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Access details: Access Details: [subscription number 901771850]

Publisher Routledge

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The International Spectator

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title-content=t768481834>

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Online Publication Date: 01 September 2008

To cite this Article Boubekeur, Amel(2008)'Time to Deradicalise? The European Roots of Muslim Radicalisation',The International Spectator,43:3,85 — 99

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/03932720802280636

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03932720802280636>

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Time to Deradicalise? The European Roots of Muslim Radicalisation

Amel Boubekeur

The interest in resolving the social conflicts in which European Muslims are involved stretches back over the last 30 years. Muslims of Europe are more affected by unemployment and social exclusion than the rest of the population.¹ Yet, it is not their social exclusion that raises the interest of European institutions and policymakers. Rather, the reason for their interest in the Muslim presence in Europe is linked to the fear of the radicalisation that could spring from the failure to integrate them. This obsession for securitising the political demands of Muslims has led policymakers by extension to consider these political claims as potentially destabilising and threatening elements to the European identity. A survey of the press as well as of policy documents produced on the relationship between Islam and social crisis since 2001² reveals that it is mainly when violence or political radicalisation is linked to Islam that institutional, national and local policymakers feel that the European identity is threatened.

- “Violence has signed the death of the idea of multiculturalism” or at least led people to declare the failure of this political project. Beyond such issues as poverty and discrimination in housing, education and (un)employment etc., it is the essence of multiculturalism which is now being condemned. This is clearly so in the UK and Netherlands where, after violent acts inspired by Islam, politicians, the media and even Muslim citizens now point to the need to reorganise the place of Muslims – either to enlarge their participation or to restrict it.
- “Violence challenges the idea of the national identity”. By rejecting the British, French or Belgian etc. identity, Muslims who commit violent acts are forcing

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¹See the series of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (former European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia) on Muslim discrimination and Islamophobia. <http://fra.europa.eu/fra/index.php>

²Boubekeur, “Reinventing Political Islam”.

other mainstream segments of the population to rethink what the common national political project should be. These violent events also lead Muslims to claim a new place in these societies with greater recognition of their rights.

- “Violence points to Islam as a non-Europeanized culture”. The roots of violent acts inspired by Islam are often presented as influenced by external factors coming from outside Europe and its cultural heritage.³

Many policy responses to the difficult political and economic integration are then given on an ideological base. Instead of entering into a process of consultation and negotiation with their Muslims citizens, member states have tried to deradicalise what is seen as a community that is politically radical and religiously under foreign influence. Building up a good peaceful European Islam⁴ has often been presented as the solution. The goal would be to play down what is seen as an exogenous and problematic Muslim political identity when living conditions in Europe are contested.

In this article, an attempt will be made to show whether or not the religious variable determines the political radicalisation or even the use of violence of these individuals in their relationship to Europe. In order to grasp the real or imagined role of Islam in the way they react to their difficult integration, it is important to understand, first, what part the influences of the so-called Muslim “countries of origin” play in these phenomena, and what part is purely European. Then, the extent to which the claims of the Muslims in Europe are truly Islamic or communitarian in nature and what role the religious institutions play in their resolution has to be assessed.

An ideological response instead of institutional political responses

In the 1970s, the poor living conditions of Muslims throughout Europe, barely visible and considered temporary like the immigrants themselves, received little attention in public policies. The matter was labelled a foreign affairs issue and, until the late 1980s, its framing was left up to the responsibility of the immigrants’ country of origin.⁵ Since then, the end of the migratory dynamic and the emergence of young people of Muslim confession born in Europe has increasingly brought the member states of the European Union to add the new – and often thought of as problematic – presence of these populations to their agenda. It is therefore through the prism of an Islam linked to various social crisis⁶ (riots, demonstrations, risk of terrorist attacks...) that the attention towards Muslims

³*Ibid.*

⁴Birt, “Good imam, bad imam”.

⁵V. Geisser, “L’islam consulaire: le rôle des Etats d’origine dans la gestion de l’islam en France”. http://www.oumma.com/article.php3?id_article=1122&var_recherche=Vincent+Geisser

⁶Boubekeur, “Between Suicide Bombing and Burning Banlieues”.

of public actors (states and the media) has been structured. Social problems that are only very rarely specific to the Muslim community have been inextricably linked in their political treatment to the construction of a problematic nature of Islam, an Islam in crisis whose intrusion into the public sphere is almost always polemical. In fact, the last two decades have also witnessed polemical events connected (in very different ways) to the presence of European Muslims, such as terrorist attacks (Paris, Madrid, London), the Rushdie affair in the United Kingdom, the processes of re-islamisation and the struggle for identity of young people born in Europe.⁷ Gradually, the concept of religious radicalisation has become the main paradigm for understanding the malaise of “European Muslim youth”.

Since 2000, Islam as a religion has been too often connected with social problems that are not specifically Islamic, such as the new anti-Semitism, the role of religion in the secular space, and even the lack of security and employment in popular neighbourhoods with a predominantly Muslim population. For the majority of institutional actors, Islam has become a determining factor in understanding and resolving these problems. This viewpoint underpins the idea that Islam is at the same time the cause of, and the solution to them. With a diagnosis that presents Islam as the variable explaining the difficulties experienced by the Muslims of Europe, the shortcomings in terms of equality of access to cultural and economic resources are overlooked.

The debates on the role of Islam in these problem areas are most often presented in terms of cultural inadaptability leading to the “clash of civilisations”, as epitomised by the questions of wearing the veil,⁸ rioting in the suburbs and more recently the affair of the Islamophobic cartoons. The response of the European Union in terms of the development of intercultural policies aimed at putting an end to the crises concerning Islam draws equally, and in an almost ironic way, on this question of cultural inadaptability.⁹ According to this logic, a culture inherent to Islam and hardly adaptable to Europe, more than the relative equality of access for Muslims and non-Muslims to the majority identity, is the problem. The boundary between Islam as a *de facto* European religion and Islam as an autonomous and exogenous political factor, trigger of the crisis threatening the foundations of the societies concerned, is therefore progressively blurred.

In the post-11 September context, this question of the incompatible nature of Islam has been accompanied by the security argument of the fight against Islamic terrorism waged by EU member states. Here too, as far as Islam as a religion is concerned, anti-terrorist policies help to conceal some of the most common problems that the Muslims of Europe face: Islamophobia, the management of worship, the building of mosques and the training of imams. In this way, the

⁷Boubekeur and Roy, *Whatever Happened to the Islamists?*

⁸Bowen, *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves*.

⁹Göle, *Interpénétrations: L'Islam et l'Europe*.

policies of the fight against so-called “Islamic” terrorism amount to a package of security measures reinforced by the desire to set up an official, national and acceptable westernised Islam.

The apparent failure of 30 years of European social policies aimed at integrating Muslims is also undoubtedly related to the fact that these policies are usually designed without them, except of course when those perceived as Muslim authorities are consulted on subjects connected to security and terrorism. Then again, the role within Europe of Muslim citizens, thought of as “new” and “particular”, is regulated by hesitant and inconsistent policies, oscillating between assimilation, interculturalism and integration, hiding behind the difficulty, at national as well as European level, of choosing between the categories of minorities, immigrants, new nationals or even “new Europeans” to describe Muslims.¹⁰ Complementing the lack of confident political representation and participation of the body of Muslims in Europe, this conception of Islam in crisis increasingly confirms the gap between European political elites and the distant and controversial reality of European Muslims.

Taking stock of the foreign radicalisation factors

European Islam versus foreign Islam

With the definitive arrival of Muslim populations in Europe and the emergence of young Europeans of Muslim faith descended from this immigration, and with the substantial number of converts, Islam must now be regarded as a stable element of European society. Yet, the crises perceived as surrounding these Muslims are often singularly based on an imported logic, dependent on the influence of a foreign Islam. The influence of foreign Islam can be exercised at two levels. Externally, the political relations that member states have with certain Muslim countries allows for foreign influences on European Islam to be underlined. There is also an internal element, however, and that is the attention that Muslims themselves pay to foreign Islam, particularly in their religious practice.

As a result of their emigration, Muslims represent a political resource for their countries of origin in negotiations with Europe. As a result of their intervention in the management of problems connected to the Muslim population, they have for a long time had an influence on the orientation of policies (or rather the absence of policies) of member states as regards the question of Islam. Since the 1970s, these countries (principally Algeria, Morocco and Turkey, but also Saudi Arabia) have taken care of most of the need of imams, the financing of mosques and the

¹⁰The French model of integration is based on the idea of assimilation of foreigners, while the British and Dutch models are predicated on recognition of the immigrants’ cultural and ethnic specificities. For a description of the position of Islam in the member states, see Papi, “Les statuts juridiques de l’islam dans l’Union européenne” and Schiffauer *et al.*, *Civil Enculturation*.

religious instruction in France, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Spain and Italy.¹¹ Initially, this made up for the lack of response in Europe to the cultural demands of immigrants, but above all it made it possible to some extent to keep Muslim populations under the control of their countries of origin, thereby avoiding the development of opposition to these regimes, on the one hand, and preventing the early Muslim immigrants from making overly strong political demands on the member states, on the other, particularly regarding the organisation of worship (Islam not being considered part of the European identity at the time).

In the 1980s, transnational movements originating from the Muslim world began to appear, which would try, in keeping with the consular Islam of the Muslim countries, to structure the European religious area and to secure its leadership. Among the most influential of these movements were the Tabligh, installed in Europe by missionaries originating from Pakistan, Salafism from Saudi Arabia, and the leanings of the Muslim Brotherhood disseminated by Islamic elites from the Maghreb and the Middle East.¹²

As a result, European Muslims began to see themselves as hostage to the tensions and competition between these different groups, which often tried to reproduce in Europe the conflicts existing in the Muslim world. In France, these tensions found their expression in the creation in 2003 of the *Conseil Français du Culte Musulman* (CFCM), the Moroccan and Algerian consulates putting pressure on their nationals to direct their votes towards lists reflecting their national majorities.¹³ The animosity between young Salafis and Muslim Brothers in Europe in the 1990s, maintained to a large extent by theologians from Saudi Arabia, even led to sporadic confrontations between the two groups. In a less polemical way, the Turkish diaspora has equally played an important role in the discussions over Turkish accession to Europe. Foreign influences on European Islam are therefore real, but are often only loosely connected to the internal political role of Muslims born in Europe. On the contrary, they reflect the will of foreign states to play a political role in the question of European Islam as regards the European Union.¹⁴

The influence that foreign Islam can have on the more day-to-day existence of European Muslims is to a large extent the result of the absence in Europe of Islamic theological, intellectual and cultural structures.¹⁵ This absence often pushes the

¹¹Cesari, "Mosque Conflicts in European Cities".

¹²Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising*.

¹³Godard, "Official recognition of Islam".

¹⁴Boubekeur, *Islamic Parties in the Maghreb and their Connections with Europe*.

¹⁵A European body, the European Council for Fatwa and Research (*Conseil Européen des Fatwas*), now exists. Close to the Muslim Brotherhood and under the patronage of theologian Youssouf Qaradawi, it is tasked with drafting Islamic norms that take into consideration the European social reality. It is nevertheless not considered authoritative by the Muslim world and is mainly made up of militants coming from the Muslim world. For an overview of their production, see *Recueil de fatwas*.

Muslims of Europe to look for references beyond Europe's borders.¹⁶ The Saudi religious authorities, for example, play an important role in this dynamic. The ideological positions taken by European Muslim groups (associations, places of worship, internet sites...) at times of international political crisis can also be influenced by these foreign authorities. The opposition of a large number of Muslim militants to European policies on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the war in Iraq had as a base, among other things, the various fatwas of the Egypto-Qatari theologian Youssef Qaradawi, close to the Muslim Brothers. These fatwas pushed some Muslims to boycott Israeli and US products (Coca Cola, Nike...¹⁷

The religious practice of European Muslims is an open market, and all types of actors are trying to get into it. Minimal as their impact may be, the propaganda tapes recorded in the Arab world, the so-called "jihadist" internet sites and the stories of combatants who operate in the countries in question play an important role in the radicalisation and then the transition to violence of young European Muslims, as the cases of the so-called Chechen and Iraqi networks demonstrate.

The European roots of radicalisation

However, even if the backing of this radicalisation may be foreign, the motivation has to be understood in purely European terms. Effectively, for the dozen or so young Muslims born in Europe who decide to carry out a suicide attack, *jihad* represents a way out of the European crisis built around the presence of Muslims in Europe, a nihilist escape route which responds to their inability to act on this crisis and transform the reasons for their discontent as Muslims in Europe.¹⁸ This way out of crisis by means of exile can also be brought about in a pacific and pragmatic way. More and more young Salafis, and even young non-practicing Muslims, are deciding to do their *hijra* (an Arabic word which means to emigrate and which harks back to the idea of the emigration of the prophet from Mecca, where he was persecuted, to Medina). By leaving Europe, where they were born, to go and live in a Muslim country (mainly Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, but also Egypt, Algeria, Morocco and Syria), they feel that they are escaping a life of crisis (stigmatisation, discrimination, confrontation with institutions such as school, the police, hospitals and so on). Fascinated by the feeling of belonging which they miss in Europe, they think that these countries, with their strong economic growth (in the case of the Gulf) and the place accorded to Islam, will allow them to live a less tense religious life, but above all to accede to a certain "bourgeois" social well-being which Europe, in their opinion, has failed to offer them.¹⁹

¹⁶Werbner, *Imagined Diasporas among Manchester Muslims*.

¹⁷Boubekeur, "Is Islam soluble in Mecca Cola?".

¹⁸Based on interviews with young people one year before they carried out suicide attacks in Iraq.

¹⁹Boubekeur, *Salafism and radical politics in post-conflict Algeria*.

The role of the governments of the EU member states also has to be taken into account in relation to the European roots of the crisis. The existence of a foreign Islam intervening in the life of Muslims has in effect led the European political class to look for the answers to the crisis surrounding Islam in Europe beyond its borders. In the context of the fight against Islamic radicalism, certain European countries (Germany, France) have returned imams to their country of origin (Turkey, Algeria) because of their statements threatening public order. At the time of the affair of the veil, then French Home Secretary Nicolas Sarkozy went to the University of Al Azhar to obtain a fatwa from the mufti of Egypt, Al Tantawi, ordering young girls not to wear their veil at school. As a counter-movement to this removal of a French problem to the Arab world, demonstrations against the parliamentary bill on the veil took place in various Muslim countries (Egypt, Lebanon and Algeria). These demonstrations were certainly an expression of opinion against the bill, but they were also an opportunity for Islamic movements to receive important political visibility on the international scene.

The European (as well as Russian and US) media also resort to the idea of imported Islamic attitudes to explain European crises. At the time of the French riots in November 2005, the parallel of “young Muslim gangs” waging an “intifada of the suburbs” and transforming “Paris into Baghdad” was frequent. The idea that Islam had been the trigger for this explosion allowed for an instrumentalisation on the part of the foreign media and the international political class. Thus, the US and Israeli media imagined the crisis of the suburbs to be a “manipulation by al Qaeda”, France paying the price for its “pro-Arab policies”,²⁰ while the Russian media saw the riots as an ideological extension of the Chechen resistance, thereby justifying their policies of repression of those seeking independence through the perspective of the fight against Islamic radicalism.²¹

In reality, the interactions between the growth of a European Islam and the international events surrounding the question of Islam are more complex, being situated halfway between foreign influence and endogenous construction. Certainly, one must recognise the weight of foreign influence, but the role of international actors in the crisis in which the Muslims of Europe find themselves must not be over-estimated. The argument of cultural misunderstanding between Islam and Europe advanced by the European Union at the time of the Danish cartoon affair thus allowed the Muslim states to present themselves as the only actors capable of restoring the pride of Muslims in Europe. Yet, the extent to which this crisis was understood and used in different ways by European Muslims and the Muslim states

²⁰Many of such Islamophobic or pro-Israeli statements were made on media such as Fox News or *Haaretz*. This rhetoric can be found in D. Pipes, “Reflections on the Revolution in France”, *New York Sun*, 8 November 2005.

²¹For an account of this distortion between Muslim violence and the French riots of 2005, see Mucchielli and Le Goaziou, *Retour sur les émeutes de novembre 2005*.

was evident. While certain states, such as Syria, were absorbed by an external logic of opposition to the decisions of Europe in the Middle East,²² European Muslims (as at the time of the veil affair or the Islamophobic attacks) resorted to law, taking the issue to their national courts and the European Court of Human Rights. They relied not on the cliché of the “hatred of Islam” anchored in the West, but on European values of freedom of belief and freedom of expression to show their disagreement, on those of multiculturalism and even laity to protect their religion.

The reactions of European Muslims during such crises are, in most cases, a sign of their internalisation of the values of the European political culture. Their reactions are connected to their desire to be active citizens. It is therefore the responsibility of European political leaders to take these crises of a profoundly European nature into account, mobilising strong leadership and a capacity for dialogue with their citizens (as did Tony Blair after the terrorist attacks in London, presenting the Muslims of the United Kingdom not as the cause of the problem, but as a part of the nation affected by the tragedy in the same way as the rest). These crises generally have Western roots, whether one speaks of their modes of expression, the values which they mobilise or their origin. As a result, with regard to the tensions surrounding Islam, the positions taken by Muslims are determined by a European political logic.²³

The claims of Muslims in Europe

At the time of the riots in 2005, it was in part the Islamophobia present in Europe and not “the attacks made on Islam in Baghdad” that had the effect of radicalising a feeling of exclusion (generated, more particularly, by the explosion by the police of a tear-gas grenade in the mosque of Clichy-sous-bois). The rioters were not practising Muslims, but one does not necessarily have to be religiously observant or militant to feel concerned or even targeted by Islamophobia. This is the only link that can be made between the riots and the question of Islam. At the level of political expression, they can be set in a typically French tradition of demonstrations (e.g. May 1968, school or metro strikes). The rioters had no political propositions defined in accordance with the political modes of expression of the majority, but it would be inaccurate to conclude for that reason that they were depoliticised. Nor can the blame be put on the void left by the failure of Islam as a political project in the suburbs²⁴ (this would once again be making Islam the exogenous element of explanation for the event).

What these riots expressed was a desire to see the French model of integration applied; they were not contesting it. Certainly the manner was peripheral, but profoundly French and political. The depoliticisation of the political structures

²²J. Sterling, “Interview with Olivier Roy”, *The Wall Street Journal Online*, 7 February 2006.

²³Boubekeur, “Political Islam in Europe”.

²⁴ICG, *France and its Muslims*.

traditionally in charge of supervision of populations with a Muslim majority in France (social workers, unions, extreme left parties)²⁵ does not mean that Muslim actors themselves are depoliticised. Feeling themselves deprived of the tools of political contestation of the majority (it is worth recalling that, as regards the mechanisms of transmission of the memory of citizenship, the majority of their immigrant parents did not always have the right to vote), certain rioters justified their violence by the desire to make the French government keep its promises as regards the fight against racial and economic discrimination.

Finally, it was interesting to see the caution of the Muslim states in expressing any solidarity with the rioters. Islam, or its failure as a political doctrine was not the factor explaining the riots of 2005.

Do religious variables determine political radicalisation?

The risk of radicalisation among Muslims when faced with the failure of their integration is often explained by the influence of foreign Islam. Two other assumptions for the radicalisation of Muslims are frequently made. First, the religious factor through the different ideologies of the various Muslim groups in Europe is given in policy and media discourses as one of the main explanations for European Muslims' discontentment with what Europe is offering them in terms of integration. The second argument that has become important in interpreting the potential risk of Muslim political radicalisation is that of separate or parallel societies and communitarianism.²⁶ The model of the Muslim enclave, however, is an imposed, not a chosen structure, in particular in terms of urban zones with a strong Muslim concentration. The vision of a Muslim population placed under the watchful eye of Islamic actors harbouring a plan to destroy Europe and organising the protest in deprived neighbourhoods is a myth. Furthermore, experience has repeatedly shown that Muslim leaders or figures of authority cannot solve the crises surrounding the question of Islam alone.²⁷

On the way in which Muslims use religion to claim participation in European societies or to reject so-called European majority values, four ideal types can be distinguished

- *Secular Muslims and political radicalisation*

This group represents the majority of European Muslims. They choose to consider religion a private matter, which should not interfere with politics or citizenship.

²⁵Roy, "The Nature of the French Riots".

²⁶To be understood as a conception of society as separate communities. The Islamic communitarian identity will then stand above a common secular European one. On this phenomenon, see Soysal, *Limits of Citizenship*.

²⁷The participation of these actors should be long term, not only when anti-delinquency policies have to be worked out.

Islam is not the element of justification or the motivation of their demands in case of conflict with the majority of society (political leaders, institutions, etc.). Their choice to secularise their participation in European societies could even lead to conflicts with or rejection of Muslim attitudes which play the Islam card. When radicalisation arises, it is not based on religious arguments. Their radical rhetoric is founded on a secular political position. It is in the name of political and ideological values that these groups attempt to advance their position. This may take various forms, for example extreme left factional groups, or rap groups, or riot movements such as in the case of the French suburbs in November and December 2005. It was the common conditions of social exclusion of the rioters, rather than their adhesion to a single religion, which explains the violence in the French suburbs during the autumn of 2005. The weak control of Muslim and Islamist leaders in these neighbourhoods proves this. In fact, Youssef Qaradawi's call for calm and his demand that France engage in dialogue with the Muslims in control so as to improve the situation were not heard. The fatwa of the *Union des Organisations Islamiques de France*, one of the main federations of Islamic associations, calling for calm and based on Koranic references, was also without effect. Finally, the few young Muslim militants who chose to carry out a night watch only partially managed to pacify the periphery. This situation throws into question the view that religious actors can supervise Muslim populations and guarantee public order and social peace.

- *Active Islamic citizenship (the positive multiculturalist model)*

This group seeks recognition of the role of Islam in Europe, institutionally, historically, politically, culturally. They are in favour of an active role of Islam in the resolution of conflicts or tensions with their environment. At the same time, they are respectful of the existing norms of European society and consider themselves fully integrated citizens. Islam for them is a European religion, which should be considered as such. They often use typically European tools to resolve conflicts and express their demands by voting or through the courts or peaceful demonstrations. They work and share a lot of activities with non-Muslims citizens, while still retaining and wishing to express a sense of Muslim identity. Here, Islam becomes the starting point for engagement as a citizen in society. This political engagement must not be understood as synonymous with political radicalisation. In fact, their participation in demonstrations against the law on religious symbols at school was not evidence of a desire to impose a religious reference point on a lay republic, but the desire to demand by means of political negotiation the implementation of laws built on the common bases of citizenship, freedom of expression and religious choices. In this case, Islam allows for participation in the construction of the society to which one belongs and for making a contribution as a positive minority.

Without representing it exclusively, the Swiss intellectual Tariq Ramadan is one of the principle promoters of this “credent citizenship” or “citizen’s religiosity”²⁸ which greatly influences the political engagement of many of Europe’s Muslims, above all the re-Islamicised middle classes in Europe (France, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Great Britain and Spain). The recent establishment of the European Muslim Network, a sort of think tank of which Tariq Ramadan is the president, is an indication of this group’s political interest in the Europeanisation of the debate on Islam. Muslims belonging to this category vote, are members of political parties, hold opinions on supranational questions, such as the referenda on European treaties, organise debates on questions of alterglobalism, in particular in the European Social Forum.

- *The separate communities model and sectarian radicalisation*

This group is made up of two sub-groups. The first consists of immigrants who segregate themselves. They do not feel part of the European political debate on the place of Islam. They are often not able to use European citizenship as a tool for their political demands, and in some cases have links with political movements of their countries of origin. The types of radicalisation in which they may be involved are often more ethnic than religious. The other group consists mainly of young Muslims born in Europe who are increasingly adhering to the Salafî movement. This movement is interesting in that it strongly challenges the usual boundaries traced when it comes to Muslims, violence and European values. This group maintains that Islam forbids any form of political or social participation of Muslims in European countries. This reading of Islam does not lead to a political investment in society, but on the contrary falls back completely on religious identity. While they are not contesting European values politically and do not have links with direct foreign influences, members of this group socially reject European values and models of society, and decide to withdraw from society. They work, go to school and live in Europe, but they do not want to socialise with other people who do not share their religious practices. They are part of a process of what can be seen from the mainstream as a religious or sectarian radicalisation which does not include the use of violence. This radicalisation, or closure, is not synonymous with political radicalisation, in that there is no desire for political participation. One sees here equally the weakness of the explanation of political radicalisation through communitarianism. Far from leading to political violence, which they condemn, their credo leads the followers to withdraw from society. For them, their Islamic identity, which is expressed in a universal and timeless context where only imitation of the prophet matters, cannot be contained in an unholy process of negotiation with the state. They try to live

²⁸Frégosi, “Laïcité et identité islamique chez Tariq Ramadan”. See also Finan, “La mise en avant d’une citoyenneté croyante”.

their faith in a closed circle while protecting themselves from the “stains” of the surrounding society. They cannot therefore think of themselves as taking part in a political system which is not Muslim. For them, withdrawal is preferable to any form of participation, and they will not therefore be found among those demonstrating against the law on the veil or the publication of cartoons of the prophet.

- *When religious and political radicalisation meet*

The last group of militant Muslims is represented by young people born in Europe who carry out (al-Qaida inspired) terrorist attacks. While the third group lives its opposition at a distance from the European environment, the members of this group maintain that Islam gives Muslims the possibility of defending themselves against offences that originate in the West through jihad. Although they do not share a particular social status, they have in common the experience of social decline and marginalisation at some given moment in their life. Their personal and subjective experience of having been the victim of injustice, rather than the Islamic normative corpus, is why they turn to violence. They therefore place jihad (which leaves much more room for individual action and personal vengeance than adherence to a communitarian group) at the heart of religious belief, thinking that only terrorist violence can give the Muslims of Europe and those of the Muslim world the means to influence the policies of EU countries. Thus, when the attacks in Madrid of March 2004 and in London of July 2005 took place, the intention was among other things to put pressure on Western states, in these cases Spain and the United Kingdom, to withdraw their soldiers from Iraq.

Advocating jihad in the name of a sacred cause, it is direct and terrorist action that dominates in this kind of radicality. Its proponents develop literal readings of Koranic texts that have political connotations and refer to matters of power management, authority and the Caliphate that lead to revolutionary action. Their discourses and actions refute any idea of engagement or collaboration with the prevailing regimes in either Muslim or Western society. Hostile to religious action limited to predication (*da'wa*), these revolutionary militants put the use of jihad at the heart of their religious beliefs. The recourse to violence is thus both ideological and tactical, as these movements prefer direct action to all other forms of political action which they entirely discredit.

Time to deradicalise policies related to Islam

Overplaying the religious variable without taking into account the complex relationships that Muslim groups have with their political environments, both national and international, means considering Muslims a homogenous group, which is not the case. The different groups can at best be distinguished by the way they mobilise

Islam in their political claims for greater integration or their rejection of it. Overall, one can discern a relatively serene form of political participation emerging among most Muslims, notably in comparison with the minority of violent jihadists.

Those who developed an interest in politics during the major crises concerning Islam, such as the headscarf affair in France or the Danish cartoons of Mohammad, did so referring not exclusively to religion but to European law. The cultural and religious “otherness” emphasised by certain Islamic countries in times of contrast with Europe is no longer the privileged means of expressing contestation or of justifying their presence. The overwhelming majority of Muslims assert the European values of freedom of religion as the basis for their political demands. Recourse to radical forms of political Islam, particularly by young people, is often the expression of a lack of political representation and participation by those who are excluded and socially and culturally discriminated against.

Muslims should be drawn in to participate in the construction of European society by the same methods used for all European citizens and should not be heard only when they represent a security threat. The roots of present tensions must also be seen as European roots corresponding to particular national realities. The responses by national and European institutions should therefore be considered not as a matter for intercultural dialogue, as was the case during the cartoon episode, or as a concern for potential radicalisation, but as a European political responsibility to European citizens. The place of European Islam and immigrant communities needs to be made visible as a part of Europe’s cultural, political and historical heritage.

Consequently, Europe has to rethink what it can offer Muslims in terms of political participation and representation. A common public space has to be created that can provide a viable alternative to what is currently proposed through the use of violence or withdrawal. In addition to the policies of integration designed to calm the crises surrounding Islam, policies of non-exclusion will have to be envisaged.

The complexity of the links between foreign influences and European roots as factors of radicalisation have been examined here. The recent history of relations between Europe and prevalently Muslim countries (notably Maghrebi and Turkey) also reveals the centrality of Islam among the “negative” problems to be addressed: cooperation on migratory questions and the fight against terrorism. The foreign policy of Europe and its member states is a central factor in the political radicalisation of young Muslims in Europe.

Thus, it is time to reverse this negative trend in North-South relations by privileging the role of immigrants in condemning terrorism, but also by involving them in initiatives of solidarity towards its victims throughout the world, in the great majority Muslims. The North-South partnership on security questions should be reconsidered, putting Muslim civil society and not Muslims at the centre of the debate.

In the North, as in the South, the question of the fight against radicalisation has to be flanked by deradicalisation programmes. A rethinking of the practices to adopt in order to deradicalise young Muslims that have experienced prison or been rejected by society on religious grounds must be undertaken. In the end, that deradicalisation will have to provide an inclusive and participatory political response to the young people seduced by violence as a means of political action.

The experience of the Islamist parties in the South which tended towards violence and political radicalism in the 1980s is interesting in this regard. One can see that their political cooptation and the professionalisation of their political militarism obliged them to give up the utopia of a global enemy and to concentrate on providing the local populations with credible responses to their concerns. Taking this as an example, it is important that young European Muslims subject to political radicalisation receive political responses, local and participatory, that look beyond the supposedly “violent and specific” nature of Islam. Europe’s performance on these questions will depend to a large extent on the degree of participation of its Muslims in the construction of a new, solidary and non-exclusive European identity.

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