Intellectual and Ideological Debates on Islamophobia : A « French Specificity » in Europe ?

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Foreword :

The aim of this paper is to analyze how the relation between French society and Islam and the muslims has specifically evolved over the times compared to the other European countries. It will be shown that « islamophobia » (the fear of Islam) has now become a global phenomenon throughout Europe. Yet, this phenomenon of collective fear indeed covers issues that differ depending on the socio-political context. With this regard, the « French specificity » can be explained by the weight of intellectual and ideological traditions. In the French public space, debates on Islam are nearly always emotive and the passion displayed whenever the issue of its integration is discussed which contrasts with the relative serenity that can be observed elsewhere in Europe.

Secularization and Laicization of a Fantasy : from Christian Anti-Mahometism to Modern Islamophobia

The famous Orientalist Maxime Rodinson demonstrated in his writings how the negative image of Islam had been a key factor in the emergence of the ideological and theological unity of the West[1]. Since the 11th century, the image of the Muslims keeps haunting the European consciousness. To describe the fascination muslims have had over the years on the Western mind, British historian Norman Daniel even refers to a « war psychosis »[2] : « Western Europe has for a long time its own view, which was shaped between approximately 1100 and 1300, and has been only slowly altered ever since »[3]. From hence, it is possible to trace back through the old and recent European history a phenomenon of fear towards Islam. It certainly refers to different cultural and ideological schemes according to times, geopolitical context and social groups. But it has contributed to structure in a durable and permanent way our « European social imaginary ». However, it is necessary to emphasize what appears to be a radical turn in the last centuries: the initial « old fear » made of preconceived religious and theological ideas eventually turned itself into a « modern fear » moulded by a secularized vision of the world.

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[1] Maxime Rodinson, *La fascination de l'islam,* Paris, La Découverte, 2003, p. 39 (1ère édition, François Maspero, 1980).

[2] Norman Daniel, Islam et Occident, Paris, Les éditions du Cerf, 1993, p. 13. Original text: *Islam and the West. The Making of an Image*, Edinburgh University Press, 1980.

[3] N. Daniel, *ibid.*, p. 13.

From a Christian Fear to a Secular Fear

The observable expressions of islamophobia in today European societies are no longer the direct consequences of the Christian anti-Mahometism - which Norman Daniel calls « the substratum of the medieval canon »[4] - but that of a secularized relation to Islam and the Muslims. The modern fear of Islam is not solely the result of religious passions. As modern anti-Semitism, modern islamophobia largely derives from a post-revolutionary (1789) and « universalist » vision of the world .

Since the Ecumenical Council of October 1965 (Vatican II), the Roman Catholic Church adopted a more open attitude towards the other monotheist religions (Judaism and Islam) by recognizing their decisive contribution to human history[5]. The official attitude of the Catholic Church had concrete social consequences in European societies. Along the Seventies in France, Catholic priests played a fundamental role in the set up of the first Muslim organizations and places of worship (mosques and prayer rooms). The Catholic and Protestant Churches (Lutheran, Calvinistic, Evangelistic…) altogether encouraged a « positive » and unconflicting institutionalization of Islam in European societies. The evolution of the Christian's stance on the Islamic religion contributed to take the heat out of the relations « common Christians » had with Muslim populations who immigrated in Europe.

Ideological Similarities with Modern Anti-Semitism

From a theoretical point of view, a parallel can be drawn between recent islamophobia and modern anti-Semitism. We will refer here to the iconoclastic thesis of the American historian Arthur Hertzberg (New York University) which shows that modern anti-Semitism is more « the Child of the French Enlightenment » than Christianity[6]. It comes more from the doctrinaire views of individuals like Voltaire, Holbach, Diderot or Marat than from Christian theology. Arthur Hertzberg concludes that a theory of secular anti-Semitism[7] truely exists: in the post-revolutionary context (1789), some leftist activists would have built up a theory according to which France needed to regenerate itself and therefore had to expel the Jews.

Naturally, such a thesis is marginal in France. French intellectuals still refuse to consider anti-Semitism, just as islamophobia, to be the product of modern, secular and republican ideology. According to them, they are just about the remnants of an ancient and obscurantist tradition, inherited from the medieval Christianity. For this reason, most of the French opinion leaders do

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[4] N. Daniel, *ibid.,* p. 356. Philippe Sénac, *L'Occident médiéval face à l'Islam. L'image de l'autre*, Paris, Flammarion, 2000.

[5] M. Rodinson, *La fascination de l'islam*, *op. cit.,* p. 95 ; Jean-Paul Charnay, *Les Contre-Orients ou Comment penser l'Autre selon soi*, Paris, Sindbad, 1980, p. 167 (coll. « La Bibliothèque arabe ») ; Youakim Moubarac, « Y a-t-il une nouvelle vision chrétienne de l'islam ? », dans *L'islam et le dialogue islamo-chrétien*, tome III, Beyrouth, Éditions du Cénacle libanais, 1972, p. 82-91.

[6] Arthur Hertzberg, *Les origines de l'antisémitisme moderne*, Paris, Presses de la Renaissance, 2004, quatrième de couverture. Original version: *The French Enlightenment and the Jews. The Origins of Modern Anti-Semitism*, Colombia University, Press, New-York, 1968.

[7] A. Hertzberg, *ibid* ., p. 354.

deny any true islamophobia (it simply doesn't exist!). The actual reasonning behind goes by the following syllogism: As long as France is definitely secular and republican, it can't possibly be « anti-Islamic », it can only be tolerant![8]. Of course, this ideological view of social reality (the negation of the phenomenon) does not resist the straight sociological observation: islamophobia actually increases in the French society, even though a majority of actors (media, intellectuals, politicians...) prefer to ignore this « new racism ».

Even worse, French medias easily indulge in pointing out the so-called US anti-Islamism (based on the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, the 9/11 related security measures, etc.), while they refuse to see how much it is also at work in their own country and among all social groups. It is, in France, a typical tradition to see evil in other countries while not being able to see it at home. As an illustration, almost every single French leader has bluntly criticized the G. Bush « Axis of Evil » formula even though the same culturalist and conflicting representation is also widely spread within the French society.

The reasons for this « French blindness » to islamophobia are to be found in our history. From the 18th century and especially in the times of the French colonisation of Western Africa and Middle East, the French representation of Islam began to move away from the prevalent European ones, separating from its common Christian legacy.

The Western Invention of « Homo Islamicus » and its French Version

In most European countries, the breaking off with the anti-Mahometism Christian medieval canon was the end result of a rather slow process. In fact, the derogatory picture of the Muslims had long depended on ideological, political and geopolitical necessities. The anti-Mahometism played a cohesive role within a Christian Europe deeply divided by wars between kingdoms and dynasties. This fear of Islam was indeed helping out Western Christendom to exist as a political, cultural and religious entity. The historical analysis of Daniel Norman shows that « a collective way of thinking had taken place. By its strong internal cohesion, it represented the unity of the Christian doctrine in its political opposition to the Islamic society and played an evident social role, co-ordinating the military aggression with the intellectual aggression »[9].

But this Christian anti-Mahometism evolved along the centuries. From the 15th century, the Christian fear of Islam began to decline and turned into a geopolitical fear: The Ottomans kept on symbolysing a danger to the western world but a danger that was getting more temporal and political than religious. This change stands out as a major turn in history as it clearly started the secularization process of our relation to Islam and the Muslims. Ottomans were no longer represented as religious enemies but merely as a rival European superpower[10]. The argument stating today that the « islamic culture » of Turkey would prevent it from joining the European Union (EU) is, with this regard, an

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[8] This ideological position is defended by intellectuals as Alain Finkielkraut, Henri Pena-Ruiz, Pierre-André Taguieff, Pascal Bruckner...

[9] D. Normal, *Islam et Occident*, *op. cit.*, p. 355.

[10] M. Rodinson, *La fascination de l'Islam*, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

intellectual and ideological regression compared to the liberal and tolerant views of the 15th century. In those days, the Ottoman Empire frightened us but we nevertheless admired it and were looking at it as « culturally and politically European ».

At the French Revolution times, it is striking to see that Islam is in no case an issue for most European intellectuals. On the contrary, what is clearly an issue then is the status of the Jews, fiercely discussed between « anti-Jewish »[11] and « pro-Jewish » advocates. At the time, Europe is typically more anti-semitic than it is anti-Islamic. The French Enlightenment is developing an anticlerical vision of society and most people are fighting against the omnipotence of the Roman Catholic Church. In reaction to Catholicism, those thinkers regard Islam as a peaceful, exotic and liberal religion. It might sound quite a paradox today, but the Muslim countries are viewed all along the 18th century as outstandingly liberal territories with regard to their social and sexual habits (re. the sensual image of the harem). Such an image is praised by the liberal spirit of the « Lumières » as it fights against the Catholic Church's claim to control the private life of individuals and families. We find a good example of this typical romantic vision of Islam in the writings of Voltaire who, though criticizing the Prophet Muhammed, nevertheless develops a positive representation of the Muslims who are described as « normal persons »[12].

But this tolerant attitude towards Islam is to be supplanted in the 19th century by the emergence of European nationalisms and imperialisms[13]. The image of Islam as a peaceful religion is then gradually replaced by an obscurantist, archaic and despotic one. It is in this changing ideological and political context that the homo Islamicus representation is being shaped out[14]. The triumph of euro-centrism seems to legitimate the idea of the superiority of western civilization on the arab and Islamic world. The tolerant universalism of the « Lumières » progressively gives way to a scornful one. European thinkers are starting to tackle new issues such as « Muslim fanaticism », « Islamic fundamentalism » and « panislamism ». Even Though no one can speak as today of an « islamo-terrorism » yet, the specter of an « Islamic contagion » is already in mind. The most representative French thinker of this anti-Islamic universalist trend is probably Ernest Renan who, in the famous lecture he gave at the Sorbonne University in March 1883, declared: « One only needs to know little about our times to clearly see the inferiority of today Islamic countries, the decline of nations ruled by Islam, the intellectual uselessness of races whose culture and education derive entirely from this religion »[15].

In the context of the French colonization of North Africa, especially in Algeria, panislamism had great success and gave grounds to the surveillance and repression of the reformist Muslim groups. In his work entitled Algerian Muslims and France (1968), historian Charles-Robert Ageron shows how the

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[11] Arthur Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews. The Origins of Modern Anti-Semitism*, *op. cit.*

[12] M. Rodinson, *La fascination de l'islam, op. cit.*, p. 74 ; Jean-Paul Charnay, *Les Contre-Orients ou Comment penser l'Autre selon soi, op. cit.*, p. 55-68 : « Les orientalismes révolutionnaires ».

[13] Edward Saïd, *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.

[14] About the invention of the myth of " Homo Islamicus": M. Rodinson, *La fascination de l'islam, op. cit.*, p. 57-90.

[15] 15 Ernest Renan, « L'islamisme et la science », lecture given at La Sorbonne, March 29th, 1883.

French colonial authorities used the very traditional Islamic institutions and religious representatives (imams, muftis, qadis) to be instrumental in putting down the claims of the colonized populations[16]. Even today, France is still imprinted with this colonial management of Islam. On this particular issue, we do agree with the analysis of Jocelyne Césari : « It is certainly in France where this fear [of Islam] is the strongest because the « colonial wound » hasn't been healed yet »[17].

As orientalist Maxime Rodinson points it out, it is most difficult for France to overcome its ambivalent representation of the Islamic religion[18]. While the French authorities tolerate the public expression of Islamic groups, they impose strict limitations to a free worship. The French political elites, medias and intellectuals agree altogether upon an « assimilationnist » conception of Islam, a « ready-made Islam » where the expression of religiosity is reduced to a minimum. In this regard, French intellectuals clearly appear to be the heirs to Ernest Renan[19]'s essentialist theories which express more a culturalist racism (the belief in a hierarchy among cultures and religions) than a biological one. Indeed, Islam is still largely perceived within the French society as a « regressive religion », opposed to the secular and republican modernity.

A French Obsession: Controlling, Institutionalizing and « Reforming » Islam

The French paradox in Europe

The Islamic religion status in today's France is a permanent paradox that strangely translates into some social dynamics: significant breakthrough in the institutionalization of Islam regularly alternate with real or symbolic repressions. As a minority religion, recently established on the French territory, Islam is theoretically tolerated and protected. But this « cold tolerance »[20] towards Islam is also a way to encourage Muslim populations to gradually abandon their « community attitudes ». The situation of the Muslims in France is therefore extremely contrasted and it can become difficult for a foreign observer to gain a clear understanding of what the issues really are. However, it is necessary to overcome two major prejudices that can blur the objective perception of what the situation of the Islamic community truely is in France.

The first prejudice is to think of France as a profoundly islamophobic and anti-Islamic country continuously persecuting its Muslim minority. In spite of obvious ethnic and religious tensions within the French society, there never were pogroms or anti-Muslim popular riots. Furthermore, one cannot either speak today of an « islamophobia of State », as historians can refer -- with regard to

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[16] Charles-Robert Ageron, *Les Algériens musulmans et la France (1871-1819)*, Tome I et Tome II, Presses Universitaires de France, 1968.

[17] Jocelyne Césari, *Faut-il avoir peur de l'islam*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 1997, p. 126.

[18] Maxime Rodinson, *La fascination de l'islam*, *op. cit.*

[19] E. Renan, « L'islamisme et la science », *op. cit*

[20] Catherine Coroller, « Une tolérance froide pour l'islam », *Libération*, 6 octobre 2003.

the Vichy regime (1940-1944) -- to an « anti-Semitism of State ». With the exception of the radical right-wing nationalist parties (the « National Front » of Jean-Marie Le Pen and The « Republican National Movement » of Bruno Mégret), French political representatives widely promote a rhetoric of tolerance that helps out the institutionalization process of Islam. In short, contrary to the awesome picture some are trying to draw, France is not the most islamophobic country of Europe: assaults on Muslims and attacks on mosques are in no way more numerous than in any other European country[21].

Moreoever, France is probably the country in Europe that has been the most deeply involved and truely instrumental in institutionalizing the Islamic cult at both national and local levels: the French government two years ago set up the « French Council of the Muslim Cult » (CFCM) at the national level while « Regional Councils of the Muslim Cult » (CRCM) were established and elected at the local level. Hence, even though the French secular State has always reiterate its commitment to the principle of the church / state separation set by the 1905 law, Islam enjoys a nearly official recognition by the Government and public authorities of the country. All of this eventually make up a quite paradoxical situation[22].

The second prejudice is to nourish an « angelic vision » of the French social reality, as if there were indeed no cultural and religious discriminations against the Muslims. To go by an old Jewish saying from the 19th century, we might say that Muslims live as « happy as God in France! », implying from there that France would be the true haven for Muslims of all countries. This romantic representation denies the phenomenon of islamophobia and minimizes the acts of anti-Islamism that have particularly increased over the last years[23]. Although France is not quite an « islamophobic State », French society is nevertheless inhabited by some « islamophobic trends » that live cross almost every social group: popular classes and middle classes just as much as the country elites (intellectuals, writers, journalists, political leaders, etc.).

The development of Islamophobia after September 11th:
a favorable Context

As in all European countries in the follow up of september 11th, France experienced a rise of anti-Islamic racism in many social sectors. However, it must be said that these « islamophobic attitudes » were already at work prior to the 9/11 event as much as they went on far beyond this date. The attacks on New York City acted as a revealing and amplifying factor of the French islamophobia

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[21] European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, *Anti-Islamic reactions in the EU after the terrorist acts against the USA, 12th September to 31st December 2001*, published by European Union in 2001.

[22] Xavier Ternisien, *La France des mosquées*, chapitre 12 : « Le long chemin de la consultation », Paris, éditions 10/18, 2004, p. 255-282.

[23] French intellectuals refuse to use the term "islamophobia " and even uphold the thesis saying that this term would have been invented by radical islamists: "the word " 'islamophobia' was created to "sap" the debate and divert the antiracism to their fight against the blasphemy », Caroline Fourest, Fiammetta Venner, « Islamophobie ? », *Pro-Choix*, n° 26-27, automne-hiver 2003, p. 13-14.

more than a deciding one[24]. With this regard, the slaughters of civilians that took place in Algeria between the years 1991 and 2000 produced a somehow greater emotionnal trauma on the French public opinion, Islam being often related to barbaric violence and fundamentalist terrorism. Indeed, there is in France an « Algerian trauma » comparable to the « 9/11 trauma » in the United States, especially since a three-million French-Algerian community live in the country and many Algerian intellectuals are regularly denouncing the ill effects of radical islamism. These French-Algerian networks are indeed working as a « cultural lobby » anxious to fight every aspect of « Islamic activism » and as a matter of fact, altogether contribute, to shape the perception of the Islamic religion in the French opinion. It is therefore the particular conjunction of the fallouts of both the recent Algerian civil war and the 9/11 terrorist attacks that makes the French situation a very unique one among the European countries.

The concrete manifestations of the « French Islamophobia »

From January 2001 to June 2004, numerous attacks against Islamic places of worship took place: racist graffitis (« Down with the Muslims ! », « Muslims Go Home! »), Molotov cocktails against islamic premises and arson (several Islamic prayer rooms were destroyed by fire). At the same time, records of desecrations of Islamic graves in civil and military cemeteries increased, whereas it was mainly happening so far to Jewish graveyards. In some regions of France, particularly in Alsace (next to the German border), attacks even spread out to private businesses notoriously perceived by agressors as « Islamic ». Furthermore, up to a hundred openly racist and anti-Islamic web sites targeted to the French audience began to flourish. But because of the strong legal restrictions we have in France (laws against racial discriminations), most of these radical nationalist web sites are indeed hosted on the US « Libertysurf »[25] network.

In parallel to attacks against Islamic places and graveyards, physical assaults on people increased, especially on young ladies wearing the head scarf in public places (streets, banks, post offices, supermarkets, etc.). French islamophobia often intermingles with « hijabophobia » (rejection of the Islamic veil)[26]. Many are those who hide themselves behind the values of securalism and equality between men and women to express their categorical refusal of the wearing of the veil in public places: The hijab is largely identified by a majority of the French people as the expression of a « threatening islamity » and the symbol of a new Islamic fundamentalism which endangers the basic secular and republican values. For that reason, the Islamic hijab is not considered as a mere sign of feminine modesty or a simple religious garment but as a social danger causing a security problem. Hence the trend in French society to somehow « criminalize » the hijab and to look at Muslim women wearing the veil as « offenders » or passive accomplices of radical islamism. In final, hijabophobia

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[24] European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, *Anti-Islamic reactions in the EU after the terrorist acts against the USA, 12th September to 31st December 2001*: *National Report « France »*, *op. cit.*

[25] Vincent Geisser, *La nouvelle islamophobie*, Paris, La Découverte, 2003, p. 9-22.
[26] V. Geisser, « Hijabophobia in France »: Note for the seminar of the Council of Europe, *Islamophobia and its consequences on Young People*, European Youth Centre Budapest, 1 - 6 June, 2004.

stands out as one specific expression of French islamophobia that actually hides itself behind the values of republican universalism and secularism.

Latent Islamophobia of the Elites: the « New French Intellectuals », Heirs of Ernest Renan?

French islamophobia can probably be characterized by its intellectual and elitist dimension[27]. The direct or indirect fallouts of the widely publicized debates about the prohibition of the Islamic veil within public school premisses (Stasi's Commission on the wearing of religious signs) played a significant role in « facilitating » a latent islamophobia: Opinion leaders (journalists, editorialits, philosophers, security experts, etc.) are the main vectors of this latent islamophobia which takes advantage of the right to criticize religions and the freedom of conscience to draw stigmatizing representations of Islam and Muslims. Islamophobia is thus taken over and further supported by some representatives of the French elites who are therefore directly contributing to its justification among various social groups. To some extent, they are indeed promoting a liberalization and trivialization of the islamophobic thesis.

According to philosopher Pierre Tévanian, French islamophobia is primarily the expression of a « culturalist racism » (as opposed to a biological one). From there, the Islamic religion is not seen as a specific form of spirituality but rather more as a « totalizing culture », carrying a threat to our western civilization (essentialist vision): « One is to face the facts: there is in France a « culturalist racism » that specifically targets the descendants of colonized people, and is entirely grounded in their belonging to the islamic world. That particular type of racism is as much alive within the « educated » groups as within any other social group »[28].

This fear of Islam takes its roots in the ambivalence of the French universalist ideology. France hasn't yet overcome its complex of a « republican purity » and French intellectuals are still the defenders of a genuine « republican puritanism ». On behalf of the alleged superiority and universality of the « French republican model », elites are sincerely convinced they have indeed the very mission to emancipate the Muslims and the moral duty to regenerate the Nation. In their republican consciousness, they consider Muslims to be the unfortunate prisoners of their « community spirit » (Umma). With this regard, the French attitude towards Muslims today is somehow comparable to the one that prevailed towards the Jews during the last century. The universalist mission of the French Republic is therefore to make possible for Muslims to free themselves from their « ummist spirit » and to refrain their natural tendency to communautarism.

The French intellectuals implicitly defined "a level of tolerable islamophobia" for our secular and republican society. It points out historian Charles-Robert Ageron's theory about the colonial Algeria, "the gradual assimilation". According to the french republican norm, a perfect muslim is one who has given up a part of his faith, beliefs and "outdated" religious practices. A

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[27] V. Geisser, « Islamophobie médiatique : les journalistes et les intellectuels en question ? », dans *La nouvelle islamophobie*, *op. cit.*, p. 24-56.

[28] Pierre Tévanian, « De la laïcité égalitaire à la laïcité sécuritaire. Le milieu scolaire à l'épreuve du foulard islamique », www.lmsi.net, mars 2004.

beautiful mosque is a quiet one without minaret, practically invisible, in harmony with the republican context. An emancipated Muslim woman is one who has escaped from her tribe, being freed of "islamic males"'s supervision.

The Comparison between the French Situation and the Other European Countries

Beyond the outward similitude of facts, the increase in the islamophobic trends all over Europe after the 9/11 events, has revealed every national specificities towards Islam. In this way we do agree with the hypothesis according to which "There is not a European islamophobia but rather various kinds of european one", even though observers and experts draw a parallel between attitudes and behaviours according to the country. Experts of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia notice: "Throughout many parts of the EU in the post-September the 11th period, a rise in Islamaphobia was identifiable. Irrespective of the variable measures of violence and aggression that are identified, the recurrence of attacks upon recognizable, visible traits of Islam and Muslims have been the most prolific element in all the country-reports. This is most obviously highlighted by the headscarf that many Muslim women choose to wear. The headscarf seems to have become the primary visual identifier as a target for hatred, with Muslim women being routinely abused and attacked across those countries in the EU where Muslim women could be identified in this way"[29].

EUMC's report therefore distinguishes three series of phenomena after the 911 terrorist attacks:

- acts of violence and especially verbal agressions,

- change of attitude and perception towards Muslims and especially towards women wearing the hijab,

- attempts of nationalist parties and organizations to politically and electorally use the fear of Islam.

However, the situations can be contrasted according to the States. In the European Union, everyone is afraid of Islam but not for the same reasons and in the same way.

To gain a clear understanding of what the "French specificity" is, it is necessary to compare it with the situation of the Muslims in the other European countries : Great Britain, Netherlands and Spain.

Islamophobia in Great Britain: A "Double Tension"

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[29] European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, *Anti-Islamic reactions in the EU after the terrorist acts against the USA, 12th September to 31st December 2001*, National Focal Point "United Kingdom", *op. cit.*

Great Britain is, rightly or wrongly, merely regarded as the expression of a "communautarist society". The analysis of the Moslem position in the British society is therefore very relevant. After the 9/11 event, European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) noticed that the British society had been crossed by an unprecedented islamophobic wave: "A significant rise in attacks on Muslims was reported across a range of media in the immediate aftermath of September 11. Numbers of incidents of violent assault, verbal abuse and attacks on property were noted, some of which were very serious. Muslim women wearing the hijab were easily indentifiable and widespread targets of verbal abuse, being spat upon, having their hijabs torn from them and being physically assaulted. A number of prominent mosques around the country were similarly attacked, ranging from minor vandalism and graffitis to serious damage through arson and firebombs. Threatening and explicitly Islamophobic messages also widely circulated over Internet and through e-mails. Telephone calls, anonymous posts and threatening messages left on car windscreens were observed"[30].

Nevertheless, this phenomenon of islamophobia is not recent in the British society. Along the nineties, before the 9/11 terrorist attacks, John Rex, professor in the Center for Research in Ethnic Relation noted an evolution of the "British racism". The religious factor would play a more and more important role in the stigmatization: "Great Britain has experienced a racism against colored people, founded on physical characteristics, then, recently, a discrimination and an hostility on cultural and religious bases [...]. The law of the relations between races has not defined Muslims as an ethnic group. Thanks to this law, employers are reluctant to discriminate on color criteria However the Rushdie Affair, the Gulf War…, had probably caused more hostility against Muslims than any other communities"[31].

But contrary to France, where Islamic associations are perpetually invoking the State to enjoy an almost official representation (problem of the representativeness), and to get numbers of symbolic and material gratifications (cultural and religious projects), British Muslims protect themselves from the prevailing stigmatization, having a weak relation with the State, developing a kind of independant regulation of their "community matters". In the British context, Islamophobia would stimulates the "self-organization" trends of the Islamic community, on the contrary in the French context, the anti-Islamic racism would increase the resort to the state protection to the detriment of the cohesion group: Werner Menski professor at the Oriental and African Studies school in London notices "British Muslims have been developing a strategy of minimal contact with the British State. They live in Great Britain, but in their "own world", on which they have a weightier influence"[32]. With this regard, the situation is characterized by a "double tension": on the one hand, the Muslims with the rest of the British population and, on the other hand, Muslim lobbies with the State.

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[30] National Focal Point « United Kingdom », *ibid.*

[31] Declaration of John Rex, in Robert Bistolfi, François Zabbal (ed.), *Islams d'Europe. Intégration on insertion communautaire ?*, La Tour d'Aigue, Éditions de l'Aube, 1995, p. 155.

[32] Wener Menski, « Nationalité, citoyenneté et musulmans en Grande-Bretagne », in R. Bistolfi, F. Zabbal (ed.), *Islams d'Europe. Intégration ou insertion communautaire ?*, *op. cit.*, p. 138-139.

Islamophobia in Netherlands : The Crisis of the Multicultural Model

Reports of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia described a mass hysteria in Netherlands after September the 11th which has affected the whole country. The authors note : "Reactions within the Muslim community saw women going out without wearing hijabs and others reluctant to send their children to school unaccompanied. Such sentiments may have been a direct result of the 'mass hysteria', as described by a prominent psychologist, that was inflamed by a series of opinion polls in the Netherlands. Large numbers of the population were in favour of the deportation of Muslims whilst others were keen to see asylum seekers from Muslim backgrounds being refused entry to the country"[33].

This collective hatred might be surprising in a State traditionally presented as a model of tolerance and cultural pluralism. Professor Hans Hentzinger notices "During the sixties and seventies, the pluralist model, as a matter of fact the 'moluquois model', was necessary, even for the other migrant worker communities who came from the Mediterranean basin […]. Thus we generally think immigration in terms of community, which is different from the individualistic approach that prevails in France"[34]. The emergence of islamophobia after the 9/11 event is not completely new, it refers to a more general crisis, the one of the multicultural Dutch model. The model is henceforth sharply criticized by the Dutch political and intellectual backgrounds. Sjoerd Van Koningsveld points out "These last years, especially since the Rushdie Affair (1989), the Dutch society experienced the emergence of an anti-Muslim talk whose themes are regularly exploited by Dutch politicians and intellectuals. These views go with various kinds of social, economic and racial discrimination, and an increasing number of violent verbal and physical assails against members of ethnic minorities, especially Muslims one […]. Giving socially acceptable responses to his champions, the anti-Islamist thesis prevents from being accused of racism, what could explain its appeal"[35].

Following the example of France, "Dutch islamophobia" is a latent way of expressing a racism which does not want to clearly appear. This "Islamization" of the racist register contributes to give grounds to islamophobia within elites and popular classes.

Spain: from Traditional Xenophobia to Anti-Islamic Racism after the Madrid Terrorist Attacks

Contrary to a preconceaved idea, in Spain, after September the 11th, there hasn't been massive expression of islamophobia: "Initially no incidents of

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[33] European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, *Anti-Islamic reactions in the EU after the terrorist acts against the USA, 12th September to 31st December 2001*, National Focal Point "Netherlands", *op. cit.*

[34] Han Entzinger, « L'approche néerlandaise et ses interrogations », in R. Bistolfi, F. Zabbal (ed.), *Islams d'Europe. Intégration on insertion communautaire ?*, *op. cit.,* p. 177.

[35] Sjoerd Van Koningsveld, « Perception de l'islam : dialogue et conflits », in R. Bistolfi, F. Zabbal (ed.), *Islams d'Europe. Intégration on insertion communautaire ?*, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

agression or hostility or any changes in attitude were identified by the National Focal Point (NFP), although a few mosques being attacked were noted. The number of events increased throughout the reporting period, verbal assaults began to be reported and attacks on property continued [...]. Most of this expression of anti-Muslim sentiment was directed towards those of Morocan descent, which drew upon a deeply embedded and pre-existent ethnic xenophobia that was in evidence long before September the 11th"[36]. These observations of the European experts confirm the trends analyzed by the Spanish specialists of the migrations and ethnic relations. In Spain, the absence of passion displayed during debates on the questions of Islam would be merely explained by the refusal of the"French jacobinism dogmatism" (centralism), because the Spaniards have a long experience of regionalism and independent communities. Thus, Spanish debates about secularism are less polemical than in France: "The Spanish political system, the monarchy, the pseudo-federal structure and its autonomous communities gave a less passionate turn to the debates which France knew about the question of the the Nation-state, the secularism and the secular education. They seem to have been diluted in the relations between the State and the independent regions and with other types of communities or varied associations"[37].

For these reasons, and in spite of a conflicting historical past, the spanish attitude towards the Muslim community is still determined by the relation with the image of the immigrant workers. Although the term "El Moro" (the Moor) is frequently used by the Spaniards to describe the Moroccan workers and the inhabitants of the Spanish enclaves in Morocco (Ceuta and Melilla), it does not necessarily refers to a religious connotation : It would be exaggerated to say that the ideology of "Reconquista" continues to structure the iberian consciousness towards Muslims. According to Antonio Izquierdo Escribano, "we do not observe in Spain deeply rooted prejudices against Muslims: It can be explained by the novelty of the immigration and the rarity of the contacts with these immigrant populations"[38]. If there was not really in Spain a "September the 11th effect", a "March the 11th traumatism" might appear. Since Madrid terrorist attacks (March, 2004), Islamic leaders and experts notice a fast growth of a "new islamophobia" in the Spanish society, especially in the police: "Muslims of Spain are very afraid. They limit their movements to the bare minimum. When they venture outside they are constantly interrogated by the police forces. More and more, signs of xenophobia appear, a direct consequence of the attacks of March the 11th"[39].

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To conclude, France is not more islamophobic than the other European countries. An "institutional islamophobia" or "Islamophobia of State" doesn't really exist . However, the relation towards Islam is complex and determined by

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[36] European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia, *Anti-Islamic reactions in the EU after the terrorist acts against the USA, 12th September to 31st December 2001*, National Focal Point "Spain", *op. cit.*

[37] Miguel Angel Moratinos, « Immigration et accueil des musulmans : la politique officielle de l'État », in R. Bistolfi, F. Zabbal (ed.), *Islams d'Europe. Intégration on insertion communautaire ?*, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

[38] Antonio Izquierdo Escribano, « Présence musulmane et perception de l'islam », ibid., p. 265.

[39] Abdelmohsin El Hassouni, "Islamophobia in Spain", free text, Internet version, April 2004.

the "missionary mind" which consists in willing to emancipate Muslims from their religion, perceived as an archaic, obscurantist and despotic phenomenon. French specificity expresses itself in the tendency to « ideologize » Islam. In front of the « danger » of the political Islam (fundamentalism, radical Islam, islamo-terrorism…), French institutions would like to promote their own conception of a « regenerated Islam » (comparable to the « regenerated Judaism » during the Third Republic). The jacobinism and republican view of "Islam Governance" is founded on a « powerful interventionism » of the State and the public institutions in usual Islamic matters.

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