

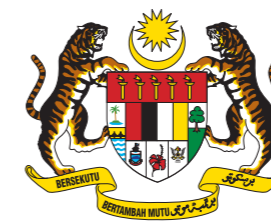
# SEARCCT'S SELECTION OF ARTICLES

*PUBLISHER*

Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT)  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
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ISBN 978-983-44397-1-2



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MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
MALAYSIA**

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SEARCCT is dedicated to advocating the understanding of issues pertaining to terrorism and contributing ideas towards the shaping of sound counter-terrorism policy. The Centre accomplishes this mainly by organising constructive capacity building and public awareness programmes, as well as enhancing information sharing through networking, research and publications.

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## **VISION**

*Towards becoming a dynamic and effective world-class  
counter-terrorism training and research centre that is committed to  
improving regional and international security*

THE SEARCCT'S SELECTION OF ARTICLES  
Vol.1, No.1, 2009

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## FOREWORD

I wish to congratulate the Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT) for this publication entitled *SEARCCT's Selection of Articles*.

While SEARCCT is still relatively young, it has constantly sought to build partnerships and expand cooperation with various other organizations and institutions. This particular booklet aims to do just that. While it should be acknowledged that differences exist and at time prejudices could persist, there is much to be gained by listening and seeking different points of view. The excellent commentaries provided by the various authors would in many ways address the relevant issues in a thought provoking yet sensitive manner.

I wish to record my sincere thanks to the various authors and editors for their excellent work in shedding light on the significant, yet controversial subject of terrorism and counter-terrorism. My appreciation also goes to Ambassador Ahmad Shahizan Abdul Samad, Director-General of SEARCCT, who has overseen this project to its fruition.

It is hoped that this booklet will spur debate and provide greater clarity on the subjects of terrorism and counter-terrorism and would eventually lead to greater understanding, which often times forms the basis for peace, tolerance and harmony.

**Tan Sri Rastam Isa**  
**Secretary General**  
**Ministry of Foreign Affairs**  
**Malaysia**

## **EDITOR'S NOTE**

The Southeast Asian Regional Centre for Counter Terrorism's (SEARCCT) booklet endeavours to explore various themes in the field of international security with the hope that it will spark constructive discussion and debate. In this issue, we are fortunate to have the views of eminent scholars in the field of international relations, political science and Islamic thought and civilization on the theme of Islamophobia.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the esteemed contributors who have done a commendable job in putting forth their ideas on this particular subject. I must also mention Colonel Ghazali Ismail, Director of the Research and Publications Unit and the research team for working tirelessly to coordinate this project. We are also grateful for the support of YAB Dato' Sri Anifah Hj. Aman, Foreign Minister of Malaysia and the guidance of Y. Bhg. Tan Sri Rastam Mohd Isa, Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia in the publication of this booklet.

It has been said that "*until lions learn to write, hunters will tell their story*". For too long terrorists have been dictating the agenda and discussion in the public sphere. As a result, the hearts and minds of the people gravitate towards them. It is my hope and aspiration that this work will be a positive and meaningful contribution to reverse this one-track trend of thoughts.

**Ambassador Ahmad Shahizan Abd Samad**  
**Director-General**  
**Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT)**  
**Ministry of Foreign Affairs**  
**Malaysia**



## ISLAMOPHOBIA: A HISTORICAL CONTINUITY

*Chandra Muzaffar*

There is no doubt at all that the influential and articulate stratum of Western society is guilty of a whole range of negative attitudes towards Islam and the Muslims. At one end of the continuum is ignorance compounded by prejudice; at the other end is aversion alloyed with antagonism.

These negative attitudes are deeply embedded in the Western psyche. From time to time, in the course of the last 1000 years or so, they have manifested themselves through religion and scholarship, folklore and literature, education and the media, domestic politics and foreign policy.

Starting from the 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the Church, for instance, through distorted translations of the *Qur'an* sought to disparage Islam and the Prophet Muhammad. There was a deliberate endeavour to tarnish Muslim history, to vilify Muslim society. As a result, images of Arab despots and bloodthirsty Muslim tyrants gained certain notoriety in medieval Europe. Unedifying images of this sort were often embellished by ugly portrayals of the wanton lust of lascivious Arab Sheiks wallowing in harlot-lined harems.<sup>1</sup> Even in the writings of illustrious European poets and playwrights – from Dante and Shakespeare to Byron and Shelley - there were pejorative references to the Qur'an and the Prophet, to 'Moors' and 'Saracens'. They became part of the regular intellectual diet of many a European student right down to the present.

### *The Islamic Threat*

Today, the mainstream Western media portrays Islam or what it describes as 'militant Islam' or 'fundamentalist Islam' as a threat to the West. Writing in 1981, Edward Said notes, "For the general public in America and Europe today, Islam is 'news' of a particularly unpleasant sort. The media, the government, the geopolitical strategists, and - although they are marginal to the culture at large - the academic experts on Islam are all in concert: Islam is a threat to Western civilisation. Now, this is by no means the same as saying that only derogatory or racist caricatures of Islam are to be found in

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<sup>1</sup> See Rana Kabbani, *Europe's Myths of Orient*, (London: Pandora Press, 1986).



the West. What I am saying is that negative images of Islam are very much more prevalent than any others, and that such images correspond, not to what Islam 'is' ... but to what prominent sectors of a particular society take it to be: Those sectors have the power and the will to propagate that particular image of Islam, and this image therefore becomes more prevalent, more present, than all others".<sup>2</sup>

If anything, that notion of 'threat' to the West has become even stronger in the nineties. As John Esposito, one of the few balanced non-Muslim American scholars on Islam put it in a recent book, "In some ways, the attitude of the West towards communism seems at times transferred to or replicated in the new threat, 'Islamic fundamentalism.'<sup>3</sup> He suggests that selective presentation of facts and biased analysis of Islam have contributed to this perception of the religion within mainstream Western society. "As a result," he says, "Islam and Islamic revivalism are easily reduced to stereotypes of Islam against the West, Islam's war with modernity, or Muslim rage, extremism fanaticism, terrorism. The 'f' and 't' words like 'fundamentalism' and 'terrorism' have become linked in the minds of many. Selective and therefore biased analysis adds to our ignorance rather than our knowledge, narrows our perspective rather than broadening our understanding, reinforces the problem rather than opening the way to new solutions."<sup>4</sup>

On numerous occasions, policy-makers and politicians in the West, particularly the United States, have exploited this ignorance, this narrow perspective to advance self-serving foreign policy objectives. In the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution and the hostage crisis, for instance, they used all the major American television networks and newspapers to whip up mass hysteria against "militant Islam", the Shiites, Khomeini, the Mullahs, *Purdah* and so on.

The 1995 Oklahoma City incident revealed yet again the tendency of the mainstream American media to stereotype Islam. Though there was not a shred of evidence to suggest it, their initial reaction was to blame 'Islamic terrorists' for that inhuman massacre of innocents. So powerful was the effect of the media's targeting that many Muslim families in cities across the United States were gripped with fear, lest public wrath turned against them. Even when it was that the real culprit was an American from a Christian cult,

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<sup>2</sup> See Edward Said, *Covering Islam*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), p. 136.

<sup>3</sup> See John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 172.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 173.

the media did not even bother to apologise to the Muslims and the public at large for their irresponsible reporting.<sup>5</sup>

### *Conquests and Crusades*

Why, one may ask, are Muslims stigmatised in this manner? Why is there so much bias and antagonism against Muslims within certain crucial segments of Western society? Part of the explanation lies in the Muslim conquest and occupation of parts of Western, Southern and Eastern Europe for long centuries. Though Muslim rulers were by and large just and fair to the Christian and Jewish communities under their charge, there was, nonetheless - and understandably so - a certain degree of resentment towards the alien conquerors. The infamous crusades which ended in the defeat of the Christian invaders of Arab-Muslim lands in West Asia also heightened European antagonism towards Islam and its followers.

It is a measure of the intensity of European antagonism that the West has consciously chosen to down play, even ignore, the immense debt that it owes Islam and the Muslims. In almost every facet of life, from medicine and algebra to law and government, Islam had laid the foundation for the progress of medieval Europe. In the words of the late Erskine Childers, "In every discipline upon which Europe then began to build its epochal advancement, European monarchs, religious leaders and scholars had to turn to Arab sources. When once any Western student of history manages to learn of this vast Arab inheritance buried out of sight and mind in Western historiography, the astonishment that the very facts of it do not appear in Western education is the greater because the proofs are literally in current Western language."<sup>6</sup> Childers describes the unwillingness of the West to acknowledge the intellectual inheritance of Islam as "a collective amnesia".<sup>7</sup>

### *Colonial Subjugation*

However, what perpetuated this collective amnesia through the centuries was not just the mere memory of conquest and crusades. The West was determined to block out Islam for yet another more important reason. This, in a sense, is at the root of contemporary Western antagonism towards

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<sup>5</sup> For an analytical discussion of the negative role of mainstream Western media, see *Terrorising the Truth* prepared by Farish Noor (Penang: Just World Trust, 1997).

<sup>6</sup> See Erskine Childers, *Amnesia and Antagonism*, *Terrorising the Truth*, p. 134.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p. 133.

Islam and the Muslims. It is the persistence of Muslim resistance to Western colonialism and neo-colonialism. At the height of Western colonialism in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Muslim groups were amongst the fiercest opponents of alien subjugation. Even in preponderantly non-Muslim societies like India, Muslim elements were often the earliest to express their rejection of Western colonial rule. This is why Muslim freedom-fighters like Siraj-ud-daula and Omar Mukhtar and Syed Jamaluddin al-Afghani were often defamed and denigrated by the colonial authorities. Of course, there were a number of illustrious non-Muslim freedom-fighters too who incurred the wrath of the mighty colonial powers.

### *Oil and Domination*

Since the end of formal colonial rule, Muslim societies have discovered that they are once again the targets of new forms of Western domination and control. This is primarily because of the world's oil reserves - the lifeblood of Western industrial civilisation - lie beneath Muslim feet. Controlling Muslim and Southern oil has been a fundamental goal of U.S. foreign policy for at least the last four decades. Anyone who dares to resist American control, or worse, challenges its hegemony, is at once branded as an 'extremist', a 'radical' or simply 'a threat to peace and stability'. This was the fate of the Iranian Prime Minister Muhammad Mossadegh who for a brief but spectacular moment in 1953 nationalised his country's oil. This has been the fate of the Iraqi and Libyan leadership ever since they gained control of their oil in the early seventies. This is also the fate of the Iranian leadership which since the Islamic Revolution of 1979 has tried to exercise sovereignty over oil and other mineral resources. Whatever the ideological orientations of these leaderships - and indeed each of them relates to Islam in a different way - the West has decided that they are all Muslim militants and sponsors of terrorism. What the general public in the West and even in the East do not realise is that the conscious denigration of such leadership has less to do with their misdemeanours (which do exist) and more to do with their assertion of authority over their one most precious natural resource.

## *Zionism*

The desire to control oil and the determination to perpetuate Western domination are, however, not the only forces behind the depreciation and disparagement of Islam and the Muslims. Zionism has also played a big part. Zionist attacks on Islam and Muslims, which began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century itself, became even more intense with the creation of Israel in 1948. With their disproportionate influence over Western media and Western scholarship, Zionists have been targeting specific aspects of Islamic theology and society - like the question of polygamy and the position of women - in order to discredit the religion and its adherents. They have also sought to depict Islam as a militant faith and Muslims as individuals prone to violence.

It is not difficult to understand why the massive Zionist propaganda machine has chosen to project Islam and Muslims in such a derogatory light. By presenting Islam as evil and Muslims as loathsome, the Zionists are, in fact, trying to justify their own illegitimate, immoral usurpation and annexation of Palestinian and Arab land. In other words, the aggressors, in their craftiness, are attempting to camouflage their violence and oppression by depicting the victims of their violence and oppression as the aggressors. This explains why those Palestinians and Arabs who resist Israeli occupation and subjugation - the real freedom-fighters - are invariably described in the mainstream Western media as 'terrorists' and 'militants'.

## *Muslim Migration*

There is perhaps yet another, more recent development which has also begun to impact upon mainstream Western perceptions of Islam and Muslims. This is Muslim migration to West European countries since the end of World War II. Muslim communities have emerged as the most populous - and often the most visible - minority in a number of countries. While European governments have sought to accommodate some of their more significant religious and cultural rights, there have also been allegations of subtle discrimination against Muslims in the school system, in employment and in social life. One must hasten to add, however, that on the whole, the domicile of non-European Muslims has worked both ways: it has reinforced age-old prejudices against Muslims; at the same time, however, interaction between Europeans and Muslims has also helped to lessen misconceptions about the latter among the former.

## *Islamic Resurgence*

Nonetheless, Islam remains the 'irreconcilable other' as far as Europe and the West are concerned. The situation is unlikely to change in the near future. This is partly because the main thrust of opposition sentiment to not only Western domination but also to local regimes which are in cohorts with Western powers, is now being channelled through the ideology of Islam. Indeed, Islam is rapidly emerging as the ideological rallying point for Muslims everywhere as they aspire for genuine liberation from the fetters of both local despotism and global authoritarianism. Given the prevailing perceptions of Islam within the major centres of power in the West, one can expect its political elites and makers to respond to Islamic resurgence with even more anger and antagonism.

This would be a real pity. For it can only lead to greater strife and conflict, exacerbated by all the prejudices and misconceptions accumulated through the ages. There is an urgent need, therefore, for mainstream Western society to try and understand Islam and the Muslims with an 'openness of mind and heart' which is sadly missing today. As the Christian scholar, Karen Armstrong put it, in her analysis of Western-Muslim relations, "We in the West must come to with our own inner demons of prejudice, chauvinism and anxiety, and strive for a greater objectivity".<sup>8</sup> In the process, one hopes that the West will realise that if there is to be genuine peace and harmony between the West and Islam - and within the human family as a whole - those structures which allow the few to dominate the many who are powerless would have to be replaced by new institutions that promote equality and justice for all.

There is some awareness of the importance of such a fundamental change in relationship in the preparatory work that is going on in conjunction with the World Conference against Racism (WCAR). The European regional meeting leading towards the WCAR, and the accompanying NGO forum held in Strasbourg in October 2000, for instance, took note of the problem of Islamophobia. From this and other similar efforts, it appears that mainstream Western society is slowly but steadily coming to terms with Islam and the Muslims.

At the same time, as the West evaluates itself, so must the Muslim world examine itself critically. The rise of Islam, with all the emotional

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<sup>8</sup> See Karen Armstrong, *Holy War: The Crusades and Their Impact on Today's World*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1991), p. 530.

power it commands, makes it incumbent upon us to ask some soul-searching questions about certain Muslim attitudes and priorities. Is Islamic resurgence giving enough attention to some of the crucial challenges confronting the *Ummah* - challenges pertaining to poverty and hunger, disease and illiteracy? Have Islamic resurgents gone beyond the rhetoric in addressing issues of education and knowledge, science and technology, politics and administration, economics and management in the alternative Islamic social order that they envision? Isn't it true to some extent that Islamic resurgence as a whole tends to be preoccupied with forms and symbols, rituals and practices? Isn't there a tendency within Islamic resurgence to view laws and regulations in a static rather than a dynamic manner? Is the conventional position of Islamic resurgence on the role of women in society and the place of minorities in a Muslim majority state, in accordance with the fundamental values and principles of the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*? Isn't it true that the exclusiveness of Islamic resurgence reflected in a variety of matters ranging from charity to politics is a betrayal of the letter and spirit of the *Qur'an*? Are Islamic resurgents, by insisting upon their interpretation of Islam, as the only correct approach to the religion, guilty of promoting sectarian sentiments within the *Ummah*? Have Islamic resurgents themselves contributed, perhaps unwittingly, to the factionalisation and fragmentation of the *Ummah*?

An extreme example of Islamic resurgence which transgresses some of the most essential attributes of the religion's social doctrine is the Taliban of Afghanistan. Since seizing power in that country five years ago, the Taliban have interpreted Islam in such a bigoted and dogmatic manner, that even conservative Muslims elsewhere regard it as a misnomer. By equalling 'puristic' Islam with strict adherence to the forms and frills of the religion in matters such as attire and appearance, the Taliban have succeeded in projecting Islam as a superficial religion. This is why when the Taliban ordered the destruction of ancient Buddhist statues in Afghanistan, there was an international outcry. Some of the loudest protests came from Muslim governments and NGOs,<sup>9</sup> for the Taliban have become a metaphor of what Muslims and Islamic resurgence should not be.

In that sense it reminds us of a simple truth: that we Muslims are also responsible, to a certain degree, for the negative perceptions of the religion and the community in today's world.

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<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, The Commentary for articles on the destruction of Buddhist statues in Afghanistan, International Movement for a Just World, vol. no. 3 (March 2001).

# **THE WEST, ISLAM AND THE MUSLIMS: ISLAMOPHOBIA AND EXTREMISM**

*Abdul Rashid Moten*

## *Introduction*

Islamophobia and extremism reinforce each other and the two terms are alike in their hatred of the 'other'. Islamophobia is akin to extremism whose practitioners provoke reactions from Muslims leading to an inflationary spiral of violence. Though of centuries old, Islamophobia, as proven by surveys and other documents, has increased in intensity due to, among others, the fear of the increasing number of Muslim citizens and asylum seekers in the West. It has been propagated by the media and the political leaders to galvanise support for the war on terror and for the occupation of alien lands. The authorities should criminalise Islamophobia and extremism and adopt strategies, in collaboration with Muslim and non-Muslim organisations, to promote understanding and respect for each other's faith. Western major powers could assist greatly by adopting a balanced approach to solving international conflicts.

Islamophobia and extremism have two things in common: the hatred of the 'other' and the resultant militancy and violence in both the camps. The two terms are also related in the sense that the more Islamophobia rises and manifests in extremism, the more Muslims organise against it and inversely, the more the Muslim resistance, the more Islamophobic tendencies amplify. Given the predominance of the West, the scholarly community has emphasised the need to quell Muslim extremism without focusing much on Islamophobia which is manifested through extremism that gives rise to Muslim extremism. This study aims to break the vicious cycle and restore sanity to the world that has gone awry.

## *Islamophobia and the Islamophobes*

Islamophobia is a neologism used to refer to an irrational fear or prejudice towards Muslims and the religion of Islam as it condemns Islam and its history as extremist, and regards Islam as a problem for the world. The "Islamophobia Observatory" at the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) defines Islamophobia as "an irrational or very powerful fear or dislike

of Islam”.<sup>1</sup> Its manifestations include prejudice, stereotyping, hostility, discriminatory treatment, denigration of the most sacred symbols of Islam and also non-recognition of Islam and Muslims by the law of the land. The Runnymede Trust report defines Islamophobia as:

“...unfounded hostility towards Islam. It refers also to the practical consequences of such hostility in unfair discrimination against Muslim individuals and communities, and to the exclusion of Muslims from mainstream political and social affairs.”<sup>2</sup>

According to Esposito and Mogahed (2007), “Islamophobia was coined to describe a two-stranded form of racism – rooted in both the ‘different’ physical appearance of Muslims and also in an intolerance of their religious and cultural beliefs.”<sup>3</sup>

The Runnymede Trust identifies eight components of Islamophobia as follows:

1. Islam is seen as a monolithic bloc, static and unresponsive to change;
2. Islam is seen as separate and ‘other’. It does not have values in common with other cultures, is not affected by them and does not influence them;
3. Islam is seen as inferior to the West. It is barbaric, irrational, primitive and sexist;
4. Muslims are seen as violent, aggressive, threatening, supportive of terrorism and engaged in a clash of civilisations ;
5. Islam is seen as a political ideology and is used for political or military advantage;
6. Muslim criticisms of the West are rejected;
7. Hostility towards Islam is used to justify discriminatory practices towards Muslims and exclusion of Muslims from mainstream society; and
8. Anti Muslim hostility is seen as natural or normal.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The OIC Observatory on Islamophobia, The 1st OIC Observatory Report on Islamophobia, May 2007-March 2008,

[www.oicoci.org/oicnew/is11/english/Islamophobia-rep-en.pdf](http://www.oicoci.org/oicnew/is11/english/Islamophobia-rep-en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Runnymede Trust, Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All,”Summary 1997, <http://www.runnymedetrust.org/publications/pdfs/islamophobia.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> John L. Esposito & Dalia Mogahed, *Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think*. (New York: Gallup Press, 2007), p. 136.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*



The West has maligned Islam, from its inception, as a religion of terror and extremism. This attitude has become much more pronounced in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and is a cause for concern to the Muslim world. As pointed out by the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan:

“Islamophobia is at once a deeply personal issue for Muslims, a matter of great importance to anyone concerned about upholding universal values, and a question with implications for international harmony and peace. We should not underestimate the resentment and sense of injustice felt by members of one of the world’s great religions, cultures and civilizations.”<sup>5</sup>

Particularly in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, Islamic and Muslim values and attitudes have systematically been characterised as being incompatible with ‘Western values’. Muslims are often stereotypically portrayed in media reports as a devoutly religious and undifferentiated group sharing a fundamentalist version of Islam. A number of events like the Rushdie affair, the September 11 terror attacks, bombings in Bali and Madrid, the murder of Dutch filmmaker Theo Van Gogh and the July 2005 London bombings have “exacerbated the growth of Islamophobia almost exponentially.”<sup>6</sup>

In the West, Muslims and Islam are under attack. In Britain, for instance, Muslims are characterised “as a ‘problem community’ in much of the media and through statements made by Government and police officials. These have contributed to a growing anti-Muslim climate in the U.K.”<sup>7</sup> There is a mass of polling data that shows hostility to Muslims in various guises and under many headings. In his analyses of data relating to Islamophobia in the U.K., for the years 1988-2006, Clive Field has observed that, “There appears to be an increasing perception that Muslims in Britain are slow to integrate into mainstream society, feel only a qualified sense of patriotism and are prone to espouse anti-Western values that lead many to

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<sup>5</sup> Secretary-General on Confronting Islamophobia. Press Release, SG/SM/9637, HR/4802 PI/1627, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2004/sgsm9637.doc.htm>.

<sup>6</sup> John L. Esposito & Dalia Mogahed. 2007. *Who Speaks for Islam?* p. 136.

<sup>7</sup>Electing to Deliver: Working for Representation in Britain The Muslim Council of Britain (2005): p. 11, <http://www.mcb.org.uk/vote2005/ELECTINGTODELIVER.pdf>.

condone so-called Islamic terrorism.”<sup>8</sup> Many of the features of Islamophobia that Clive Field has identified in the U.K., can in fact be found in other European countries, as well as in the United States of America (U.S.A.).<sup>9</sup>

In the U.S., several key polls have indicated that not only does Islamophobia exist but it also continues to rise on a yearly basis. According to the U.S.A. Today/Gallup poll, 39 per cent of Americans felt some prejudice against Muslims. Almost the same percentage favoured requiring Muslims, citizens and non-citizens alike, to carry a special ID as a “means of preventing terrorist attacks in the United States”. Some 22 per cent of the respondents of the U.S.A. Today/Gallup poll would not want American Muslims as their neighbours.<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, Representative Virgil Goode slammed the proposed use of the Qur’an for the congressional swearing-in ceremony for Keith Ellison, the first Muslim in America elected to Congress.<sup>11</sup> *The New Yorker* magazine published a satirical cover that shows Senator Barack Obama in a Muslim robe and turban, his wife, Michelle, as a terrorist holding a machine gun, the American flag burning and a picture of Osama bin Laden in the background. The intention obviously was to further instil fear in the minds of American people should Obama, alleged to be a Muslim, be elected President of the United States.<sup>12</sup>

It has been said that the West’s depiction of Islam and the Muslims as the ‘other’, derives from centuries-old stereotypes of Muslims as violent, oppressive and intolerant. Moreover, prejudice against Muslims has increased since the September 11, 2001 incidents. A Washington Post/ABC News Poll in 2006 found that the negative view of Islam among Americans had increased by seven percentage points, from 39 per cent to 46 per cent. The poll also showed that the proportion of Americans holding the view that

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<sup>8</sup> Clive Field, Islamophobia in Contemporary Britain: The Evidence of the Opinion Polls, 1988-2006, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 18:4 (2007): p. 466.

<sup>9</sup> Fred Halliday, *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation: Religion and Politics in the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003), p. 165-77.

<sup>10</sup> Cited in Council on American-Islam Relations, *The Status of Muslim Civil Rights in the United States 2007: Presumption of Guilt*, (Washington DC: CAIR, 2007), p. 6.

<sup>11</sup> *The Washington Post* of December 22, 2006 condemned Goode saying Bigotry comes in various guises -- some coded, some closeted, some colossally stupid. The bigotry displayed recently by Rep. Virgil H. Goode Jr...falls squarely in the third category.

<sup>12</sup> *The New Yorker*, July 21, 2008. His campaign website carries a statement dated Nov. 12, 2007 with the headline, Barack Obama Is Not and Has Never Been a Muslim.

Islam/violence against non-Muslims had more than doubled since the 9/11 attacks, from 14 per cent in 2002 to 33 per cent in 2006. A Pew Research Centre survey found about a third of Americans, (36 per cent), believing that Islam encourages violence among its followers.<sup>13</sup> Many human rights organisations have also documented this recent increase in Islamophobic events and hate crimes against Muslims, which, Kofi Annan referred to as “increasingly widespread bigotry...a sad and troubling development.”<sup>14</sup>

This development is related to the writings of some Westerners, notably Islamophobes, who “have denigrated and demonised Muslims as ‘the others’, juxtaposing them with idealised images of ‘civilised’ Americans.”<sup>15</sup> Pat Robertson, a Christian evangelist, called Islam a “bloody, brutal type of a religion” and referred to Muslims, who protested against controversial cartoons, as “motivated by demonic power.”<sup>16</sup> Charles Krauthammer, the American political columnist, wrote about “an Islamic World united under the banner of Iranian-style fundamentalism in existential struggle with the infidel West.”<sup>17</sup> Daniel Pipes, Director of the Middle East Forum, warned that, “keeping Islam at bay was Europe’s preoccupation from 1359, when Gallipoli fell to the Turks, until the last occasion in which the Ottoman soldiers stood at the gates of Vienna, in 1683. Islam is once more a preoccupation in the face of the Islamic Revolution.”<sup>18</sup> Bernard Lewis, Professor Emeritus of Near Eastern Studies, Princeton University, cautioned of “the perhaps irrational but surely historic reaction of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the worldwide expansion of both.”<sup>19</sup> This, he called, “a clash of civilisations”, a notion popularised by Samuel Huntington, a Professor at Harvard University, who has set an example of an Islamophobic mindset by clearly articulating his hatred for Islam. Huntington wrote: “The underlying problem for the West is

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<sup>13</sup> John L. Esposito & Dalia Mogahed. 2007, *Who Speaks for Islam?* p. 46.

<sup>14</sup> Secretary-General on Confronting Islamophobia. Press Release, SG/SM/9637, HR/4802 PI/1627.

<sup>15</sup> The OIC Observatory on Islamophobia, p. 6.

<sup>16</sup> Media matters for America, <http://mediamatters.org/items/200605010007>.

<sup>17</sup> Charles Krauthammer, The Foreign Policy President, *Washington Post*, April 16, 1993.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Daniel Pipes, *The Muslims are Coming! The Muslims are Coming!* *National Review* 19 (November 1990): p. 28.

<sup>19</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Roots of Muslim Rage: Why So Many Muslims Deeply Resent the West and Why Their Bitterness Will Not Be Easily Mollified*, *Atlantic Monthly*, 266 ((September 1990):p. 60.

not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam, a different civilisation whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture and are obsessed with the inferiority of their power.”<sup>20</sup>

Likewise, the Western media’s portrayal of Islam and Muslims are Islamophobic. The Western media has consistently been using value-loaded and inaccurate language to portray Islam as a dangerous religion rooted in violence and irrationality. The media is the most accessible and indiscriminate disseminator of Islamophobic ideas at the local and global levels. Barring some “responsible” media publications, certain specific and often predictable sources have been attributing to all Muslims, the entire spectrum of negative characteristics that are fundamental to Islamophobia.

A report commissioned by the Mayor of London looked into the portrayal of Muslims and Islam by the U.K. national media in 2006.<sup>21</sup> It analysed, among others, 352 articles dealing with Islam and Muslims in the British press for the duration of one week, from Monday May 8 to Sunday May 14, 2006. The daily newspapers varied in terms of coverage. *The Guardian* published over 50 articles, *The Times*, *Financial Times*, *Daily Telegraph* and *Independent* published over 40 but the *Sun*, *Mirror*, *Express* and *Star* published less than 20. Of the 352 articles, 288 (82 per cent) were news reports. The others included 27 (eight per cent) editorials or comment pieces, 26 (seven per cent) features (i.e. non-news coverage typically in supplements or the more central pages of a newspaper), and five (1.5 per cent) cartoons.

Of the 352 articles that referred to Islam and Muslims during the week in question, 91 per cent of articles were judged to be negative in their associations, four per cent positive, and five per cent were judged neutral. Almost half of the articles represented Islam as a threat. “A consequence of implying that all Muslims are a threat is that all activities distinctively undertaken by Muslims are seen as threatening, even such activities as attending a mosque for Friday prayers.”<sup>22</sup> In this “normal” week, the Report explains:

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<sup>20</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), p. 217.

<sup>21</sup> *The Search for Common Ground: Muslims, non-Muslims and the U.K. Media. A Report Commissioned by the Mayor of London* (London: Greater London Authority, 2007), p. 17-30.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

... the vast majority of representations of Islam and Muslims were overly and overtly negative, cutting across tabloid and broadsheet with little apparent differentiation or clear ground between them. Crisis and threat informed, determined and overshadowed much of the reporting and subsequent understanding. In this same “normal” week, Muslims both from Britain and abroad – indeed everywhere across the “Muslim world” and also the globe – were seen to be one and the same, without difference or diversity. In this same “normal” week, Muslims were being identified and confirmed as challenging all that “we” are understood to be: challenging “our” culture, values, institutions and way of life. It is “common sense” that no common ground between Muslims and non-Muslims exists, or can exist.<sup>23</sup>

In general, the media portrayed Islam as profoundly different from and a serious threat to the West on the world stage and Muslims within Britain as different from and a threat to ‘us’. The Mayor of London, Kenneth Robert Livingstone, who commissioned the study, said the findings showed a “hostile and scaremongering attitude” towards Islam. “Facts are frequently distorted, exaggerated or oversimplified... The tone of language is frequently emotive, immoderate, alarmist.”<sup>24</sup> To prove that media coverage is having an influence on attitudes, the Report quotes a U.K. survey, which establishes that “74 per cent of Britons... claimed that they know ‘nothing or next to nothing about Islam’.” Of these, 64 per cent claimed that their knowledge of Islam and Muslims is gained through the media. Interestingly, Livingstone was later defeated in his second re-election bid by Conservative candidate Boris Johnson on May 1, 2008.

The U.S. news media’s portrayal of Islam and Muslims is in tune with those found in the U.K. and Europe in general. Sam Harris of *Washington Times* commented that, “It is time we admitted that we are not at war with ‘terrorism’. We are at war with Islam... The only reason Muslim fundamentalism is a threat to us is because the fundamentals of Islam are a threat to us...”<sup>25</sup> Dr. Suad Joseph and her team of researchers systematically analysed news reports in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Wall Street Journal* for the period of 2000-2004. Assessing the texts

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>24</sup> The *Guardian*, Wednesday November 14, 2007.

<sup>25</sup> Sam Harris, Mired in a Religious War, *Washington Times*, December 2, 2004.

qualitatively (for how they represent Arab and Muslim Americans) and quantitatively (analysing the use of 1500 words that recur frequently in articles) they found, among others, that the media regularly represents Arab - and Muslim-Americans as more attached to their country of origin than to the U.S. The media imply that Arab and Muslim-Americans are more linked to Muslims in other countries than to other people in the U.S. and that Muslims around the world are seen as so devout that they are on the verge of becoming fanatical. According to Suad, distorted press coverage “narrates Arab and Muslim Americans in ways that enable racial policing of Arab and Muslim Americans as marginal, suspect citizens.” She found that “through word choices, rhetorical moves, and thematic patterns, Arab and Muslim Americans are racialised as different types of ‘others’ and as dangerous citizens.”<sup>26</sup>

Jack G. Shaheen after analysing more than 800 feature films and hundreds of television newscasts, documentaries and entertainment shows found that:

... lurid and insidious depictions of Arabs as alien, violent strangers, intent upon battling non-believers throughout the world are staple fare. Such erroneous characterisations more accurately reflect the bias of Western reporters and image makers than they do the realities of Arab and Muslim people in the modern world.... On the silver screen the Muslim Arab continues to surface as the threatening cultural ‘other’.<sup>27</sup>

According to Anthony Lane, “the Arab people have always had the roughest and the most uncomprehending deal from Hollywood, but with the death of the Cold War the stereotype has been granted even more prominence.”<sup>28</sup> Clearly, there exists an unending barrage of hate-filled images, equating Arabs with terrorists and Muslims with fundamentalism, bent upon destroying the West. These stereotypes are continuously repeated, leading to a surge of anti-Arab, anti-Muslim and racist attitudes.

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<sup>26</sup> Rami G. Khouri, Soul-searching Time in the American Media, <http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=16524>.

<sup>27</sup> Jack G. Shaheen, Hollywood’s Muslim Arabs in *A Community of Many Worlds: Arab Americans in New York City* edited by Kathleen Benson (New York: Museum of City of New York, 2002), p. 92.

<sup>28</sup> Anthony Lane, The Current Cinema ‘Changelings’, *New Yorker*, May 10, 1999, p. 104.

## *Forces Feeding Islamophobia*

Hostility towards Islam and Muslims has been a feature of Western societies for centuries. Dante Alighieri, an Italian poet from Florence, had placed Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) in the circle of hell reserved for heretics. This antithetical relationship was perpetuated by the Crusades. A plethora of popular literature has appeared in justification of the Crusades for the repossession of the Holy Land by Western Christendom from the militant, fanatic, illegitimate Muslim occupants. The Muslims were portrayed as the 'other' because they fanatically believe in the wrong religion. Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare depicted the Saracen, Moor and the Turk in less than positive terms.<sup>29</sup>

The Ottoman advances in the 15th and 16th centuries led to a further chapter of anti-Muslim diatribe. Fred Halliday suggests "this experience above all shaped European attitudes."<sup>30</sup> The Ottomans were dreaded as the "public calamity" and were regarded as "a dull and backward sort of people."<sup>31</sup> The idea of barbaric, uncivilised, fanatic Muslims was used to justify conquering the Muslim land and colonising its people. Colonialism was a mission to civilise the "natives". During the colonial period, Orientalists became more active and started the negative portrayal of Islam and Muslims, which until now, continues unabated. It could be hypothesised that Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington's 'clash of civilisation' thesis has its roots in Orientalist scholarship, the tradition and scholarship by which Western civilisation portrays Islam and Muslims. Edward Said's analysis of 19<sup>th</sup> century orientalism shows clearly the myriad ways in which the West have stereotyped Islam, Muslims and the Arab world.<sup>32</sup> To Said, orientalism

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<sup>29</sup> See, for example, Norman Daniel, *The Arabs and Medieval Europe* (London: Longman, 1975); Richard Fletcher, *The Cross and the Crescent: Christianity and Islam from Muhammad to the Reformation* (New York: Viking, 2004); Andrew Wheatcroft, *Infidels: the Conflict between Christendom and Islam (638-2002)*, (London: Viking, 2003).

<sup>30</sup> Fred Halliday, *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation*, p. 177-79, 181-2.

<sup>31</sup> Asli Çirakman, From Tyranny to Despotism: The Enlightenment's Unenlightened Image of the Turks, *International Journal Of Middle East Studies* 33 (2001): p. 49-68.

<sup>32</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978). For a convenient summary see Peter Gottschalk and Gabriel Greenberg, *Islamophobia: Making Muslims the Enemy* (New York, 2008), p. 16-37.

is a “corporate institution for dealing with the Orient” beginning in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and is “a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient.”<sup>33</sup>

Contemporary manifestation of Islamophobia is also related to large-scale Muslim immigration to Western countries. A report by the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia alludes to “the presence of some fifteen million Muslim people in western European countries.”<sup>34</sup> Muslims have lived in Western countries for centuries. However, most Muslims living in Europe and America arrived during the economic boom of the 1960s as migrant workers and also as asylum seekers in the 1990s. “The majority initially settled in capital cities and large industrial areas.”<sup>35</sup> Muslims have a high birth rate, as reflected in their demographic profile, which is reportedly younger than the general population. “In the U.K., for example, in 2001, one third of the Muslim population was under the age of 16 compared to one fifth of the U.K. population as a whole. The average age of the Muslim population in the U.K. is 28, which is 13 years below the national average. On 1 January 2004, some 38 per cent of Muslims in the Netherlands were not migrants, but of migrant descent.”<sup>36</sup> It is estimated that Muslim population in Europe as a whole would double by 2015.

With the increase in their number, Muslims have demanded and established their mosques, schools, provision of *halal* meat and separate Muslim cemeteries. There are also several organisations engaged in introducing Islam to the members of host countries.<sup>37</sup> Thus, Muslims have emerged gradually as a ‘minority’, clearly distinct from the rest of the population, giving rise to the ‘us’ versus ‘them’ phenomenon. They are no longer ‘temporary guest workers’, but a permanent feature of Western

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<sup>33</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, p. 70, 202-203.

<sup>34</sup> Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, *Islamophobia: Issues, Challenges And Action* (London: Trentham Books Limited, 2004), p. 7.

<sup>35</sup> European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, *Muslims in the European Union: Discrimination and Islamophobia*, [http://fra.europa.eu/fra/material/pub/muslim/Manifestations\\_EN.pdf](http://fra.europa.eu/fra/material/pub/muslim/Manifestations_EN.pdf).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>37</sup> See Jocelyne Cesari, *When Islam and Democracy Meet* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); T. Modood, The Place of Muslims in British Secular Multiculturalism in *Islam and the changing identity of Europe*, N. Al Sayyad, M. Castells and L. Michalak eds. (London: University Press of America/Lexington Books, 2000); Amber Haque ed., *Muslims and Islamization in North America: Problems and Prospects* (Maryland: Amana Publications & A.S. Noordeen, 1999).



national landscapes. Yet, thirteen European states reportedly do not recognise Islam as a religion. Many of them do not even bestow minority rights embodied in their Constitutions on Muslims because they are not a recognised ethnic group. On top of that, Muslims are also resistin assimilation into secular societies and are only willing to integrate without losing their Islamic identity and practices.

There has been a fear that Muslim immigration would result in the Islamisation of Europe, transforming Europe into “Eurabia”. It has given rise, according to Justin Vaisse, to four inaccurate premises:

“Myth number one is about demography. It is the idea that Muslims taken as a demographic bloc are gaining against the native population. The second myth is about sociology and culture. It is the idea that Muslims form “a distinct, cohesive, and bitter group” in the words of a 2005 *Foreign Affairs* article. Myth number three is about political attitudes. The alarmist view has it that Muslims seek to undermine the rule of law and the separation of church and state in order to create a society apart from the mainstream whether by imposing head scarves on young girls, campaigning for gender segregation in public institutions, defending domestic abuse as a cultural prerogative, or even supporting terrorism. The fourth and last myth is about domestic and foreign policy. Because they supposedly form a bloc, Muslims are supposed to influence more and more heavily the political process whether in domestic issues or, more importantly, in foreign policy issues. The idea is that France, Europe in general, but France more precisely, is kind of held hostage by its growing Muslim population and that it is tilting towards a more anti-Israeli and anti-American position.”<sup>38</sup>

“The increasing Muslim presence in Europe has reopened debates on several issues: the place of religion in public life, social tolerance in Europe, secularism as the only path to modernity, and Europe’s very identity.”<sup>39</sup> The *Economist* has warned that this “could be a huge long-term threat to

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<sup>38</sup> Justin Vaisse, Integrating Islam: Political and Religious Challenges in Contemporary France, <http://www.brookings.edu/comm/events/20060913islam.pdf>.

<sup>39</sup> See T.M. Savage, Europe and Islam: Crescent Waxing, Cultures Clashing, *The Washington Quarterly*, 27:3 (2004): p. 39.

Europe.”<sup>40</sup> The French Commission, which recommended banning the Islamic headscarf, declared that the secular state was under “guerrilla assault” by Muslims.<sup>41</sup> The Middle East editor of *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* depicted the situation as “frightening”, since, according to him, “at least 10 per cent of Germany’s Muslim population - 400,000 individuals - are followers and supporters of radical Islam, whose aim is the establishment of an Islamic state.”<sup>42</sup> Bernard Lewis reinforced such fear by declaring in the *Jerusalem Post* in 2007 that Europe would be Islamic by the end of this century “at the very latest”.<sup>43</sup>

In short, the West sees Muslims as a direct challenge to the collective identity, traditional values and public policies of their societies and thus a major source of Islamophobia. The issue of Islam and its “challenge to the West” was fuelled by events such as the Salman Rushdie affair, the September 11, 2001 incidents, the attacks in Bali and Madrid as well as the July 2005 London bombings. The Muslim reactions to the cartoon controversy also demonstrated an apparent popularity of the perception that “Muslims are making politically exceptional, culturally unreasonable or theologically alien demands upon European states.”<sup>44</sup> It is, therefore, the fear of a “crash of Western civilisation” that has ignited the discourse on the clash of civilisations.<sup>45</sup>

Finally, leaders may also use Islamophobia to wage war of aggression against the Muslims. During times of international conflict, the media and political leaders demonise the enemy and idealise their own side. Religion is used as an instrument to mobilise support and maintain morale. According to the Archbishop of Canterbury, “Historically, religious faith has too often been the language of the powerful, the excuse for oppression, the alibi for atrocity.”<sup>46</sup> After 9/11 and during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, politicians and newspaper editors maintained that terrorists were totally

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<sup>40</sup> Forget Asylum-Seekers: It’s the People Inside Who Count, *Economist*, May 8, 2003 cited in *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>41</sup> Ken Dilanian, France Struggles to Integrate Its Muslim Minority, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 5, 2004 cited in *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>42</sup> Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>43</sup> Cited in Esposito & Dalia Mogahed, *Who Speaks for Islam?*, p. 138.

<sup>44</sup> T. Modood, Muslims and the Politics of Difference, *Political Quarterly* 74 :1 (2003): p. 100.

<sup>45</sup> See Jacques Attali, The Crash of Western Civilisation: The Limits of the Market and Democracy, *Foreign Policy*, 107(1997).

<sup>46</sup> Cited in *Islamophobia: Issues, Challenges And Action*, p. 19.

opposed to all things Western. “The perpetrators acted out of hatred for the values cherished in the West such as freedom, tolerance, prosperity, religious pluralism and universal suffrage.”<sup>47</sup> President George W. Bush spoke of “a monumental struggle of Good versus Evil.” In an article entitled “Islamism is the new bolshevism”, Margaret Thatcher wrote:

“America and its allies, indeed the Western world and its values, are still under deadly threat. That threat must be eliminated, and now is the time to act vigorously... Islamic extremism today, like bolshevism in the past, is an armed doctrine. It is an aggressive ideology promoted by fanatical, well-armed devotees... The United States should strike at centres of Islamic terror that have taken root in Africa, Southeast Asia and elsewhere.”

She concluded that:

“We have harboured those who hated us, tolerated those who threatened us and indulged those who weakened us. As a result, we remain, for example, all but defenceless against ballistic missiles that could be launched against our cities. A missile defence system will begin to change that. But change must go deeper still. The west as a whole needs to strengthen its resolve against rogue regimes and upgrade its defences. The good news is that America has a president who can offer the leadership necessary to do so.”<sup>48</sup>

Thus, the U.S. Islamophobia is related to the emergence of the United States as a global power, its pursuit of control over the strategically significant Middle East, and its sinister alliance with hegemonistic Zionism. The West needed an enemy to maintain social cohesion and certain deference towards political leaders and to maintain public support for expenditure on weapons programmes dividing the world into “us” (good guys) and “them” (bad guys). Consequently, Islamophobia became widespread and respectable but at the cost of menacing world peace.

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<sup>47</sup> *New York Times*, September 16, 2001.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, February 12, 2002.

## *Extremism and the Extremists*

Most Islamophobes are extremists. Extremism refers to any attitude, action or reaction that deviates from the norms or common moral standards. It denotes hate directed at the 'other', which may be expressed through vitriolic rhetoric, discrimination, and/or physical acts of violence. At the root of extremism are radical beliefs and pent-up anger and frustration that may lead to violent acts ranging from hate crimes to terrorism. Islamophobes believe that Muslims in their countries have a strong sense of Islamic identity and hence resist adopting their nation's customs and way of life. Hence, they use 'violence' to intimidate Muslim minorities into silence and to enforce the will of the majority constituency. Many organisations have documented increasing hate crimes against Muslims. The ferocity and extent of hate crimes against Muslim individuals and institutions soared after September 11, 2001 incidents. Muslims suffer verbal abuse, physical assaults, property damage, and murder. According to the FBI, there was a seventeen-fold increase in the number of anti-Muslim hate crimes between 2000 and 2001 (from 28 to 481).<sup>49</sup> At least seven people were murdered because of anti-Arab and anti-Muslim hatred.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) documented 1,717 incidents of violence against Muslims ranging from verbal taunts to employment discrimination to airport profiling from September 11, 2001 through February 2002.<sup>50</sup> In its June 2007 report on the status of Muslim civil rights in the United States, CAIR counted 2,467 incidents and experiences of anti-Muslim violence and discrimination in 2006 compared to 1,972 cases in 2005.<sup>51</sup> The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) reported 301 cases of Muslims having been dismissed from their jobs.<sup>52</sup> The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), as of June 2002, had investigated 111 complaints of airline passengers being singled out at security screenings

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<sup>49</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, Crime in the United States - 2001," <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/01cius.htm>.

<sup>50</sup> Anti-Muslim incidents, <http://www.cair-net.org>.

<sup>51</sup> CAIR, *The Status of Muslim Civil Rights in the United States 2007: Presumption of Guilt*.

<sup>52</sup> EEOC Provides Answers About the Workplace Rights of Muslims, Arabs, South Asians and Sikhs, Press Release, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, May 15, 2002, <http://www.eeoc.gov/press/5-15-02.html>.

because of their ethnic or religious appearance.<sup>53</sup> For the same reason, additional 31 passengers were barred altogether from boarding airplanes.

The anger and bitterness provoked by the Islamophobes did lead to extremism among the Muslim minorities. Muslims in the Western societies have vented their anger at the deliberate, specific acts of Islamophobia through peaceful protests and demonstrations. In Muslim majority countries, the demonstrations became violent leading to the destruction of properties and loss of lives.

The publication of Salman Rushdie's novel, *The Satanic Verses* in 1988 in London by Viking/Penguin is another case in point. The novel had angered many Muslims, as it was insulting to their sacred religion. They requested the publisher, through thousands of letters and phone calls, to withdraw the novel but to no avail. Peaceful protests against the blasphemy of the novel were held in London, followed by the symbolic burning of a copy of *The Satanic Verses* by Muslims protesters in Bradford and the *fatwa* (ruling) of Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini, which sentenced Rushdie to death.<sup>54</sup> The book sparked violence in Muslim majority countries, the protesters clashed with the authorities, resulting in many deaths and injuries.

The Western media turned against Muslims during the Rushdie Affair carrying articles that showed Muslims as aliens because of their inability to appreciate the value of free speech and to assimilate into British/Western society. The symbolic book burning was featured as Islam's intolerance and the *fatwa* as the sinister Islamic "death sentence". Salman Rushdie was showered with the Whitbread Novel Award, the "Best of the Booker" prize and, in June 2007, was appointed a Knight Bachelor for "services to literature". In the wake of the Rushdie Affair, Islam emerged as the enemy of everything that the West stood for.

A similar story unfolded when twelve editorial cartoons were published in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* in 2005 as an exercise for the rights of free speech. The cartoons were a clear manifestation of Islamophobia intended to humiliate the Danish Muslim minority by insulting their Prophet. Muslim organisations responded by holding peaceful public protests, which were retaliated by the reprinting of the cartoons in other Western countries. The ensuing Muslim protests in the Muslim world escalated into violence leading to hundreds of deaths and injuries. Muslim

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<sup>53</sup> William Wan, Four Airlines Sued For Alleged Post-Sept. 11 Discrimination. Cox News Service, June 4, 2002.

<sup>54</sup> For the chronology of the Rushdie Affair see M. M. Ahsan and A. R. Kidwai's (eds.) (1991). *Sacrilege versus Civility*. Leicester: The Islamic Foundation.

attempts to boycott Danish products were countered in the West by “Buy Danish” campaigns. *Fitna* is yet another manifestation of Islamophobia aimed at humiliating the Muslims. It is a short film produced in 2008 by a Dutch parliamentarian, Geert Wilders, showing the linkage between the Muslim’s revealed book, the Qur'an, and terrorism. Muslims worldwide condemned the film and its producer and attempts to organise boycotts against Dutch products were retaliated in similar forms by the establishments and organisations in the West. Evidently, there is a circular relationship between Western Islamophobia and Muslim extremism.

Admittedly, the blasphemous *Satanic Verses*, irreverent cartoons, insulting *Fitna* and other similar provocations have given rise to extremism and violence among the Muslims all around the world. Many of these incidents were reportedly isolated and uncoordinated and did not persist beyond a month of the Islamophobic provocations. However, they did reinforce the feeling among the Muslims that their religion and way of life is under attack from the West. To this should be added the perceived anti-Muslim foreign policies of Western governments, particularly the U.S. and Britain. The blatant Western bias in Israel’s favour over the Israel/Palestinian conflict, and the American projection of power (whether direct or by proxy) have been perceived as aiming at weakening the Muslims. The American invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and later of Iraq under the false pretext of destroying weapons of mass destruction have added to the already existing fury in many parts of the Muslim world. The despicable acts of torture at Iraq’s Abu Ghraib Detention Centre and other American detention facilities have further inflamed the passions of Muslims around the world. The belief that a nation has the exclusive right to wage war against another country under the ‘pre-emptive strike’ doctrine and/or to impose ‘regime change’ has paved the way for brutal occupation, radicalised insurgency, civil war and chaos. This has led Muslims to increase in-group solidarity, strengthening their self-identification as Muslims rather than by ethnic labels and condoning and eventually participating in anti-Western terrorist acts. These acts are described in the West as a pathology that is intrinsic to the faith resulting in the inflationary spiral of violence.

Studies conducted on extremism, however, have shown that very few Muslims subscribe to terrorism. Gallup poll conducted, between 2001 and 2007, among residents of more than 35 nations that are predominantly Muslim or have substantial Muslim populations found that only 7 per cent of the respondents thought that “the 9/11 attacks were completely justified. Among those who believed that the 9/11 attacks were not justified, 40

percent were pro-United States.”<sup>55</sup> It must be noted that those 7 per cent of the respondents who justified 9/11 attacks did not indulge in any terrorist acts.

Terrorism, therefore, is a global phenomenon that is not related to any religion, race or country. As Robert Pape points out, “...overwhelmingly suicide terrorist attacks are not driven by religion as much as they are by clear strategic objective: to compel modern democracies to withdraw military forces from the territory that the terrorists view as their homeland.”<sup>56</sup> Islam does not sanction the killing of innocent civilians. Muslims do, however, claim the existence of a united Muslim world, the *Ummah*, and resent the West because of the West’s “sexual and cultural promiscuity”, “ethical and moral corruption” and “hatred of Muslims”.<sup>57</sup> An overwhelming majority of Muslims view the U.S. as “ruthless 68 percent, aggressive 66 percent, conceited 65 percent, and morally decadent 64 percent.”<sup>58</sup> Studies have also shown that it is the Western foreign policy towards Muslims and not the Western culture and ways of life that causes Muslims to rise in opposition to the West. Many Muslims claim a common cause with suffering brethren in the Israeli occupied Palestinian territories, as well as in Iraq, Chechnya and elsewhere. They tend to view the “war on terrorism” as a war on Islam and perceive an unjust double standard at work in the foreign policies of the U.S. and many European governments. The 2004 Defence Science Board study found that “Muslims do not hate our freedom, but rather they hate our policies... The overwhelming majority voice their objections to what they see as one-sided support in favour of Israel and against Palestinian rights, and the long-standing, even increasing, support for what Muslims collectively see as tyrannies, most notably Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Pakistan and the Gulf states... Thus, when American public diplomacy talks about bringing democracy to Islamic societies, this is seen as no more than self-serving hypocrisy.”<sup>59</sup>

Interestingly, the U.S. fights its extremist Muslim adversaries not on its soil but offshore, through military action and foreign assistance to its

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<sup>55</sup> Esposito & Dalia Mogahed, *Who Speaks for Islam?* p. 69-70.

<sup>56</sup> Robert Pape, *The Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, interview by Scott McConnell, *The American Conservative*, July 18, 2005, cited in *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>57</sup> Esposito & Dalia Mogahed, *Who Speaks for Islam?* p.84.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>59</sup> Defense Science Board, *Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Strategic Communication*, [www.acq.osd.mil/dsb/reports/2008-01-Strategic\\_Communication.pdf](http://www.acq.osd.mil/dsb/reports/2008-01-Strategic_Communication.pdf).

allies. This is not the case in Europe. It has been claimed that the 9/11 attacks on the U.S. were planned from a base in Europe. Since 9/11, US officials have expressed concerns about Europe becoming the launching point for further attacks on the U.S. interests. Though the vast majority of Muslims in Europe are not involved in radical activities, Muslim extremists and vocal fringe communities that advocate terrorism exist in a broad range of European countries. Melanie Phillips argues that London has become the hub of European terror network and would soon be transformed into “Londonistan”.<sup>60</sup> The most dreaded is the al-Qaeda and its affiliates who have claimed responsibility for several terrorist acts on European soil including the double suicide bombings in Istanbul in November 2003, the March 2004 Madrid bombings, the assassination of Dutch artist, Theo van Gogh, in November 2004 and the July 2005 London subway and bus bombings. However, there are a variety of transnational groups who spread extremism by claiming to be non-violent.

The governments of European countries are worried that an increase in terrorist activities will feed an expanding popular backlash in Europe against Muslims which will, in turn, drive new converts into the extremist Islamic camp. Consequently, European governments have sought to contain radical extremists by tightening security measures and reforming immigration and asylum laws. Muslim religious groups are investigated, mosques monitored, and radical Muslims expelled. Attempts are also made to make Muslims embrace the native cultures of their host countries through assimilation policies and by promoting secularism. The French government, for example, has banned “conspicuous” religious symbols in public schools, including headscarves for Muslim girls.<sup>61</sup> Muslims, giving rise to Islamophobic violence against Muslims, resist these measures. Within a year of the London bombings in 2004, there have been over 180 incidents of racial violence targeting London’s Muslim population including the killing of one Muslim by British youths.<sup>62</sup> Many experts, therefore, believe that European Muslim youth feel disenfranchised, as the society does not fully accept them. They appear to turn to Islam as a badge of cultural identity and

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<sup>60</sup> See Melanie Phillips, *Londonistan* (New York: Encounter Books, 2006).

<sup>61</sup> Terry Sanderson, *God and Government*, *Conscience*, Spring 2005, [www.catholicsforchoice.org/conscience/archives/default.asp](http://www.catholicsforchoice.org/conscience/archives/default.asp).

<sup>62</sup> Elaine Sciolino, *Europe Struggling to Train New Breed of Clerics*, *New York Times*, October 18, 2004.



are then radicalised by extremist Muslim clerics.<sup>63</sup> Muslims desire to be integrated and not assimilated; they would like their governments to arrest Islamophobia and to correct anti-Muslim foreign policies.

### *Policy Prescriptions*

The policy prescriptions to deal with Islamophobia and extremism vary depending on the way the problem is perceived. The Runnymede Trust's report concerning Islamophobia is addressed to the government. It lists a number of steps that the government should adopt to tackle the issue of Islamophobia, including a greater range of positive images of Islam in the media, a more balanced and responsible use of Muslim spokespersons, more expert use of public relations methods, modification and strengthening of existing codes of practise, appointment of more Muslim reporters and journalists and provision of seminars and training to raise awareness of Muslim issues and cultural particularities among journalists and the media generally.

The OIC Observatory Report is addressed to two parties: (1) the OIC and the Muslim World and (2) the Western World. The recommendations are divided into two parts, i.e., short-term for immediate action and long-term for subsequent or simultaneous actions on legal aspects, inter-cultural dialogue, the media and at the level of civil society. The report suggests, among others, that the OIC member states should help the Observatory to project Islam as a religion of moderation, peace and tolerance. They should monitor all Islamophobic incidents and report to the Observatory and assist the victims of Islamophobia to file complaints under the Human Rights Council Complaint Procedure, promote inter-cultural dialogue and encourage the Islamic media to react against negative reporting of Islam and Muslims. Muslims in the West need to become pro-active respondents rather than passive recipients. They should also make use of all available democratic channels to promote inter-faith understanding in the hope that it would end the demonisation of their faith.

Likewise, the Western world should take necessary steps to "protect Muslims as a vulnerable group" from all sorts of discrimination, hostility and violence and to prosecute and punish perpetrators of such acts. They should take "necessary measures against publications of inflammatory, insulting and

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<sup>63</sup> Al Qaeda Today: The New Face of the Global Jihad, *Frontline*, January 25, 2005, <http://www.pbs.org>; Sebastian Rotella, Europe's Boys of Jihad, *Los Angeles Times*, April 2, 2005.

provocative materials in the media or postings of such in websites.” The OIC Observatory Report suggests that governments “avoid using Islamophobic rhetoric used in the war against terror.”<sup>64</sup> The concerned authorities should strengthen law enforcement against violent hate crimes and “ensure that provisions covered by international legal instruments, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, are applied equally to all.”<sup>65</sup> The UN General Assembly Resolution adopted in its 61<sup>st</sup> Session emphasises effective measures to prevent tarnishing the image of any religion in general, and Islam and Muslim in particular, specifically in the arena of human rights.

Esposito and Mogahed (2007) argue that “diagnosing terrorism as a symptom and Islam as the problem, though popular in some circles, is flawed and has serious risks with dangerous repercussions.”<sup>66</sup> They emphasise that Anti-western feelings result not from Western culture and way of life but from Western policies and actions. The Gallup data confirms “the crucial issues in improving relations are the beliefs and perceptions of “the other” which affect and need to inform foreign policies”. They stress the need to win the ‘minds and hearts’ of ‘the other’. This, they suggest, “requires a public diplomacy that addresses the ideological dimensions of war: the war of ideas and the foreign policies created.”<sup>67</sup>

However, the policy prescriptions by the former U.N. Secretary General, Kofi Annan, fit neatly with the analysis of the problem attempted in this study. Kofi Annan suggests eight steps to ‘unlearn intolerance’ that include: (1) enforcement of the right to freedom of religion and to be free from discrimination based on religion as enshrined in international law and other instruments; (2) educating the public about all religions and traditions; (3) preventing the media and Internet from spreading hatred; (4) condemning Islamophobia and enforcing laws on non-discrimination by public authorities; (5) the need for Muslim immigrants to Western countries as well as the host countries to understand each other’s expectations and responsibilities and to jointly act against common threats such as extremism; (6) organising inter-faith dialogues to demystify the ‘other’; (7) adopting policies to deal with unresolved conflicts in the Middle East and elsewhere; and, (8) condemning terrorism and violence carried out in the name of Islam.

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<sup>64</sup> The OIC Observatory on Islamophobia, p. 30-34.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>66</sup> Esposito & Dalia Mogahed, *Who Speaks for Islam?* p.163.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

This should be the responsibility of Muslims to stop the few who “give a bad name to the many”.<sup>68</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Muslims have been living in the West for a long time. Since 1960, however, their number has swelled and millions of Muslims are now living in the West permanently. This fact is associated with the emergence of political movements aimed at liberating and protecting Muslim lands from the clutches of occupying Western powers that use terrorist acts. These developments have reinforced anti-Muslim and anti-Islam prejudices in the West resulting in the coinage of the term Islamophobia, which was first used in print in 1991. Islamophobes are considered as extremists, who demonise Islam and Muslims, destroy mosques, attack people wearing Muslim religious dress and deny Muslims their human rights. There is a widespread negative stereotype in all sections of the Western press. Islamophobia inhibits the development of a just society, characterised by social inclusion and cultural diversity.

The cumulative effect of Islamophobia’s various features is that Muslims are made to feel that they do not truly belong to the civilised world. Muslims living in the West are seen as “an enemy within”. Muslim insights on various local and global issues are looked upon with disdain. These feelings are accentuated by the double standard in the foreign policy of major Western powers that are unabashedly pro-Israel. The international Muslim community sees the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq in the name of war on terror, as acts against Islam.

Perceived Islamophobia in the West and in the Western media may cause some Muslims to become extremists. Some may feel isolated and alienated leading to a rejection of democratic and multi-cultural values. Most of them develop a strong sense of Muslim identity and strict adherence to traditional Islamic teachings. Some advocate or support terrorist attacks against Western interests and probably only a minority of those holding such views join the movements to fight American, British and allied forces. The number of Muslims actively espousing extremist politics is very small but Islamophobia may help swell their numbers. Experts are of the opinion that the young generation of Muslims in the West are feeling disaffected, alienated and bitter.

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<sup>68</sup> Secretary-General on Confronting Islamophobia.

It is in the interest of non-Muslims, as well as Muslims, therefore, that Islamophobia and extremism be rigorously tackled and removed. The West must adopt strategies to combat Islamophobia in the West and address the political, economic, social and cultural causes of extremism through development programmes and the resolution of long-standing conflicts. There is a need to deal with the great media hype about 'political Islam'. The OIC and other organisations are placing great emphasis on inter-civilisation and inter-faith dialogue to help promote respect for all faiths. The major Western powers must pursue courageous, energetic and balanced policies to establish peace in the Middle East and in the world as a whole. On their part, Muslims need to be pro-active in living according to the true teachings of Islam, condemning violent extremism and terrorism, and in acquiring the Islamic vision, knowledge and initiative to lead the humanity towards a just and peaceful world order.

## **A CLASH OF XENOPHOBIC NARRATIVES: THE SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ISLAMOPHOBIA AND EXTREMISM**

*Abdelwahab El-Affendi*

In the late 1990s, during the build-up to the war over Kuwait in the Gulf, a Muslim lady wearing a headscarf was waiting to board a bus in West London when she was verbally abused by a group of men who shouted at her: “Go home to the Gulf! We don’t want you here!”

There was a slight problem to this demand. For, apart from being a British citizen, the lady in question originated in Africa, not the Gulf. Her assailants also appeared oblivious to the official stance in Britain, which was to welcome people from the Gulf even before the 1990 crisis, as they were Britain’s allies. Gulf Arabs do not come to settle in Britain, but usually go there to spend their vast oil wealth, for which they would receive a hearty welcome from the officials and the business community.

In this case, the xenophobic assault on this “Gulf” lady by her clueless assailants indicates a general climate in which Muslims in general are seen as a threat, or just an object of hate. But it could not be credibly claimed that the lady did provoke her attackers by her “extremist behaviour”, unless the wearing of the headscarf is to be considered extremist, an argument which some in France were already making at that time (Silverstein, 2004). No less significant is the fact that this was no isolated incident. In fact, the Gulf War of 1991 was the start of a period which has witnessed the “irresistible rise of Islamophobia” in Britain and many other Western countries, beginning with a steep rise in attacks on Muslims (Poynting and Mason, 2007: 69-70). And that was just the taste of things to come.

Fast forward, a decade and a half later, and British and European streets were the site of a new kind of turmoil as Muslims marched to protest against the publication of cartoons in a Danish newspaper depicting the Prophet Muhammad as a terrorist. The Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* published the series of pejorative cartoons of the Prophet in September 2005. Following protests on the streets of Copenhagen in October and representations by Muslim ambassadors to the Danish government, the protests spread around the world from January 2006. After the protests in London in February, four young British Muslims were put on trial for inciting terrorism. One of them had provoked media outrage by wearing a

mock suicide vest, while others called for the cartoonists and others to be beheaded (BBC, 2006; EUMC, 2006). The four were convicted in July 2007 for a number of offences which included solicitation to murder, and stirring up racial hatred, and given sentences of up to six years imprisonment. Commenting on the sentences, Sir Ken Macdonald QC, Director of the Crown Prosecutions Service, argued that “calling for people to be beheaded and for European cities to be bombed” on London streets, as the accused have done, and glorifying the terror attacks of July 2005 on the city, meant that one had “crossed a line”. This kind of behaviour “undermines everyone else's freedom by stirring up bigotry, racial hatred and violence” (CPS, 2007).

These remarks by Sir Ken point to the central question regarding the symbiotic relationship between extremism and Islamophobia: which one is the cause and which is the effect? The CPS director seems to make the valid point that extremist rhetoric, even when not directly linked to violent action, could contribute to the sentiments at the heart of Islamophobia: bigotry and hatred. But as we can see even from this specific incident, the issue is much more complex, as the extremist rhetoric here has also arisen as a direct response to the perceived assault on Muslim beliefs and identity (through the attack on the character of the Prophet). This assault has in turn been motivated by self-acknowledged Islamophobic sentiments. The whole question therefore deserves more in-depth analysis to ascertain the complex dynamics of the symbiotic relationship between the two phenomena.

### *Islamophobia: What's in a name?*

The term Islamophobia was given wide currency since its adoption by the Runnymede Trust in its 1997 report: *Islamophobia: A Challenge to Us All*. But the term did not originate there, and has been first coined in English at around 1991, even though the French equivalent is much older, dating back to 1922 (Cesari *et al.*, 2006: 5). One of its earliest reported recent uses was in the US-based conservative magazine *Insight* in connection with Russian involvement in Afghanistan in 1991 (Poole, 2004: 215). Runnymede, however, put the term into mainstream circulation in order to capture what it regarded as a new phenomenon: the rise of trends characterised by “an unfounded dread and dislike of Muslims” demanding or underpinning “practices of exclusion and discrimination” against Muslim citizens or residents in Britain.

This phenomenon has come to the attention of the Runnymede Trust around 1993 when a commission established by the charity to tackle rising anti-Semitism was forced to note that “anti-Muslim prejudice was increasing rapidly and dangerously in force and seriousness” (CBMI, 2005: vii), and therefore needed to be highlighted and tackled. This realisation in turn led to the establishment of the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia (CBMI) which produced the above-mentioned 1997 report.

The challenge for the proponents of this concept was to distinguish between unfounded prejudice and hostility against a whole community (albeit one defined by its religious identity), and the legitimate right to criticise any religious tradition. Many critics were quick to point out this problem. Writing in *Prospect* magazine in February 2005, Kenan Malik described warnings about rising anti-Muslim prejudice as “scaremongering”, adding that it could promote “a Muslim victim culture and [allow] some community leaders to inflame a sense of injury while suppressing internal debate” (Malik, 2005). The same point was taken up by the American polemicist Daniel Pipes who reiterated the view that complaining about Islamophobia was intended “to silence critics of Islam, or even Muslims fighting for reform of their communities,” and urged Muslims to “dispense with this discredited term and instead engage in some earnest introspection” (Pipes, 2005).

For these critics, anti-Muslim prejudice where it exists, is at worst a manifestation of habitual racism (Malik, 2005). For other critics, what is needed is caution, as “the term can be misleading, as it presupposes the pre-eminence of religious discrimination when other forms of discrimination (such as racial or class) may be more relevant” (Cesari *et. al.*, 2006: 8).

However, many analysts argue that religious prejudice, or “cultural racism” in general, is a new type of racism which deserves to be tackled separately, since the “conceptualizations of race and racism, and hence also of antiracism and racial equality, have been too narrowly defined” (Modood, 2005: 6). This new type of hostile prejudice can be called “cultural racism”, and it is different from familiar types of racism in that, as in the case of British Asians, for example, racists here seem to hold that the “defects” ascribed to this target group “lie deep in their culture rather than in a biology that produces their culture” (Modood, 2005: 7). Thus, while cultural racism builds on colour racism, it is different from it, and it is conceivable that it could become a stand-alone type of racism. In such an eventuality, colour racism could “decline and fade away” while cultural racism could “remain and even grow” (Modood, 2005: 8).

In response to the criticism that deploying the concept makes it difficult to criticise Islam and even argue with Muslims, the CBMI argued that it was possible to “tell the difference between legitimate disagreement... and phobic dread and hatred” by making an “essential distinction” between “*closed* views on Islam on the one hand and *open* views on the other.” The first treats Islam as monolithic, aggressive and “totally other”, and sees all Muslims through negative and inflexible stereotypes; the latter, by contrast, recognises Muslim communities as diverse, with many internal debates and differences, and acknowledges the shared human values and concerns with Muslim communities and individuals (CBMI, 2004: 22-23).

Evidence of the fact that Islamophobia is a manifestation of sentiments akin to racial hatred rather than hostility to certain beliefs or cultural practices, can be found in “current practices of racial profiling in the War on Terror [which] perpetuate a logic that demands the ability to define what a Muslim looks like from appearance and visual cues” (Rana, 2007: 149). One can also cite here the surge of anti-Muslim hate crimes in the immediate post-9/11 period, when men with “Arab” appearance, such as Sikhs, were randomly attacked, sometimes fatally (BBC, 2003).

In this regard, Islamophobia “is a phobia inasmuch as it denotes an incapacity to deal with difference as well as similarity,” and reflects a fear of a retrogression to the past which “is primarily endorsed by fearful elites in Western countries.” The “strident anti-fundamentalism” of the elite “lends credence to the more lumpen forms of colour racism, whose proponents may then add the usual insults used against all racialised minorities, that they are violent, licentious, dirty and so on” (Birt, 2006).

### *Against Multiculturalism*

For some of the Muslims experiencing it, Islamophobia is racism with attitude or, according to one rendition, “racism with a spin.” Instead of being abused as “Pakis”, Muslims could now be called “Bin Ladens” (CBMI, 2004: 5). What is more significant is that it is also a form of racism with an intellectual, even moral, pretence. A rising number of prominent intellectuals, journalists and politicians have declared themselves as self-appointed champions of “Islamophobia”, as did the left-wing columnist Polly Toynbee who responded to the Runnymede report on Islamophobia with an article entitled: “In Defence of Islamophobia,” arguing that being an Islamophobe does not entail being racist (Toynbee, 1997). Other prominent figures (or some who became prominent as a result) who joined the



campaign included the media presenters-turned-politicians such as the Dutch Pim Fortuyn, his compatriot Geert Wilders and the British Robert Kilroy-Silk. The Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci, did not form a xenophobic political party, but joined the others in calling on the West (in a small best-selling book) to “wake up” to the fact that “what’s under way here is a reverse crusade” by Muslims who want to force their way of life on the West through violence (Marranci, 2004: 107-09).

Mainstream politicians were not far behind. The right-wing Italian Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, was even more blunt with his remarks celebrating the superiority of Western civilisation over Islam, adding that the Muslim countries were 1,400 years behind and needed to be conquered and occidentalised (Erlanger, 2001; Marranci, 2004: 107). The actions of French President Nicolas Sarkozy, and his repeated comments regarding the dress of Muslim women was also seen as reflecting suspicion of Islam and Muslims. Even Pope Benedict XVI endeared himself to right-wing parties by his remarks describing Islam as inherently violent and anti-rationalist, causing groups such as the Italian Northern League and the British National Party (BNP) to hail him as defender of Western civilisation against the Islamic “invasion” of Europe (Zúquete, 2008: 325-26).

However, what is remarkable about the rise of the new Islamophobic tendencies is that they seem to transcend the usual left-right polarisation (El-Amine, 2009). Anti-immigrant sentiments have habitually been expressed by the right in general and the far right in particular. In Britain, the most serious attempt to whip up anti-immigrant feelings was that of the late conservative politician Enoch Powell, whose 1968 warning of “rivers of blood” as a consequence of rising immigration won popular support, but was rejected by the political establishment. Right-wing xenophobic movements have indeed been growing steadily in Europe since the 1980s. The National Front rose to prominence in France from 1984 and espoused a strident anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim rhetoric. Similar movements emerged in Italy in the 1990s and in the Netherlands in the 2000s (Cesari, 2004: 30-34). Britain and most other European countries witnessed the steady rise in support of similar movements.

However, what is novel about the new Islamophobic sentiments is that they have also been, even more enthusiastically, espoused by the left and liberals. And second, the new phenomenon no longer targets immigrants in general, but Muslims in particular. They are the ones who “refuse to integrate” and support extremism and threaten the security of the nation.

It is also of great significance that traditional right-wing parties, such as the National Front in France and the BNP in Britain, began to shed their traditional anti-Semitism sentiment in favour of exclusive hostility to Muslims and third-world immigrants. Some of them have tended towards what one commentator described as “philo-Semitism”, celebrating the contribution of Jews to Western civilisation and expressing admiration for Israel (Zúquete, 2008: 327-28; Cesari *et al.*, 2006: 31, 80-82). The Lega Nord in Italy has also modified its opposition to the church and the Pope [who it used to call a “Polish enemy” (Zúquete, 2008: 325)] and “switched its rhetoric to take advantage of anti-Muslim sentiment, deploying slightly modified versions of traditional anti-Semitic devices as weapons against Islam” (Cesari *et al.*, 2006: 31).

This was followed by the rise of movements which have built their popular (and populist) support exclusively on Islamophobic rhetoric, coupled with xenophobic, anti-establishment and anti-EU platforms. This included the List Pim Fortuyn, named after the populist Dutch politician (assassinated by a radical animal rights activist in 2002) and the liberal-right party VVD (People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy), led by the populist Geert Wilders (Cesari *et al.*, 2006: 104-106).

There is a sense, as one commentator pointed out, in which Islamophobia could be described as “a ‘phobia’ of multiculturalism” (Marranci, 2004: 115-6):

To create a multicultural society... [it] is not enough to allocate a space for the other, but also to accept the transformations that the cultural contacts and cultural interchanges with the ‘other’ may cause... Islamophobia, today, is increasingly connected to the fear of a real multicultural society, in which Islam may become a recognised and meaningful part of a new Europe (Marranci, 2004: 116).

It is no surprise therefore that the rise in Islamophobia coincides with rising hostility to multiculturalism, even at the heart of the liberal establishment. In Britain, the front man in that attack happened to be Trevor Phillips, Director of the (now defunct) Commission for Racial Equality, who warned in a speech in September 2005 that Britain was “sleepwalking into segregation” due to misguided multiculturalist policies (Schönwälder, 2007: 14).

Multiculturalism, which can be succinctly defined as “the political accommodation of minorities formed by immigration” (Modood, 2007: 5) is a novel development both as a reality and as a theoretical/political perspective. For, while multicultural and multiethnic societies did exist throughout history, “[m]ulticultural societies in their current form are new to our age and throw up theoretical and political problems that have no parallel in history” (Parekh, 1999). This is mainly due to the fact that multiculturalism has evolved within “the context of liberal or social democratic egalitarianism and citizenship,” in contrast to de facto multicultural co-existence with empires or undemocratic states where citizenship rights were not guaranteed (Modood, 2007: 6).

Multiculturalism has evolved out of a number of converging and competing processes impacting modern societies. At one level, there were large and unprecedented movements of people across continents. Whole new societies, such as those of the Americas and Australasia have been formed predominantly through mass immigration. The post-war period also witnessed significant movements of immigrants to Europe from former colonies. As a result, most countries now accommodate significant ethnic/religious minorities. And while the immediate post-War period witnessed an espousal (at least in theory) of liberal egalitarian principles emphasising the “essential sameness” of all human beings, mainly as a reaction to Nazi discrimination, the period from the 1960s witnessed new demands to recognise differences (Modood, 2007: 1).

Many movements emerged from the 1960s, representing ethnic minorities, indigenous communities, feminists and alternative life-style advocates, and agitating for the recognition (and not mere toleration) of differences, in particular cultural difference as part of the conferral of democratic rights, challenging the hegemonic “monocultural” paradigm of assimilation (Goldberg, 2009: 6). For these groups, their demands “represented part of the struggle for freedom, self-determination and dignity and against contingent ideologically biased and oppressive views and practices, claiming false objectivity and universal validity” (Parekh, 2000: 2). This recognition was seen as essential since culture was seen as constitutive of individual identity, while “culturally derived differences” command a normative validity by “virtue of being embedded in a shared and historically inherited system of meaning and significance” (Parekh, 2000: 3).

Partly due to the partial success of these protest movements, and partly due to evolution in political attitudes and practices, multiculturalism has become an accepted norm in most modern liberal democratic societies.

North American nations were the first to regard themselves in this light, and were soon followed by Western European countries such as Britain and the Netherlands which accepted the “multiculturalism” label (Modood, 2007: 3-4). This process was helped by a parallel evolution in democratic theory, in which leading theorists began to question the original “culture-blind” theses of conventional liberal democratic theory (Kymlicka, 1995; Kelly, 2002; Goldberg, 1994). These interventions also regarded the traditional left-wing emphasis on class and economic equality as inadequate (Parekh, 2000), but were in turn challenged by critics who either charged the multiculturalists with espousing relativism, or accused them of permitting the entrenchment of outdated hierarchical relationships (Parekh, 2000: 2; Barry, 2001; Kelly 2002: 6).

What is significant about the new attacks on multiculturalism is their specific Islamophobic undertones. The start was in France, with the eruption of the headscarf controversy in 1989. This started as a minor affair when the headmaster of a grammar school outside Paris expelled three girls for wearing headscarves, sparking a nation-wide debate that led to an official ban of headscarves in all French schools (Silverstein, 2004). This episode coincided with the Rushdie Affair in the U.K., but the two were not directly related. Muslim protests against the publication of Salman Rushdie’s novel *The Satanic Verses* in 1988 (which involved book burning in Bradford) angered and alienated influential figures in the liberal establishment. When Ayatollah Khomeini issued a *fatwa* (ruling) on Valentine Day 1989 permitting the murder of the author and his publishers, the confusion which reined within the British Muslim community in Britain angered many more liberals. The ambivalence of many Muslim groups and important leaders with regards to the *fatwa*, and negative message which this gave, fuelled increased hostility to Muslims, in the media and within important intellectual circles.

Both the headscarf and the Rushdie Affair became catalysts for a seismic shift in European attitudes to Muslim citizens and immigrants in Europe. The Rushdie controversy was described by Professor Bhikhu Parekh, even as it was unfolding, as “an episode of exceptional significance” and also as “a magnifying mirror reflecting some of the deepest trends and tendencies developing in society” (Weller, 2009: 1-2). The same could be said about the headscarf controversy in France (and later in Germany). Both instances put societies face-to-face with the profound changes taking place within these societies and provoked reactions seeking to cope and come to terms with these (or resist them).

Both episodes provoked Muslim citizens in those countries into highly visible collective action *as Muslims*. Other identities (citizens, immigrants, ethnic or national minorities) were all subsumed under this overarching identity (Modood, 2005), and the attendant visibility was seen by some observers as, in fact, the trigger for rising Islamophobia in a development reminiscent of the emergence of anti-Semitism almost a century earlier (this link is of utmost significance, as will be seen later):

Islamophobia emerges decisively as a concept, around 1991, at the point when Muslim minorities have become politically active in Western Europe, in the midst of religio-political revival in the Muslim world, and at the ending of the Cold War. (It is interesting to note in passing the coining of anti-Semitism in Europe in 1879, after the legal emancipation of European Jewry and during their social ascent at the height of European nationalism) (Birt, 2006).

This self-affirmation was seen by some critics in Britain as evidence that multiculturalism was “undermining British identity”.

[T]he politics of multiculturalism has encouraged a greater consciousness of difference amongst Muslims so that they increasingly think of themselves at odds with wider society. They are much more conscious of their identity, which differentiates them from others. Younger Muslims are far more likely to identify with the *Ummah* than their parents, who are more attached to their ethnic or cultural identities (Mirza, 2007: 38).

Multiculturalism was thus blamed by people like Trevor Phillips for the rising ethnic tensions in Britain, even terrorism. According to Melanie Phillips, multicultural education is virtually directly responsible for the 7/7 terror attack in London, and for creating “a terror state within” (Phillips, 2008: 106-24). According to Phillips, it is multiculturalism, and the effort to be sensitive, which are the cause of extremism, and not the other way round. Describing any criticism of Islam as “Islamophobic”, Phillips argues, quoting Kenan Malik, stifles criticism within Muslim communities, giving extremists a free run and thus, handicaps those who want to defend basic rights within the community.

In other words, it is not “Islamophobes” who are helping create Muslim extremism and violence. It is, on the contrary, those who conjure up the spectre of Islamophobia (Phillips, 2008: 129).

Neither Phillips nor Malik, however, bothers to explain why a Muslim criticising his own community could be described as an “Islamophobe”. The very sense of Islamophobia excludes legitimate criticism of both the Muslim community and all criticisms of the Islamic faith as such.

*“A New Name for an Old Fear?”*

Determining the precise trigger for mass Islamophobic reactions is crucial for this debate. A number of discussions of the rising hostility to Islam in the West attempt to link it to certain developments either in the West itself or in the Muslim world. In particular, the “monumental shock of [the 9/11] catastrophic event” is regarded as a decisive moment which enhances the “deeply felt American vulnerability to an Islamic threat.”

Nothing before had so crystallised fear of Muslims and Islam: not the 444-day confinement of American embassy staff by Iranian students (1979), the deaths of hundreds of U.S. marines in Lebanon due to Hezbollah suicide car bombers (1983), the Ayatollah Khomeini’s *fatwa* (legal ruling) consigning author Salman Rushdie to death for his novel *The Satanic Verses* (1989), nor the first bombing of the World Trade Centre (1993) (Gottschalk, and Greenberg, 2008: 42).

The surge of Islamophobic sentiments and activities all over the Western world in the period immediately following 9/11 was certainly observable. In the U.K. for example, the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) received a barrage of hate mail in the days following the attacks on New York, with some telling Muslims “what a vile evil race you are”, or “you do not belong here”, and should go home “and leave us alone”. However, some of the same emails remark “hope you like the bombs”, and gleefully predict that the “U.S. will soon kill many Muslim women and children. You are all subhuman freaks” (CBMI, 2004). These messages are classical Islamophobic texts, holding all Muslims responsible for the atrocities, and expressing deeply felt hate and revulsion.

However, it is precisely due to the nature of such sentiments that it becomes clear that anti-Muslim prejudice in the West did not start with 9/11. You cannot develop this depth of hate and anger overnight. The authors of the book from which the above quotes came produce ample evidence that the depiction of Arabs and Muslims (in particular in political cartoons or in the cinemas) shows that they have been objects of both fear and ridicule for decades. Editorial cartoons commenting on events touching on relations between Muslims and the West reveal a consistency as well as subtle shifts in the way Muslims were depicted. In the aftermath of the Suez crisis of 1956, American cartoons depicted both Egypt and Nasser in feminine form, as a seductive “oriental” woman being taken advantage of by the Soviets or wooed by the Cold War rivals. Neither Islam nor the Arab identity was highlighted, and the threat was seen more in terms of a vacuum that could be exploited by the real enemy, in this case the Soviets (Gottschalk, and Greenberg, 2008: 112-115).

With the oil crisis of 1973-74, we witness a shift towards a more explicit depiction of the “Arab” as a devious and threatening manipulator who was holding the West hostage. The lascivious and barbarian Arab is at times even depicted to be adding Western countries to his “harem”. Islam creeps in subtly as the Arab is at times depicted performing religious rituals simultaneously with manifesting his greed and deviousness (Gottschalk, and Greenberg, 2008: 117-123). With the Iranian revolution, the Arab fades into the background as the Muslim ‘fanatic’ takes centre-stage. Here, the threat is depicted as even more sinister and intrinsic to the barbaric, backward, cruel and even “spooky” religious fanatic (Gottschalk, and Greenberg, 2008: 124-29).

September 11 brought all these tropes together. Here the “Arab” is depicted consistently as a menacing (almost exclusively male) religious fanatic bent on destruction. The enemy here is literally demonised: depicted as a duplicitous and devious demonic creature, and also as occult and mysterious, a terrifying “spooky” creature (Gottschalk, and Greenberg, 2008: 42).

These depictions draw from deeply-held beliefs and myths that have been, according to some analysts, constitutive of Western identity. As Tomáš Mastnak put it, “Islam was essential for the formation of [European] identity, and remains so for its maintenance.” European identity was formed “not by Islam but, predominantly, in the relationship... to Islam.” In this regard, the crusades, which could be regarded as “the first Western union”, were a “crucial formative condition of what was to become Europe”

(Mastnak, 1994: 2-3). Paradoxically, this aggression against Islam was seen as essential to unite Europe and maintain its internal peace. The movement for “holy peace” in Western Christendom very quickly (and logically) transformed itself into a campaign of holy war against infidels, in particular those of the Muslim variety (Mastnak, 2002).

European peace and unity were intimately linked to war - war against those who were perceived as threatening that unity, against enemies within and without: “infidels”, “heretics”, “schismatics” (who were later joined by the savages). It was Muslims who were made *the* enemy among all possible enemies (Mastnak, 1994: 3).

The construction of European identity by contrast to the “Islamic other” had an enduring impact on how Muslims were viewed. As Edward Said masterfully demonstrated, this in-built hostility to Islam expressed itself powerfully in scholarship on Islam (the discipline of “Orientalism”) and later in media coverage of Islamic issues. The misrepresentation of the East in dominant European scholarship did not only internalise earlier prejudices, but also helped justify and inspire the Western imperialist endeavour and to later facilitate it (Said, 1978; 1981). The portrayal of the other in Orientalism has in turn helped shape and influence perceptions of Western self-identity and scholarship, rather than merely reflecting them.

[A]s a species of Enlightenment discourse, orientalism has been a carrier of basic Western notions of the European self and the non-Western other that generated unfalsifiable propositions about the superiority of Europeans to non-Europeans. In this way, Orientalists participated in the elaboration of modern European cultural identity (Burke III, 1998).

The close link between this scholarship and policy circles survived both the Enlightenment and colonialism, and continued to influence key policy decisions, as well as the portrayal of recent events in the Muslim world, such as the Iranian revolution (Said, 2003; Said, 1981). At times, this influence has been very direct, as when the “doyen of Orientalists”, Bernard Lewis, reportedly played a crucial role in influencing the Bush administration’s decision to invade Iraq in 2003 (Hirsh, 2004). But the influence is mutual. The “superheated ideological climate of the



Reagan/Bush years,” ushered in neo-Orientalism, with its “new object of study: Islam.”

Intersecting with an increased ideologisation of relations between the Middle East and the West, this “back to the future” enterprise rehabilitated old orientalist tropes about Islam, Muslims, and non-Westerners generally. Media hype about a “crescent of crisis” arching through the Middle East, as well as Gulf War I (between Iran and Iraq) and conflicts in Lebanon and Libya, helped shape a new intellectual climate. Further, the European and American publics were weaned of their sympathy for progressive nationalism by a fear campaign that created the new category of “the Islamic terrorist”, a useful supplement to that old standby, the Arab terrorist... Overnight, Islamic culture became highly toxic as a subject of intellectual investigation (Burke III, 1998).

The convergence of ancient fears and modern European politics manifested itself in even more brutally lethal form in the Balkan wars of the 1990s. The violent Islamophobia amongst the Serbs is not unrelated to the Serb narratives of self-identity in which Islam is defined as the historical enemy and abiding threat. In the 1980s, Serbian nationalists used a classic text *The Mountain Wreath*, an epic poem by the 19<sup>th</sup> century poet Bishop Petar Njegos which celebrates the extermination of Slavic Muslims of Montenegro by their Orthodox Serb compatriots in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the poem, the Serbs give the Muslims an ultimatum: convert or die. The Muslims plead for tolerance, but their tormentors are not for “co-existence” or “tolerance”.

The *Mountain Wreath* culminates with a graphic depiction of the Christmas-day slaughter of the Slavic Muslims of Montenegro - men, women and children - and the annihilation of their homes, mosques, and other monuments (Sells, 2003: 355 ).

In this incident, we encounter Islamophobia at its purest, without any admixture of racial or ethnic undertones. However, in most European narratives, the two are often intertwined. The Muslim is often used as a synonym of either Turk or Moor. The former is portrayed as “cruel, tyrannical, deviant and deceiving,” while the latter (with a habitual emphasis

on his dark colour and African features) is shown as “sexually overdriven and emotionally uncontrollable, vengeful and religiously superstitious” (Rana, 2007: 154).

### *Immediate Triggers*

This deeply ingrained hostility to Islam and fear of Muslims had made it easy for Islamophobia to rise and extend its influence in response to a series of interrelated recent events. And as mentioned at the start of this article, one such early event was paradoxically one that many Muslims saw as a new imperial endeavour (the Gulf War of 1991) aimed at the heart of the Muslim world. In the age of mass media, every event of this type tends to become a spectacle shared by disparate communities around the world, as it ushered in the “CNN era”, and was beamed live into living rooms across the globe. It both thus united and divided audiences as various groups watching the same footage reacted angrily.

The series of events in question (the Rushdie Affair, the Headscarf Affair, the Gulf War, the *Intifada*) had this in common: they all became media events, enacted in full view of the proverbial “global village”. Not only did they provoke concerted action all over Europe, but also all over the Muslim world. Together with the collapse of the Berlin Wall in late 1989 (an event that was also beamed live to the whole world) these events and their media representations began to shape perceptions (and actions) in the new era. They were soon to be eclipsed (and reinforced) by the carnage in Yugoslavia.

The linkages between these dramatic events and developments were not just in the media, but the media played a crucial role. The burning of Rushdie’s book in Bradford in January 1989 caught world media attention, and the coverage provoked protests in India and Pakistan where a number of protesters were killed. News of the protests and the deaths reached Iran and were instrumental in convincing Ayatollah Khomeini to issue his *fatwa* against Rushdie on February 14, the day after (Weller, 2009: 34-35). The *fatwa* in turn provoked frenzied media coverage, and stirred activism both by Muslim protestors and pro-Rushdie liberal activists.

At the same time, the headscarf controversy in France provoked angry protests in France and some Muslim countries. It was soon to be overshadowed by developments across the Mediterranean in Algeria, where Islamists were on the verge of taking power in elections in 1991, prompting a coup that was enthusiastically backed by France. As a result of the rising

tension, the official French stance on the headscarf issue hardened, and the perceived hostile French stance led to the Algerian violence spilling over into France.

The Gulf War played an instrumental role in shifting the stance of Islamic militants who had been content in the past to wage local “*jihad*” in Afghanistan (where they were happy to ally themselves with the U.S. and its regional allies) and usually worked independently from each other, to rethink some of their strategies. Some of these groups began to think of coordinating their action, and their criticism of U.S. presence in the Gulf began to grow louder. This in turn dictated closer cooperation between the U.S. and the enemies of these movements, causing more hostility to the U.S. among them.

The coalition and combination of all these events led eventually to the collapse of barriers between various conflicts which did not have any links in the past. Veterans of the *jihad* in Afghanistan (or groups which opportunistically used the “*jihad*” context to gain training) began to play a role in such disparate conflicts as the civil war in Algeria, a minor insurgency in Libya, the Chechen war, the Kashmir conflict and, later, in the war in Bosnia. It was not going to be long before such violent would spill over into Europe and the U.S.

Thus, just as anti-Muslim sentiments in the West did not start with 9/11, violent confrontation and anti-Western Muslim sentiments did not start there either. However, previous violent conflicts between Muslims and Western powers appeared to have been the result of cultural convergence rather than divergence. The anti-colonial struggles in Muslim lands derived legitimacy from modern ideologies such as nationalism, socialism and liberalism, while the dominant themes in the earlier struggles were notions like self-determination, human rights and democracy. The most intense or prolonged conflicts in this regard, such as the Algerian war of liberation or the Palestinian struggle, were conducted specifically under radical secular ideologies or radical nationalism, to which key Western thinkers (such as J-P Sartre, Jean Genet and Franz Fanon) made significant contributions.

The most recent confrontations, in particular those associated with the rise of anti-Western feelings among Muslims, also appear to have familiar roots. Hostility to the West in Iran, for example, dates back to the 1950s when a liberal nationalist government was overthrown with American help, and was fed by continued Western support for the brutal regime of the Shah. More recently, massive U.S.-led intervention in the Gulf became the spark for both Islamophobic incidents and anti-Western sentiments among Muslim masses.

There is a sense in which the rise of a specifically anti-Western Islamic violent radicalism can be dated to that period, and has been inextricably linked to the episode of U.S.-led military intervention in the Gulf and its aftermath. For up to that point, Islamic radicals were allies of Saudi Arabia and indirectly of the U.S. This alliance of convenience emerged first against both the Soviet Union and radical Arab nationalist regimes which oppressed the Islamists and sought to destabilise traditional monarchies of the Gulf. The U.S. and its allies enlisted Sunni-backed *jihadi* in Afghanistan and enlisted *salafi* radicalism, with its anti-Shi'ite fanaticism, in their conflict with Iran (Kepel, 2004: 153-57)

However, the massive U.S. intervention in the Gulf in 1990-91 brought it in direct confrontation with these tendencies, as it encroached on their home turf. At first, the Gulf Islamists were persuaded that the U.S. presence was temporary and would end as soon as the Iraqis were driven out of Kuwait. But once the war ended, the troops refused to budge; the fractured Saudi-Islamist alliance fell apart. Saudi Arabia witnessed the rise of open political opposition for the first time. The more peaceful wing of the opposition relocated to Europe. The more militant used Sudan as a base before joint U.S.-Saudi pressure forced it out to Afghanistan.

At that time Europe was generally the favourite locus of exile for the opponents of the despotic regimes of the region. Even Osama bin Laden set up a London office for his anti-Saudi opposition group in 1994 (Atwan, 2006: 15), which indicates that he had not decided up to that point to enter into open confrontation with the West. But the Gulf conflict became the point when many exiled opposition groups abandoned their habitual preoccupation with exclusively attacking the regimes at home. It also impacted Western Muslim communities, who were now required to prove their loyalty (Poynting and Mason, 2007: 69). The horrendous human cost of the draconian siege on Iraq, and the daily televised casualty toll in the Palestinian *intifada*, caused anguish and outrage among large sections of Muslim public opinion around the world.

The perceived Western reluctance to stop the carnage in former Yugoslavia, where Muslims in Bosnia and Kosovo became the targets of vicious Serb attacks, contrasted with haste through which the military option was adopted in the Gulf with the procrastination in the face of the slaughter that was taking place in the heart of Europe itself, and regarded this as both a betrayal of the Bosnian Muslims and a threat to their own precarious existence in Europe (Qureshi and Sells, 2003: 231-2, 352-4; Weller, 2009: 90; Kepel, 2004: 31-46).

With the collapse of Algeria's short-lived democratic experiment as the army mounted a coup in January 1992 (with visible French support) to block an anticipated Islamist electoral victory, the civil war that ensued resulted in a spill-over of the violent conflict into Europe. This in turn, led the French in particular to institute intrusive policing measures which further alienated the immigrant youth, and highlighted the links between these conflicts in their minds:

In other words, when Franco-Maghrebis qua Muslims witness the events of 9/11, the American occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, or the ongoing violence in Israel-Palestine, they increasingly witness a reflection of the struggle that they are undergoing in their daily lives. In spite of obvious diplomatic and policy distinctions between France and the United States and Israel, young French Muslims make the implicit analogy between the American army, the Israeli IDF and the French riot police. They reinterpret, in other words, their battles with French forces of law and order as an *intifada* of their own, as a resistance to the forces of imperialism (Silverstein, 2008: 19).

Both Western action (in the Gulf and Iraq) and inaction (in the Balkans and Chechnya) led to a steady influx of Muslim refugees coming to the West, thus contributing further to anxiety about immigration and more hostility towards Muslims. More action was in turn being taken against Muslims in anti-immigration and anti-terror measures. The post-Cold War era witnessed more intense international involvement in domestic conflicts abroad, in particular the grappling with failed states and unstable regions, and led to further entanglements of domestic and international politics.

### *Converging Narratives of Fear*

What is most remarkable about the xenophobic narratives of Islamophobia and their counterparts among Muslim radicals and extremists is the way they appear to echo and mirror each other, and often converge in expressing contempt and mistrust of the establishment in both the West and the Muslim world. The convergence is at times so striking that the comedy show presenter Jon Stewart of the *Daily Show* created the impression at one of his shows in February 2009 that he was going to play a "terrorist" tape which had just arrived, and then played radio comments by former Vice

President Dick Cheney warning about an impending terror attack on the U.S. in which nuclear weapons would be used.<sup>1</sup>

Leaders of *Al Qaeda* justify their actions by claiming that the whole world is now ganging up against Muslims, with the West even reconciling with its former enemy, Russia, for this purpose. Led by the U.S., “which is under the influence of the Jews”, the West uses, and only understands, the language of violence. “Therefore if we wish to have a dialogue with them and make them aware of our rights, we must talk to them in the language they understand” (Atwan, 2006: 83-84). In this conflict, not only are the ruling Muslim regimes on the side of the enemy, but so are also those Islamic movements which have chosen the path of peaceful engagement in national politics, and thus betrayed the cause of Islam and the people (Atwan, 2006: 84; Kepel, 2004: 86).

The purveyors of anti-Muslim rhetoric are also dismayed that the establishment, and sometimes the whole population, appear oblivious to the fact that their countries were “even now sleepwalking into Islamisation”:

Britain still doesn't grasp that it is facing a pincer attack from both terrorism and cultural infiltration and usurpation... And so, particularly within the elite, people think that things are broadly under control. They fail to realise that the attempt to take over our culture is even more deadly to this society than terrorism (Phillips, 2008: vii).

According to this view, the West is “a civilisation under siege”, but “the political, judicial, security and intellectual elites are busy denying the nature of the danger” (Phillips, 2008: xvi).

Another writer of similar persuasion praises extreme right-wing parties (which he alternatively calls “populist” or “pro-liberty” parties) in Europe as being “the only ones to address with candour the issues of fundamentalist Islam, immigration, and integration”. It is thus lamentable that they have been “powerfully stigmatised for doing so.”

The political establishment has routinely acted to keep pro-liberty parties out of power, even if some of them enjoy the support of a large portion of the electorate. Meanwhile,

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<sup>1</sup> See the clip at the website of *The Daily Show*, at: <http://www.thedailyshow.com/video/index.jhtml?videoId=217694&title=Why-Are-You-Such-a-Dick?---Audio-Tape>.

establishments do their part by misrepresenting “populist” ideas, maligning their leaders, and mocking their supporters (Bawer, 2006:44-45).

Worried Islamophobes like the late Pim Fortuyn of the Netherlands were certain that the Islamic takeover of Europe was imminent. “It is five minutes to twelve,” he told his followers in February 2002. “Not just in the Netherlands, but in the whole of Europe” (Bawer, 2006: 166). But according to other colleagues in this trend, they need not bother, since the takeover of Europe by Islam is already complete. According to the staunchly pro-Israel Swiss-based British author Bat Ye’or, Europe, or more accurately *Eurabia*, is now already a Muslim colony, with its citizens reduced to subject status to their Arab overlords. Bat Ye’or (Hebrew for “daughter of the Nile”), is a pseudonym for the Egyptian-born Gisèle Littman, who wrote extensively on the history of non-Muslim subjects of Islamic empires, not with great accuracy, it has been argued (Qureshi and Sells, 2003: 360-3). In her 2005 book, *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis*, she offers a spirited defence of Israel against what she sees as a combination of resurgent European anti-Semitism exacerbated by sucking up to the Arabs for economic reasons. In an earlier article with the same title in the *National Review*, Ye’or sums her argument thus:

The cracks between Europe and America reveal the divergences between the choice of liberty and the road back to Munich on which the European Union continues to caper to new Arab-Islamic tunes, now called “occupation”, “peace and justice”, and “immigrants’ rights” — themes which were composed for Israel's burial. And for Europe's demise (Ye’or, 2002).

It is probably no coincidence that the bulk of those figures and groups usually described as Islamophobes are fanatical supporters of Israel. However, it is no less remarkable that Islamophobia has also been compared to anti-Semitism and seen as feeding from the same source of xenophobic intolerance and gratuitous demonisation of the other. It is rather instructive that the body which first stumbled onto Islamophobia (and publicised the term) (the Runnymede Trust), has in fact been engaged with the task of examining the resurgence of anti-Semitism. And as mentioned above, the subtle shifts in extreme right-wing xenophobia have witnessed a marked displacement towards Islamophobia, with right-wing parties which started

with an emphasis on anti-Semitism (as in Britain and France), revising their theses towards the now “safer” and more acceptable anti-Muslim racism.

There are some parallels in the supporting narratives of both types of racism, in particular the contradictory claims that the target groups have all sorts of despicable characteristics such as backwardness and unreliability. At the same time, they are perceived as having control of the world. However, the dynamics of the two phenomena are somewhat different. The hostile narratives of the Islamophobes tend to feed from reinforcing events, including the narratives of Muslim extremists residing in Europe. Acts of terror, such as the murder of the television presenter Theo van Gogh in 2004 by a Moroccan-born immigrant, not to mention major terrorist incidents such as 9/11 and March 11 (Madrid, 2004) and 7/7 (London 2005), do reinforce the climate of fear.

In a similar vein, the extremist rhetoric among Muslims finds support from Islamophobic attacks and official policies, such the Gulf War of 1991, the repressive Israeli policy after the second *Intifada* of 2000s, as well as the wars on Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003). The revelations about the Abu Ghraib torture in Iraq in 2004 gave a huge boost to extremist rhetoric, while the apparent victimisation of Western Muslims in counter-terror measures creates more anger amongst Muslim youth, making many among them more receptive to extremist rhetoric. At the same time, the rising number of high profile arrests under anti-terror laws, and the intense coverage in the media increases popular suspicions of Muslims and reinforces Islamophobic narratives.

Often, the inter-linkages and symbiotic relationship between policies and events become much more direct. President Sarkozy’s remarks in June 2009 to the effect that the *burqa* (a dress which covers a woman’s whole body, including the face) was not “welcome” in France as it was “a sign of servitude” which violates women’s dignity, elicited a threat of retaliation from the extremist Algerian-based group calling itself *Al Qaeda* in the Islamic Maghreb.<sup>2</sup> In early July, anger spilt over on the streets of Alexandria in Egypt as over a thousand mourners gathered at the funeral of 31-year-old Marwa el-Shirbini, who was stabbed to death by a German man she was suing for abuse in Dresden, Germany. The Egyptian-born el-Shirbini, a pharmacist who was three months pregnant, was stabbed 18 times inside the court by a man described as “a fanatical racist” in front of her three-year-old

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<sup>2</sup> “Al Qaeda Affiliate Threatens Vengeance for Sarkozy’s Criticism of Veils on Muslim Women”, Wednesday, July 01, 2009, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,529708,00.html>.



son. Her husband, who tried to protect her, suffered multiple stab wounds and was also shot by the police who arrived on the scene. The incident provoked angry protests on the streets in both Germany and Egypt, with calls for action against German interests (Collins, 2009; Connolly and Shenker, 2009). Within days, angry protests were spreading to other parts of the Muslim world. *Tehran Times* reported on July 12 that Iranian students held demonstrations and picketed the German Embassy in Tehran. An Islamophobic attack in Europe thus appears to be on the verge of provoking another momentous clash across cultural boundaries.

### *Conclusions*

The rise of Islamophobia in the West does not simply reflect the revival of ancient fears which are deeply ingrained in the European formative narratives of identity, even though the influence of these narratives plays a powerful role. It represents, in part, a displacement of habitual xenophobic and racist tendencies onto new targets, helped by aspects of official policy which feeds on suspicions against Muslims and also foments resentment amongst them. The rhetoric and actions of some extremist Muslim groups and individuals further enhance the climate of mutual mistrust, and in turn feeds on Islamophobia. This process has an alarming capacity for self-reinforcement into a vicious cycle of self-fulfilling narratives of mistrust and victimisation.

In order to break this cycle, the narratives of mistrust, demonisation and insecurity need to be confronted and deflated. In some of their more extreme implausible forms, these narratives are easy to puncture. Few rational individuals can buy the argument that Europe is about to be overrun by Muslim hordes, let alone the more implausible claim that this take-over is already complete. This is especially so since the same people making these claims also accused Muslims of living in ghettos and not wanting to integrate or even learn the language. How can a small minority living in poverty and seclusion take over the continent? And why would impoverished rural immigrants from Bangladesh and Africa threaten Berlusconi's "superior" civilisation which is busy conquering the world?

And on mentioning this "conquering" part, it is noteworthy to point out that Islamophobic reactions to 9/11 and similar incidents not only demanded that Muslims be thrown out of the West, but also called for the bombing and invasion of Muslim countries. Notorious Islamophobes see the mere presence of a Muslim woman with a headscarf on the streets of Paris or

Amsterdam a colossal threat to the very essence of Western civilisation. At the same time, these same individuals support Israel's expansionist policies and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and by consequence the resultant instability which pushes many more refugees to seek asylum in the West. Thus, while immigration might ostensibly be the flashpoint and source of anxiety exploited by Islamophobes, the problems and tensions will persist even if immigration were to stop completely. This is so, because the Islamophobes, as we have seen, are supportive of all sorts of expeditions into the Muslim world.

It is to be noted here that some of the fears and anxieties invoked by the Islamophobes are real, even if misguided. Even some liberal and left-wing intellectuals are now acceding to the rhetoric of the Islamophobes, but more from the anti-clerical and militantly secularist perspective now being re-directed against Islam, thus creating a lethal incendiary combination the like of which has not been seen since the rise of Nazism in Europe. For, while the extreme right is using Islamophobia as an extension (or substitute) for habitual xenophobia, the liberal left is claiming to be fighting the Enlightenment's battle anew, this time against Islam.

Islamophobia is thus a type of racism which is proud of itself, combining the pride of the Enlightenment in its rationalism and ethical self-grounding with the pride in European identity and achievement. The fear of Islam and Muslims is seen as not merely the contempt for poor, coloured immigrants who blot the perfect European landscape, but as the justified standing up for liberal Western values against backward and bigoted alien mores which are threatening what is best in Europe and the West. Rather than being an heir to Nazism, it pretends to fight Islam as the heir to the Inquisition.

This tendency becomes self-reinforcing, since the fear (which is sometimes genuine) does provoke reactions which tend to exacerbate the situation. Even paranoids can have enemies, the saying goes. Often these enemies are the results of the very paranoid reactions to presumed threats. Official policies seeking to accommodate and alleviate these fears (counter-terrorism and immigration measures, racial profiling, external wars, etc.) also tend to increase mutual hostility and resentment, and generate new grievances and grounds for suspicion.

This said, it is undeniable that Islamophobic narratives also do feed on, and are reinforced by, extremist rhetoric and actions of some Muslim groups or individuals. Murders or acts of terror that claim to be motivated by Islam or in support of Muslim causes, or provocative remarks supportive of

such acts, are certain to worsen tensions between Muslims and their neighbours. It is of course impossible for Muslim communities to police every member, but purveyors of extremist rhetoric must be emphatically isolated and chastised so as to eliminate any suspicion that they may be speaking for, or acting on behalf of, the community. Curbing and isolating the extremists should be done in the context of a mutual de-escalation of hostilities, with Muslims and their compatriots working jointly to allay each other's fears and manifest mutual solidarity with the victims of aggression from any side.

This mutual de-escalation must not be seen as a substitute for confronting Islamophobia or an excuse for it. By definition, Islamophobia is a pathological and unjustified attitude which cannot be excused by acts of violence or any other criminal behaviour by members of a minority, since there are laws to deal with these criminal actions, and none can justify criminal attacks on innocents, burning mosques, etc. However, it is realistic to believe that removing possible excuses for Islamophobes cannot but help diffuse the situation.

Fortunately, effective action is being taken at many levels, official and non-official, to confront both Islamophobia and extremism. Officials and community leaders in major European countries, as well as officials and bodies at the E.U. level, have made it clear that Islamophobia will not be tolerated. Many civil society groups are active in confronting this scourge. Muslim community leaders are also active in confronting extremists within the community.

But much more needs to be done. Muslim groups and leaders could do more to isolate and morally disarm the extremists, while officials need to avoid falling into the trap of appeasing Islamophobes by appropriating some of their rhetoric and recommendations in order to win votes, especially in the light of recent developments where extreme right-wing parties appear to have made unexpected gains in the June 2009 European Parliament elections. Islamophobia is not only a threat to Muslim minorities in the West, but also to Western democracies and global peace and security. A Europe where minorities live in terror cannot be a credible contributor to world peace.

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# POST-9/11 ISLAMOPHOBIA AND THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN ISLAM

*Osman Bakar*

## *Introduction*

The 21<sup>st</sup> century took off with a ‘big bang’ at the financial heart of the United States of America, the world’s most powerful nation and sole super power. The ‘big bang’ to which I am referring here is none other than the September 11, 2001 tragic destruction of the World Trade Centre in New York. After the United States, led by George Bush Jr., struck back in vengeance at enemies it perceived as implicated in the attack, first by invading the Taliban-led Afghanistan and later Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, with such a powerful global impact that is yet to subside, we could easily make the claim that the September 11 tragedy has proved to be the most consequential event to have occurred in the post-Second World War history of the world. Taking revenge on September 11, the United States mobilised the so-called “coalition of the willing” nations to wage a “global war on terror.” This global terror, which was assumed to be the new enemy of the “Free West” in the post-Cold War era but whose identity remained mysterious to many people, was presented to the world by the Bush Administration as being given shape by the *al Qaeda* and personified by its leader Osama bin Laden.

The global war on terror was widely criticised from the very day it was launched till its unofficial ending, especially in the Islamic world and in Muslim communities throughout the world, including in the West itself. Similarly widely criticised were the American-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, which were purportedly carried out in pursuit of the strategic objectives of the war. The legitimacy of the war and the two invasions was even questioned, including by some of the world’s foremost authorities in international law. As a matter of fact, as the war dragged on, it became increasingly unpopular with the Americans and the Europeans, not to mention with the more than one billion members of the global Muslim community (*ummah*). It did not take long before the “coalition of the willing” shrunk in size, pointing clearly to the increasing unpopularity of the war.

Much has been debated and written about the September 11 event and its aftermath. Bush’s war on terror and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq easily qualify for top placing in the list of consequences of the September 11 tragedy. From the general perspective of Muslims, these



unwelcome happenings also turned out to be the most destructive consequences of the September 11 tragedy on the Islamic world. Both Afghanistan and Iraq underwent massive destruction, not only physically but also psychologically and culturally. There were promises of a new Afghanistan and a new Iraq that would be far better respectively than the old ones, but in reality, sad to say, no better political and cultural replacement is yet in sight in each case. The full impact of the September 11 episode and Bush's global war on terror vis-à-vis Islam and the Islamic world is yet to be documented and studied.<sup>1</sup> It is beyond the scope of this paper to offer a discussion of this issue in all its dimensions. Our limited concern here is the impact of the September 11 event and the American-led war on terror against the global Muslim community with specific reference to Islam in the U.S. For brevity, we henceforth use the term 'American Islam' to mean Islam in the United States.'

Why the particular concern here with American Islam? I think we may cite many good reasons for this due concern. The issue of post-September 11 American Islam is of increasing interest to many people today both within and beyond the United States. American Islam is a phenomenon – religious, socio-cultural, and political – to watch in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is the fastest growing, the most vibrant, and the most intellectually influential Muslim minority in the world.<sup>2</sup> In light of this, American Islam has the potentiality and the capacity to influence both the Islamic world and the West, particularly the U.S. It is therefore worth pointing out the full significance of the issue of American Islam for present and future Muslim-Western relations. This is the more so when we come to realise that future international peace would depend very much on the good and constructive relations between Islam and the West on the basis of mutual respect and the

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<sup>1</sup> There are still only a few studies available that seek to objectively assess the impact of the September 11 tragedy and the American-led war on terror on Islam and the Islamic world. For an early study of this impact, see Osman Bakar, 'The Impact of the American War on Terror on Malaysian Islam,' *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, vol. 16, no. 2, April 2005, pp. 107-127.

<sup>2</sup> For an informative study of the intellectual influence of American Muslims on the rest of the world, see Phillipa Strum, ed., *Muslims in the United States: Identity, Influence, Innovation* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2005). For specific treatment of American Muslim intellectual influence on Southeast Asia, see Osman Bakar, 'The Intellectual Impact of American Muslim Scholars on the Muslim World, with Special Reference to Southeast Asia,' Phillipa Strum, ed., *Muslims in the United States*, pp. 87-101; and Osman Bakar, 'Competing Visions of Islam in Southeast Asia: American Muslim Scholarship as a Shaping Factor,' Phillipa Strum, ed., *Muslims in the United States*, pp. 103-119.

common good. President Barack Obama realises this crucial need, as amply demonstrated, during his Istanbul and Cairo speeches to the Islamic world. He deserves to be congratulated for emphasizing this need to the world. At least he has indicated his willingness to depart from those poorly informed past American policies that could only mean disastrous relations between Islam and the West.

It is a generally accepted fact that the American global war on terror has impacted the Islamic world, Muslim minorities in the West, and the world at large in various areas of life and to various degrees of suffering and hardship. Without doubt, Muslims have been the worst affected. It is enough to cite the fates of Afghanistan and Iraq. In the name of War on Terror these two Muslim nations have been uprooted and devastated. The devastation wrought on them in both human and material terms is beyond estimation. Now with the American military occupation of Iraq entering its seventh year, and with its end nowhere yet in sight despite Obama's commitment to end it, the country is set to slide further on the slope of destruction, violence and civil strife. Similarly, there is no peace and meaningful national reconstruction in sight in Afghanistan. On the contrary, the war in Afghanistan is claiming more lives from among the military servicemen of the surviving members of the "coalition of the willing".

The September 11 episode and the war on terror have also impacted on Muslim minorities in the West in a significant way. Nowhere is this impact more visible than in the United States. The impact is to be observed and understood in both positive and negative senses. In the positive sense, September 11 and the war on terror have generated an unprecedented intensity of interest in Islam and in things Islamic. This extraordinary interest in the religion of Islam among non-Muslim westerners has often led to conversions to the religion. In the negative sense, Islamophobia has become worse as a result of September 11 and the subsequent war on terror. The phenomenon of Islamophobia which is usually equated with a general prejudice and hatred of Islam and the Muslims was already to be observed in the West long before September 11. We can even say that even before the Western coinage of the term 'Islamophobia' in the early 1980's<sup>3</sup> the phenomenon as implied by the term was already a part of the Western intellectual and social scene that may be viewed as a manifestation of the Western response to Islam and the Islamic world. But September 11 had led

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<sup>3</sup> The main factor contributing to the Islamophobia of the 1980's was the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979 which overthrew the Shah, a close friend of the U.S., the capture of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran by Khomeini's Revolutionary Guard aftermath that fed the Western media with so many negative images and portrayals of Islam.

to the creation of new negative images of Islam and Muslims in the minds of the Western public. It became more frequent for Islam – the religion, its holy book and its prophet – to be publicly ridiculed and hated. Not few voices have condemned the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad as “violent to the core”. According to this poorly informed view, Muslim violence is rooted in the Qur'an and in the teachings and practices of the Prophet. These negative stereotyping and ridiculing of Islam become all the more disturbing when they come from the respectable class of religious preachers and church leaders.

Islamophobia has angered the Muslims. So have the war on terror and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, both of which are predominantly Muslim countries. All of these negative phenomena and politically charged events have invited violent reactions from the more extremist-prone elements of Muslim communities. Muslim extremism invites in turn extreme reactions from the extreme elements in Western societies such as the ‘skin heads’, the neo-Nazis, and the religious ultra-right. American and European Muslims have to bear the brunt of the extreme reactions of these rightist groups, which often include physical attacks. We thus have a potentially dangerous spiral wave of negative reactions and counter-reactions that could very well threaten the security of Muslims living in the West as well as worsen relations between the West and the Islamic world. September 11 attacks on the symbols of American wealth and power were supposed to be Muslim reactions against American-aided Israeli humiliation of the Palestinians and against other forms of “American tyranny” in various parts of the Islamic world. Then there came the American-led counter-reaction, namely the global war on terror and, within the framework of this ‘ideological’ war, the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq as well as the despatch of American troops to Muslim Mindanao. These wars ignited a wave of violent anti-West demonstrations throughout the Islamic world, not to mention a series of bombings targeting Western embassies and places frequented by Western tourists. Anti-Americanism feelings ran high in the Islamic world. And as one opinion poll after another conducted in the Islamic world have shown, Muslims cite the American foreign policy, particularly its blanket support for Israel, as the main factor for their anti-Americanism.

### *Pre-9/11 American Islam*

We would be in a better position to appreciate the significance of post-9/11 American Islam if we were to look at how it fared before the tragedy. I will provide a brief profile of pre-9/11 American Islam in three main areas: first, demography; second, projection of Islam; and third, Islam in the public square. In the demographic arena, I have referred to the fact that Islam is the fastest growing religion in the United States. In the American context, it is important to note that we are not speaking of birth-rate as the major factor in the Muslim demographic growth. Rather, we have in mind conversion to Islam as its most significant factor. The significance of conversion to Islam to the fast changing American demographic landscape may be gauged from statistical studies of the conversion phenomenon. According to a study, in the year 2000, just a year before 9/11, more than 20,000 Americans converted to Islam. This means that on average 55 Americans convert to Islam everyday. The study provides an interesting statistical break-up of the converts, especially in terms of ethnicity and gender. Sixty percent of the new converts were blacks, twenty percent whites, and twenty percent Hispanics. On the basis of gender the study showed that sixty percent of the converts were females, and forty percent males.

These figures do tell a lot of significant things about the changing pattern of American response to Islam. For example, the increasing percentage of white converts is a new development. What the statistics are telling us is that 4,000 whites convert to Islam in the year 2000, which means at least ten conversions per day. The development is significant for at least two reasons. First, whites constitute the majority ethnic group in the country. This means that Islam is going to have a growing representation in the white majority community. Second, whites have been traditionally viewed as the most prejudiced toward Islam. The conversion statistics, however, show that Islam is beginning to be accepted by the white community. More than any other ethnic group white Muslims can play an effective role in bridging the wide cultural gap between the minority Muslim community and the majority white community.

Also quite surprising is the Hispanic share of the new converts. Their twenty percent share is also a significant development. Hispanics are widely viewed as staunch Catholics. So the fact that 4000 of them have entered Islam's fold in a year sent shock waves to the Catholic community. According to a *Washington Post* report published in 2001, Muslim Hispanics are still a tiny minority, numbering not more than 140,000. But there is an unmistakable trend: more and more Hispanics are embracing Islam, especially in the state of California. Hispanic mosques are now to be found in many big American cities such as Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, and Washington, D.C.

The fact that blacks still provide the biggest share of the new converts is not surprising. This has been the case so far ever since the heterodox Nation of Islam founded by Elijah Muhammad became transformed in the 1980's into an orthodox Afro-American Muslim community led by Warith al-Din Muhammad, Elijah's son. Over the years, Islam has proved to be far more attractive to blacks than any other non-Muslim ethnic group, because there is the prevailing perception among them that Islam inculcates a strong sense of cultural identity and a strong sense of social justice, both of which the black community badly needs. The claim widely propagated in the 1970's that blacks have Islamic roots traceable to their Muslim ancestors brought as slaves to America from Muslim Africa, provided a boosting factor to the favourable reception of Islam in the black community.

If the statistical break-up in the ethnic composition of the new Muslim converts continues to be the trend in the years to come, then it would not be long before American Islam can make the claim that it is truly representative of the broad American ethnic spectrum. With such an ethnically constituted American Islam exhibiting a sizeable white component, we can expect it to play a more effective role in dealing with the challenges of Islamophobia, not just in America but also globally.

The gender composition of the new converts provides another surprise. Given the persisting negative portrayal of women in Islam in the Western media and widespread claims of Islam's suppression of women rights, one would expect Western women to shun Islam. But the contrary has happened as clearly shown in the study. Some of these women converts are now playing leadership roles in the American Muslim community. For example, Dr. Ingrid Mattson, a professor at Hartford Seminary, Connecticut, has created history by becoming the first woman President of Islamic Society

of North America (ISNA), an organisation which is known for being the largest annual gathering of American Muslims.

Insofar as the projection of Islam to the American public in all its forms is concerned, we may say that right up to the eve of the September 11 tragedy, there has been some sort of an explosion of information on Islam. At the same time, there was also a lot of misinformation disseminated to the public about Islam. The most important source of positive information about Islam came from the academia. Books and journal articles on Islam written by academics register a remarkable annual increase in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup>. I do not know of any other country in the world which has published works on Islam in its varied aspects as much as America has. Not even the most academically productive Muslim country has come close to its achievement. As for the misinformation on Islam and the negative portrayals of the religion, these came mainly from the media. True enough misinformation and misleading coverage of Islam has drawn fire from Muslim individuals and groups. But the confrontational encounter between the two opposing coverage of Islam may not be necessarily bad for the religion in the long run. Given the freedom and openness of intellectual expressions in America the parallel outputs of information and misinformation on Islam have tended to generate discourses and debates that lead to further curiosity and inquisitiveness about the religion among the American public. A progressively growing interest in Islam is thus assured.

On the subject of Islam's growing presence in the American public square in the years leading to the September 11 tragedy, there is indeed a lot to report. There has been a substantial increase in the number of mosques and Islamic centres across America. More Muslim students had been registered in schools, colleges, and universities. Some of them succeeded in gaining admission into the Ivy League universities. Their number is disproportionate to the size of their population. Muslim professionals – medical doctors, lawyers, engineers and others – are also on the increase. American Muslims are beginning to be noticed as a community with good educational and professional achievements. Their average income is higher than the national average. More Muslim organisations of various kinds have been formed. This development testifies to the growing Muslim social activism in the American public square in response to the current Muslim needs at both the individual and the community levels as well as to the challenges posed by contemporary American life.

In light of the overall positive profile of pre-9/11 American Islam as I have given in the preceding pages, it came as no surprise to me when on the

very day of the tragedy I encountered American Muslim reactions that cast a bleak future for Islam and the Muslims in America.<sup>4</sup> One American Muslim professor, a woman, reacted to me in person rather emotionally in these words: if it is true that Muslims did this [i.e. attacked and ruined the twin towers of the World Trade Centre], the progress we have made all these years is going to ruin! Her sentiment was widely shared in the American Muslim community in the days shortly after the tragedy.

Many thought Islam and the Muslim community in America would suffer a great setback from the 9/11 tragedy even if no conclusive proof of Muslim responsibility for the attack could be provided. No one could foresee then what would be in store for the future of American Islam. True enough, in the aftermath of the tragedy, American Muslims had to sail through rough waters in their courageous attempt to be both Muslim and American. But that aside, there were positive surprises in store for them as well as for the world. In the following pages, I will provide an overview of post-9/11 American Islam covering both its promising aspects and the main challenges it has to face. The most important of these challenges is Islamophobia.

### *Post-9/11 American Islam: Promises and Challenges*

It is a surprise to many people that despite its numerous challenges, post-9/11 American Islam succeeded in sustaining its pre-9/11 achievements. In fact, in some respect it even succeeded in surpassing those achievements. This is certainly true in the three key areas I have considered in the profile of pre-9/11 American Islam: conversion to Islam, coverage or projection of Islam for public consumption, and the visibility of Islam in the public square. One of the earliest Muslim concerns following the 9/11 tragedy was that it would scare away the Americans from Islam. The belief highlighted in this concern is that people would have such a negative image of Islam and the Muslims that they would not even bother to study and to get to know the real Islam believed and practised by the great majority of Muslims all over the world. If this belief turned out to be true then one consequence of it would be a sharp decline in conversion to Islam. But the feared decline did not happen. As it turned out, the opposite happened. A study of post-9/11 conversion to Islam showed that conversion figures for the year 2001, the year of the tragedy, and the year 2002 surpassed the figure for the year 2000.

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<sup>4</sup> I was in Washington D.C. when the September 11 attack took place both in New York and in the United States capital. I was Chair of Islam in Southeast Asia at the Prince Al Waleed bin Talal Centre for Muslim-Christian Understanding, Georgetown University from July 2000 until June 2005.

The rise in conversion to Islam has to do perhaps with the extraordinary new interest in the religion of Islam which 9/11 has generated. Within a few months of the tragedy several surveys showed that sales of books on Islam went up. Americans rushed to the bookstores to buy books on just anything about Islam. The same surveys showed that in this rush for Islamic books, the Qur'an became the best-seller.

In post-9/11 America, publications of books and other writings on Islam increased substantially. The same phenomenon is to be observed in the electronic media. Coverage of Islam multiplied in numbers both in the print and the electronic media. It is not an exaggeration to claim that publications of Islamic books have become a booming industry in America.

The 9/11 tragedy has also resulted in greater visibility of Islam in the public square. On the political front we could see Muslims playing a more active role in the political processes at all levels. At both national and state levels they have become better organised politically. They were able to mobilise Muslim voters across America to the point of being able to influence the outcome of presidential election in a number of key states such as Illinois, Wisconsin, Florida and New Jersey. There is now a visible Muslim lobby in Congress which in 2006 has its first Congressman in the person of Keith Allison, a representative of Minnesota's fifth congressional district. It was a great symbolic boost to the presence of Islam in the public square when Ellison decided to swear his oath of office on the Qur'an. His swearing on the Qur'an became the more significant for the American public when he used a copy of the Muslim holy book once owned by Thomas Jefferson, author of America's Declaration of Independence and its third President. That historic event in American politics proved to be an excellent public relations exercise for American Islam.

A Muslim organisation which has played such an important role in raising the profile of Islam in the American public square is the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR). Created in June 1994, CAIR has the professed goals of enhancing understanding of Islam, promoting justice and empowering American Muslims. It is popularly seen today by both its supporters and its critics as a defender of the rights of Muslims in the United States. The aftermath of 9/11 has helped to project CAIR to the public square and through its advocacy, to push Islam to the centre stage of American national consciousness. CAIR is presently regarded as the most visible and public representative of the American Muslim community. With its dynamism and commitment to American Muslim rights in a national political climate dominated by fear of terrorism, CAIR has not been free of suspicions and even accusations by its critics and enemies of having ties with terrorist organisations and of pursuing a radical Islamic agenda. The accusations were



of course most unfair and in fact baseless, since CAIR has consistently condemned terrorism. For example, CAIR with several American Muslim groups condemned the terrorist attacks on 9/11 within hours of the first plane crashing into the World Trade Centre. It is not true as claimed by some quarters that not a single American Muslim organisation has come out to publicly condemn the terrorist attack.

There are many other examples to illustrate the greater visibility of American Islam in post-9/11 American public life. Apart from the three areas which I have just discussed, we may observe the promising aspect of American Islam in the field of Islamic studies and Islamic scholarship. More courses on one or more aspects of Islam are being taught in American universities and colleges. This means more lecturers or professors (faculties) are being hired to teach these courses. The teaching of Arabic gains wider currency. Islamic scholarship becomes more vibrant. Intellectual output in all areas of Islamic scholarship is acknowledged to be on the rise. This positive development in the domain of academic and intellectual life on Islam is worthy of special mention. This is because, as I have asserted earlier, the academia is the most important source of objective coverage of Islam.

While the promising aspects of post-9/11 American Islam are clearly visible, the same can be said about the kind of challenges it has to face. American Muslims themselves see multiplying challenges to being Muslims in post-9/11 America. I have referred to Islamophobia as the most important of these challenges. American Muslims have to endure every kind of insult and attack imaginable on their religion and community. However, in any objective study of post-9/11 American Islam, both its promising aspects and negative challenges need to be dealt with together. Moreover, we find that the development of American Islam is very much influenced by the outcome of the dynamic interaction between the positive projection of Islam to the public and the stream of misinformation on Islam and its negative portrayal. It is true to say that there has been an explosion of both positive information and misinformation on Islam. The resulting scenario may be described as an intensifying clash between two images or portrayals of Islam. It is precisely because this clash has political implications for American politics that Islam has been pushed to the centre stage of American national consciousness.

The following passages are meant to provide an insight into the American public mind insofar as its response to the two opposing public projections of Islam is concerned. In a 2006 USA Today/Gallup Poll, it was found that substantial minorities of Americans admit to prejudice against Muslims. Forty-four percent of Americans have the perception that Muslims are too extreme in their religious beliefs. A significant twenty-two percent of them say they would not want a Muslim as a neighbour. More importantly,

especially in the context of America being at war with terrorism associated by many with Islam or the Muslims, many Americans believe American Muslims are not loyal to the United States. This perception of Muslim disloyalty finds agreement with the Financial Times/Harris Poll findings released in August 2007 which claim that twenty-one percent of Americans say the presence of Muslims in their country is a threat to national security. However, American Muslims may see a ray of hope in the poll findings: forty-seven percent of Americans believe that American Muslims have become the subject of unjustified criticism and prejudice.

Many Americans have questions about Islam and the Muslims which they have been asking since September 11 until today. Among the most popular questions are the following: why do they hate us? What are the causes of Muslim extremism and terrorism? Is Islam a violent religion? Since some of these questions are not appropriately structured it is possible to say that they smack of Islamophobia, that is, negatively reacting to the growing presence of Islam and the Muslims in America. To be sure, there are identifiable factors responsible for this rather active Islamophobia. Among the main factors are the following: [1] the persisting phenomenon of terrorism committed by some Muslim individuals or fringe groups in the name of Islam; [2] the persisting anti-Islamic sentiments and phobia displayed by the preachers of hate including Christian extremists; [3] the negative portrayals of Islam and quite often the anti-Islam and anti-Muslim outbursts by popular talk show hosts and political commentators in both TV and radio channels. All these factors tend to obscure the understanding of Islam and to inflame Islamophobia among the Americans. In the face of blatant discrimination against Muslims and the defamation of Islam, advocates of Muslim rights such as CAIR, have sought to respond to practically every manifestation of Islamophobia in American society.

No matter how hard the American Muslim community try to diminish the challenge of Islamophobia, they are not going to achieve it overnight. American Islamophobia is a much more complex phenomenon than what many Muslims understand it to be. Consequently, it is a much more complex and formidable challenge than what they have so far realised. Islamophobia is not simply a result of widespread American ignorance of Islam. There is an ideological dimension to the phenomenon which will help to sustain it for a long period of time. American Islam has to face political challenges of a more enduring nature emanating from this ideological dimension. Groups opposed to Islam for ideological reasons are found to have the tendency to inflate the threat of radical Islam. As Steve Chapman

has observed in his interesting commentary in the Chicago Tribune,<sup>5</sup> there are many Americans who see radical Islam as the heir of communism and Nazism. On the basis of this perception of radical Islam, Chapman is telling us that these Americans are bent on taking up the ideological position of “making war against radical Islam as sounding like a war between Islam and the West.” One of these Americans whom Chapman mentioned by name was Norman Podhoretz, an adviser to Rudy Giuliani.<sup>6</sup> Podhoretz wrote a book titled *World War IV: The Long Struggle against Islamofascism*. In this book he writes: “The stakes are nothing less than the survival of Western civilisation, to the extent that Western civilisation still exists, *because half of it seems to be committing suicide*.” Interestingly, Chapman interprets the phrase in italics in the quotation as follows: “By that he seems to be referring not just, to terrorist groups but also to the proliferation of Muslims in the West, which many conservatives see as a mortal peril.”

### *Conclusion*

Thus far, American Muslims have tried to respond to the challenge of Islamophobia in various ways. Commendably, in their effort to strengthen their strategic position to counter the damaging onslaught of Islamophobia they have created new alignments and alliances with many non-Muslim American groups. Their effort in this direction is highly visible in a number of areas. First, there is much activity in the area of interfaith dialogue especially involving members of the three Abrahamic religions, namely Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Second, in the political arena, we see a growing Muslim activism to position their influence in both the Republican and Democratic parties. One of the goals of this activism is to help influence American foreign policy. Third, we see Muslim students and professors creating alliances with their non-Muslim colleagues in the universities and colleges in pursuit of the common goals of social justice and freedom. For example, we may refer to the role of Muslim students associations in nationwide campuses in mobilising support from other campus groups to counter the Islamophobia inflamed by the “Campus Watch” of Daniel Pipes, a vocal critic of American Islam.

It is the battle for influence in shaping the American foreign policy that is going to be the most bitter and the most far-reaching between the

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<sup>5</sup> See *The Chicago Tribune*, September 16, 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Giuliani was the serving Mayor of New York when the September 11 attack took place. He was a former Republican Presidential candidate who lost in his bid for the White House.

supporters and sympathisers of Islam and its opponents. The issue of Islam in American foreign policy is going to influence a lot of other issues which engage American Muslims, both in the positive and the negative sense. The opponents of American Islam are going to watch closely every step the Muslim community is taking in the political arena. In fact, there have been attempts at political pre-emptive strikes against the community with the view of preventing American Muslim political influence from taking shape.

It is difficult to say what the long-term impact of Islamophobia on American Islam would be. But on the basis of present trends discussed in the foregoing pages, we have good reason to believe that the outcome of the clash between the two sides of the divide – Islamic affirmation and Islamophobia – would be of great significance to the rest of the world, particularly the Islamic world.

## **ISLAMOPHOBIA – MAKING MUSLIMS THE ENEMY**

*By Peter Gottschalk and Gabriel Greenberg*

*Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 151 pages*

*Reviewed by Thomas Koruth Samuel*

*Islamophobia – Making Muslims the Enemy* by Peter Gottschalk and Gabriel Greenberg is an attempt to understand the anxiety towards Islam through an examination of a particular type of popular expression – the political cartoon. The authors have chosen such an indicator because, according to them, political cartoons are images created as immediate responses to events. As such, these images are perceived as an expression of the latent sensibilities of the cartoonist and by extension, of society. The book begins by examining the reaction of Muslims to the caricatures that appeared in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*. The authors argue that media outlets broadcast a series of repetitive messages regarding Muslims and Islam that mutually reinforce negative views among American non-Muslims through what they do and do not say, write or demonstrate. They also argue that the mass media deliberately overlook the voices of moderation that come from the majority of Muslims. Such averse reporting, the authors contend, has led to the impression that Muslims are two-dimensional, existing only as *Muslims* and seemingly never sharing identities or interests with non-Muslims. They argue that while American and Western depiction of Muslims and Islam has evolved, there nevertheless remains a constant nervousness and distrust of those associated with those terms.

The authors define Islamophobia as an ‘anxiety of Islam’. They believe that Islamophobia accurately reflects the social anxiety towards Islam and the Muslim culture, which is largely unexamined yet deeply ingrained in Americans. The first chapter, *Overview of Western Encounters with Muslims*, examines how the initial perception of Islam by the West was seen through the lenses of the Crusades as well as European imperialism and hegemony. Subsequently, the authors indicate that the Soviet containment during the Cold War, oil concerns, Zionism and terrorism, have further reshaped and at times, reinforced the Western stereotyping of Islam. The second chapter, *Symbols of Islam, Symbols of Difference*, takes a close look at the symbols of Islam, via political cartoons, such as the scimitar, the mosque, the crescent, the veil and Muslim men, as seen through the eyes of the West. The authors then describe how these perceived symbols of Islam are then used to

communicate the American understanding/misunderstanding of Muslims and Islam. According to them, these inaccurate, and at times, prejudicial presentations, further reinforce the negative view on Islam and Muslims. In the third chapter, *Stereotyping Muslims and Establishing the American Norm*, the authors examine the dynamics between caricatures and stereotypes. Stereotypes are defined as “descriptions of a group of outsiders using characteristics understood both to be shared by all members and to define them as different from ‘normal’ society”. Caricatures on the other hand are “practices by which artists focus on one or more unusual physical or behavioural features of an individual, and exaggerate those characteristics in their portrayal.” Among the stereotypes that are identified via political cartoons are the assumptions that all Muslims are Arabs, against progress and evil. Arabs, particularly the Saudis, are also generally stereotyped as duplicitous and treacherous. In the fourth chapter, *Extreme Muslims and the American Middle Ground*, the authors examine via political cartoons, five themes, namely, *Religion and Government, Nationalism, Men, Women and Morality*, through which Americans have positioned themselves as representing the norm of the middle ground, while at the same time, casting Muslims and Islam as being extreme. In the final chapter entitled *Moments*, the authors examine four distinct moments, that is, the Egyptian nationalisation of the Suez Canal in 1956, the oil crisis of 1973, the Iranian Revolution and the hostage crisis of 1979-1980, as well as the 11 September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Centre and its subsequent events, and show how on each occasion, cartoonists depict the principal players in question in a negative and hostile manner.

The authors contend that no freedom exists without limits and while the mass media deserve special protection, there is a need to portray Muslims and Islam in a more nuanced and balanced manner. They conclude by indicating that America’s growing Muslim population, as seen in the increasing conversions to Islam, means that it is already part of the Muslim world and thus, portraying them in a prejudicial manner would be greatly detrimental.

### *Comments*

There is an underlying assumption that the U.S. is inherently and particularly biased against Muslims and Islam. However, past events have shown Americans employing similar attitudes towards the Russians (during the Cold War period), the Jews (during World War II) and the Japanese (the

forcible relocation and internment of approximately 110,000 Japanese nationals and Japanese Americans to War Relocation Camps during World War II). These past instances could indicate that the U.S. does not seem to have any specific prejudice towards Muslims and Islam in general; but rather, the American society – like most other societies – tends to view migrant communities as foreign and alien in nature. While this is not necessarily positive, it does show that the U.S. does not have a particular dislike of Muslims or Islam specifically, but rather perceive anything or anyone foreign as being non-American and hence, viewed rather cautiously or at times even suspiciously.

The authors examine the perception of the Americans by critically examining their political cartoons. While it is probable that the cartoons reflect the thinking and prejudices of the cartoonist, it is pertinent to examine if such prejudices reflect the opinion of the majority of its society, especially one as diverse as the American society. Furthermore, given the inherent disposition and message of cartoons which are lampooning and extreme in nature, it is questionable if such a medium is therefore well suited as an indicator to gauge and understand the feelings, thoughts and perceptions on a certain issue or topic.

This book nevertheless does provide compelling and graphic evidence that there has been and is at present a distorted and prejudiced view of Islam and Muslims as seen via political cartoons. The authors however have not been able to show that such cartoons actually reflect the general sentiment and that such political cartoons *per se* is able to both convince and influence the general public opinion on Islam and Muslims.

## **ISLAMOPHOBIA AND ANTI-AMERICANISM, CAUSES AND REMEDIES**

*Edited by Mohamed Nimer  
Amana Publications, 152 pages*

*Reviewed by Ahmad Tajuddin bin Mohd Said*

“Islamophobia” has become more pronounced after the tragic attacks by terrorists on September 11, 2001. The event subsequently brought a profound impact on Muslims in America as well as Muslims throughout the rest of the world. Mohamed Nimer, together with a distinguished group of scholars and personalities, has attempted to assess and examine Islamophobia and anti-Americanism in America. This book is divided into six chapters that discuss both issues from a range of perspectives.

The first chapter of this book is entitled “*The Challenges of Defining Islamophobia and Anti-Americanism*”. The definition of Islamophobia cited in this book is an “unfounded fear and hostility towards Islam”. According to the author, Islamophobia and anti-Americanism are used as a strategic weapon in a war of ideas. Both stem from misrepresentations, ignorance, lies and half truths. Based on several polls conducted by various organisations, the author shows how Islamophobia is truly evident in America. There is a need to make Islamophobia unacceptable to Americans, the same way the majority of them reject racism, particularly anti-Semitism.

According to the author such sentiments had already taken root in the 1920s and the 1950s. It is, however, by no means true that American prejudices have been solely aimed towards Muslims. In the same vein, we are reminded by the authors that America was the scene of strong anti-German sentiment in the midst of the First World War. In the 1960s, America was gripped by an anti-Communist fervour, as exemplified by the Un-American Activities Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives. These instances suggest that Islamophobia can be seen as part of a recurring theme in American history, rather than as an isolated phenomenon.

The chapter entitled “*Misconceptions*” addresses the need for Americans to improve their understanding of Islam and the people who practise the religion. Looking at a Muslim community from a distance does not provide the whole picture. Instead, there is a need to engage the Muslim community to get a better understanding of their practices and beliefs. This



chapter also suggests that Muslims and non-Muslims need to concentrate on what binds them together, rather than on what separates them.

The USA Patriot Act, that is, *Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001*, and the American foreign policy were discussed in “*The Effects of Policy*”. While the U.S. promotes liberal democracy to the Muslim world, torture, abject humiliation and religious affront take place in their own backyard. Such controversies and incidents can only further inflame anti-Americanism sentiments. The authors claim that, even though Washington puts in significant efforts into spreading liberal democracy throughout the Middle East, American politicians have been reluctant to engage Muslim organisations in dialogue. The authors suggest that it is high time that American Muslims begin such an effort.

In “*The Role of Faith Community Leaders*”, the authors assert that similar values – namely compassion, responsibility, self-discipline, honesty and perseverance – underpin all religions. This chapter suggests that differences among religions should either be respected or form the basis of dialogue. The authors suggest the need to concentrate on reconciliation and building coalitions to address the causes of Islamophobia.

“*The Role of the Media*” suggests that American television news and popular culture tend to propagate negative stereotypes through its violent portrayals of Muslims. One of the authors cites his experience that only two out of over a thousand of his interviews with the American media was on a positive issue about Islam. This, the author suggests, has to do with the established bias of the American media which is more concerned on bringing to light negative issues. Such negative portrayals of Muslims in popular American TV series such as “The Agency”, “Alias”, “Threat Matrix”, “24”, “The Grid” and “DHS, Department of Homeland Security” only add to the recurrence of negative stereotypes about Muslims. However, the authors also point out that it has been *Newsweek* which first published stories on the Guantanamo controversies and that the *CBS* has been the first to report on the Abu Ghraib atrocity.

In *The Role of American Muslims*, the authors argue that throughout American history, there has always been a social group at the bottom of its society. In the past, there were the Irish, the Italians and the African Americans; today, the bottom of the social ladder appears to be occupied by Muslims. The authors say that American Muslims must learn from earlier societies on how to deal with challenges that inevitably arise out of being in such a position. They must have the courage and openness to positively and

constructively engage the majority of Americans, whom the authors characterise as decent, open-minded and tolerant. Better-educated Americans do not act emotionally towards Muslims due to greater access to more reliable information, providing them with a better view of Islam and Muslims. The same could be said with regards to better-educated Muslims.

### *Comments*

This book provides basic understanding of Islamophobia and Anti-Americanism. It provides a balanced view of both issues. Several chapters largely focus on the 'struggle' of American-Muslims to be recognised as part of America.

It may seem inconsequential as a basis of argument, but this book should nevertheless highlight the fact that only a small percentage of Muslims are involved in the commission of acts of terrorism does not mean that the whole community is made up of champions and perpetrators of terrorist acts, neither does it denote that Islam condones terrorism. The terrorist act committed by Timothy McVeigh, for instance, does not suggest that the majority of Americans share the same view as his.

Indeed it is a commendable proposition by contributors in this book that American Muslims play an important role in bridging the gap both domestically and internationally in addressing the issues of Islamophobia and Anti-Americanism. Non-American readers may feel that the contributors could have gone a step further and address the prospect of take on Muslims in the rest of the world to contribute towards improving the image of the religion and its adherents. In addition, discussions on ways of engaging Muslim leaders and scholars who hold extreme views and misguided opinions should also be incorporated in the book. Such an approach could counter the extreme views and misguided opinions reported from time to time which would in turn add to the negative views on Islam, and thus may hamper the efforts of reconciliation and building coalitions, as suggested by numerous contributors in this book.

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

**Chandra Muzaffar** is a social activist and an academic. He is President of the International Movement for a Just World (JUST), a Malaysian-based non-government organisation (NGO) which seeks to critique global injustice and develop an alternative vision of a just and compassionate civilization, guided by universal spiritual and moral values. Chandra also sits on the Noordin Sopiee Chair for Global Studies at the Science University of Malaysia (USM) in Pulau Pinang. He has published extensively on civilisational dialogue, international politics, religion, human rights and Malaysian society. He is a prolific writer, and has authored and edited more than 20 books in English and Malay, with many of his writings having been translated into other languages. Chandra's major publications include *Protector* (1979), *Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia* (1987), *Human Rights and the New World Order* (1993), *Rights, Religion and Reform* (2002), *Global Ethic or Global Hegemony?* (2005), *Hegemony: Justice; Peace* (2008) and *Religion & Governance* (2009). In 1977, he founded a multi-ethnic social reform group called Aliran Kesedaran Negara (ALIRAN) which he led for 14 years. Today, apart from his presidential role in JUST, Chandra sits on the board of several international NGOs concerned with social justice and civilisational dialogue. He is also Chairman of the Board of Trustees for the newly established Yayasan 1Malaysia. Chandra features regularly as a speaker not only in seminars and conferences in Malaysia, but also in other parts of the world.

**Abdul Rashid Moten** is Professor of Political Science at the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM). He obtained his BA (Hons) and MA from Dhaka University, Bangladesh; a second MA from Villanova University, Pennsylvania, U.S.; and a Ph.D. from the University of Alberta, Canada. He has travelled extensively and for about 40 years, has given lectures at many universities in various countries including Bangladesh, Pakistan, the U.K., the U.S., Canada, Nigeria and Malaysia. He has authored and edited numerous publications, including 25 books and monographs, and contributed over 100 articles in international refereed journals. He is now the editor of *Intellectual Discourse*, the flag-ship journal of the International Islamic University of Malaysia.

**Abdelwahab El-Affendi** is Reader in Politics at the Centre for the Study of Democracy, University of Westminster and Coordinator of the Centre's Democracy and Islam Programme. He was member of the core team of authors for the *Arab Human Development Report* (2004), and author of a number of books, including, *Turabi's Revolution: Islam and Power in Sudan* (1991), *Rethinking Islam and Modernity* (2001), *For a State of Peace: Conflict and the Future of Democracy in Sudan* (2002) and *The Conquest of Muslim Hearts and Minds: Perspectives on U.S. Reform and Public Diplomacy Strategies* (2005). Dr. El-Affendi has also contributed in several books and leading journals. He has worked as a pilot (1976-1981), a magazine editor (1982-1989), and diplomat (1990-1994). He was the 2006 recipient of the Muslim News Allama Iqbal Award for Creativity in Islamic Thought. In June 2008, he was elected Fellow, the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Science and Manufacture (RSA). In May 2009, he was awarded a fellowship by the ESRC and AHRC to conduct a study on "Narratives of Insecurity, Democratisation and the Justification of (Mass) Violence".

**Osman Bakar** is Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, Univ. of Malaya, and currently Dep. CEO & Sr. Research Fellow, International Inst. of Advanced Islamic Studies, Malaysia. His illustrious academic appointments include: U.M.'s Dep. Vice-Chancellor (Acad. & HR), 1995-2000; Malaysia Chair of Islam in S.E. Asia, Georgetown Univ., U.S. (2000-05); Professor, ISTAC, IIUM (2005-08); Sr. Fellow, Prince al-Waleed Centre for Muslim-Christian Understanding, (Georgetown); Visiting Research Fellow, Doshisha Univ., Japan; Sr. Research Fellow at U.M.'s Centre for Civilisational Dialogue; Fulbright Visiting Scholar, Harvard (1992). He has served as advisor/consultant to various international organisations, and is a member of C-100, the West-Islamic World Initiative for Dialogue. He has published 15 books (the best known being *Tawhid and Science (A History and Philosophy of Islamic Science)*, *Classification of Knowledge in Islam*, and *Islam and Civilisational Dialogue*), and over 250 articles on Islamic thought & civilisation, esp. Islamic philosophy & science, some of which have been translated into other languages, incl. Persian, Arabic, Mandarin and Spanish. Osman Bakar has a B.Sc and M.Sc in Mathematics (London), M.A. (Comparative Religion) and Ph.D. (Islamic Philosophy) (Temple Univ.).

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