3 Public policies towards Muslims and the institutionalization of ‘Moderate Islam’ in Europe
Some critical reflections

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Introduction

This chapter provides a comparative critical overview and assessment of the logics and mechanisms for Muslim representation in Europe as they have emerged and been consolidated in the two decades at the turn of the millennium. First, it seeks to illuminate the dual thinking behind – and the causes for – policy decisions that have led European governments to promote Muslim institutions and to engage with their Muslim populations in formal and semi-formal ways. In doing so, it questions the utilization and validity of the expression ‘moderate Islam’, as well as the excessive focus on ‘organized’ forms of Islam. After categorizing existing models of Muslim–government relations in Europe, the chapter points out the implications of this process of institutionalizing Islam, in both the short and long term, for the status of Muslim communities in Europe and for the future of Europe’s secular democracies. It concludes with a call to adjust public discourse and policy approach to Islam in Europe through a methodological shift that privileges Muslims’ experiences as ‘individuals’.

The dual concern with Islam

The first decade of the twenty-first century in Europe has been characterized by increasing attention, on the part of state and international institutions, as well as of the general public, given to the issue of Islam. There are two dimensions to this concern. ‘Internally’, on a domestic political level, there is a preoccupation with the consequences of the growth of the Muslim population inside Europe. ‘Externally’, European foreign policy is concerned with the future of relations with the so-called Muslim world and with transnational political actors that are connected to Islam. Each of these two dimensions is characterized by a set of more specific concerns. Internally, inside the borders of the European Union (EU) member states, awareness of ethnic and religious pluralism is growing. Scholars and policymakers have recognized that European legal and political systems should be adjusted in order...
fully to implement the principles of equality, anti-discrimination and freedom of religion, and better to govern ever more diverse and interconnected societies. It has also been gradually acknowledged that a transnational religion with a strong universal message – Islam – is not just increasingly visible and assertive in Europe, but has obviously become a ‘feature’ of Europe, since large numbers of people of Muslim faith have settled permanently in Europe and are in fact, or at least aspire to become, ‘European citizens’. In turn, the increasing visibility of religious symbols and the emergence of discussions around the application of Sharia law in Europe have triggered a reflection on their implications for Muslim believers and for the future of ‘European values’, democracy and secular-driven notions of tolerance and multiculturalism.

On the international scene, there are calls to respond to the causes and consequences of international terrorism and violence – including violence stemming from Islamist groups and ideologies. Another ‘external’ concern for European countries is the emergence of pro-democracy reform movements in the Middle East, North Africa and Asia, which are born out of various Islamist traditions. They challenge autocratic regimes and the thin stability that they produce (Asseburg and Brumburg 2007; Pace, et al. 2009). The big dilemma for European actors that are interested or engaged in these regions is how to marry the search for freedom with the need for greater socio-political and economic stability (Salamé 1994; Cavatorta and Volpi 2007). Policy choices that would be obvious for promoting political participation and the empowerment of Muslim minorities ‘inside’ the EU might not be the best ones for dealing with Arab and Asian political actors and Islamist parties ‘outside’ EU borders.

In this chapter, I concentrate on the internal dimension only, since it is the one that best fits the scope of the book. This internal attention to Islam and Europe’s Muslims is, however, multifaceted and context- and time-specific, and has been articulated by opinion- and policymakers in various ways. There have been general calls for the ‘integration’ (whether social, economic, cultural or juridical) and political participation of Muslim minorities. These efforts have combined with endeavours to steer existing Islamic institutions (e.g. mosques, schools, Sharia councils) and other forms of ‘Muslim self-organization’ (e.g. ethnocultural associations, advocacy groups, networks providing social services, Muslim media), in order to adapt and incorporate them somehow into European society. There have also been attempts to strengthen Muslim–government relations in Europe, both by searching for partners among European civil society actors – domestically – and by engaging in diplomatic relations with representatives of Muslim countries. A range of multi-purpose activities in the field of intercultural relations have also been promoted (Silvestri 2005a: 385–405).

Muslim–government relations

In the period spanning the 1990s and the early 2000s, the idea of Muslim–government relations often translated into attempts to establish in Europe, in a rather artificial way, consultative Muslim bodies, or councils. Such entities, which
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despite their aspirations never managed to be representative of the Muslim population in Europe, include people of Muslim tradition who are either European citizens or long-standing immigrants in Europe. These councils are expected to function as official Islamic ‘interlocutors’ with European state authorities as well as with other religious and civil society groups, in a context that lacks the appropriate jurisprudence to deal with a highly religiously diversified European scene.

The idea of establishing these consultative institutions derived from the realization that the emergence of Islam in the European public sphere has been happening in a disorganized way, across an ummah (the global community of the faithful) that is fractured. This is because, as with Protestantism, Islam (especially in its Sunni version) is a faith focused on the direct relationship between the believer and God, and without significant intermediary figures and hierarchical structures comparable to those of the Catholic or Orthodox Churches. Moreover, the Prophet Muhammad left no instructions as to how to select his successor to lead Muslims (religiously and politically) after his death.

Enlightenment-derived notions of secularism, combined with the socio-political dominance exercised by the Christian Churches in Europe throughout the centuries, have also shaped the way bureaucracies, public authorities and legal systems, all over the continent, relate to religion, whether institutionalized or not. On the one hand, European states enthusiastically support equality and religious freedom, provided that they operate within the framework of separated private and public spheres. On the other hand, the way states have developed their relations with religious groups is still shaped by corporatist models and by the traditional pattern of Church–State relations, which still reflects, if anything in this very terminology, the privileged position enjoyed until recently by the Christian Churches in this part of the world (Silvestri 2007a: 159–77).

Prior to this attempt to promote genuine ‘European’ Muslim institutions, channels to discuss issues and defend the rights of Muslim populations based in Europe (especially as long as these individuals were simply ‘immigrants’ and not ‘citizens’ in the countries where they were residing and working) almost automatically involved the diplomatic representation of Muslim countries (Shadid and van Koningsveld 1996). Such contacts were developed either with Muslim majority countries that ‘export’ migrants to Europe, or with prominent political and religious actors of the Muslim world. Saudi Arabia, Iran and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) are, for instance, three major sources of religious authority and economic influence for the Muslim (Sunni and Shia) population across the globe. This means that the Muslims of Europe did not have a chance to engage with or express directly to European society their own concerns and claims, which instead were filtered by non-European governments and institutions.

As the notion of ‘intercultural dialogue’ gained currency in the run up to 2008 (established by the EU as the Year of Intercultural Dialogue), a current of opinion developed in certain European countries according to which engaging in intercultural dialogue coincided with the establishment of formal mechanisms for governments to relate to Muslim communities, for instance by promoting the creation of national Muslim councils. Whereas it is important to include such initiatives
as one of the many facets of intercultural dialogue, it is nevertheless crucial to realize that intercultural dialogue is not just about developing institutional and political relations that are sensitive to issues of culture, religion and identity. Intercultural dialogue entails a broader effort, implying a change in mentality directed towards a more ‘human’ or ethical dimension of politics (beyond concerns with power, economic interest and security); it means adopting an intercultural mindset in whatever individuals and institutions do. We could argue that intercultural dialogue succeeds in refocusing on both individual human rights and collective responsibility in a way that is in line with the concepts of ‘cosmopolitan citizenship’ and ‘cosmopolitan democracy’ discussed by Archibugi, et al. (1998).

The ‘normalization’ of ‘moderate Islam’

The terrorist attacks of September 2001, March 2004 and July 2005 triggered the ‘securitization’ of Islam across the globe. According to the Copenhagen school, securitization is the objectification of the perception of an existential threat that leads into an exceptional response of the state (Buzan, et al. 1998; Bigo 2000). This process of Islam securitization did not start with 9/11. It existed in previous local and domestic tensions from the Rushdie controversy and the French affaire du foulard in 1989, to the northern England riots in the spring and summer of 2001, and to the intensification of migration controls across the EU following the Treaty of Amsterdam. The combination of all these factors produced ‘emergency sentiments’ in the non-Muslim European population, which was fearful of losing its prerogatives, and the values and traditions of individual European countries. These emotions combined with a growing Brussels-inspired procedural mentality, with the lack of legal policy and administrative instruments capable of dealing with an unprecedented level of religious-ethnic diversity in Europe, with strong religious self-awareness, and with the internal fragmentation of a (broadly speaking) acephalous religion, Islam. These factors together prompted European states to come up with a relatively easy solution, somehow inspired by existing patterns of Church–State relations as well as by a Napoleonic mechanism that had been elaborated in order to deal with Jewish minorities. This tentative solution consisted in engineering and speeding up the process whereby state agencies grant official recognition to minority religions by proactively ‘institutionalizing’ Islam in a ‘corporatist’ way, that is, by promoting the establishment of Muslim representative institutions, whether from scratch or by drawing upon existing resources and forms of self-organization.

There is an expectation that such institutions should be in place if Muslims want to ‘earn’ a place in the complex mechanisms of governance in EU institutions and member states. This is, first, because Muslims are perceived – and often tend to present themselves, by insisting on the unity of the ummah – as a bloc, as a community sharing fundamental values, sensitivities and perspectives which are often discriminated against or ignored. Second, a structural problem comes into play when we talk of Muslim engagement and representation within European states and societies; that is, the idea that Islam should ‘fit in’ with the criteria that regulate
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relations with the dominant faith groups. Such criteria are rooted in at least three basic expectations:

1. Islam should behave like an ‘organized’ belief, with mechanisms of representation and religious leaders in clear positions of power. This is based on the assumption that the traditional Church–State model within the secular framework of the separation between public and private spheres will work for Islam, too.

2. There is a somewhat abstract notion of ‘integration’ which de facto differs between various multicultural, assimilationist and mixed practices adopted by European states.

3. Muslim organizations should be representative both of the demographic and of the doctrinal characteristics of the Muslim populations of Europe.

In short, Muslim communities are implicitly expected to adopt and adapt to the existing pattern of relations between the state and ethnic and religious communities in order to engage with the social and political context of where they live. As a consequence, new forms of institutionalization of Islam (other than mosques and Islamic schools) have begun to appear in Europe, often through the direct intervention of European governments.

Elsewhere I have illustrated the specific discourses and political dynamics surrounding the emergence of Islamic institutions and in particular national Muslim councils across Europe. I took into account the perspectives, strategies and narratives of a selection of European governments and related them with those of a selection of Muslim associations and networks that operate in European countries (Silvestri 2005b: 101–29, forthcoming). Muslim councils are a relatively new invention, created with the expectation that they will constitute official interlocutors available for consultation and capable of representing the internal diversity of the Muslim communities that exist in European states, thereby acting as bridges between the grass-roots level and the state. This process inaugurates a European domestication or normalization of Islam shaped around the idea that a moderate form of integrated Islam should be supported for multiple purposes: to be more inclusive of religious-ethnic minorities, to maintain law and order, to stem radicalization, and to make sure that Muslims are properly familiarized with and incorporated in the ethos of the European countries in which they live. Ultimately, many argue that this process will construct a specifically European version of Islam or ‘Euro-Islam’ (cf. AlSayyad and Castells 2002).

The expression ‘moderate Islam’ is problematic for a number of reasons. First it assumes implicitly that Islam per se is not moderate (although what it is assumed to be exactly remains nebulous), and that it nurtures some extreme or radical qualities. Second, it appears inappropriate to use the adjective ‘moderate’ in relation to a religion when in fact this term normally qualifies one particular section of the wide spectrum of political activities. Third, it could produce, among Muslims, the negative impression that European society does not fully implement the principle of religious freedom and only selectively accepts ‘lukewarm’ Muslims. If the term
moderate was to be associated with lukewarm or ‘half’ Muslim, then we could possibly witness, in response, an increase in deliberately radical (by this word I mean extreme, aggressive, but not necessarily violent) Muslim assertiveness.

Overall we can say that the early years of the twenty-first century have been marked by a pan-European trend, on the part of the political establishment, to promote Euro-Islam, to devise a common European pattern of Muslim institutions or mechanisms to facilitate Muslim–government relations. Many Muslims have been critical of these initiatives and have proven reluctant to participate in projects that are often directed from the top and contain a large security component. Nevertheless, the debate about these issues has promoted an interesting and positive dynamism and ‘reactive’ political engagement among Muslim individuals and communities in Europe. It is also interesting to note that at last across Europe, at both national and at EU level, the political community has woken up to the concerns and the needs of the Muslim individuals who reside in Europe.

Typologies of Muslim councils

Islamic commissions and councils started to emerge in Europe from the early 1990s: the Comisión Islámica de España in 1992, the Exécutif des musulmans de Belgique in 1996, the Muslim Council of Britain in 1997, the Conseil Français du Culte Musulman in France in 2003, the Italian Consulta in 2005, and the Islam-Konferenz in Germany in 2006.

Many common motivations can be found between Muslim individuals, associations and state institutions in establishing these bodies. However, the strategic mindset behind these institutions, as well as their structure and manner of function, differs according to the Muslim group(s) and the country concerned. Factors that determine these differences include: the variety of versions of Islam that exist across Europe; political ideologies; the geographical and national origins of the people involved; the socio-economic circumstances of the local Muslim population; cultural and historical features that characterize specific European countries and their approach to secularization; national and EU legal provisions concerning immigration, citizenship and discrimination; patterns of Church–State relations; conceptualization of national identity, national security and national interest; and attitudes towards foreigners and minorities in individual countries.

Another major difference determining the status, position and function of Muslim institutions in European countries is determined by the role of the state itself. Despite certain social scientists’ calls for the demise of the state in the epoch of globalization (Held and McGrew 2003), the state still plays a major role in the regulation of sensitive issues such as migration flows or the modalities and limitations to the exercise of freedom of religion. Maybe this is not so evident in the Church–State relations’ norms that concern the religion of the majority of the European population (Christianity), because they are so embedded in our histories, cultures and constitutions. But the crucial role of the state in setting the rules of the game is obvious in its dealings with minorities and with new religious movements. In particular, the process behind the establishment of Muslim councils in Europe
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shows how crucial the state is. We could in fact divide these councils into three groups, on the basis of the approach used by the state in the creation or promotion of these bodies:

1. **Top-down**: councils came into being thanks to a strong governmental initiative (where typically in the country concerned there were few or weak forms of self-organization on the part of the Muslim population, and Islam had been ‘securitized’).

2. **Bottom-up**: councils were essentially the outcome of a strong civil society mobilization and social capital among the Muslim community, whereas the state remained officially behind the scenes while encouraging the initiative.

3. **Mixed approach**: in this case the formation of Muslim councils was openly encouraged by the government, which even offered some logistical structures, but did not get involved in the direct management.

Some practical examples may clarify this categorization. The Italian experience falls under the top-down approach. As organized Islam in Italy is both fragmented and weak, as well as relatively new, the Minister of the Interior established the Consulta by decree, in 2005, and personally selected those worthy of being members (Silvestri forthcoming).

The British case appears to fit the second example. The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) is a large and well-run (primarily Asian) umbrella organization but not a representative one in demographic or theological terms. Although it was never officially endorsed by the British government, it was nevertheless regarded for quite some time as a privileged interlocutor and as a protégé of New Labour (Silvestri 2005b: 101–29; McLoughlin 2005). With time, with the lead-up to the war in Iraq (see Birt 2005), and especially after the London bombings of 2005, however, the MCB increasingly lost its appeal and credibility (many ordinary Muslims began to accuse its members of being self-appointed political opportunists not caring for the young who were ending up in terrorism circles), and other competing Muslim organizations emerged, like the British Muslim Forum or the Sufi Council of Britain, which allegedly stole the support of the government (Silvestri forthcoming). However, the only time the British government attempted somehow to coordinate the different Muslim groups and movements that exist in Britain was during the post-crisis context in the summer of 2005, when it called for a taskforce on British Islam composed of a variety of people with the most diverse backgrounds to reflect upon the various aspects of Islam in Britain and on the prevention of radicalization.

Although membership of the French Conseil Français du Culte Musulman (CFCM) works by election, and membership of its German counterpart takes place by a careful system of appointments and proportional representation, both models actually appear to fall under category (c), the mixed approach. In both countries a number of separate groups were already self-organized and each government simply provided a platform to bring them together by allowing the organizations involved (and their members) a degree of independence while at the same time...
establishing restrictions on their membership. Membership of the CFCM is based on elections in mosques’ ‘constituencies’, whereas for the Konferenz the German government has devised a quota system (Jasch 2007). This system attempts to reflect the diversity of backgrounds of the country’s Muslim population in a very broad sense, thus also including individuals who are not practising and even people who are outspoken secularists. The Ministry of the Interior is behind these organizations in both cases, as in Italy.

None of these models is perfect or provides the right recipe to proceed. I would even argue that these councils are useful only in the short term and unnecessary in the long term because they promote a segmentation of society. However it is important to note their existence. They should be appreciated as ‘experiments’ on the part of governments and Muslim individuals who are trying to explore an appropriate method to organize – or, better, to ‘govern’, to use Foucault’s term – religious pluralism. In addition, what is particularly interesting and innovative in the German case is that the architects of the Konferenz made sure that ordinary individuals of Muslim faith (and in some cases even of simply Muslim background), not affiliated with any mosque or Islamic organization, were involved. Nevertheless, leading Muslim voices in Germany (members and non-members of the Konferenz) have actually criticized this enterprise for not including religious scholars when theological matters are discussed, and for not bringing together a mix of ordinary Muslim citizens and Islamic scholars, and feel that the German government is manipulating the divisions that exist within Germany’s Muslim communities.³

Caveats

A number of caveats should be spelled out in relation to these Muslim council initiatives. First, we should not take for granted that all Muslim individuals would want to identify themselves with such bodies or, indeed, may wish to be seen by society primarily through their ‘Muslim’ identity. In particular, individuals who are already fully integrated into European society might regard these initiatives as backward steps that promote sectarian identifications.

Second, we ought to be clearer about the exact purpose of these institutions and consider the possible consequences of establishing them. Some of the initiatives analysed above have the appearance of mere window-dressing, whereas others have specific pragmatic objectives (e.g. providing a unified calendar of Islamic festivities for European Muslims, clarifying norms for slaughtering of halal meat, setting standards for the establishment of Islamic schools, making the case with local authorities for mosques and Islamic cemeteries). What if these representative bodies began to have political leverage and demanded that the Muslim faithful position themselves politically, in European societies, as ‘Muslim’? Would we then see the beginning of ethno-religious consociationalism¹⁰ in Europe? And if so, what would be the consequences?

Third, the formation of structures promoting Muslim–government relations could provoke opportunistic or hypocritical behaviour. Antagonisms could emerge
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among Muslim communities and leadership in order to access the governmental platform; individuals aspiring to power, visibility and leadership could become compromised by a desire for personal gain rather than by genuine interest in the well-being of their minority community. Given the variety of Islamic forms that exist in Europe, it is also possible to foresee a scenario where the Muslim actors involved in dialogue with government split into two or more strands, some working through the state, some remaining independent associations, and both claiming and fighting for authority and recognition.

The same is true for secular political parties and coalitions: their support for or opposition to Muslim issues may be totally contingent on context, time and strategic interests that tend to work only in the short term. Recent disputes in Italy and Spain are an example of the use of Islamic issues for political opportunism. In Italy, prominent voices within the centre-right political parties Lega Nord and Forza Italia have waged a demagogic vitriolic opposition to Islam and to immigration (Mangiarotti 2007). State institutions and left-wing politicians that have shown support to Muslim causes in Italy and Spain have been criticized by their counterparts at the centre-right for trying to undermine their political opponents, Christian forces and Catholic identity. Extreme and right-wing parties across Europe have clearly positioned themselves as defenders of Christianity in the supposed clash between Islam and the West (Klausen 2005).

European governments should be aware that these newly created Muslim councils and institutions are vulnerable to the monopolization of groups and movements that have an agenda, and which are often better organized and resourced than ordinary individuals and civil society associations. The problem here would not so much lie in the political message that Islamist groups preach – most of the fears that the actors involved in these councils might support terrorism are unfounded, as the Islamist groups that are involved in such initiatives tend to be quite liberal and have quite modest agendas, typically focused on combating discrimination and promoting religious freedom (Klausen 2005; Silvestri 2006), whereas more hard-line Islamists are not involved altogether as they reject a priori engagement with a political system that is regarded to be kufr – an Arabic concept meaning ‘in denial of the faith’, ‘disbelief’, ‘apostasy’. The problem is more one of guaranteeing a diversity of views among these Muslim councils’ memberships. Vocal groups with a clear political agenda may, in the long term, drown out less politicized individuals in the same institution, might impose their own ideological or prescriptive religious views upon the others, and could only be pretending to speak on behalf of all the Muslim population of Europe or of a particular European country.

Finally, the amount of attention and resources that Muslims have received recently on the part of European governments and the EU for the purpose of countering radicalization could, in the long term, cause societal tensions. Competition between ethnic and religious groups in Britain, for instance, was a matter of great concern for the representatives of non-governmental organizations and local authorities that attended a conference on social cohesion in Britain in Manchester in November 2008. Non-Muslim black and Asian minority communities, in particular, felt that now their own voice and concerns were not heard, and that all the
attention and public money was going to Muslims or to faith-based initiatives. It is important to be aware of the existence of such perceptions and to try to prevent the emergence of such polarizations in society.

**On omissions, aberrations and getting the picture straight**

The analysis conducted so far inevitably leads us to broaden our critical reflection on the way Islam and Muslims have been (mis)understood and dealt with simplistically in public discourse in Europe. In scholarly investigations, as well as in policy discussions and responses to European Islam, there has been a tendency to explain Islamic religiosity, dynamics of identity politics, and the relationship between Muslim communities and the societies of settlement by relying on a series of assumptions and attitudes that in fact constitute an aberration from reality.

First, a static view of both European societies and Muslim individuals is adopted in reductionist approaches to Islam and Muslims in Europe. They are rooted in a fixed understanding of culture, identity and secularism, which lacks any historical or anthropological perspective. This entails seeing Muslims primarily through the lenses of essentialized ethnic features, their past migration history and their supposed religiosity, without acknowledging individual agency, personal evolution, the possibility of cross-fertilization between societies and cultures, and the fact that ethnic identification is often defined and redefined by specific contexts (Hall 1992; Bauman 1999).

Second, a homogenization of Islam and Muslims through reference to key concepts and norms in Islamic theology, key events in Islamic history and the ethno-national origins of the individuals concerned is also taking place. This view overlooks not only geographical and theological differences in Islam, but also the internal fragmentation and the fierce competition among Muslim communities and traditions that coexist within a very tight space in Europe. Furthermore, this view nourishes the perception that the global ummah poses an existential threat to Western democracies.

The third aberration stems immediately from the second and consists in the obsession with the search for ‘Islamic answers’. This can lead to ascribing (even forcing) ‘Muslim identities’ upon people and realities that have nothing or little to do with Islam, and which could often be better explained through common societal dynamics rooted in political contention, economic conditions and class, such as the French riots in the autumn of 2005 (Wihtol de Wenden 2005). The other immediate consequence of this search for Islamic answers is that of creating a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby individuals who are pigeonholed as ‘Muslim’ will be induced spontaneously to identify themselves as such.

Privileged attention to the ‘organized’ aspect of Islamic institutions and Muslim associations (whether categorized as moderate or as extremist – two other highly questionable terms) can also have its drawbacks. The attempt to create appropriate avenues for consultations with the Muslim population of Europe should undoubtedly be welcomed. After all, the multiple mechanisms (all ‘experimental’, I would like to emphasize) that are currently in place in various European countries are
the outcome of careful and context-specific considerations, in which scholars and policymakers have been engaged since the early 1990s. However, an excessive focus on organized forms of Islam and on these consultative – and, to a lesser extent, representative – bodies of Muslims in Europe can be detrimental for an open and democratic Western political system. The ordinary experiences and views of ‘non-organized’ Muslim individuals could be ignored by European governments, whereas the weight of Islamist networks and of newly created groups that pride themselves on being progressive or moderate could be overestimated. Furthermore, in- and out-group dynamics could be generated, thus producing the inaccurate perception that Muslim associations and national Islamic councils are the only meaningful channels through which the Muslim population of Europe can voice its concerns.

Another aberration that lies behind frequent policy approaches to Islam in Europe consists in transposing real and perceived international threats related to ‘Islamist terrorism’ onto local situations that either constitute unlikely scenes of future violence or are conflict-prone areas, in which, nevertheless, Islam and Islamism do not play any major role. This logic can provoke a chain reaction of fears and polarization in society that would actually be based on ‘non-events’, that is, the absence of tangible issues and events, which is typical of the process of securitization.

Most studies and empirical approaches to the engagement of European states with their Muslim communities have actually omitted or underestimated three further crucial variables: (1) the importance of the domestic context in which Muslims live and practise their faith; it determines people’s mindset and the opportunities that are available for participation in society; (2) the personal trajectory of each individual who happens to be Muslim, including their psychology, their emotional ties, their aspirations and their very personal religious experiences; (3) the social class dimension; this, more than ethnocultural differences, is likely to be a crucial determinant in social mobility, performance at school, political awareness and participation in society.

A meaningful study of Islam and Muslim communities in contemporary Europe, and of the contribution their presence makes to Europe’s developing level of multiculturalism (as a reality, not as a policy) can only be conducted through a multi-tiered, interdisciplinary approach. Distinguishing between the normative dimension of the religion (Islam) and the more fluid and adaptable reality of the individuals and communities (Muslims) who practise it, is also a necessary step in order to achieve a better sense of perspective.

Notes
1 The issues addressed in this chapter were presented at – and received valuable feedback from – various academic and public policy workshops, conferences and seminars. In particular I would like to acknowledge the discussions held in Berlin and Nuremberg (with German government officials from the Ministry for Integration and the Ministry for Migration, the Migration Policy Institute, the Bertelsmann Foundation and the Weidenfeld Institute), in 2007, and at the University of Copenhagen (at the conference...
organized by Nadia Jeldtoft and Jørgen Nielsen), in April 2009. All usual disclaimers apply.

2 The Muslim inhabitants of European countries with a large Muslim demographic presence (such as the UK, France, Belgium, or Holland) tend to hold the legal status of ‘citizens’. The majority of Muslims living in Italy and Spain (two countries that experienced only recently large influxes of individuals coming from Muslim regions of the world) and quite a few Muslims in Germany are still ‘immigrants’ although naturalization is increasing. Publications that stress that Islam has become a ‘European’ feature include: Hunter (2002); Haddad (2002); Wieviorka (2004); Cesari (2004).

3 I use interchangeably the terms ‘Islamism’ and ‘political Islam’ to indicate political movements that resort to a narrative and symbolic repertoire based on key theological and historical concepts and practices related to the religion of Islam. Such movements originated in North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia at the beginning of the twentieth century, in the context of a political and ideological confrontation with the West and the consequences of decolonization. Although several groups born out of these movements ended up implicated in bloody situations, it would be inaccurate to establish a direct correlation between faith-based political engagement and terrorism.

4 The expression ‘Muslim tradition’ is used here deliberately to convey a loose notion of connection with a variety of Islamic traditions and is not necessarily related to the intensity and typology of individual religious practice.

5 The assumption that it is possible to draw a clear divide between private and public sphere is, however, highly questionable because there are many features of religion and religiosity that have a ‘public’ face and, likewise, there are many aspects of public life that impact on personal choices and experiences.

6 On the meaning of ‘securitization’ see the beginning of the previous section above.

7 See also Russo Spena in this volume.

8 Source: personal conversation with conference member, June 2009.

9 By ‘already fully “integrated”’ I mean, for instance, people who have been fully socialized in European lifestyle, people who are happy to live and work in Europe, or young people born in Europe and who seldom, if at all, visit the country of their parents.

10 Consociationalism is a method of power sharing that is regarded as successful in maintaining stability and democracy in deeply divided societies. Lebanon is a typical example. See Lijphart 1969: 207–25.

11 This newspaper article summarizes a series of occurrences involving Lega Nord and Forza Italia (Mangiarotti 2007).

12 This was particularly apparent in the controversy around the crucifix in Italy and Spain (‘Tribunale de l’Aquila: via i crocifissi dalle scuole’, Corriere della Sera, 25 October 2003; ‘Il giudice: “Via i crocifissi dalle aule” È la prima volta nella storia della Spagna’, Corriere della Sera, 23 November 2008) and in the debate around the construction of a mosque in Bologna in 2007–2008 (cf. Allam 2008).

13 On the other hand, various scholars insist on the other side of the coin and have made the case for the need to redress specifically issues of ‘religious’ discrimination pertaining to Muslims in Britain. See for instance Modood and Meer (this volume) and Modood (2005).

14 On the ummah see the relevant section in Silvestri (2007).

15 Here I differentiate between ‘Islamic’ and ‘Muslim’: ‘Islamic’ refers to what pertains to the faith, ‘Muslim’ to what pertains to the practice.

16 For a definition of ‘Islamist terrorism’ versus other types of terrorism see Home Office (2009). We should warn, however, that the notion ‘Islamist terrorism’ is highly debatable because Islamism does not necessarily produce terrorism. Nevertheless, ‘Islamist’ appears more appropriate than ‘Islamic’ terrorism (often used by policymakers and journalists) because the former openly implies a political project whereas the latter term is more neutral in that it refers to an attribute of the faith of Islam.
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References


