

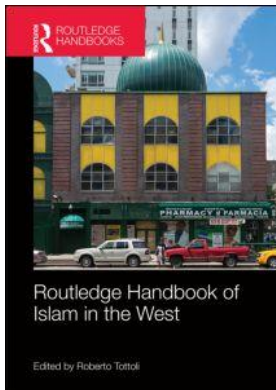
This article was downloaded by: 10.3.97.143

On: 23 Sep 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



Routledge Handbook of Islam in the West

Roberto Tottoli

Muslim political radicalization in the West

Publication details

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315794273.ch17>

Tahir Abbas

Published online on: 20 Aug 2014

How to cite :- Tahir Abbas. 20 Aug 2014, *Muslim political radicalization in the West from: Routledge Handbook of Islam in the West* Routledge

Accessed on: 23 Sep 2023

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315794273.ch17>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT

Full terms and conditions of use: <https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms>

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

Muslim political radicalization in the West

Tahir Abbas

Introduction

This chapter describes and explains the situation of radical Islam among young people in the Western European context, with a particular focus on the British case. The paper discusses aspects of migration, settlement, intergenerational disconnect, and problems of identity politics. It also explores the experience of Islamophobia, and the roles of foreign and domestic policy in exacerbating many of the problems that impact on anti-Muslimism and its manifestations; that is, the ways in which radicalization and Islamophobia have both internal and external discontents that are interrelated.

There are a number of issues to explore when considering the topic of migration in the context of the study of radicalization. In many instances, across Western Europe, what one is referring to is often postwar immigrant groups that have subsequently settled and adapted to parts of society, invariably in countries such as Germany, France, and England, those countries of “old Europe,” and who have over the generations become citizens of their new homes. Some of these groups share the cultural characteristics of majority society, while others have not been able to adapt in the same way, largely due to issues of education, employment, and forms of residual cultural relativism. The lack of integration has led to problems that are experienced within communities but also in relation to contact with majority society, which regards these groups as the alien “other,” and where such notions feed off existing racialization and exoticization as well as being a function of ongoing patterns of discrimination and prejudice. Within communities there are distinct intergenerational issues around concerns relating to identity, religion, culture, and society.

Islamophobia has many manifestations. Part of it is based on hostility to immigration. Another element is misunderstanding the idea that Muslims are monolithic, monocultural, and in many ways culturally, intellectually, and emotionally the opposite of the European self (Mavelli 2012). An association is also made with notions of terrorism and extremism, which are regarded as problems that are a function of the nature of the very religion of Islam. A great number of aspects of Islamophobia are reinforced by various media and political discourses that maintain the view that Muslims are not just a threat to forms of multiculturalism but in more recent periods a threat to the very security of the nation itself. The latter has emerged in

response to the terrorism that was carried out in the 2000s in various parts of Western Europe, namely in the Netherlands, Spain, England, and more recently in Germany in 2011. Another element of Islamophobia is that it reflects a particular situation where it is related to the politics of empire, particularly in the context of US foreign policy. Islamophobia in the USA is also becoming an increasingly recognizable phenomenon that is creating alarm within certain quarters, particularly within the academy, but also among wider society in general. In many ways Islamophobia is a function of anti-Muslim and anti-racism realized in the US social fabric, especially since the events of 9/11 (Kumar 2012).

In many ways, radicalization and Islamophobia reinforce each other. There is a symbiotic relationship between the two. They effectively feed off the motivation, drive, and expectations of the other. The framework in which Islamophobia and radicalization operate is essentially political, but has local and global effects. In order to break down the cycle one needs to get to the heart of the concerns. While there is a sense of enmity between Muslims and the other, which is based on present manifestations of politics, historically there have been many positive relations between the Muslim world, Christian world, and other civilizations. However, memories are short and emotions are easily swayed. The final aspects of this paper are concerned with ways and means to determine solutions to help scholars, policy-makers, and activists in determining specific courses of positive action and change.

Migration and settlement

It is well documented that Islam has been in Britain for over a thousand years, but the population has largely grown in the previous century (Ansari 2004), and the demographic, social, cultural, and political positions of British Muslims have developed more significantly in the postwar era (Peach 2005). In the classic Islamic period, Muslims traded with English elites and cooperated with the monarchy when expedient to all (Gilliat-Ray 2010). Queen Elizabeth I maintained positive associations with Turkish Ottomans, who played an important role in thwarting the efforts of the Spanish Armada, which came in vain to the shores of England to restore direct loyalty to the papacy (Matar 1998). The most immediately recognizable episode can be characterized as one relating to the time of the Raj. Muslims came to Britain as elites embarking on training as medics or to read law in the established higher educational institutions of the country. The experience largely catered for the needs of the privileged few, while the less fortunate could only hope for a meager income fueling the furnaces of coal-fired steamships that supported the needs of empire and war (Visram 1986).

In the postwar period, the most rapid increase in the population of British Muslims has been found, from which the subsequent generations comprise the majority of British Muslims today. Britain, short of domestic labor, was forced to encourage once-colonized citizens of the “Commonwealth” to come to the “mother country” to carry out work that few else wished for or aspired to (Institute of Race Relations 1985). Trapped in cycles of underemployment, unemployment, and low pay in general, many South Asian Muslims who came to various parts of the country during this period found themselves unable to escape from those very same locations over the generations (Simpson et al. 2009). This phenomenon remains today, over sixty years after these initial postwar booms in immigration (Phillips 2006). As a consequence of these early years of arrival and settlement, and as a result of various (limited external and internal) approaches to integration into majority society, including the important and often overlooked factor of cultural maintenance and patriarchal norms and values, it has taken many decades for Muslims to begin to act as a meaningful political and cultural voice, but one that remains far from fully formed (Anwar 2001).

The current period is one in which primary immigration from Muslim lands has all but ended. But family reunification and marriage migration from parts of South Asia adds to the growing population. In 2010, among UK–Pakistan transnational communities, there were 1.5 million journeys a year between these two countries alone, with 10,000–15,000 Pakistani wives and husbands joining their spouses in the UK every year (UK government source, personal communication, March 25, 2010). This recent period also includes those who have come to the country as “refugees and asylum seekers,” and whose positions in society have been marked by various forms of state-institutionalized practices that often reduce the needy immigrant to second-class citizen in all but name.

Exogenous and endogenous factors

In trying to understand the range of endogenous and exogenous factors that lead to the radicalization of Muslims in the West there are a number of issues to take into account. It is important to elaborate upon internal issues that affect the communities from within and then how they are affected by their positions in wider society and the role of wider society in reinforcing those concerns. These wider societal factors have national and international layers of influence. It is as if they are layers of an onion that encapsulate the individual, who rests at the center, surrounded by innumerable ongoing challenges that become deeply embedded as the status quo remains. Each of these will now be discussed in turn, with a focus on the individual, before elaborating on the different layers of the societal context. In many ways, the forces that impact on Muslims in relation to radicalization are similar to those that affect far-right groups, diverging, however, in relation to differences in religio-cultural identity politics. Therefore, many of the causes of radicalization among far-right groups have similar characteristics to those which affect Muslim groups; however, what is different is the historical migration context and the external dynamics of a global Muslim identity framework, which is sometimes negatively realized by both Muslims and non-Muslims.

The role of external racism

Without doubt it is important to elaborate upon the context of racism in British society. In the postwar period there remains a pernicious embedded experience of racism that affects people of color in significant ways in spite of the many pieces of legislation that have been enacted, particularly since the late 1960s. This form of racism is inherited from a colonial experience, for example in relation to England in the Caribbean islands and South Asia, France in relation to the Maghreb in parts of the Middle East, Italy in relation to Libya, and a somewhat less defined relationship between Germany and Turkey (Yükleyen 2011). All of these European encounters led to the exoticization of various ethnic and religious groups, coupled with an ideological framework that led to the exploitation and the disempowerment of various groups (Back and Solomos 2000). This systematic “othering” of various groups in a historical context has found itself revealed in the contemporary period, especially in the postwar immigration phases that have characterized the movements of various ethnic groups to Western Europe. Such were the ongoing prejudices in relation to minorities, it was always felt that they would leave after the periods of employment they were engaged in terminated. This affected the ways in which they are regarded as part of society, whether as citizens of the state or more generally at the everyday level of encounter and engagement. These minorities were given the worst jobs, had limited opportunities for social mobility because of the places in which they lived and the type of employment they had, which had implications for the ways in which their children would

experience their own localized forms of racialized education (Tomlinson 1980). Attending poorer schools with limited resources often stifled their ambitions as well as deliberately limiting the opportunities that they could experience, therefore reifying the notion that minorities are less ambitious or even in certain cases less intelligent (Miles and Phizacklea 1979).

What lay beneath this encounter was a deep sense of discrimination on the basis of color. This is what was characterized when minorities first came to various parts of Western Europe in the 1960s and 1970s. During the 1980s and 1990s attention shifted away from “race” towards ethnicity. It was how minorities were recognized for various cultural and religious attributes as well as their visibility in the social context. Attempts were made by various minority groups to try and bring about measures that would accept their differences in society. For example, in relation to Muslims the question of *halal* foods and Islamic places of worship were of primary concern. Since the hiking of oil prices in the mid-1970s various Western European economies had been struggling to compete. This led to deindustrialization and unemployment, which affected many young men across the Western world, in particular in relation to immigrant and minority groups, who are most susceptible to economic downturns. Given the existing patterns of unemployment and underemployment, as well as limited education and training opportunities, many minorities were simply locked out of the job market. For many it encouraged a turn to self-employment as a way in which to develop their fortunes. This occurred in parts of Western Europe, including England, Germany, and Denmark. In England the establishment of the South Asian restaurant sector led to a cultural awareness of a Muslim multicultural presence which was regarded in positive terms. Just as in the current period, when aspects of multiculturalism and its more positive dynamics are elaborated upon, there is a focus on sporting heroes from minority backgrounds, in the 1980s there was a focus on ethnic businesses, largely because of ongoing problems of deindustrialization but also because of the idea that small businesses were able to generate economic activity which would improve opportunities for all of the society (Ram et al. 2001). Part of the ethnic multicultural celebration model during this time was a function of these wider changing economic fortunes.

Therefore, it is without doubt that much of a sense of inferiority projected onto the ethnic minority other is related to a wider problem of economic downturn. The opposite is found when there are periods of economic boom. Minorities are celebrated for their differences and multiculturalism is talked about in exceedingly positive terms. Nevertheless, as a result of these economic changes, aspects of the far right in societies began to emerge as more influential figures in the political context. In Britain in the late 1970s the National Front and the Anti-Paki League were able to capture the imaginations of disaffected white working-class young men. At the same time second-generation Caribbean young men who were experiencing significant problems of over-policing, racialization, criminalization, and inner-city segregation were turning to popular music as a way to express their frustrations as well as develop a cultural form of representation (Gilroy 1991). While the Muslims in Western Europe were still visible under the banner of Asian immigrant communities, their time would come two decades later after the collapse of the Soviet Empire and the development of the clash of civilizations thesis that characterized US foreign policy, leading up to the events of 9/11 and since.

The decline of masculinity

As a result of the changing economic fortunes of Western European economies during the 1970s and 1980s, a phenomenon known as the crisis of masculinity began to emerge. Due to these patterns of deindustrialization and the role of technology in the production process, jobs that had been guaranteed for life were no longer the norm. Moreover, men were also

competing for jobs with women, particularly in the service sector economy. As the manufacture of motor vehicles and heavy engineering products shifted to Eastern Europe and the Far East, it meant that these men were no longer in a position to claim their apparent rightful ownership of a job for life. This therefore is an essential element of the problem of an attack on masculinity from without. As a result, it led to retraining and reskilling in order to find employment, and even then this employment was not guaranteed in the way it might have been in the past (Massey and Meegan 1982). This crisis of masculinity led to all sorts of inner-city conflict between various groups of differing backgrounds, Asians versus Caribbeans, Irish youth versus white fascist youth, or all youth versus the police. Many towns and cities across parts of Western Europe that were once thriving industrial zones of economic and cultural activity were suddenly reduced to ghost towns. Combined with a lack of inward investment on the part of central governments to rebuild these declining regions, this led to the ongoing exclusion, disfranchisement, and, in the case of minority groups, a systematic racialization of young men. All young men experienced problems but ethnic minority men experienced them in greater degrees (Whitehead and Barrett 2001).

Conflict between those who hold power and those who are subservient to it is a function of modern societies. This is a classic relationship between workers and bosses, proletariat and the bourgeoisie, in a system of capitalism. Various welfare state models which would attempt to provide some kind of balance in societies in order to absorb the shocks of economic decline were susceptible to moderation by various governments across Western Europe moving to the right. They began to place emphasis upon competition, individuality, and, importantly, enterprise as a way in which to generate economic success and therefore to provide the necessary contributions to the welfare tax burden. Local communities and local areas characterized by local industries were incredibly neglected by this process. The experience of minorities was even more profound given their existing experience of exclusion from society and the ways in which ongoing patterns of racism had locked these communities in the poorer parts of towns and cities across Western Europe. As a result of these shifting contours, conflict began to emerge within these inner-city groups at a far more explicit level, such that poor groups in inner-city areas were competing with each other in the most violent of ways, and yet for the crumbs of society. At the same time the discourse in relation to conflict in society focused on minorities, presented out of the center and by elite groups, placing all the attention on minorities and inner-city youth as the problems rather than the workings of society. Conservatism was rampant throughout Western European experience during the 1990s. It led to the seeds of internal conflict between poorer groups in inner-city areas that has yet to be resolved in the current period.

As Caribbean men were turning to music as a way of expressing their identity politics, Irish young men were facing the full brunt of a focus on terrorism in society that regarded the issue as one of religion and not politics. Muslim groups were largely invisible during this process. They were not regarded in any way differently to other minority groups who were also found concentrated in the inner-city areas. In the case of South Asians, they were regarded as a monolithic block in the form of Asians, and two decades previously they had all been grouped together as “colored.” But by the end of the 1980s, as a result of conflicts in other parts of the world in relation to Muslim lands, namely the Iranian Revolution and its impact across the region, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the Iran–Iraq War, a form of transnational Muslim solidarity was created which defied existing notions of the decline of the nation-state. In the UK in particular, the Salman Rushdie affair captured the mood of the time. In 1989 the Berlin Wall fell. It was also the same year that the Ayatollah Khomeini died. But this was also the year in which *The Satanic Verses* was published. The emergence of the book came at a time

when young men of Muslim origin were now well into the second generation and had already begun to define themselves along a spectrum of Muslim identities rather than Asian identities. This emergence of religious identity politics led to the establishment of a form of Salafism in relation to young Muslim men in the Western European context (Abbas 2011).

The emergence of Salafi Islam

A particular issue facing British Muslims has been that of the rise and impact of a literal interpretation of Islam, which has emerged to create significant problems for the community from within. During the 1980s British Muslims were investing in after-school Islamic training for the second and third generation. However, many of these *madrasas* were developed alongside certain sectarian lines, which accommodated certain groups but excluded others. The Deobandi, Jama'at-i Islami, and Tablighi groups were able to develop their Islamic educational institutions with relative ease, emerging from the mosques that local worshippers often attended, and funded through donations made by the local community. While aspirations in relation to the development of an Islamic awareness among second-generation parents were amenable, they often lacked the resources, direction, leadership, or ideological focus that would invariably be required in relation to meeting the needs, demands, and hopes of British-born Muslims. During this period, various elements from across the world, including Saudi Arabia, were using these after-school *madrasas* as an opportunity to promulgate their particular ideological and sectarian focus, especially among institutions that were poorly resourced. Thus, a form of Salafism emerged from within the communities who were seeking to develop the Islamic awareness of the younger generations, not as a specific goal on the part of local communities but rather through the gaps that emerged in relation to resources (Jacobson 1998).

During the 1990s, because of various problems across the Muslim world and the position of the USA in relation to its foreign policy interests in the regions associated with it, namely the first Gulf War, younger Muslims, who had access to information about the events going on in these parts of the world through various developments in the media, were beginning to feel a sense that perhaps Islam was and is now again the target. The events of Bosnia-Herzegovina during the mid-1990s caused further angst among European Muslims, who found refugees from those parts of the world coming to local the mosques in Western Europe and telling their harrowing stories. In effect, the first generation of present-day Western European-born Jihadis was in fact radicalized during this period (Abbas 2007a). The second generation was radicalized by the events of 9/11 and the "War on Terror" that ensued. Until the events of 9/11 and the subsequent changes to security policy, much of the literature found in local community Islamic centers or the activities of young people as they traveled abroad were not monitored by the intelligence services or the police. This changed in the light of legislation that was quickly enacted as a response to the security threat, namely the events of 9/11 in the USA and the events of 7/7 in Britain. While attempts were made to de-radicalize young Muslims through various measures to try and empower the community, the increase in the powers of various behind-the-scenes services and the ongoing problems of foreign policy, particularly in Iraq, caused further alarm among disaffected young European-born Muslims, who were still locked in the same inner-city areas as their parents and who continued to suffer as a result of low education and limited employment opportunities (Haddad 2002).

What these events across the world did to the perceptions of young Muslims was to also create a sense of the division between themselves and the generations before them (Anwar 1998). This would lead to various forms of conflict of identity, political engagement, questions on the role of women, and questions relating to integration into society which have yet to be

fully resolved in the current period. These global events, as well as the responses to them by the state in the guise of various policy measures, had the deleterious effect of deepening existing fissures between the generations. Concurrently, as media and political discourses placed all the attention on Muslims as being the problem, this generated further disquiet and angst within and without. Limited opportunities to develop Islamic knowledge within the European context further led to divisions between the communities facing various forms of social isolation as well as the particular gap in relation to an Islamic awareness through the *ulama*. Susceptible to the whims of charismatic preachers, young Muslim men were easily misdirected. Limited opportunities existed for those who were serious about their Islamic education and transmission of Islamic knowledge. Classic forms of knowledge continue to be disseminated through the existing structures, but various other developments to this experience are also being found among Muslims in Europe, who are utilizing the internet, for example, and in the role of globally recognized Islamic scholars, some of whom have gained iconic status, such as Tariq Ramadan and Sheikh Hamza Yusuf. A whole host of independent Muslim satellite television channels have also had a considerable role in broadening the Islamic awareness of European Muslims. This can only be seen as a positive development in the light of ongoing persistent internal and external challenges (van Bruinessen and Allievi 2011).

The roles of intergenerational disconnect and radical identity politics

Much before the events of 9/11, British Muslim “loyalty” to a cultural national identity was in question. The Rushdie Affair of 1989 placed the concerns of British South Asian Muslims firmly on the political and sociological map, with issues of civic engagement, multicultural philosophy, the nature and orientation of certain religio-cultural norms and values, and socio-economic exclusion and marginalization dominating rhetoric, policy, and practice throughout the 1990s (Weller 2009).

Based on a recent study carried out by the author, the aims of which were to explore and analyze the impact of the events of 7/7 from the perspectives of South Asian Muslims in a city in the West Midlands, UK, matters relating to radicalization and de-radicalization were explored (Abbas and Siddique 2012). Utilizing interview data from young men and women (aged 18–25), including university students, together with spiritual leaders, community activists, youth workers, and prominent political leaders, it was found that there were obvious differences in attitude, opinion, and perception based on differences in social class, ethnicity, and gender, but many responses in relation to the experiences of Muslims in the post-7/7 climate were universal in nature and orientation. One of the interesting findings in this study was that some young Muslims were using physical appearance as a resistance strategy against anti-Muslim rhetoric, usually expressed by young Muslim women wearing the *hijab* and men growing beards and wearing caps. Rather than heading towards a more violent ideology, these young Muslims were apparently experiencing a cultural identity shift that was more esoteric, conceivably reflecting a “softer” versus a “harder” form of radicalization. Both genders saw themselves as British, but specifically as “British Muslims.” However, some expressed that they were not always made to feel British.

Questions relating to integration and their relationship with wider non-Muslim communities suggested that this was a function of local area social and economic opportunities in general. This finding, however, does not cohere with existing dominant government thinking or the persuasions of center-right think tanks, commentators, and political leaders in general (Kundnani 2008). That is, official reports have tended to suggest that there has been a problem with the Muslim integration process due to cultural divisions. Or, it is reflected in the ways in which the

idea of multiculturalism, “a philosopher’s tool” in relation to imagining the “good society,” has received extensive criticism, for the left and the right (Kepel 2008). In reality, a lack of integration is more a function of economics and questions of social and political empowerment rather than identity, culture, or religion alone (Bhavani et al. 2005).

The negative effects of local and global events have the potential to attract young people to extremist organizations that provide succor in the face of a range of internal and external pressures. This is reasonably well documented in current commentary. However, none of the young South Asian Muslim respondents felt that organizations such as Hizb ut-Tahrir directly represent them or their views, but there was an understanding of why young people may be drawn to their messages. Some of the young Muslims argued that this was largely because they are able to provide unity in the face of racism and exclusion, together with an alternative to the traditional Muslim leadership, which is thought to be inflexible and stagnated. Aspects of the spiritual leadership within the Muslim community are said to be unyielding, unable to respond to the demands of the youth. A language and cultural barrier exists, as most imams, who often do not speak English, are unable to address how British Muslims should meet the challenges currently facing them. This, unfortunately, leads to some young people being drawn towards extremist bodies that can easily provide this support. These are just some of the many intergenerational challenges facing British Muslims in the current period. While considerable attention has been paid to questions of race, ethnicity, loyalty, belonging, and local and global identities, there remains a lack of appreciation of the nuances of the experience and the contextualization of physical space, region, and, more importantly, the impact of policy and practice which is local, national, and international, on questions of Islamophobia and radicalization.

The limitations of domestic and foreign policy

There is no doubt whatsoever that social exclusion features prominently in the study of Muslims. Many young Muslims live in poverty, in overcrowded homes, segregated areas, declining inner-city zones, face educational underachievement, high unemployment, low graduate employment, and experience poor health (Abbas 2005). These disadvantages have significant implications for young people growing up in society as they experience limiting horizons fueling distrust, generating antagonism towards the state, and creating an acute sense of isolation. Such structural factors are endemic in any sense of alienation that young people experience. Alongside issues of economic marginalization, young Muslim men have to operate in an ever more competitive and globalized world. Essentially, they face problems of racism, discrimination, and anti-Islamic prejudice that affect a particular section of the British Muslim community. It is easy to lose sight of Muslims in parts of the Midlands and the North while focusing on urban elites and a significant politico-media class of individuals in the South of England. A cultural, intellectual, and political North–South divide adds to many of the structural problems affecting Muslim minorities.

The 9/11 attacks and the subsequent policy reactions have permeated many areas of everyday life for Muslims everywhere, and no less so in Britain. As an event, it has implications that go far beyond merely “international terrorism.” In fact, these implications are linked to politics, religion, and issues of cultural differences in an effort to maintain harmonious societies and democracies in the West, which contain a significant number of Muslims (approximately 25 million in Western Europe). In the Middle East, as revealed in the aftermath of the war in Iraq, further unrest, political turmoil, and violent action and reaction are the main features of the current climate. In the near future, relations between Muslims and their Western hosts will continue to remain problematical, with discussions focusing on citizenship, civil society, multiculturalism,

political representation and participation (as components of democracy), and identity, gender, intergenerational development, radicalism versus liberalism (as components of the individual).

Given that British South Asian Muslims have reached the third generation, issues of concern have shifted from cultural assimilation and social integration to religious identity and discrimination. The study of Islam and Muslims has become more vigorous, and greater emphasis is being placed on understanding the nature and orientation of British Muslims in more anthropological, sociological, theological, and political science perspectives. The first generation of South Asian Muslims kept their religious practices and expressions well within private or community spheres, but subsequent generations struggled with issues of integration and racism in the climate of the early 1960s, cultural pluralism in the 1970s, free-market economic determinism and the rolling back of the frontiers of the state in Thatcher's and Major's Britain from the early 1980s to the mid-1990s, through to the "third way" center-left politics of assimilationist New Labour. At the same time, identification with Islam is gaining strength among some members of this latest generation, both as a reaction to racist hostility as well as due to a desire to understand Islam in more precise detail.

Intersecting Islamophobia and radicalization

Muslims experience a particularly problematic scenario in relation to how the religion of Islam and its people are depicted in various media scenarios. This is often described as a form of Islamophobia, or more simply as anti-Muslim racism. Since 9/11 these representations have become even more pernicious, as the representation of the other is routinely presented in more violent and conflictual terms. It was Edward Said's classic work *Orientalism* which first helped an understanding of how Islam and Muslims are represented. There are problems not only in relation to popular culture but also in various institutions and practices, such as the academy itself and the way in which it reproduces knowledge. It is also found among poets, journalists, novelists, and of course among politicians. There is a sharp "us" and "them" divide where a moderate Muslim is seen as a Muslim who is more acceptable in the eyes of the West. "Good Muslims are with 'us,' bad Muslims are against 'us,'" which is a paraphrase of a concept first characterized by Tony Blair in the immediate aftermath of the 7/7 crisis. Power remains in the hands of the West due to the institutions that have been built over the centuries creating an inequality of wealth embedded in societies, which are demarcated as wholly separate. There is an element of chauvinism and bigotry that strikes at the heart of society. The hubris and sheer arrogance of Western powers and their approaches to the Muslim world are starkly evident. The negative representation of Islam is further enhanced by various organizations who work through clandestine measures in order to obscure an already disfigured image. While there may be a physical "war on terror" there is a war in cyberspace put forward by well-organized groups to further demonize the religion for various political and ideological ends (Ismael and Rippon 2010).

This Islamophobia has the consequence of radicalizing young Muslims, who respond to it through violent means. There is a symbiotic relationship between Islamophobia and radicalization (Abbas 2012). The cycle reproduces itself without any real attempt being made to break it by dominant hegemonic interests. Within communities the lack of representation, self-belief, and the means to generate alternative responses leads to a process without end. In Western Europe, where there are currently over 25 million settled minority Muslims, younger generations are often feeling the brunt of ongoing patterns of exclusion and marginalization. But it is crucial to understand here that another factor in the realization of the circle that is maintained around Islamophobia and radicalization is the actual multicultural contexts in which these

realities are realized. A number of Western European governments have focused on the idea of providing recognition for groups in an attempt to mollify differences without necessarily working towards positive integration models. That is, ironically, though they have provided the resources to celebrate differences as a way in which to develop minority community self-confidence and belief in their roles as immigrants, minorities, and citizens, aspects of white society have regarded these actions as tokenistic or merely there to provide some kind of temporary acceptance. A sense that celebrating differences is the way in which to reassure majority society that difference is not necessarily a threat is in no way a genuine signal based on real economic and social development. A poor substitute for tackling what really has been lacking in terms of direct investment in these communities, this has created a sense of ethnicity as a vehicle for mobilizing difference when in fact it ought to be ironed out as part of appreciating minorities as equal citizens. Therefore, in many ways it is the multicultural context which in fact has fueled the cyclical process of Islamophobia stimulating radicalization, with radicalization feeding Islamophobia.

There are of course many facets of radicalization, but what is of particular interest is the nature of the relationship between it and the forces of Islamophobia. Much of the nature of the interaction process is played out within a particular function of multiculturalism itself, such that in benign forms of multiculturalism there is a sense of specific forms of identity politics emerging within the political and cultural sphere, whereas in more authoritarian forms of multiculturalism there is a greater sense of specific forms of representation, which are both political and religious. There is also the concept of integration, which suggests that there is a two-way street in relation to minorities in which minorities give a certain loyalty to the workings of the institutions of society while at the same time the state provides protections and freedoms, certainly in relation to forms of racism and discrimination. What this fails to appreciate is that France has an assimilationist notion of integration and the Netherlands works towards a culturally pluralist framework, but both countries have suffered attacks by “home-grown” radical Islamists. The problem has more to do with the intersection of the local and global in how disaffected Muslims determine their relations with others. It is also related to the perception of alienation among local and global Muslims, as much as its actual physical experience (Gest 2010). These processes have been accelerated by advances to communication technologies (Bunt 2003). The belief that the problem is Muslims is to exaggerate the debate and often return to a socio-culturalist socio-pathological argument.

As part of the migration process, Muslim minorities have brought with them various forms of Islamism, especially those from South Asia (Robinson 1988). This very same Islamism is inherited from reaction to the colonial experience, when critical Muslim thinking and progressive development were replaced with regressive and reactionary tendencies in the face of hostility from and subjugation by the “oppressor.” This became a cyclical process as the British Raj attempted to moderate and mollify such tendencies, which led to further resistance among the Muslims of South Asia, some of whom felt acutely marginalized as part of the “divide and rule” policy of their English overlords. In coming to Britain in the postwar period, much of this antipathy has remained intact and even solidified in the context of disempowered experiences of life in the inner cities. Assimilation, integration, and multiculturalism in their present forms in Western Europe evolved as part of various postwar dynamics of settlement and incorporation of various ethnic minority groups. During the course of its development, it sought to provide recognition of differences, and the means through which these differences could be expressed in public and private spheres, from accommodation of religious rights of worship in the public space to acceptance of such needs as *halal* food and Islamic marriage contracts. In some senses, the development of certain forms of benign multiculturalism has given various forms of Islamist

expression opportunities to remain hidden until various crises emerged, particularly from the Rushdie Affair onwards. Ineffective integration policies and aggressive foreign policies of the West have led certain Muslim groups to believe there is a “war on Islam,” which is not helped by a range of ongoing negative media and political discourses. To understand the nature of extremism among various Muslim groups it is important to understand the historical and contemporary dynamics, compounded by simultaneous lack of confidence and self-esteem among Muslims, who are also then further disempowered due to the dominant corporate, military-industrial, ideological, and political concerns that enfold various groups across society (Abbas 2007b).

It is in the inner cities that most European-born Muslims remain physically concentrated (cf. Rex 1988). Invariably, neglect will remain on the part of the nation-state and the political establishment until something dramatic happens again. It is precisely where the multiculturalism model in Britain works least well. In celebrating differences and being culturally sensitive to minority interests, the notion of a universal national identity has not been sufficiently determined to permit the different ethno-cultural characteristics of ethno-religious minorities and majorities to coalesce around it. At a policy level, notions of cultural identity politics supersede those relating to the need to eliminate deep-seated socio-economic inequalities.

As a final note it is important to contrast the experience of European-born Muslims with those of their North American-born counterparts. Much of the growth of the Muslim population in the USA came about after the opening up of the immigration system in 1965. Various highly qualified immigrant Muslim groups from various parts of the Muslim world came to America to seek higher returns on their human capital. As such, the immigration of Muslims into North America is hugely different from that of Muslims in Western Europe in the current period. American Muslims, particularly those that came after 1965, are highly qualified, highly integrated, and at the same time loyal to a state that has built its identity on the idea that hard work leads to prosperity. Therefore, the immigrant adaptation model in the USA has been hugely different from that of Muslims who came to Western Europe as part of the labor migration process at the bottom society. In relation to questions around radicalization, while Islamophobia is a growing phenomenon in the USA and various examples of it can be acutely observed in relation to all sorts of current dynamics, the question of home-grown Muslim extremism is still an untested notion, in spite of the various attempts by the US government to effectively intern Muslims of various backgrounds immediately after the events of 9/11 because of a view that many were engaged in radicalization. The latter claim is unfounded even though the draconian legislation still remains in place. Conceptually, there is a suggestion that increasing Islamophobia within the USA might encourage various forms of radicalization in the same way that it operates within the Western European context; however, the nature of North American society is quite different from that of Europe. For example, there is no colonial history in relation to its post-1965 Muslim groups, and class structure is less embedded in the workings of society.

Conclusion

The announcement of the June 2012 University of Essex study on Britishness made headlines in practically all of the daily nationals in England (Institute for Social and Economic Research 2012). The essence of the national survey’s analysis suggests that Muslims in Britain regard themselves as feeling far more British than popular sentiment would suggest. This particular finding, however, is hardly new. It is something that has been confirmed by surveys running back to the early 1990s, chiefly the Fourth Policy Studies Institute Survey. Experiencing a sense

of Britishness is not the issue, nor are ideas associated with “loyalty” or national identity in general. Muslims are consumers in society, from visiting supermarkets, high street stores and fast food chains, to buying German and Japanese cars, or Tweeting, blogging, or even eBay trading. They are producers in society, from manufactures, to industrialists, to designers and innovators. British Muslims, who are variously differentiated along ethnic, class, and sectarian lines (as are other faith communities), are as integrated, certainly the younger British-born generations, as they could hope to be.

Integration is a complex topic. In brief, it is the notion that minorities accept the law of the land and contribute to and engage in the national social model as best they can. In return, the state affords protection in relation to discrimination and human rights, recognizing and respecting differences in the process. Sometimes this lack of effective integration, a focus on differences, combined with economic, social, political, and cultural pressures, creates the ingredients for radicalization. This is not just regrettable, but also deeply painful for those who regard themselves as wholly British and wholly Muslim.

Although national surveys, in this case of 40,000 people, are useful in providing an understanding of overarching patterns, there is a tendency to confirm what one knows from extensive qualitative and ethnographic research, which is being carried out in abundance in relation to Western Muslims in recent years, some of which is exceptional (Roose 2012). The other main problem is the inability to ask seriously detailed questions on all aspects of life concerning various groups of interest. This is generally due to resource constraints, and hence smaller-scale qualitative research is often able to bridge that gap. The most glaring issue remains that, while Muslims themselves feel Western and want to be Western as much as they can, Muslims do not actually feel accepted as Western. The chances are that this question is likely to reveal that minorities may aspire to all the desires of wanting to fit into society, and they almost always do, but they are not always accepted. Further details about how this integration–acceptance dichotomy is actually being played out in reality would be of real importance to our understanding of all the issues. Without it, studies such as the one produced by the University of Essex only provide at most half of the picture, if that.

The task of de-radicalization has not been easy, given the local, national, and international focus of attention since 9/11. In reality, it has been necessary to reconcile religion-based identity and citizenship, as well as individual rights and community rights, in a setting where the beliefs of others have dominated, without retreating into isolationism. In addition, European Muslims have inherited the colonial history of past relations with Europe. Combined with racism, which is endemic, this creates an atmosphere of mistrust. Moreover, the recent “war on terror,” however, will wither away because it is a war that has no singular defined enemy; only a set of ideologies, falsely appropriated and actualized by the “clash of civilization” thesis. But this global picture is only part of the experience of Islam and Muslims in Western Europe. More immediate are the everyday realities (i.e. poor housing, jobs, health, and education). Once many more European Muslims have a more determined economic and social presence in society, only then will their demands, needs, and requests be met. But to be in a viable position to reach this objective, the elimination of pernicious structural and cultural racism is crucial. The nature and orientation of various forms of Western European multiculturalism are undergoing severe tests, and it will be important to observe closely how Muslims experience it over the next few years. What is apparent, however, is that 9/11 has not changed the world, but how Muslims will be regarded, considered, and treated for the foreseeable future – possibly for the remainder of the twenty-first century.

Muslims are at a crossroads in their history of immigration to and settlement in Western Europe. At the same time, one striking feature of their structural experiences is their socio-economic

position. This group constitutes one of the most marginalized, alienated, isolated, discriminated against, and misunderstood groups in society (although there is a small burgeoning Muslim elite). They are negotiating a set of identities and realities that are constantly changing, and it will be important to see how they develop in the near future. As research questions continue in the areas of race, ethnicity, religion, and culture, as well as public policy concerns at the local, national, and international levels, the ongoing study of Western European Muslims and issues of radicalization and Islamophobia remain important within this contextual and analytical framework.

Bibliography

- Abbas, T. (ed.) (2005) *Muslim Britain: Communities under Pressure*, London and New York: Zed.
- (2007a) “Ethno-Religious Identities and Islamic Political Radicalism in the UK: A Case Study,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 27(3): 356–68.
- (ed.) (2007b) *Islamic Political Radicalism: A European Perspective*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- (2011) *Islamic Radicalism and Multicultural Politics: The British Experience*, London and New York: Routledge.
- (2012) “The Symbiotic Relationship between Islamophobia and Radicalisation,” *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 5(3): 345–58.
- Abbas, T. and Siddique, A. (2012) “Perceptions of the Processes of Radicalisation and De-radicalisation among British South Asian Muslims in a Post-industrial City,” *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* 18(1): 119–34.
- Ansari, H. (2004) *The Infidel Within: The History of Muslims in Britain, 1800 to the Present*, London and New York: Hurst.
- Anwar, M. (1998) *Between Cultures: Continuity and Change in the Lives of Young Asians*, London: Routledge.
- (2001) “The Participation of Ethnic Minorities in British Politics,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 27(3): 533–49.
- Back, L. and Solomos, J. (eds.) (2000) *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Bhavani, R., Mirza, H.S. and Meeto, V. (2005) *Tackling the Roots of Racism: Lessons for Success*, Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Bunt, G.R. (2003) *Islam in the Digital Age: e-Jihad, Online Fatwas and Cyber Islamic Environments*, London: Pluto.
- Gest, J. (2010) *Apart: Alienated and Engaged Muslims in the West*, London: Hurst.
- Gilliat-Ray, S. (2010) *Muslims in Britain: An Introduction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gilroy, P. (1991) “There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack”: *The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Haddad, Y.Y. (ed.) (2002) *Muslims in the West, from Sojourners to Citizens*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Institute of Race Relations (1985) *How Racism Came to Britain*, London: IRR.
- Institute for Social and Economic Research (2012) *Understanding Society: Findings 2012*, Colchester: University of Essex Institute for Social and Economic Research.
- Ismael, T.Y. and Rippon, A. (eds.) (2010) *Islam in the Eyes of the West: Images and Realities in an Age of Terror*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Jacobson, J. (1998) *Islam in Transition, Religion and Identity among British Pakistani Youth*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Kepel, G. (2008) *Beyond Terror and Martyrdom: The Future of the Middle East*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kumar, D. (2012) *Islamophobia and Politics of Empire*, Chicago: Haymarket Books.
- Kundnani, A. (2008) “Integrationism: The Politics of Anti-Muslim Racism,” *Race and Class* 48(4): 24–44.
- Massey, D.B. and Meegan, R.A. (1982) *The Anatomy of Job Loss: The How, Why, and Where of Employment Decline*, London and New York: Methuen.
- Matar, N. (1998) *Islam in Britain, 1558–1685*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mavelli, L. (2012) *Europe’s Encounter with Islam: The Secular and the Postsecular*, London and New York: Routledge.

- Miles, R. and Phizacklea, A. (1979) *Racism and Political Action in Britain*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Peach, C. (2005) "Britain's Muslim Population: An Overview," in Abbas, T. (ed.) *Muslim Britain: Communities under Pressure*, London and New York: Zed.
- Phillips, D. (2006) "Parallel Lives? Challenging Discourses of British Muslim Self-Segregation," *Environment and Planning D* 24(1): 25–40.
- Ram, R., Abbas, T., Sanghera, B., Barlow, G., and Jones, T. (2001) "Making the Link: Households and Small Business Activity in a Multi-ethnic Context," *Community, Work & Family* 4(3): 327–48.
- Rex, J. (1988) *The Ghetto and the Underclass: Essays on Race and Social Policy*, Avebury: Ashgate.
- Robinson, F. (1988) *Varieties of South Asian Islam*, Research Paper No. 8, Warwick: Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations, University of Warwick.
- Roose, J.M. (2012) "Contesting the Future: Muslim Men as Political Actors in the Context of Australian Multiculturalism," unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Asia Institute, University of Melbourne.
- Simpson, L., Purdam, K., Tajar, A., Pritchard, J., and Dorling, D. (2009) "Jobs Deficits, Neighbourhood Effects, and Ethnic Penalties: The Geography of Ethnic-Labour-Market Inequality," *Environment and Planning A* 41(4): 946–63.
- Tomlinson, S. (1980) "The Educational Performance of Ethnic Minority Children," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 8(3): 213–34.
- van Bruinessen, M. and Allievi, S. (eds.) (2011) *Producing Islamic Knowledge: Transmission and Dissemination in Western Europe*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Visram, R. (1986) *Ayahs, Lascars and Princes: Indians in Britain, 1700–1947*, London and New York: Pluto.
- Weller, P. (2009) *A Mirror for Our Times: The Rushdie Affair and the Future of Multiculturalism*, London: Continuum.
- Whitehead, S. and Barrett, F. (eds.) (2001) *The Masculinities Reader*, Cambridge: Polity.
- Yükleyen, A. (2011) *Localizing Islam in Europe Turkish Islamic Communities in Germany and the Netherlands*, New York: Syracuse University Press.

This page intentionally left blank