The Fear of Islam: French Context and Reaction

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Introduction

The terrorism of 11 September 2001 may have been aimed at the United States, thereby demonstrating the symbolic role that country plays in its imaginary representation of the world; but the profile of the perpetrators of these dramatic attacks had connections to Europe, including Germany especially. In this respect, the terrorist attacks on American soil profoundly affected the way European societies relate to Islam, which now constitutes the religion of a substantial minority of the Western

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European population.[1] The events of 2001 reinforced the fear of Islam first triggered by the Iranian Revolution of 1979, and this fear has become a major obstacle to the acceptance of the fact that Muslim minorities are now a permanent feature of the social landscape. Since the terrorist attacks on Madrid and London of 2004 and 2005, a number of issues have been hotly debated that seem to have crystallised around the question of female clothing; the relationship between Islam and the secular state; the question of the status of Muslim women; and the way in which European Muslims are responding to the radicalisation of their faith in other parts of the world. Specifically, the question of the Islamic female headscarf has become a common 'mirror of identity' for European societies across their different models of secularity (Joppke 2009).

France, with its past colonial links to North Africa, now has proportionally the largest Muslim minority in Europe (6–8.5 % of the population as opposed to 3–3.5 % in Germany and approx. 2.7 % in Britain)(Euro-Islam.info. 2010) and was the first to experience the kind of difficulties other European societies are now encountering in their attempts to integrate Islam into their national cultures. All these cultures have their own social models, including models of secularity. France's conception of secularity, or *laïcité*, stands out because of its intolerance towards public expressions of religious faith and identity. It first came to the world's attention with the 2004 law on 'conspicuous signs of religious identity' forbidding girls from wearing the Islamic headscarf in public educational institutions. More recently, France has again singled itself out through the introduction of a ban on the wearing of the burqa (and niqab) in public spaces.

These legislative efforts have reinforced the view amongst external observers that there exists a fundamental divide between the French understanding of modern democracy and that of other European (and more broadly Western nations) as evident in its particular constitutional model of state–church relations and militant view of state neutrality. The French political model is often thought to be fundamentally illiberal, in religious matters especially. However, as Joppke (2009) convincingly argues, French republicanism is but a variant of European liberalism. French republicanism is characterised by the tension between an uncompromising ideology of national unity stressing the primacy of the state contrasting with a history of pragmatic adjustments to the reality of social and cultural pluralism (Rosanvallon 2007). Misunderstandings of this tension seem to have encouraged the perception, particularly prevalent in some American political circles, that contemporary French society is particularly incapable of integrating its Muslim minority; a view that does not stand up to close examination, as a survey by the Pew Centre has demonstrated (Laurence and Vaisse 2006; Joppke 2009, 124–125).[2]

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[1] France, the United Kingdom, Germany and Belgium now have second and third generations of Muslim residents or citizens. Southern and continental Europe are fast catching up. Information can be found at www.euro-islam.info, a web-based research project established by the French national research body CNRS (*Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique*) in conjunction with Harvard University.

[2] See also Jodie T. Allen (2006).

The idea that there exists a 'French exception' constitutes an obstacle to the understanding of the challenge that Islam constitutes not only for France, but for Europe and the West as a whole. It is, as a result, important to explore the specificity of the French experience so as to define what it shares with that of other European countries. To this end, this chapter draws on the contribution made by contemporary French sociologists and Islam-specialists to the understanding of the phenomenon of Islamic radicalisation. The originality of this contribution lies in the way it connects the discussion of radicalisation to a reflection on the 'post-industrial' and 'post-modern' evolution of French society. In France, the transition to a different type of economy negotiated in the 1980s came into conflict with a program of immigration initiated during the post-war period of rapid industrialisation. This program drew on the former colonial ties with countries of Muslim culture in North Africa, especially Algeria. This strong link to Algeria exposed France to Islamic terrorism in the mid-1990s, long before the events of 2001.[3] In France, the intellectual debates on the contemporary risks of Islamic radicalisation have, as a result, been enriched by an older engagement with the Algerian situation. They have also benefited from a broader reflection on the significance of contemporary individualism.

Although it focuses on the specific problems encountered by a North African minority, French sociology deals with phenomena that have been experienced also in other European countries. In the 1960s and 1970s Western Europe came to rely upon the immigration of large numbers of unskilled workers from Muslim countries, whose labour then became increasingly redundant in the 1980s. Despite their different ethnic origins, the progeny of this migrant working-class experiences similar forms of social exclusion and marginalisation. At the same time, they belong to a generation characterised by its intensified aspiration to individual self-realisation. This engenders a very specific type of frustration that constitutes the terrain within which forms of religious radicalisation can successfully graft themselves onto a socio-cultural alienation specific to the profile of Muslim immigrants to Europe. More broadly, the French situation highlights a common element in the way Western European countries have approached the fact that Islam has now become the second religion of Europe: the tendency to see it as a threat to their very identity. In this respect, it can be argued that the French legal response to this perceived threat is but an extreme expression of a broader European trend, as I shall discuss below. This will shed light on the way Islam is now at the centre of a fundamental tension throughout Western Europe—that between the values of secularity and liberal pluralism—and the role which the notion of secularity is now playing: that of defining 'European identity'. I will argue that this 'European identity' is based on an inadequate understanding of the role of religion in contemporary Western European societies.

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[3] France experienced terrorist attacks by Islamists from the GIA (*Groupe Islamique Armé*) in 1994.

Islam in Contemporary France

In June 2008, the French Council of State (*Conseil d'État*, the highest body dealing with disputes between individuals and public administration) upheld the decision made by government authorities that the Moroccan wife of a French citizen living in France with her husband and their three children, did not qualify for French citizenship because her 'radical' practice of Islam was seen as incompatible with women's rights (Vakulenko 2009, 144). The decision was based on a clause in the civil code that allows naturalisation to be refused to a person who is deemed to have failed the criterion of having assimilated into French society 'for reasons other than inadequate language proficiency'. Newspapers quickly reacted with headlines such as 'Moroccan woman in burqa refused French citizenship' despite the fact that the actual judgment of the council of state did not use the word 'burqa' nor make any reference to the type of clothing worn by the person in question.[4] This was an attempt on the part of the media to connect the judgment to an earlier controversy, that surrounding the wearing of the Muslim hijab, or headscarf, in the school environment.

This controversy—dating back to 1989, the year of the bicentenary of the French revolution—had originally been triggered by the decision of some school principals to exclude young women who came to class wearing the hijab. This decision reactivated the ultra-militant, anti-religious understanding of secularity, which in the early years of the twentieth century had seen Catholic symbols banned from state schools as part of the struggle of the republican state to assert its primacy over the Catholic church. (This struggle was accompanied by a phase of acute anti-clericalism in which Catholic nuns were similarly targeted for the visibility of their religious identity). In the 1990s the controversy over the hijab was fuelled by the extreme right-wing populist party, the National Front, which justified its xenophobia and anti-immigration stance by invoking the threat which the ethnic identity of immigrants of Muslim culture supposedly posed to the integrity of the nation. Throughout the 1990s, the National Front was very successful in exploiting the theme of national identity to promote its answers to the problems the French working class suffered—most crucially unemployment—problems caused by the country's difficult transition towards a post-industrial economy. The strains on the cohesion of French society, in particular the rise of delinquency and petty criminality in a segment of French youth excluded from the labour market, were explained in purely

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[4] To clarify the way Islamic traditions of female clothing have been discussed, I need to offer brief definitions of the terms used or misused. 'Hijab' is a generic Arabic term used to designate the veil covering parts of the female body which female modesty is thought to require. The term was used in the French debates of the 1990s to refer to a scarf covering the head, when earlier the Iranian term 'chador' tended to be used, under the influence of the Iranian revolution. The chador is a kind of shawl that does not hide the face, unlike the niqab and burqa. The niqab is a piece of clothing that covers the entire face revealing only the eyes in the tradition of the Persian Gulf. The burqa, used primarily in Afghanistan and parts of Pakistan, is similar to the niqab but goes further in concealing the eyes behind a form of mesh.

ethno-cultural terms as a result of its non-Christian/non-White profile. In essence, the National Front racialised social issues through the prism of cultural difference whilst posing as the champion of national identity in ways that the French mainstream political establishment found hard to counter. In the 1990s, the established political parties were indeed promoting *Europeanisation* as the solution to France's economic woes. As plans for European economic and monetary union progressed, spelling the demise of the franc, the age-old symbol of national sovereignty, national identity appeared under attack from another quarter: immigration. The program of immigration that had served the country well during the so-called 'glorious years' of economic growth, 1945–1975, was now perceived as a threat to employment; a phenomenon which, clearly, has had parallels in the rest of Europe and the Western world (Castles and Miller 2009, 96–119).

The failure of French political elites to fight populism was also in part due to some features of the republican definition of national identity which, from the late-eighteenth century, exercised influence over the historical development of nationalism in Europe as a whole. In France itself, this definition became ideologically set in ways that proved to be an obstacle to the acceptance of socio-cultural pluralism in the centuries that followed the French revolution. The notion of democratic sovereignty as 'one and indivisible' was central both to the late-eighteenth-century struggle of French revolutionaries to wrestle power from the absolutist monarch, and to the task of representing the social body of the nation, hitherto understood as a hierarchically-structured unitary body. To combat the hierarchy of hereditary estates, French revolutionaries redefined the nation as a body of equal and free individuals emancipated from group affiliations, and its sovereignty as that of a single will whose exercise had to be protected from partial, corporatist group demands. This understanding of nation was, however, incompatible with the recognition of society's divisions. French republicanism encouraged a strong assertion of democratic public power relegated to the private sphere of affiliations and cultural identity, including religion.

At the turn of the twentieth century, republicans had to make peace with liberal pluralism (Rosanvallon 2007, 186–207). This meant accepting the right to associate, something hitherto seen as a threat to the principle of national unity, and legally suppressed since the *Le Chapelier Law* of 1794. The need for the working class to have autonomous representation was well understood by the republicans, but the religious congregations posed another problem. Catholicism was seen as a threat to the civil religion of patriotism and as the republican state struggled to establish its moral sovereignty over the Catholic church, republicanism became synonymous with anti-clericalism. The 1901 *Law of Associations*, which revoked the prohibition of trade unions and gave not-for-profit organisations legal autonomy, introduced a legal distinction between civil associations and religious congregations. The 1905 *Law of Separation of Churches and State*, which signalled the victory of the republican state, enshrined the principle of state neutrality in religious matters as a guarantee of religious pluralism but was subsequently radicalised through the prohibition of all displays of religious identity by public servants, religion being redefined as a phenomenon that must be excluded from the sphere of activity of the state. The

French term for secularity, *laïcité*, today retains this historical ambivalence: respect for religious freedom and diversity; hostility to religion as a collective phenomenon. This ambivalence is also evident in non-European countries such as Turkey, in which state development drew on the French model.[5] Within the context of the general disengagement from established religion characteristic of all Western European countries, the commitment to the principle of the state's secularity continues to be taken by some as synonymous with a rejection of all forms of institutionalised religious practices, if not of religious feelings *per se*. Much confusion exists regarding the definition of state neutrality. It is commonly misinterpreted as meaning that religion in France, by law, must be confined to the sphere of private life—which in fact clashes with the freedom of worship enshrined in the law of 1905. In public opinion, state neutrality is even often taken to be synonymous with official atheism.

The insistence of French republicanism on one common, undifferentiated, public culture has made it harder for French society to conceptualise issues to do with cultural diversity. To this day, it is regarded as discriminatory and unconstitutional for the state to gather data on the religious identity of its citizens, and also their ethnic identity.[6] Amongst other things, this means that there are no absolutely reliable statistics of the number of people of Muslim cultures living in France, with estimates ranging from 3.5 to 5 million (6–8.5 % of the population).[7] This lack of public knowledge on the actual profile of French Muslims has allowed prejudiced fears to take hold, most obviously the perception that Islam is fundamentally incompatible with the French understanding of secularity. Following President Chirac's re-election in 2002—tainted by the fact that the candidate of National Front, Jean-Marie Le Pen, had been his adversary in the second round—he set out to defuse the controversy surrounding the issue of Islam that had been allowed to develop over the course of the 1990s. He entrusted a commission of experts with the task of reflecting on possible measures to promote a 'peaceful application of the French principle of *laïcité*' (Chirac 2003). This commission (*Commission de réflexion sur l'application du principe de laïcité dans la République*), headed by the public servant Bernard Stasi, produced a report that clearly highlighted the responsibilities

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[5] It must be pointed out that the French model has always been ambivalent as a result of the old legacy of Gallicanism, or state control over Catholicism. This statism was exacerbated in the Turkish model of secularity. Despite the principle of neutrality, the French state never totally abandoned its ambition to exercise control over religious matters. In contemporary times it resurfaced in the creation of the official body representing French Muslims discussed below (see note 11).

[6] In 2002, the government of François Fillon made proposals seeking to counter this but not without some degree of controversy and no progress seems to have been made since. On this question of ethnic and racial statistics and French law, see Simon (2008). This lack of statistical data concerns other European countries, with respect also to ethnic identity, a legacy of the history of Nazi persecution of Jews. As a result, the official European agency Eurostat does not compile data based on either religious affiliation or ethnicity.

[7] The website www.euro-islam.info has used various sources to establish an estimate of around 16 million Muslims living in Europe (3.25 % of the population). Of the 3.5–5 million Muslims living in France, at least two million have French nationality. The great majority of French Muslims are of North African ancestry.

of the state administration to combat anti-Muslim sentiments as manifestations of racism, and highlighted the failings in public policy that, in the previous decade, had allowed the issue of Islam's alleged incompatibility with French republicanism to gain prominence (Commission de réflexion 2003).

The Stasi report, it seems, was trying to address two problems: the success of the National Front in promoting anti-Muslim sentiment, and the growing sense of alienation of a proportion of young Muslims; the two being locked in a kind of positive feedback loop which focused attention on the question of religious difference rather than on underlying social problems. In brief, the many recommendations formulated by the Stasi commission pointed to the failure of successive governments to promote the social integration of the 'second generation' of immigrants from Muslim countries, mostly from North African countries born to often semi-literate parents who migrated when unskilled labour was needed in Western Europe. These youths faced disproportionate difficulties in finding employment in a very competitive labour market and a hostile social context in which the struggle of the other unskilled youth, those of European descent, had increasingly been depicted by the populist right as caused by immigration. Their presence was the result of France's rather *laissez-faire* immigration program whose consequences successive governments failed to anticipate. Despite the financial incentives to return to their home countries offered by the government following the economic crisis of 1973–1975, the 'guest workers' chose to use the right to family reunion inscribed in the French constitution since 1958—reaffirmed by the Council of State in 1977—to settle in the country. This, it must be pointed out, was a situation replicated in other European countries (Castles 2000, 25–78).

Possibly because of the sheer size of this population influx, and government's total unpreparedness, reunited families found themselves spatially segregated. Whereas earlier immigrants such as the Italians had been forced to merge with the existing population, living in the same urban areas and assimilating culturally, e.g., by Gallicising their names, immigrants from the mid-1970s onwards found themselves in conditions that encouraged the reconstitution of communities modelled on their previous experiences of social life, and a much stronger assertion of cultural identity than had been possible in previous eras of immigration. A greater visibility of the Muslim faith was one consequence of this segregation. The Islamic headscarf came to symbolise the challenge this represented for French society.[8] The Stasi commission was given a brief limited to the question of secularity but it saw that the question was linked to the fact that the cultural consequences of this segregation had not been addressed. Its report made 26 policy recommendations that dealt with the

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[8] Earlier migrants from North African countries such as Algeria or Morocco, to a large extent having been forced to merge with the existing working class population tended to consider the hijab as a sign of backwardness, hiding women from view and so leaving husbands and children to handle all interactions with the public sphere. This is a point made by Françoise Gaspard and Farhad Khosrokhavar (1998) in their study of the tension between the hijab and French republicanism. With Chala Chafiq and Farhad Khosrokhavar (1995) had earlier investigated the ambivalent meaning of the Muslim forms of headdress in Islamism generally; initially a vehicle of the integration of women in the modern public sphere, it became the instrument of a regressive backlash.

need for government to tackle the discriminations that the North African minority suffered, ranging from the teaching of colonial history in schools, to the introduction of Muslim chaplains in prisons.[9] The commission insisted that any legal measures introduced as a result of its report would have to respect the bipartite objective of secularity: to protect the neutrality of the state but as the means to protect the plurality of faiths. The government, however, ignored this and retained only a single recommendation: the ban on the display of all 'conspicuous' religious symbols in the public school environment (Zuber 2004, 36–37).

In this respect, the government's decision was influenced by the way the media shaped the public debate and narrowed it to the single issue of the hijab. Neither teachers nor students in French schools were particularly concerned by the fact that some Muslim girls chose to wear it. The media, however, used a very selective 'expert' opinion to construct a one-sided view of the significance of their choice: the hijab was a sign of male oppression and any evidence to the contrary was suppressed. As Pierre Tévanian (2005) has argued, this encouraged an Islamophobic political consensus in favour of banning the hijab in schools, regardless of the effect this would have on the girls concerned and by extension, their communities. Whilst the original recommendation of the Stasi commission had been careful to refer to all religions, many observers, as well as one member of the actual commission, were of the opinion that the proposed ban on 'conspicuous religion symbols' was a thinly disguised attack on Islam. It is worth noting that the ban was the only recommendation not to have gained unanimous support within the Commission.[10]

The decision by the Council of State to refuse citizenship to the Moroccan wife of a French citizen shows how the reductive view of Islam that motivated the hijab ban gained ground. After having been rejected by the national government administration in her application for French citizenship, the woman in question appealed to the Council of State as was her political right. Rejecting her appeal, the Council invoked an imperfect integration into French society due to the fact that she had adopted a 'radical practice of her religion' that was incompatible with an essential value of the French community, 'the principle of the equality of sexes' (Le Bars

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[9] The report recommended 26 measures, some of which promoted public recognition of Jewish and Muslim religious festivals having a distinct 'multicultural' flavour. Whether this signalled a radical turn from republican universalism as Akan (2009) argues or a pragmatic extension of the state's duty to protect religious diversity as defined by the law of 1905 on the separation of church and state, remains to be debated. Whilst Anglo-American critics may see this as evidence of a growing acceptance in some sectors of 'multicultural' measures designed to counter the historical disadvantage Islam suffers from as a result of its much more recent arrival in France, it must be recognised that this acceptance may in fact be part of an attempt to bring the practice of Islam under the control of the state much more than it is an acceptance of multiculturalism. Hostility to the phenomenon of 'communitarianism' (*communautarisme*)—the formulation of rights-claims based on one's affiliation with a cultural group—remaining high in France (see note 4). In this respect, it must be noted that those speaking out against the ban on the hijab primarily did so with reference to the individualistic understanding of individual rights that constitutes the historical basis of French republicanism.

[10] Jean Baubérot (2003) a leading historian of French secularity and member of the Stasi commission wrote a public letter to its other members proposing a way to avoid a complete ban on the hijab, which he saw as having the potential to alienate further the French Muslim population.

2008; Vakulenko 2009, 145). The council added that its decision did not violate her religious freedom as she could continue to practice her religion as a permanent resident. The radical practice in question, it turned out, was Salafism. The judgment did not make any explicit reference to the issue of clothing. It seemed to have been careful not to appear to condemn the fact that the petitioner wore a niqab revealing only her eyes and concentrated on what it interpreted as an underlying problem: the rejection of the principle of equality between males and females.

The fact that the plaintiff wore the niqab had, however, been mentioned in a submission to the Council of State (Vakulenko 2009, 145). This submission by an independent female magistrate stated that the woman had come to interviews with government authorities fully covered in a 'robe from the Arabic peninsula' and had refused to bare her face even in front of female officers for purposes of identification. It added that, always accompanied by her husband, she appeared submissive to his authority and had shown herself unaware of the meaning of democracy and specifically of the fact that French women have the right to vote (Le Bars 2008; Vakulenko 2009, 145). Extensively commented upon in the media, this presumed submission encouraged many to declare that the judgment highlighted the profoundly oppressive nature not only of the 'burqa', as the woman's niqab came to be designated, but of the hijab itself, even if earlier declarations of the Council of State had pointed out that the hijab could not in itself be taken to be a sign of imperfect integration into French society.[11] The media reactions to the Council's decision clearly illustrated the way Islam in France has come to be perceived as subscribing to a conception of gender roles totally incompatible with European values. This phenomenon is in fact not limited to French society (Cesari 2005, 47). It is particularly significant in this respect that discussions of the burqa as symbol of female oppression will often also bring up the fact that the burqa/niqab constitutes a security risk, suggesting that Islam is now seen as synonymous with terrorism. In the lead up to the Swiss referendum on minarets in 2009, the depiction on a Swiss People's Party poster of a woman wearing a niqab juxtaposed with a Swiss flag adorned with missile-looking minarets clearly signalled the double reduction that has characterised European debates around Islam: Islam is exclusively identified with Islamic neo-fundamentalism; Islamic neo-fundamentalism is itself exclusively identified with extremist violence, a question to which I will return below.[12]

In its decision on what integration into French society constitutes, the French Council of State did not explicitly raise the question of clothing but focused on the religion of the applicant. The fact that it mentioned her 'radical religious practice' was a point criticised by many, even those that supported the judgment on the basis of its appeal to the value of civic equality between men and women. Mohammed

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[11] The most vocal representative of this position was '*Ni Putes Ni Soumises' (Neither Whores Nor Submissives*), a French feminist movement created in 2003 by a group of French Muslim women protesting against sexual violence in the areas of French cities mostly inhabited by North African immigrants. Controversially, it has related what it saw as a rise in violence committed against women to the spread of radical Islam in France and taken a strong stance against the hijab as symbol of female oppression.

[12] I use the term, 'neo-fundamentalism', as Olivier Roy (1994) has defined it. I return below to the significance of this book.

Moussaoui, the then president of the *Conseil Français du Culte Musulman*—a national body representing French Muslims created in 2003 upon the request by the then Minister for the Interior, Nicolas Sarkozy—reiterated the old argument put forward in support of banning the hijab not only in France but also in Germany; that its wearing was not an actual religious requirement but constituted a political symbol. Moussaoui also expressed regret that the judgment's reference to religion drew attention to the fact that the rejected applicant was a Muslim, thus potentially feeding Islamophobia.[13] His comments were echoed by the anthropologist Dounia Bouzar, one of the few Muslim public figures in France, who went to great lengths to dissociate Islam from Salafism, arguing that it should not have been considered as a 'radical' variety of Islam, but as a *sect*.

The basic rationale of the judgment refusing to give French nationality to a woman whose 'lifestyle' supposedly did not respect a basic principle of French society was thus welcomed by a chorus of prominent personalities while attracting only muted criticisms. It was not unanimous, however. The legal profession was very much divided, with some lawyers arguing that the Council of State's judgment reflected growing intolerance of Islam within French society. This position concurred with the findings of an earlier investigation into discrimination against Muslims conducted by an autonomous civil society organisation, the *Collectif Contre l'Islamophobie en France* (CCIF). Founded in 2003, in reaction to the nefarious influence over French public discourse of 'essentialistic representations of Islam as a monolithic religion/community', this organisation had earlier collected the most extensive evidence of Islamophobic acts or pronouncements aimed at both individuals and institutions, and published a substantial report (CCIF n.d., Rapport). Having observed the failure of traditional anti-racism organisations in France to respond to the specific question of Islamophobia, it had also established a legal service with the purpose of advising victims and advocating for their rights. Through an analysis of the statistics it collected of Islamophobic acts perpetrated by public institutions, private companies or individuals, the CCIF identified two very significant facts: 59 % of cases were acts of discrimination by a public institution, and in 89 % of all cases of Islamophobic acts, women wearing the Islamic headscarf were targeted. With respect to the role played by public institutions, the CCIF was careful to point out that it saw no evidence that such discrimination was imputable to the institutions themselves. Rather, the discriminatory practises of French public servants were facilitated by a general ideological context of hostility towards Islam. The principal victims of this hostility have been women wearing the hijab. As a report for the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia noted, following the terrorist attacks of 2001, the Islamic headscarf became 'the primary

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[13] For a long time, French Muslims only had very fragmented representation. The creation of one body was first canvassed in the late 1990s. It gained momentum with the events of September 11 2001. The *Conseil français du Culte musulman* was established as a civil society organisation in 2003 with the strong backing of Nicolas Sarkozy, then Minister of the Interior, but without well-defined functions its claims to provide autonomous representation to four million Muslims in France and lobby the state on their behalf have been tainted with suspicion. See Alexander Caerio (2005).

visual identifier' triggering Islamophobic attacks in Europe (Allen and Nielsen 2002).

As the CCIF stresses, the need to protect women's rights has been a major theme of French debates around the question of the hijab. This question clearly intersects with the problems associated with the urban segregation of French Muslims and their specific socio-economic profile. The sub-culture that it has encouraged in the quasi-ghettos of the *banlieues* (the high-rise public housing estates of major cities) juxtaposes elements of contemporary French culture—for example, the aspiration to individual self-realisation—with the traditional values of North African rural communities, including those to do with the definition of gender roles (Khosrokhavar 1997, 2004). Deprived of a proper religious education, some of the children of immigrants will argue that these values are intrinsic to Islam, thus reinforcing the perception that Islam is incompatible with modernity. The concern for women's rights that figures so prominently in all discussions of Islam in France, however, tends to be part of a discourse that considers Muslim women wearing the hijab or burqa/niqab only as victims. This discourse does not really allow them to express their subjective experiences. Interviews conducted by two feminist activists and the sociologist Tévanian, however, reveal a capacity for autonomy that does not accord with the idea that the hijab is fully synonymous with submissiveness (Chouder et al. 2008). Media reports of the appeal to the Council of State discussed above were characterised by this failure to give equal weight to the voice of Muslim women: there were at the time no interviews of the woman at the centre of the dispute and so no opportunity to assess the validity of the submission arguing that she was unaware of the political rights enjoyed by French women. The CCIF reported that it had been able to talk with the woman and her husband and that the conversation had thrown into doubt many aspects of the facts reported to the Council of State: the woman was far from being the recluse oppressed by her husband she had been depicted as; she was not fully dependent on her husband—indeed, she drove the family car and contemplated taking on paid employment once the children were older (CCIF n.d., Arrêt du Conseil d'Etat).

The burqa then came to replace the hijab as the target of French legislative efforts. On 22 June 2009, the French president Nicolas Sarkozy (2009) made a speech in front of the National Assembly and Senate gathered in Versailles. In this speech, covering a range of issues, he raised the question of the burqa's significance but questioned the validity of the framework within which the hijab had been banned from public schools, that of the principle of secularity: Islam, as a religion, did not threaten French identity and it had been a mistake to stigmatise it. In the same breath, however, Sarkozy went on to discuss the significance of the burqa as a symbol of the denial of women's freedom, and to conclude that the French Republic would not tolerate such an 'attack' on its fundamental values. This marked a significant shift as through the reference to women's rights, it gave a much broader legitimacy to the Islamophobic consensus of the French political class. Following the speech, a new commission was established devoted exclusively to the 'problem' of the burqa—a problem, it must be stated, that concerns only a very limited number of women in France. As reported by the newspaper *Le Figaro* (Gabizon 2009), a confidential report of the French Ministry for the Interior estimated it to concern

2000 women nation-wide. A general law prohibiting attempts to conceal the face but widely understood to be targeting the burqa was voted by the French National Assembly in July 2010 to come into effect in April 2011 (Euro-Islam.info 2011).

The French conception of secularity gave a very specific flavour to the debates on the burqa but, despite this, as Joppke (2010) notes, there is a new radical hostility to the question of the Islamic full veil across Europe and the legislation introduced in France seems to have made it legitimate in other countries to consider such moves, regardless of their different understandings of secularity. Whereas in the past, constitutional law restricted attempts to limit freedom of religious expression with respect to Islam, a political backlash has been gaining ground combining arguments about public security with the question of the need to defend women's rights as a central feature of European identity (Joppke 2010).[14] The question of the burqa/niqab, in other European countries, also concerns only an extremely small number of women but it has not stopped governments from considering the kind of legislative action now introduced in France.[15] In 2009, the Danish Minister of Justice put forward a bill proposing to broaden the scope of an already existing law, imposing a prison sentence on men who force women to wear the niqab or burqa. The Danish government's 'Burqa Commission' (as it came to be known) found that only three women were actually wearing the burqa on Danish territory, with 150–200 wearing the niqab (Euro-Islam.info 2010). In 2010, a Belgian parliamentary commission found in support of proposals to make the burqa illegal on the grounds that it is incompatible with women's rights and constitutes a threat to national security (*BBC News* 2010). A disturbing trend is the fact that municipal governments, for example in Belgium and Italy, have already been using police regulations to prohibit the burqa (Fautré 2010). The question of the burqa had not appeared in German political debates, a fact which be traced back to the weight of the Nazi past which has made the question of religious symbols extremely delicate, and also prevented the rise of extreme right-wing parties. The publication by Thilo Sarrazin (2010) of a book denouncing the threat that Islam represents for German identity, and the subsequent refusal by the German Socialist Party to censor the author, however, signalled a similar evolution.

European Fears of Islamic Radicalisation

The burqa and the niqab have become targets of Islamophobia as symbols of a traditional world that is thought to threaten the future of Europe. This appears clearly in the judgment of the French Council of State. The report by the CCIF highlights

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[14] Whilst in the United Kingdom the House of Lords has spoken out in favour of religious freedom and politicians have traditionally considered the issue of the headscarf better handled at the local level, the issue of the burqa/niqab was also raised at the national level in 2006 by Jack Straw MP.

[15] The Dutch parliament was first to pass a resolution in 2005 urging the government to ban the wearing of burqas, but it was not enacted.

the underlying issue at stake by identifying as decisive in the judgment, the question of knowing whether the woman's lifestyle was 'modern' or not. The question of what constitutes Western modernity is indeed central: in this case, how French society defines its own modernity conditions who it judges to be unacceptable to it. More widely, the question of the place of religion in the Western understanding of modernity is central to the misunderstandings that plague assessments of the threat which fundamentalist Islam poses to Western societies outside and within their own boundaries. In Europe, the Muslim presence challenges countries to re-examine their understandings of secularity, which already no longer matches the social experience of their original, non-Muslim populations. Secularism in the European public sphere has acquired an ideological character and been defined as a cornerstone of European identity (Cesari 2005, 4). The diversity of secularity models across European countries has been subsumed in the emphasis on a commitment to the historical 'Great Separation' between church and state as foundational to western liberal modernity (Cesari 2005, 4; Lilla 2007). This phenomenon is also apparent in Germany despite its historically stronger association between the state and Christian values. In this respect, it is interesting to note the convergence in the evolution of debates in France and Germany regarding the headscarf that saw the question of state neutrality in the French tradition gain ground in Germany, whilst the question of the political significance of Islamic religious symbols originally stressed by the German *länder* 'states' in their bans on the wearing of headscarfs by public servants, has gained prominence in France since 2001 (Joppke 2009). This, in all likelihood, is linked to the attempts by European elites, since the 1990s, to secure the legitimacy of the European Union through appeal to a common identity based on common 'European values' which, as many critics have pointed out, have been largely defined through exclusion, not least that of Arab-Islamic culture (Stråth 2002). Islam *per se* is now perceived as antithetical to European liberal political modernity, and a report on public sentiment prepared for the *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung*, a German socio-democratic foundation, showed that 50 % of those interviewed in eight European countries, considered Islam to be a religion of intolerance (Zick et al. 2011).

The European notion of secularity, however, is no longer compatible with a commitment to pluralism and needs to move away from the narrow understanding pitting rationality against religious irrationality that dominated the nineteenth century. This means coming to terms with the fact that religious faith has not been eliminated by modern science but assumed a totally new meaning, and that the notions of a 'return of religion' or 're-enchantment' do not do justice to the complex significance of the renewed expression of religious feelings in Western societies and non-Western countries alike. As Olivier Roy (2008) has shown, this religious revival—which has, for example, made of Pentecostal Christianity the world's fastest growing religion, or seen Islam and Buddhism make considerable inroads in the traditionally Christian West—involves the emergence of culturally dis-embedded beliefs, a phenomenon that challenges the thesis of secularisation. As Marcel Gauchet (1997a), one of the foremost exponents of the often-misunderstood notion of modern religious 'disenchantment', suggests, this re-assertion of religious

identity in the late-twentieth century cannot be taken to be synonymous with a retreat from the secular underpinnings of modern culture.[16] Religion has lost its central, structuring role in the modern world but this does not mean that religious faith has altogether disappeared: it has simply acquired a new meaning. Religious spirituality has been the main vehicle for an alternative vision of modernity that resists its reduction to rationalisation. This has consequences for understanding not only the significance of religion in Western countries, but also for that of Islamism (Gauchet 1997b, 2008).

If the idea of the 'de-secularisation' of the world was first articulated in the English-speaking world by Peter Berger (1999), it was first promoted by Gilles Keppel in his *Revenge of God*, first published in France in 1991, comprising an analysis of the convergence between Islamism and neo-fundamentalist forms of Jewish or Christian religiosity, and which exercised great influence over later debates (Keppel 1994). As François Burgat (2003) has convincingly argued, the idea of 'de-secularisation' has, however, stood in the way of understanding the specificity of the Islamist movement and its political significance. Religion in the Middle East has been central to the reconstruction of communal identity reacting against the traumatic imposition of modern culture by autocratic regimes supported by the West. Such an imposition was experienced as a form of cultural violation. In its attempts to reconstruct the cultural identity trampled by the Westernised elites who had promoted modernisation in a rationalist mode, Islamism was originally an attempt to promote an alternative form of modernisation: one that would not be in radical conflict with traditional Islamic culture. It must be understood to have pursued a *transitional* identity. The dominant interpretations of Islamism have, however, defined it as an attempt to re-construct an Islamic civilisational system at war with modernity, and to return to a form of society in which religion is the glue of social cohesion with the state the ultimate expression of this common religious bond.

The violent radicalisation of Islamism poses the question of why this transitional identity has not been successful. The analysis formulated in Roy's (1994) *The Failure of Political Islam*, posits the failure of revolutionary Islamisation 'from above'—the failure to defeat established political regimes. Islamisation 'from above' gave way to cultural and educational Islamisation 'from below'. The lack of success of Islamisation 'from below' then paved the way for violent radicalisation that, far from signalling the triumph of Islamism, was in fact a sign of its failure. Burgat's (2003) analysis, however, questions such a chronology and causal chain: violent radicalisation was triggered by earlier factors, by the role played by the modernising elites of Muslim countries, often with strong support from Western countries.[17]

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[16] It must be noted that Gauchet's notion of disenchantment is much broader than that of secularisation, originally promoted by Peter Berger (1967) in the late 1960s, as it is part of an overall theory of the development of modern democracy.

[17] Burgat (2003) suggests that the process of re-Islamisation has in fact always possessed the two dimensions, the one pursing the revolutionary conquest of state power not always being the dominant one, as opposed to the re-Islamisation 'from below'.

The great majority of Islamist movements in the 1960s and 1970s only had religious and social objectives but the success of their proselytising social action alarmed both the 'post-colonial' regimes and their Western supporters, leading to repressive measures that played a big role in their violent radicalisation. This highlights the fact that the violent radicalisation of Islamism reacted against the collusion between corrupt indigenous post-colonial elites and Western countries, whose hostility towards Islamist movements involved geopolitical interests, ideological misunderstandings or a combination of the two.

The argument that has interpreted Islamism as a regressive return to religious tradition also fails to explain Islam's appeal in Western societies themselves, an appeal that extends beyond the question of the presence of immigrant minorities. As Gauchet (1997b) was first to point out, and Berger now also argues, the de-institutionalisation that characterised the retreat of religion in the Western world, especially in Europe, has in fact involved a mutation in religious belief-systems, which has produced 'anti-secular' alternatives to the emphasis on rationalism central to modernity. This has involved the creation of religious sub-cultures, on the one hand, or an attempt to reconcile traditional beliefs with modern values on the other (Gauchet 1997b). This revival of religion has been associated with the progress of individualism in Western societies: it is now left to individuals to formulate their own answers to the ultimate questions of life that used to be addressed collectively. Individuals, in other words, have been left bereft of stable collective identities and as a result have had to formulate their own identities and to recreate social bonds. In this, the pursuit of non-orthodox forms of religious belief has played a significant role. This phenomenon has not only affected Western societies and their dominant religion, Christianity, it seems to have also affected societies of Islamic culture.

In 2005, Patrick Haenni (2005), a Swiss sociologist, published an analysis of a new phenomenon he called 'Market Islam' which gives empirical evidence of the appearance within Islam of an individualism convergent with the dominant values of Western modernity and with it, of new forms of Islamic faith. What is 'Market Islam'? Sharing Roy's assessment of the failure of political Islam, but like Burgat questioning his interpretation of radicalisation, Haenni argues that contrary to Western perceptions, dogmatic Islamists have lost control over the Islamisation they first promoted and which is now increasingly assuming a non-political, non-violent form motivated by a new concern for cultural normalisation and integration into the global public space. At its heart is the value of individual self-realisation, rather than that of social transformation, a self-realisation pursued through economic activity and participation in the global market—that of consumer goods, including religious ones. As a religious configuration 'Market Islam', he argues, has been expanding through the second half of the 1990s and produced novel fusions of traditional Muslim values with Western models of behaviour, evident for example in the appearance of Islamic clothing fashion, which increasingly distances itself from its originally religious meaning to try and attract a wider market, or in the evolution of musical production towards denomination-neutral 'world music'. His analysis thus points to a growing divergence between the phenomenon of Islamism

and Islamisation—the latter referring simply to assertion of a religious identity, even if it can assume a rigorous, fundamentalist form; the former seeking to impose an Islamic identity of its own making. Haenni (2005) surveys the manifestations of 'Market Islam' both in the lifestyle of the middle classes of countries with Muslim majorities from Egypt to Indonesia and in that of France's Muslim minority. His discussion of the influence of 'Market Islam' on Salafism itself is particularly apposite to the concerns of this chapter, as it points to the need to avoid drawing a direct line between Islamic neo-fundamentalism and political Islamism implicated in violent jihadism.

As we have seen, the judgment of the French Council of State revealed a deep fear in French society of Islamic fundamentalism. But an analysis of the possibility of its violent radicalisation needs to take into account the more complex significance of Islamisation to which Haenni's work points. Islamisation now partakes of the individualistic search for meaning and self-realisation that characterises Western societies, a search which in the last 20 years or so has been almost exclusively formulated in the language of the market. In contexts of social marginalisation or 'exclusion', the lot of many French Muslims whose great majority belongs not only to the working class but to its economically most vulnerable sub-set, this search for meaning has been made harder by the change in ideological circumstances triggered by the end of the Cold War. In the case of France, it seems that neo-fundamentalist Islam came to fill an ideological void. Here it is important to recall that the denunciation of Western culture by the founding fathers of Islamism, such as the Egyptian Sayyid Qutb or the Moroccan Abdessalam Yassin, itself drew on the arguments of European extremist anti-capitalism from the 1930s, or in the case of the Iranian Ali Shariati, on Marxism (Khosrokhavar 2009).

Their anti-capitalist revolutionary language, given new life by a new generation of extremists, was perhaps destined to find fertile ground in a country like France, in which communism had been the language of working class identity and the Communist party an important political actor representing its needs. In the 1950s and 1960s, through their active participation in local government especially, its members contributed to the creation of structures of social support in housing, childcare, education and so forth (Lazar 1992). From the 1980s onwards, with the rise of the populist National Front, the French Communist party lost its traditional constituency and its influential place in French society. Against the background of this difficult evolution, Islamist groups active in the public housing estates, or *cités*, came to assume the function that was once that of the Communist party, and play a crucial supporting role for the economically and socially disenfranchised youth abandoned by both the state and trade unions, many of whom are of Muslim culture. The association 'Faith and Practice', which belongs to the Tabligh movement, has, for example, been especially active in providing assistance and services to the residents of the '*banlieues*' (Euro-Islam.info n.d. a, Islam in France). In the process, Islam has become the language of those for whom there is no hope of social mobility. This has clearly been one of the factors feeding into the conversion to

Islam of French individuals with no pre-existing cultural links to Muslim countries and traditions.

On a global plane, it is no longer original to note the similarities between the role that Islamism has come to play in the Western imagination and that of Communism during the Cold War era. In this context, Huntington (1996) notion of a clash of civilisations pointing to the contest of religions as the defining feature of the post–Cold War era has exercised a pervasive influence in all discussions of Islamism, even in France despite its traditional suspicion of American ideas.[18] The fear of global Communist expansion seems to have been transformed into the fear of Islamic expansion: Islam taken to be a singular, threatening, civilisational entity. As Haenni and Sami Amghar (2010) argue, European societies are presently fighting an imaginary threat, that of a *Muslim conquest*. Religious expansionism, they point out, can assume different forms. It can be aggressive and involve political activism, propaganda or even physical violence. It can promote increased religiosity through conversion or revivalism. It can be also purely demographic. Whilst the demographic 'threat' was, in the 1980s and 1990s, greatly exaggerated by the populist right (Todd 1994), as a result of the terrorist attacks on the US, the focus has now shifted more to the question of radicalisation, both political and religious.

The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, well anchored in continental Europe, was the first target of European Islamophobia.[19] It is true that this organisation's original ideology aimed at the creation of an Islamic state, and had clear hegemonic aspirations. These, however, were never really directed at Europe even though this is where members of the Muslim Brotherhood settled in the 1950s, as it was a safe base for their actions in North Africa and the Middle East. In addition, the formation of Muslim minorities in Europe, which the organisation did not really anticipate, paradoxically proved to be an obstacle to their plans, as it trapped them in a dilemma: become a preaching institution responding to the spiritual needs of this new minority, or remain a purely revolutionary organisation trying to recruit activists for their cause. In terms of religious authority, they were competing with neo-fundamentalist groups such as the Salafist movement or the Tabligh organisations. At the same time, their attempts to provide leadership in purely religious matters led them to be involved in the liberal democratic process, thereby tarnishing their revolutionary image. By and large, the Muslim Brothers, today, are not perceived as radical by the younger generations of European Muslims. Most of its supporters now belong to the middle class and many members have opted for a purely electoral approach: they have become militants in mainstream parties. They have, in other words, failed to establish a political program that responds to the specific experience of European

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[18] For a critique of Huntington's thesis from the point of view of civilisation theory, see Johann Arnason (2003).

[19] The Muslim intellectual Tariq Ramadan, because of his family's historical link to the Muslim Brothers, has been caught up in this suspicion. As Roy has argued, in France he has effectively been demonised. For an analysis of the way his traditionally religious views have been misrepresented, see Roy (2005). This analysis is informed by the definition of religious disenchantment first formulated by Gauchet (1997a).

Muslims. To appeal to those Muslims that are excluded from the dominant consumerist culture of contemporary European societies, they would have had to offer an alternative vision of modernity, one proposing a different relationship between the religious and political dimensions of social life. This failure of the Brotherhood to develop an alternative political vision has greatly benefited Salafism which, in Europe, gives its proponents an identity that encourages the creation of peaceful, closed 'counter-cultures' that minimise interaction with the mainstream society they consider morally corrupt. In general, these communities avoid confrontation with the dominant culture and are reluctant to get involved in political activity (Kosrokhavar 2006, 344). They have, for example, been remarkably silent on the issues that have divided public opinion in Europe, from the question of Palestine to that of the hijab in France, or more recently the burqa.

Most importantly, Salafism has fed the dream of the marginalised second or third generation of European Muslims to leave the countries where they were born and return to the land of Islam that assumes a mythical dimension. Ironically, the fact that the generation of their parents settled in European countries but lived their entire lives with the dream of returning to their home countries prepared their complete disengagement from European public life. This appears clearly in the case with which I started. In the only two interviews that were conducted with the couple, they expressed their pain at the application having been rejected but also their desire to avoid confrontation with French society and their ultimate dream: that of being able to settle in Saudi Arabia with their three children, the only country in which they believe they can be totally faithful to Islam (Le Bars 2009). Their voices, however, were not heard in the debates that surrounded the judgment by the Council of State. These debates were dominated by a deep suspicion of Salafism with it having become the main target of European Islamophobia. The judgment of the French Council of State highlights the way distinct phenomena have been amalgamated in the European response to Islam: neo-fundamentalist religious radicalism and Muslim political radicalism have been taken to be synonymous, and neo-fundamentalism identified as an *automatic* pathway to violent extremism. In Europe, however, religious radicalism has in fact, as a whole, *neutralised* political radicalism, this even if some individual cases such as that of Frenchman Mohamed Merah show that Salafism can be a pathway to violent radicalisation. As Haenni and Amghar (2010) put it, '[In Europe] jihadism is lived as a quest for sacrifice, not as politics by other means'.

Conclusion

Islam in France has become a source of fear. This fear is fed by the perception that Islam threatens modernity. The European understanding of modernity was shaped by the battle between a political conception of collective life and a religious one, asserting the authority of a transcendent, hierarchical principle. The creation of the secular state put an end to this battle but, paradoxically, by drawing on the resources

of religion: that is, through the promotion of 'civil religion', a religion of devotion to the nation-state. The nation-state created the circumstances within which individuals acquired autonomy from tradition, and pluralism became accepted in a way that led to civil religion losing its hold on society and individualism gaining ground. However, French society is yet to embrace *religious* pluralism. Like many other European countries, its approach to religion remains tied to historical Christian roots, even through the negative prism of *laïcité*. In addition, whilst they were all successful at establishing different models of secularity ranging from the imposition on state religions of the principle of tolerance, to a strict definition of the state's neutrality in religious matters, European countries seem deeply suspicious of religious radicalism, which is regarded as complicit with a hierarchical conception of society and as hostile to individual freedoms, as highlighted by the concern with women's rights. This appears clearly in the French hostility towards Salafism, in the perception that its dogmatic and strict interpretation of Muslim precepts necessarily promotes aggression against Western societies. But another phenomenon has also contributed to the failure of Western European societies to accept Islam.

Within the Western world, Western Europe has seen the most radical decline of religious practice in its traditional institutionalised forms, decline that has contributed to widespread misunderstanding of the significance of expressions of religious faith. This phenomenon, first analysed by Grace Davie (2002) as the 'European exception', has erected additional barriers of misunderstanding towards the religious practices of the new Muslim minorities, even in countries whose history did not produce a definition of secularity that easily becomes as anti-religious such as French *laïcité*. All European countries, in other words, regardless of their definition of citizenship, face the same problem specific to the vitality of Islam as the second religion of the region. But they are rather insensitive to it as a result of the increasingly non-religious profile of the majority of their population. In all public institutions, from schools to jails, Islam does not receive any formal acknowledgement commensurate with its status as most practiced religion (Beckford et al. 2005). There is here a specifically European problem: the extensive decline of religious practice for those faiths that once were a dominant part of Europe's cultural landscape has coincided with the revival of Islam among the second and third generations of Muslim immigrants. The increasing insensitivity to religious subjectivity that radically contrasts with the religious revivalisms known in the rest of the world, including the United States, combines with the different nature of Europe's immigration (Joppke 2009, 3).

As I have pointed out, the social profile of European Muslims is overwhelmingly working class and they have been particularly affected by the disappearance of unskilled jobs. Their segregation in particularly badly serviced urban areas has trapped many in the second and third generations in a vicious cycle of social deprivation. For this marginalised section of the population, Islam has been a way of constructing a positive identity, of building supportive social networks and more broadly of acquiring a code of ethics that enables them to live peacefully alongside mainstream society. This return to Islam has assumed two forms: the form of 'Market Islam' that expresses a desire for both the individualisation and normalisa-

tion of the Islamic faith, a desire fully compatible with the values of contemporary European societies; and the form of neo-fundamentalism that seeks to break with those values and is dominated by the simple desire to escape European societies (Haenni and Amghar 2010). This sociological reality has, however, not been acknowledged publicly to counter the perception that Islam is by definition a violent religion. This is not to say that there is no problem of Muslim violence in Europe; but this violence is, at least to start with, not primarily ideological in character, it has socio-cultural causes. These are linked to the appearance in some urban areas of a sub-culture of delinquency and crime which has, for example, led British and French Muslims to being vastly overrepresented in jails, in which they—and also non-Muslim inmates—come to be exposed to the ideology of violent jihad (Beckford et al. 2005; Khosrokhavar 2004).

In Europe there is a perception of very strong connection between criminality and Islamic terrorism. Criminality, however, does not alone explain the appearance of 'home-grown' violent jihadism. The individuals involved in the attacks in London and Madrid, as well as other violent incidents, were relatively well-educated and well-integrated European Muslims (Cesari 2008). As research has demonstrated, the decision by European Muslims to engage in terrorist action cannot be explained as a purely rational choice (Khosrokhavar 2006). As Khosrokhavar (2005, 2006) argues, it involves a very complex subjective experience, the formation of a very specific worldview within an enabling social context that can be summarised as centred on the encounter between two types of actors: that of the disenfranchised 'Islamo-nihilists' of Europe with the 'Islam-plethorists' from the Middle East or Asia.

For the 'Islamo-nihilists', reference to Islam is not central: the turn to Islam comes after a primary rejection of life in Western societies, a rejection which in the 1960s and 1970s might well have assumed a non-religious form, for example the revolutionary ideology of extreme left-wing terrorist groups such as the Italian Red Brigades or the German Red Army. On the whole, 'Islamo-nihilists' are quite ignorant of Islam at any depth, this being linked to the fact that their rather uneducated families had purely customary religious beliefs or that their integration in European societies was accompanied by their adoption of the secular outlook. As a result, they tend to look up to members of the middle class elites of a variety of Muslim countries from the Middle East to Pakistan (the Islam-plethorists) who are both well versed in Muslim theology and in possession of good qualifications in science and technology and, as a result, function quite well in Western societies. In contact with the 'Islamo-nihilists' devoid of sound cultural roots, these easily assume the role of an 'enlightened' revolutionary vanguard in a mode first historically experimented with by the cadres of the Soviet-backed *Komintern*. The community they feel called to lead is defined as the transnational Islamic 'umma' of Europe.

Individuals gravitate around these two central groups and can also become radicalised into violent action. Intensely religious individuals, whose faith is part of a totally individualised life project but often misconstrued as 'anti-modern'. As seen above, a major source of misunderstanding is the fact that the individualisation of Islamic faith is not necessarily synonymous with a decline in religious practice.

I have, for example, looked at the fact that the voluntary wearing of the hijab by young females in Europe is but one element in the construction of an individualistic identity that allows these young women to give meaning to their lives and take part in mainstream social life. The subjectivity of these 'Islamo-individualists'—whose attitude to Islam overlaps to a certain extent with we have seen above as 'Market Islam'—is thus essentially different from that of those who appear as their counterparts, the 'Islamo-fundamentalists' from the Middle East. Khosrokhavar's (2009) investigation of jihadism worldwide extends this analysis. He distinguishes within the worldwide constellation of Islamic radicalisation three distinct currents that interact with one another, share the same goal of Islamic theocracy, yet entertain quite different relationships to democracy and political violence: the old fundamentalism (encompassing Saudi Arabian Wahhabism and Egyptian Salafism) that believes in a literal interpretation of the Qur'an and Islam's prophetic tradition, but despite the contradiction with liberal democratic culture does not espouse violence towards either Western countries or existing power structures in Muslim societies; the historically more recent neo-fundamentalism or 'hyper-fundamentalism' that seeks to have Islam rule society, but refuses violence to reach that end whilst entertaining a somewhat ambiguous attitude to democracy, playing the electoral game where it can but indecisive as to what it would do if it seized power democratically (or as recent historical events in Egypt demonstrated, proving itself rather inept at governing when it does); and jihadism, whose interpretation of Islam's meaning is close to that of hyper-fundamentalists but has formulated an ideology of sacred violence, that is, violence that is legitimate as it seeks to realise Allah's rule (Khosrokhavar 2009, 152–185).

The three movements maintain ambivalent relationships with one another and constitute the spectrum of radicalisation. However, Khosrokhavar agrees with Haenni and Anghar's (2010) assessment that the failure of the project to spread radical Islam has now made of hyper-fundamentalism the dominant form of Islamism in a country like France: rather than formulating projects of a radical break with modernity, hyper-fundamentalism establishes purely defensive, not aggressive, pockets of anti-modern resistance (Khosrokhavar 2009, 152–185). This appears clearly in the initial case discussed above. This form of anti-modern resistance in fact constitutes a barrier to the spread of jihadism but, if assimilated with it, can become violent. This is the context within which the need to understand and defuse the fear of Islam becomes paramount. The task involves more than understanding and responding to the needs of the Muslims minorities living in Europe. As Roy (2005, 43) points out in relation to France, Islam is not the cause of the crisis of the French model of secularity but only a mirror through which contemporary society contemplates itself. This holds true for Europe as a whole. Islam confronts it with the need to interrogate this European identity that since the mid-1980s has been evoked to justify the construction and enlargement of the European Union. This includes examining the reasons why xenophobic movements have been able to gain hold in the political landscape that now seem to define the terms of political debates. The national models of political representation are in crisis: Islamophobia is a symptom of it.

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