battle between rationality<sup>26</sup> and mysticism, reason always prevails.

<sup>26</sup> Weber, Max, and Max Rheinstein. 1954. *Max Weber On Law In Economy And Society*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.





In order to rationally approach the question, we have to wonder whether there is one Islam in the East in the first place. And, if so, whether it is compatible with the Western system of values. Then we have to wonder whether the West shares exactly the same values and whether they are compatible with the Islamic ones. The issue becomes even more complex when we discover that we have neither a monolithic Islam nor a monolithic West. The issue might be one of a system that successfully separated the overwhelming religious influence on social, economic, and political considerations and another that integrates the religious fact in every sphere of life. Do we have to draw a line between what is private and what is public? Can this line be drawn in all circumstances? Is there a dichotomy between the two of them? Does it actually really matter? The perception of Islam by the West is of utmost importance in the process of evaluating the compatibility of two systems of values.

### A Mixed Perception of Islam by the West

In an article from Sunday, July 17, 2016, in the Independent, Atif Rashid<sup>27</sup> operated a rather interesting retrospective study of Islamic values concluding that "Islam isn't just compatible with Western values; it started to espouse and establish them long before western democracies. Islamic and Western values are one and the same, and they have been for longer than you could possibly imagine." He holds that "Islam from its very outset advocated for complete freedom, justice and democratic values." Rashid then goes further by emphasizing the crossroads where the essential values of the West are met by Islamic values:

to illustrate Islam's support for a democratic government, verse 4:59 of the Holy Qur'an clearly outlines the basic and main requirements for democracy. The people must take their vote as a responsibility and thus choose the most appropriate and suitable person to lead them. The Qu'ran then in turn exhorts those in authority to exercise justice. Further, it promotes dialogue and consultation to gauge public opinion and decide matters fairly as illustrated in 42:39. Muslims in the early era of Islam had this sense of responsibility. So when Islam itself supports a democratic form of governance and also requires Muslims to "obey those in authority among them" (4:60), any Muslim speaking against the West while living with its freedoms is acting deliberately against the recommendations of their religion. Those who really feel Islam isn't compatible with Western values ought to educate themselves on Islam's true teachings, even if some so-called Muslims won't. If we take justice to be one of the Western values to be proud of, those unaware of Islamic teachings would be surprised to hear how the Qur'an strongly exhorts to absolute justice on more than one occasion (5:9, 6:153, 7:30), saying, "Allah loves the just" (49:10).

The Koran is so clear on the importance of fair-mindedness that Harvard University declared this verse as one of the greatest expressions of justice in literature. But what about freedom? Here we find similar values. Those asserting that Islam restricts freedom are grossly mistaken, or simply deceived by the

oppressive political regimes in the Middle East. It's important not to confuse the religion of Islam with an oppressive political and dictatorial rule. How, when the Prophet of Islam said it was forbidden to compel anyone in matters of faith, can his followers then have the authority to impose their beliefs on others? Time and again Islam's teachings uphold religious and personal freedoms. If dictators in the Middle East or radical Muslim preachers oppose the Prophet Mohammed in their words and actions, then they're solely to blame. It doesn't mean Islam is incompatible with freedom or human rights. It means that these hate preachers and unjust rulers who claim to be Muslims are at odds with not only Western values, but also the true requirements of their faith.

On a more academic tone, Harvard professor and Islam expert Jocelyne Cesari<sup>28</sup> analyzes the mechanisms of the West's fear of Islam. She then tries to counter the dominant narrative that tends to present Islam as an alien religion. In her study, she reveals that "headscarves, mosques, and minarets are increasingly seen as a rejection of western democratic values, or even worse, as a direct threat to the West." A number of legal and administrative procedures have attempted to restrict and control Islamic signs in a way that fits political cultures. In April 2011, for instance, the French government enforced the ban on wearing the niqab or burqa, which was previously largely approved in 2010 by the French Parliament. Belgium and The Netherlands followed the French path in 2011 and 2012. The most recent development concerns circumcision. Indeed, In June 2012, a judge in Cologne, Germany, outlawed circumcision on the grounds that it causes "illegal bodily harm."

The Muslim side is not spared however. Salafism, which is a specific interpretation of Islam is strikingly opposed to Western values and cultures. It advocates, as a matter of fact, many practices ranging from gender discrimination to rejection of political and civic engagement. This particular brand of Islam, being one of the most visible, widespread, and accessible, gives the illusion to both Muslims and non-Muslims that Salafism is the true Islam. This is a fatal 'either-or' approach, according to Cesari: "On one hand, for most westerners, the burqa symbolizes total denial of freedom and of gender equality. On the other hand, for fundamentalist religious voices, the burqa symbolizes woman's dignity and her devotion to family values, as opposed to the bikini seen as an objectification and degradation of the female body." She moves on to contend that the "Islamic Problem" in Europe is a consequence of immigrant settlement that in the last two decades has been phrased in cultural and religious terms. She then correlates the coexistence of three major social problems: immigration; class and economic integration; and ethnicity and multiculturalism, with concern about Islamic religion increasingly seen as the major reason for all problems. With the "apocalyptic turn of the public rhetoric on Islam in Europe," it would be misleading to think that the conflict between Islam and the West is waged only on the margins of European societies, according to Cesari. "In fact, numerous opinion surveys, as well as political discourses,

<sup>28</sup> Jocelyne Cesari, Senior Research Fellow at the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, Georgetown University, Director of the Islam in the West Program, Harvard University. *The Oxford Handbook of European Islam*. Oxford University Press, 2016.

<sup>27</sup> The truth about whether Islamic values are compatible with Western values.

show that the perception of Islam as a danger to Western core political values is shared across political allegiances and nations." This 'new integrationist' discourse is widely shared across European countries and, quite interestingly, promoted by former left-wing activists. Gender equality activists and rejectionists of religious authority, mostly left-wing in the 1960s have become the banner holders of modern European Liberal values. Hence, all groups and individuals are required to demonstrate conformity to these values in order to become legitimate members of national communities. The 'Moderate Muslims' or 'European Islam' labels serve this purpose. A distinction is therefore to be made between Islam as such and the adherence of Muslims to liberal values. Feminist groups took the lead by standing against any Islamic principles that could undermine gender equality. Consequently, this feminist narrative tends to silence the Muslim women that it purports to defend.<sup>29</sup>

To make things more complicated, authors like Jaan Islam<sup>30</sup> hold that "the notions that Islam can be progressive, Jihad can mean "peace", and Shari'ah is nothing more than a "personal relationship" are the real myths and deserve to be put to rest." Accordingly, Islam cannot be reinterpreted, Muslim countries partially follow the *Shari'a*, *jihad* does not mean "personal effort," Islam has conditioned freedom of religion, *Shari'a* is not pro-women's rights. The issue then becomes one of the incompatible values. Besides, Islam, just like almost all religions, has a universal vocation. Among the most fearful of Islam's designs for global expansion are writers like the French-Catholic historian Jacques Ellul,<sup>31</sup> who cautioned: "Whether one likes it or not, Islam regards itself as having a universal vocation and proclaims itself to be the only true religion to which everyone must adhere. We should have no illusions about the matter: no part of the world will be excluded."

Allen W. Palmer and Abdullahi A. Gallab presented a more complete study.<sup>32</sup> They claim that Muslims as a group have been less successful than other religious or ethnic minorities, like the Jews or African Americans, in opening "a window on the multidimensionality of what can be called cultural ecology."<sup>33</sup> The dilemma is how to assimilate Western culture without compromising deeply held religious beliefs and traditions. The challenge is that "Islam offers a totalized worldview encompassing all spheres of community intercourse: political, economic, social, etc. The West isolates the spheres of knowledge and action and enshrines the individual." In an analysis of Islam in the diaspora, there is evidence of a "tentative ascent" into Western society.<sup>34</sup> Arabs face more

difficulties related to acculturation than other immigrants, including those identified as Muslims.<sup>35</sup>

Although Muslims embrace different religious traditions, they share a common textual language and common religious beliefs based on the Koran with their basic duties expressed in the five pillars of Islam: the profession of faith, prayer, alms-giving, fasting, and pilgrimage. Traditional Muslims affirm, as did Pakistani anthropologist Akbar S. Ahmed, one of the leading interpreters of Islamic values for Western audiences, "Islam is essentially the religion of equilibrium and tolerance; suggesting a breadth of vision, global positions and fulfilment of human destiny in the universe."<sup>36</sup>

In the late 1970s, Edward Said argued that Western values were dominating the Arab and Islamic worlds. Said argued, "The Arab and Islamic world remains a second-order power in terms of the production of [global] culture, knowledge, and scholarship."<sup>37</sup> Other Muslim Traditionalists argue, however, either for severance of Islamic nations with Western institutions or for the globalization of Islamic values. A group Oliver Roy<sup>38</sup> calls lumpen intelligentsia or "Islamic new intellectuals" aims at confronting Western science and ideology with equivalent concepts drawn from the Koran and Hadith or Sunnah. Some Islamic intellectuals adopt a rather ambivalent position towards the desirability of a "public sphere" and the role of democracy from which Western societies derive their base for rationalized public action. At best, Muslims have deep ambivalence about their role as "co-citizens" in the West<sup>39</sup>. At worst, Islam's defensiveness amounts to what has been described as "a holding operation against modernity."<sup>40</sup>

Fundamental disagreements in worldviews persist<sup>41</sup>. Muslims' ability to find a voice in Western culture depends on their ability to develop strategies to blend two radically different "cultural ecologies."<sup>42</sup> "The Western secular model privileges a rational, reasoning mind in the pursuit of individual and collective fulfilment; and Islam's model emphasizes justice and tradition as the basis of a legitimate community and family life."<sup>43</sup> The problem, if any, might be formulated in a different manner. The

*Americanization Path?* Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998. Haddad, Y.Y. and Smith, J.I. *Mission to America: Five Islamic Sectarian Communities in North America*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993. Lebor, A. *A Heart Turned East: Among the Muslims of Europe and America*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997.

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<sup>30</sup> Ahmed, Akbar S. 1992. *Postmodernism and Islam*. New York: N.Y.: Routledge.

<sup>31</sup> Said, Edward W. 1994. *Orientalism*. New York: NY: Vintage Books.

<sup>32</sup> Roy, Olivier. 1996. *The Failure of Political Islam*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

<sup>33</sup> Hofmann, Murad Wilfried. 1997. "Muslims as Co-Citizens in the West—Rights, Limits, and Prospects". *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 14.

<sup>34</sup> Sivan, Emmanuel. 1985. *Radical Islam*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

<sup>35</sup> Lewis, Bernard. 1996. "Islam Partially Perceived". *First Things*, no. 59: 40-44.

<sup>36</sup> Mowlana, Hamid. 1995. "Radio and Television," J.L. Esposito (Ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, New York: Oxford University Press 3: 405-407.

<sup>37</sup> Allen W. Palmer, PhD, Professor of Communications, BYU, and Abdullahi A. Gallab, PhD, Professor of International Communication, Hiram College in Ohio. *Islam and Western culture, navigating Terra Incognita. Religion and Popular Culture; Studies on the Interaction of Worldviews*, ed. D. Stout and J. Buddenbaum, Ames, Iowa State University Press, 2000. Op. cit.

<sup>29</sup> Rufin, Jean-Christophe. 1995. *La Dictature Libérale*. Paris: Hachette.

<sup>30</sup> Editor-in-Chief of the international journal of Political Theory, and the author of True Islam, Jihad, and Terrorism: the Science of Islamic Foreign Policy, Nova Publishers, 2016.

<sup>31</sup> Littman, Gisèle, and Jacques Ellul. 1985. *The Dhimmis*. Rutherford [N.J.]: Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Pr.

<sup>32</sup> Allen W. Palmer, PhD, professor of communications, BYU, and Abdullahi A. Gallab, PhD, professor of international communication, Hiram College in Ohio. Stout, Daniel A, and Judith Mitchell Buddenbaum. 2001. *Religion and Popular Culture*. Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press.

<sup>33</sup> Mowlana, Hamid. 1993. "The New Global Order And Cultural Ecology". *Media, Culture & Society* 15 (1): 9-27. doi:10.1177/0163443993015001002.

<sup>34</sup> Haddad, Y.Y. *The Muslims of America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991. Esposito J. *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1992. Haddad, Y.Y. "Islam in the United States: A Tentative Ascent." (<http://usis-israel.org.il/publish/journals/society/march97/haddad.htm>), 1997. Haddad, Y.Y. and Esposito, J.L. *Muslims on the*



question would not be the compatibility of the Islamic system of values with the liberal-democratic western one but the compatibility of any set of religious beliefs in a secular West.

The issue is the opposition of an allegedly rational West and an irrational Muslim world. Before questioning the place of Islam in the West, one must consider the place of Christianity and, a fortiori, the place of religion in the West. If we change perspectives, we might discover that Muslims in the West and the West itself are speaking two different languages. A short historical retrospective might be of great help. For centuries, the Roman Catholic Church has played a central role in the lives of Europeans. With its implacable alliance with aristocracies, the Church has ruled over the lives of millions of individuals. In this love and hate story, the Church has been, at the very least, arrogant and sometimes self-centred. So much so that schisms appeared, and bloody religious wars ravaged the Western kingdoms. The main aim was control, and if it could not be achieved willingly it was achieved through force and terror.

The story of the Cathars may illustrate this situation better. They formed an anti-sacerdotal party in opposition to the Catholic Church, protesting against what they perceived to be the moral, spiritual and political corruption of the Church. Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, although opposed to the Cathars, said of them in Sermon 65 on the Song of Songs: "If you question the heretic about his faith, nothing is more Christian; if about his daily converse, nothing more blameless; and what he says he proves by his actions ... As regards his life and conduct, he cheats no one, pushes ahead of no one, and does violence to no one. Moreover, his cheeks are pale with fasting; he does not eat the bread of idleness; he labors with his hands and thus makes his living. Women are leaving their husbands, men are putting aside their wives, and they all flock to those heretics! Clerics and priests, the youthful and the adult among them, are leaving their congregations and churches and are often found in the company of weavers of both sexes." <sup>44</sup>

When a key leader of the anti-Cathar persecutions, Bishop Fulk, excoriated the Languedoc Knights for not pursuing more diligently the heretics, he received the following reply: "We cannot. We have been reared in their midst. We have relatives among them and we see those living lives of perfection." <sup>45</sup> Catharism means 'the pure ones.' <sup>46</sup> It was a Christian dualist or Gnostic revival movement that thrived in some areas of Southern Europe, particularly northern Italy and southern France, between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. Cathar beliefs varied from one community to another, because Catharism was initially transmitted by ascetic priests who had set few guidelines. The Roman Catholic Church denounced their practices, including the Consolamentum ritual, by which individuals were baptized and raised to the status of 'perfect.' <sup>47</sup>

The roots of Catharism go back to the Paulician movement in Armenia and eastern Byzantine Anatolia and the Bogomils of the First Bulgarian Empire, <sup>48</sup> who were influenced by the Paulicians resettled in Thrace by the Byzantines. Even though the term 'Cathar' has been used for centuries to identify the movement, whether the movement identified itself with this name is debatable. <sup>49</sup> In Cathar texts, the terms 'Good Men' (*Bons Hommes*) or 'Good Christians' are the common terms of belonging or self-identification. <sup>50</sup> The belief that two Gods existed, one being good and the other evil, was a central belief to Cathars. They considered for instance that the God of the New Testament, creator of the spiritual realm, was the good God. In contrast, they regarded the God of the Old Testament as evil since he is presented as the creator of the physical world, identified as Satan. This evil god created all visible matter, including the human body, tainted with sin straight from the beginning. This ultimately contradicted the dogmas of the monotheistic Catholic Church, who believe that only one God exists, almighty creator of all visible and invisible things. <sup>51</sup> Cathars had the belief that human spirits were the genderless spirits of angels trapped within the physical creation of the evil god, and that they were condemned to an eternal incarnation until the faithful ones achieve salvation through a ritual called the consolamentum. <sup>52</sup>

Pope Innocent III attempted to put an end to Catharism by sending missionaries and by persuading the local authorities to act against them from the beginning of his reign. The papal legate Pierre de Castelnau was murdered, in 1208, while returning to Rome after excommunicating Count Raymond VI of Toulouse, who, in his view, was too lenient with the Cathars. <sup>53</sup> Pierre de Castelnau was declared a martyr by Pope Innocent III who abandoned the option of sending Catholic missionaries and jurists and launched the Albigensian Crusade which failed at ending Catharism. <sup>54</sup> G. K. Chesterton, the English Roman Catholic author, claimed: "... the medieval system began to be broken to pieces intellectually, long before it showed the slightest hint of falling to pieces morally. The huge early heresies, like the Albigenses, had not the faintest excuse in moral superiority." <sup>55</sup>

The Cathar Inquisition caused the death of millions. Christianity, a peaceful religion, has been transformed into a machine of oppression. The Enlightenment put an end to this drift. Absolute divine monarchies have been removed, sometimes violently, and the sacred character of the human individual has been celebrated until, gradually, Church has been separated from State. <sup>56</sup> The Cathars have replaced former moral and religious values by civic human values, despite being sometimes inspired

<sup>44</sup> Wakefield, Walter L, and Austin Patterson Evans. 1991. *Heresies of The High Middle Ages*. New York: Columbia University Press.

<sup>45</sup> O'Shea, Stephen. 2001. *The Perfect Heresy*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre.

<sup>46</sup> Simpson, John, ed. (1989), *Oxford English Dictionary (Second ed.)*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

<sup>47</sup> Lambert, Malcolm. 2000. *The Cathars*. Oxford: Blackwell.

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<sup>49</sup> Pegg, Mark Gregory. 2001. "On Cathars, Albigenses, And Good Men Of Languedoc". *Journal Of Medieval History* 27 (2): 181-195. doi:10.1016/s0304-4181(01)00008-2.

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<sup>51</sup> Nicene Creed

<sup>52</sup> Schaus, Margaret. 2006. *Women And Gender In Medieval Europe*. New York: Taylor and Francis Group.

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<sup>55</sup> Chesterton, G. K. 1910. *What's Wrong With The World*. London: Cassell.

<sup>56</sup> Loi 1905 portant séparation de l'Eglise et de l'Etat, in France.

by them, and created a system in which the individual plays the central role and not God or any other spiritual entity. For Islam to pretend to any kind of integration or assimilation in the West, it has to operate accordingly and try not to pull back the wheels of history.

The final question is not whether Islamic values are or not compatible with Western values, it is rather which Islamic values are compatible, which ones are debatable, and which ones are not. In the confrontation between Islamic and Western values, a Universal value will prevail. As we are going towards more and more individualism, materialism and rationality, any value, be it Islamic or else, will give way. The Christian Church has operated a number of reforms in order to adapt to those changes. Islam will not be spared such necessary introspection, with this major difference however that Islam is not a centralized hierarchical institution.

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## MUSLIMS AND WESTERN POLITICAL SYSTEM: PROBLEMS OF POLITICAL INCLUSION AND PRECONDITIONS FOR ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

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### Abstract

To understand the French political system, the prerequisites for active citizenship, and the political inclusion of Muslims, it is necessary to understand a fundamental principle of the French republican foundation from history: the principle of secularism, which is one of the components of the French exception. The French are extremely attached to this principle of secularism; no religion is legitimate to interfere with political decisions, even if the influence of religions can be great by their moral dimension. The first condition for political inclusion is the integration of the Muslim religious fact into the institutional framework of secularism, which is in France a quasi-dogma. Any French citizen, Muslim or not, who does not highlight particularisms related to his religion encounters no legal obstacle to committed citizenship. Some Muslims, under the influence of subversive currents, create difficulties for themselves and this contributes to casting a shadow on Muslims in France. Nevertheless, we are witnessing a process of integration of French Muslims and we have an Islam in France that is destined to have its own identity beyond any foreign influence. The process will be long but it has begun.

### Keywords

Islam in France, French political system, Secularism, *Laïcité*, Islamic veil, Integration of French Muslims

### Introduction

To understand the relationship between the French political system and Muslims, the pre-conditions for an active citizenship, and the challenges behind the political inclusion of Muslims, it is absolutely necessary to understand a fundamental principle of the French Republican foundation from history: the principle of secularism or *laïcité*, which is one of the components of the French exception. Religions have penetrated Western societies which, over the centuries, have become states, and most of which adopted the Christian faith. Jews have a very ancient presence in these European territories, where their rite has often led political authorities to keep them away from local populations. The Muslim presence is naturally later and has spread around the Mediterranean, where, with the exception of Spain, it has mainly marked the southern shore. Traces of this presence are discreet and rare in the Kingdom of France, the eldest daughter of the Church, but contacts with the Ottoman Empire had been established as early as the 16th century by King Francis I. But it was the Egyptian campaign led by the First Consul Bonaparte at the end of the 18th century that introduced the French elites to this wonderful civilization and to Islam. The Catholic religion, the majority religion, was fought in the 19th century by a secularist

movement to fight its interference in political life. And this fight led to the adoption of the 1905 law on the separation of Church and State, establishing the secular nature of the State.

What exactly is secularism in its French version? It must be recognized that giving a definition — even a simple one — of what is exactly secularism in its French version, is sometimes a perilous exercise. Secularism's daily implementation sometimes seems to pose problems: Christian nurseries in town halls, substitute menus or wearing a headscarf in public places. However, the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen states: "No one shall be disturbed by his opinions, even religious ones, provided that their manifestation does not disturb the public order established by law." From 1886, the adjective 'layman' appeared in the Jules Ferry Laws which created the public school system as free, lay, and compulsory. Article 1 of the Act guarantees freedom of conscience, the right to believe or not to believe. But since Islamist attacks, there has been confusion in France around neutrality and secularism, which have become conflated. The principle of neutrality governs the operation of public services. In France, a teacher or police officer may not wear a religious symbol in the performance of their duties. This principle of neutrality sometimes leads some citizens and/or politicians to assert that the Islamic headscarf should be banned on the streets. This is a misinterpretation since the strict application of the 1905 law guarantees the right, in the public space, to women who so wish to wear a headscarf or to men to wear a yarmulke.

So, can we talk about *laïcité* in the singular? To put it simply, there are two groups in France: those who for secularism is not a value, but a principle according to which religious identity is private but can be expressed in the public space, and those who believe that secularism is a principle that competes with religious values, to which they deny any presence in the public space. Secularism requires a certain maturity. Accept it only if you know how to put your personal and community interests aside in favour of a broader and more universal interest. Accept it only if you understand the depth of the meaning of human rights: equality, justice and freedom. The French are extremely attached to this principle of secularism: no religion is legitimate to interfere with political decisions, even if the influence of religions can be great by their moral dimension. It would be a mistake to think — as it is repeated over and over again — that only the State and civil servants must respect secularism. In reality, it is French society that is deeply secular. This is precisely why the appearance of the Islamic headscarf by high school girls in 1989 shocked the French so much and why it is not accepted by society any more than other public demonstrations with religious connotations such as street prayers. The first condition for political inclusion is the integration of the Muslim religious fact into the institutional framework of secularism. We cannot understand the stakes if we ignore this foundation, almost a quasi-dogma and its consequences in the expression of all religions. Even Catholics have renounced the outings of communicants in the streets even though it is an age-old tradition. Only a few priests and nuns still wear the cassock and cornet, but this is a 'professional' attribute. This being said, it is understandable that French citizenship and the rights attached to it cannot have any connection with religion, because religion is an intimate matter: there is no state religion nor is there any discrimination based on religion.

In this context, what place in political life for Muslims? One is tempted to use the formula of the Revolution: "All citizenship as an individual, nothing as a community," because France, unlike countries of Anglo-Saxon culture, does not recognize distinct communities with legal power of direction over their members. Multiculturalism has no normative value; one cannot conceive of the acceptance of Sharia Law as in Great Britain. As long as a French Muslim accepts the same rules as his fellow citizens by considering himself a French citizen, without highlighting particularisms related to his religion, there is no legal obstacle to his becoming a committed citizen. There are many examples of the investment in politics of people of the Muslim faith, and the appointment of some of them to the highest positions: Rachida Dati, Minister of Justice; Nadjat Vallaud-Belkacem, Minister of National Education; Gérald Darmanin, Minister of Action and Public Accounts (his grandfather is Algerian and Muslim); and Fadela Amara, State Secretary for Urban Policy. There are many other examples of political inclusion in high positions in the French Republic.

It is also necessary to make the link between Islam and French colonization. The opposition of the Muslim population is in part due to the fact that they are trying to resist, even unconsciously, a form of neo-colonization of their minds. As such, a better recognition of the crimes of colonization, as well as a symbolic inclusion in the narrative of the history of France, would improve the sense of belonging and thus of inclusion and citizenship. The obstacles in France are not only legal, but they are also symbolic. France must, through a process of remembrance, recognize the diversity of its sons and daughters in its history, including the Muslims of France. If the narrative remains the same, our country will continue to consider Islam as a foreign body, which it is not! Today, empirically, we are witnessing a semantic evolution between an Islam that is driven by immigration and an Islam that has become French through the integration of children from immigrant backgrounds: Islam in France to Islam in France, and then French Islam. The 'Muslim community' is the second-largest community in France, although there are no ethnic statistics. Nevertheless, it is estimated that there are between 5 and 7 million Muslims in France or of Muslim culture. Do these 5 to 7 million Muslims find themselves in institutional representation? It is an open question!

Some Muslims create difficulties under the influence of subversive currents. These difficulties are due to the fact that claims against French society are being put forward, prefiguring a 'separatism' by rejecting the customs and habits of the country they live in. An example is the proliferation of 'Islamic costumes' reflecting a 'foreign' invoice such as burkinis, hijabs, jilbabs, and niqabs. Foreign authorities call on our Muslim fellow citizens to resist inclusion in the political fabric and to remain Muslims first and foremost loyal to their countries of origin. This is very regrettable and can only contribute to casting a shadow on Muslims in France.

It is not being Muslim that prevents some of our fellow citizens from actively and positively integrating into the country's social life; it is demanding that particularities presented as 'Muslim' be imposed on society, whose civility is secular. To live as a happy citizen in France, it is necessary to accept the rules of

living together as they have been built up over time with all the components of society. We are witnessing a process of integration of French Muslims we no longer ask ourselves the question, we have a French Islam that has a vocation to have its own identity. During the *Eid al-Fitr* celebration, government members are always invited to an Iftar dinner, a symbolic act to testify to the desired integration of Islam. At a time when France is fighting for gender parity and equality, we can see that this issue crosses all currents, including part of the Muslim community. For example, do Koranic texts forbid (or not) women to be imams?

My first name suggests that I am a Muslim, and this has not an obstacle to the exercise of active citizenship. A slogan for Muslims and the western political system could be: "Islam is my religion, French is my language, and France is my homeland." Today, the main challenge of secularism is to know how to respond to new challenges by creating and defending a public space of pluralism, discussion of ideas, respect for others. Debate on these issues now appears fundamental, and this is what the Friedrich Naumann STIFTUNG Foundation and The Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies did by organizing a conference on Islam and the West. The Foundation and the Royal Institute have, in a way, anticipated the debate that is tearing French society apart over the Islamic veil. France witnessed a media frenzy after an elected representative of the National Assembly attacked a veiled school trip companion, asking her to remove her veil, in the name of secularism, at a meeting of the Regional Assembly of Bourgogne Franche-Comté. Ministers such as Jean-Michel Blanquer and Bruno Lemaire, while condemning the attitude of the elected representatives of the National Assembly, questioned the compatibility of the Islamic veil with the values of France. They see it as a refractory Islam, trying to impose its faith above the republican pact of "laïcité".

According to a 2019 survey conducted by a French Institute of Public Opinion (IFOP) on "La laïcité, l'islam et les Français," 61 per cent of French people believe that "Islam is incompatible with the values of French society," 78 per cent believe that secularism is threatened, and 73 per cent support the ban on religious symbols for school outings. The upcoming municipal elections in France are already raising the premise of a new media hype about community political parties that would exclusively address the Muslim community. We can discuss this at the next conference organized by Friedrich Naumann for Freedom Foundation and Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies.





## ISLAM IN FRANCE

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### Summary

This paper focuses on Islam in France and will address two issues. The first one is the historical process by which, up from the beginning of the twentieth century, a Muslim community emerges in France, mostly made of Sub-Saharan soldiers coming from the French colonies in West Africa. This first step will be followed by other waves of immigration from the Maghreb and, more recently, again Africa South of the Sahara, Turkey and the Middle East. The second issue will question the idea of 'A' singular Muslim community and the relations between the state and Islam, with a focus on public values and norms being shared, or not shared, by French Muslims.

French Muslims represent the largest Muslim community in the EU, and Islam is the second biggest religion in France. The vast majority of Muslims are migrants or second-generation or even third generation migrants. Muslims came to France in several waves, marking a long historical process. The first wave was from colonial times, between the First World War and the Second. Following the First World War, there was another wave of migration when thousands of colonial soldiers who fought for France stayed in the country after the war. Then, after the Second World War, there was a wave of massive work recruitment, especially from Algeria. This migration has impacted French culture and is part of a long process with deep sociological consequences.

The French state cannot interfere with religious institutions because it is in contradiction with secularism and the 1905 Act which separates religion and the state, a unique case in the Western World. Thus any mention of religious symbols in the public space is forbidden in France. The French state is, according to the 1905 Law, the protector of all religions and is not meant to give preference to any religion over another. The state cannot take part in the internal institutional organization of religions. There are attempts, however, since the 1970s, to organise the Muslim community through encouraging Muslims to organise themselves in a representative and unique instance which is contradictory to the principle of the neutrality of the state. Further, the training of imams was started as an attempt to spread a message of compliance with democracy and Western values and to decrease the possibilities of radicalisation.

President Macron's plan for "A French Islam" aims to improve the relationship between the state and Islam, with a focus on public values and norms. It is wrong to consider the Muslim community in France as a single united entity. There are many loyalties, especially those divided according to belonging to multiple nation-states, such as the Moroccan community, the Algerian community, Tunisians, Turkish Muslims, Sub-Saharan Muslims and so on. The question

arises whether the relation between France and Islam should be: 'Islam in France,' or 'Islam of France,' or 'French Islam.' It is the same question that Christians asked themselves a long time ago, which is now arising from a need for Islam to adapt to the new society.



## ISLAM IN CONTEMPORARY SPAIN: THE DIFFICULT PATH BETWEEN RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND SECULARIST DEMANDS

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### Abstract

The solid links of Spain's identity with Islamic civilization cannot be denied. But its relevance goes beyond the aesthetic enjoyment of a heritage that we enjoy today. Officially, the establishment of democracy in 1975 opened the way to the institutionalization of Islamic communities, a process that accelerated the transformation of the state in matters of religious freedom. However, the positive balance of this multi-religious society has been based on secular principles that corner the religious fact, considering it more as the cause of problems than in response to the longing for the human being. In Spain, this tension has resulted in a communication policy that consolidates Islam as a privileged political actor, contrary to democracy and strongly linked to international security problems.<sup>57</sup>

### Keywords

Contemporary Spain; Islamic Communities; Identity; State; Religious Freedom; Immigration; Security.

### Introduction

From a global vision of the process, there are two issues that I think are fundamental to the Spanish case: one of a quantitative nature represented by the statistical threshold and one qualitative, closely linked to the process of modernization of the Spanish State since the beginning of the Spanish democracy. Firstly, both have drawn their practices and perception by the social majority. Secondly, they have marked the political agenda regarding the religious question, from the model of interlocution with the Spanish State to the design of specific policies to meet the demands of the Islamic confession.

### The Statistical Tolerance Threshold

The Demographic Study of the Muslim Population 2019, conducted by the Union of Islamic Communities (from now UCIDE) and the Andalusian Observatory, estimates that there are two million Muslims in Spain. According to their sources, this amount represents 4 per cent of the Spanish population. Of these, 42.5 per cent are Spanish-born Muslims and 57.5 per cent are to residents from other countries.<sup>58</sup> These types of

studies are a good example of how the issue of numbers has been a strategy to understand the Spanish case.

The first question we can ask ourselves is why an official institution like UCIDE regularly presents statistical studies on religious confession. Data that can be widely discussed are based on three criteria: firstly, they come from internal sources that are not comparable. Secondly, the declaration of religious convictions is protected by law in Spain, and finally, nationality, emigration, immigration are subject to official figures. Thus, we can question whether UCIDE has been able to contribute to generating an image of Islam connected to certain nationalities and the phenomenon of immigration. In this way, the issue of numbers has become a very relevant argument for its ability to generate perceptual distortions such as 'invasion,' 'illegitimacy,' or 'positive discrimination' of a 'traitor' collective to the foundations of the legal system and oblivious to the 'true' roots of the history of Spain. These ideological discourses, disseminated through the media, offer an image of Islam as an uncontrolled, uprooted, massive and potentially dangerous reality. And, although it is essentially false, it has been enormously effective in generating fear and rejection.<sup>59</sup>

A second factor that makes the issue of numbers relevant is that it was one of the reasons that politically promoted the legal recognition of Islamic confession. The social pressure generated by the Maghreb immigration caused the state authorities to open negotiations with the Muslim minority in the late 1980s.<sup>60</sup> Their representatives held the responsibility of controlling the 'avalanche' that called the southern border of Europe. The term 'avalanche' was exploited intensely by the media in the late 90s and has generated a system of thinking about Islam that has moved to the current debate on refugees. Finally, it cannot be ignored that the growth rate of the Muslim population has been crucial in the internal organization of the communities themselves. Its leadership, design, distribution, specialization and pressure capacity in the public sphere respond, to a large extent, to its growing number. According to the data released by the Registry of Non-Catholic Entities of the Ministry of Justice, after the Agreements of the Spanish State with the Islamic Commission of Spain in 1992, the pace of legalization and registration of communities and federations was growing in parallel to the complexity of internal organizational charts.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>57</sup> A detailed study on the Spanish case can be found in M. A. Corpas-Aguirre, *Las Comunidades Islámicas en la España actual (1960-2008): Génesis e institucionalización de una minoría de referencia*, UNED, Madrid, 2010. Also a specific approach West and Islam in M. A. Corpas-Aguirre "The West and Islam: Consequences in the Marginalization of the Religion by the Post-National State", Hülya Yaldir and Günel Önkol (eds.), *New Horizons in Philosophy and Sociology*, Peter Lang, New York, 2018, pp. 119-130

<sup>58</sup> The figure comes from de Unión de Comunidades Islámicas de España (UCIDE) y Observatorio Andalusi, *Estudio Demográfico de la Población Musulmana 2019*, UCIDE: <http://observatorio.hispanomuslim.es/estademograf.pdf> According to their records, they represent approximately 4 per cent of the population of Spain. Of these, 42.5% are Spanish born and 57.5% are residents.

<sup>59</sup> On this link between the number and degree of conflict offers a very elaborate perspective already in the mid-90s. Desplanques, "La localisation des immigrés et son évolution", *Espace, Populations, Sociétés*, n° 2/3 (1996), Université des Sciences et Technologies de Lille, pp. 287-297. Actes du IVème Colloque National de Démographie Immigrés et enfants d'immigrés en France, Poitiers, 25 al 27- X-1995. On the misperceptions, see M. A. Corpas Aguirre, "Imágenes, percepciones e identidad. Una perspectiva de análisis de la inmigración en España", III Coloquio Internacional de Geocrítica: Migración y cambio social, en *Scripta Nova. Revista Electrónica de Geografía y Ciencias Sociales*, Universidad de Barcelona, n° 94 (art.42), 1-VIII-01 in: <http://www.ub.es/geocrit/sn-94-42.htm> y "La inmigración en España. Distorsiones perceptivas y praxis multicultural" en *El Mediterráneo: origen de cultura y fuente de conflictos*, IUGM, Madrid, 2004, pp. 245-264.

<sup>60</sup> The opinion of the Comisión Asesora de Libertad Religiosa (CALR) on Islam in Spain was presented in 1989. Its authors took into account, among others, the presence of organized groups, the exponential growth of immigration in Spain and the proximity to the Maghreb. The consolidation of the number as an important factor when legislating the right to freedom of conscience in Spain was based on Dionisio Llamazares Fernández, *Derecho de libertad de conciencia* (vol. II), Civitas, Madrid, 2003, pp. 615-644.

<sup>61</sup> Between 1968 and 1995, the total number of registered entities was sixty-seven. However, between 1995 and 2000, the number rose to one hundred and seventy-one. These figures reflect the inflection of the legalization of Islam as a minority confession and its ability to structure the migration phenomenon through their organizations.



## Islam as a Modernization Factor of the Spanish State

Since the late 1950s, the presence of Islam in Spain can be explained as the passage from a seated minority to a social actor with political projection. A qualitative change is measurable in the scope and depth of legal-political changes in collective religious identity, the regulation of religious freedom and international relations, especially regarding how the events of the Islamic Arab world and the ability of the Islamic Communities in Spain to project internationally have been received in Spain. It cannot be denied that Islam in Spain has been a factor of modernization of the bases of the State. Historically, the religious question has been a crucial issue in Spanish identity. Franco's dictatorship rested on the identity of the nation in the so-called national Catholicism: the identification of the purity of the Spanish with the Catholic essence. This was the principle that structured the organization of the 'New State.'

Consequently, a discourse on the Islamic as 'parenthesis' or 'exception' prevailed in the history of Spain; eight centuries of Islamic presence were essentially foreign to the 'being of Spain.' And, despite a contradictory foreign policy of 'Hispanic-Arab friendship,' the Islamic was identified with the anti-national Catholic. Paradoxically, what legally changed the situation of Muslims in Spain was the pressure exerted from Rome for the Franco regime to recognize the right to religious freedom. The renewal of the Second Vatican Council on the recognition of religious freedom as a fundamental right brought Franco's national Catholic regime into crisis and made important changes in the right to religious freedom. This ended up being crucial in legalizing the presence of Arabic-Islamic groups in Spain.<sup>62</sup>

A second aspect has to do with the construction of the democratic State. The development of the constitutional pillars implied a new model of relations between the State and minority religious denominations. Given its implantation and growth rate, Islam was outlined as the 'minority of reference' to measure the normalization of pluralism as a daily occurrence. The expectations of change in the area of freedom of conscience became the natural growth space of the Islamic communities. During the 1990s, some of the organizations connected with the convert movement expressed their vocation as an alternative to a western system 'in decline.'<sup>63</sup>

Terrorism has marked the profound changes in international security systems and has decisively affected the perception and regulation of Islam as a minority in Western countries. Until 2001, radical Islamism had been considered an external risk, an element of geopolitical destabilization, basically disconnected from minorities. Increasingly, research shows links between

both realities, accelerating the improvement of state control and security mechanisms. Successive terrorist attacks have consolidated a discourse that presents Islam as a transnational movement that makes any attempt at control by the Western States sterile:

Se habla de organizar el Islam, de burocratizarlo (...) Crear unas estructuras similares a las de la Iglesia, de controlar lo que dicen los imames en las mezquitas (...) Crear una jerarquía de imames al servicio del Estado, cuyo discurso sea conveniente (...) Sin embargo (...) todo musulmán puede ser un imam (...) Si se quiere dar dinero para el cuidado de las mezquitas, hay que tener en cuenta que toda la tierra es una mezquita (...) No hay sacerdocio, no hay dogmas, no hay sacramentos, ni doctrina. No hay símbolos religiosos (...) El Islam no es manipulable, es un estado de conciencia (...) Este es el drama del Estado moderno. La presencia del Islam en su seno lo corroe, es como una luz incontrolada.<sup>64</sup>

The 'terrorist alert,' the 'civilizational shock,' the 'stigma of the stranger,' and the capture of the 'maladaptive' have solidified a structure of thought that points to religion in general and Islam in particular as the problem of the twenty-first century.

## Islam in Spain: 'State Question'

Since the attacks in Madrid in 2004, the Islamic communities have maintained a difficult balance between religious action and State policy in matters of security. There have been two immediate consequences to this evolution. The first is a strong bureaucratization of the collective as a result of a considerable loss of independence from public authorities. The second, greater visibility of 'official Islam' compared to other sectors. From the scenarios that have been revealed this trend, I would like to focus in particular on the attacks in Barcelona in 2017.<sup>65</sup> Interpreted by some sectors as a 'political opportunity to move forward' for Islam in Spain, the truth is that they revealed the difficult control of the imams by security forces. In this regard, in 2017 the representatives of Islam in Spain estimated that there were 1,200 imams in Spain. However, the message reflected in the media was that nobody seemed to have the responsibility for regulation of the imams. However, Law 26/1992 contemplates the figure of the imams with a stable character and a specific function. They must have a certification issued by the Ministry of Justice and another from the community to which they belong, and always in conformity to the Islamic Commission of Spain (art. 3.1). In addition, they are assimilated as employed persons and included in the General Social Security Scheme.<sup>66</sup> Likewise, the President of the Islamic Commission of Spain (CIE) insisted that "there is no lack of control." However, he said he has been developing a census of imams since 2016, despite considering that this level of control was rather "typical of dictatorial governments."<sup>67</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Mater et Magistra (1961), *Dignitatis Humanae et Gaudium et Spes* (1965) reflect a new framework of relations between the Catholic Church and democracies. Its principles were in clear contradiction with the Spanish Concordat of 1953 and the Law of Principles of the Movement (1958). The result of this process of homologation of the Franco regime with the international sphere was reflected in the Freedom Act of 1967 and the opening of the Registry of non-Catholic entities.

<sup>63</sup> During the second half of 1990, the convert movement managed to consolidate around the Federación de Entidades Religiosas Islámicas (FEERI). Its leaders expressed this desire to build a contemporary Spanish and alternative Islam.

<sup>64</sup> Ahmed Lahori, "Se habla de organizar el Islam" *WebIslam*, nº 251, 15-IV-04 [www.webislam.com/numeros/251/noticias/habla\\_organizar\\_islam.html](http://www.webislam.com/numeros/251/noticias/habla_organizar_islam.html)

<sup>65</sup> Departamento de Seguridad Nacional, "Nota informativa sobre los atentados en Barcelona y Cambrils", 17-8-2017, <https://www.dsn.gob.es/es/actualidad/sala-prensa/nota-informativa-sobre-atentados-barcelona-cambrils>

<sup>66</sup> After the attacks of 11M, the Zapatero government proposed a reform of the Law of Religious Freedom and create a register of imams. At that time, those responsible for the Islamic community showed serious reluctance: El PAÍS (ed.), "El Gobierno creará un registro obligatorio de mezquitas e imames", 8-5-2004, [https://elpais.com/diario/2004/05/08/portada/1083967205\\_850215.html](https://elpais.com/diario/2004/05/08/portada/1083967205_850215.html)

<sup>67</sup> Osé Marcos, "El Estado no nos informa si un imam tiene antecedentes penales", *El País*, 30-8-17, [https://politica.elpais.com/politica/2017/08/29/actualidad/1504030925\\_010310.html](https://politica.elpais.com/politica/2017/08/29/actualidad/1504030925_010310.html)

The figure of the imam is the responsibility of the communities themselves. However, it is a reality that escapes them. Lahsen Himmer, president of the Comunidad Islámica de Andalucía and member of the Comisión Islámica de España, explicitly stated that "there is no real control of the imams."<sup>68</sup> These facts have revealed that the effectiveness of the measures rests on a full collaboration of both spheres in favour of the common good, renouncing particular aspirations. Despite this, some Muslim representatives linked the attacks more to unsatisfied claims of Islam in Spain than to terrorism. Through the approach to this context, the old debates about Islam in the West underlie, especially around the difficult fit Islam in the public sphere, the typology of Muslim organizations, the role of representatives, leadership styles, internal programs, and communication policies. Dynamic and multifaceted realities, the Islamic Communities in Spain have channelled the pillars of a religious identity, at the same time that they have implemented a political action with parties of different signatures. They have participated in the dynamics of government and opposition. Its history has been drawn from confessional groupings of late-Francoism to multifunctional organizations representing a minority of reference.

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## ISLAMICATE THOUGHT IN THE EUROPEAN INTELLECTUAL MILIEU

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### Abstract

This study is articulated around selected philosophical perspectives that are rooted in the confluences of the Islamicate and European intellectual histories, with an emphasis on the strands of their current conceptual convergences and the epistemic conditions of their co-entanglements. My reflections address the intellectual, academic, and high-cultural settings in Europe. The focus would be set accordingly on ideas and concepts rather than on societal patterns of behaviour or customs in the quotidian intercommunal affairs or in political *praxis*. This would serve as a rudimentary pathway in understanding the deeper attitudes and predispositions towards reflecting on *the question of being* in existential terms (ontology), and on the modes through which knowledge is acquired, produced, and negotiated in the age of modern technologized-science (epistemology), in addition to pondering the perception of justice and law, goodness, and beauty in line with their attributes in politics, ethics, and aesthetics (grouped as 'theories of value'). I shall proceed hereinafter with a focus on these strands in their past manifestations, current conditions, and future horizons and prospects.

### Keywords

Architecture; Art; Epistemology; European Thought; Islamicate Thought; Philosophy; Science; Technology.

### Introduction

This present paper offers selected philosophical perspectives on some of the principal conceptual leitmotifs that pertain to the unfolding of the Islamicate and European intellectual histories, while also placing an emphasis on the pathways of their modern notional convergences, and on the contemporary epistemic conditioning of grasping their historical and present co-entanglements. The meditations that are presented herein are based on manifold studies that I have published on related themes at a deepened philosophical level of inquiry. I have, for instance, addressed some fundamental questions concerning the renewal in the impetus of philosophical thinking within the Islamicate contemporary context by way of probing its potential interactions with the modern prevalent schools in Continental European Philosophy (German and French in particular; with an emphasis on phenomenology, hermeneutics, and deconstruction) and the Anglo-American Analytic Philosophy.<sup>69</sup>

This line of inquiry consists of reflections and ponderings over the intellectual, academic, and high-cultural strands in Islamicate thought in connection with the intellectual settings

of the western regions in Europe (British, German, Italian, French, Spanish). The focus is set accordingly upon the investigation of ideas and concepts, rather than researching the multifaceted societal patterns of behaviour, norms, customs, politics, economics, or laws within the quotidian intercommunal affairs per se. This approach aims at underpinning the potentials of understanding the deeper attitudes and predispositions towards reflecting on *the question of being* (*Seinsfrage*)<sup>70</sup> in existential terms through *ontology*, and on the modes by virtue of which knowledge is acquired, produced, and negotiated in the age of modern technologized-science in *epistemology*, in addition to pondering over the perception of justice, governance, and law in politics, or the conceptions of goodness in praxis in terms of ethics, or the appreciation of what inspires the aesthetic sense in judging what is beautiful or experiencing what is sublime. Such investigations proceed hereinafter by addressing the aforementioned phenomena in terms of their past historical manifestations, current intellectual conditionings, and postulated future prospective horizons.

### Intellectual Histories

The confluences of selected Islamicate *concepts* with their European counterparts is witnessed in the intellectual history of philosophical, theological, scientific, and artistic ideas in theory, along with their variegated applications in *praxis* as well. This is mainly set in the context of the Greco-Latin-Syriac-Arabic-Latinate legacies in thought, as these were adaptively transmitted and assimilated within the European intellectual milieu in the mediaeval and Renaissance epochs. The impact of seminal Islamicate pre-modern polymaths, such as Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā), Averroes (Ibn Rushd), and Alhazen (Ibn al-Haytham), is well-documented and evidenced with proofs within the historical development of scholastic mediaeval thought in Europe, and in the Renaissance liberal arts. We cite herein figures *inter alia* such as Moses Maimonides (Mūsā Ibn Maymūn), Robert Grosseteste of Lincoln, Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, Roger Bacon, Witelo (Vitellonis), Leon Battista Alberti, Lorenzo Ghiberti, as scholars who have been in the reception of the Greco-Arabic sources in philosophy and the exact sciences. This lineage in thought has had further prolongations *a fortiori* within the early-modern European thought with the case *inter alia* of the legacies of René Descartes, Baruch Spinoza, Girard Desargues, and Johannes Hevelius.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>70</sup> I am appealing in this paper to the ontological reflection on the question of being (*Seinsfrage*) in terms of its existential analytics in: M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 1977.

<sup>71</sup> I investigated these aspects in intellectual history, and specifically in terms of science, philosophy, and architectural as well as pictorial arts in various published studies, including: N. El-Bizri, 'Arabic Classical Traditions in the History of the Exact Sciences: The Case of Ibn al-Haytham', *The European Physical Journal Plus*, vol. 133, 2018, pp. 271-277; N. El-Bizri, 'Desargues' oeuvres: On perspective, optics and conics', in G. Cairns (ed.), *Visioning Technologies in Architecture*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2016, pp. 36-51; N. El-Bizri, 'Seeing Reality in Perspective: The "Art of Optics" and the "Science of Painting"', in R. Lupacchini, and A. Angelini, *The Art of Science: From Perspective Drawing to Quantum Randomness*, Dordrecht-Berlin, Springer, 2014, pp. 25-47; N. El-Bizri, 'By Way of an Overture: Classical Optics and Renaissance Pictorial Arts', in A. Bartram, N. El-Bizri, and D. Gittens, *Recto-Verso: Redefining the Sketchbook*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2014, pp. 11-26; N. El-Bizri, 'Parerga - Carnet de Croquis: "ni oeuvre, ni hors d'oeuvre"', in A. Bartram, N. El-Bizri, and D. Gittens, *Recto-Verso: Redefining the Sketchbook*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2014, pp. 27-38; N. El-Bizri, 'Classical Optics and the Perspectiva Traditions Leading to the Renaissance', in C. Carman, and J. Hendrix (eds.), *Renaissance Theories of Vision*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2010, pp. 11-30; N. El-Bizri, 'Creative Inspirations or Intellectual Impasses? Reflections on the Relationships between Architecture and the Humanities', in S. Bandyopadhyay, J. Lomholt, N. Temple, and R. Tobe, *Building Metaphors: The Humanities in Design Practice*, London, Routledge, 2010, pp. 121-133; N. El-Bizri, 'Imagination and Architectural Representations', in M. Frascari, J. Hale, and B. Starkey (eds.), *From Models to Drawings: Imagination and Representation in Architecture*, London, Routledge, 2007, pp. 34-42.

<sup>69</sup> See, for example, my treatment of this matter in terms of new methodological pointers and directives in: N. El-Bizri, 'The Labyrinth of Philosophy in Islam', *Comparative Philosophy*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2010, pp. 3-23; N. El-Bizri, 'Le renouvellement de la falsafa?', *Les Cahiers de l'Islam*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2014, pp. 17-38; N. El-Bizri, 'Falsafa: A Labyrinth of Theory and Method', *Synthesis Philosophica*, vol. 62, no. 2, 2016, pp. 295-311.

The intellectual history of the Abrahamic monotheistic traditions, in terms of confluences in the shared rootedness in the Greek legacies in philosophy and science, requires further dissemination in the current cultural European milieu. This is anchored in the way the Greek bodies of knowledge were not restricted in antiquity to Athens or mainland Greece, but they furthermore flourished in such locales as Alexandria, Geresia, Sidon. This is, for example, clear with the traditions of Euclid in geometry and optics, Archimedes in mechanics and solids' geometries of measures, Nicomachus in arithmetic, or Ptolemy in astronomy and optics. Their oeuvres were sheltered and expanded in the Near East, and mainly through Syriac and Sabians communities, and then in the Arabic Muslim and Christian scholarship, which altogether produced expansions, revisions, novel breakthroughs in knowledge that were adaptively assimilated and translated into the Latinate European mediaeval scholastic milieu, and then finding further flourishing in the Italian Renaissance, with its impact on early-modernity in Europe of the Enlightenment.

We can, for example, evoke herein the impact of Avicenna and Averroes in metaphysics and natural philosophy on Robert Grosseteste, Duns Scotus, and Thomas Aquinas, or the influence of Alhazen on Roger Bacon, Witelo (Vitellonis), and subsequently on Leon Battista Alberti, Lorenzo Ghiberti, and Johannes Hevelius; along with how such legacies affected the early-modern spheres of inquiry in philosophy and science. The study of these confluences within the Islamicate and European intellectual histories of philosophical and scientific ideas needs to be integrated into core curricula of general education at the high-school level as well as in the undergraduate years at the university.<sup>72</sup> The emphasis would not be on the technicalities of becoming trained in the methods and fields of the historian of ideas, or the mediaevalist scholar, but rather the focus would be set on how such wealth in intellectual histories ought to disclose to modern European young citizens (non-Muslim and Muslim alike) the elements of their shared civilizational heritage, with co-entanglements across the centuries within the folds of the European and Islamicate settings. Such curricula can be connected to debating in-class, and within cultural forums, the phenomena that pertain to the confluence of civilizations, which flourished around the Mediterranean (Greek-Roman-Syriac-Arabic-Latinate) and impacted the deeper realms of the exchanges between Europe and the Near East. This can be given further focus at the conceptual and philosophical levels in terms of probing selected fundamental questions in ontology, epistemology, and the theories of value, along with their realms of *praxis*.

## Ontology and Epistemology

When thinking about the ontological outlook that is focused on the question of being (*Seinsfrage*), we reflect on its articulation by way of responses to the Aristotelian

metaphysics as it figured via Avicenna's distinction between existence (*wujūd*) and essence (*māhiyya*). This is ultimately set against the background of handling the vexing central theological question in Abrahamic monotheism concerning the relationship, distinction and connection, of the divine essence to the divine attributes (*al-dhāt wa'l-shifāt*).<sup>73</sup> The impact of Avicenna in this regard is visible on the scholastic mediaeval metaphysical systems of Thomism and Scotism, (respectively as the traditions of Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus). This side of Avicennism was seen by Martin Heidegger being as one of the classic modes of ceding the question of being (*Seinsfrage*) to oblivion. This Heideggerian perspective on Avicenna's legacy, as articulated in the context of a critique of the history of metaphysics and of classical onto-theology, was called into question by my investigation of this matter to be thought.<sup>74</sup> Such debate in ontology is vital again in our age of technologized science, and in the way technicity frames the Being of beings in our era through its *Ge-stell* (en-framing) that turns all existents into a standing reserve (*Bestand*) of energies that are locked, and that can be commanded and ordered into mass-mobilization. This is what Heidegger associated with the unfolding of the essence of modern technology.<sup>75</sup> His reflections on the dangers of this phenomenon of modern technicity becomes more fundamental in the way contemporary techno-science is rendering our *being-in-the-flesh* ungrounded through Artificial-Intelligence, automated algorithms of Machine-Learning and the Internet-of-things, Virtual Cyberspaces, bio-engineering and genetics, etc. Embodiment and being-in-the-world take a new sense with the advancements of contemporary technicity in the way our life is transformed and metamorphosed into standing reserves of energy and resources, and in how our worldliness is threatened in this process of technological hyper-hegemony through a parallel environmental degradation in our natural habitats.<sup>76</sup>

Many questions arise against the background of the progressions in technicity when thinking about onto-theology in our epoch. For instance, one wonders as to how the religious scriptures of Abrahamic monotheism will be processed in their interpretive horizons, exegetic or hermeneutic, by humanoid-like A.I. robots, which surpass the individual human intelligence in their networked machine-learning and artificially-intelligent capabilities? How will the scriptural text be subjected to such self-automated and self-controlled calculus and algorithm? In what way would our *embodiment in the flesh* as humans be exposed to the future prospects of being blended in hybridity with silicon for survival in degraded ecosystems? Furthermore,

<sup>73</sup> I accounted for this question in: N. El-Bizri, 'God: Essence and Attributes', in T. Winter (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 121-140.

<sup>74</sup> I addressed this matter in: N. El-Bizri, 'A Levantine Reception of Heidegger', in K. Moser, and U. Gösken (eds.), *Heidegger and the Islamicate World*, London, Rowman & Littlefield International, 2019, pp. 69-84; N. El-Bizri, *The Phenomenological Quest between Avicenna and Heidegger*, 2nd edn., Albany, SUNY Press, 2014; N. El-Bizri, 'Avicenna and Essentialism', *Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 54, 2001, pp. 753-778.

<sup>75</sup> I examined Heidegger's account of the *Ge-stell* (en-framing) of the essence of modern technology in: N. El-Bizri, 'Being at Home among Things: Heidegger's Reflections on Dwelling', *Environment, Space, Place*, vol. 3, no.1, 2011, pp. 47-71; N. El-Bizri, 'On Dwelling: Heideggerian Allusions to Architectural Phenomenology', *Studia UBB – Philosophia*, vol. 60, no.1, 2015, pp. 5-30; N. El-Bizri, 'Transnational Islamism and Heidegger's Reflections on Technology', in eds. A. Cerella, and L. Odysseos (eds.), *Heidegger and the Global Age*, London, Rowman & Littlefield International, 2017, pp. 43-62.

<sup>76</sup> I accounted ontologically for the entailments of these novel technologies in: N. El-Bizri, 'Phenomenology of Place and Space in our Epoch: Thinking along Heideggerian Pathways', in E. Champion (ed.), *The Phenomenology of Real and Virtual Places*, London, Routledge, 2018, pp. 123-143.

<sup>72</sup> This is an aspect that I am trying at present to implement in the revamping of the general education program at the American University of Beirut (AUB) by introducing a new university-wide core curriculum in the liberal arts and sciences that is inspired in part by the AUB's longstanding Civilization Sequence Program (CVSP) and the Natural Sciences Tripos at the University of Cambridge in Britain, besides benchmarking these models in relation to curricula in seminal liberal arts colleges in the United States, such as those that are adopted at the Claremont consortium of colleges in Los Angeles (all being higher-education programs that I have experienced first-hand in terms of teaching within them and assuming directorship or fellowship roles).



how would such phenomena alter our conception of our *humanity*, and with it transmute our sense of values, religiosity, the sacred, etc.? Such questions require the ingenuity of all cultures, and globally, in order to address their challenges, and to face up to the destiny they apportion for our human condition via what such unprecedented phenomena already point at by way of what awaits humans in the near future, and posterity beyond our current epoch. These existential questions are connected with the epistemic conditioning through which we also acquire knowledge, process it, expand it, produce it, and apply it. The ontological question has, therefore, an epistemic horizon from within which we account for it.

The epistemological aspects that can be highlighted in this regard pertain to the development of the rudiments of the experimental method, and of the procedures of controlled testing, besides the mathematization of physics (like in the geometrization of the notion of place qua space), and in the analytics of the experiential aspects of kinaesthetic embodiment in the determination of perception as a basis for acquiring verifiable forms of knowledge. This line of inquiry is historically exemplified in the legacy of Alhazen, and the reception of his theories of vision and light, of his catoptrics and dioptrics (respectively as the sciences of the reflection and refraction of light, with their associated instruments), via his experimentations, within the perspectiva tradition of the mediaeval scholastic milieu, and in the Renaissance Italian architecture and pictorial cum plastic arts, up until the times of Girard Desargues in the early-modern epoch.<sup>77</sup>

These aspects constitute vital leitmotifs, for example in the 'Ordered Universe Project', which is held by a grant from the AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council) in Britain through the University of Oxford and the University of Durham, where modern scientists work in teams with Latinists, Arabists and Mediaevalists to study the formation of thirteenth-century science in England at the time of the founding of the University of Oxford, with an investigation of the impact of the Greco-Arabic sciences on that intellectual mediaeval milieu.<sup>78</sup> Another cognate line in research is articulated, for example, around the unfurling of Florentine *perspectivism* in the pictorial and architectural arts of the Renaissance, with figures such as Leon Battista Alberti and Lorenzo Ghiberti, as they both adaptively assimilated the science of optics of Alhazen and applied it within the sphere of architecture, painting, and relief-art. These endeavours offer a context for an encounter between modern scientists and artists, alongside historians of science and art, by way of investigating the epistemic relevance of the confluence of variegated pre-modern traditions in the production of knowledge. Such ontological and epistemic determinations also necessitate an appeal to the theories of values, in ethics, politics, and aesthetics, along with how a handed down heritage as sent our way from ancestors is handled by our contemporaries and destined through them towards posterity.

## Theories of Value?

Experiential learning and community and civic engagement are becoming of prime existential importance in the production and dissemination of knowledge and culture within the academic setting of university-wide core curricula in general education. This is set against the background of global issues and crises of unprecedented scale in ecology, and the potential of devastating destruction and impoverishment that can result from the misuse of high-technology for vehement ends, be it geopolitical or economic. Moreover, the notion of the flesh (*La chair*),<sup>79</sup> as what underpins the human embodied lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*), constitutes a phenomenon that is itself called forth into question for new definitions, and specifically due to the advancements in bio-technologies, genetics, and self-learning robotics. The same applies to our modes of *dwelling in the world*, and the organization of smart-cities through novel disruptive technologies in cybernetics, the internet-of-things, machine-learning. In what way would such phenomena affect our *lifeworld* (as evoked by the parlance of Edmund Husserl in classical phenomenology)? How would this alter our worldly conceptions that are mediated via our embodied lived and situated sensorial-motor given and evidenced experiences, and the way they get filtered through our modes of consciousness in processing understanding, imagination, memory, and the sense-data of the flux of space-time? At the ethical level, one wonders how the refinement of the moral character in accomplishing virtue can still be reached by way of cultivating the rule of *the golden mean*? In what way can excellence be the *telos* of gifted individuals who can, from the individuated particularities of their ethnicity and religious provenance, turn universal in their global aspirations, outlooks, *praxis*, and accomplishments?

Can aesthetic differences become sources of richness rather than strife, whether in plastic, visual, and performing arts, which seek beauty? Would this be potentially realizable through literature, poetry, and thought, which ponder over the truth of our being and its ethos in contemplation of the good and seeking it ethically? Or can this be instated in more pronounced forms by means of the *praxis* of politics in upholding the laws that bring justice and defuse conflict, or that sanction corruption for the sake of safeguarding civic life rather than oppressively degrading it? Beauty, truth, goodness, and justice are not to be simply construed as being sets of virtues but to seek them as *existential essentials* in the age of the planetary framing of being (what is named in Heideggerian terms under the appellation: 'Ge-stell') via the essence of modern technicity and its global will to power (*Wille der Macht*) that mobilizes humans and lifeforms as energies of standing reserve (what Heidegger called: '*Bestand*').<sup>80</sup>

These phenomena call for overcoming the pull and seduction of the language-games that unleash the powers of grandiloquence and oratory skills. Would the discourses

<sup>77</sup> For referencing, *Vide supra*, footnote 3.

<sup>78</sup> Ordered Universe Project [website], <https://ordered-universe.com/> (accessed 24 November 2019).

<sup>79</sup> The notion of '*La chair du monde*' ('the flesh of the world') is articulated in: M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, Paris, Gallimard, 1988; it is also based on his reflections in: M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, Paris, Gallimard, 2005. I have examined related leitmotifs in: El-Bizri, 'Phenomenology of Place and Space in our Epoch: Thinking along Heideggerian Pathways', art. cit. (*Vide supra*, footnote 7).

<sup>80</sup> *Vide supra*, footnotes 6-7.

of multiculturalism become freed from their situated encapsulation in the realm of what the pre-moderns classed under the antique *trivium* (grammar, logic, rhetoric), namely as *logos*-based *cum* linguistic models, rather than also engaging with scientific exactitude in thinking as classically enshrined within the demonstrative *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music)? Consequently, this calls for opening up the spheres of thought and discussion towards a meditation on the entailments of science and technicity in our epoch, as urgently set against ecological challenges and advancements in knowledge with manipulative politics and economics that threaten our conception of human life and whatever remains of the possibilities of still valuing it.

The notion of *humanity* is itself called into question in our age; let alone the *values* associated with it under the rubrics of humanism; including what has been enshrined as *virtues* of empathy, justice, hospitality, compassion. Such states of affairs evoke the prospects of the emergence of unprecedented realms in which new and algorithmically-induced concepts may yet go beyond the domains of human thought and reasoning. Novel possibilities in articulating concepts may evolve beyond what is conceivable as being strictly attached to human reasoning and modes of existence or affective lifeworld. This points towards Artificially-Intelligent machine-learning self-propelled and self-corrective algorithms of auto-control in agile robots. The *logos* may, therefore, stretch into a higher order of transcendent and mathematized computation that is beyond what is accomplished to date via formal logical models and systems of human reasoning.

It is unclear how our thinking about inter-communal relations can still be conducted from mere societal, geopolitical, or legal frameworks, let alone by appealing to interreligious dialogues, while the unprecedented developments in techno-science are challenging the very idea of being *human* altogether, or opening up our *being-in-the-world-in-the flesh* to other modes of existing besides *entities* that exceed our human capacity in coherent intellection (artificial-intelligence and machine-learning) or in agile kinaesthetic action (robots and drones).<sup>81</sup>

Some are dreaming these days of smart-cities, and aiming at perfecting their designs, by structuring them through an internet-of-things mode of urbanism and urban planning, and making them locales that are co-populated with humans by intelligent-robots, and furthermore blending enhanced-reality-places with virtual-spaces. Hints at such aspirations are associated, for example, with the projected images of the '2030 Vision' of the designing of the 'NEOM' world-city. This will be built, managed, and inhabited as 'a living laboratory and hub of innovation', and in being as such 'a sustainable ecosystem' that serves as 'a model for the New Future'. Such Mega-Metropolis is destined to emerge in this current century on the north-eastern coast of the Red Sea as a global locus

of technologies within the upper north-western region of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.<sup>82</sup>

Living within such futuristic locale is not simply a matter to be thought by way of urbanism, architectural-engineering designs, innovative technologies, or legally-sheltered lifestyles of multiculturalism and interreligious globalism. It is rather fundamentally a milieu in which we are called upon to rethink *what it is to be human*, or to nurture authentic values that shelter or humanity from what threatens it; hence to rethink about technology and ecology in view of rekindling the primordial meditation *over the meaning, place, and truth of our being-in-the-world-in-the-flesh*. This oblique form of *thinking-by-way-of-questioning* opens up a broader horizon and clearing for meditations that exceed the present debate over: '*What it is to be a Muslim outside the historically Islamicate lands (namely, and grosso modo, as being a member of an ethnic minority that is viewed as migrant-based and non-indigenous)? And: 'How is it to be situated as such within a modernist, secularised, and historically-Christian Europe?'* The earthly existential planetary fundamental question that arises can no longer be entrapped by international and intercommunal strife or cordiality over ethnicity, religiosity, geopolitics, economics. The essential question is fundamentally ontological, namely: '*What is it to be rather than not-to-be?*'

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<sup>81</sup> To think herein of the next generations of humanoid robots like 'Sophia' from 'Hanson Robotics' (activated in 2016), which received Saudi citizenship in 2017, and a non-human given a United Nations title. It is designed as a socially-interactive entity, enabled with A.I., visual-data-processing, and facial-recognition. It already has 'Hanson' sibling-robots in progress. It is advancing beyond being a chat-robot with a human-like animated mask. Its capacity to develop consciousness is in the making. For further particulars, see: 'Hanson Robotics' [website], <https://www.hansonrobotics.com/> (accessed 24 November 2019).

<sup>82</sup> 'NEOM' [website], <https://www.neom.com/en-us/> (accessed 24 November 2019).



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## IGNORANCE FUELS ISLAMOPHOBIA

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### Abstract

Islam is the religion of more 20 per cent of the population of our planet. It is a major player in international life. However, the Western world has little knowledge of Islam and because it does not know it well it does not understand it. Islam is often at the centre of unreasonable questions or fears because of the failure to distinguish Islam as religion and civilization from radical Islamism, which is only a political project. This misunderstanding leads to the ideology of the clash of civilizations, according to the now famous theory of Samuel Huntington (*The Clash of Civilizations*). This theory is accentuated by certain circles, mainly Israelis, who want a confrontation between the West and Islam. The problem is therefore not a question of belief but a discomfort of living together.

### Keywords

Communitarianism; Immigration; Integration; Islam; Islamophobia; West.

### Introduction

Islam is the religion of more than 1.5 billion people, or 20 per cent of the population of our planet. It is a major player in international life. However, Islam remains poorly known in the Western world. The literature on Islam is abundant, but it must be noted that most of the works deal with sociological, political or even media-related aspects, which are only details. Islam, the object of fantasies, fears and misunderstanding, remains an enigma for most Westerners. The Western world, therefore, has a poor understanding of Islam. Islam is often at the centre of unreasonable questions or fears because of a failure to distinguish Islam as religion and civilization from and radical Islamism, which is only a political project. Moreover, Islam is generally examined in the light of the dominant values or ideologies in the Western world—for example, secularism—without any effort being made to understand it by referring to its own specificity and values. In addition, words such as 'Islamism,' '*jihād*,' 'Salafism,' and '*sharī'a*,' are used to satiety, but no scientific definition is proposed.

This misunderstanding promotes the ideology of the 'clash of civilizations,' according to Samuel Huntington's now famous theory. It must be seen that this shock is accentuated by certain circles who want a confrontation between the West and Islam. It is true that some Western circles and pro-Israeli pressure groups are very precisely mixing Islam and terrorism to hide political problems. Far from being part of the continuity of the Islamic tradition, revolutionary activists are at odds with the Islamic tradition. They form a kind of revolutionary, activist and terrorist-Kharidjite-international of which the al-Qaeda nebula is now a component in the same way as the Iranian regime and its followers. It is therefore clear that extremist and

terrorist groups cannot claim to be Islam. And Islam should not be confused with these deviant groups and ideologies.

It is true that some Western circles and pro-Israeli pressure groups are very precisely mixing Islam and terrorism to hide political problems. Yet the first emergency is to resolve the crises in the Middle East: the occupation of Iraq, the tragedy in Palestine, the long martyrdom in Afghanistan, and so on. It is curious that those in the West who never stop assimilating Islam and terrorism never propose anything to try to resolve these crises. They preferred to invent fictitious connections to create an imaginary Islam to better nurture the ideology of the clash of civilizations that feeds US imperialism. Concerning Islam in the West, I will make three remarks. The first concerns diversity. This means that it is very simplistic to talk about Islam in the West given the diversity of Muslim communities in Western countries: Moroccans, Algerians, Turks, people from the Arab Mashreq, Afghans, Iranians, Africans, etc. Not all of them have the same history, the same approach to religion. Moreover, the problem becomes more complicated when the population census does not ask questions about religion, as is the case in France. Hence estimates that are very random, sometimes varying by a factor of two depending on sources and exaggerations. There are between 70 and 90 million Muslims in Europe (including Russia) and North America (about 3.5 million in the United States, more than one million in Canada and Quebec). Excluding Muslim Russians (about 15 million, especially in the Caucasus), the largest Muslim communities are in France and Germany, with more than 6 million in each of these countries. The fact that should be highlighted is the steady increase in these populations, which on average have more children. But it is also important to highlight the great diversity of these communities. The Western vision of Islam is dominated by the inability of some American or European circles to accept cultural diversity. First of all, it is the idea that all Muslims are identical and the refusal to admit the complexity of the Islamic fact. It is also the claim that the whole world should adopt the Western model — one may wonder which one — to achieve a so-called universal civilization, which would basically mean a Westernization or Americanization of the world. Here the issue concerns respect for diversity in a world that would tend towards standardization and globalization. The great sixteenth-century French philosopher Michel de Montaigne wrote that humanity must be approached “from variety and diversity.”<sup>83</sup> Nowadays, the requirement of a certain cultural relativism is particularly recommended if one wants to reasonably study Muslim civilization.

My second remark concerns the ignorance of Islam of the majority of people. This is, of course, the case for Westerners, but it is also the case for Muslims living in the West. This ignorance feeds fears, rejections, superstitions, etc. It feeds Islamophobia and at the same time encourages behaviour among Muslims themselves that does not promote their integration. It should be added that an uncompromising conception of secularism contributes to preventing any progress of knowledge in the religious field, which is too often reduced to secondary aspects. Islam continues to raise many questions and much hostility.

Because it is complex and poorly studied, Islam is not well understood. This lack of knowledge results from several causes: bad faith, political instrumentalization, confusion between immigration that is less and less well accepted due to economic crises, ignorance, ambiguity of some (according to the Montaigne Institute, 28.5 per cent of Muslims in France adhere to fundamentalist theories; we know that, in some suburbs, applause has welcomed the attacks in France...) The issue of women, particularly the veil, has greatly disrupted some countries with a strong anti-communitarian tradition, particularly France. It is quite surprising to see that Muslim women in European countries claim — out of ignorance, communitarianism, provocation, refusal to integrate or for many other reasons — to wear a veil that many women in Muslim countries want to remove. In any case, it is a “sign of great regression to see women putting the veil back on today,”<sup>84</sup> and also a cause of great sadness when one considers that all the women who wanted to advance the status of women in Muslim countries began by tearing off their veils: Houda Shaarawi, in 1923 in Egypt, Habiba Menchari, in Tunisia in the 1920s, and Princess Lalla Aïcha, daughter of King Mohammed V, in Morocco in the mid-1940s. It is true that things are not easy for emancipated women. In immigrant communities, young immigrant women who wish to free themselves from patriarchal customs such as arranged marriage, and surveillance from older brothers, and the constraints that result from them are often stigmatized. Moreover, the difficulty for the West is to distinguish Islam as religion and civilization from and radical Islamism, which has proclaimed itself, over the past forty years to be the bearer of political resentment in some Islamic societies.

I believe that the first objective must be to promote a better knowledge of the reality of Islamic thought. It must be shown that Islam cannot be confused with minority currents characterized by revolutionary sectarianism or terrorism. That is why I have devoted a significant part of my work on Islam to the study of Muslim dogma (*aqida*) and to the description of the intellectual, socio-political and legal evolution of Muslim thought from the first centuries of Islam to the present day. I would remind you that Islam is a reformist religion that does not correspond to the caricature that has been made of it. One of the reasons for the Western world's poor vision of Islam is that revolutionary and deviant extremists have tried to give their activities an Islamic veneer. It has become essential to show that these are lies and to recall the true meaning of these words. This will demonstrate that Islam has nothing to do with fanaticism and extremism. It is also essential to recall exactly the ideological origins of revolutionary Islamism, what is called political Islam, whose singers were the Muslim Brotherhood, and then especially Sayed Qutb in the 1950s and 1960s or the Iranian mullahs after the 1979<sup>85</sup> revolution. In this respect, an objective analysis shows that this deviant trend owes nothing to Islamic tradition and traditionalist Muslim thinkers — for example, to a thinker like Ibn Taymiya.

<sup>84</sup> Mezghnani, A. *L'État inachevé*, Paris, Gallimard, 2011, p. 243.

<sup>85</sup> Saint-Prot, C., *Islam: l'avenir de la Tradition entre révolution et occidentalisation*. Paris, Le Rocher, 2008 (traduit en arabe: الإسلام: المسئلة بين الثورة والتغريب et en anglais, *Islam. The Future of Tradition between Revolution and Westernization*, 2010 et en chinois).

<sup>83</sup> Montaigne, M., *Les Essais*, 1580-1588.



My third remark concerns the confusion that is made between immigration and Islam. Not all immigrants are Muslims – think of Eastern Europe, including Romania, or India, Africa, China, Cambodia, and Vietnam. Moreover, being Muslim is only one element among others in the identity of immigrants from Muslim countries. It should be noted that most often second or third-generation immigrants do not even speak their parents' language, with the exception of Turks, whose main identity factor is precisely their membership of Turkey. There is, therefore, a deculturation of the religious, but far from promoting a 'European' Islam, this leads to political tensions and causes dilution in a levelling globalization. There remains the problem of immigration. Why the almost systematic confusion with Islam? This confusion contributes to a negative image of Islam. At the same time, the behaviour of some Muslims (a refusal to integrate, communitarianism, provocations, etc.) accentuates the confusion.

Too often, the study of the Muslim religion consists in focusing solely on immigration, which is far from being representative of Islam. The causes of this discomfort are deeper. In reality, they are many and go far beyond religious fact. On the one hand, Westerners are facing an unprecedented immigration phenomenon, even though the economic situation in most of the countries concerned is very worrying and integration structures have been abolished or broken down, such as military service in France and public schools. On the other hand, conflicts and the adventures of international events are taking hold in people's daily lives due to the prodigious development of communication technologies. These events, which are generally treated in a lapidary manner and poorly explained by often mediocre media, naturally lead to misunderstanding or rejection of the Islamic world.

The problem is therefore not a question of belief but a discomfort of living together. It will not be solved without taking the necessary measures to control immigration, which is seen by many peoples as aggression. But neither will the problem be solved if we refuse to get to know Islam better – and this applies to both Muslims and non-Muslims. In other words, we must get out of clichés, caricatures and outdated customs. I affirm that Islam retains the same and unchanging ability to develop, generate, and innovate. It is therefore in itself, in its tradition, that Islam will find the strength to progress and adapt. Today, as in the past, it is the reform (*islah*), i.e. the "reactivation" of the Islamic tradition by the *ijtihād*, which will make it possible to regain all the dynamism and creative vitality of the Muslim religion.<sup>86</sup>

## Conclusion

I have two concluding statements. The first is that it is not up to the West to dictate to Islam its reforms. They must come from within while respecting Islamic identity and values. It is in itself, and not by imitating external models, that Islam will find the strength to meet the challenges of the modern world. The second statement is that it is obviously not immigrant communities in the West that are to be expected to make the

effort to adapt and evolve. Indeed, these communities have little knowledge of Islam and do not have in their ranks the leaders capable of wide-ranging reflection. It is up to Islamic scholars in the Muslim world to combat deviations and implement the necessary *ijtihād*. Indeed, as I write in my book *The Islamic Tradition of Reform*,<sup>87</sup> Islam needs new wise men who, by practising *ijtihād* in the light of the Koran and Sunna, will reaffirm its living and eternal Message by providing solutions adapted to new situations. It is *ijtihād* that Islam continues to need in its reform efforts to continue to combine tradition that does not merge with folk archaisms, and progress that does not mean acculturation and blameworthy innovations.

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<sup>87</sup> *La tradition islamique de la réforme*, Paris, CNRS éditions, 2010, traduction en arabe حركة الإصلاح في التراث الإسلامي, Le Caire, Centre national de la traduction, 2013, trad. en espagnol, Barcelone, ed. Bellaterra, 2014.

## HOW ISLAM SHAPED THE RELATIONSHIP OF STATE AND RELIGION IN GERMANY: RELIGIOUS POLICY AS INTEGRATION POLICY

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### Abstract

This article addresses how the presence of Muslims in Germany has changed the relationship between religion and state in Germany. The article introduces these questions by showing how many Muslims live in Germany and how they are perceived by the public. Though Muslims are not as numerous as publicly thought, they still are feared by many in the population. This leads to a strong public demand to regulate religion more strictly. However, such an active religious policy was a taboo just two decades ago, as will be shown by an analysis of scholarly literature and party manifestos. Since then, an ideological shift has occurred in Germany, now allowing the state to perform a more restrictive religious policy. How these new options are used will be shown at the end of the paper. While the two major churches in Germany do not face restrictions, the new religious policy clearly limits the religious freedom of Muslims. At the same time, however, some aspects of Muslim life in Germany are supported by the state. The aim of this mix of support and restriction is to 'integrate' German Muslims. Using religious policy as integration policy is a completely new phenomenon in the history of (West) Germany after 1949.

### Keywords

Islam; Germany; Religious Policy; State and Religion; Integration policy; Discrimination.

### Introduction

In just a few decades, the number of Muslims in Germany rose to four million, or 5 per cent of the population.<sup>88</sup> However, Muslims are still a relatively small minority. In 1950, 50.6 per cent of the West German population was a member of the former Protestant state churches, 45.8 per cent member of the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>89</sup> This dominance of the so-called 'People's Churches' continued until the end of the 1980s.<sup>90</sup> Today, Germany is more plural: Only 30 per cent of the population is Protestant, and another 30 per cent is Catholic. 34 per cent do not belong to any denomination. No other religion besides Islam counts for more than 2 per cent of the population.<sup>91</sup> Thus, Muslims constitute the largest religious group after the members of the Roman Catholic Church and

the Evangelical Churches – although these two groups are way larger. This paper covers the question of how Muslims as a new religious group have influenced and shaped religious policy in Germany. Several approaches deal with the effects of new religious groups in societies. Rauf Ceylan describes Muslims as "new Catholics."<sup>92</sup> In the United States, the growth of the Catholic population in the nineteenth century led to a stricter separation of state and religion.<sup>93</sup> Another hypothesis can be derived from Anthony Gill<sup>94</sup>: If a society becomes religiously pluralistic and no tradition is dominant, the religious policy is less restrictive. However, Richard Traunmüller makes the point that pluralization may not lead to equal treatment, but to discrimination against particular religious groups.<sup>95</sup>

To answer the question of how Islam influenced German religious policy, I will conduct five steps. At first, I will outline how Muslims are perceived in the German public and which political impetus derives from these perceptions. After that, I will describe the limits of an active religious policy in Germany. These limitations have become weaker due to the Islamic presence and its public image. The new political options will be described by an analysis of party manifestos which shows how the formerly limits of religious policy have changed. How these new possibilities are used will be demonstrated by an analysis of concrete policy actions regarding all religions in Germany from 1990 to 2016.

### Public Fear

Mistrust against Muslims and Islam in general are strong in the German population. Detlef Pollack demonstrated that 72 per cent of the West Germans and 74 per cent of the East Germans perceive the growing numbers of Muslims in the society as a threat. At least sometimes, 61 per cent of the West Germans and 68 per cent of the East Germans fear that among the Muslims are many terrorists. A majority of the population – 71 per cent in the West and 74 per cent in the East – wants the state to surveil Islamic communities<sup>96</sup>. Terrorist attacks motivated by Islamism seem to play a major role in this negative public perception of Islam, as the European Values Study shows. Asked whom they would like to have as a neighbour, 20 per cent of the respondents disliked Muslims in 1990. In 1999/2000, this share decreased to 10 per cent in the West and to 15 per cent in the East. However, in 2008 after the terrorist attacks in New York, London, Madrid, and other cities, the dislike rose back to 20 per cent in West Germany and even to 35 per cent in East Germany.<sup>97</sup> These negative images of Muslims are probably the reason why the German population drastically overestimates the number of Muslims in Germany. Germans without a migration background believe that eleven million

<sup>88</sup> S. Haug, S. Müssig and A. Stichs, *Muslimisches Leben in Deutschland*, Nürnberg, Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2009, p. 80.

<sup>89</sup> fowid, *Religionszugehörigkeit, Deutschland, Bevölkerung*, 2009, [http://fowid.de/fileadmin/datenarchiv/Religionszugehoerigkeit/Bevoelkerung\\_1950-2008.pdf](http://fowid.de/fileadmin/datenarchiv/Religionszugehoerigkeit/Bevoelkerung_1950-2008.pdf).

<sup>90</sup> U. Willems, 'Bedingungen, Elemente und Effekte des politischen Handelns der Kirchen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland', in Zimmer, A. and Weißels, B. (eds.), *Verbände und Demokratie in Deutschland*, Opladen, Leske + Budrich, 2001, p. 86.

<sup>91</sup> fowid, *Religionszugehörigkeit Bevölkerung Deutschland*, 2014, [http://fowid.de/fileadmin/datenarchiv/Religionszugehoerigkeit/Religionszugehoerigkeit\\_Deutschland\\_2014.pdf](http://fowid.de/fileadmin/datenarchiv/Religionszugehoerigkeit/Religionszugehoerigkeit_Deutschland_2014.pdf).

<sup>92</sup> R. Ceylan, *Cultural Time Lag: Moscheekatechese und islamischer Religionsunterricht im Kontext von Säkularisierung*, Wiesbaden, Springer VS, 2014, p. 131.

<sup>93</sup> D. Lacorne, *Religion in America. A Political History*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2011, pp. 76–79.

<sup>94</sup> A. Gill, *The Political Origins of Religious Liberty*, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 54.

<sup>95</sup> R. Traunmüller, 'Nationale Pfadabhängigkeit oder internationale Konvergenz? Eine quantitativ-vergleichende Analyse religionspolitischer Entwicklungen in 31 europäischen Demokratien 1990–2011', *Zeitschrift für Politik*, vol. 61., no. 2, 2014, p. 171.

<sup>96</sup> D. Pollack, 'Wahrnehmung und Akzeptanz religiöser Vielfalt in ausgewählten Ländern Europa: Erste Beobachtungen', in Pollack, D. et al. (eds.), *Grenzen der Toleranz. Wahrnehmung und Akzeptanz religiöser Vielfalt in Europa*, Wiesbaden, Springer VS, 2014, p. 33.

<sup>97</sup> A. Yendell, 'Warum die Bevölkerung Ostdeutschlands gegenüber Muslimen ablehnender eingestellt ist als die Bevölkerung Westdeutschlands', in Pollack, D. et al. (eds.), *Grenzen der Toleranz. Wahrnehmung und Akzeptanz religiöser Vielfalt in Europa*, Wiesbaden, Springer VS, 2014, pp. 66–67.



Muslims live in Germany, but in reality, there are only four million Muslims in Germany. However, even Germans with Turkish ancestry believe that nine million Muslims live in Germany.<sup>98</sup> The popular fear against Muslims even inspired demonstrations against a perceived Islamization of the Occident, although it remains unclear which role Islamophobia really plays in these demonstrations.<sup>99</sup> The successful Islamophobic right-wing party Alternative für Deutschland (AfD, Alternative for Germany) will probably have a stronger influence than these demonstrations in the future as they won many seats in local, state, and national level elections.<sup>100</sup> In general, the German public is dominated by a strong wish to treat religions differently. Detlef Pollack has shown that 81 per cent of West Germans and 75 per cent of East Germans agree that all religions should be respected. However, only 49 per cent of West Germans and 53 per cent of East Germans agree that all religious groups should have the same rights.<sup>101</sup> The successes of Islamophobic sentiments, movements and the Islamophobic AfD led the established parties to an adaptation of more restrictive policies towards Islam – with the clear aim not to lose voters in future elections. Such a restrictive policy was a taboo just some decades ago.

## Religious Policy: A Former Taboo

The concept of 'religious policy' or '*Religionspolitik*' has been used for quite a while in the German scholarly discourse, with the exception of the Federal Republic of Germany. *Religionspolitik* can be found in the title or subtitle of many scientific publications before 2001: in the scholarly discourse on antiquity, the term is used self-evidently.<sup>102</sup> The scholars describe the oppression of Christians in the Roman Empire, the Christianisation policy of Constantine the Great, and other forms of active religious policy. In the scholarly works on the Medieval Ages, the term religious policy is seldom used, because the imagination is strong that secular and sacral power had been more or less equal – so that the state could not regulate the church (differing are e.g. Mordek and Glatthaar).<sup>103</sup> The term returns in the analysis of early modern history and the state policies of confessionalization.<sup>104</sup>

In the study of Imperial systems, the term religious policy was used from time to time.<sup>105</sup> More prominent was the use to describe the authoritarian and totalitarian systems in the twentieth century: the Soviet Union,<sup>106</sup> Nazi Germany,<sup>107</sup> and the German Democratic Republic.<sup>108</sup> The pejorative usage of the concept reveals its use to describe state action in the Weimar Republic<sup>109</sup> and the laicistic French Republic.<sup>110</sup> For Islamic societies, the term is used over all epochs.<sup>111</sup> However, the concept of *Religionspolitik* was a taboo to describe the perceived peaceful separation of state and religion in the Federal Republic of Germany for decades.<sup>112</sup> Political elites shared a religious policy consensus which instructed politicians not to tangle religious topics, but leave them to the decisions of courts, esp. the constitutional court.<sup>113</sup> In 1989, Göttrik Wewer may have been the first to use the concept of religious policy to describe the situation in Germany. He reports that the two major churches in Germany discussed how to react to the growing religious competition by Islam and so-called cults and if an active religious policy would necessary to counter the competition.<sup>114</sup> Ten years later, Helmut Zander demanded "Religionspolitik!" and a more active approach of the state to the religious field.

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<sup>110</sup> C. von Krosigk, *Der Islam in Frankreich. Laizistische Religionspolitik von 1974 bis 1999*, Hamburg, Kovac, 2000.

<sup>111</sup> E. Glassen, *Der mittlere Weg: Studien zur Religionspolitik und Religiosität der späteren Abbasiden-Zeit*, Wiesbaden, Steiner, 1981. M. Knüppel, *Die Türkisch-Orthodoxe Kirche: Ein Beitrag zur türkischen Religionspolitik*, Göttingen, Pontus, 1996. A. Böttcher, *Syrische Religionspolitik unter Asad*, Freiburg/Breisgau, ABI, 1998.

<sup>112</sup> R. Schieder, 'Die Zivilisierung der Religionen als Ziel staatlicher Religionspolitik?', *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, vol. 6, 2007, p. 17.

<sup>113</sup> U. Willems, 'Weltanschaulich neutraler Staat, christlich-abendländische Kultur und Laizismus. Zu Struktur und Konsequenzen aktueller religionspolitischer Konflikte in der Bundesrepublik', in Walther, M. (ed.), *Religion und Politik: Zu Theorie und Praxis des theologisch-politischen Komplexes*, Baden-Baden, Nomos, 2004, p. 308.

<sup>114</sup> G. Wewer, 'Die großen Kirchen und das politische System der Bundesrepublik Deutschland', in Abromeit, H. and Wewer, G. (eds.), *Die Kirchen und die Politik: Beiträge zu einem ungeklärten Verhältnis*, Opladen, Westdeutscher Verlag, 1989, pp. 49–50.

<sup>98</sup> A. Wittliff, *Wie viele Muslime leben in Deutschland? Einschätzungsmuster von Personen mit und ohne Migrationshintergrund*, Berlin, Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Integration und Migration, 2014, p. 2.

<sup>99</sup> H. Vorländer, M. Herold, S. Schüller, PEGIDA: *Entwicklung, Zusammensetzung und Deutung einer Empörungsbewegung*, Wiesbaden, Springer, 2016, 73–76.

<sup>100</sup> A. Häusler, 'Ausblick', in Häusler, A. (ed.), *Die Alternative für Deutschland: Programmatik, Entwicklung und politische Verortung*, Wiesbaden, Springer VS, 2016, pp. 242–243.

<sup>101</sup> D. Pollack, 'Grenzen der Toleranz: Deutschlands Plädoyer für die Ungleichbehandlung von Religionsgemeinschaften', in Pollack, D. et al. (eds.), *Grenzen der Toleranz. Wahrnehmung und Akzeptanz religiöser Vielfalt in Europa*, Wiesbaden, Springer VS, 2014, p. 35.

<sup>102</sup> e.g.: W. Enßlin, *Die Religionspolitik des Kaisers Theodosius des Großen*, München, Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1953. H. von Schoenebeck, *Beiträge zur Religionspolitik des Maxentius und Constantin*, Aalen, Scientia, 1962. H.-J. Diesner, *Die Auswirkungen der Religionspolitik Thrasamunds und Hilderichs auf Ostgoten und Byzantiner*, Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 1967. F. Schachermeyr, *Religionspolitik und Religiosität bei Perikles: Voruntersuchungen zu einer Monographie über Perikles und seine Zeit*, Wien, Böhlau, 1968. M. Frey, *Untersuchungen zur Religion und zur Religionspolitik des Kaisers Elagabal*, Stuttgart, Steiner, 1989. R. Selinger, *Die Religionspolitik des Kaisers Decius: Anatomie einer Christenverfolgung*, Frankfurt/Main, Peter Lang, 1994. V. Keil, *Quellensammlung zur Religionspolitik Konstantins des Großen*, Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995. C. Colpe, 'Civitas Graeca' und 'Eupistia Hellenike': Kennworte zur Religionspolitik des Kaisers Julian', in Schöllgen, G. (ed.), *Stimuli. Exegese und ihre Hermeneutik in Antike und Christentum: Festschrift für Ernst Dassmann*, Münster, Aschendorff, 1996, pp. 308–328. D. Alvarez Cineira, *Die Religionspolitik des Kaisers Claudius und die paulinische Mission*, Freiburg im Breisgau, Herder, 1999.

<sup>103</sup> H. Mordek and M. Glatthaar, 'Von Wahrsagerinnen und Zauberern: Ein Beitrag zur Religionspolitik Karls des Großen', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, vol. 75, 1993, pp. 33–64.

<sup>104</sup> e.g.: I. Ludolph, *Die Voraussetzungen der Religionspolitik Karls V.*, Berlin, 1965. H. Stoesser, *Der Gachnanger Handel 1610: Ein Beitrag zur Religionspolitik der Eidgenossenschaft*, Freiburg/Schweiz, 1965. H. Rabe, *Reichsbund und Interim: Die Verfassungs- und Religionspolitik*

He, too, identified so-called cults and Islam as threats to the public, although he states that cults may not be as successful as perceived publically.<sup>115</sup>

However, very few scholars used the analytical or political concept of religious policy. The historian Anselm Doering-Manteuffel states that religious policy as an analytical category shows the contrast between actions in the open society of a parliamentary democracy and dictatorially governed societies with totalitarian demands.<sup>116</sup> His view was shared broadly, as a statement of the former minister of justice, Brigitte Zypries, shows; she said during a conference in 2000 that the use of the term 'religious policy' is uncommon in Germany and sounded like a dirigiste policy which non-democratic states used to instrumentalize religions for their own ends.<sup>117</sup> Just two years later, the taboo had fallen.

### The Ideological Rise of Religious Policy

Already in 2002, the liberal party FDP included the term *Religionspolitik* into their electoral manifesto.<sup>118</sup> The taboo was broken. The Liberals demanded, among other things religious education for Muslims pupils at school – which was normal for Christians pupils for decades. They argued for this religious education not out of a motive of equal treatment, but because they wanted to support the integration of foreign Muslims.<sup>119</sup> Although other parties did not use the term *Religionspolitik*, they had similar policies in their manifestos. The Christian Democrats (CDU) and Christian Socials (CSU) wanted religious instruction for Muslim pupils in the German language.<sup>120</sup> The Social Democrats demanded the same in their electoral manifesto in 2005.<sup>121</sup> It was the same year that the first official state institution used the term *Religionspolitik* in a publication regarding Muslims in Germany.<sup>122</sup>

In just a few years, religious policy had changed from a taboo to a legitimate practice in German policy. The idea that the state has to determine the place and status of religion in a society and to act accordingly became prevalent.<sup>123</sup> This development can be seen in the party manifestos of the major German parties as well. German parties use party manifestos to describe their long-term policy goals in a general manner. Anna Elisabet Liebl has counted how often the terms 'church' and 'religion' are used in party manifestos. All major parties – CDU, CSU, SPD, FDP, Greens, and Left – have increased the coverage of

church and religion in their manifestos over time. The Christian Democrats (CDU) had five instances of church and religion in their manifesto in 1978, 20 in the manifesto of 1994, and even twenty-three in the manifesto of 2007. The Christian Socials (CSU) increased their numbers from two instances in 1968 and nine in 1993 to 24 in 2007. The Social Democrats (SPD) share the development: Their manifesto used the terms church and religion five times in 1959, fourteen times in 1998, and fifteen times in 2007. The liberal FDP's manifesto did not cover church and religion in 1985, but eighteen times in 2012. The Greens, too, did not cover church and religion in 1980 and only three times in 1993, but seventeen times in 2012. The Left Party started with eight uses of church and religion in 1990 and rose to seventeen in 2011.<sup>124</sup> The coverage of religious topics increased in coalition agreements as well. However, most of the policies toward religion are not totally new. What is new is that issues that had been self-evident just some years ago now seem to be contested – and parties feel the need to confirm the status quo for the established churches. This implies that it would now be possible to have a different relationship between state and religion in Germany.<sup>125</sup>

### The Impact on Actual Religious Policy

How do these ideological shifts influence the actual religious policy in Germany? Do they foster a separation of state and religion, equal treatment of all religions, or discrimination against newcomers? To answer this question, I will analyse how the political decisions from 1990 to 2016 influenced the different religious and ideological groups. As a basis, I use the compilation of Antonius Liedhegener,<sup>126</sup> leaving out the court decisions and adding further political decisions. My presentation does not claim to be complete, since in the case of religious and ideological communities that are not very controversial and at the same time small, religious policies are of little interest for the public and therefore seldom reported. In sum, I count twenty-six measures including the ban of headscarves for teachers, the granting and refusal of the status of some religious communities as public corporations (*Körperschaft des öffentlichen Rechts*), and inclusion of support for religion in state constitutions.

Of the twenty-six measures, fourteen can be assessed as supporting the religious community concerned, eight as restrictive and three are controversial in their effect. At first glance, this seems to support the thesis that freedom of religion increases if hegemony ceases to exist. At second glance, however, it is noticeable that nine of the fourteen supporting measures concern the two large churches and Jewish religious communities. In addition to the new circumcision rules, which also benefit the Jewish communities, three other supporting measures apply to Muslim organisations, two of them in Hesse alone; however, another one also affects the Alevis. The other two supporting measures favour the Orthodox Church(es) and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons).

<sup>115</sup> H. Zander, 'Religionspolitik!', *Merkur*, vol. 52, no. 7, 1998, p. 587.

<sup>116</sup> A. Doering-Manteuffel, 'Religionspolitik im Kalten Krieg. Die Bedeutung des Militärseelsorge-Vertrags von 1957 in der antagonistischen Gesellschaftsstruktur der Bundesrepublik und der DDR', in Doering-Manteuffel, A., and Nowak, K. (eds.), *Religionspolitik in Deutschland: Von der Frühen Neuzeit bis zur Gegenwart*, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 1999, p. 261.

<sup>117</sup> B. Zypries, 'Zum religionspolitischen Konzept der Bundesregierung', in Siegele-Wenschekwitz, L. et al. (eds.), *Religionspolitik in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Konzepte der im Bundestag vertretenen politischen Parteien, der Bundesregierung, der evangelischen und katholischen Kirche*, Frankfurt/Main, Haag + Herchen, 2000, p. 57.

<sup>118</sup> A. E. Liebl, *Parteien und Religionspolitik im Kooperationsmodell der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, München, Utz, 2014, p. 20.

<sup>119</sup> FDP, *Bürgerprogramm 2002: Programm der FDP zur Bundestagswahl 2002*, <https://www.fdp.de/files/653/Buergerprogramm2002.pdf>, p. 65.

<sup>120</sup> CDU und CSU, *Leistung und Sicherheit – Zeit für Taten: Regierungsprogramm 2002/2006 von CDU und CSU*, [http://www.hss.de/fileadmin/migration/downloads/BTW\\_2002-09-22\\_01.pdf](http://www.hss.de/fileadmin/migration/downloads/BTW_2002-09-22_01.pdf), p. 63.

<sup>121</sup> A. E. Liebl, *Parteien und Religionspolitik im Kooperationsmodell der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, München, Utz, 2014, p. 84.

<sup>122</sup> A. Liedhegener, 'Religionspolitik in Deutschland im europäischen Kontext', *Zeitschrift für Politik*, vol. 61, no. 2, 2014, pp. 128.

<sup>123</sup> A. Liedhegener, 'Religionspolitik in Deutschland im europäischen Kontext', *Zeitschrift für Politik*, vol. 61, no. 2, 2014, pp. 127.

<sup>124</sup> A. E. Liebl, *Parteien und Religionspolitik im Kooperationsmodell der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, München, Utz, 2014, pp. 257–282.

<sup>125</sup> A. Liedhegener, 'Religionspolitik in Deutschland im europäischen Kontext', *Zeitschrift für Politik*, vol. 61, no. 2, 2014, pp. 123–125.

<sup>126</sup> A. Liedhegener, 'Das Feld der "Religionspolitik" – ein explorativer Vergleich der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Schweiz seit 1990', *Zeitschrift für Politik*, 2014, pp. 189–192.

The restrictive religious policy measures present a different picture: three regard Muslims, two Jehovah's Witnesses, one the Humanist Association, one so-called sect and another one the two large churches. The restriction of the churches, however, was lifted by courts, as was the restriction of Jehovah's Witnesses and two of the Muslims. For Muslims, there are three further religious policy measures, which from the point of view of freedom of religion are at least to be classified as controversial.

The ambivalent treatment of Islam is conspicuous. The new dynamics of religious politics, which Antonius Liedhegener observes from the 2000s onwards, primarily concern Islam.<sup>127</sup> While some political decisions such as the granting of corporate status to the Ahmadiyya or the introduction of religious education in accordance with the Basic Law are clearly supportive, other political decisions such as the headscarf ban in particular have restricted freedoms for Muslims. Furthermore, measures such as the German Islam Conference and the structure of the Advisory Councils for Islamic Studies are highly controversial. All other communities are clearly, albeit not always particularly strong, on the side of those who profit (especially the two major churches and the Jewish communities) or on the side of the losers (Jehovah's Witnesses, so-called sects, the Humanist Association) in the religious-political decisions of the last 25 years.

The religious and ideological pluralization in Germany has led to a re-politicization of religion, but this has not had a negative effect on the two large churches and the Jewish communities in religious politics. This confirms the findings of Richard Trautmüller;<sup>128</sup> at the European level, greater diversity does not lead to greater liberalism but to more restrictions, which do not affect the established communities. Antonius Liedhegener also comes to the conclusion that the two major churches in Germany do not need to worry much about religious policy since secular positions were not capable of winning a majority in political parties and the political public.<sup>129</sup> This is also made clear by the fact that the representatives of secular positions continue to take the legal route if they want to be successful.

## Conclusion

The presence of Muslims has changed the relationship between state and religion in Germany deeply. Just two decades ago, an active religious policy by the state to influence religion was a taboo. But over time, the public mistrust against Muslims and Islam led to demands for a stronger regulation of religion. This development can be traced in electoral and party manifestos, and this ideological shift has manifested in actual state action. For the two major German churches not much has changed. Muslims however, face a new form of religious policy, a mix of positive support and negative restrictions with the aim to 'integrate' and 'regulate' them.

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<sup>127</sup> A. Liedhegener, 'Das Feld der "Religionspolitik" – ein explorativer Vergleich der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Schweiz seit 1990', *Zeitschrift für Politik*, 2014, pp. 182-183.

<sup>128</sup> R. Trautmüller, 'Nationale Pfadabhängigkeit oder internationale Konvergenz? Eine quantitativ-vergleichende Analyse religionspolitischer Entwicklungen in 31 europäischen Demokratien 1990-2011', *Zeitschrift für Politik*, vol. 61., no. 2, 2014, p. 177.

<sup>129</sup> A. Liedhegener, 'Das Feld der "Religionspolitik" – ein explorativer Vergleich der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Schweiz seit 1990', *Zeitschrift für Politik*, 2014, p. 206.



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## ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN INTEGRATING MUSLIM RESIDENTS IN EUROPE

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### Abstract

After the Syrian crisis, the number of Muslim refugees fleeing to European and Western countries increased enormously. Many countries in the West perceived this influx as a menace while others considered it to be a challenge and tried to understand both the religion and cultures of the new residents. Civil society organizations play a role in helping Muslim residents integrate into their new European societies. They also try, through different programs and activities, to bring people closer. This paper will discuss this context and explore examples of initiatives and activities fostering integration and their impact in some European countries, as well as their strengths and weaknesses.

### Keywords

Muslims; Islam; Refugees; The West; Societies; Policies; Civil Society; Integration; Europe.

### Introduction

After decades of hard work, Europe is proud of the level it has reached in implementing human rights and freedoms, especially when it comes to advocating freedom of religious expression, diversity, and plurality. With large numbers of newly arrived migrants and/or citizens from different backgrounds, religions, and origins, its societies represent an example of diversity and pluralism coping with difference as richness. However, Europe today is also facing great challenges regarding integration and shared living with these migrants and/or citizens. Muslims particularly are a group which faces the biggest challenges in European and Western societies in that sense, being at the centre of most debates regarding social cohesion within European "Christian" societies. This is mostly because Muslims identify respect for religion as an important and integral part of their lives in their societies, in comparison with other non-Muslim citizens, and many of them perceive Islam as a way of life and not just of worship.

### Muslims in the West

Although Muslims have been part of European and Western societies for decades (some are third-generation descendants in large European countries like France), European policies and societies still deal with Islam as a new phenomenon. While other religions are considered part of the diverse European societies, Islam still represents a dilemma. The reasons for such confusion with Islam in Europe are due to many factors and influences, but in order to explain a few of them, it is important to explore them from both a European as well as a Muslim perspective. In the historical collective memory of Europeans, Muslims are still perceived as invaders or the enemy of Christian Europe, going back to episodes in history such as the Ottoman Empire conquests, the fall of Constantinople, or the Arab expansion in

Europe, for instance Al-Andalus and the schism between East and West. Ignorance about Islam often provokes an attitude of rejection towards its followers. Stereotypes about Muslims cause fear and doubt for Westerners who see them as terrorists, fanatics and above all as aliens to modern Western life, who arrive in Western countries with many children and end up conquering these countries by changing their demographic balance. The lack of knowledge about Islam makes Westerners feel vulnerable and sceptical about the Islamic religion, its followers, its places of worship, and any activity related to Islam. Prejudice, fears, and stereotypes are leading to certain xenophobia and consequently to rejection which could at times lead to violence.

Islam is thought of as one unit, and most Muslims are treated as one homogeneous group of believers without taking into account the large numbers of followers and the historical and demographic distances which caused several schisms and sects to appear within Islam over the decades, just as with Christianity, for instance. Part of the particularity of one religion over another is appearance. While Muslim identity can be expressed physically by women wearing a veil or men growing a beard and wearing traditional clothes which strike the attention of others, making it very easy to recognize them anywhere they go as devout Muslims, regular "Christian" Europeans do not express religion through a specific physical appearance, causing many people to feel threatened by visible displays of religion representing a religious identity which is emphasized daily by the media as a threat and danger to European security. Europeans may interpret such display as a conflict between civic life and religious life. Comparisons that Muslims draw between Christian nuns and Muslim women wearing a veil are not compatible for Europeans since nuns already chose to live a religious 'mystic' life while Muslim women are living in civil secular societies and are part of daily life. This takes another step towards interpreting such appearances to be offensive to European democracy and discriminatory towards women.

Muslim immigrants arrive in Europe with mixed feelings and a complex state of mind, torn between the need of a new life with opportunities for decent living conditions especially economically, and the fear of losing their identity in a new different society, mainly religiously. This affects their lives in a way that even changes their perception of Islam. Therefore, the type of Islam lived today depends largely on how Muslims, from all groups and denominations, interpret their religion in accordance with the context of their lives. Muslims who live in the Arab world perceive Islam as part of their Arab identity and may follow different schools of interpretation according to the Arab culture and social realities, while Muslims in Europe face different realities and therefore might adopt other schools of interpretation, which help them to cope with their new and changing context. This is clear when talking about family laws and the situation of women; for example, Islam in France has allowed for the first woman imam to lead the prayer in mosques while in the Arab world, this is out of the question since leading prayer can only be done by men.

In addition, the fact that many Muslims living in Europe do not speak the Arabic language as a mother tongue makes them more exposed to religious manipulation by misinterpreting

the words of the Koran and/or Hadith. This has caused the authorities to question the background of imams in many mosques and the content of their sermons to people during Friday prayers. This was also one of the reasons which allowed extremist ideas to penetrate among young Muslims in the West and resulted in a large number of young European Muslims joining the combat of ISIS in Syria. Such manipulation has also allowed for a new current of ignorance and hatred towards different religious minorities in the Arab World, especially towards Christians, Jews, or non-Sunni Muslims and has an impact on Muslims living in Europe, who started to perceive Europeans as Christians, Zionists, and allies of the Western countries which support or cause wars in the Islamic world.

These ideas were easy to spread because they simply took advantage of an existing situation in the Arab world which allows for manipulations and misinterpretations: firstly, the Arab education system, where often Muslims learn nothing about Christianity in colleges, institutes or universities, while Christians study Islamic history and religion in addition to learning the Koran in Arabic language classes (sometimes by heart). This allowed for a gap of knowledge to widen between citizens of the same country based on religious difference. Secondly, political frustration which is caused, on the one hand, by the international political decisions that many Arabs consider unfair (especially in relation to the Palestinian-Israeli issue), and on the other, by local political systems where democracy and freedom of individual, social and intellectual expression are lacking. The third and fourth factors are economical frustration, with a high rate of unemployment and the lack of opportunities for both employment and development as well as external interference of a third-party that only pursues political interests by fostering and supporting the conflict; for example, economists spoke of weapon sales by western countries in power, such as the United States, France and others, and how such sales helped to alleviate the economic crisis in the Western world.

## Initiatives

Many civil society organizations<sup>130</sup> have noticed the gap and realized the need to bring people closer and find a long-term plan to solve issues which will affect future social cohesion in European countries. This plan involves working on multiple levels, in both host communities and original countries of migrants in the Middle East, through different projects which could help spread awareness in both sides, promote human rights, and enable people to work together in the future to build their lives in both societies. The EU endorses the role of CSOs because it considers them to be “usually close to local communities and can therefore play a crucial role in development cooperation” and seeks to strengthen their role in “shaping strategies with a view to improving local ownership of development processes” (European Commission). The work of CSOs in European, Arab and Islamic countries have taken

different forms in different domains. The following gives a few examples of this work in the domains of education, media, culture, politics, and security.

The field of education is one of the most important fields to measure integration as students from different backgrounds and religions join native/local students and share many aspects of the learning process, mainly language, thought, and daily life, whether in classrooms or school/university facilities. Parents get involved in the education received by their children and therefore end up affecting the entire process, with concerns regarding segregation of their children for not being able to agree to join all activities and or share the same ideas as all other students. Take, for example, swimming periods, sexual education classes, or even wearing the veil to school – all actions which contradict the culture and customs of Muslim newcomers but are habitual for local European students. This leads parents to prefer sending their children to schools which tend to be more ethnically mixed where teachers tend to be more sensitive towards difference. Many initiatives have taken place in schools, universities, and teaching centres for all ages. They vary from workshops, seminars, conferences, and courses to developing training and teaching manuals to address subjects of integration, difference, Islam as religion and culture, and the Arabic language and calligraphy.

Cultural programs and activities have been organized by different entities and civil society organizations at different cultural centres, theatres and public venues. Culture is a very important space to speak of a shared human heritage, history and identity where beauty is the main denominator and a language like music is universal. It is where diversity is represented as richness to any society through its different but yet tasty dishes and where its movies, theatre plays, paintings, and photography add to the already existing beautiful range of colours and images known to Europeans.

One of the biggest challenges in all these initiatives is to address media, social media, and the freedom of expression, especially as it is one of the venues which helps in spreading certain stereotypes and prejudice towards different groups, yet at the same time is one of the easiest methods to learn about a certain group or incident around the world. Many important initiatives were organized to tackle communication skills, verifying information (especially online), freedom of speech, voicing, author rights, social media tools, hate speech, and privacy. The initiatives were carried out through travels, courses, training workshops, paid projects, film and other media contests as well as mega-media events which allowed for direct contact with journalists, broadcasters, film directors, and TV/radio presenters. Other initiatives were more concerned with ensuring political and civic participation of Muslims both in their societies in the Arab/Islamic world as well as in the new European societies they are joining. Voting and being part of ‘practised’ democratic systems may seem like a new reality to many of them. Therefore, training workshops, debates and different events concentrated on citizenship, fostering active civil and political participation of people as stakeholders in their societies, helping them to trust in local political institutions and representatives such as in Parliament. The different above-mentioned initiatives take into consideration many aspects

<sup>130</sup> According to UNGP, Civil Society Organizations or CSOs include non-state, not-for-profit, voluntary entities formed by people in the social sphere that are separate from the State and the market. CSOs represent a wide range of interests and ties. They can include community-based organizations as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In the context of the UN Guiding Principles Reporting Framework, CSOs do not include business or for-profit associations.



of life and follow a holistic approach to help bring people closer. The work done has many positive points to take into consideration but has also neglected a few important ones which can be advised.

European or Western CSOs arrive in the Arab Muslim world with a conscious or unconscious first-world mentality. This has a great weight on their work since they usually perceive these countries as third-world. They sometimes do not make enough effort to consider cultural limitations related to the context and life in these countries and seek to implement European policies and customs, especially when it comes to issues like women's rights and family law (adoption, civil marriage, inheritance... etc.). They prefer sending their own experts from Europe to research and try to solve complex local Arab and Muslim issues, which does not always have a positive effect on projects.

Because of the financial dimension, many of the CSOs are too concerned about immediate results and reporting in order to prove the success of the initiative and justifying funds, and they do not allow enough time for more activities and work related to content and long-term results and achievements. They sometimes forget that social work and change need time and patience and cannot be rushed. The same can be said about paperwork related to this matter, as bureaucratic procedures and reports which focus on timeframes more than anything eat up half of the time of projects' team members instead of allowing them to focus more on activities and human relations in societies where the projects are carried out.

Another social problem that such initiatives have created is economic dependence on external humanitarian funds, to an extent that many local CBOs think of this as a business and have created their own mechanisms to do the minimum and work superficially but yet guarantee the paperwork according to funders' regulations and procedures. Young people who collaborate in these initiatives are dazzled by the economic dimension and stop appreciating volunteer work. They prefer taking advantage of the coming funds as treasures that can be afforded by first-world countries instead of looking for real jobs or at least continuing to try to find job opportunities.

Although these initiatives have all the above-mentioned weaknesses, they have also benefitted Arab, Muslim, and even European societies greatly and in many ways. Firstly, they have allowed for an exchange of knowledge between European and Muslim/Arab experts, contributing to discussing different perspectives and experiences lived by both sides and to enriching the results of joint social work. Such work has involved different activities which have enhanced building capacities and skills on an individual and group levels, have promoted the reinforcement of human rights by emphasizing the inclusion of women and youth, and have promoted a more active participation of these individuals as members in their societies while encouraging dialogue with other influential members such as representative of authorities and religious leaders. Secondly, the funding of these initiatives has taught many participants better long and short-term planning and the responsibility of constantly evaluating the work done by setting success measures and criteria through monitoring and evaluation plans. Such funding has also allowed for many job-

and/or formation or training opportunities, mitigating the high rates of unemployment in the Arab societies of many countries. Finally, the joint work has allowed the European authorities to study the migration crisis from different angles and influences, getting closer to the difficulties these immigrants are facing in their context including their human suffering, constant changes, and culture shock.

## Conclusions

The negative reaction towards religion may be due to negative personal experiences related to these religions. Our history, both in the East and in the West, is full of violent episodes where religion has been the cause of wars, conflicts, and much human suffering. This has its roots in the close relationship that religion had with political power. It is very difficult to forget about the great human suffering that lasted for centuries and was done in the name of God. Ignorance about the 'other' has endorsed such reactions and fostered a certain amount of xenophobia in many modern societies, which in turn has caused marginalization of different groups, social prejudice and violence. Muslims are at the centres of debates about challenges of integration in modern European societies. We should always remember that integration is a two-way process, which makes the role of Muslims as important in this process as the Europeans they are sharing their daily life with. European authorities should continue to work through CSOs and other entities to work together towards enforcing cohesive and inclusive societies by improving chances for employment and education, try to improve laws and legislations to promote religious diversity, including Islam, by encouraging more work related to intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

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## MUSLIM CIVIC AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN ITALY: DISCOURSES AND PRACTICES

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### Abstract

The main concern of the first generation of Muslim migrants in Italy was the preservation of their Islamic identity. But the 2000s marked the appearance of a new generation, born and raised in Italy, that aspires to participate in Italian social and civic life. This process has been accompanied by a discourse centred on citizenship and has translated into a variety of initiatives, including the political engagement, at both local and national level, of Italian citizens of the Islamic faith.

### Keywords

Islam in Italy, citizenship, Islam and the secular state, Second generation, Participation.

### Introduction

Like elsewhere in Europe, Muslims living in Italy have had to cope with a social and political context that is substantially different from that of the countries where Islam is the majority religion. The minority status, interaction with a secular state, and life in thoroughly secularised societies are some of the factors that compelled European Muslims to undergo a process of adaptation.<sup>131</sup> This process has not been limited to the sphere of practical life but has also involved the “order of discourse,” to use a Foucauldian vocabulary, urging Muslim thinkers to elaborate new conceptual frameworks capable of responding to unprecedented needs and situations.

As Bartolomeo Conti has outlined, this development has been characterised in Italy by two distinct stages. In the 1990s, when it became clear that their presence was not a transitory phenomenon, Muslims started to get organized and live their religion publicly. Throughout this period, the Muslims' main concern was the preservation of their religious identity and its transmission to their children in an environment that was perceived as potentially threatening and hostile. This approach started to shift in the 2000s, when a new generation appeared that increasingly questioned the vision and religiosity of their parents. While the former generation focused on the construction of the Muslim community as distinct or even separated from Italian society, the new generation, very often born and raised in Italy, emphasized their desire to participate in the social and political sphere of the country in which they live and which they consider their own.<sup>132</sup>

### Framing Citizenship

From a discursive point of view, the concept that arguably best summarises this desire of participation is ‘citizenship.’ As March has demonstrated<sup>133</sup>, the consolidation of the Muslim presence in the West has prompted Muslim scholars and intellectuals to revise traditional notions about residence in and loyalty to non-Muslim states. If some of these authors limited themselves to a “minimalist Islamic accommodation of liberal citizenship,”<sup>134</sup> others have gone so far as to legitimize and encourage a more constructive and cooperative attitude towards non-Muslim political communities. These two different understandings of the notion of citizenship can both be detected in the Italian Muslim communities. According to the first, citizenship has a merely instrumental value, insofar as it allows Muslims to gain and strengthen their foothold in European societies, thus contributing to the spread of Islam. This perspective is well exemplified by Qaradawi's argument that “Muslims in the West should be sincere callers to their religion,” and that they should, therefore, be provided with the appropriate normative tools to integrate into Western societies.<sup>135</sup> An article published in the bulletin of the Italian mosque of Segrate (near Milan), one of the first mosques to be built in Italy, clearly echoes this position. On the eve of the 2018 Italian general elections, the mosque invited Muslims to vote for the parties that had called for a reform of the nationality law, on grounds that they could not “miss the political opportunity that God has given them to consolidate on the territory.”<sup>136</sup> The second approach frames participation in society and citizenship as a more positive attitude of commitment to collective well-being. A prominent advocate of this orientation is the Swiss intellectual Tariq Ramadan, whose books feature abundantly in the bookshops of many Italian mosques. According to Ramadan, Muslims' personal engagement with society is implied in their testimony of faith and cannot be reduced to the defence of community interest but must address the social interest at large.<sup>137</sup>

The passage from a defensive to a more constructive posture has been particularly visible in the evolution of the Union of the Muslim Communities of Italy (Unione delle Comunità Islamiche d'Italia, UCOII), one of the main Muslim organizations in Italy.<sup>138</sup> Up the 2000s, the UCOII could be characterised as the expression of a neo-traditionalist Islam and the bulwark of an Islamic identity that was perceived to be threatened.<sup>139</sup> Starting from the 2010s, this organization has increasingly emphasized its willingness to cooperate with the Italian society and institutions, also in order to distance itself from radical Islamist interpretations and to advance the legal recognition of Islam by the Italian state. This attitude of active involvement

<sup>133</sup> A. March, *Islam and Liberal Citizenship. The Search for an Overlapping Consensus*, New York, Oxford University Press 2009.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 266.

<sup>135</sup> Cit. in U. Shavit, ‘The Paradoxes of the Integration Debate’, *Oasis*, no. 28, 2018, p. 40.

<sup>136</sup> *Il Messaggero dell'Islam*, no. 211, 2018, p.

<sup>137</sup> See M. Hashas, *The Idea of European Islam. Religion, Ethics, Politics and Perpetual Modernity*, Abingdon-New York, 2019, pp. 96-102.

<sup>138</sup> I am referring especially to the leadership of the organization. This does not exclude that some mosques identifying themselves with the UCOII still uphold a very identity-based orientation. The mosque of Segrate mentioned earlier is a case in point. For an overview of the Muslim organizations in Italy see M. Bombardieri, ‘Mappatura dell'associazionismo islamico in Italia’, in A. Angelucci, M. Bombardieri, D. Tacchini (eds.), *Islam e integrazione in Italia*, Venezia, Marsilio Editori, 2014.

<sup>139</sup> B. Conti, ‘L'Islam en Italie entre crise identitaire et réponses islamistes’, *Revue Européenne des migrations internationales*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2011, pp. 183-201.

<sup>131</sup> On these processes of adaptation see J. Cesari, S. McLoughlin, *European Muslims and the Secular State*, Abingdon-New York, Routledge, 2016.

<sup>132</sup> B. Conti, ‘Islam in Italy: from Community to Citizenship’, *Oasis*, no. 28, 2018, pp. 54-67.

clearly emerges in the document "Guidelines for mosques and imams," which has been published in 2017 on the UCOII's website and is emblematically sub-titled "Our engagement towards Italian society." The guidelines particularly stress the civic dimension of Islamic membership, inviting imams and preachers to pronounce sermons that "help the faithful to be a positive and upstanding presence within Italian society" (article 29) and to promote "interaction with non-Muslim citizens" (article 41).<sup>140</sup>

Emphasis on citizenship and cooperation to the wellbeing of society is not a preserve of UCOII, however. As its name suggests, "Participation and Muslim Spirituality" (Partecipazione e Spiritualità Musulmana, PSM), an organization linked to the teachings of the Moroccan thinker Abdessalam Yassine,<sup>141</sup> fosters the idea that Muslim religious engagement should go hand in hand with social activism. Also, the Italian Islamic Conference (Confederazione Islamica Italiana, CII), an organization promoted by the Italian Islamic Cultural Centre (the so-called Great Mosque of Rome) and with substantial ties to the Moroccan state, has focused part of its activities on the relationship between Islamic membership and citizenship.<sup>142</sup>

## Revisiting the Secular State

If the emphasis on citizenship reflects the centrality that this category has assumed in contemporary Arab-Islamic thought, appreciation of the secular state is more peculiar to European Muslims. In Muslim-majority societies, secularity is commonly conflated with atheism or irreligiosity and thus understood as a negative concept. Muslims living in Europe tend to develop a more nuanced if not outrightly positive view of this notion, which they consider as a guarantee for the rights they aspire to. Tariq Ramadan, for example, affirms that Muslims have nothing against the 1905 French Law on Separation of the Churches and State. What he criticizes are the radical interpretations of French *laïcité* that aim to marginalise religion from the public sphere.<sup>143</sup>

Among Italian Muslim communities, outspoken endorsements of the secular state are spelled out by leaders and in mosques.<sup>144</sup> The imam of Florence and former president of UCOII, Izzedin Elzir, has voiced his position on this matter on more than one occasion,<sup>145</sup> even while criticizing the discrepancies that still exist between the rights provided for by the Italian Constitution in terms of religious freedom and the failure to enact them in legislation.<sup>146</sup>

This positive attitude is based on a differentiation between various models of secularity. Whilst French *laïcité* ends up epitomizing overt hostility of the state towards religions, the Italian secular state is viewed as a more balanced and more cooperative paradigm of relationship between the state and religions insofar as it safeguards plurality and does not impose overly demanding obligations on Muslims, such as those related to dress codes. For instance, when I asked a member of Participation and Muslim Spirituality how he could reckon with the secular state given the hostility expressed by Yassine towards this principle,<sup>147</sup> he replied that the sheikh's criticism targeted the French experience specifically and could not apply to the Italian or other European cases.<sup>148</sup> Unlike the discourse on citizenship, however, which can rely on the theoretical framework provided both in Europe and in the Muslim-majority countries by decades of reflection on this issue, discourses on the legitimacy of the secular state has a practical nature stemming from the experience of Italian Muslims and has not (yet?) resulted in a more systematic theorization.<sup>149</sup>

## From Discourses to Practices: the civic and political engagement of Muslims in Italy

The opening up of Italian society, as encapsulated in the concept of citizenship, has translated into a variety of initiatives. Especially after the latest surge of jihadi terrorism in Europe, Italian Muslim communities have multiplied their efforts to convey a different image of Islam. More and more mosques, cultural centres, and associations organise or participate in shared iftar dinners with non-Muslims,<sup>150</sup> guided visits for school groups, and interfaith meetings. Furthermore, Muslim youth associations contribute to collective welfare with activities like the cleaning of public parks. At a more formal level, in February 2017 the major Italian Muslim organizations signed a "National Pact for an Italian Islam,"<sup>151</sup> a platform promoted by the Italian Interior Ministry and devised to enhance cooperation between Muslim communities and Italian institutions and to pave the way for the official recognition of Islam by the state. Besides these collective actions, it is interesting to analyse some individual trajectories of political engagement in which Muslim candidates have run for the Italian national Parliament or local councils.

Compared to European countries with longer immigration histories, the number of Italian Muslims involved in politics is still rather limited. The first Muslim politician to sit in the national Parliament was Khaled Fouad Allam, an intellectual of Algerian origin who, prior to his political involvement, was Assistant Professor of Sociology of the Muslim World at the University of Trieste and featured regularly on Italian newspapers as a columnist. He was also the first Muslim to write an article for the pontifical newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano*. Elected in the centre-left coalition of L'Unione (The Union) in 2006, Allam did

<sup>140</sup> See [http://www.ucoii.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/MOSCHEE-E-IMAM-IN-ITALIA\\_LINEE-GUIDA\\_doc-UCOII-3.pdf](http://www.ucoii.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/MOSCHEE-E-IMAM-IN-ITALIA_LINEE-GUIDA_doc-UCOII-3.pdf)

<sup>141</sup> The extent of the organization's connection to the movement founded by Yassine, Justice and Spirituality, is a matter of debate. Its members deny any formal ties to the Moroccan organization and present themselves solely as representatives of the 'Yassine's school'. External observers tend to be more cautious about the actual independence of Yassine's European followers.

<sup>142</sup> For example, the national meeting of the Youth of the Italian Islamic Confederation, held in July 2019, discussed the theme 'Identity, Citizenship and Islam'. In October 2017, the Confederation co-sponsored a Conference on the 'The Marrakech Declaration, Religions and Plural Citizenship' at the Insubria University. The Confederation's 'Charter of values' fosters 'absolute respect for citizenship duties.'

<sup>143</sup> M. Hashas, *The Idea of European Islam*, p. 98.

<sup>144</sup> See for example the discussion that has taken place in the mosque of Sesto San Giovanni (near Milan) on 5 May 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/moscheamilanosesto/videos/442705836502666/>.

<sup>145</sup> See for example his debate with the Italian philosopher Paolo Flores d'Arcais, a staunch advocate of a French-like model of a secular state, on 31 August 2016 <http://www.radiotradiale.it/scheda/485097/adriatico-mediterraneo-festival-religioni-e-democrazia-il-diritto-alla-laicita> (accessed 22 November 2019).

<sup>146</sup> In Italy, Muslims objectively face several obstacles when they need to build a mosque.

<sup>147</sup> See A. Yassine, *Islamiser la modernité*, Dar Al Afak, 1998, pp. 65–81.

<sup>148</sup> Personal conversation, Turin 29 August 2019.

<sup>149</sup> If one considers the authors of reference for the Muslim communities living in Italy, the only exceptions are probably Tariq Ramadan and Tareq Oubrou. Outside Europe, it is worth mentioning the positive stance towards secularity taken by sheikh Abdallah Bin Bayyah, see A. March, *op. cit.*, p. 231–232.

<sup>150</sup> The Project 'Open Mosque', a yearly happening supported by the city of Turin, was awarded in November 2019 the Clarinet European Award, <https://www.clarinetproject.eu/nominee/open-mosque/> (accessed 26 November 2019).

<sup>151</sup> [https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/publicazione\\_patto\\_islam.pdf](https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/publicazione_patto_islam.pdf)



not represent the Italian Muslim communities nor advocated any Islamic-oriented claim. Rather, he was a secular intellectual engaged with issues related to immigration and intercultural relations. Two years later, the journalist of Moroccan origin Souad Sbai was elected on a similar basis, but with the right-wing coalition *Il popolo della libertà* (The People of Freedom) led by Silvio Berlusconi. Sbai did not have any connection to the Italian Muslim communities and refused to be identified as a Muslim politician and, moreover, deliberately rejected any display of Muslim identity. An activist for women's rights and a staunch opposer of political Islam, she proposed a bill of the ban of burqa, in line with other European experiences.<sup>152</sup>

The third Italian Muslim MP, Khalid Chaouki, elected in 2013 in the ranks of the centre-left Democratic Party, has a different story and profile. Born in Morocco in 1983, he was one of the founders of the "Giovani Musulmani d'Italia" (GMI, Young Muslims of Italy), an association that was created in 2001 as the Youth section of the UCOII but became increasingly independent from the adult organisation. While their 'fathers' were still upholding a defensive posture opposing 'Muslims' and 'Italians,' GMI members introduced and popularised ideas such as "Italian citizens of Islamic faith" and centred their reflection and activities on the twin concepts of "participation" and "citizenship."<sup>153</sup> Unlike Allam and Sbai, Chaouki did have a background as a prominent leader of the main Italian Muslim youth association. Even though he was expelled from the GMI in 2011 because of his declarations on the 'opacity' of the Muslim networks in Italy, Chaouki could be considered an offshoot of the Muslim Italian community. In 2017, when still an MP, he was elected as the President of the Italian Islamic Cultural Centre. However, both when campaigning and when in office Chaouki presented himself as a representative of "second-generation immigrants" more than emphasising his Muslim identity. In particular, he championed the rights of the so-called 'new Italians' and strongly supported the bill on the reform of the Italian Law on nationality, an initiative that would have allowed 2 million foreigners to become Italian citizens<sup>154</sup> but eventually failed to be approved by the Parliament.

A similar trajectory has been that of Sumaya Abdel Qader, who was elected in 2016 to the city council of Milan. Abdel Qader was not the first Muslim woman to sit in a local council, but her election was regarded as a turning point on account of her background and the symbolic value of a big city like Milan. Born in Italy to Jordanian and Palestinian parents, Sumaya Abdel Qader is a writer and a blogger who has been very active in the Muslim associative movement. Like Chaouki, she was among the founders of the GMI but held offices also in the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (FEMYSO) and the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE). Furthermore, in 2016 she launched 'Aisha,' a project intended to promote women's rights. Her first book, *Porto il velo, adoro*

*i Queen* ("I wear the headscarf, I love the Queen"), published in 2008, symbolises the quest of a second-generation immigrant to navigate between fidelity to religious tradition and the lifestyle of a Western young woman.

The headscarf, also the topic of Abdel Qader's second book, *Quello che abbiamo in testa* (a pun meaning what we have in mind and what we wear on our head at the same time) raised controversies about her elections to the city council. But even more controversial was her biography. On account of her experience in the FEMYSO and the FIOE — two institutions that are to some extent connected to the Muslim Brothers<sup>155</sup> — she was accused by right-wing circles of being a member of the Brotherhood and representing a spearhead of 'Political Islam' in Italian institutions. Abdel Qader firmly rejected those allegations, but without disavowing her eclectic cultural background, which, in her own words, spans Western thinkers like Gramsci and Weber and Muslim intellectuals and Muslim activists like al-Afghani and al-Banna.<sup>156</sup> But accusations came also from another side: the councilwoman was targeted by a Facebook page as an apostate because of her political engagement "in a state that does not recognise sharia."<sup>157</sup> Abdel Qader's awkward position testifies to the difficulties of entering the political arena as a 'visible' and committed Muslim, who needs to justify her activism in front both of secular opponents and some of her co-religionists. But this in-between situation is at the same time the *raison d'être* of her engagement: "Having access to multiple readings and worlds, I have always thought that those who, like me, have such a rich background should give something in return," she said in an interview.<sup>158</sup>

The same sense of 'between-ness' inspires the engagement of another Muslim councilwoman, Marwa Mahmoud, who got elected in the city of Reggio Emilia in 2019 in the ranks of the centre-left Democratic Party. Born in Egypt, Marwa Mahmoud grew up in Italy and has been very active in the sphere of human rights and intercultural relations. In particular, she champions the cause of "Italians without citizenship,"<sup>159</sup> i.e. second-generation immigrants who have not yet acquired Italian nationality despite being born and raised in Italy. Mahmoud does not come directly from the Muslim associative fabric but has maintained substantial links to both her Islamic origins and the Muslim community. This notwithstanding, her political activity transcends religious boundaries and is mainly shaped by the principles encapsulated in the Italian Constitution, especially Article 3,<sup>160</sup> as she reminded a session of the communal council.<sup>161</sup>

<sup>155</sup> Ties between the Muslim Brotherhood and European Muslim institutions such as the FIOE and the FEMYSO are a matter of debate. See L. Vidino, 'The European Organisation of the Muslim Brotherhood: Myth or Reality?', in R. Mejr, E. Baker (eds.), *The Muslim Brotherhood in Europe*, London, Hurst & Company, 2012, pp. 51-69.

<sup>156</sup> S. Abdel Qader, 'Sui Fratelli musulmani infiltrati nel PD', 3 May 2016, <http://sumaya-blog.blogspot.com/2016/05/i-fratelli-musulmani-infiltrati-nel-pd.html>

<sup>157</sup> B. Maarad, 'Sumaya, candidata musulmana per il Pd, minacciata di morte dagli estremisti', *L'Espresso*, 13 May 2016, <http://espresso.repubblica.it/attualita/2016/05/13/news/sumaya-candidata-musulmana-per-il-pd-minacciata-di-morte-dagli-estremisti-1.265449> (retrieved on 25 November 2019).

<sup>158</sup> S. Manisera, 'Italiane e musulmane: un viaggio tra diritti, lotte e spiritualità', *Oasis* no. 30, 2019, p. 120.

<sup>159</sup> Marwa Mahmoud is a founding member of the movement "Italiani senza cittadinanza", see [italianisenzacittadinanza.it](http://italianisenzacittadinanza.it).

<sup>160</sup> "All citizens have equal social dignity and are equal before the law, without distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinion, personal and social conditions. It is the duty of the Republic to remove those obstacles of an economic or social nature which constrain the freedom and equality of citizens, thereby impeding the full development of the human person and the effective participation of all workers in the political, economic and social organisation of the country".

<sup>161</sup> See [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=3&v=75Yjtk0SmD8&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3&v=75Yjtk0SmD8&feature=emb_logo) (accessed 28 November 2019).

<sup>152</sup> A. Belli, 'Limits and Potentialities of the Italian and British Political Systems Through the Lens of Muslim Women in Politics', in J. Nielsen (ed.), *Muslim Political Participation in Europe*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2013, p. 176-177.

<sup>153</sup> A. Frisina, 'The Invention of Citizenship Among Young Muslims in Italy', in G. Jonker, V. Amiraux (eds.), *Politics of Visibility. Young Muslims in European Public Spaces*, Bielefeld, Transcript Verlag, 2015, p. 83.

<sup>154</sup> See his plea for the approval of the bill: K. Chaouki, 'Il PD non tradisca sullo Ius Soli', *Huffpost*, 12 September 2017, [https://www.huffingtonpost.it/entry/il-pd-non-tradisca-sullo-ius-soli\\_it\\_5cc1bb35e4b0e68bc67bdc88](https://www.huffingtonpost.it/entry/il-pd-non-tradisca-sullo-ius-soli_it_5cc1bb35e4b0e68bc67bdc88) (accessed 23 November 2019).

## Conclusion

Even if the cases presented in this paper are still rather limited in quantity, they illustrate a dynamic that has started in the 2000s and may have substantial effects on the development of Islam in Italy, i.e. the emergence of a new generation of Muslim who are rethinking and renegotiating the religious tradition they have inherited from their parents while engaging with the Italian public sphere. This process, which involves a significant number of women, has not yet fully deployed its potentialities, however. The discourse on citizenship and participation that has accompanied it has contributed to the integration of Muslims in the Italian social fabric but has not developed further. For instance, a theoretical and discursive legitimisation of the secular state's positive aspects, something that many Italian Muslims already experience in their life, could help overcome mutual misunderstandings between Muslim and non-Muslims. On the other hand, lack of recognition by the Italian state, *de facto* restrictions to Muslims' freedom of worship, and the rise of anti-Islamic sentiments, still limit a fully-fledged and constructive inclusion of Islam.

Moreover, public discourse on the presence of Muslims in Italian society has been dominated by security issues. It is time to engage in a more serene but also more thorough debate on what it means to live together in a secular state without renouncing one's own religious identity and beliefs.

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## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**



## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conference aimed at creating an open dialogue and non-rhetorical space to discuss, explore, analyse, and understand the manifold aspects of the “Islam in the West” phenomenon, such as the life of Muslims in Europe and other Western countries, their level of social integration in Western societies, their serious engagement in political life and the newly evolved thoughts and interpretations and sometimes stereotypes about Islam and Muslims within the Western community. The event was designed to engage and bring together a number of experts and community leaders coming from Europe and the Muslim world to reflect, converse and share experiences on the topic.

The conference attempted to bridge the gap between Muslim and Western positions and perceptions about this phenomenon, disclosing the unknown and hidden sides of it, with hope to enable policy-makers to build better influential and productive policies to deal with it. The papers presented in the conference discussed various points related to:

1. The phases of the relations between Islam and the West, exploring the current situation;
2. The dilemmas of the cultural identity of Muslims in the West, their social integration, and political loyalties;
3. Muslims' loyalty and active citizenship in a political system that is not completely concurrent with their religious beliefs and practices;
4. How Islam in the West is evolving as a new phenomenon that is manifested in distinct religious practices, new unprecedented interpretations of religious texts, and new trends in religious beliefs; and
5. The initiatives of political authorities and civil society organizations to help Muslims integrate into their new societies.

The first paper discussed terms such as ‘Islamism’ and how they are understood by both Westerners and Arabs, as well as the shift in use of terminology related to Islam and Muslims in European media. For instance, it showed that in Germany, there was no clear distinction regarding Muslims, Islamists and terrorists ten years ago, while actually the distinction between Islamists and Muslims is clear and the word ‘terrorists’ is less and less used. The paper suggested that the presence of Muslims in Europe is a positive influence when it comes to values that are still cherished in the Arab Muslim societies such as generosity, time for each other, patience, compassion, and helpfulness, among many others. The paper concluded that this positive influence can be perceived as a Good that one can learn from the ‘other’ and suggests that religion should bring people together while politics should guarantee the respect for the other and freedom in the public sphere, promoting the relationship between individuals and communities. The second paper debated the relations and mutual perceptions between Islam and the West, concentrating on how the Christian Westerners perceived Arab Muslims and vice-versa throughout history, while the third paper offered a study about the academic influence in the relationship between East and West, stating that academic studies and research have been one of the most

important factors affecting this relationship since the sixteenth century, with examples of positive outcomes.

The second session started with a paper on Iraqi and Syrian refugees in Europe and Jordan arguing that refugees often lack formalized documentation such as marriage contracts, death certificates, or divorce certificates, either because they have not been officially registered or because documents have been lost during the displacement process. The paper examined the impact of the lack of documentation on refugees' lives and their socio-legal identities in Germany. The paper particularly examined Muslim women's social and religious practices in Germany and the extent to which its legal system protects the rights of women. It questioned existing simplistic emancipatory discourses that create a dichotomy between subordination and resistance within gender relations among refugee communities in Germany.

The second paper in this session tackled Islam in Italy discussing the cultural identity of Muslims, their integration, and their political participation in the country. The paper focused on Islamic discourse and its role in promoting the values of shared living, discussing how the responsibility of imams, preachers, and Islamic institutions in the West is multiplied by the size of the Islamic presence, which has become an integral part of European society. The paper also discussed the importance of making this presence more positive and interactive, and more communicative and reassuring for European societies, especially in light of the Islamophobia campaigns. The second session concluded with a paper on a personal experience of a Muslim student in France, which analysed the social, political, and religious framework that accompanied the author during his stay in order to understand how an Arab or Muslim youth ‘integrates’ – or does not ‘integrate’ – into a new society, by exploring why the author chose a country such as France; how this new experience affected his political awareness; the sense of French racism; the extent of the presence of ‘political Islam’ in French society and state and whether ‘secularism’ can be a positive opportunity for Muslims.

The third session offered a paper which explored the compatibility of the Islamic value system with the Western liberal-democratic value system, followed by two papers which talked about Islam in France and discussed different points regarding active citizenship and integration of Muslims in the French society, where religion is usually being put in opposition to secularism (French *laïcité*). The state cannot interfere with religious institutions because it is in contradiction with secularism but is the protector of all religions. The fourth session began with a paper discussing Islam in Spain exploring how, since the late 1950s, the presence of Muslims in Spain moved from a seated minority to a social actor with political projection. The second paper in this session offered selected philosophical perspectives on some of the principal conceptual leitmotifs that pertain to the unfolding of the Islamicate and European intellectual histories, while also placing an emphasis on the pathways of their modern notional convergences, and on the contemporary epistemic conditioning of grasping their historical and present co-entanglements. And the last paper expressed how ignorant the Western world is about Islam, especially when it comes to the rich variety of Muslims coming

from different countries, cultures, and backgrounds and the big confusion of mixing up immigrants with Muslims living in the West, all of which should encourage us to study the complexity of living together rather than questioning religion.

Authors in the final session started with a paper discussing dynamics which have affected the development of Islam in Europe in countries such as Italy, where the new generation of Muslims started rethinking and renegotiating the religious tradition they inherited from their parents while engaging with the Italian public sphere. Although this process, which involves a significant number of women, has not yet fully deployed its potentialities, the discourse on citizenship and participation that has accompanied it has contributed to the integration of Muslims in the Italian social fabric. The second paper in this session evaluated the work of CBSOs towards integration and bridging the gap between people in the same society, where ignorance about Muslims in Europe has endorsed negative reactions and fostered a certain amount of xenophobia in many modern societies, which in turn has caused marginalization of different groups, social prejudice, and violence. The last paper in this session explained how the presence of Muslims has changed the relationship between state and religion in Germany deeply. Just two decades ago, an active religious policy by the state to influence religion was a taboo. But over time, the public mistrust against Muslims and Islam led to demands for stronger regulation of religion. This development can be traced in electoral and party manifestos. Further, this ideological shift has manifested in actual state action.

In conclusion, conference papers and debates suggested several recommendations that can be summarized in the following points:

1. We should always remember that integration is a two-way process, which makes the role of Muslims as important in this process as the Europeans they are sharing their daily life with.
2. European authorities should continue to work through community service organisation and other entities to work together towards enforcing cohesive and inclusive societies by improving chances for employment and education.
3. European authorities should try to improve laws and legislations to promote religious diversity, including Islam, by encouraging more work related to intercultural and interreligious dialogue.
4. A theoretical and discursive legitimization of the secular state's positive aspects could help overcome mutual misunderstandings between Muslim and non-Muslims.
5. Studying the 'other' can bridge the gaps and narrow the distances between Muslims and non-Muslims in European societies.
6. The establishment of Islamic theological institutes, as in Germany, in which only Muslim professors and Muslim students teach and study, indicates a very positive development in the history of the relationship between East and West concerning Islamic and Arabic studies.
7. Today, secularism should know how to respond to new challenges by creating and defending a public space of pluralism, discussion of ideas, respect for others, and

debate on its issues. Events and conferences such as "Islam in the West" help.

8. Islam needs new wise men who, by practising Ijtihād in the light of the Koran and Sunna, can reaffirm its living and eternal Message by providing solutions adapted to new situations. It is Ijtihād that Islam continues to need in its reform efforts to continue to combine Tradition that does not merge with folk archaisms, and progress that does not mean acculturation and blameworthy innovations.
9. Islam is capable of change and adaptation. It is not up to the West to dictate to Islam its reforms; they must come from within while respecting Islamic identity and values. It is in itself, and not by imitating external models that Islam will find the strength to meet the challenges of the modern world.











**ANNEX**



## ANNEX

### Scientific committee

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Germany, UK and Jordan. The projects examine women's narratives of transnational marriage practices performed by Iraqi and Syrian women who have settled in Europe or other countries in the Middle East since the 1980s. They focus on the historical developments and contemporary understandings and approaches of marriage practices among displaced Iraqi and Syrian Muslim women and foregrounds questions of identity, home and belonging of women constituted through local, national and transnational scales of migration experiences. For more visit the project's website: <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/ptr/departments/theologyandreligion/research/projects/reconsidering-muslim-marriage/index.aspx>.

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- **Mr. Charles Saint Pro**, is a doctor in political science and doctor in Law. He is the General Director of the Observatoire d'études géopolitiques (Observatory of geopolitical studies) in Paris, a French institute on the international relations, He has about 30 publications to his credit, some of which have been translated into English, Arabic, Spanish or Chinese.
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## DISCUSSANTS

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These conference proceedings were published by the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies with the support of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom. Funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The BMZ is not responsible for the content of the publication. The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors alone. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies or the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The International Conference on Islam in the West took place at the Landmark Hotel in Amman on September 29-30, 2019. The conference was organized by the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies and the Friedrich Nauman Foundation for Freedom, under the patronage of HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal, Chairman of the board of trustees of the RIIFS. Conference was attended by experts from Europe and the Arab/Islamic world.

**We would like to thank everyone who contributed to making this conference a success.**











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