AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN MUSLIMS AFTER 9/11: WHAT IS DIFFERENT?

Jocelyne Cesari, CNRS-Paris and Harvard University.

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Muslims are currently the largest religious minority in Western Europe. This presence of Islam in Europe is a direct consequence of the existence of pathways of immigration (that opened up in the early 1960s) leading from the Western States’ former colonies in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean. Following the official end of work-based immigration in 1974, the integration of such immigrant populations has become irreversible, and is connected to the increasing number of policies on family reunification which contribute to the recomposition of families and the noticeable increase in family size within Europe. In such a context, asserting one’s belief in Islam becomes a major factor in population sedentarization. In each country, this visibility of Islam is at the origin of many questions, doubts and often violent oppositions in relation to the newcomers.

The fact that there were Muslims amongst the slave populations, as well as the specific relationship between Islam and the black community, indicate that the conditions for Islam’s evolution in the United States are likely to be very different. However, in the United States, too, the visibility of Islam is a recent phenomena linked to the significant increase in the number of immigrants coming from Muslim countries, with a specific rise in Muslim immigration since 1965 (and until the present day) from India, Pakistan, Indonesia and Afghanistan. Immigrants from such countries now outnumber those originating from the Middle East. Since the 1970s, these new arrivals have given themselves over to building mosques and schools, to founding all sorts of magazines and newspapers, and thus demonstrate a religious vitality that is very distant from the assimilationist attitude of Arab immigrants of the early twentieth century. Islam’s visibility within American society is reinforced by the increasing Islamicization of the
black community (an estimated 50% of Muslim converts come from the black community). The extreme ethnic and religious diversity of American Muslims means that the boundaries of the Muslim community in America are surrounded by more controversy than in Europe, especially in the post 9/11 context.¹

The snare of Exceptionalism

Research on Islam has not always managed to avoid the snare of exceptionalism, especially in Europe. For example, when I first began as a researcher in the mid 1980s, the existing knowledge about Muslims (at that point almost all Muslims in Europe were immigrants) came primarily from the sociology of immigration. The main goal of such early research (research that continues to be relevant) concerned the ways Muslims integrated into French society. In France, as in Europe in general, the key question is to learn whether the integration process for Muslims is similar to that experienced by other immigrants, or if the Islamic origin of the immigrants introduces something new and specific.² Sociologists specializing in immigration matters in France (and in Europe in general) were and are inclined to see as a “given” that part of an individual’s identity that


is related to his/her being a Muslim, and to thus think this element less worthy of detailed analysis. Other factors (one’s position in the economic market place, as well as social and political factors) were and are seen as more important than religion for any explanation of the condition of being a Muslim.

On the other hand, scholars of Islam and political scientists of the Arab world, as well as certain sociologists and anthropologists, emphasize the role of Islam itself, as a system of norms and values. This second approach, often criticized for being too culturalist, runs the risk of becoming essentialist and anhistorical, a fact that has been underscored by researchers working in the tradition of Edward Said’s *Orientalism.*

However, given that an individual’s membership of Islam has progressively moved to occupy a prominent position on the public stage, and because of the increase in Muslim action and activity, the specifically religious component of integration has come to be, over the years, a legitimate subject for research in France and Europe, and of which the relevance has been increased by the post September 11th context.

We should note that the political interest in Islam was strengthened in the 1980s within the European context because of the influence within the domestic arena of political movements linked to Islam (the Algerian FIS, Milli Gorus, etc.) without mentioning, of course, the greater proximity between European States and certain Muslim States such as Algeria, Morocco, Turkey, and Pakistan in view of colonial and postcolonial history. This political will to make Islam a central topic began very early on to shape Islamic identities and research on Islam. Let us remember that the term

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“islamophobia” appeared in 1997 during British public debate on discrimination towards Muslims, and that it thus brought back to life, long before September 11, 2001, the process of victimization that has affected all European Muslims.

In the United States, on the other hand, current political and media interest is wholly tied to the aftereffects of September 11th and, if we refer to European precedent, this will have an impact on the nature of research over the upcoming decade. Until the present day, and despite the fact that religion is not considered a priori to be a taboo subject, research on Muslims has been strongly dominated by an ethnographic approach. Indeed, the extreme ethnic diversification of Islam has meant that much work has been focused on localized ethnic communities, some of which have received more attention than others as, for example, the Arabs of Detroit or Islam within the black community. Despite the existence of pioneering studies, the diversification of religious practices and their adaptation to the American context through systematic comparison between several ethnic groups still need to be properly interpreted.

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Unlike their American counterparts, European researchers have been attempting to establish a general interpretative framework. For example, many researchers in Europe consider that being a minority within a democratic and secularized context is a decisive element in the transformation of Muslims’ practices, and of their relationship to Islam. However, this approach very often amounts to a description of the modalities according to which Muslims adapt to their new context. Another (and more innovative) approach aims to take into account the modes of interaction between Muslim groups and different segments of Western societies. A process-based approach to identities means refusing to essentialize both the minority and the dominant culture, and leads to an understanding of the social construction of Muslim communities within the dialectic formed between surroundings and group resources.

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The question that must be at the heart of our research, then, is the following: how exactly are Muslim communities constructed within democratic and secularized societies?

Four dimensions are crucial to the formation of both Muslim communities and individual religious practices. These dimensions are the meta-narrative currently circulating on Islam, the influence of the cultural and political structures of the host countries, the complex interaction between religion and ethnicity, and the influence of global Islam.

Meta-narratives about Islam

In order to study ways Muslims define and experience their identity, it is necessary to take into account the frameworks and structures that are imposed by dominant meta-narratives about Islam. Certainly, the importance of the way an individual is viewed by others, and the importance of interaction in identity formation in general, are well known. Muslims, more than the members of any other religious group, are no longer in control of


this interaction, and a discourse about Islam is imposed upon them, a discourse that spreads across all levels of society from the micro-local to the international.

In the post-September 11th context, one of the elements shared by European and American Muslims has been the permanent collusion between Islam (seen as an international political threat) and Muslims living in democratic nations, as has been shown by the hostile reactions that followed the attacks of September 11, 2001. This continual move to correlate the international situation to Muslims living in democratic nations reveals the permanency of an essentialist approach to Islam and Muslims which is rooted in several centuries of confrontation between the Muslim world and Europe. This discourse tends to play continuously on the confrontation between Islam and the West, and to make of Islam a problem or obstacle on the path towards modernization, thus pushing Muslims to make adjustments, particularly since September 11, 2001. Of course, no ethnic or religious group escapes stereotyping when it comes face to face with other groups. What in my opinion seems specific in the case of Islam is: (a) the historical

10 What we profess to know about Islam is to a large extent the product of a vision constructed upon centuries of discord, as much political as religious. The mobile and paradoxical reality of Muslims, both inside and out - from their most private behavior to their most public - tends to disappear under the weight of perceptions that have been progressively deposited over the centuries. These perceptions are constructed out of specific historical moments and encounters which permanently crystallize different, even contradictory, sets of images such as violence, heresy and debauchery, or sensuality, brutality and cruelty. Many such perceptions descend from the tradition of orientalism.

While the more conspicuous forms of orientalism have been profoundly modified by sociology, anthropology and political science, its more latent forms (the result of amassed representations) still continue to operate. Edward Saïd is thus correct in asserting that the orient and Islam only exist as topoi, a collection of references, and a sum of characteristics linked to the imagination. Within such an interpretation, supported by actual quotes from religious texts, Islam is always presented as a closed system, a prototype for traditional closed societies, thus denying Muslims and Islamic society any capacity for change. Such interpretations are, of course, clearly motivated in part by the same ideology that has sought to justify, since the nineteenth century, all attempts at dominating these parts of the world.
moment at which the same network of representations is invested with meaning at both from the micro-local to the international level; and (b) the strengthening of the stereotype by certain forms of the scholarly tradition that have been built up around Islam.

The essentialist approach, as described and criticized by Edward Saïd, in Orientalism\(^\text{11}\) is far from having disappeared. It is remarkable to note that, since the 1980s, the fact of considering Islam as a risk factor in international relations has been legitimized by perceptions deposited over centuries, and which would seem very familiar to any eighteenth-century gentleman or honnête homme. The same recurring attributes are activated and reformulated by changes in international and domestic circumstances. It seems that the attacks of September 11, 2001 have reinforced this interpretation that considers Islam an inherent risk factor.

Islamic identities are constructed at the heart of these contexts. There is an interstitial space between the act of representation and the actual presence of the community. It is specifically within this gap that the specificity of Muslims appears. In order to look into this gap, we must ask of Islam: who? says what? and where? In a situation where the relationship between dominating and dominated has so many consequences, three scenarios are possible: acceptance, avoidance, or resistance.\(^\text{12}\) These three possible attitudes subtend the multiplicity of discourses and actions in the name of Islam whether they are oriented towards Muslims or non-Muslims. Acceptance means


that a dominant discourse is accepted, and is accompanied by cultural amnesia and a
definite will to assimilate. This trend is marginal amongst immigrant Muslims.
Avoidance refers to behaviors or discourses that attempt to separate as much as possible
Muslims from the non-Muslim environment by developing, for example, a sectarian
usage of Islamic religious beliefs. Resistance means refusing the status given to Islam
within dominant discourses and politics. Resistance need not be violent: it can involve,
for example, taking a view opposite to that of dominant narratives, and producing a
voluminous literature that functions as an apology of Islam. As for practices, certain
forms of resistance involve what Erving Goffman calls “contact terrorism”, which means
using certain Islamic symbols linked to clothing or behavior in order to play on the
Other’s fear and repulsion. Resistance can also take on more radical forms, such as being
attracted to certain violent Islamic movements, as is demonstrated by the cases of Khaled
Kelkal, a French citizen born in France to Algerian parents, who was involved in the GIA
battle, and of John Reid and John Leid who joined the cause of Al Qa’ida. However,
there also exist positive forms of resistance through which Muslims reappropriate for
themselves elements of Islamic practice, based on personal commitment and faith while
still “keeping up with the times”.

The diversity of dominant political and cultural frameworks

The ethnic diversity of European Muslims is often (and very rightly) underlined, but it is
also important to take into account the diversity of national contexts: the status of religion
within different societies, the modes of acquiring nationality, and the presence or lack of
acknowledgment of multiculturalism, as well as the specific characteristics of each European country have a direct influence on the dynamics of the formation of Muslim minorities and on the construction of identities. National and regional diversity is even greater in the United States and has a definite impact on the way Islamic identities are constructed. If, on the other hand, the culturally unifying elements are taken into account, then it becomes clear that one of the greatest differences between Europe and the United States resides in the greater secularization of social relationships which, in the case of Europe, make less valid any form of social or cultural action based on religious values, or which tend to invalidate certain relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims (such as inter-faith dialogue). In other words, if European Muslims do not act in certain ways, we should seek the reason for this among the range of opportunities made possible by the dominant elements of each society. There are many examples of such identity formulation that is closely related to the characteristics of the dominant culture and political framework. It is thus that Britain’s multicultural policies impede the specifically religious dynamics of the Muslim minority, at least before the time of the Rushdie affair. In the same way, the introduction of religious instruction within state schools in Germany and Austria has motivated Muslims to create textbooks with the goal of transmitting the Islamic tradition in a way that is adapted to being a minority. In the

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13 See, for example, the abundant literature on Arab Muslims in Detroit.

14 For recent research that illustrates this topic, see: Macloughin, Sean, “Recognising Muslims: Religion, Ethnicity and Identity Politics in Cesari, J (ed), Musulmans d’Europe, Cemoti, no. 33, 2002, pp. 43-57; Mohr, Irka-Christin, “Islamic Instruction in Germany and Austria: A Comparison of Principles Founded in Religious Thought” in Cesari (J), ed; ibidem, pp. 149-167.
United States, the significant racial rift, as well as multicultural ideology, are amongst the factors that have perpetuated the fact that Muslims identify with the multiple ethnic groups to which they belong. At the same time, there are two further factors that make the situation different from within Europe: (a) the social recognition of religious organizations’ collective action; (b) the cultural capital of American Muslims. These two factors have meant that, more rapidly that in the European context, a public Muslim voice has begun to emerge (for example ISNA, ICNA, CAIR, etc.) beyond the fact of ethnic diversity.

**Ethnicity versus religion**

Whether in Europe or the United States, individuals’ identification with Islam appears in most cases to be an element of emerging ethnic communities. From Turkish immigrants in Germany to British Indians and Pakistanis, or even (to a certain extent) North African people living in France, Islam is a vital element in the orchestration of ethnic identity within European societies, especially for the first generations of immigrants. The same process is at work at the heart of Muslim populations in America for whom racial and ethnic rifts are even more marked.

Simultaneously over the last decade, more “transethnic” forms of the notion of Islamic religion have begun to be developed. For example, in Great Britain, a new generation of Muslim leaders is currently starting to emerge, distant from the ethnicized and often isolationist Islam dominated by the early Indian and Pakistani immigrants (following the precepts of Barlevis and Déobandis. After the Rushdie affair, these new
leaders have opened a dialogue with national government. This emergence of a new
generation of leaders within associations and religious movements is a phenomenon that
is spreading all over Europe, and which is part of a specific social phenomenon, namely
the acculturation of Islamic references to a secularized context. This acculturation is
realized through a contradictory double movement: the privatization of Islamic references
and the increase in the collective practices of Islam.\footnote{see the conclusion below: “the Challenge of Theological Revival”}

A comparable process is at work amongst American Muslims with the appearance
of a pan-Islamic discourse based on the refusal of cultures specific to the Muslim world,
and on the search for a “truer form of Islam” whose values are coherent with those of
American society. However, America and Europe are different because the difference in
context means that the opportunities available are not the same. In the case of America,
the pan-Islamic approach is often led by an immigrant elite, specialized in lobbying at the
national level, and who try to turn to their advantage the fact that religious values are held
to be valid factors within public debate, an elite that Karen Leonard calls in her report
“professional Muslims.” Such a strategy does not necessarily mean that, in their daily
identification with Islam, professional Muslims always put into practice this pan-Islamic
approach. On the other hand, the existence in certain European countries of a third or
even a fourth generation of Muslims means that there are already well-established a
French Islam, an English Islam, a Belgian Islam, etc. detached from the ethnic and
national cultures of the first generations (cultural references, language, behavior,
interactions with non-Muslims, etc.)

In both cases (Europe and America), we must keep in mind the gap between the
reality of Islamic practice and theological or intellectual discourse. Daily, concrete
practices reveal an acculturation to the secularized context, a kind of “homemade” version of Islam, the taking into account of relativism, which is not always reflected in intellectual output, especially in Europe.

Global Islam

Globalization is a cultural process that favors the development of non-territorialized cultures and communities based on race, gender, religion, or even lifestyle. In this respect, Islam is a powerful element in identity formation, weaving together solidarity between various groups that are separated by the constraints of very different nations, countries and cultures.

Over the past two decades, two different globalized forms of Islam have attracted more and more followers in different parts of the Muslim world and beyond. One refers to theological and political movements that emphasize the universal link to the Community of Believers (Ummah) such as the Muslim Brotherhood, the Jamaat-Tabligh or the Wahabi doctrine. Today, the conditions for communication and the free movement of people/ideas make the Ummah all the more effective, without mentioning the fact that national ideologies have declined. Unlike Protestantism, where the diversification in interpretations of religious belief led to the founding of separate communities and the proliferation of sects, the unity of the Ummah as an imagined and constantly renewed community based on an understanding of a shared fate is maintained. It is important to make a distinction at this point between radicalism and fundamentalism. It is the desire to believe in an Islam based on a direct relationship to the divinely-revealed that is often
the cause of people’s decision to join salafi or wahabi movements. They are thus fundamentalists, i.e. they refer back to the sources of the religion, the Qur’an and the Hadiths. This return to the source texts can be conservative or puritan as is shown by the growing success of the Jamaat At-Tabligh, by the fact that a part of the new generations find their source for inspiration in the wahabi school and especially the fatawas of late sheikh Al-Albani.

However, this return to the divinely-revealed sources can also give rise to more open-minded interpretations, in touch with the social and political facts and issues of various European contexts. For example the growing influence of the Muslim Brothers among European and American Muslims illustrates how morally conservative interpretations of the religion can be also related to more inclusive perceptions of Western societies.

The other form of global Islam refers to diasporic communities that develop solidarity beyond the boundaries of nations and culture, and that are often labeled “transnational networks”. It refers to non-governmental participants such as religious leaders, immigrants, entrepreneurs, and intellectuals, who develop bonds and identities that transcend the borders of nation states. To achieve transnational status, a group must

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16 Historically the Muslim Brothers, founded in 1928, or the wahabite movement at the founding of the Saudian monarchy, are part of the salafist current. The institutional and political evolutions of these two trends have made the term “salafist” a synonym for conservatism, even for “reactionary stance”, notably within the context of Europe. Let us note that wahabism is hostile to all forms of intellectualism, religious establishment, and even to mysticism. However, this is not true of all trends based on a return to the word of the religious texts. Not all Muslim Brothers, for example, were originally anti-modern or anti-intellectual.

17 A cheikh at the University of Medine, a specialist in Hadiths, who died several years ago.

18 See Cesari, Jocelyne, When Islam and Democracy meet, op-cit.
possess three main traits: (1) awareness of an ethnic or cultural identity, (2) existence of
group organizations across different nations, (3) development of relations -whether monetary, political or even imaginary- linking people in different countries.¹⁹

The forms of virtual Islam are part of this globalized Islam. “Electronic religiosity” is causing Islam to expand globally via the circulation of audio- and videotapes, the broadcasting of independent television satellite shows, and (most significant of all) the creation of websites. In particular, bulletin boards, chat rooms, and discussion forums on the internet are promoting alternative, even contradictory, understandings of Islam, where only nationally-based ones previously existed. In so doing, they have an impact on Islamic discourse and break up the monopoly that traditional religious authorities had over the control of sacred issues.²⁰

Thus, mobile dynamics establish the autonomy of social groups in the field of international relations. These social groups do not strive to assert themselves as collective participants in a transnational arena; instead, private interests push them into this role that

¹⁹ Diaspora is one form of deterritorialized identities which links dispersed people with their country of origin. In the case of Muslims, even if their bond with their country of origin is strong, it is challenged by a broader solidarity with the Muslim world at large. To understand how the term “diaspora” is now used beyond its historical origin to designate transnational identities of immigrants see: Gabi, Sheffer (1996) “Whither the study of ethnic Diasporas? Some theoretical, definitional, analytical and comparative considerations” in: Prévélakis, George (ed), The networks of Diasporas, Paris: L’Harmattan, pp. 37-46; Cohen, Robin, Global Diasporas: An Introduction, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997.

²⁰ It would be misleading, however, to consider on-line Islam as an exclusive indicator of a new democratic public space without paying attention to specific social changes within specific Muslim contexts. In other words, to assess accurately what Muslim websites are accomplishing in terms of knowledge, perspective, and affiliation, sociologists must investigate how electronic religiosity is resonating with significant social changes in general.
was not intended for them. Family reunions, marriage arrangements, and business activities, for example, are usually motivated by individual or family interests, but these activities often entail international mobility. Private decisions affect not only visiting rights, family groupings, and monetary flows, but also religious, linguistic and cultural models, indirectly producing a collective result on the international scene.

A glimpse into the complex interaction of local, national and international groupings characterizing Islam in Europe or in the U.S. reveals some of the shortfalls of current scholarship on the subject. Because of the importance of transnational networks for the Western Muslim communities, any analysis that stresses Muslims’ obligations to the host society, to the exclusion of international influences, fails to provide a balanced view. The adaptation of Islam to the democratic context is a two-dimensional activity, involving both the identification to global or transnational forms of Islam and to national cultures in the different “host” countries.

**Islam, ethnicity, and poverty: a set of “dangerous liaisons”**

The socioeconomic condition of European Muslims is one of great fragility. The unemployment rate for immigrant Muslims is, as a general rule, higher than the national average: 31% and 24% for Moroccans and Turks respectively in the Netherlands. In 1995, INED showed that with equal levels of education, unemployment was twice as high for youth from a Muslim immigrant background as for youth from a non-Muslim
immigrant background.\textsuperscript{21} In this respect, the situation of Muslims in Great Britain is particularly critical. Those persons originating from Bangladesh and Pakistan have a level of unemployment three times higher than that of minority communities considered to be the most disadvantaged. Within inner cities, almost half of all Bangladeshi men and women are unemployed. This marginality is passed on to the generation born and educated in Great Britain: in 1991, the unemployment rate for young people of Pakistani origin aged 16-24 was almost 36%, whereas the unemployment rate for whites was less than 15%. This disadvantage is not limited to jobs requiring only basic qualifications, but also concerns high-profile domains such as medicine and education.

This socioeconomic marginality is in most cases accompanied by residential segregation. Data from the British census shows that Pakistani immigrants tend to live in the most dilapidated or unhealthy kinds of housing: the ethnic concentration per residential area or per residence is also a factor that must be taken into consideration within the inner cities of the United Kingdom and Germany, or in France’s poorer suburbs.

Such a situation of relegation has important consequences for Islam in Europe. The political temptation is to associate Islam with poverty, and to consider (although without any open acknowledgment of this) that the former is the cause of the latter. On the Muslims’ side, there is a tendency to use Islam in a defensive or reactive way. Ethnicity thus becomes a trap when a collusion occurs between ethnicity, religion, and

\textsuperscript{21} See Dassetto, Felice; Maréchal, Brigitte and Nielsen, Jorgen (eds), \textit{Convergences musulmanes, aspects contemporains de la présence musulmane dans l’Europe élargie}, Louvain La Neuve: Academia Bruylant, 2001.
poverty. This trap can in some situations lead to riots or a state of social unrest as is recurrently the case in England. A team of researchers on community cohesion, established under the auspices of the Home Office, led an inquiry in the towns of Oldham, Burnley, Southall, Birmingham, and Leicester where riots broke out in the spring of 2001. The results published on December 11, 2001 are alarming. They show whole groups withdrawn from society, experiencing an immense feeling of frustration, and faced with poverty and a lack of equal opportunities. “You are the only white person I shall meet today,” said one of the people of Pakistani origin in Bradford who was interviewed for the report. Whether in the domain of housing, employment, education, or social services, the report describes an England segregated according to race and religion, both factors being closely tied. The predominant anti-Muslim racism is responded to by withdrawal and a reactive use of Islam. The lack of communication between ethnic groups and local political milieus, in particular as concerns the delicate questions of culture, race, and religion. The British situation is reminiscent of that of black American Muslims. Consequently, the use of Islam becomes an element that accentuates separatism.

Although the same levels of segregation are not reached, the ethnic perception of social differences is also very present within the urban space of France, Germany, and Holland. In the case of France, it takes on the form of concentrating the poorest populations (a majority of Muslims) in the suburbs. Ethnicity generally corresponds to a way of defining oneself, or of being defined by others, as Arabic, Maghrebian, or

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Muslim, based on a factor that allows differentiation (facial features, religion) without this having to be systematically realized by culturally-specific behavior. For example, the reference to the category “young people”, when origins are not taken into account, can be a major factor in the way one defines oneself, and in the way one lives, as is shown, for example, by the success of rap music (a crossbreed music form if ever there were one).

The correlation between social problems and Islam can be invoked as one of the reasons for the political success of movements on the extreme right, not only in France (with the Front National’s high score during the first round of the presidential elections on April 28, 2002), but also in Belgium, Austria, and even Holland where similar thematics and parties can be observed.\textsuperscript{23} Indeed, the collusion between Islam and poverty accentuates the validity of the hypothesis about the incompatibility between cultures, and about the threat constituted by the settling of Islam in the West.

One of the consequences of September 11, 2001 has been the accentuation of stigma via the knotting together of Islam, the poor suburbs, and terrorism. The terrorist attack has indeed hardened the discourse on immigration (Austria, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Italy, and Portugal), and on security.\textsuperscript{24} It is still too early to measure the

\textsuperscript{23} In March 2002 during the parliamentary elections an openly xenophobic and anti-Islamic party emerged, led by Pim Fortuyn. To general surprise, this party won a majority of votes at Rotterdam. The leader was murdered in mysterious circumstances on May 6, 2002. Despite this disappearance, his party arrived in second place during the parliamentary elections on May 15, 2002, behind the Christian-democrat party, with 26 out of 150 seats in the Houses of Parliament. It has since then lost its influence in Dutch politics.

\textsuperscript{24} The antiterrorist law ratified by George Bush on October 26, 2001, increasing government ability to supervise/control citizens (including their family and people who are not yet citizens) has been followed by comparable initiatives in Europe. In Great Britain, a law on antiterrorism,
consequences of these laws on the religious behavior of Muslims in Europe, but it is very likely that the consequence will be an increase in the reactive and defensive use of Islam\textsuperscript{25}. In the United States, within the post September 11th context, a new unprecedented form of racialization of Muslims has been emerging, linked to the policies that aim to fight against terrorism, and which targets immigrants and people of immigrant origin.\textsuperscript{26}

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crime and security issues was also passed on December 14, 2001, giving rise to a real debate on the restriction of public freedom for it, too, increases the power of the police in matters of collecting information and checking up on citizens. In Germany, two laws have been voted on, one on December 8, the second on December 20, 2001. They increase not only the funds available to police forces, but also their powers of investigation. Moreover, these new laws plan to place armed security agents in German planes, and to review the law according to which religious organizations are accorded certain privileges because they are seen as public corporations. The debate on security has been subverted by the events of September 11th and by the taking into account of counter-terrorist measures, as shown by the French law promulgated on November 15, 2001, a law concerned with security issues in daily life, and into which was introduced a whole series of clauses connected with the battle against terrorism during debate at the National Assembly after September 11th, and which amalgamated interior (i.e. national) security, crime, and terrorism, thus contributing to an increase in the ostracism of the youth living in the poor suburbs. In particular, two measures cited by the law (the first one connected with the need for quiet behavior in the entrance halls to large apartment buildings; the second stating that people who “regularly” do not purchase a valid ticket when using public transport) do not seem to have any relationship with, nor will they have any impact on, more important crime issues or terrorism.

One of the paradoxes of September 11th is that in certain European countries, such as France, international logic has not, for the first time, affected the dynamics of the recognition of Islam as a social fact. The way that Islam has settled at the local level is certainly the reason for this. An astonishing and paradoxical dissociation occurs between the Muslim neighbor (about whose religion one might be aware, but that one does not really acknowledge) and Islam, a term still unknown and often carrying with it negative collections of negative images. See Cesari, J, “Islam de l’extérieur, musulmans de l’intérieur: deux visions après le 11 septembre 2001”, \textit{Cultures et Conflits}, no. 44, hiver 2001, pp. 97-115.


\textsuperscript{26} See Karen Leonard’s report, op-cit p 39.
Conclusion: The Challenge of Theological Revival

Regarding the religious practices of Islam, we might speak in terms of europeanization and americanization of Islam, two phenomena that follow parallel paths. We have already noted that ethnicity plays a more important role than the religious in the definition of Islamic identities. However, there also exists a scenario according to which the relationship to Islam takes precedence over the relationship to the ethnic group.

The dominant mode, found within European Muslim populations, is an attempt to reconcile a maximum amount of individual freedom with the belief in a more or less well defined form of transcendence that can be lived according to the constraints of one’s own era (at least via observance of key rites of passage: circumcision, marriage, and burial). People who follow such a mode will define themselves as “non-practicing believers”. Many such believers who do not really practice do not reject the ethnic Islam inherited from their parents and which forms them within a festive and traditional relationship to Islam. They generally have little knowledge of the Islamic tradition and of the rituals that it prescribes. Most will not have received any instruction in the Qur’an, whether within or beyond the family (religious schools, etc.). In such a context, Islam means faithfulness to one’s group of origin and implies no real feelings of belief or piety. This kind of loose identification with Islam is present in both the middle and upper social classes.

More generally, for those who defend Islam as a form of identity, the term “Islam” is associated with ritual-like moments in family life, notably when special feast days are celebrated (for example Aïd-El-Kebir), and which imply a break in the surrounding space and time. Furthermore, the word is also associated with the respect
due to parental beliefs and practices without it implying the same conformism amongst those who show this respect. Islam is thus conceived of as a cultural heritage inscribed within family traditions and behaviors, and which serve as their link to their family’s country or area of origin. It works more, in fact, as a “marker” that shows lines of filiation, thus making of it more a question of culture than of religion.

A second group, a minority by far, is defined on the other hand by a strict demand for respect of Islamic prescriptions. Religion in this case is invested as an orthopraxis, i.e. as a concern for respecting to the letter religious prescriptions, and to embody them in one’s daily life. Identification with Islam offers the individual direct access to daily reality and provides a framework that s/he can use to structure life: the world can be sectioned off into the “pure” and the “impure”; all acts can be categorized according to the degree to which they are lawful or unlawful. All available evidence describes this behavioral conformity as a function of Islamic prescriptions (whether on the topic of food, clothing, or ritual acts).

In this second group, Muslims are involved in an individual search that takes the form of learning classical Arabic (that most Muslim children in the West do not understand); they begin active investigation of the divinely-revealed texts, and to read general works on the founding and tradition of Islam (for the most part in French translations). The main European-language books that are available in almost all bookstores offer descriptions of the pillars of Islam, of the prescriptions in different domains (social, economic, cultural, educational, etc.), or are biographies of the Prophet, tell of the exemplary lives of certain famous Companions, or are about the status of women, or on the relationship between Islam and science.
The Europeanization of Islam is thus built upon a paradox. The democratic context promotes a diversification of religious practices marked with the seal of individualization and secularization. However, given the lack of religious authorities and of sufficient places for people to learn about Islam, the Islam that is learned about is still, in the majority of cases, dominated by the conservative trends of the Muslim world. Europe has become a chosen land for fundamentalist movements dominated by Saudi wahabism and other trends grouped together as salafist. Their establishment can be explained by the fact that they are capable of quickly supplying a basic education in Islam to those people who are not only lacking real knowledge on the subject, but who lack the means to get access to any. The education that is dispensed is thus conservative and tends to promote withdrawal and a rejection of the non-Muslim environment, especially amongst the most fragile layers of Muslim youth. When collusion occurs between Islam and marginality, the trend is to identify oneself with Islam in reaction to the hostility or the underrating of one’s surroundings. Of course, destructive use of the Islamic message does exist, as is shown by the involvement of young European Muslims with Al Qa’ida and with the attacks of September 11, 2001 in the United States. We must investigate the meaning of these commitments to a kind of theology of hatred which is not always limited to the poorest members of society, and which is more specifically a European phenomenon. Explanations that involve nihilism or humiliation are insufficient.\(^\text{27}\)

Alongside this radical and destructive trend, there is another unprecedented and opposite conception of Islam being formed: in other words, an Islam that is a source of

morality and that can educate, which extols the logic of individual choice (i.e. free will) and which breaks away from the ethnicization of religion. European and American Muslims put forward an individual logic for decision and choice making that fits well with the increasing subjectivization of religious affiliation. It is not enough to believe and to practice one’s religion because one was born into a given tradition or belief system. It is necessary, rather, to express one’s individuality by making a choice to be a practicing believer, and to give a personal meaning to the divinely-revealed message. This results in the individual taking his/her distance from his/her family, a move justified by the fact that the parents do not seem to understand what “real” Islam is, and because they have no “true knowledge” and act only under the influence of customs and superstitions linked to their culture. This search for a universal Islam, well informed and governed by individual logic, highlights the unprecedented experience of reconstruction within the European context of a religious tradition. It is important to underlines at the same time the extreme difficulty of this process which can demand often difficult ruptures with the family milieu, as well as the adaptation of elements of the Muslim tradition to the context of the Muslim community’s minority status.

These modes of identification with the Islamic tradition are also very visible (in different ways) within American society. However, we can say that, given the greater importance of the elite within American society, intellectual output is also more substantial there than in Europe. There is, in particular, one current that is critical of the emerging Islamic tradition. It attempts, taking a hermeneutic point of view, to produce interpretations that call into question the traditional approaches on a certain number of points: the relationship with non-Muslim, the relationship with secularism, and in
particular the status of women. The question of the status of women is a key element in this divergence between modernist and conservative approaches. With one or two exceptions, the supporters of modernism were or are in America (Khaled Abu El Fadl, Farid Essack Fazlur Rahma, Amina Wadud, etc).

Because of the increasing deterritorialization of religious references, a gulf is opening up between fundamentalists and modernists regarding the interpretation of the Islamic tradition, an interpretation that will be called to play a decisive role in the future structuring of the Islamic landscape, not only in Europe but also in America. One fundamental dimension of the differentiation of identifications with Islam will concern

28 Tariq Ramadan is one such exception. See To be an European Muslim, Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 1999.


30 Fundamentalists as represented, for example, by wahabism or the Tabligh movement recommend a return to the divinely-revealed text in order to put into application within their daily life the principles of the Qur’an and the Sunnah, and refuse any form of adapting Islamic principles to the modern world and to its culture. Several very varied currents exist, which run the gamut from the refusal of politics (e.g. Tabligh) to radicalization (e.g. the Taliban or Al-Qa’ida). On the other hand, there is a current of thought that recommends a return to the divinely-revealed texts but which does not reject contemporary surroundings or modernity. This latter current is often referred to as reformist, but given its explicit objective of returning to the religious texts in order to find solutions to political and social problems of the time, as well as its explicit reflection on the philosophical principles of modernity, I prefer the term modernist. Between the founding figure of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hassan El Banna, Mohamed Iqbal, and Ali Shariati or Rached Ghannouchi, there are obviously significant differences. (This form of modernism should not be confused with the first vintage of modernists, between the two World Wars, and who in the Muslim world, at that point very much under colonial denomination, recommended quite simply that Islamic principles be abandoned in favor of a form of modernization without God, following the Western model.)
the changing perspective on the status of the Islamic tradition and the acceptance of relativism linked to the democratic and secular context.