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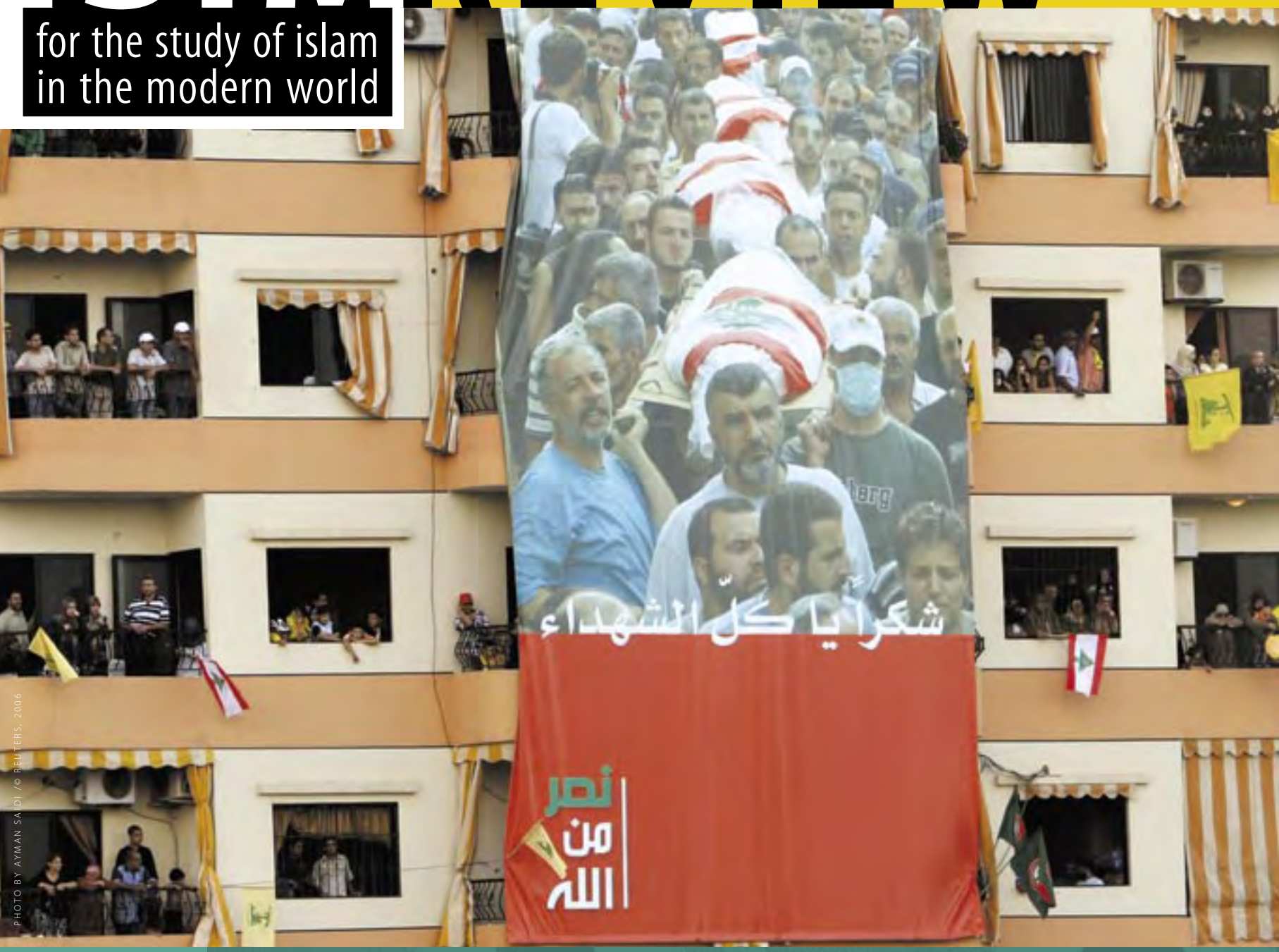


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**Hizbullah supporters watching a rally organised by Hizbullah, Beirut, 22 September 2006**

# Shades of Islamism

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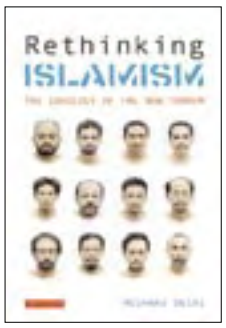


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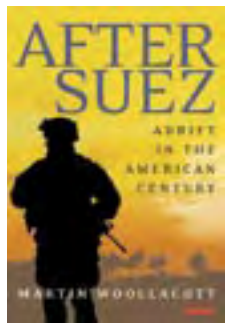


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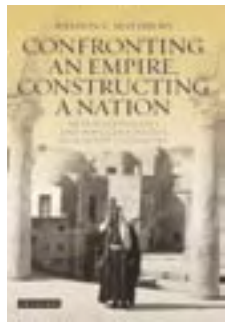


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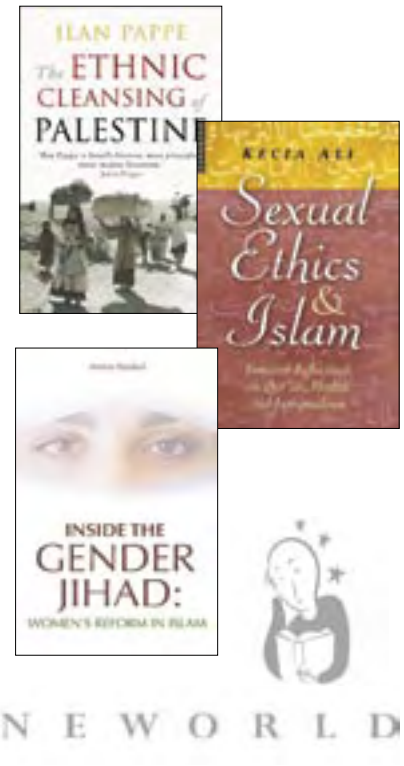


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# Editorial

MATHIJS PELKMANS

Turbaned princes, magic carpets, and other Oriental topoi thrive in computer and video games, apparently because stereotypes of the Orient translate easily into high sales (Reichmuth and Werner, p.46). While it may not be surprising that pashas and djinns appeal to Western tastes, it is harder to understand the utilization of equally archaic stereotypes by Pope Benedict XVI in his 12 September speech in Regensburg. In response to angry reactions to his speech, the Pope stressed that the hostile views about Islam expressed by the Byzantine emperor he had cited did not coincide with his own, suggesting that he personally did not equate Islam with violence. Ironically, the written version of his speech, mentions violence only in relation to Islam, and Islam only in relation to violence. Furthermore, the topic of his lecture was not violence per se but the connection between Christian faith and reason. His reference to Islam was meant as an example of what can happen when reason is removed from faith. Violence and lack of reason are, of course, two key tropes in Orientalizing discourses. Employing those highly loaded tropes in a lecture that ostensibly aims to augment inter-religious dialogue is not only counterproductive but un-reasonable.

The incident underlines the need to be attentive to the labels, categories, and concepts we employ in our speech and writing. We cannot communicate without terms, but their unreflective use may easily reinforce their stereotypic associations preventing insight into their deeper significances. The main theme of this issue, "Shades of Islamism," points at the need to reach beyond labels to see the various dimensions of what we categorize "Islamism," without discarding the term itself. In many media reports Islamists are per definition depicted as extremists and anti-modernists, and associated with violence and terrorism. By tracing the development of thought in the writings of important Islamist leaders, we cannot but recognize the modern qualities of their thinking, even while disagreeing with their conclusions (Ahmad, p.12; Reinbold, p.14). Likewise, when examining more closely the resentment expressed by most Muslims in the Middle East, it becomes apparent that radical Muslims do not necessarily reject democracy, liberty, or modernity, but rather the double standards of Western political projects and the debasement of moral values (Esposito, p.6). Often, it seems, it is not simply Islamist ideology that is attracting growing support, but rather the way these ideologies are translated into social and political action (Meijer, p.16).

The societal relevance of such movements means that they cannot and should not be ignored in any attempt to promote democratization in the Middle East (Brusse and Schoonenboom, p.8). The political costs of entering the mainstream political arena have been conspicuous in the case of Hizbullah whose imprudent decision to kidnap Israeli soldiers seemed, at least partly, inspired by the wish to restore its authority as militant movement (Alagha, p.36). The retaliation that followed demonstrated that we should not only think about whether states should engage in a dialogue with Islamists or not, but also whether conditions are present for Islamist movements to talk with (foreign) governments. In Uzbekistan for example, the government practice of labelling every grass-root organization a terrorist organization has prevented any form of dialogue and has caused a general confusion of what terrorism might actually be (Fumagalli, p.28); we may easily note parallels in other contexts.

By stressing the different shades, tints, and nuances of an umbrella concept like Islamism we do not have the illusion that those who are dependent on black and white images will change their opinions. Labels are simply too important for fostering political agendas and the creation of a collective enemy. In his article, Devji shows how, in its self-declared War on Terror, the US government employs the label "terrorist" not only to boost its own legitimacy, but also to classify its adversaries as "criminal-like" and, on those grounds, deprive them of rights (p.30). In cases where the relation between labelling techniques and the reality unfolding on the ground becomes increasingly obscure, it is often insightful to shift from academic to artistic representations of reality. By portraying his dearest family members as "terrorists," the artist Hassanzadeh effectively challenges the meaning of this label in an attempt to reclaim the right of self-representation (Shatanawi, p.54). Contributions to this *ISIM Review* ultimately demonstrate the importance of challenging dominant webs of signification as a means to maintaining our independence and as a reasonable prerequisite for critical analyses of the world we live in.

## ISIM

The International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM) conducts and promotes interdisciplinary research on social, political, cultural, and intellectual trends and movements in contemporary Muslim societies and communities. ISIM was established in 1998 by the University of Amsterdam, Leiden University, Utrecht University, and Radboud University Nijmegen in response to a need for further research on contemporary developments of great social, political, and cultural importance in the Muslim world from social science and humanities perspectives. ISIM's research approaches are expressly interdisciplinary and comparative, covering a large geographic range which includes North Africa, the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia, South and South East Asia, and Muslim communities in the West. Broad in scope, ISIM brings together all areas of disciplinary expertise in anthropology, sociology, religious studies, political science, and cultural studies.


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# Conspiracies & Theories

ASEF BAYAT

**Currently, many people seem to be preoccupied with creating or discussing conspiracy theories. At the same time, others discredit unwelcome inquiries into hidden political agendas by labelling the resulting ideas "conspiracy theories." In such an environment, the distinction between fantasy and critical thought tends to become blurred. Only by acknowledging that real conspiracies exist, and by refuting ideas that cannot be empirically staved, will we be able to analyse political situations in a manner that is neither politically naïve nor the product of a conspiracist mindset.**

In the immediate aftermath of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon on the fourteenth of July many observers challenged the US-Israeli claim which justified the campaign as a response to Hizbullah's "kidnapping" of two Israeli soldiers two days earlier. First, Israel and Hizbullah had previously exchanged prisoners without going to war. On the other hand, a "normal" response to the kidnapping could not amount to such an immensely "disproportionate" scale (killing over 1800, wounding 4000, displacing one million, and bombing civilian infrastructures, homes, roads, bridges, power stations, and airports). And finally, countries do not simply augment wars in two days; waging war with clear aims requires careful planning and preparation. In other words (as Seymour Hersh documented in the *New Yorker,* 21 August 2006) the Israeli government had planned with close involvement of the US the invasion far in advance in order to destroy Hizbullah and its military capabilities. This would remove a threat to Israel, and preempt retaliation by Iran through Hizbullah in the event that the US moves to attack Iran's nuclear installations. Israel needed only a pretext, which Hizbullah provided by kidnapping the two soldiers.

### The problem of conspiracism

The establishment circles often discredit and stifle such counter-narratives by charging their authors with weaving "conspiracy theories." How plausible are such charges? Not much. As a pejorative term, "conspiracy theory" or "conspiracism" originally referred to the work of historians who viewed most historical events and trends as the product of hidden design by those in power. To a large extent, grand happenings and sweeping trends, rather than individual and less significant incidents, were traditionally the subject of conspiracy theory. In the current popular usage, however, the term is extended to include the narrative genre which assumes behind many major or minor, social or political adverse events a concerted, secret, and unlawful plan by powerful people and institutions. Whatever the connotation, the prevalence of conspiracism in any intellectual tradition and political culture represents a serious drawback, for not only is it built upon epistemological flaws, also because it follows grave social and political implications. As such it is the antipode of critical inquiry and agency; it denigrates probing, breeds cynicism, and justifies passivity. Conspiratorial mindset fails to acknowledge that intended plots may be subverted, modified, or resisted by opposition, unforeseen factors, mistakes, or accidents. Moreover, it gives little credence to structural dynamics in forming a decision or shaping an event.

The Middle East is often said to harbour pervasive conspiratorial outlook, where many attribute almost any unfavourable political act to foreign or domestic intrigues. An Islamist member of Egyptian Parliament, for instance, would go so far as to claim in 2002 that the sanitary towels the Ministry of Education provided for girls in schools were funded by a U.S.-Jewish company and could make Egyptian girls "infertile." Or there are those Iranians who continue to believe that the Islamic revolution of 1979 was a British design to oust the Shah, to eradicate the US influence in Iran, and to install British-friendly clerics. Authoritarian regimes particularly find in their real or pretended paranoia a pretext to quell opposition groups and impose surveillance. The power elites invariably charge genuine democracy advocates with collaboration with an overblown "western enemy" to undermine "national interests" and "traditional values."

Some observers associate the source of conspiracist attitudes in the Middle East to such factors as the Islamic doctrine, historical decline of Muslims as a political and economic force, and authoritarian regimes dominating the region. Thus, predestination and fatalism in Islam are said to render Muslims to imagine hidden design behind every unexplainable occurrence. Additionally, the historic decline of Muslims and their humiliation at the hands of the colonial west and later Israel seems to have entrapped them into a conspiratorial obsession. Some even suggest that belief in martyrdom encourages Muslims to externalize their misfortune to which conspiracy theory becomes an outlet. Against this background, authoritarian states and suppression of free expression would further bolster opinions which are informed by rumours and exaggeration.

### Real conspiracies

Whereas authoritarianism plays a substantial role in developing conspiratorial attitudes, fatalism as a cataclysm for conspiracism is problematic since free will and rationalism also figure prominently in Muslim intellectual tradition. In addition, why should Middle Eastern Muslims in particular be susceptible to conspiratorial thinking, and not, say, those in Asia? The fact is that, and this is what many anti-conspiracist critics largely ignore, besides wild conspiratorial imaginations and paranoia occur also pervasive *real* conspiracies, which in turn may reinforce a mindset that is weary of the unknown, suspicious of strangers, and cynical of the powerful, and which promotes exaggerated fear among those who have little means, knowledge, and avenues to verify what they hear or to challenge what they doubt. Modern history of the Middle East is replete with colonial intrigues, divide-and-rule strategies, coups d'état, and recently, preparations for regime change. Indeed, it is the trade of secret services, such as CIA, KGB, or Israel's Mossad, to engage in plotting and implementing covert operations. In 1953, the CIA engineered a coup, which removed Iranian Prime Minister Muhammad Mosaddeq and reinstated the Shah, ending a unique democratic experience in twentieth century Iran. Mossad has engaged in numerous covert activities through its undercover agents in the Arab world. Incredibly, in the 1960s, Mossad's agent, Eli Cohen, infiltrated the highest ranks of the Baathist regime in Syria, reaching close to even the head of Syrian intelligence. Spielberg's film *Munich* dramatizes some of these covert operations. The occupation of Iraq in search for its non-existent weapons of mass destruction and the July war against Lebanon constitute a few of the latest episodes in this chain of intrigues.

While it is crucial to do away with any kind of conspiracist fantasies, one should also resist those who in the name of "conspiracy theory" discard or dampen critical inquiry into the possibility of real conspiracies. There exist fundamental differences between a "conspiracy theory" and critical inquiry. Whereas conspiracism assumes habitually or in principle that all or most adverse happenings are plotted secretly, critical inquiry does not rule out the possibility of the conspiratorial origins of some events. Contrary to conspiracism which takes its narratives for granted—narratives which often lack logical consistency and transcend common sense—critical inquiry begins by making critical observations, discovers inconsistencies, explores reasons, and develops a proposition to guide further examination. In a sense, critical inquiry aims at what the journalist Amira Hass believes to be the responsibility of genuine journalism: "to monitor the centres of power". Both the conspiracy theory and establishment narratives denigrate critical inquiry—the former defies serious investigation because it is sure of its presumptions while the latter silences critiques under the guise of anti-conspiracism. Conspiracy theory is as detrimental to truth as the cover-up of real conspiracies to justice.

Asef Bayat is Academic Director of ISIM and holds the ISIM Chair at Leiden University.

# Islamists and US Foreign Policy

JOHN L. ESPOSITO

**US foreign policy and political Islam today are deeply intertwined. Policymakers, particularly since 9/11, have demonstrated an inability and/or unwillingness to distinguish between radical and moderate Islamists. They have largely treated political Islam as a global threat similar to the way that Communism was perceived. However, even in the case of Communism, foreign policymakers eventually moved from an ill-informed, broad-brush, and paranoid approach personified by Senator Joseph McCarthy in the 1950s to more nuanced and pragmatic policies that led to the establishment of relations with China in the 1970s, even as tensions remained between the United States and the Soviet Union.**[1]

As Islamist parties continue to rise in prominence across the globe, policymakers must learn to make distinctions and adopt differentiated policy approaches. This requires a deeper understanding of what motivates and informs Islamist parties and the support they receive, including the ways in which some US policies feed the more radical and extreme Islamist movements while weakening the appeal of the moderate organizations to Muslim populations. It also requires the political will to adopt approaches of engagement and dialogue. This is especially important where the roots of political Islam go deeper than simple anti-Americanism and where political Islam is manifested in non-violent and democratic ways. The stunning electoral victories of Hamas in Palestine and the Shia in Iraq, the Muslim Brotherhood's emergence as the leading parliamentary opposition in Egypt, and Israel's war against Hamas and Hizbullah go to the heart of issues of democracy, terrorism, and peace in the Middle East.

Global terrorism has also become the excuse for many Muslim autocratic rulers and Western policymakers to backslide or retreat from democratization. They warn that the promotion of a democratic process runs the risk of furthering Islamist inroads into centres of power and is counterproductive to Western interests, encouraging a more virulent anti-Westernism and increased instability. Thus, for example, despite Hamas' victory in free and democratic elections, the United States and Europe failed to give the party full recognition and support.

In relations between the West and the Muslim world, phrases, like a clash of civilizations or a clash of cultures, recur, as does the charge that Islam is incompatible with democracy, or that it is a particularly militant religion. But is the primary issue religion and culture, or is it politics? Is the primary cause of radicalism and anti-Westernism, especially anti-Americanism, extremist theology, or simply the policies of many Muslim and Western governments?

A new Gallup World Study overwhelmingly suggests the latter. The poll enables us to get beyond conflicting analyses of experts and selective voices from the "Arab street." It lets us listen to one billion Muslims from Morocco to Indonesia. And they tell us that US policies, not values, are behind the ire of the Arab/Muslim world.[2]

### Political Islam: ballots or bullets?

History demonstrates that political Islam is both extremist and mainstream. On the one hand, Ayatollah Khomeini's Iran, the Taliban's Afghanistan, and Osama Bin Laden and al-Qaeda as well as terrorists from Morocco to Indonesia have espoused a revolutionary Islam that relies on violence and terror. On the other, many Islamist social and political movements across the Muslim world have worked within the political system.

Since the late twentieth century Islamically oriented candidates and political parties in Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, Kuwait, Bahrain, Pakistan, Malaysia, and Indonesia have opted for ballots, not bullets. They have successfully contested and won municipal and parliamentary seats, held cabinet positions, and served in senior positions such as prime minister of Turkey and Iraq and president of Indonesia.

Elections since late 2001 in Pakistan, Turkey, Bahrain, and Morocco as well as in Palestine, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt have reinforced the continued saliency of Islam in Muslim politics in the twenty first century. The more contentious aspect of political Islam has been the extent to which militant groups like Hizbullah and Hamas have turned to the ballot box. Hizbullah transformed itself into a Lebanese political party that has proven effective in parliamentary elections. At the same time, it remained a militia, fighting and eventually forcing Israeli withdrawal in 2000 from its 18-year occupation of southern Lebanon. Hamas defeated the PLO in democratic elections.

In responding to mainstream and extremist political Islam, policymakers require a better understanding of how global Muslim majorities see the world and, in particular, how they regard the United States. The question "Why do they hate us?" raised in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 looms large following continued terrorist attacks and the dramatic growth of anti-Americanism. A common answer provided by some politicians and experts has been, "They hate our way of life, our freedom, democracy, and success." Considering the broad based anti-Americanism, not only among extremists but also among a significant mainstream majority in the Muslim world (and indeed in many other parts of the world), this answer is not satisfactory. Although the Muslim world expresses many common grievances, do extremists and moderates differ in attitudes about the West?

Focusing on the attitudes of those with radical views and comparing them with the moderate majority results in surprising findings. When asked what they admired most about the West, both extremists and moderates had the identical top three spontaneous responses: (1) technology; (2) the West's value system, hard work, self-responsibility, rule of law, and cooperation; and (3) its fair political systems, democracy, respect for human rights, freedom of speech, and gender equality. A significantly higher percent of potential extremists than moderates (50 percent versus 35 percent) believe that "moving towards greater governmental democracy" will foster progress in the Arab/Muslim world. Potential extremists believe even more strongly than moderates (58 percent versus 45 percent) that Arab/Muslim nations are eager to have better relations with the West. Finally, no significant difference exists between the percentage of potential extremists and moderates who said "better relations with the West concerns me a lot."

While many believe anti-Americanism is tied to a basic hatred of the West and deep West-East religious and cultural differences, the data above contradicts these views. In addition, Muslim assessments of individual Western countries demonstrate that Muslim views do not paint all Western countries with the same brush. Unfavourable opinions of the United States or the United Kingdom do not preclude favourable attitudes towards other Western countries like France or Germany. Data shows that while moderates have very unfavourable opinions of the United States (42 percent) and Great Britain (34 percent), unfavourable opinions of France (15 percent) and Germany (13 percent) were far less and in fact comparable to the percent of Muslims who viewed Pakistan or Turkey unfavourably (both at 12 percent).

### Democratic exceptionalism?

What creates unfavourable attitudes towards the United States? One crucial factor is what is perceived as the United States' "double standard" in promoting democracy. Key factors of this perception include a long track record of supporting authoritarian regimes in the Arab and Muslim world while not promoting democracy there as it did elsewhere after the fall of the Soviet Union. Then, when weapons of mass destruc-

tion were not to be found in Iraq, the Bush administration boldly declared that the US-led invasion and the toppling of Saddam Hussein were intended to bring democracy to Iraq as part of a broader policy of promoting democracy in the Middle East. In a major policy address, Ambassador Richard Haass, a senior State Department official in the George W. Bush administration, acknowledged that both Democratic and Republican administrations had practised what he termed "Democratic Exceptionalism" in the Muslim world: subordinating democracy to other US interests such as accessing oil, containing the Soviet Union, and grappling with the Arab-Israeli conflict.

While the spread of democracy has been the stated goal of the United States, majorities in every nation surveyed by Gallup do not believe that the United States was serious about the establishment of democratic systems in the region. For example, only 24 percent in Egypt and Jordan and only 16 percent in Turkey agree that the United States was serious about establishing democratic systems. The largest groups in agreement are in Lebanon and Indonesia at 38 percent; but even there, 58 percent of Lebanese and 52 percent of Indonesians disagree with the statement.

Yet, while saying that the United States is not serious about self-determination and democracy in the Muslim world, many respondents say the thing they admire most about the West is political liberty and freedom of speech. Large percentages also associate a fair judicial system and "citizens enjoying many liberties" with Western societies while critiquing their own societies. Lack of political freedom was what they admired least about the Islamic/Arab world.

### The United States after Gaza and Lebanon

Muslim perceptions of the US role and response to the Israeli wars in Gaza and Lebanon must also be seen within the broad context of the Arab and Muslim world. From North Africa to Southeast Asia, the Gallup World Poll indicates an overwhelming majority of people (91-95 percent), do not believe that the United States is trustworthy, friendly, or treats other countries respectfully, nor that it cares about human rights in other countries (80 percent). Outside of Iraq, over 90 percent of Muslims agreed that the invasion of Iraq has done more harm than good. The Bush administration recognized that the war on global terrorism has come to be equated in the minds of many Muslims (and others) with a war against Islam and the Muslim world and reemphasized the importance of public diplomacy. The administration appointed a senior Bush confidante, Karen Hughes, as Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy, and spoke of a war of ideas. However, public diplomacy is more than public relations. It is about acting consistently with the words one speaks.

The US administration's responses in Gaza and in Lebanon undercut both the president's credibility and the war on terrorism. America's unconditional support of Israel cast it in the eyes of many as a partner, not simply in military action against Hamas or Hizbullah militants, but in a war against the democratically elected Palestinian government in Gaza and the government of Lebanon, a long-time US ally. The primary victims in Gaza and Lebanon were hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians, not terrorists. In Lebanon, more than 500 were killed, 2,000 wounded, and 800,000 displaced. Israeli's military destroyed the civilian infrastructures of both Gaza and Lebanon. International organizations like the United Nations, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch have criticized Israel for violating international law. Amnesty and Human Rights Watch has specifically cited the "use of collective punishment and war crimes." The regional blowback from the approach that the United States has taken will be enormous and enduring.

The Bush administration's promotion of democracy and the Middle East Peace Process are in critical condition. The United States remains mired in Iraq and Afghanistan with no clear "success" stories in sight. The situation has been compounded by the US and European failure to respect the democratic choice of Palestinians, whatever its reservations, done little to ease the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, and then their passive and active compliance with Israel's wars in Gaza and Lebanon. Hamas and Hizbullah have become symbols of resistance, enjoying a level of support that would have been unimagined in the past throughout much of the Muslim world. European countries have enjoyed a great deal of credibility in the Middle East. However, if this trend continues, Europe's ability to positively affect developments in the Middle East will be eroded. Many US and European allies in the Arab/Muslim world increasingly use the threat of extreme Islamists and the war against terrorism as excuses for increased authoritarianism and repression, trading their support for United States backing down on its democratic agenda. The unintended consequences of uncritical US and European support for Israel's extended war have played right into the hands of the Bin Ladens of the world.

PHOTO BY AAMIR QURESHI / © AFP, 2006

**Posters of US President George W. Bush on his visit to Pakistan, Rawalpindi, 3 March 2006**

A critical challenge today is to distinguish between mainstream and extremists groups and to work with democratically elected Islamists. US administrations and many European governments have often said that they distinguish between mainstream and extremist groups. However, more often that not, they have looked the other way when autocratic rulers in Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, and elsewhere have intimidated and suppressed mainstream Islamist groups or attempted to reverse their successes in elections in the past several decades. The challenge has been particularly complex in connection to resistance movements like Hamas and Hizbullah. Both are elected political parties with a popular base. At the same time, they are resistance movements whose militias have fought Israeli occupation and whom Israel, the United States, and Europe have labelled as terrorist organizations. There are established precedents for dealing with such groups, such as the ANC in South Africa and Sinn Fein, the political wing of the IRA in Ireland, groups with which we've had to come to terms. The United States and Europe need to deal with the democratically elected officials, while also strongly condemn any acts of terrorism by their militias. European countries like France, Germany, and Norway have both a long presence and credibility in the Middle East, are not associated as are the U.S. and Britain with the Iraq invasion and occupation, and seen as more independent in their relations with the Bush administration. This enables them to play an important and constructive role. Diplomacy, economic incentives, and sanctions should be emphasized, with military action taken only as a last resort. However, overuse of economic sanctions by the Clinton and Bush administrations has reduced US negotiating leverage with countries like Iran and Sudan.

Equally difficult, the United States and Europe, while affirming their support for Israel's existence and security, must clearly demonstrate that this support has clear limits. They must be prepared to condemn Israel's disproportionate use of force, collective punishment, and other violations of international law. Finally, most fundamental and important is the recognition that widespread anti-Americanism among mainstream Muslims and Islamists results from what the United States in particular does—its policies and actions—not its way of life, culture, or religion.

**Notes**

1. This article is based on "It's the Policy, Stupid: Political Islam and US Foreign Policy," *Harvard International Review*, http://hir.harvard.edu/articles/1453/.
2. The Gallup Organization, in association with Gallup Senior Scientist John L. Esposito, is producing a large, in-depth study of Muslim opinion. The preliminary findings of the Gallup study reflect the voices and opinions of 800 million Muslims from Morocco to Indonesia. Samples include at least 1,000 adults surveyed in each of the poll's 10-targeted preliminary countries.

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# Islamic Activism and Democratization

WENDY ASBEEK BRUSSE
& JAN SCHOONENBOOM

**Islamic activist movements and parties have become crucial political players throughout the Muslim world. In a recent policy advice to the Dutch government, the Netherlands' Scientific Council for Government Policy argues that the EU should recognize Islamic activism as a potentially constructive force for promoting democracy. The EU should use its renewed Euro-Mediterranean policy for the Middle East to support the participation within the political system of all constructive political parties, including Islamic parties.**[1]

Ever since the rise of Islamic activism in the 1970s and '80s, regimes in the Middle East and their political supporters in the West have been reluctant to allow Islamic political movements full and equal participation in national elections and parliaments. Their argument has been that once such movements receive access to the political arena and assume power, they would quickly end democratic competition altogether. In view of the absolute claims of many early Islamic activists, this fear of "one man, one vote, one time" was quite understandable. After all, these activists rejected principles of democracy and human rights as contradictory to the absolute sovereignty of God and to Sharia. They wanted the Islamization of society and the creation of an Islamic state based on their own, literal interpretations of the rules laid down in the Quran and Sunna, including the cruel *hadd* penalties. It is mainly their ideology that has inspired the widespread notion of a "clash of civilizations" between the West and Islam.

The European Commission now stresses that Europe should be open to ties with all the relevant democratic actors, including Islamic political movements and parties.

Islamic activism has proved to be neither static nor monolithic, however. Today's movements are usually very different from those of the 1970s and 1980s. Many former, revolutionary leaders have taken on more constructive roles within society and politics. Instead of striving to replace the (secular) national state, violently if necessary, with an (Ummah-wide) Islamic state, they now fight authoritarian rule through participation in the existing political system. Some have taken on board the ideas of Islamic reform thinkers who try to connect Islam with democracy by using Islamic concepts such as shura (consultation). Others see democracy as a valuable product of human reason that favourably relates to the intentions of the Quran. Others do not even look for a solid theological or ideological foundation for reconciling Islam and democracy. What all three groups share is the willingness to adapt themselves to existing political rules. They formulate political programmes, join coalitions, and distance themselves from the absolute truths and undefined forms of "opposition Islam" that appeal to dogmatic radicals and extremists. The younger generation, in particular, often draws on Islamic grassroots networks to gain support among ordinary citizens. They have become familiar with the role of democratic principles and human rights in the fight against state oppression, arbitrariness, lawlessness, and social marginalization.

### Islamic activism in Egypt

The Jamaa al-Islamiyya in Egypt offers an example of such a transformation of Islamic activism. After violent confrontations with the government during the 1990s, which peaked with the Luxor bombing in 1997, the Jamaa leadership decided to renounce violence. This led to a secret agreement with the government in 2002 and a historic public explanation from the imprisoned Jamaa leaders about their change of course. The Egyptian authorities even allowed them to travel around various prisons to persuade their followers. The leaders also published four books in which they gave an underpinning, on the basis of the Quran and Sunna, for the thesis that armed Islamic struggle is not legitimate. Furthermore, they distanced themselves from the Jamaa doctrine and practices of the 1970s and 1980s, including the strict interpretation of the sovereignty of God provided by Islamic thinkers such as Mawdudi and Qutb. To avoid any misunderstanding that this indeed represented a new, official position of the Jamaa, the books included the names of their authors, sympathizers, as well as all the Jamaa founders and historic leaders. Some of them revealed in interviews that their process of reconsideration had begun in 1982 but had been eclipsed by the escalation of violence and radical splintering during confrontations with the Egyptian regime.

Despite this moderation, the regime continued its predominantly repressive approach towards Islamic movements. This treatment included the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, which has always been more conciliatory towards the regime than the Jamaa. In the full glare of the state-controlled media, prominent Brotherhood leaders have been charged with membership of a religious—and therefore illegal—organization and with undermining state security. Through the imposition of prison sentences they were removed from the political arena and many other activists were frightened off. Initially, the Brotherhood ended up further on the political sideline and experienced a crisis. Younger generations accused their leadership of being ideologically rigid, autocratic, and insufficiently open to constructive debate and coalitions with other parties. In 1996 several prominent critics decided to form a new party called al-Wasat (Centre). This party, whose founders included women and Copts, was initially considered by the regime as a clone of, and front for the Brotherhood. A principal founder, Abul-Ila Madi, two party sponsors, and thirteen leaders of the Brotherhood were arrested and accused of membership of an illegal organization and conducting political activities without authorization. Ultimately, eight Muslim Brothers were sentenced to prison terms.

Unlike the Brotherhood, al-Wasat labels itself a political party that is not linked to Islamic faith but to "Islamic culture" on the basis of *citizenship*. With this concept the party stresses to seek a society in which Muslims and Christians have an equal place as citizens. They distance themselves from the Islamization policy of the Brotherhood and, following the example of modern, formally recognized, religiously oriented parties in Turkey, Jordan, Yemen, and Malaysia, are trying to become a broad party with a democratic, and reform-minded direction that is willing to form alliances. Because of this stance, the Party (now officially called Hizb al-Wasat al-Gedid, the New Centre Party) has received support from several prominent secular opposition leaders.[1] Meanwhile, the Brotherhood has learned from its competitor and has made a political comeback. During the November 2005 parliamentary elections, its politicians presented themselves as "independent" candidates in 150 of the 444 districts, and eventually won in 88 districts. Although still formally banned, they are now the largest opposition group in parliament.

### The need for constructive European engagement

Unlike what many "clash thinkers" and authoritarian regimes impute, Islamic politics do not constitute a homogeneous, immutably fundamentalist, and/or violent threat. It is true that threats do arise from jihadist groups. However, while their ideology and actions have caused widespread damage and fear, they are not representative of the political developments in the Middle East. Nor is the evolutionary path

of Islamic activism in Egypt so unique. Many other Islamic movements and parties have undergone similar endogenous reform processes. This can be observed in Jordan, Morocco, Kuwait, and Yemen, where Islamic parties can now take part in politics under certain conditions. Consequently, non-religious parties have taken more heed of the voters' wishes to see political programmes reflect religious values. The result is increasing competition for the large group of voters in the middle of the political spectrum, which leads to further moderation and readiness to compromise. The political agenda and behaviour of these Islamic parties also serve as examples for movements in neighbouring countries and other regions. Even in Egypt and Tunisia, where religious political parties and movements still have no access to the political arena, the success of Turkey's religiously inspired AKP serves as a source of inspiration for pragmatism and the gradual appropriation of democratic and human rights concepts.

The current turmoil in the Middle East should not block our view of such promising developments. The member states of the EU, who have Muslim states as their immediate neighbours and many Muslims among their own populations, cannot remain aloof. Relations with and within the Middle East have become a crucial influence on their international as well as their domestic internal stability. An inward-looking EU, which renounces external ambitions, only creates an illusion of security that does not remove existing vulnerabilities. Moreover, aloofness would mean ignoring opportunities to support promising developments within the region. At the same time, recent history shows that democracy cannot permanently be imposed from outside. It needs to emerge primarily from within.

PHOTO BY YOAV LEMMER / © AFP, 2006

**Posters for the Palestinian parliamentary elections at a billboard near the Damascus Gate, East Jerusalem, 23 January 2006**

### Euro-Mediterranean policy and European neighbourhood policy

The EU can and should use its "soft power" to stimulate endogenous steps towards democratization. In the past, the EU's advocacy of democratization in the Middle East was directed towards secular movements and parties, even though these had little political legitimacy among the local population. Its so-called Euro-Mediterranean Policy (EMP) was even designed to curtail the popularity and influence of Islamic activist movements. Created in the wake of the Oslo Peace agreements (1993), its charter originally intended to settle the peace relations between the Arab world, Israel, and the EU. With the rise of the FIS and the civil war in Algeria fresh in memory, however, the framers of the so-called Barcelona declaration on the EMP (1995) associated Islamic activism chiefly with fundamentalist, violent movements that would seriously undermine stability in the region. Scenario's of "one-off elections" dominated their risk analyses.

In its original form, the EMP rested on the assumption that mutually improved market access in combination with foreign direct investments, and multilateral trade liberalization could set in motion a process of economic growth that would lead to a strengthening of the rule of law and democratization. Political reforms would be stimulated best by supporting secular opposition groups, Western-oriented NGOs, and so-called civil society organizations. Ideally these would gradually develop into countervailing powers that could extract democratic concessions from the incumbent regimes. So far, however, these groups have played only a marginal role in politics and society. By clever combinations of repression, patronage, and co-optation, they have been sidelined or "bought off." Many "official" NGOs, such as community service organizations, unions, and chambers of commerce now have close economic and personal ties with policy-makers whom they do not wish to jeopardize. Yet, the Islamic-inspired political movements, parties and organizations that do manage to mobilize the masses of ordinary citizens (including also women), have thus far not been involved in the EMP.

Despite its low public profile and very modest record over the first ten years, the EMP can potentially support democratization. Now, there exists within the European Commission and among the member states support for a renewed EMP that introduces a firm link to the bilateral policy of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). This latter policy instrument can introduce a more forceful linkage between political reform efforts by individual countries and positive incentives such as improved access to the internal EU market, financial aid, and loans. In this manner, a better balance can be achieved between the multilateral co-operation of the EMP and the individual reform trajectories of the ENP. The range, emphases, and tempo of the reforms no longer need to depend on the least enthusiastic reformers among the Middle Eastern partner countries.

In a remarkable change of course, the new EMP has abandoned the premise that secular forces in the region are natural allies in the battle against Islamic activism and that NGOs outside the political arena always provide the most important impulses for democratization. The European Commission now stresses that Europe should be open to ties with all the relevant democratic actors, including Islamic political movements and parties. This change forms an important opening for constructive engagement with Islamic activism. What remains unclear, however, is the extent of support for its position among EU member states. Recent calls by the Commission for defining a standpoint on democratic Islamic parties has found little resonance on the ministerial level. "Islam" has become a very sensitive issue in most member states and politicians are clearly reluctant to be seen to endorse the Commission's views.

### Muddling through?

While violent confrontations are now increasingly being framed as clashes between the West and Islam, it is no longer possible to maintain the status quo by muddling through. Also in its own interest the EU should step up efforts to stimulate endogenous democratization in the region. It should explicitly recognize Islamic political and social groups as *potentially* legitimate and credible partners for constructive engagement. This recognition must not only penetrate the bureaucratic circuits of "Brussels." EU governments should explicitly endorse this new policy and explain this to their own populations. In the current polarized climate they will thus send the signal to people in the Middle East and to their own (Muslim) populations at home that all constructive political activists, including religiously inspired groups, will be taken seriously as potential allies in the pursuit of political participation, democratization, and improvement of human rights. Accordingly, the EU may regain some credibility regarding its own commitments to these values.

**Note**

1. Scientific Council for Government Policy, *Dynamism in Islamic Activism*: *Reference Points for Democratization and Human Rights* (Amsterdam University Press, 2006).

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# Islamist-Leftist Cooperation in the Arab World

JILLIAN SCHWEDLER
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**Islamist and Leftist movements have increasingly cooperated in a range of political activities. The authors compare the forms of such cooperation in Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen, illustrating the strategic importance of cross-ideological alliances for advancing agendas in the face of repressive regimes. However, the comparison also reveals that it remains uncertain if the alliances will gain enough strength to transform political landscapes, and unlikely that cooperation will forge a shared political vision or ideology.**

Throughout the Middle East, actors across the political spectrum cooperate in ways that were unprecedented before the democratic openings of the early 1990s. Even though few of these openings have advanced toward democracy, groups that had never previously worked together—indeed, some with long histories as rivals—now routinely cooperate in a wide range of political activities. In addition to parliamentary opposition blocs, cooperation has emerged within professional associations, in the organization of protest activities, and within special bodies convened to debate constitutional amendments or draft national charters. Perhaps most strikingly, many Islamist groups now routinely cooperate with a range of leftists, including liberals, communists, and socialists. Repressive regimes remain the primary obstacle to democratic reform in the Arab world, but even strategic and limited openings have led to new forms of political contestation. Do these new practices hold long-term consequences for democratization in the region?

In order to address this question, we organized two conferences to explore Islamist-leftist cooperation in the Middle East.[1] Applying a typology of three forms of cooperation—tactical, strategic, and ideational—to three prominent cases of cross-ideological cooperation in the Middle East, we find a high degree of low-level cooperation and increased mid-level cooperation, but less evidence that high-level cooperation will emerge soon.

## Levels of cooperation

The lowest level of cooperation is purely tactical: when groups engage in joint activities on an issue-by-issue and short-term basis. Cooperation might be repeated in the future, but only when actors embrace a common narrative—such as support for Palestinians—that entails few political costs. Tactical cooperation does not require (even if it sometimes facilitates) that groups seek to justify their cooperation in terms of their core ideological commitments.

Mid-level cooperation is more strategic and engagement is sustained and encompassing of multiple issues. Cooperation may be initiated around a particular set of aims but expanded as new issues arise. At the same time, strategic cooperation may be possible only with the understanding that certain issues are off the table: groups share a commitment to working together in a sustained manner, but not to forging a shared political vision or ideology.

High-level cooperation is when groups remain distinct entities but strive to develop a collective vision for political, social, and economic reform. Participants are open to exploring any issue that might arise, and ideological positions are decided through substantive debate about core ideological commitments. High-level cooperation also encompasses broader issues of identity, as participants claim a commitment to a shared worldview as well as specific policies about how to realize that vision.

The cases of Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen illustrate increasing levels of Islamist cooperation within different political contexts, as well as the continuing obstacles to high-level cooperation.

## Egypt

Egypt has a history of cooperation across ideological divides, but the parliamentary and presidential elections in 2005 brought massive cooperation across partisan, regional, and class lines calling for Mubarak's removal and the adoption of a new constitution. Political demonstrations reflected themes so common that the ideological commitments of specific organizers were often hard to discern in the midst of the events. However, though some instances of high-level cooperation may be emerging, cooperation between Egypt's Islamists and leftists remains primarily tactical and strategic.

Within the Muslim Brotherhood, the new generation pressed for a means through which their banned organization could access a greater political voice in parliament. In 1984, it forged a tactical electoral alliance between the Brotherhood and the right-of-centre Wafd Party, followed in 1987 by one with the Labour Party that continues to today. These alliances had a veneer of sustained cooperation, but they proved to be largely tactical. Indeed, the Brotherhood is accused of infiltrating—more than cooperating with—the Labour Party in order to Islamicize that group.

When Mubarak closed the political system in the early 1990s in response to the resurgence of violence by Islamic militants, leaders across the political spectrum jointly opposed the strict new electoral laws, the termination of local mayoral and university elections, and greater press censorship. As in other states, political opposition found new spaces in which to operate. The Brotherhood soon commanded the majority of seats in the boards of directors of numerous professional associations but also organized demonstrations around issues of broader political concern attracting activists of all political stripes.[2]

. . . participants avoid controversial topics for the sake of unity . . .

The latter half of the 1990s witnessed leftist civil society organizations collaborating on a sporadic basis at the grassroots level. With the outbreak of the second Palestinian intifada in September 2000, this cooperation drew in Islamic activists, as well as large segments of the general public. Demonstrations and rallies increased with the Iraq war, culminating in a massive demonstration in Cairo on 20 March 2003. This new mood of activism in Egypt has led to the creation of a network of joint initiatives, raising the question whether the Brotherhood is moving toward more consistently strategic cooperation. This upsurge in joint activism includes the Anti-Globalization Egyptian Group, formed in 2002 and joined by Islamists in 2003, and the dissent movement known as Kifaya (Enough), the brainchild of seven friends with Islamist, Marxist, Nasserist, and liberal backgrounds. But participants avoid controversial topics for the sake of unity, and cooperation has not reached a high level.

The number and diversity of cross-ideological organizations, forums, and blocs represents a deep and growing frustration with Egypt's status quo across the entire political spectrum.[3] In 2005, the Wasat Party, Kifaya Party, the Karama Party (a break-away group from the Nasserists), and several nationalist opposition parties announced the formation of the National Front for Change, pledging to coordinate which parliamentary

candidates would run against NDP candidates in the fall contest. For its part, the Brotherhood's participation in joint activities remains primarily at the low and middle levels, though the group does regularly reach out to other parties. It joined the National Front for Change in 2005 in spirit only, stating that it would not coordinate candidates or political slogans. Indeed, like many political actors, the Brotherhood attempts to play all sides by maintaining cooperative relations with the regime while also reaching out to opposition groups and candidates at other moments.

### Jordan

Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood has increasingly cooperated with leftists since the 1989 political opening that brought the resumption of national elections and the lifting of martial law the following year. Tactical cooperation first emerged in the course of political protests, notably the massive popular events against the Gulf War of 1990-91. By 1992, leaders from the new Islamic Action Front (IAF)—a political party dominated by Brotherhood members—were holding press conferences alongside leftist leaders to protest changes to the elections law. When a new electoral law produced losses in the 1993 parliamentary elections for Islamist and leftist parties alike, they began to hold irregular meetings of an informal opposition bloc.

By the signing of the Jordan peace treaty with Israel in late 1994, Jordan saw a precipitous decline in political freedoms as the regime sought to silence widespread opposition to the treaty. Ironically, the closing of the political system led diverse political actors to cooperate more frequently on a wider range of activities. These engagements remained largely tactical in character and were organized around broad issues such as opposition to U.S. intervention in the Middle East.

A more sustained form of cooperation among 13 parties emerged with the creation of the Higher Committee for the Coordination of National Opposition Parties (HCCNOP) under the leadership of the IAF in 1994 as an extra-parliamentary coalition.[4] Over its twelve-year history, the group's agenda has expanded beyond foreign policy to critique the regime's authoritarian practices. Former IAF leader Abd al-Latif Arabiyyat has called the HCCNOP a democratic model for the Arab world.

Like Egypt, Jordan has also seen new alliances evolve into the formation of entirely new groups. The 2003 elections included candidates from Jordan's own al-Wasat. Like its Egyptian namesake—the two have no formal relations—the new Party unites moderate Islamists with leftists intent on presenting a new vision of pluralist reform. The Party (while licensed) remains very small and holds only two seats in parliament.

Jordan's Brotherhood and the IAF have been at the forefront of the trend toward cooperation in the kingdom. In addition to parliamentary blocs and various anti-normalization committees, Islamists have engaged in less visible local cooperative activities. The overall trend has been an evolution from purely tactical cooperation to the normalization of sustained, strategic cooperation. Nevertheless, Islamists draw red lines around issues on which they refuse to cooperate or compromise, particularly issues concerning gender and the application of Islamic law. Relations between the parties are periodically strained as the IAF continues to seek its previously privileged relationship with the regime.

### Yemen

In Yemen, the mainstream Islamist political party—the Yemeni Congregation for Reform, or Islah (reform) party—is a coalition of moderate and radical Islamists, conservative tribal leaders, and businessmen. Because it is characterized by deep divisions—for example, the Party formally accepts democracy as a legitimate form of government while one Party leader, the extremist Abd al-Majid al-Zindani, routinely rejects it—the sustainability of the Party's cooperative endeavors has been uneven. Its factions share only a vision of conservative Islam as a necessary centerpiece to all spheres of life, with significant differences on what that would look like and how to achieve it. Indeed, Yemen illustrates that individual personalities play a crucial role in forging cooperation and the very real challenges of bringing together parties of different ideologies, strategies, and relations with the regime.

Following Yemen's 1990 unification, the new Islah Party was closely allied with the General Popular Conference (GPC). This alliance was easily forged around long and close relations between the regime and various factions within the Islah Party, with the latter playing a crucial role in helping to offset the potential gains of the Yemen Socialist Party (YSP) in the unified state's first parliamentary elections in 1993. In the years between unification and that first electoral contest, some two hundred YSP members were targets of assassinations, many of which were carried out by Islamists connected to the more radical factions within the Islah Party.

Yet a decade later, a prominent YSP leader was invited as an honoured guest to address the biennial gathering of the Islah Party general membership. This dramatic turnaround—from a party bent on defeating the YSP to the exploration of limited cooperation—reflects less the shifting commitments of the Islah Party than the deterioration of its alliance with the GPC. With the defeat of the YSP in Yemen's civil war in 1994, the logic of GPC-Islah cooperation was diminished: the GPC, which dominated the government, no longer needed the Islah Party to help offset the potential influence of the YSP.[5] Within three years, the ministries held by Islah declined from nine to zero.

In this context of near total domination of Yemeni politics by the GPC, the logic of sustained strategic cooperation between Islah and the other opposition parties became increasingly hard to ignore. In 2002, several moderate Islah leaders from the Brotherhood trend sought to forge an alliance with the YSP largely concerning the upcoming elections but with clear intentions that the alliance could continue. The deputy secretary-general of the YSP, Jar Allah Umar, addressed the Islah general conference in December 2002. As he exited the stage, he was fatally shot by a radical salafi seated in the second row, an area usually reserved for dignitaries.[6] The Islah Party issued a statement condemning the act, although it remains unclear whether the assassin, Ali Jar Allah, was a member of Islah.

Nevertheless, the Islah party, the YSP, and four smaller parties formed the tactical Joint Meeting Group in preparation for the 2003 elections. Islah promised to withhold from running candidates in 30 districts where the YSP's prospects were better, and the YSP agreed not to campaign in 130 constituencies where Islah stood a good chance.[7]

Yemen illustrates that even when the logic of cooperation is compelling, the divergent ideological commitments of the actors involved might render cooperation unimaginable for some actors. The factionalized Islah party moved from strategic cooperation with the GPC toward tactical and strategic cooperation with the YSP and other leftist parties. Not all Islah members or even leaders embraced this move, illustrating the key role individuals play in forging cross-ideological cooperation and gaining the support of the broader party membership.

### Democratic practice in action?

Do these new practices of cross-ideological cooperation hold long-term consequences for democratization in the region? Egypt, Jordan and Yemen illustrate that Islamist-leftist cooperation in the Arab world continues to expand, even as democratic openings are steadily reversed. While most cooperation remains short-term and tactical, instances of sustained and strategic cooperation are increasing. Cooperation emerges primarily when political opportunities render it useful, as when opposition parties develop a sense of common purpose in the face of a repressive regime. Even sustained cooperation, however, does not foreclose the possibilities that individual parties will still seek to cooperate with the regime to advance their own agendas. Mid-level cooperation does not necessarily reflect a growing commitment to democratic norms, but the ease with which many Islamists now cooperate with leftists suggests that high-level cooperation may emerge in the near future. In the meantime, however, the very limited cases of high-level, ideational cooperation appear to emerge primarily when new groups are formed out of splintering of parties, rather as a result of a broader evolution of established parties.

**Notes**

1. The first conference was held at the European University Institute and Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies Mediterranean Programme, Florence, March 2004; the second at the Rockefeller Foundation Conference Centre in Bellagio, August 2005.
2. Mona al-Ghobashy, "The Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37, no. 3 (August 2005): 373-395.
3. Samer Shehata, "Opposition Politics in Egypt: A Fleeting Moment of Opportunity?" *Arab Reform Bulletin* 2, no. 9 (October 2004).
4. See Janine A. Clark, "The Conditions of Islamist Moderation: Unpacking Cross-Ideological Cooperation in Jordan," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (forthcoming November, 2006).
5. Jillian Schwedler, *Faith in Moderation: Islamist Parties in Jordan and Yemen* (Cambridge, 2006).
6. Sheila Carapico, Lisa Wedeen, and Anna Wuerth, "The Death and Life of Jarallah Omar," *Middle East Report Online*, 31 December 2002.
7. Sheila Carapico, "How Yemen's Ruling Party Secured an Electoral Landslide," *Middle East Report Online,* 16 May 2003.

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# The State in Islamist Thought

IRFAN AHMAD

**The state became central to Islamism not because Islam theologically entailed it, but because of socio-political formations that developed in the early twentieth century. The article analyses how these historical developments are reflected in the writings of Abul Ala Maududi, whose influence has crossed the frontiers of India to influence Islamist movements across the Arab world. In doing so, the author offers a critique of the pervasive view that the importance of the state stems from a presumed lack of separation between religion and politics in Islam.**

The vast literature on political Islam pre-dominantly offers the following explanation for centrality of "state" in the discourse of Islamists: the state is pivotal to Islamism because, unlike other religions, Islam (as a faith) does not make a distinction between religion and state. Put differently, the argument asserts that since it fuses religion and politics, the idea of a state naturally flows from the very character of Islam. In Ernest Gellner's view, Islam has a lack in so far as, in contradistinction to Christianity, it failed to enact a separation between religion and politics. So pervasive is this argument that it invariably informs the writings of scholars such as Louis Dumont, Bernard Lewis, Bassam Tibi, Montgomery Watt, and Myron Weiner. Perhaps as a reaction to this, some scholars have taken the pain to demonstrate the opposite. Egyptian Ali Abd al-Raziq and Said al-Ashmawy, as well as the Indian theologian Wahiddudin Khan, for instance, contend that Islam *does* distinguish religion from state and that the latter is not important to it as a faith. On the face of it, both these positions look radically antagonistic. However, a closer scrutiny shows their basic similarity: both arguments parade a theological logic. In different ways, the proponents of both positions quote, *inter alia*, Quran and hadith to prove their respective arguments.

In this article, I call into question the validity of the theological approach to the issue of state and Islamism. I argue instead that the reason why the state became central to Islamism was not because Islam theologically entailed it. Rather it did so because of the configuration of the early twentieth century socio-political formations under which the state as an institution had acquired an unprecedented role in expanding its realm of action and scope of its effect. Since Islamism was a response to the modern state formation with its far-reaching consequences it was only logical that the state became the centre of its discourse. Thus it was not due to Islamic theology that the state became central to Islamism; on the contrary, it was the unusual expansion of the early twentieth century state and its imprint on almost every domain of life that drove Islamists to make the state central to theology. To substantiate my argument, I will discuss the writings of Abul Ala Maududi (1903-79). Arguably, he is the foremost ideologue of Islamism. Founder of the Jamaa-e-Islami in India, Maududi's appeal has crossed the frontiers of India to influence Islamist movements in the Arab world, prominent amongst whom is Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and its ideologue, Sayyid Qutb. Here I will show how Maududi's theoretical elaboration about Islam being synonymous with the state was enmeshed in and a direct product of the political-electoral matrix of colonial India.

> [I]f someone claimed to be the ruler of a country his claim would be equivalent to a claim to be God …

### The modern state

As is well documented, the medieval European state governed mostly by not governing. That is to say, seldom did it interfere in most affairs of its subjects. Its main interest, then, was to extract levies. Its administrative scope was also far less limited. The modern state, by contrast, developed a more penetrative scope. Because of print media, transportation links and other innovations, it assumed what Giddens calls "heightened administrative power"[1] and thus went beyond mere extracting taxes to impact mundane life. Around the sixteenth century or so, observes Foucault, there was a "veritable explosion of the art of governing"[2] in Europe as a result of which state acquired the pastoral power manifest in its regulation of every facet of life, including the intimate zones of sexuality and care. It would be wrong to say that the Indian colonial state had a similar pastoral power. But its administrative scope was surely more vast and far-reaching than that of its predecessor, the Mughal state. According to the political theorist, Sudipta Kaviraj, the pre-modern Indian state was of marginal significance to everyday life. It was barely interested in altering socio-religious order. "The state, far from being the force which created … or changed this order," he argues, "was itself subject to its control."[3] In contrast, the role of colonial state was unusually far reaching. It played such an interventionist role in religion, law, education, census, language, and so on that it directly affected everyday life.[4]

Given its centrality, all social movements in the nineteenth century and later pertained to the role of the state even if their target were non-state actors. The anti-colonial movement, spearheaded by the Indian National Congress (hereafter Congress) under M. K. Gandhi's able leadership, was the largest. From the early twentieth century, its main goal became *swaraj*, self-rule. Clearly, self-rule was essentially about the state. It was in such a context that Maududi, still a teenager, appeared as a journalist on the scene. Initially, he was a devoted Congressman. He wrote laudatory biographies of Gandhi and Pundit Madanmohan Malaviya, a Congress revivalist leader who he called "sailor of India's boat." In 1920, Maududi, believing in its mission for a secular, religiously composite, and free India, became an editor of *Muslim*, a newspaper published by the Jamiatul Ulema-e-Hind, an organization of ulama, and ally of the Congress. However, Maududi soon grew disenchanted with the Congress, which he believed favoured Hindus at the cost of Muslims.

### From communalism to Islamism

In 1928, Maududi left Delhi for Hyderabad, capital of the Muslim princely state of the Nizams. There he devoted himself to studying Islam. Worried as he was about the decline of Muslim power, he offered a blueprint to the Nizams to revitalize it. It called for overhauling the education system and propagating a "pure" Islam. To his dismay, the Nizams showed no interest in it. In 1932, he launched an Urdu journal, *Tarjumanul Koran* as a part of his own plan.

While busy with his studies, the elections of 1937 took Maududi by storm. Consequently, he moved first to communalism and finally to Islamism. Under the Government of India Act of 1935 introduced by the colonial state, elections to form provincial governments were held. The contest was mainly between the Congress and the Muslim League, a party of landed magnates who demanded a separate Muslim state, Pakistan. As such the League rejected the Congress' claim to represent Muslims. Yet, it lost the elections. The Congress clinched victory to form provincial Ministries. It was then that Maududi turned *Tarjuman* into a weapon against the Congress. He equated the policy of the Ministries (1937-39) with heralding a "Hindu Raj." He accused them of imposing Hindu culture on Muslim students in schools: schools were named Vidya Mandir (literally temple), which "smelled of Hindu religion." Muslim students were forced to wear the *dhoti* (a lower garment worn mostly by Hindu men) and sing the anti-Islamic Sanskrit anthem *vande matram*; while the curriculum elided or misrepresented Islam

and unduly highlighted Hinduism. Maududi saw evidence of "Hindu Raj" in the marginalization of Urdu as well. Clearly, Maududi's allegations pertained to the role of state—a role the pre-colonial state barely had.

After the elections of 1937, both Maududi and the League thus opposed the Congress. This did not make them friends, however. Actually, as the possibility of Pakistan's creation intensified so did Maududi's critique of the League. He criticized it for the absence of a sharia state from its agenda. In the late 1930s, the whole national politics revolved around the issue of state: the League demanded a separate Muslim state; the Congress attempted to avert it by having a secular state of united India; and the Indian Communist movement's agenda was to secure a socialist state. In a context where "state" was the reigning vocabulary of politics, Maududi advanced his own, a sharia state. From this standpoint, he found the League un-Islamic. For him, there was no difference between the Congress and the League as both desired a secular state. He described the League as a "party of pagans," because its leaders did not know even elementary Islam. Nor did they quote, even mistakenly, the Quran in their meetings. Since the League had no agenda for a sharia state, Maududi declared that future Pakistan would be "na-Pakistan," a profane land. He even called it an "infidelic state of Muslims." It was for this reason that in 1941, he founded Jamaat-e-Islami as an alternative to both the Congress and the League. The Jamaat's Constitution described its goal as the establishment of *hukumat-e-ilahiya*, "Islamic State."

COURTESY OF JAMAAT-E-ISLAMI HIND, 2005

**Jamaat-e-Islami Hind meeting, Delhi, 2005**

### Theology of state, state of theology

To Maududi's amazement, there were only a few enthusiasts for *hukumat-e-ilahiya*. As a party of reputed ulema, the Jamiatul Ulma-e-Hind believed in a secular, composite India and did not regard "state" as essential to Islam. Given the wholesale rejection of his ideology, Maududi realized that Muslims, in general, and ulama, in particular, would rally around him only if he proved, through the Quran and hadith, why the state was basic to Islam. A radically new theology of the state was on the anvil.

It is not as if Maududi was oblivious to the all-encompassing nature of the modern state. In March 1938, he wrote in *Tarjuman*, "Now [the state] also decides what to wear or what not to wear … what to teach your kids … what language and script you adopt. … So, the state hasn't left untouched from its ultimate intervention even most peripheral issues of life." Not only did Maududi fully comprehend the nature of the modern state, his views also reflect a critique of the policies of provincial Ministries on issues of dress, language, curriculum, and religion. Considering nineteenth century approaches to understanding the state outdated, he remarked in the same issue: "The state is beginning to acquire the same status that God has in religion". Given the extremely interventionist role of the modern state and the manner in which it impinged on the daily lives of Muslims, he equated Islam with state and accordingly interpreted the Quran.

The bible of Maududi's political theology is the tract *Four Fundamental Concepts of the Koran* (1979),[5] where he argued that to know the "authentic objective" of the Quran it is crucial to grasp the "real and total" meaning of the four Quranic words: *ilah* (Allah), *rabb* (Lord), *ibadat* (worship) and *deen* (religion). He claimed that soon after the revelation, their real meaning was lost.

Maududi considered "Allah" the most important word. His exposition on its meaning is premised on a distinction between the "metaphysical" and "worldly political" life which together constitute an organic whole. To be a Muslim is to worship *Allah alone* not just on the metaphysical plane but also in political life because He is the master of both. Accordingly, Maududi contended that Allah must also be the "Ruler, Dictator (*aamir*), and Legislator" of the political domain.[6] Consequently, if someone claimed to be the ruler of a country his claim would be equivalent to a claim to be God on the metaphysical plane. Thus, to share political power with someone who disregards the laws of Allah, he declared, would be polytheism in the same sense as someone who worships an idol rather than God.[7] Elaborating on the meaning of *rabb*, a cognate term for Allah, he wrote that it was "synonymous with sovereignty, *sultani*."[8] Since he regarded sovereignty as basically political, he argued that Allah is also a "political *rabb*."[9] To believe in Allah is to unquestionably obey His laws, sharia, in the political realm. Thus *taghoot*, another Quranic word, does not just mean Satan or idol. It means a political order not based on Allah's sovereignty. He chided the ulama for reducing the meaning of *taghoot* to a literal idol. For Maududi, the Quranic injunction to worship Allah and shun *taghoot* meant fighting for a sharia state and rejecting all forms of non-Islamic polity.

In Maududi's formulation, like Allah, worship, also meant obeying the ultimate political authority. He lamented that Muslims had limited its meaning to worshiping Allah in metaphysical life alone and banished Him from their political life.[10] He furthermore equated rituals like prayer to military training and considered them as tools to achieve the goal of Islamic state, "prayer, fasting … provide preparation and training for the assumption of just power."[11] Likewise, Maududi interpreted *deen*, religion, politically, "The word of the contemporary age, the state, has … approximated [the meaning of *deen*]."[12] Elsewhere, he wrote, "in reality, the word *deen* approximately has the same meaning which the word state has in the contemporary age."[13] Many other theorizations of Maududi also echo the spirit of modern politics; for instance, the conceptualization of Islam as a movement and Muslims as a party. Interestingly, he introduced such innovative theorizations in the name of reclaiming "pure" Islam.

### Conclusion

The aim of this article has been to rethink the dynamics of state and Islamism. To this end, I have demonstrated that the reason why the state became foundational to Islamism was not due to Islamic theology that presumably fused religion and politics. Drawing on the writings and politics of Maududi, I have instead argued that it became basic to the Jamaat-e-Islami because of the expansion and unusual reach of the colonial Indian state and the ways in which it crucially impacted everyday life. Not surprisingly, Maududi interpreted the Quranic words—Allah, worship and religion—to mean state. The study of theology is important, far more important however are the political dynamics in which theology unfolds, wins, or loses salience.

**Notes**

1. Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence* (Cambridge, 1985), 256; also see Talal Asad, "Europe against Islam, Islam in Europe," *The Muslim World*, no. 2 (1997): 183-95.
2. Michael Foucault, "What is Critique?" in *What is Enlightenment*? ed. James Schmidt (Berkeley, 1996), 383; and "Afterword: The Subject and Power," in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michael Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago, 1985).
3. Kaviraj, "The Modern State in India," in *Politics and the State in India*, ed. Zoya Hasan (Delhi: 1999), 40.
4. Peter Van der Veer, "The Ruined Center: Religion and Mass Politics in India," *Journal of International Affairs* 1 (1996): 254-77.
5. Maududi, *Koran ki Chaar Bunyadi Istelahen* (Delhi, 1979[1941]).
6. Ibid., 28. / 7. Ibid., 29. / 8. Ibid., 79. / 9. Ibid., 73. / 10. Ibid., 81-98.
11. Maududi, *Let Us be Muslims* (Delhi, 1983[1940]), 291.
12. Maudidi, *Koran, 108.*
13. *Tarjuman*, February 1941, 13.

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# The "Humanity" of Radical Jihad

JENNA REINBOLD

**Sayyid Qutb, one of the fathers of modern Islamic fundamentalist thought, located physical jihad at the centre of his vision of twentieth century political Islam. Although analysts—particularly in the post-9/11 era—have tended to conceptualize physical jihad as a thoroughly warlike enterprise, Qutb's rhetoric reveals a very different logic at work in the propagation of jihad as a primary means of political transformation in the name of Islam. In fact, Qutb's most influential work frames jihad as a particular strategy of socio-political activism—an activism geared toward the reinvigoration of particular conceptions of human nature and human agency.**

The term "Islamism" encompasses a variety of socio-political movements oriented toward the establishment of Islam, however interpreted, as the fundamental framework for the political and social ordering of the state.[1] Though Islamist movements often differ dramatically from each other—ranging from formulations of ideological critique to political reform to revolutionary violence—the "understanding Islam" literature of the post-September-11 era has tended for obvious reasons to foreground today's most radical manifestations of Islamism.[2] Few phenomena, however, present a greater challenge to concerted, dispassionate analysis than lawless acts of violence of the sort executed by the 9/11 hijackers, and it is therefore hardly surprising that post-9/11 theorizations of Islamism have generally foundered upon the doctrine of radical jihad—a doctrine which rests at the heart of Islamism's most extreme movements. The difficulty of theorizing such violence has left analysts mired either in defensive apologetics or in lofty abstractions of the sort invoked in Roel Meijer's synopsis of this issue (p. 16, this issue). In both cases the rhetoric of practical political activism, frequently a central feature of both radical and more dialogical Islamist discourses, becomes overlooked or occluded.

What do we miss when we neglect the rhetoric of political practice not merely within contemporary Islamism but, more specifically, within its radical jihadi movements? Roxanne Euben asserts that such neglect is tantamount to ignoring the manner in which such radical discourses sync with broader anxieties and critiques pertaining to modern socio-political patterns of life—in other words, to the manner in which radical Islamism might be understood to participate within a broad process of modern self-criticism which has, in diverse contexts, swept the globe in the latter half of the twentieth century.[3] A key figure within this Islamist critical tradition is Sayyid Qutb, an Egyptian thinker of the 1940-60s who shifted earlier fundamentalist discourses in the direction of revolutionary jihadism and who has been labelled by Paul Berman as "the Arab world's first important theoretician of the Islamist cause."[4] Though the direct influence of his writings upon contemporary jihadi groups such as al-Qaeda remains under debate, Qutb's most popular work, *Ma'alim fi-l-Tariq*—known in English as *Milestones*—is widely credited as the first systematic theorization of a violent jihad directed primarily against Islamic leaders and intelligentsia, whom Qutb determined to be guilty of propagating and legitimating immoral "Western" values within the North African and Middle Eastern societies of his day. Qutb's particular doctrine of jihad endures within contemporary radical Islamist movements, even within those movements such as bin Laden's al-Qaeda that have shifted their rhetorical attention to the West itself as the primary and direct threat to the Islamic societies of today.

**Sayyid Qutb behind bars in Cairo, 1966**

© AFP, 1966

## Jihad and the choice to believe

The force of Qutb's impact upon today's radical Islamists notwithstanding, *Milestones* presents an important articulation of the logic of socio-political activism embedded within the doctrine of radical jihad, and this work has thus undergone something of an analytic renaissance as scholars and policymakers in the post-9/11 era have attempted to come to an understanding of terrorism. Most crucial to an understanding of the link between jihad and socio-political activism is Qutb's framing of the jihadist as the unique bearer of a vision—indeed, of a strategy—of socio-political liberation capable of galvanizing victims of Western cultural and material domination and of countering the "universal" values of post-Enlightenment secularism (be such secularism in the form of liberal, socialist, or communist society). Qutb's peculiar take upon these matters stems from his insistence upon the centrality of "free moral choice" to the establishment and the ongoing promotion of Islam in its original, most authentic, form.[5] Not only does Qutb designate such choice-making as the quintessential activity whereby man distinguishes himself from all other animals—hence effectively equating conversion to Islam to the "fullest expression" of "man's noblest characteristics"—but he also states that the optimal context for this choice-making in which man realizes his noblest qualities is a context in which all socio-political "obstacles" have been removed in such a way that "no barrier remains" between the individual and the only religion which "places the highest value on the 'humanity' of man."[6] In other words, while "Islam does not force people to accept its belief," it does "wan[t] to provide a free environment in which they will have the choice to believe" and thus the choice to elevate themselves "far above the purely animal level."[7]

In a manoeuvre which flies in the face of the "Western" vaunting of universal values such as dignity, liberty, and equality, Qutb accuses secular societies of actually overlooking the true source of human dignity and—in conceiving of humanity primarily in terms of science or "materialism"—of placing "biological chains" upon beings designed by Allah to be free and equal.[8] After all, asserts Qutb,

> "[M]an is able to change his beliefs, thinking, and attitude toward life, but he is incapable of changing his colour and race, nor can he decide in what place or nation he is to be born. Thus it is clear that a society is civilized only to the extent that human associations are based on a community of free moral choice, and a society is backward in so far as the basis of association is something other than free choice … Only Islam has the distinction of basing the fundamental, binding relationship of the community in belief. On the basis of this belief, black and white and red and yellow, Arabs and Greeks, Persians and Blacks; all the nations of the earth become one community."[9]

Ultimately, such accusations create the dual effect, in the first place, of undermining the universalistic claims of Western secularism and, in the second place, of initiating a call "for the Muslim community to come vigorously into presence" and to exercise its "right to take the initiative for human freedom."[10] Qutb locates the jihadist at the forefront of this Islamic vanguard, framing him as a moral revolutionary who, in the name of Islam, "does not attack individuals" but "attacks [Westernized] institutions and traditions in order to release human beings from their pernicious influence, which distorts human nature and curtails human freedom."[11] Not only does such a framing of jihad call into question the widespread understanding of such violence as simple "warfare" against non-Muslims or inauthentic Muslims, it emphatically refutes the related notion of jihad as a purely "defensive" enterprise. Hearkening repeatedly to what can only be described as a proactive and fraternal conceptualization of jihad, Qutb asserts that "[i]f we insist on calling Islamic jihad a defensive movement, then we must change the meaning of the word "defence" and mean by it "the defence of man" against all those forces that limit his freedom."[12]

Of course, we might very well question the logistics and even the sincerity of Qutb's formulation of jihad as a means of bestowing upon one's fellow man the opportunity to achieve "real and complete" dignity, freedom, and equality.[13] How, for example, is the jihadist to distinguish between "individuals" versus "institutions and traditions" as objects of his physical attacks? Is such a distinction ultimately important to Qutb, or is this distinction (as well as the rest of his discourse) merely a rhetorical flourish designed to rationalize a revolutionary and perhaps a wanton violence? How, precisely, would the facilitation of a "free environment" lead to a conversion to Islam that is nevertheless "noncompulsory," and what would happen should the free, choice-making individual opt not to embrace Islam? *Milestones* sidesteps all of these issues, largely by way of its particular approach to what Qutb calls the "man-made systems [of theories and laws]" at the foundation of Western—and, increasingly, so-called Islamic—societies.[14] The elevation of such "man-made" systems of knowledge to the highest source of socio-political authority not only amounts to a form of human self-worship in the guise of scientific objectivity but, most important to the issue of jihad, it engenders complacency and lack of initiative within the individuals looking to such systems for moral guidance. As Qutb puts it, man-made theories and laws tend to mire people in "discussion, learning, and information" for its own sake rather than for the sake of "knowing with the intention of acting upon it," which Qutb believes to be intrinsic to the authentic message of Islam.[15] In the interest of combating such complacency, of "rend[ing] the curtains that ha[ve] fallen on the hearts and minds of people" and smashing "all the walls that [stand] between man and the truth," Qutb seizes upon jihad as the quintessential gesture of unequivocal and unmediated socio-political activism; a gesture which affords each individual the means of breaking radically with the "scholastic sophistry" of Western rationalism while simultaneously presenting a similar opportunity to the oppressed individuals around him.[16]

… Qutb accuses secular societies of actually overlooking the true source of human dignity …

### Jihad as political activism

Though Qutb declares the "foremost objective" of *Milestones* to be the transformation of individuals in such as way that they become empowered to "change the practices of [their] society," his formulation of jihad functions at a broader level as a powerful and surprisingly "postmodern" ideological confrontation of the Western/secularist worldview believed by many to be the source of the socio-political ills of the twentieth century—a worldview marred in Qutb's mind by excessive theorization, neglect of personal initiative and responsibility, and disregard of free moral choice as representative of the highest human value.[17] Anticipating what has today become a primary explanation for the rise of Islamism (of all sorts) within the Middle East, Qutb exhorts his readers that the "enemies of the believers may wish to change this struggle into an economic or political or racial struggle, so that the believers become confused concerning its true nature and the flame of belief in their hearts goes out."[18] He encourages his readers to recognize this manoeuvre as "a trick" designed to deprive authentic Muslims of "their weapons for true victory"—namely, their intractable commitment to translating Islam "into a living reality" rather than into a privatized system of belief along the lines of the secular model of religion.[19] For Qutb, jihad represents the quintessential practical means by which Islam becomes translated into such a living reality, for it places in the hands of each Muslim the power to create the initial "free environment" necessary for conversion to Islam and it thereafter propels Islam's "growth through the struggle against surrounding forces"—a struggle which, due to the "residual influences" of the Western worldview, is predicted by Qutb to endure "until the Last Day."[20]

Of equal importance to the issue of jihad and the spread of Islam is the manner in which this forceful method of socio-political engagement might be understood to hold the promise, if properly channelled, to engender a society in which "man's dignity is held inviolable to the highest degree."[21] Such utopianism serves to elevate (for the jihadist, anyway) what might otherwise be comprehensible only as an act of war or self-defence to the level of a humanitarian intervention of sorts—to a project, as Euben quotes, of securing "the well-being of all humanity."[22] Thus, in addition to placing in the hands of the Muslim the power to initiate and to propagate the spread of Islam, jihad as framed by Qutb affords the Muslim the power to bestow a particular conceptualization of "humanity" upon his fellow humans—a conceptualization that remains more faithful, according to Qutb, to man's unique stature than does the scientistic vision of "humanity" propounded within the modern West. As the primary translator of Islam's promise into immediate and unequivocal action—an action, as Baudrillard attests, without equal in the Western "zero-death system"—the jihadist is endowed by Qutb with the extraordinary capacity to deploy physical violence as the means of freeing himself and those around him from the fetters of materialism "so that they might rise above the angels."[23]

**Notes**

1. Alan Richards, "Explaining the Appeal of Islamic Radicals," *Center for Global, International and Regional Studies*, January 2003.
2. Clifford Geertz, "Which Way to Mecca? Part II," *New York Review of Books*, June 2003.
3. Roxanne Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Modern Rationalism* (Princeton, 1999), 124.
4. Paul Berman, *Terror and Liberalism* (New York, 2003), 62. Berman, of course, is guilty here of conflating jihadi Islamism with Islamism in general. It would therefore be more correct to credit Qutb as "the Arab world's first important theoretician of the radical Islamist cause."
5. Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones* (Indianapolis, 1990), 81.
6. Ibid. / 7. Ibid., 46, 82. / 8. Ibid., 81, 108. / 9. Ibid., 81. / 10. Ibid., ii, 62. / 11. Ibid., 61. / 12. Ibid., 50. / 13. Ibid., 81.
14. Qutb does not actually believe that any of the "Islamic" societies of his time are worthy of the name, 79.
15. Ibid., 14. / 16. Ibid., 30. / 17. Ibid., 16. / 18. Ibid.,138. / 19. Ibid.,138, 31. / 20. Ibid., 31, 87. / 21. Ibid., 81.
22. Euben, "Killing (For) Politics: Jihad, Martyrdom, and Political Action," *Political Theory* 30, no. 1 (2002): 13.
23. Jean Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism* (New York, 2002), 16; Qutb, 108.

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# Re-Reading al-Qaeda
# Writings of Yusuf al-Ayiri

ROEL MEIJER

**Second generation activists such as Yusuf al-Ayiri are now far more important than Osama bin Laden. They are regarded as true role models, the few who defend ideals and want to change "reality." The author argues that to understand the appeal of al-Qaeda related groups, we should look not only at their globally communicated doctrines and ideals, but also analyse how these messages are, often locally, connected to political programmes and activism.**

Most works deal with al-Qaeda as a terrorist organization. When these works deal occasionally with al-Qaeda's intellectual background they mostly draw an eschatological ideology that represents history as a cosmic war between good and evil; a metaphysical struggle between the forces of darkness and light.[1] This type of analyses is especially prominent in post-Structuralist writings on al-Qaeda.

According to Jean Baudrillard, 9/11 had shelved concrete politics: "we are far beyond ideology and politics now … the aim is … to radicalize the world by sacrifice."[2] Faisal Devji pursues this line further. His main argument is that a transnational jihad has replaced politics and intentionality. "These are [global] movements whose practices are ethical rather than political in nature because they have been transformed into gestures of risk and duty rather than acts of instrumentality[3] […] One implication of treating holy war as an individual duty (*farz kifaya*), like prayer, is that it becomes spiritualized and finally puts the jihad beyond the pragmatism of political life."[4]

However brilliant these post-Structural insights are, the problem is that in as far as they analyse ideology, they focus only on the top figures, Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, and their extreme expressions of globalization, as represented in their speeches, video's, and ad hoc writings and actions. The above authors refrain from studying the more concrete relations between the separate branches of al-Qaeda, the background of their members, their often much more elaborate writings, and their (sometimes) intensive relations with local Muslim political movements. In a way they play into the hands of these leaders by helping them to become mythical heroes who float in empty transnational space.

Only a cursory look at the life and times of the first leader of al-Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula, Yusuf al-Ayiri, shows that at least this group defies this type of analysis. To be sure, the rhetoric of Bin Laden's civilizational war is not absent, and in true al-Qaeda style, jihad is regarded as the alpha and omega of Muslim doctrine. But on the whole his programme is imminently political. In fact, purposeful politics—including, its analysis, strategic planning, and mobilization of followers for concrete goals—form the very core of Yusuf al-Ayiri's writings. Intention rather than ethics is the stuff of his writings. Politics are instruments for a specific goal, not explicitly stated as the establishment of an Islamic state, but at least as the destruction of the power of the United States and Israel and the spread of Islam and the Salafi programme (*manhaj*) over the world. Although these goals may not be realistic, they should still be seen as an explicit political agenda. Moreover, it is clear that while Yusuf al-Ayiri was active in al-Qaeda, he was also involved in the Sahwa (awakening) movement, the Saudi Salafi reform movement of the 90s, and always regarded himself as part of that movement.

> … Ayiri comes across as a well-informed, clear-headed, and down to earth analyst.

Yusuf bin Salih bin Fahd al-Ayiri (or Uyayri), born in 1973 in Damam, is a typical member of the Saudi youth who were influenced by the Jihadi youth culture that sprang up in the 1990s under influence of the Sahwa movement. He did not finish his secondary school and left for Afghanistan when he was 18 years old. There he was trained in one of the training camps, al-Faruq, where he himself later became a trainer. He was also for a short while a bodyguard of Osama bin Laden, with whom he travelled to the Sudan in 1994, and was involved in most of the jihadi fronts of the time, many of which he visited: Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Chechnya, the Philippines, and Afghanistan under the Taliban. After the bomb attack in 1996 on the American base at Khobar in Saudi Arabia, he was arrested and tortured in prison. But when he was released two years later he continued his transnational jihadi activities, and was asked by Osama bin Laden to organize the al-Qaeda branch in Saudi Arabia. During the next years he was both a prolific writer, establishing an Islamic research centre, running al-Qaeda's website al-Nida, as well as recruiting the leaders of the different cells who would later become famous from the mug shots of wanted persons that the Saudi government published after the bomb attacks in Riyadh in 2003. Although Yusuf al-Ayiri was killed in a shoot out in Turba/Hail at the end of May, just after the first bomb attack in Riyad on 12 May 2003, by what later became known as al-Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula, his immediate influence reached out to the famous online magazine *Sawt al-Jihad* and beyond. Since his death, he has become a role model for many of the young Jihadi Salafis, embodying the ideal of an independent *'alim*-thinker-Jihadi cum political activist, whose death, because of his rooted as well as his transnational background, was a political statement. He was especially honoured by the Jihadi's in Iraq, who in the beginning of the Sunni insurgency often referred to his works and martyrship. But also in the Netherlands, those who probably will stand trial in the Piranha case regard him as a hero, together with one of the subsequent leaders of al-Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula, Abd al-Aziz al-Muqrin.

### Rationalism

What immediately strikes the reader of the works of Ayiri is their scope, depth, and length.[5] Between 1998, when he was released from prison until his death, he managed to publish hundreds of pages on topics ranging from open letters to the two leaders of the Sahwa movement in Saudi Arabia, Salman al-Awda and Safar al-Hawali, to a work on Islamic "modernist" opponents, to several political analyses of the American presence in the Middle East, the jihad in Chechnya, the Abu Sayyaf group in Philippines, and the Taliban in Afghanistan. Some of these works were written only months before he was killed, even after publication of the wanted List of 19, with his mug shot as number ten. In contrast to the usual image of the Jihadi as a myopic ideologue, and a mystical pedant who is alienated from his surroundings, from his work Ayiri comes across as a well-informed, clear-headed, and down to earth analyst. For instance, in his work on the United States in Saudi Arabia he refers to Nixon's memoirs, delves into the Carter and Bush doctrines, and gives a coherent analysis of the American policy in the region. The same applies to his analysis of Iraq, predicting—correctly—a long war just before he himself was killed, or Chechnya, combining his first hand knowledge with historical facts and a clear analysis of the political situation. Although it is doubtful whether he has read all the books he mentions in his work against the "modernists," the array of especially Egyptian writers he castigates is impressive, ranging from Muhammad 'Abduh to Fahmi Huwaydi.

Despite his typical Salafi rejection of rationalism, Ayiri work stands out for the rational and argued quality of his arguments and analysis. In fact, one of Ayiri's overriding concerns is with reality (*al-waq'i*). For instance, in the case of the "martyrship operations," carried out by Chechen women against Russian troops, or the case of Moscow Theatre hostage affair, Ayiri only briefly goes into notion of martyrship and its rewards in heaven. By far the largest part of these writings is taken up with the (chilling) rational analysis of the costs and benefits of such actions, legitimating them because their benefits—vast damage to the

enemy, psychological disarray, greater awareness for the cause abroad—far outweigh the costs to the mujahidin, who will go to heaven anyway. The same applies to the 9/11 Operation. In accordance with al-Qaeda ideology, the massive killing of innocent Muslims in, for instance, Palestine, Iraq (sanctions) is compared to the limited numbers of deaths in the WTC and Pentagon attacks. The difference with other works, is that Ayiri tries to make a much more political and lengthy and reasoned argument for the attacks, while vehemently attacking American double standards and hypocrisy, which have led to the decline of the Islamic ummah. Despite the presence of the "cosmic" dimension, the analysis focuses on economic, political, as well as cultural factors leading to this war of life and death between the forces of evil, the unbelievers (*kuffar*), and good, the vanguard of Muslims, consisting of the mujahidin.

© AFP, 2006

**A combo picture grabbed from a video posted on internet by the Global Islamic Media Center (GIMC), 23 June 2006**

### Activism

However, like all activists, Ayiri is not driven by the search for pure knowledge, whether religious or secular, despite his stress on the necessity of analysing "reality." His goal is to translate political knowledge and analysis into action, and action into knowledge, almost in the Marxist notion of Praxis. Both are dependent on each other: In the present crisis, knowledge without action is worthless, while action without knowledge is irresponsible and can lead to even greater decline. In that sense concrete political action and not globalized ethics acquires an epistemological dimension, for truth (*haqq*) can only be discerned in action, which is jihad, and this in turn is dependent on individual experiences in very different specific geographic and political circumstances. Only the mujahidin as the vanguard can have true knowledge for they have acquired this unique experience. In this activist sense Jihadi Salafism is truly transformative. The true believer is not just working for God but working in concrete history "for" God, and transforming "reality." Needless to say, the correct belief (*'aqida*) is of course a crucial lynchpin in this process: for believing without action is *irja'*, while acting without a proper belief makes one a hypocrite (*munafiq*). It is in this action and knowledge embodied in jihad that the vanguard, the "victorious group" manifests itself, and sets itself apart from those who are not only weak, but are also theologically misguided and factually misinformed. Sacrifice is therefore neither a goal in itself nor the ultimate legitimation, as post-Structuralists maintain, but sacrifice as a contribution to a concrete victory of Islam over its adversaries. Purity of intention (*ikhlas al-niyya*), such a crucial element in Salafi thinking, is an essential ethical principle, but the action itself is conditional on its practical results. In the end, action must be to the benefit of the "interest (*maslaha*) of the religion," which can be measured in rational terms.

### Local context

Besides throwing new light on the political theory of al-Qaeda, Yusuf al-Ayiri's writings also provide some new insights into al-Qaeda as organization. Although most researchers stress its de-centralized, globalized, networked character, only a few see it as part of a larger Saudi social movement.

Yusuf al-Ayiri writings give a more detailed view of the relations between his group of Jihadi youth and the elder Sahwa shaykhs and their movement. In several writings of Ayiri on the Sahwa movement, among which are two open letters to Safar al-Hawali and Salman al-Awda, it is clear that he feels his group as still part of the movement, while on the other hand he also tries to acquire an independent position and attempts to establish his own religious authority. For instance, in his open letter to Safar al-Hawali he thanks him for educating the youth of the Sahwa, but accuses him of having abandoned his previous ideas after his release from prison in 1999 when he started to attack the jihad and the mujahidin.[6] Ayiri is especially angered by al-Hawali's accusation that the mujahidin do not have a manhaj. In response, he states that the mujahidin are in fact the only Muslims with a programme. But as important: "they are the only ones who say and do what they believe in." Only they are "only afraid of God." In his "advice" to Salman al-Awda he is even more vehement.[7] He accuses him of "submitting to reality" and therefore "mitigating" and "destabilizing" his manhaj, which will finally lead to "compromise" and "dilution" of the *aqida*, tenet of faith. Even after the Sahwa shaykhs condemned 9/11 and half-heartedly supported opposition against the Americans in Iraq in 2003, Yusuf al-Ayiri did not cut off all his relations with them.[8] Nor does he rule out other forms of resistance against the Saudi government, such as demonstrations. Instead, to demonstrate his own moral and political superiority, he calls them mere "intellectuals"; they are only interested in "raising consciousness" of the impending US invasion of Iraq and do not call for "practical plans."

That Yusuf al-Ayiri never intended to wage an armed struggle against the Saudi Arabian state is clear from his last writing after he was added to the List of 19.[9] In it he warns the general public that the state is rounding up the Jihadis for the benefit of the United States. He concludes that the mujahidin "have not reached this phase voluntarily, but have been forced on this path by measures of the intelligence services."

Second generation activists as Yusuf al-Ayiri are now far more important than Osama bin Laden or Ayman al-Zawahiri. It is their message that comes across in the countless websites that publish his as well as the works of other young Jihadi Salafis. They are regarded as true role models, the few who defend ideals and want to change "reality," and pay for the cause with their lives. Their writings embody a new political activism of young thinkers whose religious authority is based on both their religious and their factual political knowledge, reinforced by their claim that only they are independent and pure in their intentions and only they are incorruptible, unswayable, and principled. This transforms them into a much more powerful force than the old al-Qaeda gang.

**Notes**

1. Jason Burke, *Al-Qaeda*: *Casting a Shadow of Terror* (London, 2003), 26.
2. Jean Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism* (London, 2002), 10.
3. Faisal Devji, *Landscapes of the Jihad. Militancy, Morality, Modernity* (London, 2005), 11.
4. Ibid., 34.
5. All of Ayiri's works can be found on the www.tawhed.ws website of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, or www.ozooo.tk.
6. *Risala maftuha ila shaykh Safar al-Hawali*. 23 *Sha'ban* 1422 H.
7. *Munasiha Salman al-'Awda ba'd taghyir manajihi*, 15 August 2000.
8. *Hamla al-'alamiyya li-muqawama al- 'udwan*, April 2003.
9. *Risala min Yusuf al-'Ayiri, ahad al-matlubin al-tisa' 'ashar ila umum al-muslimin*, May 2003.

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# Liberal Islam
# Between Texts and its Modern Condition

ABDULKADER TAYOB

**The Sudanese Islamist leader Hassan al-Turabi has become known for what appear to be contradictory statements, for example, defending women's rights one day and denying them another. Significantly though, such conflicting statements are based on a singular fidelity to Islamic texts. Rather than just explaining the apparent contradictions by referring to the contexts in which such statements are made, the author argues that only by moving beyond contextuality is it possible to capture and understand the power of texts in modern Islamic thought.**

At a conference in Khartoum in April 2006, Islamist leader Hassan al-Turabi caught the attention of more than one observer when he expressed unusually liberal views on Islam. He also came to repeat similar views in an interview on Arabiyyah satellite channel:

> "I want women to work and become part of public life, Allah willing. Allah gave them certain advantages over us, and gave us certain advantages over them. He gave men and women advantages over one another. I would like there to be equality between people, because we were all created from the same soul: 'Allah created from a single soul its mate.' … I have not found a *hadith* that prohibits women from being Imams."

In Sudan some ulama were swift in condemning these public statements, and called for meeting out the appropriate capital punishment (*hadd*). Internationally, Turabi's statements have attracted much attention given his position in the Islamist camp.

Turabi has been the unquestioned leader of the Sudanese Islamists who first originated in the 1960s as a branch of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers. He eventually became the real power behind the throne following a coup that unseated a democratically elected government in 1989, and has led the Islamization of the country for most of the last decade of the twentieth century. Since 2001, however, Turabi and General Omar al-Bashir broke up their thirteen-year alliance, and Turabi has been arrested twice in a brush with his former ally. Meanwhile, he has been campaigning for more liberal reforms but, still, under a clearly Islamist ideology.

### Texts beyond contexts

In the last year or so, a group at ISIM has come together to put such remarks in a larger time span framework. Rather than simply regarding such statements as the harbingers of a liberal Islam, or as unorthodox views challenging the essence of Islam, we urged scholars and researchers to look for broader patterns in modern Islamic thought. Such analyses would give a better perspective on the statements and utterances of individual thinkers such as Turabi. Several articles have since then appeared in the ISIM Review on this theme. This, my final reflection as ISIM professor at the Radboud University, is dedicated to sharing some thoughts on the recent spate of liberal Muslim pronouncements.

Turabi himself has been rather more liberal in comparison to other Islamist leaders with whom he shares a political ideology. In the early 1990s, Turabi told an American audience that women need not wear a headscarf. Soon thereafter, though, the government of Sudan introduced a bill that made *hijab* mandatory. Turabi's liberal views completely contradicted the project of Islamization that he had campaigned for and led during the greater part of Sudan's post-independence era. During the height of Sudan's Islamization project, women systematically lost rights on a grand scale, following similar Islamization projects in Pakistan and Iran. If there is anything unequivocal about Islamization projects of the twentieth century, then it is the systematic erosion and denial of the rights of women in public life. Thus, for Turabi to utter such statements today raises even more questions than provides answers.

In a book on Islamic fundamentalism and gender, Shehadah has argued that moderate Islamists like Turabi tailor messages for respective audiences.[1] They present one message for domestic purposes, and another for international arenas where they defend the reasonable credentials of Islam. In this particular case, it seems that Turabi is employing the liberal vision of Islam against his earlier allies and in contradiction with his earlier practices. On an international level as well, there is a ready audience for liberal and moderate Islamic voices. Turabi's words seemed in step with a whole range of international policy think-tanks that have urged governments in the last few years to identify moderate and liberal Muslims, and build alliances with them. The much-publicized Rand Report of 2003 and more recently, the report of the policy research unit for the Dutch government (WRR), are two well-known cases in point.[2] Academics like Etzioni have joined the call for building a public culture with the participation of moderate Muslims.[3]

Notwithstanding, one ought to look beyond the expedient proclamations, and identify Turabi's statement as an expression of a highly problematic but powerful pattern in modern Islamic thought. I suggest that we go beyond a contextual reading that maps Turabi's statements in national, regional, and global settings. Turabi's mode of argument is too familiar to be restricted to the contexts and settings of the hour. It is a mode of argument that has been employed in a diverse number of contexts. Its proliferation and ubiquity therefore demand more careful reflection on a more comprehensive and fundamental level.

### Back to texts

Turabi's approach is a familiar one of relying and appealing to a purely textual foundation for his views. A careful reading of his interviews indicates how his views filter one or the other texts from the Islamic legacy. And it is this particular textualist approach that merits scrutiny. It appeals to those both inside and outside Islam who yearn for an authentic voice to defend liberal values. As an Islamist leader, Turabi's liberal views might be regarded more authentically Islamic than those of a feminist writer, such as Fatima Mernissi, or a liberal thinker, as Abdul Karim Soroush, relating the same thing. In Muslim matters, clearly, nothing can replace an argument founded on a set of texts. And nothing beats an Islamist defending a liberal approach through an appeal to texts.

Text-centred-ness is widely shared by Muslims across the broad spectrum of modern trends, and deserves close scrutiny as an ethic, and a way of doing things in the world. Recent progressive and liberal approaches have offered alternative ways of approaching the texts. Few, however, have explored the quandaries of the textualist–literalist approach as a fundamental modern feature that deserves critical review. In fact, I believe that paying more careful attention to the textualist approach of modern Islam should be the starting point of a fundamental analysis of its discourse. I would even venture to say that the play and obsession of texts in Islamic discourses mirrors the dilemmas of modern philosophy and its grappling with Existence, Being, and the threat of illusion. Texts pose a similar attraction and suggestion for Muslims in that they can unlock all secrets of a moral life.

PHOTO BY BEATRICE MATEGWA / © REUTERS, 2005

**Hassan al-Turabi, Khartoum, 11 July 2005**

### How texts work

I would suggest several important facets that show how texts work in Islamic discourses. The first point to note is how a textual approach could justify completely different standpoints on the same issue. As such, selecting texts that suited his particular view at the time, Turabi conveniently ignored others that contradict his position. Some might triumph at detecting the obvious contradictions in Turabi's position. But Turabi's contradiction is only valid if we judge him on the basis of a value or set of values outside the texts. If the principle position is not a value, but the selection of texts, one can find no fault with defending the rights of women one day and denying them another day. Turabi has, in effect, remained faithful to texts. The value itself is of secondary concern.

Turabi's method is widely employed, and reflected in a pattern that has justified Islam to trends and developments in the modern world. In the nineteenth century, it was modernization, then came nation building, left-wing mobilization, followed by Islamization. Always, a set of verses has been employed to support the sentiment that Islam is compatible with modern, anti-modern, socialist, nationalist, popular, third world, and European values. The only consistent feature of these processes of justification has been the selection of texts as a tool of legitimization. And so, I will venture to say that one of the cornerstones of contemporary Islamic thought is a fidelity to texts—any texts that can be presented as Islamic. When the principle is fundamentally grounded on texts, and the choice of texts is inherently subjective and arbitrary, then contradiction of values and effects necessarily follows, including self-contradiction. I would argue that a discourse dominated by texts builds a feeble foundation. One scientific theory to another, one political project to another, have all been anointed by texts. The texts are the only secure markers for discourses that have no moorings.

Certainly, this is not a classical relativist position of modern philosophy. Muslims are not engaged in a search for truth or reality that is thwarted by the available tools of observation, language, and practical reason. But they do find themselves in an equally fundamental quandary. They are engaged in the pursuit of a morally, upright life that covers ritual, belief, social engagement, and individual responsibility. And the key answers to these day-to-day practical questions are exposed to idiosyncratic choices that change rapidly as the modern world throws up its challenges in rapid succession. If the juggernaut is an accurate metaphor of social life in the modern world, then the shifting sands of a textualist approach can only be imagined. More recently, the support for violence faces a similar contradiction that sees the meaning of Islam being thrown from one side of the political fence to another.

Even though the textual approach is inherently problematic when it comes to values, it still has a powerful appeal. Unlike any other approach in modern Islam, the textualist approach captures the power of indigenous identity and authenticity. In a globalizing world that threatens to wipe out differences, the textualist approach appeals to the founding documents of early Islam, and provides a sort of security and a semblance of indigenous propriety. This text is ours and our projects based on these texts are justified since it is our cultural heritage. Such an appeal to authenticity cannot be dispelled out of hand. Cultural uniqueness is very much part of a global world that threatens to erase differences. The original texts of Islam restore uniqueness and specificity to Muslim projects.

It is not surprising to note how texts underline and promote the identity politics of the day. It has generally been ignored that Muslim governments used the textual approach even before the waves of Islamization in the 1970s. Initially, the politics of authenticity was a voice of protest against a colonial occupier in the period between the two world wars. Soon after national independence, post-colonial governments seized upon its magic to claim authenticity and exclusivity in the world of nations. Whilst Islamic protest groups took to the streets in the 1970s, Muslim governments themselves had already wielded the same card at international forums from the 1960s. They systematically appealed to exemption from international human rights charters on the basis of cultural specificity.[4] The Islamic revolutionaries hardly realized the extent to which the politics of authenticity was a script of the powerful as it was of the powerless. Texts cut both ways, and as such suit the identity politics that Muslims have engaged in for most of the modern period.

Another important feature of the textualist pattern is its amenability to a personalist approach to religion. Appealing to texts stresses the transparency of the tools used to construct the ideology, the belief, and practices associated with Islam. The texts appear both accessible and amenable to a modern DIY approach to religion. And contemporary society has the technology to make these texts available in print, Internet sites, and multi-media formats. One can read one text, have it delivered to an email address, mobile phone, or fax on a daily basis. Accessibility of texts provides the basis for a profoundly personal approach to religion. The individualist approach of the texts does not reside in a deeply personal attitude to the spirit of God. But it conveys a powerful sense of immediacy in following a religious discipline.

### The promise of texts

The reformers of the nineteenth century promised that a return to the texts of early Islam would help Muslims to enter the modern world with dignity and respect. They ascribed the decline of Islam to the dead weight of a tradition that had accumulated over the original wisdom. This particular attitude spread across Muslim societies, challenging a myriad of different traditions and patterns that had developed over centuries. As we face the challenges of the twenty first century, however, this call for a return to texts has itself become a tradition of modernity.

This new tradition is embroiled in the politics of identity of the modern world. It yields very little reward at providing a clear ethic or set of values. But its inability in this regard is substituted by the substantial claim it makes in the name of authenticity and indigenity. And its appeal lies in the substantially personal approach to religion that it provides for many Muslims. Contradiction, authenticity, and individualism are not consistent with each other, but they make a powerful combination in the right context.

**Notes**

1. Lamia Rustum Shehadeh, *The Idea of Women in Fundamentalist Islam* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003).
2. See: Cheryl Benard, Civil *Democratic Islam: Partners, Resources, and Strategies* (Santa Monica et al: Rand Cooperation, 2003), at http://www.rand.org.
3. See: Amitai Etzioni, "Leveraging Islam," *National Interest* 83 (2006): 101-106; W. Asbeek Brusse, and I. J. Schoonenboom, *Dynamiek in islamitisch activisme: aanknopingspunten voor democratisering en mensenrechten*. Wetenschaplijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid Rapport (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006).
4. David Little, John Kelsay, and Abdulaziz A. Sachedina. 1988. *Human Rights and the Conflict of Cultures: Western and Islamic Perspectives on Religious Liberty* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988).

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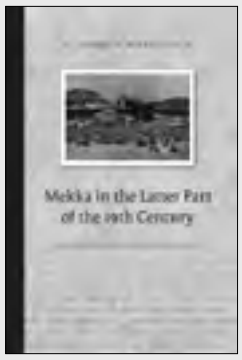


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# Mohammad Khatami
# The Philosopher President

FARZIN VAHDAT

**In his speech at the UN General Assembly in September 1998, Mohammad Khatami proposed to analyse the principle elements of American culture in terms of Puritan history and influence. Similarly, in an interview with CNN, he invoked Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* to highlight the religious foundations of American democracy, a gesture that caused a vexatious envy among some American politicians and political pundits. In this essay the author argues that such references reflect not just Khatami's erudition but also highlight central tenets in his political philosophy.**[1]

Seyyid Mohammad Khatami was born in Ardakan in the central province of Yazd in 1943. He is the son of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khatami who founded the seminary there. Khatami finished his primary and secondary schools in Ardakan and then attended Qom Seminary in 1961. It is noteworthy that before finishing his seminary studies he received a bachelor's degree in philosophy from the secular University of Isfahan, a relatively rare experience among Shii clergy at the time. In 1969 Khatami entered another secular institution of higher education, the University of Tehran, from which he earned a master's degree. Later he returned to Qom seminary to attend philosophical classes with renowned religious scholars such as Ayatollah Motahhari. Khatami was a political activist in the Islamic movement before and during the revolution of 1979.

Khatami was elected to represent the people of Ardakan and nearby Meibod in the first session of the Islamic Majlis in 1980, and in 1981 Ayatollah Khomeini appointed him as the head of the influential Kayhan newspaper. In 1982, he became the Minister of Culture and Islamic guidance. During the 1980-1988 war with Iraq, he served in different capacities including deputy and head of the Joint Command of the Armed Forces and chairman of the War Propaganda Headquarters. In 1989 Khatami again became the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance during the presidency of Hashemi Rafsanjani, but after three years, and under pressure from conservative forces, he chose to resign his post rather than struggle to stay in power.

Reason occupies a central position in Khatami's thought. As a Shia, he firmly believes in the concept of justice and accordingly finds freedom of choice to be both closely intertwined with reason, and indispensable to its exercise. Since reason presupposes a notion of human agency and entails freedom, Khatami maintains that Islam has always been a religion with the potential to achieve human liberation. However, the widespread and chronic conditions of tyranny in Islamic lands after the era of the so-called Righteous Caliphs prevented the realization of this potential. As a result of this historical tyranny, in Khatami's view, the ideas pertaining to freedom and human rights among Muslims have remained suppressed and never had a chance to develop.

Khatami's own discourse and agenda professedly aim at reversing this trend through an interpretation of Islamic sources. For this reason he has elaborately discussed the notion of freedom. He maintains that a major task of the prophets of monotheistic religions had been to remove the internal and external bonds of servitude from the hands and feet of the people, and help them to attain freedom, which is the most noble desire of all humans throughout history. Historically, whatever came into conflict with freedom, Khatami maintains, was damaged or defeated. Even righteousness, when it countered freedom, was harmed. Justice, faith, progress, or social justice, when they opposed freedom they all suffered. Medieval Christianity and Communism were both defeated because in the name of religion and the idea of social justice they opposed freedom.

Yet, freedom for Khatami is not absolute. Every society sets some limits on freedom. In an Islamic state, no one has the freedom to say anything she or he pleases as no other state allows such an absolute freedom. Freedom of speech that might disrupt the foundations of Islam and oppose the rights of the public cannot be allowed. But within these limits, everybody is free to express their views. During Khatami's tenure there was an attempt to implement these ideas: critical journals and newspapers were permitted to be published in the Islamic Republic. Films and books that presented an unorthodox point of view also were allowed to be promulgated, despite the conservatives' fierce opposition and the closure of many newspapers and journals and banning of films and books.

Khatami paid significant attention to women's rights in general and to their rights for political and social participation. He proposed establishing institutions such as political parties, trade unions, and associations to realize their civic engagement, even though his success in practice has been very limited. Yet, even on the ideational level, Khatami has revealed some reservation on women's right to participate in their society and state. He acknowledges that women need to increase their presence in the public sphere to realize their potentials, yet maintains that such activities detract from their essential role in the family.

As a philosopher and social thinker, Khatami's success seems much greater in the shaping of Iranian political culture than the concrete reforms in the legal realm and in institution building during his eight years of presidency. On the other hand, despite his attempt to derive a genuine discourse on modern human empowerment and freedom through interpreting Islamic metaphysics as well as western modern thought, according to Khatami the carrier and beneficiary of this empowerment and freedom is not the individual. Very much like some of his revolutionary intellectual forefathers such as Ali Shari'ati, Khatami has castigated the individual very often as he equates individualism with license and denounces it as capitulating to the appetites and desires of the individual.

Yet, it would be unwarranted to consider Khatami's eight years of presidency as total failure. To be sure, he surely promised much more than he could deliver in terms of expansion of freedom and human and citizenship rights. Nevertheless, the expansion of discourse on rights and freedoms and democracy has promoted the tenets of civil society in Iran by raising popular expectations and the demand for its implementation.

© REUTERS, 1998

**Khatami at the UN General Assembly, September 1998**

**Note**

1. This article is partly based on a longer paper, "Religious Modernity in Iran: Dilemmas of Islamic Democracy in the Discourse of Mohammad Khatami," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 25, no. 3 (2005).

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# The Western Mosque
## Space in Physical Place

THIJL SUNIER

**Negotiations about the construction of the Western Mosque in Amsterdam started some ten years ago. While local politicians voiced their fear that Islamic immigrants would take over the neighbourhood, the local mosque organization immediately resorted to legal rights. This lack of trust has been overcome during the past ten years. Though the design of the mosque may still be seen as a compromise between opposing parties, the process of building the mosque led to a firm entrenchment of the organization in the local community.**

The acquisition of places of worship has always played a crucial role in religious emancipation processes. Religious groups, once settled in a new environment, have put major efforts in organizing accommodations for prayer. Historically, places of worship have constituted the most controversial and symbolically laden arenas with respect to religious emancipation. Although political empowerment, networking, and organizational activity are also important aspects of that process, and although legal arrangements constitute crucial landmarks in the emancipation of religious "outsiders," the symbolic significance of places of worship cannot be overestimated. Places of worship, especially when built for that purpose, "objectify" religious presence in ways that reach beyond physical appearance and urban planning. In several cases initiatives to build a new mosque have aroused fierce debates about the place of Islam in society. While the first mosques were rebuilt garages, houses, or factory halls that did not visually stand out as *Muslim* buildings, new purposely built mosques attract not only more visual attention, but also have become prime signifiers of the process of localization of religious newcomers.[1]

Today the mosque organization has become instrumental in bringing together several parties in the neighbourhood.

Most studies on the acquisition of mosques have either treated it as a marker of religious institutionalization, or as a test case for the formal relation between state and religion. In much of the immigration literature, the building of mosques is perceived as the result of the growing cultural diversity that characterizes Western European cities since the Second World War. Muslims arriving as migrants have built up a religious infrastructure, which was perceived as a sign of religious continuity with their countries of origin. Such instances of institutionalization have unleashed a more principal debate about the position of religious minorities in Western European nation-states. The extent to which they actually facilitate or discourage the institutionalization process can be considered within a structure of opportunities that harks back to earlier debates in many nineteenth century nation-states about the relation between state and religion.[2] In such an approach, identities, both of religious newcomers and of the host society often seem to be fixed categories. As a consequence, many studies on the construction of mosques do not look beyond formal arrangements.

### Places of worship and the symbolization of space

I contend that any thorough understanding of the establishing of mosques should analyse the conceptualization of public space as a locus where identities are reconstituted. Negotiations about places of worship have always triggered debates about the character of public space in which authenticity, historicity, and representation are key concepts.[3] This goes way beyond religious issues. Negotiations about the construction of a mosque are embedded in a principle discussion about the conceptualization of space and the question who is "local," the articulation of contextualized identities, and discourses of in-, and exclusion as "categories of practice." To capture these different dimensions, it is useful to make a distinction between "place" and "space." In relation to mosques, "place" starts off as a "religious" issue. A group of Muslims collects money to build a mosque in order to be able to perform religious duties. When they take action and negotiate with local administrators, place also becomes an administrative category linked to urban zoning planning, bureaucracy, and legal arrangements. Place, as the final outcome of the negotiation process, is then the balancing of religious demands and administrative procedures. In the Netherlands, creating a place for mosques has often been realized as an almost purely administrative formality. Many cases of negotiation, however, have turned into a long struggle for recognition, and this is where I would propose the term "space." Space is a discursive contentious field that is linked up with a particular problem definition, the production of locality, embedded in specific power and political relations and by definition something that resolves in the public sphere.

### Islam as a public affair

Today, partly due to the recent changes in the political climate towards Islam, the construction of mosques has been transformed into a public issue that brings about much more than just administrative procedures. Mosque construction is simultaneously the creation of new spatial categories, the product of human agency. For many Muslim organizations a big, purposely built mosque signifies recognition and communicates religious identity. There are several projects in the Netherlands that are designed with these motives in mind. But bigger does not necessarily mean better. There are also cases in which the parties involved agreed on a design of the mosque that merges with the physical and social environment rather than sticking out against the surrounding community. This is not necessarily a compromise between opposing demands, but rather about the reconceptualization of space and identity. For a proper understanding of these processes, the actual design and the architectural specificities are less relevant than the discourse in which negotiations are embedded.

One of the most ambitious plans in the Netherlands was the realization of a huge complex consisting of a central mosque, sporting facilities, conference halls, etc. initiated by the Turkish Milli Görüs movement in the Amsterdam district *De Baarsjes*. Officially named The Western Mosque, the construction of which started in 2005, is being built in the style of the Amsterdam architectural school. At the launching of the plans the chairman of northern branch of Milli Görüs Netherlands announced: "We do not want an ugly big white pastry in our neighbourhood, as you sometimes see when they build a new mosque. Our mosque will be completely in the style of the "Amsterdam School," such that fits perfectly in the neighbourhood and becomes a real Dutch mosque. That should be the future of all mosques in this country: in line with the physical and social environment." Some have discarded the statement as pep talk for a Dutch audience. I strongly doubt that. The lengthy negotiations about the mosque project were instrumental for a process in which the northern branch of Dutch Milli Görüs developed from a Turkish political organization that sought to increase their support among Turkish immigrants into one that plays a crucial role in the shaping of a Dutch-rooted Islam. The mosque project envisioned not an alien element in a Dutch environment but the redefinition of a Dutch neighbourhood. Their rank-and-file is not anymore considered as Turkish aliens but as Dutch citizens-to-become. Thus initially the mosque project was the object of a power struggle between rivalling Turkish Islamic fractions, in the process it became a symbol of the definition of a "Dutch" Islam.

At the time when Milli Görüs bought the plot and the premises of a former garage in the early 1990s, the organization was still firmly connected to the German headquarters in Cologne and to the Turkish Welfare Party. The party was involved in a fierce political struggle with the Turkish secular state about the status of Islam in Turkish society. From the early 1970s onwards, several Turkish Muslim organization have struggled for gaining influence among the newly arrived immigrants. Initially this struggle was a purely Turkish affair, transplanted to the European host societies. The construction of houses of worship was an obvious and strategically very effective means to attract people and to build up rank-and-file. When the Turkish state-backed *Diyanet* gained increasingly influence among Turkish immigrants in the late 1970s, Milli Görüs decided to set up organizations as well to counterbalance this influence. Many of the Turkish mosques in Europe came into being as a result of these organizational activities.

### The organization of Turkish Islam

At the time of the initial plans of the Western Mosque in the early 1990s, the future of migrant youths was one of the most pressing issues that occupied both Muslim leaders and the municipal authorities and politicians. There was a pressing need for more youth facilities in the neighbourhood and Milli Görüs claimed that their plans would include accommodation for sport and other activities with which they could attract young people and keep them off the street. Although there were people in the municipality who were not principally against such a complex with facilities, shops and a mosque, there was also a lot of objection. The traditional leftist migrant organizations, but also the established welfare institutions considered the plans as a dangerous development. An Islamic organization such as Milli Görüs could gain a disproportionate influence in the neighbourhood. Due to its critical stance towards the radical secularism that dominates Turkish political culture, Milli Görüs was often branded as a "fundamentalist" organization. Already at that time, long before 9/11, the traditional Turkish population, with its grim socio-economic future, was considered an easy target for radical Islamic politics. Very negative articles appeared in the newspapers and journals about the "obscure" objectives of Milli Görüs.

Also internally the project aroused a lot controversy. Some of the younger leaders of Milli Görüs, raised in the Netherlands and very familiar with the political mores, considered the whole initiative a test case for the development of a much more independent organizational structure. Formally speaking the Dutch branch of Milli Görüs was accountable to the German headquarters, which in turn had a strong link to the Turkish mother branch. Many of the young leaders, however, deemed the situation in Dutch society a much more relevant point of reference for their political agenda, than the ties with the party in Turkey. In the course of years this resulted in a gradual rift between subbranches of Milli Görüs in the Netherlands. The southern branch emphasizes the strong link with Turkey, whereas the northern branch considers Dutch society as their prime operational field. The controversies around the Western mosque have been momentous in this process.

When we take a closer look at the difficult and protracted negotiations, we can see how the parties involved developed their strategy and how the project rendered a highly symbolic significance. At the start of the negotiations some ten years ago, local municipal politicians vigorously objected to the very idea of such a big religious structure in the neighbourhood. They perceived it as an invasion of Islamic immigrants taking over the neighbourhood. The mosque organization, on the other hand, initially operated very formally, resorting to legal rights. And although the resulting mosque may still be depicted as a compromise between two opposing parties,[4] the "hidden" processes taking place both within the municipality and the local branch of Milli Görüs are striking. When Theo van Gogh was murdered in November 2004, Milli Görüs, rather than being treated as an adversary, was immediately included by the authorities as a partner against radicalism and criminality. Today the mosque organization has become instrumental in bringing together several parties in the neighbourhood. The so-called "contract with society" that had been signed by several parties in the Baarsjes following the tensions after the Van Gogh murder, was an attempt initiated by the local municipality to create a common "modus operandi" in cases where radicalism thrives. The contract serves as a blue print for proper citizenship. Although the initiative may well be dismissed as a mediated public event initiated by the local government, it is also a redefinition of locality. Such ritual events can only be understood as processes of localization with an axiradius that exceeds the local community.

PHOTO BY DENNIS JANSSEN, 2006

**Construction site of the Western Mosque, Amsterdam**

In April 2006 the conservative German headquarters of Milli Görüs dismissed the board of the northern branch of the Dutch organization and installed a more subservient board. By that time, the previous board had become well-known for its fresh ideas, its cooperativeness and open-mindedness towards Dutch society. They had become well-known public figures, frequently appearing in media performances. The replacement of this liberal board by more conservative members of Milli Görüs therefore triggered negative reactions. As an observer concluded: "The loot is hauled. The fundamentalists take over."[5] I do not subscribe to that conclusion. As I stated above the protracted negotiations about the mosque project have been instrumental in bringing about political changes within Milli Görüs. The most crucial aspect of these changes is the firm entrenchment of the organization in the local community. The German headquarters can only superficially influence that process. If we take a closer look at the actual negotiation process over the past years, it becomes clear that the initial goal, the building of a new mosque, has unleashed so many issues that concern the whole neighbourhood, its inhabitants and its public spaces, that an unfortunate but relatively trivial "takeover" can not possibly turn the tide. The Western Mosque has become a project of De Baarsjes, not anymore solely of Milli Görüs.

**Notes**

1. See also Metcalf, ed., *Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1996).
2. S. Stuurman and T. Sunier, ed., *Explaining the Reactions of Nations to Religious Newcomers* (Amsterdam: AUP, forthcoming).
3. For London, see J. Eade, *Placing London: From Imperial Capital to Global City* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2000).
4. F. Lindo, *Heilige Wijsheid in Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 1999).
5. According to Dutch Muslim convert Jan Mahmood Beerenhout in an email letter on the thirteenth of May 2006.

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# New Muslim Elites in The City

KONRAD PĘDZIWIATR

**The members of the new Muslim elites emerging in European cities possess a number of crucial means that allow them to choose between different courses of action and move beyond the formal to more substantive forms of citizenship. This article follows the discursive practices of the City Circle, to analyse how its members play a role in deconstructing media myths about Islam and solving problems of collective uncertainty among young urban Muslims in London.**

The City Circle, set up in 1999 by a group of young Muslim professionals, some of whom work in London's financial district (the City) is one of many Muslim organizations established in different cities of Britain, and of Europe, by the generations of Muslims born on the continent, who on the one hand do not want to discard the religious heritage of their parents and on the other, do not feel comfortable within the existing organizational structures.[1] The key point of reference for these new organizations is not the region of origin or some foreign agency, but the national and local context. While engaging in work with different actors of the country's civil society they are at the same time becoming more "ecumenical" in their attitudes to cooperation with Islamic religio-political movements different from their own. The most telling is probably the current cooperation of the young British Muslims involved in the production of the magazine Q-News (Brelwi sympathies) with organizations such as FOSIS or YMOUK (Ikhwan Muslimun and Jamaat-i Islami sympathies) in the organization of the Radical Middle Way project.[2]

Notably, one of the biggest transformations in recent years within Islam in Great Britain, as well as in larger Western Europe, is that it has ceased to be only the religion of immigrants and is now becoming a religion of European-born citizens. The generational change marks not so much difference in the legal citizenship status of Muslims, as in identity, participation, and understanding of civic rights and duties. While the first generation of immigrants were often unable to play active roles in the public life of the wider society due to lack of cultural resources (e.g. poor knowledge of the receiving country's language or lack of education), their offspring is often quite well equipped with these tools. These young Muslims not only better understand the political and administrative processes of their country, but also are often eager to make use of this knowledge and their civic rights.

"[W]e need to . . . transfer these skills back to the community and help others below us to get there as well."

### New Muslim elites

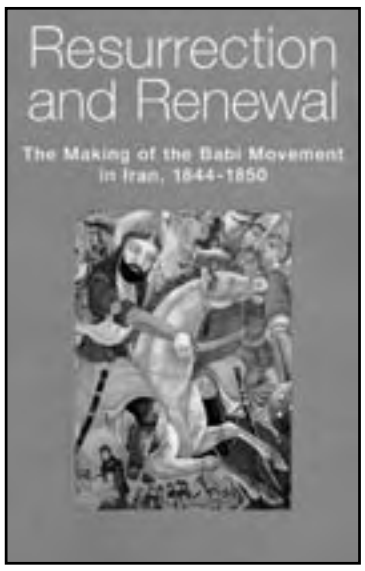
Citizenship is crucial to the identity of 120 young Muslim Londoners from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds who are actively involved in running the City Circle's activities. In contrast to the majority of Muslim organizations in the country the Circle refrains in its name and promotion material from direct references to religion or religious community, clearly preferring the reference to the occupational category—employees of the City—or to the larger category of professionals. Its assumed religiously neutral status does not only enable the association to build up close links with other Muslim and non-Muslim groups and organizations, but also to involve in its activities Muslims from various ethnic and sectarian backgrounds, for example, by inviting them to its weekly sessions. The City Circle likes to describe itself as "an open circle of minds who want to promote the development of a distinct British Muslim identity and to assist the process of community cohesion and integration."[3] As such it constitutes an important part of the new Muslim elite[4] that has emerged in London in recent years and that tries through various projects to contribute to tackling such issues faced by the Muslim population like, for example, educational underachievement or lack of role models, and thus at least partially solve the problem of collective uncertainty. This elite consists of people who very often have cut their Islamist teeth in all sorts of university Islamic Societies or in one of many Muslim youth organizations and after completion of their studies decided to remain active in the Muslim civil society. Their approach can be on the whole described as constructive engagement with the local and national institutions and is well captured in the following statement by one of its members: "We are not interested in conversions, but in convergence. We, communities together; convergence on shared interests, shared values, shared objectives and shared future" (Interview with Sajid).

In contrast to the majority of first generation Muslims the core members of the Circle, British-born Muslims, possess a number of crucial means that allow them to choose between different courses of action and to move beyond the formal to more substantive forms of citizenship. Their case upholds the thesis of Verba et al. who argue that the level of involvement in voluntary activities depends on three kinds of resources: time, money, and civic skills, and that when inputs of time and money are coupled to civic skills, then people become not only more likely to participate but also more likely to be effective when they do.[5] The last resource, namely civic skills, is precisely what the first generation of Muslims who lived their formative years outside Europe, lacked. Those born in Europe, on the other hand, even if they do not manage to gain substantial amounts of cultural capital in the form of educational qualifications (institutionalized cultural capital), they still possess much wider knowledge, than their parents, of the mechanisms how the European societies work, acquired during the process of socialization (embodied cultural capital).[6] Members of the new Muslim elites possess usually not only substantial amounts of the embodied cultural capital, but also the institutional form of it. All the core members of the City Circle for example finished universities and often the most prestigious ones, such as University College of London or Cambridge or Oxford.

### Key activities and main motivations

Among the projects carried out by the City Circle, the educational ones—career guidance for students; Saturday school consolidating students' knowledge in National Curriculum subjects; and Jannah Club teaching children Quran and Arabic—occupy the most important place.[7] These projects have the same objective, that is, "to create a balanced and sensible individual" (interview with Shazad). All of them also spring up from the same negative assessment of the current situation of Muslims in the country and in particular from analysis showing the poor performance of Muslim children at schools. "Intellectually we are backward, economically we are backward. Look where all indicators are. Muslims have to learn so much!"—notes one of the Circle's members (interview with Sajid). However, it is not only the willingness to improve the performance of Muslim children at schools that is driving members to get involved in the above mentioned projects. Almost all persons interviewed talked also about a strong desire to share their personal success with others, as Sajid puts it: "If we have made it, [achieved personal success] we need to try to transfer these skills back to the community and help others below us to get there as well.

Although the educational projects are the flagship of City Circle, it is its Friday-sessions that have popularized the association among the wider public. The aim of these weekly gatherings frequented, on average, by around 100 people is to act as a forum of debate and discussion on the issues concerning the country's Muslim population. Although the vast majority of speakers and listeners at these sessions are Muslims, it is not uncommon to find among the panellists, as well as among

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the audience, non-Muslims. For example, one of their gatherings after the 7 July bombing devoted to "the criminal distortion of the Islamic texts" was being filmed by the BBC Panorama; while 2 weeks later Roger Mosey, BBC Head of Television News, was under a storm of questions from the audience trying to explain "how BBC sees the world." Recently, and in particular after the 9/11 and 7/7 terrorist attacks, the City Circle debates have started to play not only a role of important intra-community debate forum, but with more and more broadsheet newspapers referring to the opinions expressed during these sessions[8] they have also begun to influence the larger discourse on Islam in Britain. Thus, ironically the organization that does not make any claims of representing Muslim population in the country or to speak on its behalf, has played a significant role in shaping the debate on the possible causes and results of the terrorist attacks in London. In this way the Circle has been able to counter the attempts of hijacking the discourse on Islam in Britain by some groups and to propose more complex views of the facts.

### Making Islam a less lonely place

Not only do the Circle's weekly gatherings contribute to enriching the debates on Islam and provide many of its participants with intellectual and spiritual nourishment, they are also very important vehicles of social networking among young Muslim professionals in the global city. Actually, the desire to get to know other Muslim professionals has been one of the root causes behind setting up the organization. This is evident for instance in the following account of one of its founding members: "initially it was more like people getting together for a bit of a lecture but really to go out afterwards for curry. Because nobody knew anybody. In London it is difficult to connect with people 'cause it is such a huge city." Although the main outcome of the networking within the organization is building bonding social capital, as the majority of friends that members of the Circle make through the meetings and projects are Muslims, it also enables building bridging social capital (particularly at the institutional level) as the organization is closely cooperating with a number of non-Muslim bodies (e.g. Fulbright Commission).

The City Circle with its weekly sessions does not only make Islam a "less lonely place" as one unmarried member put it, but also provides them with an alternative to drinking culture that is the most popular way of socializing among young Britons. Obedience of the Islamic prohibition of drinking alcohol entails "refusal of commensality" and "rejection of social intercourse,"[9] and in practice means exclusion from a very important part of British culture. Practising Muslims are thus forced to search for other means of socializing that would comply with Islamic instructions. The desire to create vital alternatives to drinking culture has been in fact one of the most commonly advanced explanations by the respondents for setting up the association, as made clear in the following account by a member: "While I was doing my work I always felt as you was wearing a straight jacket because I did not participate in pub culture and the rest of it. So I very strongly felt the need of finding a halal alternative, where we Muslims could hang out and chill out without being concerned about alcohol." Although the Circle has not solved the problem of halal ways of socializing for all concerned young Muslim Londoners, it has definitely provided some of them with an important substitute.

The emergence of groups similar to the City Circle in other parts of Europe (e.g. Presence Musulmane in Brussels) allows one to hope that the numerous problems faced by Muslim populations in Europe will be debated openly and addressed adequately. The new Muslim elites growing in European cities are challenging classical notions of citizenship not only by claiming public recognition of their sameness, but also of their difference. With the assistance of citizenship, which is today one of the major discourses of entitlement, they have been following the footsteps of ethnic minorities, women, gays, and lesbians in seeking space for their heritage and values in both the public and private sphere.

**Notes**

1. The empirical material for this article was gathered in July and August 2005. All names of informants have been changed in order to provide them with full anonymity.
2. See www.radicalmiddleway.org.uk.
3. See www.thecitycircle.com.
4. By Muslim elite I mean social actors who participate directly or indirectly in processes of decision making that are important for the future of Muslim population and the wider society.
5. S. Verba, K. L. Schlozman, and H. E. Brady, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* (Harvard University Press, 1996), 271.
6. Both terms are used in the sense given them by Pierre Bourdieu, "The forms of capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. J. Richardson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 243-48.
7. For more information about the projects, see: www.thecitycircle.com.
8. See, for example, M. Bunting, "Orphans of Islam," *Guardian*, 18 July 2005; Z. Sardar, "Beyond blame and shame: what we must do now," *New Statesman*, 25 July 2005; E. Mosood, "Muslim Journey," *Prospect*, August 2005.
9. M. Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), 40.

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# Ramatoulaye
# Brotherhood in Transition

FELICE DASSETTO &
PIERRE JOSEPH LAURENT

**Religious movements are playing a new role of social consolidation in many African countries. In these contexts of "insecure modernization"[1] religious groups and images provide followers new bases for social solidarity, as well as identity and moral references. Similarly, new expressions of African Islam which, while founding themselves on the old tariqas, carry out modernizing transformations in an attempt to respond to contemporary situations and expectations. This is the case for the "eleven bead" variant of the Tidjani Sufi Order, whose spiritual centre is the "city" of Ramatoulaye in western Burkina Faso.**

Ramatoulaye is a town of about 5,000 inhabitants, situated some 30 kilometres from Ouahigouya, the former capital of the Moaga Empire, regional headquarters of the French colonial administration. Ramatoulaye was first founded as a simple village, around 1920 by Aboubaker Savadogo, a man who had received the Tidjani Order *wird*. The present-day city was built by his son Mohammed, who succeeded Shaykh Aboubakr at his death in 1945. Ramatoulaye, since then, has been steadily growing. The site has acquired a considerable symbolic dimension, becoming one of the central shrines of Islam in Burkina and, beyond that, in western Africa.

Today, however, Ramatoulaye has to meet a number of challenges if it is to sustain and augment its spiritual centrality and socio-political legitimacy. On the Islamic front, it faces competition from the "twelve bead" Tidjani Order and from Wahhabi currents. It also finds itself caught up in a religious bidding war, especially with active Christian evangelical movements. Above all it has to play its hand wisely in its relationship with the semi-authoritarian Burkinabé regime, which uses religion as well as tribal social forces to consolidate its popular legitimacy. Accordingly, the Ramatoulaye brotherhood has carried out a series of redeployments, which can best be seen in the light of modern African history and the presence and role of Islam.

### Colonization and the Tidjani Order

The colonization of Western Africa, which picked up speed in the second half of the nineteenth century, was a major cause of the destruction and de-legitimization of existing social structures, thereby, creating the conditions for an increase in the legitimacy of Islam as a means of collective identity. In addition, unification of territories, road building, and modernizing means of communication allowed faster and wider circulation of persons and ideas. The result was a new phase of the expansion of Islam during the colonial period between 1850 and 1950. During this turbulent period, the Tidjani Order took up different positions in regard to the colonizing power. Some leaders originated jihadist movements, like that of Hajj Umar in the mid-nineteenth century. In reaction to the catastrophic results of this jihad, which led to armed conflict between Muslims, some leaders collaborated, within certain limits, with the colonizing power.

> [T]he attraction of Ramatoulaye [is] the city's ability to present itself as a successful social model, quite apart from its holy character.

One branch of the Tidjaniyya, in the Volta basin, distanced itself from this political context. It strongly emphasized the spiritual nature of the Sufi message and practised a sort of "spiritual" resistance as a protest against the colonizers. At Nioro in the Sahel, Shaykh Hamallah, who had received the Tidjani *wird*, initiated a variant (at the beginning of the 1920's) referred to as the Tidjaniyya of the "eleven beads."[2] Through reciting 11 times the *Jawharat al kamâl* (pearl of perfection) in the *dikhr*, he distinguished his variant from the classic Tidjani practice of reciting it twelve times. According to the Hamallist tradition, it was Shaykh Tidjani himself who recited the pearl of perfection 11 times. This return to 11 recitations thus signifies a return to the sources of the Tidjaniyya and its spirituality. An esoteric interpretation reported by Hampate Bâ also indicates that the figure 11 is that of pure spirituality, of communion with God, whereas the figure 12 is that of the temporal engagement. This symbolic gesture indicated that it was necessary to spiritualize the Tidjaniyya path and relieve it of all terrestrial encumbrances.

The French colonizers would term this variant "Hamallist," and the term remains in use today. The French saw Hamallah and the Hamallists as dangerous opponents of colonial policy. Their repressive response increased after 1940 under the Vichy regime. Hamallah was imprisoned, later deported to France, where he died in 1943. Hamallism boasted important figures in Western Africa such as Diarno Boka Tall, the "sage of Bandiagara," a title bestowed by Hampaté Bâ, who had himself converted to Hamallism. In Upper Volta, Hamallism was spread through three people who received the *wird* and who were designated *muqaddem* (representatives) by Hamallah himself. One was Moussa Aminou, established in Diori in the northern part of Upper Volta, in the Sahel region. He launched a jihad in 1949, which lasted exactly 24 hours before being bloodily put down and he himself killed. The second was Abdoullaye Doukouré who introduced Hamallism among the Peuls from his base in the town of Djibo. The third was Aboubaker Savadogo who received the Tidjani *wird* and was then named *muqaddem* of the "eleven beads" by Hamallah in 1923.

### The construction of a Shaykh and a utopia

Shaykh Aboubaker, the founder of Ramatoulaye, completed his Quranic studies in 1908. After a ten-year pilgrimage, which led him to the holy places and later to Ghana, he returned to his village having received the Tidjani *wird*. He was thrown out by the animist chiefs, whose prestige had been shaken by Aboubaker's preaching, which they felt undermined ancient beliefs (ancestor cults, foundations of traditional power). Aboubaker then began to formulate the project of building a holy city for pure Muslims, which he called Ramatoulaye.[3] Numerous of the faithful joined the Shaykh.

Ramatoulaye underwent colonial control and repression, especially after the Shaykh's adoption of Hamallism. Shaykh Aboubaker was imprisoned, his adepts were dispersed and Ramatoulaye was destroyed. Aboubaker was freed in 1947 following changes in French colonial policy. As described in one of the interviews, "He was given (a sentence of) ten years. They took five of them. God took the rest." Aboubaker died a few months after being released. His successor and son, Muhammad Savadogo, successfully imposed his authority in 1945 just before his father's death and instituted a new phase of the brotherhood, which consisted of a complete institutionalization of the charismatic nature of the founder. First, Shaykh Muhammad changed the patronym Savadogo (very current in Yatenga province) to that of Maïga, in reference to a Muslim ancestor. He thus constructed a long Islamic lineage and at the same time inaugurated a dynasty of Shaykhs. He then redesigned the city and the zaouyya, which includes the tomb of the founder. In 1962, he set up the great mosque, which can hold a thousand persons, copied from the mosque of Nioro, and designated it for Friday prayers. The city was divided into four quarters whose names all refer to the Islamic world: Mecca, Medina, Fez, Dar as Salaam.

Today Ramatoulaye, the "city of the Shaykh," ruled by the Shaykh's justice has in its population third and fourth generation residents. These residents are very vocal about Ramatoulaye's attractions: "We came to find the truth." "We came to follow the Master." The Shaykh "had Islam." Follow-

ing the Shaykh also bears fruit: "When we converted to Islam, parents refused (us) their daughters. So the Shaykh provided a woman," as the story of a first-hour adept is told. If one comes here, one must do "what is commanded," for "the Shaykh has instituted the law." "We have peace in our hearts" because the Shaykh has offered "a paved road to salvation." The city is made holy by the presence of the Shaykh, as by the rhythm of prayers and the dhikr held in the purest Tidjani tradition. However, this local holiness is male. Women are confined to the domestic sphere, even excluded from the daily agricultural work so many African women perform. In September 2003 we saw TV antennas appear on the roofs of a few houses. It is as if the masculine (and Shaykh) power was obliged to bend a little to accommodate modern needs.

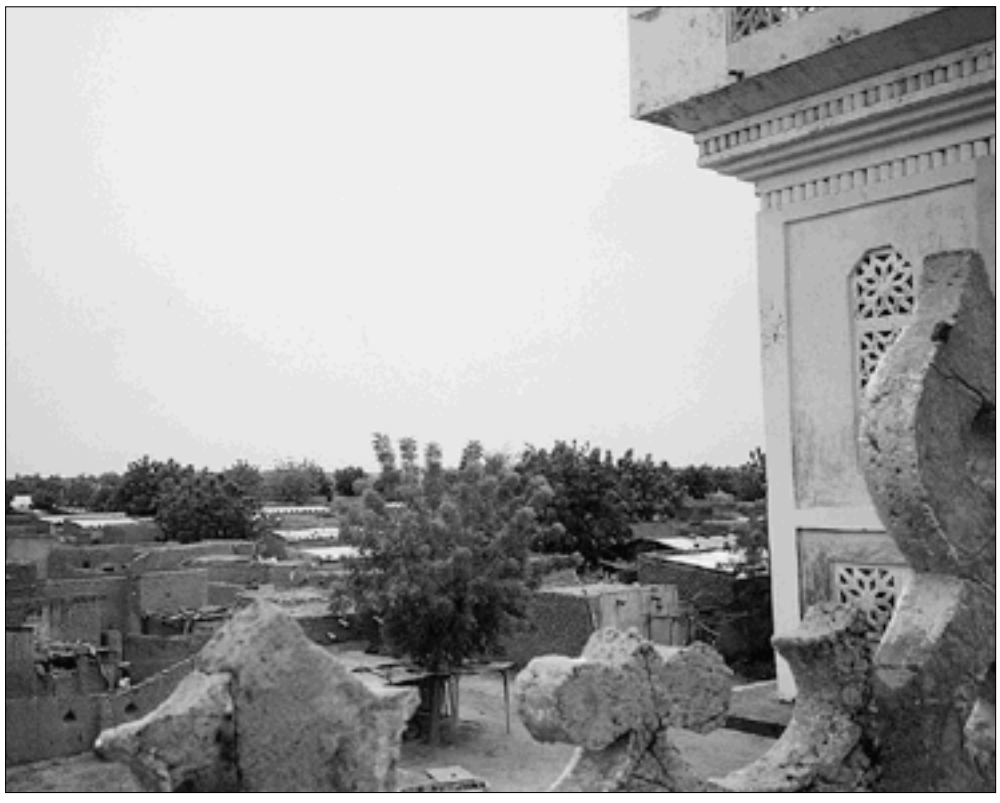

PHOTO BY FELICE DASSETTO, 2004

**View at Ramatoulaye from the Mosque**

### Present challenges

The proclamation of Burkinan independence in 1960 led Ramatoulaye, along with many other religious forces, to take a position in the new order of an independent nation-state. Its resistance to colonization gave the brotherhood credibility, but nonetheless several years were needed before Ramatoulaye understood how it should position itself in the context of a new state. In 1985, under Sankara's regime, the brotherhood was suspected of plotting. The other Hamallist branch, led by Abdoullaye Doukouré from Djibo, a few dozen kilometres from Ramatoulaye, rapidly gained a foothold in the capital of the Burkinabean State, close to the new power. Only upon the death in 1987 of Mohammed Maïga did the current Shaykh launch a strategy of gaining visibility in Ouagadougou, the capital. From that point, a true political exchange took place. Ramatoulaye contributed to the legitimization of the regime ruling Burkina Faso, and in turn was legitimized by the central government. The change of status was reflected in the participation of the President—a Catholic—in the Mawlid festivities in 1990. Conversely, in 2002 the Shaykh was part of a delegation received by the President on the occasion of the "day of pardoning," a critical moment in recent Burkinabean history.

Education is the new concern that Ramatoulaye is eager to take advantage of. It poses interesting questions since education is situated at the intersection of different contemporary logics. The weakening of the Burkinabean State, following sanctions imposed by international agencies, created new incentives for privatization of the educational system. The state, which has become a member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, has agreed to recognize "Franco-Arab" schools in response to pressure from Muslim associations. Ramatoulaye hastened to use these new possibilities. With financial assistance from the Libyan Islamic Call, a "Franco-Arabic" high school was opened at Ramatoulaye, which included a teacher-training programme. In 1998, the government accredited the school. The teachers, young inhabitants of Ramatoulaye, have finished their studies in various Islamic universities (al Azhar, Zitouna, Damascus) through grants offered by the Libyan Islamic Call. Participation in this "modern" form of education, in contrast to classical forms of Quranic education, has placed the brotherhood in the mainstream of the country's efforts toward development, while also confirming its membership in the new "locality" which is the nation-state.

Through the development of these schools we see at Ramatoulaye a process, often observed in African countries, of an increasing Arabization among intellectuals and middle-level white-collar workers. This is only partly attributable to the role played by the Quranic schools and the classical madrasas. It is also a matter of Arabization accompanied by literacy. Arabic is no longer *only* a means of oral expression in symbol and ritual, and Arabic script and writing a devotional form transmitted by the perishable calligraphy of Quranic schools. Arabic is now a spoken language and, even more importantly, a written language which has become a source of normativity. This process of globalization of a written sacred language introduces new dynamics and challenges to the charisma of the Shaykh, traditionally rooted in the person of the Shaykh, and sets him in competition with scholars of the written word and daily pragmatic norm.

Furthermore, the growth of the population and the presence of institutions of learning raise the question of whether the city should be enlarged, or should be restricted to its current size, of about 5,000 inhabitants. An enlargement of the city would seem to require more mosques. But "there must be only one path, therefore one single mosque" in the words of an interviewee. Making the city larger would imply an increase in various activities, thereby creating a risk that norms which govern the unity of the city might be disturbed. Certainly, with the arrival of the third generation, the question will be to see if Ramatoulaye will be able to respond to the needs of the young men of today and to the suppressed aspirations of its women. This is perhaps the greatest challenge of the future, now that the pioneers of the Shaykh's generation are disappearing gradually.

Finally, the Tidjani, like all the brotherhoods, are typical participants in the dynamic of globalizing Islam, which while procuring their own expansion as a brotherhood introduces innovative features. One novelty, for example, is their introduction to global networks of the Libyan Islamic Call, just as the other branch of Hamallism is integrated into the wider Saudi network. Ramatoulaye itself appears to be at the beginning of a process of globalization properly so called. The radial influence of Ramatoulaye has begun to affect various localities and even to go beyond Burkina. Members from neighbouring countries (like Mali, Niger, Ghana, Benin) participate in the pilgrimage of Mawlid, one of the greatest moments in the life of Ramatoulaye. Diplomatic representatives of these countries also attend, as well as members of other branches of the Tidjani. It is certainly not to be attributed solely to the mystical aura of the current Shaykh, who appears to be more a nimble political figure than a mystic. Rather, the attraction of Ramatoulaye may lay in the city's ability to present itself as a successful social model, quite apart from its holy character: "If you come in clear-minded fashion, you will obtain that which you seek. And then you will testify to others …" It is precisely these very challenges and opportunities that will determine Ramatoulaye's future prosperity or its mere survival.

**Notes**

1. See: P. J. Laurent, *Les pentecôtistes du Burkina Faso. Mariage, Pouvoir et guérison* (Paris: Karthala, 2003), 448.
2. Hamallism has often been studied by colonial administrators as well as academic researchers. See for example: B. Savadogo, *Confreries et pouvoirs. La Tijaniyya Hamawiyya en Afrique occidentale (Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger): 1909-1965* (Aix en Provence: University de Provence, 1998).
3. Research on Ramatoulaye is directed and administered by Felice Dassetto and Pierre Joseph Laurent (CISCOW/CISMOC and LAAP) at the Catholic University of Louvain-la-Neuve with the collaboration of Tasseré Ouedraogo. The project has included several site visits and a hundred interviews made between 2003 and 2006.
See: http://www.cismoc.ucl.ac.be/.

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# State Violence and Popular Resistance in Uzbekistan

MATTEO FUMAGALLI

**The violent crackdown of a large demonstration by government forces in Uzbekistan in May 2005 spurred many controversies. The government tried to legitimate its actions by insisting that it had acted against radical Islamists and terrorists, but other sources claimed that unarmed civilians, including children, were massacred. Although tragic, it should be stressed that the events did not represent a break with the past. Rather, they should be read as part of an on-going struggle between popular forms of resistance and state articulation of a discourse of terrorism.**

On 13 May 2005 the security forces of Uzbekistan reacted to a protest demonstration that had gathered in the centre of Andijan, a town of about 320,000 people located in the Ferghana valley region of post-Soviet Uzbekistan. The previous night a group of armed men had assaulted the local prison and freed several hundred inmates. Among them were twenty-three local entrepreneurs that the authorities had jailed over the summer of 2004 on the charge of being part of the "Islamist" organization *Akromiya*. They were awaiting an imminent verdict. Demanding their release, local citizens had assembled in the town centre several times in the preceding months, to no avail, but incidentally also exciting no particular reaction by the local authorities. In the morning of 13 May, the insurgents moved on to occupy the local city council (*hokimiyat*). At the same time a crowd of thousands took to the streets protesting against the government, as they had done many times in previous months. Then, abruptly, government forces began a swift crackdown on the demonstrators. Chaos ensued. Curfew was imposed, the region was sealed off from the rest of the country, and strict security measures were enforced. Indeed, order was restored at a very high price.

In the days following the events a large number of people fled the country. Most of them found temporary refuge in neighbouring Kyrgyzstan. At the same time demands for an independent investigation voiced by human rights organization were vehemently rejected by Uzbekistani authorities. Disputes over the course of events, the rationale behind government crackdown, the identity of the protesters, and especially the count of the victim opened a chasm between the Uzbek official version and that of international organizations. The relations between this post-Soviet Republic and Western states who, under the pressure of human right organizations had demanded that Tashkent allowed an independent investigation, reached the lowest point since independence.[1] In short, the events of 13 May 2005 marked the climax of months, even years, of mounting tensions in post-Soviet Uzbekistan. The ruthless crackdown on the Andijan demonstrations together with the events of the preceding night should not be taken in isolation: understanding the context in which events have unfolded and their broader ramifications is essential.

> [T]he group's successful attempts to provide real-life alternatives … blatantly demonstrated the shortcomings of the regime.

### State violence and violence against the state

In the weeks following the Andijan events, the government justified its actions as a necessary reaction to tackle a militant insurgency, organized by Islamic radical organizations. The protesters, but also international human rights organizations, countered the claim by arguing that unarmed civilians, including children, were being shot at. There is neither consensus as to what really happened nor why.[2] That hours of intense shooting and street fight and killing occurred is not under dispute by any side; what is contested is the number and identity of people left dead on the ground. According to an official investigation 187 people, mostly "terrorists" died, whereas according to international human rights organizations many more, mostly unarmed, civilians lost their lives because of government action. What actually happened still remains wrapped in mystery, largely as a result of the Uzbekistani government's refusal to allow an independent investigation into the dynamics of events.

The aftermath of the Andijan events was defined by a "war of figures." The dawn of 14 May 2005 was truly a "dawn of the living dead" because of this irreconcilability between the two positions. Hundreds of Uzbeks, if not a thousand or more, were counted dead by some (human rights organizations), but never died according to others (Uzbek state authorities). Although there are insufficient verifiable sources to prove the exact number of casualties, by situating the events within the broader developments of state-society relations in Uzbekistan it becomes not only clearer how and why this eruption of violence occurred, but also what the short and medium-term implications will be.

One cannot make sense of this particular set of Andijan events without looking at the larger picture of the post-independence difficulties experienced by both state and society. Though the government allowed a limited multiparty system to develop soon after independence, democracy remained at a mere façade level, with power and decision-making being the domain of closed elite circles. The economic downturn plunged most Uzbeks in poverty while privatization benefited only a few. With the state failing to act as social safety net, many ordinary citizens had to resort to alternative means to cope with economic duress.

Thus, as Kandiyoti noted, the key to understanding "Andijan" lies in the breakdown of the social contract between state and society whereby the latter is experiencing a "crisis in provision, legitimacy and security."[3] The background to the 2005 tragic events lies mostly in the convergence of impoverishment of large sections of the population (economic insecurity), the lack of safety valves for "letting pressure go" (social insecurity), the state's fear of any form of opposition and subsequent clampdown on it, and a decline of state authority and legitimacy (political insecurity). All of these factors have created a state of fear and powerlessness among the population which, deprived of any legal outlet for airing grievances has leaned towards various forms of opposition, some "silent" and non-violent, others more intolerant and violent. A glance at the post-independence era suggests that Uzbeks have typically resorted to limited forms of protest, due to over-arching structural constraints. When these have taken place, they have traditionally taken the shape of street demonstrations and pickets. Hence, taken in isolation, the lead-up to the Andijan events could be read as a typical example of "coping strategy."

Nevertheless, it would be a misrepresentation to simply depict the relation between the government and its citizens in terms of violent state oppression and peaceful resistance. In rare, though visible cases,

radicalized elements of society have resorted to violence. Such radical dissent has been articulated in the language of Islam, as it is a key marker of Uzbek identity and a popular frame for political mobilization. During the 1990s, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) posed an increasing threat to the administration of president Karimov, which culminated in the assassination attempts in 1999 and clashes between Uzbek government forces and the IMU in 2000. These attacks were not fragments of government imagination, but real experiences of anti-government militancy, of violence against the state. Moreover, Hizb-ut Tahrir, a transnational Islamist organization, also banned in Uzbekistan, has been reported to gain in popularity in recent years. Although this growing appeal of Islamist movements understandably unsettles the government, it should be stressed that manifestations of violent opposition remained the exception rather than the rule.

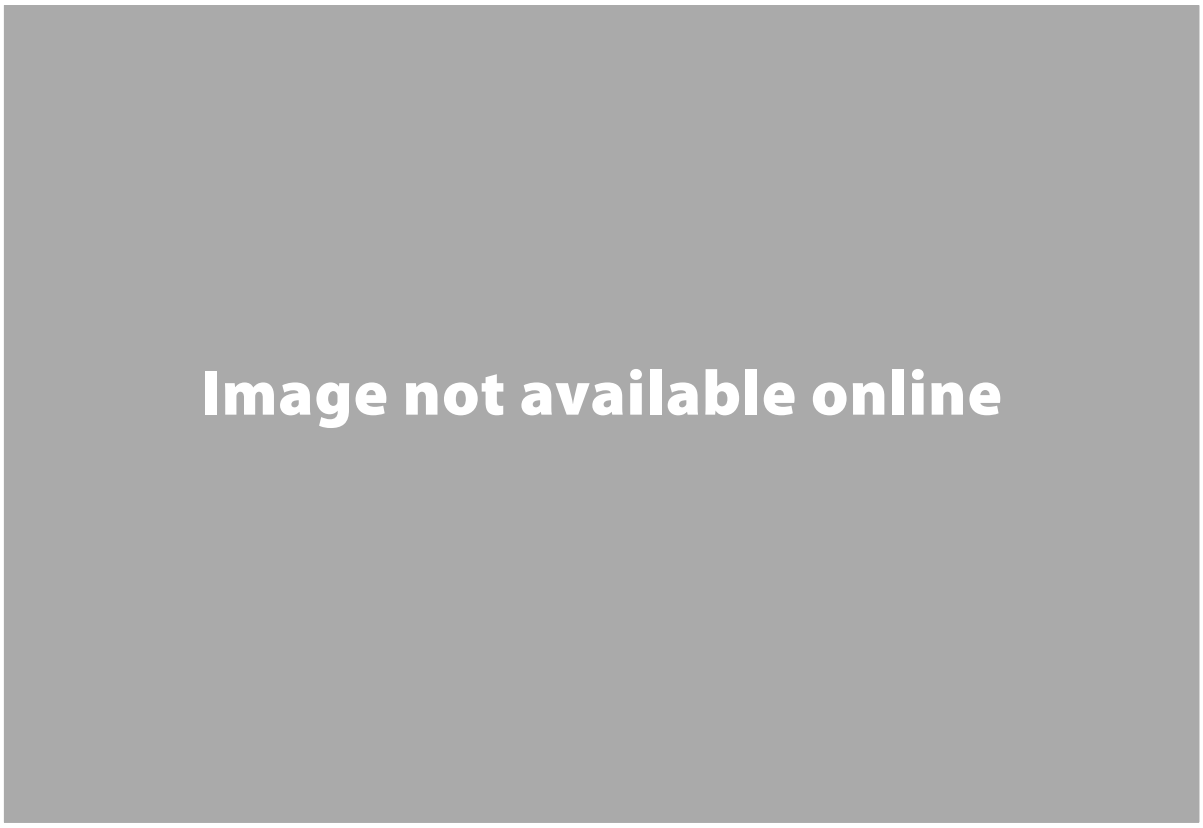


PHOTO BY VLADIMIR PIROGOV / © REUTERS, 2005

**Uzbek refugees from Andijan in a tent village, Jalal-Abad province, Kyrgyzstan, 15 May 2005**

The Andijan events, regardless of one's own reading of them, were thus not an isolated episode of resistance and/or repression in post-Soviet Uzbekistan. The bitter irony is that the entrepreneurs under arrest did not engage in any known violent activities. They were part of a group or network that became known as Akromiya, whose members were engaged in mutual help activities and happened to share strong religious beliefs. Pooling resources for the common good constituted a way of getting around intense economic pressure from the state. It is likely that the group's successful attempts to provide real-life alternatives to the failures of the government made them an even larger threat to the Karimov regime as they blatantly demonstrated the shortcomings of the regime. This suggests that the Andijan events have less to do with radical Islam, however much strength this may have gained in the country in recent years, and more with the state's incapacity to comply with the expectations of its part of the social contract.

What can be seen here is the convergence of a discourse about "terrorism" propagated by the government, and the actual activities of opposition groups that are or are not violent. Explicitly linked to Islamic radicalism according to the authorities, but seen as an association of pious local entrepreneurs by others (including human rights organizations), Akromiya is perhaps more realistically an "informal association of like-minded individuals, mostly young entrepreneurs … [intent in] pooling their resources for the benefit of their communities."[4] This does not detract from the possibility that radicalism may have become a more popular option for disgruntled elements of Uzbek society, but calls for *qualification* of the government-articulated thesis that Islamic radicalism might be the "culprit by default" of recent insurgencies in the country.

The intensity of the May 2005 crackdown has not just instigated a sense of fear among the population, but also raised the question as to whether instead of being a source of security for its citizens, the state may have become the main source of *in*security. This sentiment was well captured during an interview held with an Uzbek citizen who had assisted to the events in Andijan: "[w]hen the people are hungry and rebel against the state, it is not terrorism, but when the state kills its own people, then that is terrorism!"[5] This seems to suggest that the very definition and popular perception of what constitutes terrorism has become blurred over the years. Although only few Uzbek citizens condone violence, the statement returns the accusation of terrorism back to the very actor that has branded any form of opposition as being part of a terrorist threat. Whether such threats are real or imagined has lost its significance as the government's (increasingly incredible) discourse of stability and security has become the defining element in state-society relations. In this light the Andijan events should be viewed in terms of continuity rather than dramatic change.

### What next?

So, what awaits Uzbekistan and its citizens? However tragic, the Andijan events do not represent a rupture with the past. Quite the contrary, they "merely" constitute the latest episode in the deterioration of state-society relations. State and society have begun to isolate from each other. While the former now tends to see any instance of popular expression as evidence of an imminent threat to its survival, the latter has developed an explicit distrust and fear of the state. Repeated episodes of popular protest and more rare, but increasingly frequent, violent outbursts of resistance point to a state increasingly out of tune with its own population.

By cracking down in such a ruthless way, along with generating a sense of widespread fear across the population, the government reaction may have achieved the objective of sending a message that similar acts of resistance would not be tolerated. For months, in fact, protest remained dormant. Gradually, however, new acts of protests resurfaced in the country, over the summer of 2005 in Samarkand and with women-only peaceful demonstrations across the streets of Andijan in January 2006. More than a year after Andijan state and society have not shown signs of reconciliation. Any more wait, let alone failure to do so, will only prolong scenarios of instability when change ultimately occurs.

**Notes**

1. In fact they had already soured since the start of the so-called "colour revolutions" in other post-Soviet republics since 2003 (Georgia, Ukraine), which president Karimov perceived as aiming to effect regime change and, therefore, threaten his position in power.
2. Thus S. Akiner's *Violence in Andijan 2005: An Independent Assessment* (Washington DC, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Silk Road Papers, 2005) represents the account most sympathetic to the government's version of the events. By contrast, Human Rights Watch, *Bullets were falling like Rain: The Andijan Massacre 13 May 2005* (Report vol. 17, 5(D), July 2005) renders those views that are most different from it. The International Crisis Group, *Uzbekistan: The Andijon Uprising* (*Asia briefing* 38, 25 May 2005) gives a balanced account of the events, background, and immediate consequences.
3. D. Kandiyoti, "Andijan: Prelude to a Massacre," *Open Democracy*, 20 May 2005, (http://www.opendemocracy.net).
4. International Crisis Group, *Uzbekistan: The Andijan Uprising*, 2.
5. The interview was held on 22 July 2005, in Osh, Kyrgyzstan.

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# Global War on Terror as De-Militarization

FAISAL DEVJI

**This essay argues that the emergence of al-Qaeda as a new kind of enemy has resulted in the paradoxical de-militarization of the war waged against it. The much-publicized incidents of abuse at the U.S. detention centre of Abu Ghraib provide an example of the way in which the Global War on Terror has increasingly become a criminal rather than military operation. By reclassifying Iraqi prisoners into "criminal-like" enemies they became mere human beings rather than prisoner of war properly defined, which meant that their captors, too, were ironically defined merely as human beings and not as soldiers subject to a set of positive regulations.**

The transformation of war into policing, and therefore its de-militarization is something that has been widely recognized, not least within the U.S. armed forces themselves. In 2004, for instance, the "Final report of the independent panel to review Department of Defense detention operations" dealt with the incidents of prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib precisely by placing them in this context. It argued that the emergence of global terrorism and its "asymmetric warfare" made the "orthodox lexicon of war," like state sovereignty, national borders, uniformed combatants, declarations of war and even war itself irrelevant, for today "the power to wage war can rest in the hands of a few dozen highly motivated people with cell phones and access to the Internet."[1] Furthermore, "the smallness and wide dispersal of these enemy assets make it problematic to focus on signal and imagery intelligence as we did in the Cold War, Desert Storm, and the first phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The ability of terrorists and insurgents to blend into the civilian population further decreases their vulnerability to signal and imagery intelligence. Thus, information gained from human sources, whether by spying or interrogation, is essential in narrowing the field upon which other intelligence gathering resources may be applied."[2]

[T]he global war on terror was represented … by the virtual collapse of distinctions between internal and external enemies.

### Criminalizing the enemy

What all this means is that a place like Abu Ghraib was suddenly transformed into something it was never meant to be, an interrogation centre that was part of a new form of warfare in which "the distinction between front and rear becomes more fluid."[3] In other words, the novelty of the global war on terror was represented at the prison by the virtual collapse of distinctions between internal and external enemies, as well as between front and rear lines. Quite apart from the ineptitude exhibited by all concerned with the prison, then, as well as the infractions committed by some among its staff, the abuse at Abu Ghraib was important because it threw light upon the new role assumed by military detention, which was no longer to process front-line suspects quickly for distribution to judicial bodies in the rear, but rather to hold them for extended periods in order to extract urgent or "actionable" information that might prevent future acts of terror, a function which is effectively one of policing because it turns enemy actions into criminal ones. Extracting information from prisoners of war, of course, is no new thing, but to do so in the theatre of war by intertwining and even confusing the jurisdiction of the army and the CIA is a departure from standard practice. For the very presence of the CIA at Abu Ghraib, signalled the introduction of rules outside traditional military logic as well as jurisdiction. Hence, a facility like Abu Ghraib lost its traditional function of providing one service in the linear logic of military deployment, something like an old-fashioned factory line, to become a multitasking node within a non-linear or network logic.

It was this very criminalization of enemy actions that had led to the partial suspension of the Geneva Conventions, which included the President approving, in principle, the use of torture for al-Qaeda and Taliban detainees in Afghanistan and at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba. Precisely because such detainees did not seem to fall under the formal, public and state-centred categories listed by the Geneva Conventions they could be described as unlawful combatants, enemy combatants, or unprivileged belligerents. The debate generated by these developments, of course, has focused on the fact that such new enemies appear to possess no legal status at all, being defined neither as soldiers nor as civilians, neither as foreign subjects nor as domestic ones. This was exactly the concern expressed by the International Committee of the Red Cross as well as by the U.S. Supreme Court, since the government did not even have a negative definition for such combatants, i.e. those who could not fall into their ranks.[4]

What the debate did not take into consideration, however, is the fact that the suspension of any juridical definition for this new kind of enemy ended up pushing him from the public status of foreigner and soldier to the private one of domestic and civilian ambiguity. Because this enemy had no legal status under international as much as domestic statute, in other words, he existed underneath the law rather than under it. While a criminal, after all, enjoys rights because he possesses juridical status, this new enemy is not classed as a criminal, but rather as someone criminal-like. What this did was to transform the landscape of war into one of civilian and, therefore, of ethical life because the enemy was now increasingly given his due, not by right, but as a gift or favour. Treated thus he became a mere human being rather than prisoner of war properly defined, which meant that his captors, too, were suddenly and ironically defined merely as human beings and not as soldiers subject to a set of positive regulations. The historical precedent for such a status is that of slaves, who also existed underneath the law governing free men as much as criminals, becoming therefore merely human beings along with their masters.[5] For what could be more human than social relations governed by ethical rather than juridical practices?

### Civilian ethics and the military

All this is made very clear by the U.S. presidential memorandum of February 7, 2002, which suspends certain articles of the Geneva Conventions while at the same time emphasizing the need to adhere to their principles. "As a matter of policy," the President declared, "United States Armed Forces shall continue to treat detainees humanely and, to the extent appropriate and consistent with military necessity, in a manner consistent with the principles of Geneva."[6] In other words these formerly juridical duties of military experience have been turned into the ethical prescriptions of an ambiguously civil life, becoming discretionary and, therefore, gift-like. The place evacuated by the language of the law, then, is occupied by the vocabulary of ethics precisely because neither legal obligations exist nor even a clear doctrine regarding the treatment of detainees. Given this, it is not incidental that the "Final report of the independent panel to review Department of Defense detention operations" should recommend that all "personnel who may be engaged in detention operations, from point of capture to final disposition, should participate in a professional ethics programme that would equip them with a sharp moral compass for guidance in situations often riven with conflicting moral obligations."[7]

Instead of reading the recommendations of the independent panel either as a lot of eyewash, or as routine ways of addressing routine military problems, I see them expressing a genuine attempt to deal

with a novel situation—one which includes the troubling insertion into military life of an ambiguously civilian space of ethical rather than juridical existence. "Some individuals," states the report, "seized the opportunity provided by this environment to give vent to latent sadistic urges. Moreover, many well-intentioned professionals, attempting to resolve the inherent moral conflict between using harsh techniques to gain information to save lives and treating detainees humanely, found themselves on uncharted ethical ground, with frequently changing guidance from above."[8] As if to support this position, the "Investigation of the Abu Ghraib Detention Facility and 205th Military Intelligence Brigade" even quotes Staff Sergeant Ivan L. Frederick II, one of the soldiers accused of the most egregious abuse, telling colleagues who rescued one of his victims, "I want to thank you guys, because up until a week or two ago, I was a good Christian."[9] This was well before any photographs had surfaced from Abu Ghraib, or any investigation launched.

The emergence of such new spaces within the cultural and institutional life of the armed forces is neither accidental nor unplanned, for the prison we have been looking at in Baghdad marks one site in which the eminently private, civilian, and even ethical vision for the military proposed by the U.S. Secretary of Defense has achieved its crude beginnings: "We must transform not only our armed forces but also the Defense Department that serves them—by encouraging a culture of creativity and intelligent risk-taking. We must promote a more entrepreneurial approach: one that encourages people to be proactive, not reactive, and to behave less like bureaucrats and more like venture capitalists; one that does not wait for threats to emerge and be 'validated' but rather anticipates them before they appear and develops new capacities to dissuade and deter them."[10]

Both the Armed Forces and the State Department had opposed the President's suspension of certain articles in the Geneva Conventions, arguing not only that these were sufficient to deal with the enemy threat, but also that "to conclude otherwise would be inconsistent with past practice and policy, jeopardize the United States armed forces personnel, and undermine the United States military culture which is based on a strict adherence to the laws of war."[11] Apart from the repercussions of this suspension in terms of international law as well as of international reputation, which were primarily the concerns of the State Department, the military was concerned with the fragmentation of its own culture that such partial suspensions of juridical uniformity represented. And indeed a whole new world of private or civilian practice soon hove into view, or rather out of view, within the armed forces. For example, interrogation techniques, as well as moral liberties that had been permissible in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay, where the relevant articles of the Geneva Conventions had been suspended, were introduced into Iraq, where they were still in force, through "a store of common lore and practice within the interrogator community circulating through Guantanamo, Afghanistan and elsewhere."[12]

The juridical fragmentation and privatization of military life was compounded by its institutional fragmentation and privatization, given the presence of private contractors or the CIA at a facility like Abu Ghraib, all working under different rules. Naturally, the absence of legal or doctrinal uniformity, plus the sheer multiplicity of guidance, information, and authority present, created areas of confusion, negligence, and criminal opportunity in the prison.[13] All this, of course, would be avoidable once a doctrine governing relations between these various elements was formulated and enforced. What seems to be unavoidable even under the most serene of conditions is the military's cultural and institutional fragmentation, signalled most disturbingly, not by the infiltration of private contractors and the CIA into its domain, but by the spread of private or civilian practices among its own troops. This is not a matter merely of temporary exigencies having to do with the particularities of time, place or resources, but apparently marks a new paradigm of war that has emerged since the attacks of 9/11. It is in this light that the deference accorded at Abu Ghraib to non-commissioned officers who had civilian correctional backgrounds becomes significant.[14] For no matter how accidental or temporary it might have been, such deferral points to the private, civilian, and even ethical nature of new military practices—which, paradoxically, end up treating foreign enemies *like* but not *as* domestic criminals.

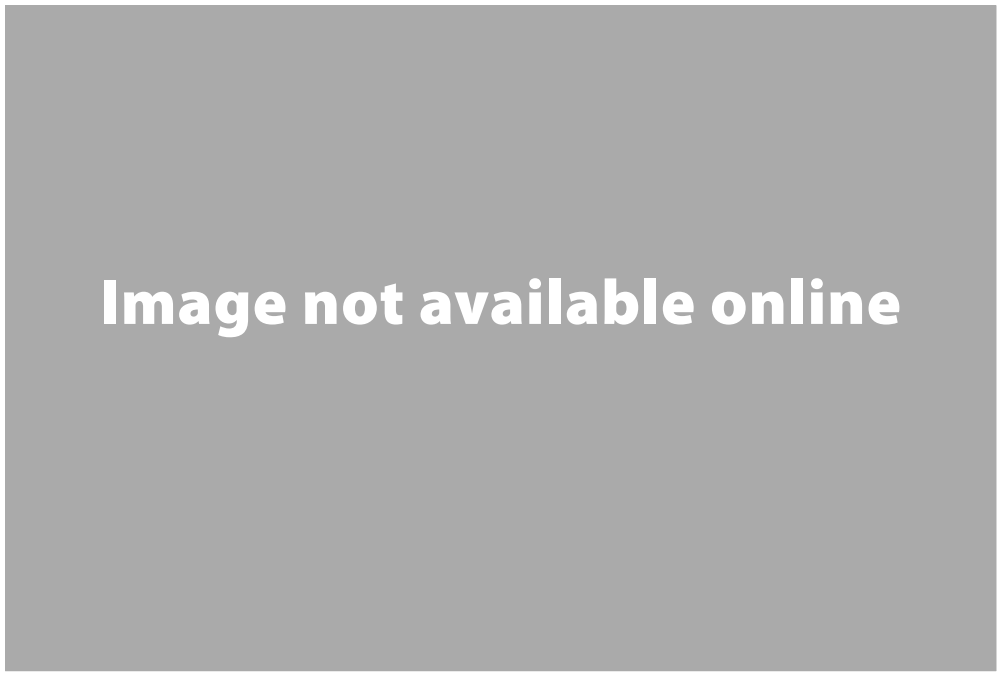


PHOTO BY ALI JASIM / © REUTERS, 2006

**U.S. soldiers stand on guard at Abu Ghraib prison, Baghdad, 15 June 2006.**

Unlike many commentators on the incidents of abuse at Abu Ghraib, who, like those accused of it, blame such incidents on orders given from above, I suspect that American military culture itself had little to do with the sadistic fantasies of the soldiers involved. This is why the two official reports on these episodes are so concerned with the fragmentation of command structures, the private world of unauthorized behaviour, and the military risk they represent. Indeed the apparent tolerance of abuse among some of the superiors of those accused, as well as of their colleagues who did not participate in it, poses significant risks to military discipline, as the reports acknowledge by recommending punitive measures and additional training. The reports also make it very clear that the new paradigm of war announced by the attacks of 9/11, which entailed, among other things, suspending the traditional laws of war, are transforming the American armed forces in an unexpected fashion by breaking down some of its familiar structures in ways like opening it up to multiple sets of rules as well as to private contractors and other civilians.

I want to bring this set of reflections on Abu Ghraib and the transformation of American military life to a close by pointing out the chief repercussion that al-Qaeda's jihad has upon its enemy's identity and functioning: the problem posed by asymmetric warfare to conventional deployments of force. This problem is described very succinctly in the "Final report of the independent panel to review Department of Defense detention operations," which states that asymmetric warfare "can be viewed as attempts to circumvent or undermine a superior, conventional strength, while exploiting its weaknesses using methods the superior force can neither defeat nor resort to itself."[15] While this definition recognizes the structural impasse posed by al-Qaeda, whose organization, mobility, and aims no longer bear much comparison to those of guerrilla or terrorist groups in the past, it does not consider the ways in which such asymmetrical warfare has, in fact, changed the armed forces. But does not the collapsing of military distinctions between the external and internal enemy, or the front and rear line, mirror the global jihad's own collapse of the distinction between the near and far enemy, or the military and civilian one? Does not the juridical, cultural, and institutional fragmentation of the U.S. armed forces mirror that of al-Qaeda? And does not diverting military life into private, civilian, and even ethical channels mirror a similar diversion in the lives of Islam's holy warriors?

**Notes**

1. See *The Abu Ghraib Investigations*, ed. Steven Strasser (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 27.
2. Ibid. / 3. Ibid., 28. / 4. Ibid., 88-89.
5. I owe this point to Uday Singh Mehta.
6. Ibid., 30. / 7. Ibid., 99. / 8. Ibid., 25. / 9. Ibid., 167-68.
10. Donald H. Rumsfeld, " Transforming the military," *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 3 (May/June 2002): 24.
11. *The Abu Ghraib Investigations*, 30.
12. Ibid., 34-5. / 13. Ibid., 73-4. / 14. Ibid., 81. / 15. Ibid., 26-27.

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# Lebanese Shia Women
# Temporality and Piety

LARA DEEB

**Among Shia Muslims in Lebanon, piety has become a central marker of modernity. The author argues that, perhaps unexpectedly, it is *women* who are allotted the greater responsibility of representing modernity in *all* its dimensions, including the material. As part of their mandate to represent and facilitate their community's progress, pious Shia women are encouraged to move into public roles and spaces. These processes demonstrate the coming together of the material and spiritual domains as well as the transformation and partial blurring of gender divides.**[1]

For many Shia Muslims in Lebanon since the late 1970s—particular practices of piety have become part of a discourse that is held up as an alternative to notions of a secular modernity. In this process, an identity has been forged that is understood to be both pious and modern, and where notions of piety and modernity are interdependent on one another.[2] Within this context, ideals of public piety—or public expressions of religious commitment that are interpreted in contextual ways—have had particular ramifications for women. This is in part because of gendered markers of religiosity like the headscarf, but more importantly, because public piety has emerged in relation to a set of gender ideologies that highlight the ways that locality is firmly embedded in its transnational dimensions. In what follows, I will touch upon the interconnections among local and transnational gendered linkings of piety to modernity, female role models from Shia religious history, and ideas about temporality.

The link between notions of piety and modernity is rooted in a Lebanese Shia mobilization around religion that began in the 1970s. The dominant gender ideologies in circulation amongst pious Shia have emerged through these historical processes and in the Lebanese context of sectarian coexistence. Over this period of transformation, the meaning of "modernity" in the pious Shia cultural sphere came to include three elements: being "civilized" as opposed to backward, material progress, and spiritual progress—which meant cultivating particular religious understandings and practices that were characterized as more "authentic" than supposedly older or "more traditional" forms. For women in this community, the result has been that to be considered a modern woman in most contexts, one must also be visibly pious in very specific ways. To begin to look at the ways women demonstrate these qualities simultaneously, let us turn to contemporary reformulations of the behaviour of Sayyida Zaynab at the Battle of Karbala.

### Zaynab as role model

Ashura, the annual commemoration of Imam Husayn's martyrdom at Karbala, is a key element in the transformations of religiosity that have taken place in Lebanon. One of the myriad ongoing changes in Ashura commemorations has been a two-part shift in the ways that ideal womanhood is portrayed. First, there has been a decrease in emphasis on Sayyida Fatima accompanied by an increased emphasis on Husayn's sister, Zaynab. In pious women's testimonies about the influence of these figures on their lives, Fatima has taken a background role, despite continued emphasis on her stoicism and strength by religious scholars. Instead, lay women focus on Zaynab as the dominant female figure of Ashura, emphasizing her presence at the battle and her role as the community's leader following Husayn's martyrdom.

> For women in this community, … to be considered a modern woman … one must also be visibly pious in very specific ways.

Second, there has been a reformulation, in Ashura recitations, of Zaynab's behaviour during and after the battle. Portrayals of Zaynab as buried in grief or shedding copious tears over the dead and dying gave way to representations that emphasized her courage, strength, and resilience, and highlighted her leadership role. This reinterpretation of Zaynab's role is both embodied in the increased participation of women in Ashura commemorative practices and the model for women's greater public participation in the community more generally.

When the notion of "role model" comes up in relation to Islamic religious and/or political groups, it is frequently followed by assumptions about the forms of temporality that must be structuring the lives and expectations of people who draw upon religio-historical figures for inspiration. In particular, the idea frequently arises that looking to a figure like Zaynab implies or demonstrates a "looking backward," a desire to "return" to an earlier time period, or an understanding of time as circular and therefore, non-modern. In response to such assumptions, I argue that in this community there exist multiple notions of temporality simultaneously, including both a modernist notion of time as linear progress to a potentially attainable yet unknown future and a notion of time as—not quite cyclical—but paradigmatic.

### Temporal readings

The Battle of Karbala's relationship to time can be read in at least two ways in its contemporary representations in Lebanon. On the one hand, time here may be understood as nonlinear. This reading emphasizes a notion of time similar though not identical to that described by Reinhart Koselleck as a temporal framework in which "the future could bring nothing fundamentally new" because the end of the world was expected.[3] In the Christian contexts in which Koselleck's theorizing is rooted, this relates to the enduring nature of human beings as sinful until Judgment Day. However, in the Shia worldview emphasized in the Lebanese context, this non-new future is instead related to the continuity and constancy of a battle between good and evil that is consistently foreshadowed and re-instantiated in different eras. This was often articulated to me as the idea that "there is a Yazid and a Husayn in every time, in every nation, in every era."

This represents a paradigmatic reading of Karbala, as opposed to a narrative reading. Paradigmatic, not as the origins of Shia resistance against evil, but as the paradigmatic instance of this resistance, understood as an ever-repeating type of event, an always-foreseen battle of good against evil that will not be resolved until Judgment Day. This is not about a return to Karbala, but rather, about using Karbala in *parallel*, to emphasize the morality of one's stance, and an identification with the side of good in the good-evil binary. Contemporary Shia battles, like those against the twenty two-year Israeli occupation of Lebanon or the Israeli attack on Lebanon in July 2006, become yet another instance of the universal moral battle for which Karbala represents the paradigm.

The second possible reading of the Battle of Karbala's relationship to time instead highlights the notion of an unknown and unpredictable future—what Koselleck and others describe as "modern time." Here Karbala is the point of origin for a linear historical narrative, the location of the beginning of the history of the possibility of Shia Resistance, as well as the locus of inspiration. The next step in this telling of the narrative involves partial rupture, where centuries of historical time are skipped over in a catapulting move to the early 1980s and the beginnings of the history of the Lebanese Islamic Resistance in its contemporary and local manifestations. This rupture is not one of time itself, but one of narration, where the "missing" centuries are understood to exist outside the particular telling of the history of the Lebanese Islamic Resistance, as commonly narrated.

In the second reading, the events of Karbala and the behaviour of the role models of Husayn and Zaynab function as a literal model—to be drawn upon by many of my Shia interlocutors as role models for moral behaviour interpreted through the lens of the contemporary world. Characteristics associated with them were to be emulated *in the present*, *in order to shape the future,* characteristics such as bravery and sacrifice for one's community. In the first temporal framework, the martyred Imam and the contemporary martyred fighter are seen as lives in parallel, as participating in the same battle. In the second, the martyred Imam is viewed as inspiring values that lead to similar participation in the contemporary moment.

PHOTO BY LARA DEEB, 2001

**Hizbullah women guiding girls in the public Ashura procession in Beirut, 2001**

### Gendering temporal frameworks

In this community, both these notions of time and both these understandings of the role of Husayn and Zaynab as models for, or in, the present coexist. Yet their relative emphasis is gendered in particular ways. When men are called upon to fulfil the public piety ideal, it is most often in relation to the resistance to occupation, and when their participation is recognized, it is most often framed as a paradigmatic instance of continual resistance. In other words, Lebanese Shia fighters are frequently equated with Husayn in discourse and in memorialization practices.

In contrast, when women are called upon to participate, or are recognized for their participation, it is more frequently cast in the framework of linear progress of the community into an unknown but inevitably more "developed" future—drawing instead on "linear" temporal frameworks identified with modernity. Women activists are not equated with Zaynab. Zaynab is looked to for inspiration, and values associated with her are adapted to the current context.

One may note the contrast of this gendering of temporal frameworks to that described by Partha Chatterjee in relation to colonial India. Chatterjee's analysis is one in which the material and the spiritual were also both key elements in ideas about modernizing the community, but in that case, Bengali women were delegated the maintenance of the spiritual, while the material development was conceptualized as the domain of nationalist men. Women's spiritual responsibility was linked to a gendered division of space into public and domestic spheres. Even with nineteenth century shifts in gender norms that facilitated elite women's emergence into public spaces, the gendered nature of the spiritual-material divide remained.[4]

In contrast, the Shia Lebanese case, located in a neo-imperialist context of the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries, demonstrates the coming together of the material and spiritual domains without a similarly prominent gender divide; and where such a divide can be discerned, through notions of temporality, it is *women* who are allotted the greater responsibility of representing modernity in *all* its dimensions, including the material. Furthermore, as part of their mandate to represent and facilitate their community's progress, pious Shia women are encouraged to move into public roles and spaces. This contrast raises questions about the limits of comparison of colonial and postcolonial contexts to contemporary theorizing about gendered responses to neocolonialisms and neoimperialisms in the Middle East and elsewhere.

### Gendering piety and modernity

Women's public activism in emulation of Zaynab takes many forms. The most visible can be seen in the thousands of women who volunteer with Islamic social service organizations. In addition, more Shia Lebanese women are formally employed than before, and the types of employment have diversified widely. A third area where Zaynab's example is applied today draws on her ideal attribute of outspokenness, as Lebanese Shia women contribute to the continual process of religious reform through daily conversations and debates about the proper interpretations of religious meanings and practices.

Women's public participation is a key element in the way that Zaynab provides a normative model for public piety and for the ideal moral woman, a woman who is conceptualized as both pious and modern. The activist lesson of Karbala, in its application in daily life, provides a framework for these expressions of piety, and indeed, *insists* on public activity as a part of piety. In this context, to be pious according to such standards is a large part of being modern. Women who did not express piety "properly" were considered "backward" and in need of education to bring them into their proper role in the progressivist narrative of community development.

While it can be argued that this is true to a certain extent for both women and men, public piety marks women most visibly. This gendering is related to a number of factors: the new visibility of women in public spaces, especially in relation to how women's activities and words are embodied and marked as *women's*; the way that this new visibility provokes discussion of change in domestic relationships; and finally, the gendered temporal frameworks structuring the emulation of Karbala-based role models, so that women have become the representatives and agents of linear progress in ways that men have not.

This gendered temporal difference is related to the way that women's public piety is marked as crucial to the community's external visibility. Shia women's public piety is central to their signifying their community's modernity within a transnational discursive field. The status and image of Muslim women is one of the most consistent and contentious issues that arose during my field research, in passionate and often, unsolicited responses to Western discourses about Muslim women. Gender norms are critical because of both local and international concern, as well as local concern about international concern. As one woman put it, "a woman is the example for everything. A culture is judged by the level of its women."

Public participation has come to provide an externally visible marker of morality and modernity by which women can be judged within the community, and by which the community can be judged internationally. The social importance of this is magnified because women's participation and its promotion are taking place in a discursive field where gendered notions of modernity are negotiated. Piety and modernity are thus linked on two levels: in the first, because the forms of piety that *require* women's public participation are locally understood as both modern and as a crucial aspect of community progress. And in the second, because those same forms emerge in response to, or dialogue with, transnational discourses about gender and modernity.

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**Notes**

1. This is a much-condensed version of a paper presented at the University of Texas, Austin on 16 February 2006. Since then, the community described here has come under intense Israeli attack.
2. This is elaborated in Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon* (Princeton University Press, 2006).
3. Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History* (Stanford University Press, 2002).
4. Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments* (Princeton University Press, 1993).

# Religious Mediators in Palestine

NAHDA SHEHADA

**The spatial and social fragmentation of the Palestinian territories has not only weakened judicial and police systems, but also undermined classical conflict resolution mechanisms based on kinship and other forms of social proximity. In this context, new religious mediators are gaining ground. The author shows that by appealing to "Islamic values" as the only remaining connecting principle, these new legal actors have played a key role in preventing the disintegration of now isolated communities.**

The rule of law in the Palestinian territories must be addressed in its historically unique context. Complex forms of legal pluralism have obtained in Palestine since Ottoman times. After 1967, the judiciary was subjected to external control through Israeli occupation and military rule. However, following the signing of the Oslo agreements in 1993/4, a secular judiciary was reinstituted under the auspices of the Palestinian Authority, as well as a sharia court system whose role was, however, reduced from that of a general tribunal to that of a forum dealing with personal status issues. This dual system was superimposed on a long-standing network of customary institutions of conflict resolution, based on lineage or tribal councils, collective land administration assemblies, and public reconciliation committees. These institutions have not only endured the political upheavals of the twentieth century, but, in recent years, also seen their roles diversified, transformed and perhaps reinforced through the absence (until 1993) and present debility of the Palestinian proto-state, the very existence of which is now threatened. In this complex and versatile field of conflict resolution, new actors have appeared while classical players are taking on new roles.

Since the eruption of the second Intifada in September 2000, an on-going process of spatial and social fragmentation has taken place. Firstly, the construction of the separation fence/wall, destined to become a 640 kilometres long barrier, annexes de facto large portions of territory while severing the Palestinian communities, fields and families. Secondly, some 540 checkpoints and hundreds of settlements have turned the West Bank into a patchwork of ghettos whose only access to each other is through an Israeli military checkpoint. Thirdly, parallel to the above-mentioned processes, the systematic weakening of the apparatus of the Palestinian Authority (PA), combined with the disintegration of the military wings of various political factions into dozens of militant groups, has not only weakened the judicial and police systems, but, more importantly, undermined more classical conflict resolution mechanisms based on kinship and other forms of social proximity. Thus, throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip, new actors, notably *da'iyyat* and *qudah*, have stepped in to fill the breach in conciliatory mechanisms and save the now isolated communities that form the nation from total chaos by appealing to the only remaining connecting principle, namely the common reference to "Islamic values." Yet female da'iyyat and male qudah differ significantly with regard to the gendered definition of their sphere of intervention in homes, inaccessible to men, and religious institutions, such as mosques, as well as interpersonal networks, charities and governmental institutions, notwithstanding their spatial and modes of operation. In the light of the present polarization between a secular bureaucracy, dominated by Fatah (the recently defeated ruling party), and the newly elected Hamas government, until now, such conciliatory mechanisms have played a key role in maintaining a high degree of social coherence in a nation that has never formed a state yet has experienced four decades of occupation. Whether this solidarity will persist is, however, an open question.

### Male religious leaders as mediators

Despite the relative decline of the sharia judiciary, the *qadi* of the personal status court, as a public figure, still retains a considerable degree of moral influence in his community. His authority in the context of extra-formal conflict resolution mechanisms transcends his administrative and legal attributes. In contrast to many qudah in Ottoman Palestine, who were transferred every year so as to preclude local involvement, the contemporary qadi in the Palestinian Territories tends to be a full-fledged member of the community. This embeddedness has far-reaching implications, influencing spheres beyond the domain of personal status and affecting significant aspects of social practice, community life, and political encounters.

In the current Palestinian social context, the qadi emerges as a key actor not only in regulating relations within and between families or descent-based groups or those bound by matrimonial alliance, but more importantly as a community leader approached in his capacity as an imam, a preacher or simply a "respected person," to sponsor a solution or initiate a settlement. It seems that respectability, trust, and wisdom are the main attributes, which legitimize the intervention of particular person as a mediator acceptable to opposed parties. The fact that these same qualifications are prerequisites for the qudah, appointment in the formal system of the sharia court puts him in a pre-eminent position in matters of conflict management as compared with other intermediaries. This standing must today be understood in a context of weakness of the formal judicial system, which, as a consequence, tends to empower the qadi and permits him to occupy a greater space than he enjoyed earlier. Hence, his exercise of active authority renders his resolutions suitable for settling most sorts of conflicts between community members or groups without major objections being raised.

The centrality of his role should not, however, lead one to underestimate either the role of networks that crosscut or overarch the kinship-based relations of community members, bonds of patronage and dependency, or any other system based on formal justice, whether secular or religious. Indeed, there are several authorities or actors to whom individuals can turn for assistance before asking the qadi to intervene. These include kin, friends, neighbours, and family or lineage elders, including *makhatir* (sing. *mukhtar*),[1] extended family councils, police officers or relations of influence in Palestinian Authority institutions. Salha, a poor, 34-year-old widow, approached a qadi to resolve a dispute with her brother-in-law over a "high" payment promised to her by an insurance company after the death of her husband. The brother-in-law wanted to use his guardianship over her children to profit from their father's insurance. Had the dispute been between two Gazan notables, it is doubtful that the case would ever have reached the qadi. The matter would, of necessity, have been settled *en famille*. Once the case had been presented to the qadi, a specific range of options emerged, ranging from the judge's refusal to consider the case at all, through opening the road to a "customary" solution to his formulating of a legal decision that would gravely affect Salha. In practice, qudah most often opt for an "inventive," median solution that avoids irrevocable consequences for the parties from their kin and society at large. Only a systematic exploration of the contextual decisional process in cases involving fundamental moral principles would enable us to understand the qudah's socially and ethically situated practice. After listening to Salha, the qadi contacted her family's mukhtar. The next day, both agreed to resolve the dispute at the council. For more than a week, they kept up negotiations with the family's powerful figures. Holding the uncle responsible through the *hamula* was a way of exerting pressure on him through the collectivity. Eventually, through mechanisms of negotiation, persuasion, and agreement, a solution was reached that allowed Salha to keep her children and receive the insurance payment and even obliged the brother-in-law to pay their *nafaqa* to her.

PHOTO BY MENAHEM KAHANA / © AFP PHOTO, 2006

**Kalandia checkpoint, north of Jerusalem, 21 March 2006**

The study of the qudah, extra-formal intervention thus presupposes distinguishing a number of spheres of potential intervention beyond his formal role in the sharia court. All social and power resources are differentially available to the qadi according to time, context, and the social status of parties. They converge to model specific decisions, thereby setting limits to his moral authority.

### Female sub-mediators

The phenomenon of da'iyyat arose in the Palestinian Territories more than a decade ago, after the emergence of the Palestinian Authority and the challenges it posed to the political and social operation of the Islamist movements. Over time, the role of the da'iyyat has been significantly transformed from that of educators advocating Islamic values in mosques and charity centres to active involvement in various issues related to community and social life, including interventions in public and private conflicts.

These voluntary activists often come from a middle class background and enjoy a high level of education; most have a BA or higher degree in a variety of specializations such as medicine, agriculture, architecture, and, obviously, Islamic studies. Despite denying any explicit political commitment, a number of informants indicate that they are attached to the social infrastructure of the main Islamic political party (Hamas) or, to a lesser degree, of the Islamic Jihad movement.

In the course of their activism, da'iyyat meet hundreds of women from various regions, generations, statuses, and classes. They often take the lead in introducing women from different backgrounds to each other and design shared teaching programmes and various activities for different communities, which indicates the importance of social networking for their activism. Part of their daily agenda is to follow their "clients" to their homes; they regularly pay visits, both at times of crisis and of celebration. Their female "clients," in response, make them privy to their intimate problems as well as more "public" conflicts. This might be the most interesting question in the study of the roles and actions of da'iyyat, their modes of intervention in the social conflicts submitted to them by their female "clients." The preliminary data indicate that the motivation for their intervention in social conflicts is not public status; rather, their intervention is veiled behind their religious activity. They seem to prefer confining themselves to the role of *sub-mediators* between the parties to a dispute and the principal mediators, i.e., those "wise" men who share with them both their religious background and willingness to resolve communal conflicts. Studying their activism may therefore provide us with further insights regarding the careful gender division of labour, political vs. non-political activism, and the public-private division.

The variety of cases in which da'iyyat intervene is vast: domestic disputes, sexual harassment and assaults, adultery, inheritance, financial disputes, land disputes, etc. The male leaders of the community do not seem to feel threatened by their activism, unlike their reaction to other outspoken feminist activists. Despite their advocacy for women's rights (regardless of what that means), their religious background and Islamic perspective ensure them a positive reception in the community. The interventions of the da'iyyat, may, I believe, (as in the case of their counterparts, the qudah) fill the gap left by the increasing vulnerability of the formal justice system of the Palestinian Authority. Further, the fact that these new actors have gradually earned the people's trust may also signify a degree of scepticism with regard to the neutrality, influence, and legitimacy of other informal systems.

The da'iyyat have a particular method of dealing with community disputes including those related to political conflicts between Hamas and Fatah. For example, in 2004, a sixteen-year-old young man was arrested by the preventive security force (one of the many security branches functioning in Gaza) on the basis of his membership of Hamas and his involvement in preparing crude bullets. His mother was one of the followers of Dr. Salma, who is one of the most active da'iyya in Gaza. Dr. Salma, who does not deny her sympathy for Hamas, however has good relations with Fatah (then the ruling party) through her kinship with a high-ranking official in the Ministry of Islamic Endowment (*awqaf*). She approached him with the argument that the first half should not imprison the second half of the nation. This is Dr. Salma's conception of the polarised political matrix in Gaza between Fatah and Hamas. The man, on his part, approached the top security head to release the boy, astonishingly using the same argument as Dr. Salma: "it is unfair for one half of the nation, which dominates the political scene, to imprison the other half." After several attempts by the Shaykh of awqaf, the boy was released and returned to his mother. What is significant and requires deeper theorization, which unfortunately is beyond the scope of this short article, is Dr. Salma's advice to the mother: "Our God works for our good, even if His decisions seem to be illogical to us. Your boy may or may not come back. We should work hard to release him, but if we cannot do so, we have to look beyond our agony. God may want to teach us how to be patient, compliant, and accommodating through such tests." Thus, while doing her best to release the boy, Dr. Salma's advice to the mother was that of acceptance and confession. This approach is not unique in the discourse of da'iyyat. They teach their followers to work hard to improve their living conditions, but at the same time they train them to accept the hardships of being truly pious.

In conclusion, there is a need to examine not only the roles of these new actors in conflict resolution but also the position they occupy vis-à-vis other justice systems. Thus, their interventions should not be perceived as a linear process; rather, they should be viewed in their emergence, development, transformations, and shifts, in terms of the objectives of the parties involved and their terms of settlement. There are areas of overlap and intersection, or, alternatively, conflict and contradiction in the course of disputing and resolution. This implies the need to document conflicts through their entire duration so as to understand at which stage particular institutions are invited to intervene, the reasons for their success or failure, and the choices to be made by both disputers and mediators.

**Note**

1. Literally, the "selected person." In contemporary Palestine, one must distinguish between *makhatir* designated according to the principle of locality and those designated on the basis of descent. The former act on behalf of the sharia court and the civil authorities, mainly in marriage-related disputes. The descent-based makhatir are not recognized by the authorities; they are designated by their kin to mediate in conflicts within and between wider patrifocal descent groups.

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# Hizbullah's Promise

JOSEPH ALAGHA

**After the 34-day war in Lebanon, *both* Israel and Hizbullah claimed victory. With over one million displaced, 1,300 casualties, many more injured, and imperceptible changes in the status quo, such victory cries seem out of place. Looking beyond strictly military parameters, however, Alagha argues that the war resulted in greater political prominence of Hizbullah, enhanced prestige of its leaders, and even increased national integration.**

In the aftermath of August 2006, belief that war had simply "erupted" because of a few captured soldiers was shaken. Israel's insistence that its actions were legitimate "defensive" responses to Hizbullah's kidnapping of two soldiers lost its credibility triggering suspicion that it served as a pretext for launching a long-planned war intended to undermine Hizbullah's influence as both a militant and democratic political player. Notwithstanding, Israel seriously misjudged its own capacity and Hizbullah's strength. Likewise, Hizbullah committed a strategic mistake in miscalculating the intensity of Israeli response, apparently assuming that holding Israeli soldiers would ultimately lead to a swap operation with Lebanese prisoners. Acknowledging misjudgement, Nasrallah later stated that the soldiers would not have been kidnapped if the devastating outcome were foreseen.

Although the origins of war should not be reduced to the prisoner question, their importance in processes of legitimation highlights the symbolic significance of prisoners for both parties. By attempting to take or liberate prisoners, both aimed not only to display military power, but also to demonstrate commitment to their populations. Understandably then, the destruction of Lebanon resulted in a victory for Hizbullah. Indeed, though some Lebanese question the wisdom of Hizbullah's action, nevertheless Hizbullah emerged from this crisis much more popular than before.

PHOTO BY ERIC GAILLARD / © REUTERS, 2006

**Lebanese residents stand in the rubble of their homes in southern Beirut, 16 August 2006.**

### Promises and deliveries

While Hizbullah's kidnapping of Israeli soldiers should in part be seen as a gesture of support to the Intifada after the June Israeli incursion into Gaza, it was also prominently related to some morally charged statements Nasrallah had made six years earlier. He had made a public "faithful promise": "We are people who don't leave their prisoners behind." Pragmatically, then, the kidnapping aimed at liberating Lebanese prisoners of war in Israeli jails. Moreover, by acting on the prisoner question, Hizbullah reinforced its status as a militant Islamic resistance movement, one which seemed to be shaken by its participation in the democratic political process.

Undoubtedly, the Israeli response was devastating. Israel imposed a triple blockade on Lebanon virtually isolating the country from the outside world. Large parts of Lebanon's infrastructure were destroyed and its economy came to an almost standstill. The war resulted in more than one million displaced, 1300 dead, and 3000 wounded. By attacking Christian areas Israel plausibly aimed at sowing a wedge between the Lebanese and Hizbullah, in order for Hizbullah to be blamed for the misfortunes that befell Lebanon. Israel repeatedly stated that its war targeted Hizbullah and *not* the Lebanese population.

However, inside Lebanon few blame Hizbullah for the misfortunes. Instead, Hizbullah emerged as the hero of reconstruction. Soon after the ceasefire, Hizbullah's civil institutions spearheaded relief efforts and started rebuilding damaged homes. While the Lebanese state is considered too fragile and corrupt to deal efficiently with the destruction, Hizbullah is well renowned for its probity and integrity in conducting public affairs. Indeed, Hizbullah honoured its words and delivered on its promises of handing out cash donations to all of those whose homes have been partially or completely destroyed.

Attempting to defuse the crisis, the Lebanese cabinet—*including* its two Hizbullah ministers—unanimously endorsed PM Sanyura's seven points, one of which mentions that the state enjoys absolute monopoly over the use of force; a proposition that Hizbullah had persistently resisted. Moreover, after its rejection of the UN draft resolution because it fell short of demanding an Israeli withdrawal, and in an attempt to influence the wording of the new resolution to Lebanon's advantage, the cabinet unanimously approved deploying Lebanese soldiers to the border region with Israel. This seemed to constitute a genuine policy shift rather than a rhetorical move since Hizbullah's earlier discourse had vetoed sending the army to the south. The cabinet also approved the 2006 UNSC Resolution 1701, which calls, among other things, for the cessation of hostilities and Hizbullah's disarmament, by a political process, rather than by military force, as Kofi Annan clarified. In these decisions, Hizbullah's two ministers voted "yes". Nasrallah asserted that accepting the deployment of the army to the south (a repeated Israeli demand) would "serve national interest since the strength of Lebanon is in its resistance and national unity." This policy targeting more national integration and Lebanonization, aims at portraying Hizbullah as a progressive social movement and mainstream political party.

### Prospects

Most likely Hizbullah not only survived this war, but also enhanced its domestic, regional, and international fame. Domestically, it showered its supporters with "Iranian" petrodollars and honoured its promise of immediately rebuilding the war damages. Also, Hizbullah achieved the respect of many Lebanese by agreeing to deploy the army to the south and accepting 1701, which would pave the way for discussing not only disarmament, but eventually dismantling its military wing once Israel relinquishes the Sheba Farms. Regionally and internationally, Hizbullah boosted its pan-Arab and pan-Islamic credentials by scoring a victory against Israel, a victory unattained by any Arab army. Israel aiming to eradicate Hizbullah's military wing, succeeded only in cutting its tail. Hizbullah emerged victorious by shedding off its skin, but keeping its body intact. Its capacity for mobilization coupled with its theory of martyrdom and religious ideology, on the one hand, and its integration into the Lebanese public sphere, on the other, serve as guarantees to its survival throughout the wind of change.

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# How & Why "Immigrants" became "Muslims"

STEFANO ALLIEVI

**Over the last ten years or so, migrants to Europe who used to be labelled as Moroccans, Turks, Algerians, Pakistani, and so on, have increasingly come to be labelled in religious terms. This article provides a brief analysis of how and why this transformation of public discourse in European contexts has taken place, and discusses the consequences of defining immigrants with Muslim background in terms of an essentialized religious identity. The current text is based on the workshop "Public Debates about Islam in Europe" held in March 2006 in Montecatini. Details about this workshop can be found on page 56.**

Discussions in the public sphere about Islam in Europe have become more and more crucial in defining the symbolic integration of Muslim communities. Cultural conflicts related to Islam in the public space have erupted in many countries of Europe, mainly over Islamic symbols that have become increasingly visible. Moreover, the content of discussions on immigration has tended to shift to the cultural and symbolic level: political actors, media, intellectuals, all focus their attention on some presupposed Islamic specificities. The immigrant, in many variable scenes, has progressively become "Muslim," both in his/her perception by the host societies and in his/her self-perception.

Clearly, the use of the religious argument in the public debate has led to the marginalization of other social issues, and many questions are more and more frequently debated on religious grounds. Immigration, in a word, tends to be "islamized." Reactive identities (i.e. identities defined in opposition to others) become more salient and "act" specifically as such in the cultural, political, and religious field—both for the immigrants and for the autochtonous populations.

It becomes important, then, to analyse the process by which the discussion on the presence of immigrants has gradually shifted towards identification on religious grounds, particularly as far as Islam is concerned. However, though much attention (including that of the academic institutions: studies, researches, papers, dissertations, etc.) has been given to Muslim individuals and communities in Europe, relatively little research has focused on the "other side" of the processes of integration.

The reasons for this change are manifold. Some are connected with the world of migrations, and the process of progressive stabilization and settlement of migrants in the different countries, particularly with the passage from the first generation of migrants to succeeding generations of new Europeans. Then there are reasons connected with the emergence of Islam as a disruptive element, also on the symbolic plane: as a global geo-political actor from the local crises connected with Islam (Afghanistan, Algeria, Bosnia, Palestine, Chechnya, and many others) up to transnational Islamic terrorism and the impact of the terrorist attacks upon the Twin Towers, and then, still in the West, the attacks upon Madrid and London); as an instrument and interpretative category (from Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington onwards, in a very widespread literature, especially its more popular versions); and as a social and political actor of ever greater importance, particularly in the countries of origin of the European immigrants.

But there are also long-term reasons internal to the European West, which are not only specific to Islam but also more in general to the position of religion in society. The last thirty years in particular have led to a radical transformation of the religious "field" in various European countries, which have become more and more religiously plural. These changes were taking place in a period during which the presence of religion in the public sphere was, in contrast to earlier periods in the recent history of Europe, experiencing a resurgence. This resurgence was connected as much with processes of globalization and their cultural consequences as with the effects of the increasing visibility of "religion" in the media. It may even seem that in public discussion Islam has taken on a crucial role among other religions precisely because it is perceived to represent the most conspicuous case of "traditional" religion, resisting to be exclusively relegated to the private sphere. The debate on Islam, with the historical and symbolic overload it carries with it, has started to dominate public discussions about the "pluralisation" of Europe. Consequently, the public discussions about Islam seem to be the means by which Western societies discuss their recent and not yet fully understood evolutions and tendencies.

In this context, immigrants are increasingly seen as Muslims, rather than as workers, students, parents, children, etc. In other words, society tends to define them by their (pre-supposed) identities rather than by their social roles. Thereby, the category of diversity, but also those of otherness (if not extraneousness) and even incompatibility, are being re-introduced in situations where such categories had previously been excluded because they no longer made much sense. For instance, second generation new Europeans, who can no longer be considered immigrants and in fact have become less and less "other," are now being "Islamized," which means that they may well become reconstrued as "other," different, and even extraneous.

This debate has progressively invaded the public space in several European countries: in politics, media, certain religious considerations, and popular essays. But elements from the public debate have entered sociological praxis and analysis as well. Though the Montecatini Workshop only partially succeeded in its attempt to attract new researches and new researchers on these issues (many of the proposals submitted fell out of the framework of the workshop theme), nevertheless it managed to offer a high calibre of presentations and discussions that have permitted an extraordinary rich debate on the different national cases.

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# "Muslims" in Swedish Media and Academia

GÖRAN LARSSON

**Even though academic studies often function as a vital counter-weight to media portrayals of immigration, religious communities, Islam, and Muslims, the author stresses the importance of being self-critical and of asking whether academic studies may not actually be enhancing, even creating, similar stereotypical depictions. This article traces the similarities between media and academics portrayals of Islam and Muslims living in Sweden and argues that academics should be wary of too easily adopting religious labels when the topics under discussion have little to do with religion or faith.**[1]

A large number of surveys and polls from various parts of Europe clearly demonstrate that Islam and Muslims are often perceived negatively and as a problem in Western societies. This is a strong indication of a division between "Us" and "Them," i.e. between non-Muslims and Muslims. This gap is often explained by global events, such as the terror attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001, the murder of Dutch film-maker Theo van Gogh in November 2004, the London bombings in summer 2005, and the publication of and responses to the Muhammad cartoons in *Jyllands-Posten*, as well as the negative and biased media coverage of Islam and Muslims in general. Although a large number of independent academic studies and interviews with Muslims demonstrate that the media often use negative and stereotypical images in depicting Islam and Muslims, it is essential to analyse whether, and if so how, academic studies are also contributing to the image of Islam and Muslims in Europe. In this article, therefore, I focus on similarities between media and academics portrayals of Islam and Muslims living in Sweden. From a more general point of view, however, my text should be read as a call for a more self-critical discussion of how and whether academics are also contributing to the portrayal of Muslims in accordance with religious categories.

[T]he Muslim community … is generally described … as a *religious* community, even though most Muslims living in Sweden are secularized.

Even though academic studies often function as a vital counter-weight and an important resource for journalists who are writing about immigration, religious communities, Islam and Muslims, I argue that it is essential to be self-critical and ask whether academic studies may not actually be enhancing, even creating, stereotypes of them. When journalists call on experts in the universities, they are mainly asking for statistical figures and numbers or for quotations that could be used to support the claims made by the journalists: the latter seldom ask for more complex or conflicting examples or illustrations. As a result, the Muslim community (the term is used here as a collective label for a large number of different communities) is generally described in both public and academic debates as a *religious* community, even though most Muslims living in Sweden are secularized.

According to the most widely circulated figures, the number of individuals with a Muslim cultural background in the country is estimated to be approximately 250,000 or 300,000. These figures are only rough approximations, since it is forbidden to include religious affiliations in official statistics in Sweden. Regardless of the problem of calculating how many people have a Muslim cultural background, academic studies and information provided by Muslim organizations indicate that the great majority of Muslims are secularized. Nonetheless Muslims are presented and discussed in religious categories when they are debated in the public discourse. How does this selectivity affect Muslims' self-perceptions, and how does this way of depicting the Muslim community influence how non-Muslims understand the Islamic presence in Sweden? Although this is a relevant question that needs to be raised, it is very difficult to find a clear answer supported by hard facts. However, by comparing the discursive techniques by which the Swedish media and the academic community have depicted Islam and Muslims, it becomes possible to identify both similarities and differences.

## Swedish perceptions of Islam and Muslims

Both media studies and a large number of surveys have demonstrated that in public debates Islam and Muslims are often perceived as different and non-Swedish. According to the latest report of the Swedish Integration Board (2004/2005), two-thirds of those surveyed felt that Islamic values are not compatible with the fundamental values of Swedish society; 30 percent were categorically negative, and others answered that such values are "to a great extent" not compatible.[2] Approximately 54 percent responded negatively to the statement that "Swedish Muslims are like Swedes generally," and 37 percent were opposed to mosques being built in Sweden. Regarding the veil, 35 percent were against Muslim women wearing veils on the street, and only 24 percent approved. The most negative attitude was reported towards women wearing veils on ID cards; 66 percent were against this and only 10 percent in favour. These results are not exceptional or unique: similar results are also indicated in earlier surveys and polls. Against this background, Muslims have become the immigrant par excellence in the official debate over immigrants in Sweden.

When journalists report on Islam and Muslim affairs, it is often violence, war, and conflicts that are their main focus.[3] Although this is not necessarily the journalists' intention, the indirect message to the audience is that Islam is a violent religion and that Muslims are more prone to violence than believers of other religions. The Muslim identity or affiliation becomes stigmatized by the overwhelmingly negative media coverage of Islam and Muslims. Although it is difficult to establish a clear link between the output of the media and public opinion, there is a striking correspondence between, for example, television news content and the attitudes of Swedes towards Islam and Muslims. To what extent it is possible for a journalist who wants to keep his or her job to challenge existing stereotypes is an open question. Whatever the answer, it is obviously easier and safer for a journalist to adjust to the prevailing norms. Growing competition, less time to do research, and shrinking budgets have also changed the conditions in which news and reporting are produced. It is also clear that the news is often selected, repeated, and reused on a global scale because control over the media has become more concentrated in the hands of a small number of global news agencies. Thus it has become more difficult to present news reporting that questions or challenges the prevailing order and the agenda of the dominant news agencies. As already mentioned above, the extent to which media producers are willing to support articles and reports that are in conflict with the opinions of the readership, news agency owners and advertisers, requires more research before it can be answered satisfactorily. However, if the great majority of consumers in Sweden see Muslims primarily as religious, the media will consequently present reports that more or less correspond to this image. There is little or no room to present a more complex and heterogeneous picture, which, for example, might show that the Muslim community is divided along a large number of political, ethnic, religious, and secular lines. Muslim identity is also a flexible category that often includes several identities or hybridizations (especially among young Muslims who are on the one hand born and raised in Sweden but on the other are also accustomed to Muslim traditions). From this point of view many young

Muslims have hybrid identities, including Muslim and "Swedish" components as well as religious and secular outlooks. This complexity is seldom analysed, discussed, or presented by the media.

Although the findings above are pessimistic, it should be stressed that it is very difficult to demonstrate a clear relationship between what the media publish about Islam and Muslims and the opinions of the public. For example, do the media have a driving effect on the opinions of their readership, or do they merely reflect and repeat public opinion? From this point of view, media and communication studies often indulge in a debate about the so-called "chicken and egg" problem, i.e. what is the driving force of the debate? It is also obvious that different audiences interpret the message in different ways, depending on their knowledge and personal experiences of Muslims. Still the media play an important role in the formation of the society, especially when the latter becomes more ethnically and religiously segregated and the distance between people of Muslim cultural backgrounds and ethnic Swedes is increasing. From this point of view, the media are of great relevance for how both non-Muslims and Muslims understand Islam, Muslim identities and Western society. It should not be forgotten that Muslims are also affected by, for example, the portrayal of the West by Arabic, Turkish, and Persian satellite channels.

### What about academic studies of Islam and Muslims?

If the media have focused on the negative cases (Islamic fundamentalism, terrorism, violence, patriarchal structures, *jihad*, etc.), most studies of Islam and Muslims in Sweden have focused on organizational structures, conversion, freedom of religion, etc. As my annotated bibliography on literature on Islam and Muslims in Sweden—*Islam och Muslimer i Sverige: En kommenterad bibliografi*—amply illustrates, most academics have not studied the negative cases.[4] Although this is an important observation that shows an essential difference between media coverage and academic studies, most researchers on Islam and Muslims in Sweden have also neglected to focus on processes of secularization, internal variations within the Muslim community, generational differences, hybrid identities, etc. From a critical point of view, most studies have been based on earlier and well-known facts and figures: until now, innovative research has mainly been carried out by doctoral candidates. The lack of empirical research could partly be explained by the economic situation in the Swedish academic milieu (today it is extremely difficult to obtain funding for empirical research, a problem that is not, of course, unique to researchers on Islam and Muslims). But it also seems that many researchers have been reluctant to leave their safe university environments and go out into the field to collect new empirical data. To evaluate and interpret the debate over Islam, it is also essential to collaborate with other researchers who are engaged in the study of Islam and Muslims in Europe, as well as to take part in research carried out by academics in, for example, media and communication studies (especially if we want to analyse the impact of new information and communication technologies such as the Internet, satellite television and the lesser medias, such as cassettes and pamphlets).

Because of the situation described above, I argue that we have a fairly low knowledge of what is actually going on inside the Muslim communities in Sweden. For example, we lack studies of Islamic sermons, the reception of *fatwa*s, the impact of international theologians on the Swedish Muslim context, or generational and gender differences. There are, of course, important exceptions to my negative presentation and conclusion, such as Jonas Otterbeck's study of the Swedish Muslim journal *Salaam*, Anne Sofie Roald's studies of Muslim women, and David Westerlund's studies of sufism. My critique should therefore not be read as a criticism of my hard-working colleagues in Sweden—on the contrary, they have laid the foundations for the study of Islam and Muslims in the country—or as an excuse for my own shortcomings in this area (I am very much a part of the academic tradition described above). Rather, this article is a call for more thorough empirical research on Islam and Muslims in Sweden and for greater collaboration between Swedish and international researchers.

From a general point of view, I argue that it is both necessary and important for academics who are engaged in research on Islam and Muslims in Europe to adopt a more self-critical approach and ask if and in what ways we are contributing to the portrayal of Islam and Muslims. For example, by neglecting processes of secularization, or internal variations within and between the generations, we are running the risk of becoming either defenders of Islamic traditions and interpretations, or single-minded researchers on Islam and Muslim cultures who simply repeat the prevailing views of the public debate. Thus, instead of single-handedly blaming the media for all the problems, it is essential to evaluate how and whether the academic study of Islam and Muslims is also contributing to their stereotypical portrayal in Sweden.

PHOTO BY BERTIL ERICSON / © AFP PHOTO, 2004

**Woman at a demonstration in Stockholm with a placard, saying "To Wear a Scarf Is Your Own Choice," 17 January 2004**

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**Notes**

1. This article is based on a paper presented at the workshop "Public Debates about Islam in Europe." See page 56 for further details.
2. This survey is based on a questionnaire sent to 4000 people randomly selected from among the population (aged 16–78); 2577 answers were returned. See *Integrationsbarometer 2004 En rapport om allmänhetens inställning till integration, mångfald och diskriminering 2003 och 2004* (Norrköping: Integrationsverket, 2005).
3. Cf. Håkan Hvitfelt, "Den muslimska faran: Om mediebilden av islam," in *Mörk magi i vita medier: Svensk nyhetsjournalistik om invandrare, flyktingar och rasism*, ed. Brune Ylva (Stockholm: Carlssons, 1998), 72–84.
4. Göran Larsson, *Islam och Muslimer i Sverige: En kommenterad bibliografi* (Göteborg and Stockholm: Makadam Förlag, 2004).

# (Muslim) Boyz-N-The-Hood

CHRIS ALLEN

**This article focuses on the rise of the "Muslim Boys" gang, from its origins in prison and the streets of south London through street crime and forced conversions to a media discourse alleging links with international terrorism and al-Qaeda. Paradoxically, the absence of reliable factual evidence only seems to have enhanced the power of discursive labelling. The author shows how the word "Muslim" is being used both by the gang and the media and how in this process stereotypes about Muslims as well as young black males are being amplified and reified.**

The words "Islam" and "Muslim"—both interpretative and associative—are no longer banal, harmless or simple givens that can be neutrally employed without some ideological content being disseminated: their mere employment conjuring and informing a myriad of different, typically negatively evaluated understandings and meanings. It is interesting therefore that in the past few months, the term Muslim has been seen to be identifying, informing, and adding a new dimension to a group in society that has been subjected to various myths and processes of stereotypification in the media over the past three decades. The social group in question is that of young black males: the new dimension being identifiable in the media's reporting and coverage associated with the "Muslim Boys" street gang.

### Converts to crime

Of the Muslim Boys, little factual evidence is known although it would appear that they formed over two years ago when a "hardcore" of African-Caribbean Muslim converts began violently "taxing" the local criminal community, being initially dubbed the Taliban Terrorists. Comprising mainly ex-convicts with a history of serious crime, the gang's members began following an austere form of Islam—having embraced the religion whilst in prison—that it is alleged they sought to use to fashion a criminal network with a higher purpose on the outside. Operating primarily in south London, whilst some media reports have described the gang's numbers as being in their hundreds, those, such as the Metropolitan Police's Detective Chief Superintendent John Coles, are much more sceptical, suggesting that even a hundred might be an exaggeration. Nonetheless, he does confirm the gang's involvement in at least two execution style murders and a growing number of assaults, robberies, and firearms offences. They are also suspected of involvement in the shooting of a policeman in December 2005.[1]

That which is known about the Muslims Boys is therefore far from categorical and at times, even contradictory. Yet the increasingly sensationalist media coverage and the ever more hyperbolic discourse written about the gang prompts a number of pertinent questions about the Muslim Boys. Why, as a phenomenon, have they been able to find resonance in the media and the social spaces beyond? To answer this question, it is necessary to ask to what extent the gang is reflective of all that it is being alleged of; whether it is possible that the gang has merely tapped into the anxieties and fears about Muslims and Islam that exist in society to bolster their own stature and status; and finally, whether they are in reality little more than the media further articulating the same fears and anxieties that it has historically attributed to young black males but more contemporarily with the meanings associated with the monikers of "Muslim" and "Islam."

> There is [. . .] only one concrete fact known about the Muslim Boys . . .

In considering the first of these sub-questions, one of the most recurrent news stories has been concerning the gang's alleged practice of "forced conversions," conversions that are said to be enforced at gun-point. It is further alleged that the murder of Adrian Marriott, a young student, was an unwanted consequence of such a conversion, being reported by the media in two ways: the first as a consequence of him refusing the gang's ultimatum "convert or die," the second as an example to others who might choose to refuse Islam.[2] As the London *Evening Standard* explained in the words of alleged gang member Winston: "You got to be Muslim to be in our group … If you not down with Muslim, we visit your home, maybe strip you naked in front of your fucking mother, we put a gun in your mouth. We give you three days [to convert], then, if you not down with it, we fucking blow [shoot you]."[3] Whilst the claims and allegations of those such as "Winston" might be somewhat questionable, with the actuality of a murder having been committed, those same claims and allegations cannot therefore be entirely refuted.

### An urban al-Qaeda?

There is actually only one concrete fact known about the Muslim Boys: that they are a street gang that has been involved in a number of violent and drug-related crimes and murders in the south London area. The gang is therefore a worrying reality but one that cannot be substantiated either way as to whether or not they are capable of, or indeed undertaking, all that is being alleged of it.

One of the recurrent themes that emerge in the media is that the Muslim Boys are a criminal vanguard of religious extremists. Reflecting the growing reputation of the gang and the media's acknowledgement that Islam can be transnational, so it has been suggested that the gang is seeking links beyond south London to potentially more dangerous organizations and networks, going beyond the realm of drugs and firearms. This view is voiced by Lee Jasper, one of the Mayor of London's senior advisors, who is concerned that the leaders of the Muslim Boys could be a criminalized front for terrorist extremists.[4] Whilst links have previously been made to criminal networks in the Caribbean, never before have black gangs in the UK been directly associated with or perceived to be involved in terrorism. Somewhat unsurprisingly, in a post-7/7 climate such suggestions have found resonance despite lacking any real substantiation. Seeking to find any justification for such an interlinkage, one local newspaper used the words of Camila Batmanghelidjh, leader of a youth charity in Camberwell, south London as categorical evidence following her remark that many of the children she dealt with—many who were likely to become part of south London's gang underclass—were similar to suicide bombers: "They get to the point where they don't care if they live or die … They don't have empathy. They've lost touch with their humanity. That's why they're so dangerous … They can't feel anything at all."[5]

Despite Detective Chief Superintendent Coles responding that "we have found no evidence whatsoever of a link to terrorism" this has failed to abate the media's pursuit of such links, one that has recently culminated in the national daily newspaper, *The Mirror*, running a front page headline "The jail run by al-Qaeda."[6] Alongside an image of Osama bin Laden, the article detailed how Belmarsh prison in south London, notorious for holding those arrested under anti-terrorism legislation since 9/11, had allegedly become the Muslim Boys' stronghold where "violent Islamic extremists are terrorizing inmates … as they trawl for al-Qaeda recruits." Once again the issue of forced conversions was recurrent where an alleged leaked report stated, "They force prisoners to accept the Muslim faith—those who refuse suffer assaults. They promise potential converts protection from other prisoners and staff …"

What is important to note is that despite the article apparently being concerned with the Muslim Boys, it is far from specific, suggesting a much wider frame of reference than merely the gang itself. So the

activities and practices of all Muslims without differentiation were being called into question, as for example when the leaked report alleged that Islamic "religious meetings" and "services" were nothing more than al-Qaeda recruitment meetings. Considering Belmarsh's notorious security, it is highly questionable—even downright nonsensical—whether "top members of al-Qaeda" are allowed to preach to Muslim inmates at Friday prayers each week. Nonetheless in codifying the problem, the newspaper quoted a member of prison staff saying: "None of the staff has a clue what they're talking about … [they] could be planning a major terrorist attack but the officers wouldn't know. We can't even tape the service and get it translated because it is against human rights. It's frightening."

### The banner of Islam

The construction of the islamized discourse with regard to the Muslim Boys, has become something of a cause for concern in certain south London Muslim communities. Following the negative coverage received after "shoebomber" Richard Reid was identified as having prayed there—Reid himself a revert to Islam of African-Caribbean heritage with a criminal past—the Brixton mosque recently sought to avert any problems, potential or otherwise. Following the murder of a young black man, Solomon Martin on New Years Eve 2005, another linked to the gang, the Brixton and Stockwell mosques publicly denounced any association with any such groups or activities. Without naming the Muslim Boys specifically, the mosque declared that these "criminals masquerading as Muslims"[7] were threatening the good name of Islam, giving some credence to the possibility of the gang tapping into the anxieties and fears associated to Muslims and Islam. Despite the denouncement however, the recurrence of the Muslims Boys fails to go away: at another local mosque in Thornton Heath, gang member Marcus Archer was arrested and subsequently convicted of possession of firearms after being arrested by armed police having been seen handing a gun to a friend before entering the mosque to pray.[8]

As regards their tapping into social anxieties and fears, this would also appear to be what is being suggested by Toaha Qureshi, chair of the Lambeth Muslim Forum, who suggests that far from being sincere Muslims, the gang are instead "camouflaging themselves in the banner of Islam."[9] Such an explanation would appear to have some validity, although in recognizing this one has to make some assumptions—whether fairly or otherwise—about how sincere those gang members are in their adherence to Islam. This again cannot be substantiated from what is known and so again, this question also remains unanswerable.

### "Boyz-n-the-Hood"

The gap between fact and fiction is therefore extremely difficult to identify and even more so to differentiate between. The final point about the practice of the media is potentially the most complex, namely that the myths surrounding the Muslim Boys may be nothing more than an extremely localized "story" being propelled into a globalized and hybridized spectacle. Utilizing the increasing problematization of Britain's Muslim communities since 2001,[10] intensified by both 9/11 and 7/7, it might be that this problematization is being employed to further reinforce the representations that have been associated with young black males in the media since the 1970s. It therefore seems that it is the myths about the Muslim Boys that are problematic, simultaneously reifying the contemporary problematization of Muslim communities and the historically rooted criminalization of young, black males. In this way, two separate yet equally dangerous sets of stereotypes, those of radicalism, violence, and terrorism (Muslims) and criminality, violence, and "gangsta" culture (young black males) find form and become strengthened. Whilst Stuart Hall noted three decades ago that "race" had come to signify the crises in society—the "moral panic"—it seems that now it is race, augmented by religion that is providing today's "moral panic": an "arena in which [today's] complex fears, tensions and anxieties … [are] most conveniently and explicitly [being] projected and … worked through."[11] As such, those young black males that are being identified as "Muslim"—taking into account the aforementioned Reid and also the Jamaican-born 7/7 bomber Germaine (Jamal) Lindsey—might be merely the latest manifestation of a historical discourse that has repeatedly racialized, criminalized, and perpetually problematized myths and stereotypes about this marginalized and demonized social group.

It is therefore suggested that whilst it is highly unlikely that the Muslim Boys present the size or scale of threat that some sources are suggesting, the utilization of the Muslim tag does confirm how such words and descriptors can no longer be neutrally employed: conjuring and informing a myriad of negatively evaluated understandings that contemporarily strike fear not only into the communities within which such a gang might be operating but also in the readerships and wider socio-political spaces within which those media sources are also being disseminated. Aside from the realities or otherwise of the Muslim Boys and their foreseeable (mediatized?) future, what this episode—whether ongoing or possibly even already concluded—allows is an insight into the way in which the discourses of stereotypification and societal demonization inherent within racism and, more recently, Islamophobia are always moving: constantly maintaining a protean nature and rarely, if indeed ever, remaining static and unchanging.

PHOTO BY CHRIS ALLEN, 2006

**Graffiti on a south London housing estate**

**Notes**

1. "The rise of the 'Muslim Boys'," *Evening Standard,* 3 February 2006.
2. "Student was shot by 'Muslim Boys' gang," *South London Press*, 6 January.
3. *Evening Standard*, 3 February 2006.
4. "Captive converts," *Times Online*, 11 August 2005.
5. "God's army," *Sunday Times*, 14 August 2005.
6. 30 January 2006.
7. Ibid.
8. "Gang member jailed over mosque pistol," *South London Press*, 16 September 2005.
9. "Criminal gangs use Islam to intimidate victims," *Guardian*, 7 March 2006.
10. Chris Allen, *Fair justice: the Bradford disturbances, the sentencing and the impact* (London: FAIR, 2003).
11. Stuart Hall et al, *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order* (London: Palgrave, 1978), 333.

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# From "Patani Melayu" to "Thai Muslim"

PATRICK JORY

**A violent insurgency in the ethnically Malay Muslim region of southern Thailand has claimed over a thousand lives since 2004. Although the conflict between the country's southernmost provinces and the Thai state dates back at least a century, recently the ideology in which the conflict is expressed has changed markedly. Whereas a generation ago the goal was "liberation" of the ethnically Malay population from the former sultanate of Patani, today the spirit of the movement is expressed predominantly in Islamic terms.**

It would appear a simple question: *who* are the people at the centre of the conflict in Thailand's southern border provinces? The Thai and Malaysian governments, the media, many academics, and the general public who have contributed to the mountains of words produced about the violence that has taken place over the last two years, seem to agree: "Muslims." The Thai Government will often add an adjective to this collective name to affirm this group's nationality, "Thai Muslims." Thus merely through the use of these religious labels to represent the actors involved in the conflict, it is difficult for many people to imagine it to be otherwise. The result is a depressing one. On Thai Internet web-boards—a useful source for gauging uncensored public opinion nowadays—one can read quite virulent anti-Muslim attacks.

Yet if the conflict were essentially religious then hundreds of thousands of "Muslims" all over Thailand outside the border provinces would surely rise up in mass revolt against the Thai state in a gesture of solidarity with their co-religionists. But they do not. If not, why then is this conflict consistently talked about today using religious terminology? The answer can be found in the suppression of official references to the distinct ethnic Malay identity of the population of the border provinces, in favour of the generic term, "Thai Muslims." The consequence of this re-labelling has been that the essence of the conflict, a clash between competing Thai and Patani Malay nationalisms, has been lost amidst explanations of the conflict in religious terms.

> With the spectre of communism finally put to rest as an ideology of resistance … radical Islam has taken its place.

### From "Malays" to "Thai Muslims"

Historically, both in the discourse of the Thai state as well as that of its adversaries in the South, the people of the former Patani sultanate were usually referred to as *melayu* (Malay). Even during the reign of the modernizing king Chulalongkorn, who oversaw the abolition of the Patani sultanate and the definitive absorption of the territories of the former sultanate into the Thai state under the 1909 Anglo-Siamese Treaty, the Thai court habitually and un-selfconsciously referred to the region's inhabitants as Malay. The King once stated that he hoped to eventually achieve a situation where "even though they are Malays and of a different faith … [they] are Thais in sentiment and outlook just as any other Thai …" Thus it seemed possible then, still under the Absolute Monarchy, for the Thai government to recognize dual ethnic identities within one state, "Thai" and "Malay."

Likewise, the Thai state's antagonists in the south following the Second World War also spoke of and for the "Malays." Ibrahim Syukri, author of a popular nationalist history of Patani published in 1948 titled *Sejarah Kerajaan Melayu Patani* (*History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani*) called for the recognition of the "nationality [of the population of Patani] as a "Malay people." Following the end of the Second World War, as Malay nationalism was gathering momentum across the border and Thailand was forced by the British to give up its irredentist annexations during the war, including the northern Malayan states, a group of Malay leaders in the Patani region submitted a petition to the British requesting the British Government to "have the kindness to release our country and ourselves from the pressure of Siam." Patani, they pointed out, "is really a Malay country, formerly ruled by Malay Rajas for generations." Moreover, the political ideology of the most prominent of the region's separatist organizations that sprung up soon after has been the national liberation of the "Patani Malays."

Until recently then, the majority population of this region was commonly referred to in ethnic terms—as Malays. It is indeed remarkable how little reference there was to their religious identity. How then, have the subjects of the conflict been transformed from "Malays" into "Muslims"?

First, since the era of de-colonization and the rise of Malay nationalism in British Malaya, the Thai government has actively sought to avoid references to the Malay ethnic identity of the subjects of the region. It feared that with the new, post-colonial logic of nation-based states, recognition of the people of the region as "Malay" might give credibility to demands for a separate Malay state, either based on the territories of the old Malay sultanate of Patani, or through union with the other Malay states of British Malaya, which were now preparing for independence from Britain. Under the assimilationist policies of national integration, which began in Thailand from the beginning of the Second World War and held sway through to the 1990s, Malay ethnic identity as expressed in terms of language, dress, education, history, and custom has been consistently discouraged by the state. The government has attempted to replace it with a religious label, "Thai Muslims" or "Thai Islam" in the hope that this linguistic change would contribute to the overall goal of assimilation. Thus for Thai governments since the Second World War, the only possible identity officially acceptable for the "Patani Malays" within the Thai nation-state was as "Thai Muslims."

### Islamization in Malaysia

Another contributing factor has been the politicization of Islam amongst the Malays in neighbouring Malaysia. Although this process first became clearly visible in the 1970s, its seeds were sown with the establishment of the state of Malaysia and the legal definition of Malayness. One of the components of Malay identity as defined by the Malaysian Constitution was "a person who professes the religion of Islam." Following Malaysia's independence in 1957, therefore, to be a Malay—and thereby eligible to the special privileges accorded to "Malays"—legally one must be a Muslim. Yet up until the 1970s Islam was marginal to most discussions of Malay identity. Reading Mahathir's controversial book, *The Malay Dilemma*, first published in 1970, one year after bloody race riots, it is striking that Islam receives hardly any attention. The bulk of the book concentrates on Malay cultural traits that were supposedly responsible for the "dilemma" in which, according to Mahathir, the Malays now found themselves—that is, a majority in an ethnically plural country and politically dominant, but seemingly unwilling to use that dominance to improve their disadvantaged social and economic position because of a cultural predisposition for tolerance.

Ironically it was Mahathir who, upon becoming Prime Minister in 1981, began to implement a policy of Islamization. A year later he co-opted the former Muslim student activist Anwar Ibrahim into the government. Between them a policy emerged which viewed Islam as the answer to "social ills"—corruption, laziness, materialism, drug addiction, promiscuity, incest, child abuse—which appeared to be more prevalent among the Malays than the other ethnic groups, and which were blamed on the government's policy rapid economic development. It is from this era the government began to promote Islam as a solution to these problems and to extol Malays to follow more closely the teach-

PHOTO BY RYAN ANSON / © HOLLANDSE HOOGTE, 2005

**Students line up for morning exercises at Tadika Islamiyah School, Thailand.**

ings of Islam. Islamic discourse in Malaysia, therefore, became dominated by the government, and the two key figures in the Islamization of Malay society were the Western-educated Mahathir and Anwar, rather than trained Islamic scholars. Thus when Patani Malays look today to their Malay brothers in Malaysia they see a more Islamized Malay identity.

A third factor behind the representation of the conflict in the south in religious terms has of course been the so-called global "Islamic revival" since the 1970s, and particularly the way in which Islam has become an ideology of resistance. Its prestige grew even further with the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union and with it international communism, which dealt a deathblow to most Marxist-inspired resistance movements in the developing world. The extraordinary political and economic consensus we live under today that Fukuyama termed with a troubling sense of finality, "the end of history," that is, liberal democracy and free market capitalism, means there is no longer a credible leftist programme of resistance available to groups for whom the existing status quo is unbearable. With the spectre of communism finally put to rest as an ideology of resistance, for certain groups of Muslims radical Islam has taken its place.

Despite the fact that some Patani Malays are known to have fought in Afghanistan, that some have been trained overseas in "jihadist" guerilla warfare, and that people in the region have links with "Islamist" movements elsewhere in the world, almost every serious study of the conflict shows that the grievances that have given rise to the conflict are entirely local. The fact that Islam plays a much more prominent role in the rhetoric of the people of the region is certainly partly related to the global Islamic revival that has also influenced the Muslims of the southern Thai border provinces. But it is even more related to the critical problem of needing to find an effective ideology of resistance in the, post-Cold War, globalized environment, to help provide meaning and perhaps also a resolution to one of the region's most intractable conflicts.

### "De-culturalization" of Islam in Southern Thailand?

Amidst this Islamic discourse we might well ask, to what extent does a Patani Malay ethnic identity still exist among the local population of Thailand's southern border provinces? Anecdotally it is said that fluency in the distinctive Patani Malay dialect among the young has decreased compared to a generation ago, and that competence in Thai has increased. A half-century of assimilationist policies has certainly had some effect. Many people from the region travel to Malaysia and some to Indonesia for educational and employment, which exposes them to an alternative "Malay" cultural milieu. Another cultural influence in the region that has increased is Arabic, as students return from their studies in the Middle East, or as a result of funding provided by Arab states for religious and educational purposes.

Numerous studies point to social problems prevalent among the youth in the region, including drug addiction, and involvement in violence and petty crime. One wonders whether one of the sources of the violence might be an identity crisis among young men of the region resulting from the obliteration of Patani Malay identity over the last century, the resistance to the full adoption of a Thai identity given its association with discrimination and oppression, and the attraction of a radicalized Islam to fill the void. According to Olivier Roy,[1] one of the reasons for the turn to extremism among some young European Muslims is their rejection of the traditional culture of their parents, their inability to find acceptance in the mainstream cultures of Europe, and their refuge in a purified, reconstruction of an "imagined" Islam: "Islamic radicalization is a consequence of 'de-culturalization' and not the expression of a pristine culture." Roy's argument thus raises the question whether a similar phenomenon of de-culturalization, albeit caused by different factors, may be partly responsible for the radicalism in Thailand's south. His characterization of radical European Muslims could be equally applied to the militants of Thailand's south: "The generation gap, coupled with a sense of disenfranchising […] individualization of faith, self-teaching, generation gap, rejection of authority (including that of religious established leaders), loosening of family ties, lack of socialization with a broader community (including the ethnic community of their parents), and withdrawal towards a small inward-looking group akin to a cult: all these factors show the extent of the process of deculturation of the radicals."[2]

If a Patani Malay identity is indeed in crisis, then that may also explain why the separatist organizations such as Patani United Liberation Organization, the Barisan Revolusi Nasional, and Bersatu, whose political ideologies were originally based, as argued above, on national liberation tinged with socialism rather than Islam, seem only tangentially involved in the conflict that has erupted since the beginning of 2004. Despite repeated claims by the government, it is quite unclear to what extent, if at all, separatism is a goal of the militants. Indeed, one of the most extraordinary aspects of the whole conflict is the ambiguity regarding the objectives of the militants, which is perhaps a symptom of the confused ideology of the movement in the midst of the void left by the obliteration of Patani Malay identity.

Thai national identity thus stands out from that of many of its Southeast Asian neighbours. Whereas Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, even Myanmar, have accepted the existence (at least conceptually, if not in practice) of dual identities, national and ethnic, since independence, Thailand maintains an essentially assimilationist model of national integration. It is revealing that one of the responses to the crisis in the south was to renew official nationalist campaigns to promote "Thainess." In the words of one of the most popular nationalist propaganda songs: "underneath the Thai flag the whole population is Thai." And within official discourses of Thainess while there is a place for Muslims, it appears there is no place for Malays.

**Note**

1. Olivier Roy, "A Clash of Cultures or a Debate on Europe's Values?" *ISIM Review*, no.15 (Spring 2005): 6-7.

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# Vanishing Orientalism in Leiden

LÉON BUSKENS

**For more than four centuries the city of Leiden has enjoyed a reputation in the study of Oriental languages and cultures. This fame was both linked to the scholars of its university, and to activities of printers and booksellers. Since 1683 a bookshop, which later became known as Brill's Bookshop was one of the landmarks in this infrastructure of Oriental studies. The present owner's decision to close shop in February 2006 is an occasion for reflection on the changes in scholarship on Muslim societies and the sources it uses.**

For centuries orientalists had at least two important sites to visit in Leiden: the University Library, and Brill's Bookshop. Many scholars combined their research in the famous Legatum Warnerianum collections with the acquisition of books, both from the East and the West, at the bookshop, which was at only a stroll from the library. Brill's was famous in the world of learning for its scholarly editions and for its catalogues of new and second-hand books. University libraries all over the world hold important collections acquired in Leiden.

For me a visit to the antiquarian bookshop was always a treat. Its premises looked as if time had stood still for decades. The work of generations of scholars was gathered here, which contributed to an atmosphere of stateliness and solemnity. The shop's austerity also inspired excitement. The persevering book hunter could always cherish hope that his quest for a new catch might be gratified. Many rare books could only be found here, sitting on dust covered shelves, often inscribed with dedications from one famous scholar to another, or adorned with marginal notes of an intellectual ancestor.

In February 2006 Mr Rijk Smitskamp, the present owner of the bookshop, decided to close business after more than three centuries of service to the world of learning. This decision marked the end of an era of a certain style of scholarship, in which the study of Muslim societies was dominated by a philological approach, for which the amassing of all-encompassing libraries, public as well as private, was an important tool. The vanishing of this prominent institution in the intellectual infrastructure of Leiden prompts me to give a short historical sketch of the relationships between the bookshop and the development of Islamic studies.[1]

English-language monographs based on "field work" have replaced editions of unique texts, full of exotic characters.

### History

In 1683 Jordaan Luchtmans established a publishing house cum bookshop at the Rapenburg, in the centre of Leiden which soon became famous for its scholarly publications in the fields of theology, classics, and orientalia. In 1848 Evert Jan Brill acquired the firm and continued business under his own name. In 1872 the firm changed hands again, but its new owners A.P.M. van Oordt and F. de Stoppelaar retained the name Brill. In 1894 Van Oordt and De Stoppelaar decided to concentrate on publishing, and on dealing in books on oriental and colonial studies, selling the rest of their stock, some 250,000 volumes, to two former employees, who started their own bookshop and auction house.

From the nineteenth century onwards Luchtmans and Brill became famous for their publications on oriental studies. Brill could print almost any text in any oriental language. Many of the editions and studies published by Luchtmans and Brill were the result of a close cooperation with eminent orientalists connected to Leiden University. For example, in 1732 Luchtmans published its first edition of a text in Arabic, a *Life of Saladin*, prepared by the Professor of Arabic, Albert Schultens. Brill undertook several prestigious projects with scholars from Leiden University and their foreign colleagues, such as the edition of a series of classical geographical texts in Arabic (1870-1894) and of the multivolume history of al-Tabari (1879-1901). In both ventures the work of Michaël Jan de Goeje, Professor of Arabic at Leiden University, was essential. The publication of the first and second edition *Encyclopaedia of Islam* was also possible thanks to the offices of scholars from Leiden and Utrecht.

### Oriental connections

Brill's bookshop also sold foreign publications, which were otherwise difficult to obtain. Its catalogues, which were published from the end of the nineteenth century onwards, are important sources for our knowledge of the materials which orientalists could obtain for their studies. Again, the collaboration between Leiden scholars and Brill's authors abroad with the bookshop proved vital: these gentlemen sent books from the East as well as their own books to be sold through the bookshop.

For example, Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, who visited Mecca at the expense of the Dutch government in 1885, encouraged Brill's to acquire a fair number of copies of a famous work on the history of Islamic conquests by Ahmad Dahlan, a mufti in Mecca and a close acquaintance of Snouck, which had just been published in Mecca. The last copy from this stock was sold only this spring to a collector in the Arabian Peninsula. Snouck Hurgronje was also instrumental, together with M.Th. Houtsma and their Swedish colleague Carlo Landberg, in the acquisition of several collections of oriental manuscripts from Amin al-Madani, a learned shaykh from Madina, described in a series of catalogues issued between 1883 and 1889. One collection was sold to the Leiden library another went to Princeton in 1900. The trade in oriental manuscripts, in languages as diverse as Arabic, Ottoman, Persian, Ethiopian, Chinese, Mongol, and Tibetan, would become another specialty of Brill's.

For more than a century the books from the estates of many famous European orientalists were sold after their death to Brill's, which made them available again to their intellectual heirs. This resulted in monumental catalogues, such as of the libraries of René Basset, Enno Littman, Franz Taeschner, and Oscar Löfgren. Some of these collections were the beginnings of new university libraries. Thus, Joseph Schacht's famous library on Islamic law was sold to Kuala Lumpur.

### Early editions and manuscripts

When the present owner Mr Rijk Smitskamp, educated as a classical scholar, started to work at Brill's in 1970, he gradually made himself acquainted with the riches that had accumulated in the bookshop during more than a century. In the course of the years he transformed the enterprise from a firm dealing in second hand books into an antiquarian bookshop of renown, specialized in scholarly and rare works.

Unlike his predecessors he did not consider the old books as outdated and less valuable. He realized the importance of the large stock of nineteenth century publications and marketed these as antiquarian books of considerable interest and value. His extensive knowledge of the books offered for sale became more and more visible in the catalogues, both in the composition of the collections offered, and in his learned descriptions. His own specialty became the history of oriental printing in Europe, for which he created a monument in the three volumes of *Philologia orientalis* (1976-1991).

One day an itinerant Turkish merchant in sheep's intestines and pistachio nuts, who in his youth had enjoyed an Islamic education, visited Mr Smitskamp in order to sell some manuscripts. During his tours in the Anatolian countryside he encountered old books in a largely forgotten script for which the owners did not have much use any more.

PHOTO BY SMITSKAMP ORIENTAL ANTIQUARIUM, 2006

**Smitskamp Oriental Antiquarium, Leiden**

After he had found out that these discarded books turned out to be valuables abroad, he sent for several years mailbags, full of manuscripts, to Leiden. A few years later he was followed by a Turkish professor and connoisseur of the Islamic heritage, who used his contacts in Western Asia to furnish Brill's with manuscripts.

As in the nineteenth century, Smitskamp invited Leiden University scholars to contribute to lavishly produced catalogues, such as the famous catalogue 500 on Arabic manuscripts compiled by Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld and Qasim al-Samarrai in 1978. This collection, like many others since the 1970s, ended up in the Near East.

### Closing shop

In 1992 Messrs Brill decided to sell the bookshop, thus ending the ancient combination of the publishing and selling of books. At about the same time they had also given up the printing of books. Its famous printing house, with all its movable type of oriental scripts and the specialist knowledge of its typographers, which had given Leiden fame for centuries, was relinquished. Fortunately, Mr Smitskamp was so courageous as to continue business as an antiquarian bookseller under his own name.

However, in recent years important changes in the antiquarian book trade have come about by the spread of the use of the Internet. The publication of printed catalogues embodying the fruit of years of studying and collecting became somewhat obsolete, and in any case expensive, like the maintenance of prestigious premises in the centre of town. The commerce in books again requires new skills, such as the practice of electronic marketing and sales.[2] No successor dared to take over the venerable bookshop. At the last moment a booklover from the Arabian Peninsula bought the books on Islam and the Middle East, as the nucleus of a new scholarly library which he intended to establish.

At the end of 2005 Mr Smitskamp decided to close his bookshop with the publication of a catalogue of important works from the republic of letters (no. 653), to which his firm had been offering its services since 1683. The remaining stock, the bulky result of centuries of bookselling, and including the valuable reference library studies compiled by Mr Smitskamp, will be auctioned in several sessions by Burgersdijk & Niermans, the firm established by two former Brill employees in 1894.[3]

With the decision to close the Oriental Antiquarium a long tradition of dealing in books from and about the East has come to an end. Gone are the days in which a student, after a studious morning in the University Library, could walk leisurely to the Nieuwe Rijn, and browse for a bookish lunch. Its nooks and crannies, where on bright days incoming sunrays would transform the dust fluttering down among the towering bookcases into speckles of gold, held unexpected treasures brought together during three centuries by generations of scholars, printers, and booksellers.

### Vanishing Orientalism

However, the closure of the bookshop implies more than the vanishing of a bibliophiles' sanctuary. Almost simultaneously the oriental reading room of the university library was closed, and its staff cut down. These developments are part of important changes in the academic study of oriental languages and cultures which have taken place in recent years. The concept of Orientalism as a designation of a field of study has come under severe attack. Since the publication of Said's seminal essay in 1978, the term is rather looked down upon, as the sign of an old-fashioned, antiquarian approach to research, or the expression of bygone view of things political.

Philology, which flourished in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century, stressed the importance of the study of texts, especially in the form of collecting and editing of manuscripts. Brockelmann's *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, the *Handbuch der Orientalistik*, all published by Brill, are outstanding embodiments of this textual approach. During the last three decades social scientists have criticized the primacy of philology in the study of Muslim societies and gradually taken over its place. The Orient does not need a special branch of scholarship, but should be studied as all other human societies, using a diversity of disciplines, in which knowledge of languages is only an auxiliary science. This is for example the approach which underlies the ISIM programme.

The production of books and articles shows these changes. English-language monographs based on "field work" have replaced editions of unique texts, full of exotic characters. Meanwhile the Orient has changed from a passive object of research into a multitude of modern states, some of which hold considerable funds for research and the construction of new identities. Patrons from Arabia, Malaysia and Japan, who bought manuscripts as well as antiquarian European studies, made the Oriental Antiquarium flourish. The trade in oriental manuscripts changed drastically. On the one hand the removal of the written heritage of "traditional" societies was severely criticized. On the other hand prosperous states and private collectors from the East acquired a "proper" past and tradition in less well-off countries and at London auctions, sometimes for skyrocketing prices.

The techniques and instruments of the humanities have also been profoundly altered. Laptops and virtual libraries have replaced writing-desks and bookcases, just as shorter trips have come instead of lengthy expeditions or stays as advisers for native affairs, which would be exploited during an academic career. Internet trading and digitalization have made books from all over the world much more easily accessible. A bookshop, which encompasses the entire Orient from a philological perspective, does not seem to be a viable institution anymore in the light of a profoundly altered vision of scholarship.

In this light the history of three centuries of oriental bookselling in Leiden is a source for reflection on course of scholarship in our field. The bookshop's archives offer a unique image of changes in ideas about the study of Muslim societies, and as such deserve conservation and further exploration.

**Notes**

1. See, for instance: J.T.P. Bruijn, "Collective Studies of the Muslim World: Institutions, Projects and Collections," in *Leiden Oriental Connections 1850-1940*, ed. Willem Otterspeer (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989), 94-114; J.M.Van Ophuijsen, *E. J. Brill: Three Centuries of Scholarly Publishing. Since 1683* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994); Jan Just Witkam, "A Giant Fades Away," *Ezelsoor: Newsletter of the Department of Book and Digital Media Studies* (Leiden), Spring 2006, 1-6.
2. The electronic address of the bookshop is: www.oriental.demon.nl.
3. The catalogues of the successive auctions can be consulted at their website: www.b-n.nl.

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# Pixel Pashas, Digital Djinns

PHILIPP REICHMUTH
& STEFAN WERNING

**_Arabian_, one of the earliest computer games with a decidedly Oriental setting came out in 1983. Structurally similar to Nintendo's _Donkey Kong_ (1982), the imaginary Orient permeates _Arabian_. The story is told as a "book," consisting of the various scenarios as "pages." Its hero, a scimitar-wielding, turbaned prince, fights his way through ships and castles against djinns and rocs, finally rescuing his princess, and the two fly away on a magic carpet. We thus encounter the Orient in _Arabian_ on multiple levels: narrative setting, character design, and even in the game's technical manual, which is filled with carefully-drawn djinns and other Oriental imagery.**

The study of computer and video games (CVGs) is currently a discipline with a large spectrum of research ventures, coming mostly from literary and film studies, cultural studies, pedagogics, psychology, and computer science. The on-topic discourse still exhibits a binary segmentation into narratologists and "ludologists," the latter focusing on games as rule systems and cultural aspects of ludic activity. Moreover, there is little homogeneity in the choice of analytical tools and terminology, especially in less-covered areas such as digital game ethnography.[1]

The study of Orientalism or, more precisely, Oriental topoi and Orientalist rationales in CVGs requires an understanding of the specificity of interactive media and the logic behind their production and distribution. First, the topography that the player traverses in the game, i.e. the parameters of spatial construction and orientation, is an important factor that sets CVGs apart from narrative media (like film and literature) and links them closer to spatially oriented media like architecture. Second, the rule-system governing the player interaction is a level on which cultural bias may be communicated. A semiotic reading of game rules can both be helpful to describe built-in signification and the game mechanisms as a projection space for player disposition. A rewarding approach for future research would be to explore representations of Oriental themes in a diachronic perspective with examples such as the *Prince of Persia* series (1989-2005). Design properties, like the badly implemented joystick controls which make the game frustrating at times, are communicated among players and thus, perhaps unintentionally, reinforce pre-existing ideas such as the association of the Orient with vertigo and hallucination.

**Title screen from _Arabian_ (1983)**

### Representations and re-representations

How does the "Orient" figure in computer and video games? Game producers draw from a rich field of Oriental topoi and representations that is well established in Western (and Japanese) culture; notions of an imagined Orient as a complex cultural metasign that "is" everything that can be associated with it, could be applied quite successfully. We thus often find adaptations of familiar motifs from popular literature, art, cinema, or even political discourse that appear on various levels. These include visual elements such as tiles, minarets, or localities such as deserts or bazaars (e.g. *Breath of Fire 4*, 2003), character concepts such as warriors-with-scimitars, evil viziers, dancers, or merchants (e.g. *Prince of Persia,* 1989), or narrative tropes such as travel narratives (e.g. *Talisman: Changing the Sands of Time*, 1987), but also contemporary political representations (such as *Commando Libya,* 1986, or *Terrorist Takedown*, 2004). CVGs are thus highly intertextual, taking up established representations and reprocessing them into an interactive medium. Additionally, interactiveness allows for innovative ways in which assumptions about the Orient can be invoked. *Khalaan* (1990), a strategy game about four caliphs competing for supremacy, tries to evoke a sense of "Oriental despotism," by giving players extremely fine-grained, but also lavish large-scale control of vast armies and treasures. *Magic Carpet* (1994) is a 3D simulation of air combat on magic carpets.

### Technical contingencies

Apart from intertextuality, a second major frame for assessing both structural parameters and potential effects of CVGs are technological contingencies. Accordingly, interactive media should be interpreted as products of code, both in terms of production, usage, and retelling. The act of playing a video game is usually described as a "cybernetic feedback loop," i.e. as an input-processing-output cycle, both from a psychological and communication studies perspective. In other words, interacting with a CVG substitutes hermeneutic understanding for a kind of algorithmic text-processing; the gradual uncovering of the programmed game rules is an inextricable element of play.

Consequently, elements of Orientalism, whether audiovisual, narrative, or other, must also be analysed against the momentum of technology. Many games with Oriental themes are showcases for particular technological achievements, be it new techniques of character animation (*Prince of Persia*, 1989), zoom effects (*Arabian Fight*, 1992), pre-rendered cutscenes (*Egypt III*, 2004), digitized photographs blended with bitmaps (*Khalaan*, 1990), or large-scale deformable terrain (*Magic Carpet*, 1994). In the context of video game history, the theme of exploring mysterious, Oriental landscapes, often presented in the conventionalized form of travel narratives (e.g. *Sinbad and the Throne of the Falcon*, 1987), starkly coincided with the 1980s' technohistorical perspective of the computer as a "black box," awaiting exploration and understanding at the hand of the user. As Claus PIAS argues, navigation in early computer games derived from technical concepts such as graphs and interconnected nodes rather than from a hermeneutical approach to space popular in textual media. Often, stereotypical representations are derived from technical feasibility, an observation which would allow for a comparison with older media phenomena. For instance, John MacKenzie notes how Orientalist painters developed "rapid sketching" techniques to avoid "nuisances" like the colour bleaching due to the intense desert sunlight and potential attacks, and used these sketches as mnemonic proxies for their final works.[2] Digital games are constrained by production circumstances in a similar manner. "Libraries" of pre-produced, iconic "Oriental" objects are reused for economic reasons. Interaction patterns like the protagonist's ability to "rewind" time in *Prince of Persia: Sands of Time* (2003) are first and foremost determined by new software techniques and later pass into the inventory of conventionalized representational topoi.

Thus, oriental stereotypes are often part of player dispositions, recursively shaped by interactive and other media consumption. For instance, adversaries in many Oriental games carry a scimitar. In films, this is a key feature identifying them as Orientals; in CVGs, it also carries the technical reading of marking the figure as an enemy, so that the player can discern between "dangerous" and "harmless" figures in a cluttered screen space. When, upon death, the figure loses the scimi-

tar (such as in *Arabian Magic*, 1992), this is meant as a visual cue that this figure no longer poses a threat, not that it ceases to be Oriental. Even narrative contiguity is being technologically dissected and re-assembled through storytelling algorithms which create emergent plots based on a formalist understanding of narrativity particularly suited to computer implementation. Recently, multiplayer games such as the Korean *Silkroad* (2005-6) aim at a collaborative retelling of Oriental narratives by allowing players from diverse personal cultural backgrounds to impersonate figures from their own imagination.

### Political and societal backdrop

Another interesting observation is a certain interdependence between computer games and the way political processes and events, along with their representations in Western mass media, shape the imagination of the region in the general public. Since CVGs are usually produced with their consumer base in mind, they tend to incorporate and reflect these imaginations as they change over time. An especially obvious case is the field of military simulation games, most of which put the player into the role of a (mostly US) military commander, foot soldier, tank driver, or fighter pilot in a number of different scenarios worldwide. In the late 1980s, against the backdrop of the first Palestinian Intifada and the US bombings of Tripoli and Benghazi; these scenarios usually included missions in the eastern Mediterranean (*F-15 Strike Eagle II*, 1989) or in Libya, which figured prominently in games such as the extremely violent *Commando Libya* (1986) with its notorious execution scene, or *Airborne Ranger* (1987), the first tactical simulation game. After the Gulf War in 1991, the "Iraq theatre" immediately became a prominent operational arena in military simulation games, such as the 1991 add-on mission disk for *F-15 Strike Eagle II*, where Iraq replaced the formerly rather diffuse "Mediterranean" scenario, and many other games, staying popular throughout the 1990s as the Oriental war scenario per se (*Back to Baghdad*, 1996, or *M1 Tank Platoon II*, 1998). In the second half of the 1990s, it began to be accompanied by other, increasingly detailed Middle Eastern scenarios as the political backdrop changed, such as Yemen after the Yemeni civil war of 1994 (*Apache Longbow*, 1995), Somalia after the failure of UN operations (*F-16 Multirole Fighter*, 1998), or Afghanistan after the victory of the Taliban (*Hind*, 1998). Since September 11, the focus shifted somewhat; recent games often focusing either on US special forces in Middle Eastern countries (*Full Spectrum Warrior*, 2003) or on counterterrorist operations (*Terrorist Takedown* series, 2004-05). Computer games as consumable goods with rather short market cycles thus allow conclusions on short-term conceptualizations and representations of the Orient among consumers.

However, Edward Said's hypothesis that the Western-imagined Orient is an ahistorical entity, that the Orient of the Arabian Nights and of Palestinian suicide bombers are one and the same, does not hold well for CVGs. Games portraying a contemporary and a historical or fantastical Orient constitute separate categories. Few games exist where connections are drawn between Near Eastern settings and ancient, particularly Egyptian mythology, as in the *Metal Slug* series (1996-2006), where, after fighting turbaned thugs in a Middle Eastern city, the players confront mummies in an Egyptian tomb; or in *Daughter of the Serpent* (1992), an adventure game revolving around ancient Egyptian magic set in a minutiously detailed nineteenth-century Egypt; however, these instances remain exceptions.

How can this approach contribute to Islamic Studies and related disciplines? Firstly, the use of Oriental representations in CVGs allows detailed examinations how these representations are deployed and interconnected, especially regarding the reincorporation of established motifs from other genres, such as literature or art, as well as the adaptation of this imagined Orient to the technical realities of the new interactive medium—whereas in static, literary, or pictorial media the Orient is imagined, in interactive media it can be enacted. Secondly, CVGs allow Western representations of the Orient to be studied in terms of their consumption. While connections between consumption-driven popular entertainment culture and the use of Oriental representations are well known, "Orientalism" is still mainly understood mainly as a mode of cultural production rather than consumption. Games are interesting objects of study here whose consumption is well documented in many forms, ranging from sales figures and popularity rankings to reviews, "walk-through" solution guides, and the emergence of fan communities. We can thus see how representations are accepted, reinforced, modified, or rejected on grounds of technical innovation and detail, but also on grounds of familiarity and convergence with political configurations and existing Orientalist subtexts in the target audience. Another aspect are their short product cycles, resulting in feedback loops where producers, intent on maximizing revenue, implement their own assumptions of their audience's tastes, expectations, and consumption habits. Authorial intent and representational strategies within computer games are thus subject to short-term retroactive influence from their consumers.[3]

**US soldiers in an Oriental courtyard in *Full Spectrum Warrior* (2003)**

### Computer games as "neglected media"

As this argument suggests, CVGs should be discussed in a broader context of "neglected media." Briefly, neglected media exhibit strong popular appeal and economic relevance, contrasted by a lack of cultural prestige and scientific coverage. Often, they have a profound impact on the collective imaginary although this "passive" knowledge is seldom accepted as culturally relevant. Examples could include computer games, tabletop role-playing, trading card or board games, comic books, music videos, events, concerts, performances, or pinball machines, as well as corresponding paratextual material such as package designs or advertisements for games. It is methodologically useful to consider them from an explicit overarching "neglected media" standpoint instead of viewing instances of them in the light of specialized disciplines such as, popular or fan culture studies or even more specific subfields[4] which obstruct the view on general similarities in the mechanisms of cultural representation within these media. Orientalist representations tend to be reproduced in neglected media in more explicit and graphic forms partly because these media are considered less relevant in cultural discourse and thus less subject to media critique.

Key arguments presented here for CVGs can be applied to these media correspondingly. Firstly, in any medium that depends on state-of-the-art technology, technological innovation will immediately impact representations of cultural content such as the "Orient." Secondly, since these media are aimed at a public whose own conceptions of the "Orient" are influenced by political and societal events, representations tend to reflect these political and historical contingencies rather than existing in an ahistorical space; historical tie-ins are equally understudied in computer games as in other "neglected media" such as events or comic books. Lastly, since most of these media operate in an economic context where profit is dependent on consumption, patterns of media consumptions and usage are a promising way to study how representations of the "Orient" are reproduced and perpetuated.

**Notes**

1. T. Boellstorf, "A Ludicrous Discipline? Ethnography and Game Studies," *Games and Culture* 1, no.1 (2006): 29-35.
2. J. MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).
3. R. Döbeli, *Dekonstruktion des ökonomischen Diskurses* (Bamberg: Difo-Druck, 1995).
4. See, e.g., the *Board Game Studies* journal at http://boardgamesstudies.org.

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# Anti-Evolutionism Among Muslim Students

DANIELLE KONING

**Supposed anti-evolutionist convictions among Muslim students in Amsterdam have been widely discussed in Dutch media. These discussions are often undergirded by the assumption that religious attitudes have concrete socio-political relevance, more specifically, that anti-evolutionism fosters disintegration and radicalism. However, research data show that most Muslim students creatively combine ideas about evolution and faith, thus prompting questions about the stereotypes that surface in public debates on integration in the Netherlands.**[1]

In December 2004, local and national media were stirred by an incident at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. A group of Muslim students in the bio-medical sciences were said to have carried out an essay assignment for the course "Man and Evolution" by uncritically copying anti-evolutionist scripts from supposedly anti-western Muslim sites such as www.harunyahya.com. Generally, teachers said, Muslim students did not even want to consider evolution theory. The discussion spiralled from a local concern over the scientific attitude of Muslim students to various national debates on Islam and integration and evolution versus Intelligent Design. It led to articles in multiple newspapers, analyzing the scope and nature of the "problem."[2] In the VU newspaper *Ad Valvas*, a discussion about science versus religion resurfaced. Van der Hoeven, minister of Education, Culture, and Science, started a national debate about the educational and scientific status of the Intelligent Design theory—among other reasons to enhance religious and cultural integration.[3] In spite of this rather abundant media spin-off, the inspiring event seemed locally bound: no other Dutch universities reported to have problems with Islamic anti-evolutionism.[4]

[S]ocietal (including educational) integration does not require a secularization of the mind.

Can the essay incident be situated within a broader development of ideologies like anti-evolutionism, defence of supernatural reality and an anti-scientific worldview among Muslim students? Moreover, how can the relatively intense response of Dutch politics and media to this incident, seemingly displaced from its more familiar American or Christian context, be understood? In the fall and winter of 2004-2005, I conducted qualitative research among Turkish and Moroccan Muslim students of various disciplines in Amsterdam, participating in Islamic student organizations, classroom discussions, and student mosques and conducting over 25 formal interviews. The data gathered suggest that most of these students partially rejected and partially adopted evolution theory, affirmed various supernatural phenomena, and had a largely positive view on science and its relation to Islam. Further, these religious convictions appeared to coexist with an active citizenship and embracement of democratic values.

### Negotiations with evolution theory

Though a few students I interviewed simply negated the whole of evolution theory on the basis of its perceived incongruence with the creation account in the Quran, their vast majority constructed types of *bridge models* in which some aspects of evolution were accepted and others rejected. The construction of these models does not imply that the students experienced the encounter of two different accounts of origin as very problematic or disconcerting. On the contrary, they hardly recognized the implicit presence of evolutionary assumptions underlying studies like medicine, chemistry, and bio-medical sciences. Students in these disciplines were of course aware that they were required to take some courses and exams related to evolution theory, but they considered this quite unproblematic as they felt that external reproduction does not require internal acceptance. Many students even stressed they felt it important to learn about "Darwin's theory" so that they could better understand, and argue with, its adherents.

In the students' bridge models, microevolution and the concept of "the survival of the fittest" appeared on the accepted side of the equation. Students reasoned that it is impossible to deny the logic and empirical backing of these concepts. They also connected micro-evolution to theistic evolution, the idea that God has guided the adjustments in his creatures. Several students accepted the Big Bang and believed that the Quran contains references to both the Big Bang and evolution theory. For almost every student I talked with, macroevolution was on the negated side in the bridge models. In contrast to microevolution, macroevolution was connected to atheist aspirations. Arguments against macro-evolution concerned problems with the fossil record, the unlikeliness that the great number of mutations needed to create a new species would simply occur, the impossibility that chance produces and maintains the complexity of nature, the misinterpretation of Darwin's original work, Darwin's personal regrets about his theory, the arbitrary parameters of computer simulations of evolution, the empirical evidence against the linear development of skull size, the unexplained extinction of dinosaurs, and the unknown "what" behind the Big Bang. Likewise, no student accepted the idea that human beings have sprung from apes. Arguments against this recent event in the evolution process involved questioning why apes still exist, pointing to inner and outer human-ape differences, suggesting that human beings used to look more like apes, and advocating the (supposedly Quranic) idea that during the time of the prophets, God, in his wrath, turned some wicked people into apes. More generally, the validity of evolution theory was relativized by emphasizing that it is "just a theory," or "also a belief," or that it is not, or not sufficiently, empirically proven.

Aside from its partial acceptance in the form of microevolution and theistic evolution, evolution theory was also partially embraced by means of some creative reinterpretations. A female Turkish student, for example, postulated the dualistic nature of humanity. She accepted evolution theory as the explanation of biological, but not of spiritual humanity. A Moroccan female student approached evolution theory as a potential divine ordeal. In her view, bones that support evolution theory could possibly exist by God's will to test the faithfulness of his people: is their faith strong enough to believe in spite of the facts? Another Moroccan female student affirmed the validity of evolution by invoking it to explain the significance of the headscarf: the sex-oriented male mind would necessitate protection of itself and others. Lastly, a male Turkish student saw evolution theory as a necessary theoretical interlude science has to pass through before it can reach ultimate truth, i.e. a scientific explanation of the Quranic account of origins. In short, the attitude of these Muslim students towards evolution theory was much more one of negotiation than downright rejection.

### Negotiations with supernatural claims

Roughly speaking, the source of the evolution-creation debate can cross-religiously be located in a tension of two philosophical presuppositions: naturalism and supernaturalism. Concerning evolution theory, the bridge models allowed students to maintain a crucial supernatural element (God as creator) in coexistence with natural explanations of life (e.g. micro-evolution, survival of the fittest, Big Bang). In my research I also investigated other aspects of the students' worldviews that could possibly partake in this tension between naturalism and supernaturalism, assuming that tenets of their Islamic and academic learnings would mutually shape and alter one another.

In line with the acceptance of creation, it clearly stood out that the existence of God went unquestioned among the students. Atheism was strongly refuted. All students believed in angels, *djinns*, and devils, to which they applied both supernaturalist and naturalist characteristics. Especially for medicine students, hesitations on the true origins of psychiatric ailments stood out—are they djinns or genes? The view on miracles emerged from a mixture of natural and supernatural ingredients. On the one hand, students made clear distinctions between make-believe and authentic miracles, used scientific explanations for and minimized the supernatural content of the miraculous, and had theological objections against it. On the other hand, students all accepted the miracles in and of the Quran, said to accept miracles without proof, and were theologically "forced" to embrace the potential of the miraculous because of God's omnipotence. The supernatural origin and conservation of the Quran were unequivocally embraced. Lastly, all students believed in Judgment Day, heaven, and hell. Thus, though some naturalist traits could be traced in students' religious ontologies, the acceptance of most supernatural claims was evident.

**Still from www.harunyahya.com**

### Negotiations with general science

As for the general attitude of Muslim students towards science, I found that on the whole, students were unfamiliar with problematizing the relationship between Islam and science. Their rather "instant" view on science and religion consisted of positions granting religion either a superior or equally valid status to science. The former (superiority of religion) did not so much find expression in a rejection of the whole of Western science, but more so in questioning aspects of its cognitive validity and ethical soundness as compared to Islam. The latter (equality of science and religion) was argued for by emphasizing the similar structure and compatible content of science and religion, predominantly drawing on the Islamic emphasis on gaining knowledge, the leading role of Islamic science in the Middle Ages, and the so-called scientific teachings in the Quran (e.g. its references to various scientific facts and theories such as the stages of embryonic development, the distinction between salt and fresh water, the positions of the sun and moon, the composition of mountains, the source of rain, heliocentrism, the expansion of the universe, Einstein's relativity theory, the beneficial health effects of breast milk, the digestive system of cows, the roundness of the earth, friction force, the amount of oxygen in the air etc.). Expressions of being anti-science or experiencing significant tensions between Islam and science were wholly absent.

### The Dutch response

In view of this larger context of Muslim students' negotiations with evolution theory, supernaturalism, and science, how can the intense response of Dutch politics and media to the essay incident be understood? Public discussions about evolution and creation, religion and science, and other Islam-related topics, often seem undergirded by the assumption that religious axioms and attitudes have concrete socio-political relevance. More specifically, they seem to converge in the idea that anti-evolutionism is a societal problem, facilitating disintegration and radicalism. Three public figures may be mentioned here to illustrate this type of thinking. Ayaan Hirsi Ali, former member of Parliament for the right-winged VVD in the Netherlands and internationally known for her fight against radical Islam and Muslim gender inequality, often connects religious to socio-political views. For example, in a defence of her film, *Submission*, a provocative depiction of the position of female Muslims, she connects dogmatic renewal, de-absolutization of doctrinal claims, and a historic-symbolic reading of scriptures within Islam to the rise of a faith that embraces humanistic values and gender equality.[5] A second example is Afshin Ellian, a Dutch-Iranian professor at the faculty of law in Leiden University and famous for his straightforward defence of human rights and sharp rejection of radical Islam. In one of his writings, he calls out to make jokes about Islam and to expose it to rational philosophical dissection, as he believes that such a critical approach would teach Muslims the concept of tolerance.[6] Comparable linkages can be found in the thinking of Paul Scheffer, a social scientist at the University of Amsterdam and a prominent member of the Dutch Labour Party (PvdA). In a public lecture, he connects repression of religious doubt to aggression, and suggests that viewing the Quran as God's (literal) revelation obstructs Muslims' attempts to integrate in the West, though he also distinguishes between the spiritual and political components of religion.[7]

The idea underlying these pleas is that religious cognition somehow translates itself into socio-political realities: irrationalism is linked to theocracy, philosophical absolutism to political oppression, and supernatural myth to sloppy sociocultural integration. This type of thought echoes modernization theory and constructivist schools in the sociology of knowledge. It is also connected to radical Enlightenment thought in which not just political religion but religion as a whole is strongly criticized. The common conviction in the media messages and these schools of thought is that socio-political change (or liberation) presupposes religious-philosophical change (or liberation). In the context of such thinking, it is hardly surprising that an explicit anti-evolutionist stance of some Muslim students alarms journalists and ministers.

The research data, however, suggest that neither a stark anti-evolutionism nor an anti-scientific attitude is representative of Muslim students. At the same time, students seemed to hang on to the supernatural tenets of their faith and did not accept evolution theory in its complete form. From a Dutch secular perspective as outlined above, this may be considered a social problem. Ironically though, the Muslim students I conversed with were active participants in civil society, and passionately convinced of democracy, religious pluralism, and equal gender rights. That these students combined such enlightened political views with enchanted beliefs in djinn-caused psychiatric ailments, divinely spoken and flawlessly preserved holy scriptures, and the necessity of the breath of Allah to fuel the Big Bang, illustrates that societal (including educational) integration does not require a secularization of the mind.

**Notes**

1. D. Koning, "Encounter of Islam and Science: Religious Beliefs and Academic Education Among Muslim Students in Amsterdam" (M.A. thesis, Vrije Universiteit, 2005).
2. For example: "Darwin is de profeet niet," *Volkskrant*, 9 April 2005; "Nieuwe studenten biologie wijzen evolutieleer af," *Trouw*, 4 February 2005; "Intelligent Design is geen goed startpunt voor een dialoog met moslims," *NRC*, 4-5 June 2005; "Moslimstudenten willen niets van evolutie weten," *Ad Valvas*, 20 December 2004.
3. See: "De evolutietheorie is niet compleet," *Volkskrant*, 21-22 May 2005; "Minister wil debat over evolutie en schepping," *Volkskrant*, 21-2 May 2005; "D66: geen bijbels scheppingsverhaal tijdens de biologieles op school," *Volkskrant*, 27 June 2005.
4. "Nieuwe studenten biologie wijzen evolutieleer af," *Trouw*, 4 February 2005.
5. "Ik bevraag de islam, een religie zonder zelfreflectie," *Volkskrant*, 30 October 2004.
6. "Maak grappen over de islam!" *Volkskrant*, 6 November 2004.
7. "Het onbehagen in de islam," *Trouw*, 18 September 2004.

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# The Sharia Debate in Ontario

ANNA C. KORTEWEG

**From 2003 through 2006 a debate developed on the introduction of "sharia law" or sharia arbitration in Ontario, Canada. The author shows how an issue that was in its core about legal principles and practices turned into a debate about women's inequality, and by extension Canadian national identity and culture. The ensuing public lambasting of Islam reinforced the notion that Islam and gender inequality are inherently incompatible. Important questions regarding faith-based arbitration were thus ignored, and with it the possibility to improve gender equality.**

In late 2003, Syed Mumtaz Ali, a retired lawyer and scholar of Islamic jurisprudence, announced in the Canadian media that the Islamic Institute of Civil Justice (IICJ) would start offering arbitration in family disputes in accordance with both Islamic legal principles and Ontario's Arbitration Act, 1991. This act allowed a variety of private matters to be settled through legally binding arbitration, including arbitration based on religious principles. A vociferous debate ensued on the introduction of sharia law in Ontario in which the presumed incompatibility of sharia-based family law and women's individual rights took centre stage. This debate reached its conclusion in September 2005 when Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty announced that he would end all religious arbitration. In February 2006, the Ontario legislature passed amendments to the 1991 Act that allowed family arbitration only if it was based on Ontario or Canadian law, excluding any form of religious arbitration, whether based on Christian, Jewish, Muslim, or other religious principles.

The account that follows is based on my reading of the Canadian newspapers, the government commissioned report on the desirability of allowing sharia-based arbitration tribunals, and the websites of various organizations arguing for and against the establishment of sharia-based arbitration tribunals.

### The development of the sharia debate

Established in part to diminish a backlog in the courts, the Ontario Arbitration Act of 1991 allowed for religious, as well as non-religious, arbitration in private matters, including family and business matters. Under the 1991 Act, two parties can appoint an arbitrator to make a legally binding decision. Unlike in mediation where two parties collaboratively reach a resolution aided by a mediator, an arbitrator acts much like a judge. Under the 1991 Act, both parties have to agree to engage in arbitration and if one of the parties feels that the decision reached is in conflict with existing Canadian law, they can appeal the arbitrator's decision in court. However, the 1991 Act contained no institutional oversight mechanism to ensure that decisions were in compliance with Canadian law. Feminist scholars and legal practitioners have warned that arbitration, like mediation, runs the risk of reproducing gendered power inequalities in intimate relationships, leaving women to agree to decisions that might not be in their best interest.[1] Nonetheless, arbitration under the 1991 Arbitration Act has continued to increase in popularity in Ontario, quite likely because it offers a faster and cheaper route to resolving issues surrounding family dissolution and inheritance than the court system.

As a matter of fact, under the Arbitration Act, [sharia-based] arbitration was *already* possible.

After 1991, Jewish and Christian groups, as well as Ismaili Muslims, set up arbitration boards that arbitrated in accordance with their religious principles. These arbitrations never received public scrutiny and little is known about them. The IICJ's proposal, then, built on over ten years of, seemingly unproblematic, religious arbitration in Ontario. Nonetheless, the ensuing public debate often misconstrued the Muslim Arbitration Board as a proposal to *extend* the law to include arbitration based on Islamic religious principles. As a matter of fact, under the Arbitration Act, such arbitration was *already* possible. As with all other arbitration, decisions would be legally binding as long as they did not violate existing Canadian law, though, again, there were at this point in time no oversight provisions to ensure that this was the case in each individual decision made. Furthermore, even though the debate centred on the proposal of the IICJ to start a sharia-based tribunal, there was no reason to assume that Ontario would only have one Muslim arbitration board. Under the 1991 Arbitration Act, multiple sharia-based tribunals could have been established, something that might well have happened given the tremendous diversity in Muslim communities in Ontario.

The debate on the idea of sharia-based arbitration clustered around a number of events. First, there was the announcement, made in December 2003, by the IICJ. That announcement resulted in some news reporting and editorials on the application of Islamic principles in family arbitration. A second period of more intensive debate occurred in June 2004 when Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty asked his Attorney General, Michael Bryant, and Minister Responsible for Women's Issues, Sandra Pupatello, to look at the issue of religious arbitration based on sharia more deeply. By the end of the month, Bryant and Pupatello asked former Attorney General Marion Boyd to conduct a study. Marion Boyd was a minister in the left-wing National Democratic Party government in Ontario that passed the 1991 Arbitration Act. She had strong credentials as a feminist and was thought to be knowledgeable about both issues related to arbitration and to gender equality, particularly those pertaining to the family.

The third wave of the debate occurred when Boyd issued her report in late December 2004. She argued that religious arbitration based on what she called "Islamic legal principles" was allowed under the existing Arbitration Act. Furthermore, Boyd proposed that religious arbitration should continue arguing, "secular state laws do not treat everyone equally because people's individual backgrounds lead to differences in the impact of these laws."[2] At the same time, she was very concerned that individual rights, including women's rights, be safeguarded. To ensure this, she proposed a number of amendments to the Act, including institutionalized oversight measures and education measures on the principles of both religious arbitration and Canadian legal principles.

The debate peaked in September 2005. On September 8, a number of women's groups staged international protests against the adoption of sharia law in Ontario. On September 11, 2005, Premier McGuinty announced that he would put forth an amendment to the Arbitration Act to ensure that there would be "one law for all Ontarians" effectively ending faith-based arbitration. This was followed by a stream of op-eds, news analyses and opinion pieces, arguing, on the one hand, that this was a victory for women's rights and on the other, that McGuinty was leaving religious Muslim women who would now turn (or be turned) to informal sharia based-arbitration without any protection by the state. Since the adoption of the amendments to the Arbitration Act on February 14, 2006,[3] there has been little public discussion of the issue, though some groups, both Jewish and Muslim, have vowed to struggle for the reinstatement of religious arbitration.

### Multiculturalism, group rights, and women's rights

The sharia debate was at its core a debate on group rights. In his work on multiculturalism, the Canadian political theorist Will Kymlicka argues that ethnic groups deserve protections of their culture insofar

as these protections further the group's integration into dominant society.[4] This is in line with the intent of official Canadian multicultural policy, which emphasizes the goal of integration in its respect for group rights and ethno-cultural difference. Kymlicka further makes an important distinction between what he calls external protections and internal restrictions. External protections are group rights that remove a barrier to a group's full participation in society or that protect a group's ethno-cultural heritage. Internal restrictions, on the other hand, are group rights that enable the imposition of practices by some members of a group on other members of that group. The sharia debate, then, can be read as a debate on whether sharia arbitration would be an external protection furthering Muslim communities' integration into Canadian society or an avenue by which Muslim men can place restrictions on Muslim women.

Religious rights are one form of group rights that can be protected within the context of Canadian multicultural policy. The editorial board of *The Globe and Mail*, one of the two national newspapers in Canada, supported sharia-based tribunals because of their potential to increase integration of Muslims into Canada, arguing that, "the Islamic tribunal may yet send a message that Muslims can be who they are and still be as Canadian as anyone else."[5] The editorial board rooted this argument firmly in a multicultural group right to practice one's religion within the confines of Canadian law. From this perspective, instituting sharia-based tribunals would provide an external protection to Canadian Muslims that would enhance their integration into Canadian society.

Syed Mumtaz Ali of the IICJ stressed a sense of religious obligation rather than of religious rights in his arguments for the establishment of sharia-based arbitration: "Islamic law obliges Muslims to follow local law, and Islamic law where possible. Under Ontario's Arbitration Act, Muslims will be able to settle disputes in matters of contracts, divorce and inheritance privately with the help of arbitrators […]"[6]

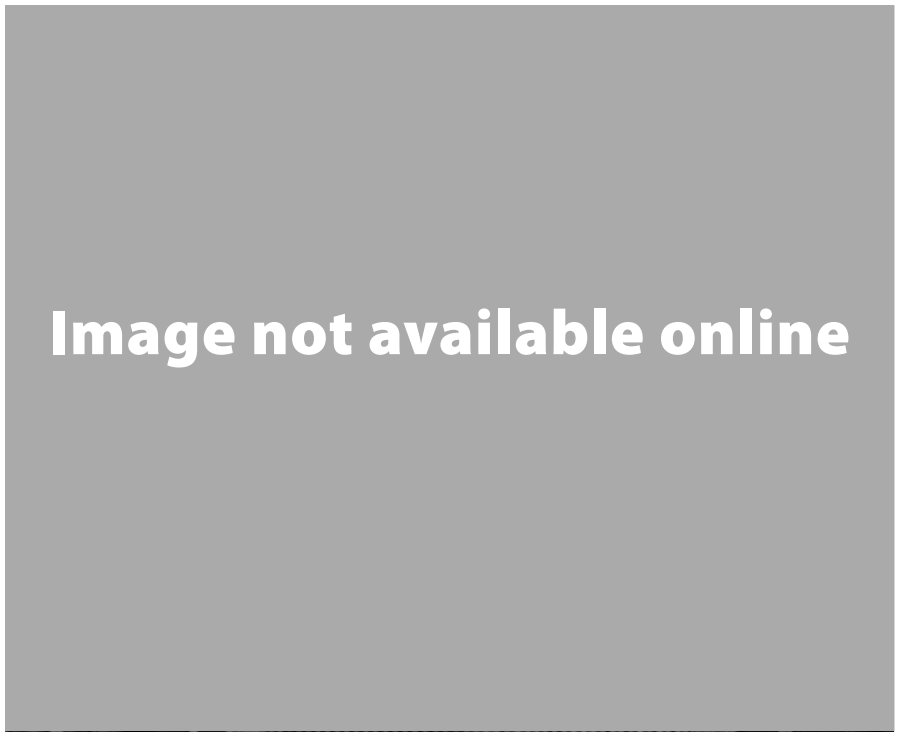
Echoing the multicultural paradigm, Mumtaz Ali argued elsewhere that in order for Muslims to feel accepted within Canadian society, they have to be able to fulfil what he sees as a religious obligation to obey Muslim family law, insofar as it is in accordance with Canadian legal principles. While there is one place on his website that lists an argument he made in 1997 that arbitration is useful to Muslims exactly because there is no oversight, in his later writings, Mumtaz Ali stresses that interpretations of sharia are always context dependent and that they therefore can and should accommodate Canadian law.[7]

However, this argument for the compatibility of Muslim family law and Canadian law did not resonate with those who were concerned with Muslim women's rights. In her oft-cited critique of multiculturalism as "bad for women," feminist political philosopher Susan Moller Okin argues that multiculturalism has a tendency to reinforce ethnocultural practices that are detrimental to women within that group.[8] In other words, from her perspective multicultural group rights almost always entail internal restrictions.

This is exactly what those arguing against the institution of sharia-based tribunals argued. They did not take Mumtaz Ali and others' invocation of support for the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and its protections for gender equality seriously. Rather, a wide range of organizations and individuals, representing religious Muslim women and men, secular Muslim women and men, and non-Muslims, strenuously argued that by allowing sharia-based tribunals government would give its approval to the systemic devaluation of women's rights.

The argument that multiculturalism threatened women's individual rights dominated the debate. For example, Homa Arjomand was the founder of the International Campaign Against Sharia Court in Canada and one of the most cited people in the debate.[9] A feminist who fled her native Iran in the late 1980s, she stated in an interview that, "I chose to come to Canada because of multiculturalism. … But when I came here, I realized how much damage multiculturalism is doing to women. I'm against it strongly now. It has become a barrier to women's rights."[10]

Arjomand further argued that her experience living in Iran and working with Muslim women as a refugee counsellor in Toronto gave her first-hand knowledge of the negative impact of Muslim family law on Muslim women's rights. Many of the groups and individuals arguing against sharia-based tribunals drew on such personal experiences as well as stories from countries like Iran, Pakistan, Saudi-Arabia, and Nigeria to argue that women's rights are clearly incompatible with religious group rights.

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**Heated debate on Sharia law, Queen's Park, Ontario, 8 September 2005**

### The effects of the sharia debate in Ontario

Ultimately, the sharia debate in Ontario had a number of effects. The framing of the issue as multiculturalism gone awry combined with the reach and depth of groups arguing against sharia-based arbitration to pit public support for multiculturalism against support for women's rights. As such, I would argue that the debate confused a larger problem with arbitration with matters of religion. In its 1991 incarnation, the Arbitration Act did not adequately deal with institutionalized power imbalances between men and women regardless of their religious affiliation or practices. Yet, rather than debating the way *arbitration* can reinforce such power imbalances, the focus of the debate was on how *sharia* threatened women's equality, and by extension Canadian national identity and culture. The debate on sharia arbitration, then, often turned into a public lambasting of Islam rather than a debate on legal principles and practices.

Second, this had the effect of reinforcing negative stereotypes about Islam as much of the evidence for the detrimental effects of sharia-based arbitration were drawn from countries where sharia is used to justify acts that clearly violate international standards of women's or human rights. In doing so, the debate also reinforced the notion that Islam and gender equality are inherently incompatible and that liberal rights and freedoms depend on secularism.

Third, the debate divided Muslim communities as it pitted those religious Muslims who believed they could best practise their religion privately against those who wanted state sanction for sharia-based rulings.

Finally, the issue of how to protect Muslim women in Canada from rulings that go against their interests was ultimately left by the wayside. As newspaper arguments made clear, religious Muslim women in Canada do go to Muslim arbitrators to rule on family matters. The decisions reached there will not be legally binding given the amendments to the Arbitration Act but they do shape the lives of these women and their children. By not seriously engaging in an attempt to conduct religious arbitration with government oversight, where that oversight would have focused on issues of gender equality, Ontario quite possibly left these women with fewer protections.

**Notes**

1. For a good overview of the legal situation regarding faith-based arbitration and mediation and gender inequality, see: Natasha Bakht, "Family Arbitration Using Sharia Law: Examining Ontario's Arbitration Act and its Impact on Women," *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights* 1, no.1 (2004).
2. Marion Boyd, 2004. *Dispute Resolution in Family Law: Protecting Choice, Promoting Inclusion* – Executive Summary, 2004: 3, http://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/about/pubs/boyd/.
3. 2006 Family Statute Law Amendment Act, http://www.ontla.on.ca/hansard/committee_debates/38_parl/session2/GenGov/G011.htm#P619_194522.
4. Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).
5. *Globe and Mail*, 29 May 2004.
6. *Globe and Mail* A11, 11 December 2003.
7. http://muslim-canada.org/.
8. Susan Moller Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).
9. See http://www.nosharia.com/.
10. *Globe and Mail*, 29 May 2004.

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# Miniature Painting as Muslim Cosmopolitanism

IFTIKHAR DADI

**Artists in Lahore have creatively reinterpreted Mughal miniature painting and its successors. The artist Chughtai initiated this process when he started to reorient his "Indian" painting towards consciously Islamic styles. Although he had no immediate followers, since the 1980s a new group of artists inspired by Chughtai's works has started to produce playfully subversive miniature paintings. By using "obsolete" painting techniques in depicting familiar political themes, important questions are raised about the "reality" of the media imagery that surrounds us.**

South Asia Muslims over the last century have produced an important body of visual arts, drawing upon a complex of frameworks that included Indo-Persian aesthetics, Indian regional schools, and the influence of Western art. By the beginning of the twentieth century, modern art had become firmly established in South Asia. One significant development by artists has been to creatively reinterpret seventeenth century Mughal miniature painting and its successors. The city of Lahore has witnessed two such revivals during the last century, by the artist Abdur Rahman Chughtai (1897-1975), and more recently, by the graduates of the Miniature programme, Department of Fine Arts, National College of Art (NCA) from the late 1990s onwards. The contemporary miniature produced by the recent NCA graduates has been the focus of recent critical attention, but also needs to be situated in relation to the earlier twentieth century–developments. An aspect of my research seeks to understand the issues that preoccupied Chughtai—by examining his works, writings, and the wider intellectual circle in early twentieth century Lahore—and to see how these issues resurface in contemporary miniature. But first, a brief historical background is necessary.

### Painting in (pre-)colonial South Asia

North Indian elite Muslim cultural practices were deeply informed by Persianate influences, which increased in intensity during the Mughal period from the sixteenth century. Poetry, literature, painting, and calligraphy all closely followed Persian models. The Timurid *kitabkhana* (royal bookmaking workshop) had functioned as a royal design studio, producing designs for architectural facades, carpets and decorative objects, along with its central function of producing illustrated and illuminated manuscripts, and albums (*muraqqa'*) composed of calligraphy and painting. The status of the painter, which until the fifteenth century was generally considered lower than the calligrapher, grew in importance. In the sixteenth century, during the Safavid dynasty that followed the Timurids, the general status of painting rose further, and acquired greater diversity and a certain independence as an autonomous medium, rather than its earlier role as illustrating text. It was this later Timurid and Safavid Persian influence that was imported into India by the second Mughal emperor, Humayun, on returning from his exile in Iran to India in 1555.

Humayun's successor, the great emperor Akbar (r. 1556-1605), abundantly expanded royal support of the ateliers, leading to the flowering of the highly influential school of Mughal painting and bookmaking. During Akbar's later years, the character of painting changed, becoming less action-oriented and more naturalist and realist. By this time, the aesthetics of Mughal painting had departed considerably from the earlier Persianized formal mannerism, and individual styles of various painters were appreciated for their particularities and their realism. With the ascension of the more religiously conservative Aurangzeb to the Mughal throne, painting lost a great deal of royal patronage starting around 1668; instead it witnessed a partial dispersal to local courts, which led to the development of greater diversity in the process of diffusion, leading to regional schools such as Pahari, Sikh, etc.

Painting developed in relation to the overall arts of the book, in which calligraphy played a central role. Of particular interest in this regard are the *muraqqa'* albums composed both in Timurid and Safavid Persia, and in Mughal India.[1] These albums, which can be considered a scrapbook for elite pleasure, compiled esteemed but heterogeneous examples of painting and calligraphy, and framed them in elaborate decorated borders. In Indian albums, prized samples of Persian and Indian painting and calligraphy were inserted, and the album functioned as an important aesthetic benchmark for an age in which mechanically reproduced samples of work were absent. The *muraqqa'* album was reinterpreted by Abdur Rahman Chughtai in 1928 when he published his *Muraqqa'-i chughtai*, which I discuss shortly.[2]

### Early twentieth century Lahore

The rise of British control over South Asia led to the decline of Mughal painting, which was almost complete after the Mutiny of 1857. Thereafter, during the later nineteenth century, Indian painters largely emulated European salon and academic styles. There were painting ateliers in Lahore since the Mughal times, and a small number of practitioners had continued to paint the miniature in the later nineteenth century. At that time, the British founded the Mayo School of Art (later renamed as NCA)—which was the most traditional of the art schools set up in colonial India. By the early twentieth century, Lahore, as the capital of the prosperous province of Punjab, was renowned for its higher educational institutions and a vibrant Muslim intellectual culture that included the poet-philosopher Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) and other influential writers, scholars, and poets well versed in Urdu, Persian and English.[3]

The rise of a modern Indian style of painting begins in Calcutta in the early twentieth century, called the Bengal School of Art, which flourished till the 1930s. The Bengal School was self-consciously "Indian," rejecting British academic oil painting, and drew its themes from Indian mythological and historical texts. The Bengal School painters synthesized conventions of the Mughal miniature with Japanese watercolor wash techniques, and the linearity and symbolism of Art Nouveau.[4]

Abdur Rahman Chughtai, the first prominent modern Indian Muslim artist, studied at the Mayo School of Art from 1911, and began painting early on. Chughtai did not study in Calcutta, yet has a vexed relationship to the Bengal School. Despite formal and thematic correspondences between the work of Chughtai and many of the Bengal School artists, Chughtai vigorously argued that he belonged rather to the Lahore School of Painting, whose centrality and continuity he traced back to the Mughal era.[5] Chughtai was well versed in Urdu and Persian literature, poetry, and over the years became increasingly interested in Persian, Mughal, and Pahari painting. Generally, the larger rubric of decolonization at the time provided for an experimental and creative atmosphere.

Chughtai started painting in the 1910s, initially creating works based on Hindu mythology. By the 1920s, under the influence of Iqbal's pan-Islamic ideas, he began reorient his paintings towards a consciously Islamic and "Mughal" aesthetic. The *Muraqqa'-i chughtai* (1928), illustrating the poetry of the nineteenth century Urdu poet Ghalib, marks this shift. Chughtai's earlier Indian Paintings are set outside or in simple architectural frames, showing Hindu mythological figures. By contrast, the later paintings are carefully set in elaborate arabesque interiors, with the female figures covered in elaborate, stylized layers of clothing. The later paintings are not narrative based, but create an idealized and romanticized aesthetic universe akin to the classical Urdu *ghazal*. In his own Urdu introduction to the *Muraqqa'*, Chughtai had praised, among others, Bihzad's use of imagination as a guide for pictorial depiction, rather than observing reality itself. The Persian artist Bihzad

COURTESY OF SAIRA WASIM

**Buzkashi, (2004). Gouache on wasli paper. 25.5 x 16.5 cm. Buzkashi, literally "goat-grabbing," is an old game still popular in parts of Pakistan.**

### Contemporary miniature

By the 1980s, the NCA had started a separate Miniature programme, where a strictly traditional training based on copying Persian, Mughal, Rajput, and Pahari styles has continued to be imparted. By the mid 1990s, its students began fracturing the traditional space and narrative of the Mughal miniature. The contemporary miniature is currently flourishing in Pakistan—there are now numerous graduates of the NCA living around the world, and developing their own reinventions of the miniature based on its narrative, arabesque, and allegorical dimensions. My contention is that while oil-based abstract and post-Cubist works were dominant during the first few decades of national independence in Pakistan, the playfully subversive miniature today is perhaps better suited to participate in a globalized and postmodern cultural sphere in which Pakistani art is inextricably linked to diasporic practices, international mega-exhibitions, and promotion by Western galleries.

I present here only two examples of the contemporary miniature scene. Aisha Khalid, based in Lahore, who also studied in the Netherlands, has created works that explore questions of veiling, gender, and its relation to interiority, domesticity, and the decorative in a compelling and urgent manner. In many of her works, the minimalist space and the repetition of arabesque pattern that also recalls colonial floor tiles, creates an enclosure from which no escape appears to be possible. The figure of the woman itself becomes the decorative background, interchangeable with objects of furniture or drapery.

Chicago based Saira Wasim deploys her striking technical skills to create potent political allegories, reminding us that many Mughal works were oriented to serve as allegories of the elevated status of the Mughal emperors. Her works depict persistent crises of national sovereignty in Pakistan and the Muslim world, and have for example, addressed religious and political hypocrisy in Pakistan, the fall of Iraq to US forces, and the propaganda of the Bush administration. Her reliance on an "obsolete" painting technique precisely serves to create the temporal and aesthetic distance from pervasive media imagery, which allows her paintings to be read as allegories, rather than cartoons or parodies. Her works fully recognize political representations circulated by the electronic media, but by retaining a critical distance, prompt us to question whether the events we see every day on television are world-historical, or utterly banal and cynical instances of religious and political manipulation.[7]

### Conclusion

Contemporary miniature is often claimed to be an unbroken continuity with tradition, but also a new way of celebrating hybridity and cosmopolitanism. These are seen as formations that venture beyond the ideological dictates of the Pakistani nation-state. However, South Asian Muslim identity in modern history has been too complex and overdetermined to be easily confined in a national register. The return of the miniature today is neither an unbroken continuity with "tradition," nor fully new in its acknowledgment of hybridity, although its playful and ironic potential is certainly a new development. But in many ways, it parallels the revival of the miniature by Chughtai, who also negotiated cosmopolitan frameworks, even while articulating an idea of a Lahore-based Muslim art. The Chughtaian and the contemporary miniatures draw upon the legacies of Mughal painting, (post)modernism, and Indian vernacular painting traditions to create a kind of post-national cosmopolitan Muslim aesthetic. The miniature either arises too early, before the founding of Pakistan, or too late—when the great national drive for modernization from the 1950s to the 1970s has been exhausted—to be unproblematically considered as national art. The miniature today also unwittingly recreates Chughtai's object of longing, the Lahore School of Painting, but whose geographic locale is ironically, globally dispersed and diasporic.

(1465-1535) has become celebrated in legend, and for Chughtai, Iqbal, and others, is an antonomastic figure characterizing perfection in the art of painting. By consciously following the path of imaginative depiction that he ascribed to the great Bihzad—Chughtai inserts himself in a history of Muslim painting that traverses the Timurid, Safavid, and Mughal eras. Chughtai and Iqbal share a cosmopolitan Muslim imagination during a time when pan-Islamic ideas were still prevalent, and the rise of independent Muslim nation-states in South Asia and much of Middle East was not yet a settled affair. But there were also key differences between them.

Iqbal's later poetry and philosophy is characterized by revolutionary dynamism, which clearly departs from the introspective stasis of the classical *ghazal*. The relationship between Iqbal and Chughtai was thus characterized by asymmetry. Although Iqbal agreed to write a Foreword to the *Muraqqa',* he remains rather evasive about the actual merits of Chughtai's illustrations. Indeed, Iqbal goes so far as to claim, "[I]t is my belief that, with the single exception of Architecture, the art of Islam (Music, Painting and even Poetry) is yet to be born—the art, that is to say, which aims at the human assimilation of Divine attributes …," implying that neither Chughtai nor any other painters' works are properly "Islamic."[6]

Interestingly Iqbal's unease with modern Muslim painting should also be seen in relation to the larger critique leveled against the Bengal School by Bengalis and British modernist critics during its heyday. The Bombay Progressives, who oriented themselves in relation with International Modernism, and painted with oil in abstract and post-Cubist styles, also attacked the Bengal School for its decadence, idealism, and an illustrative relationship to text and myth, rather than creating works that would be artistically autonomous in their own right. The art of Pakistan during its first five decades (1947-1997) largely develops from this engagement with modernism. Chughtai was over 50 years old when Pakistan was created. In terms of subsequent influence, Chughtai's recovery of the miniature was largely neglected in Pakistan for decades. He remained a highly admired figure, but one who had no immediate followers.

**Notes**

1. David J. Roxburgh, *The Persian Album, 1400-1600: From Dispersal to Collection* (Yale University Press, 2005); Imad al-Hasani, *The St. Petersburg Muraqqa*, 2 vol., ed. Ivanov Akimushkin (Leonardo Arte, 1996).
2. *Muraqqa'-i cughta'i* (Lahore: Jahangir Book Club, 1928); reprint edition (Lahaur: Aivan-i isha`at, 1971).
3. Akbar Naqvi, *Image and Identity: Fifty Years of Painting and Sculpture in Pakistan* (Oxford, 1998), 40-99.
4. Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India, 1850-1922: Occidental Orientations* (Cambridge, 1994).
5. See his *Lahaur ka dabistan-i musavviri* (Cughtai Miyuziyam Trast, 1979); Naqvi, *Image and Identity*, 46-58.
6. Iqbal, "Foreword," n.p.
7. Her work can be viewed on her website www.sairawasim.com.

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# The Disquieting Art of Khosrow Hassanzadeh

MIRJAM SHATANAWI

**Khosrow Hassanzadeh is one of Iran's leading contemporary artists. During his artistic career his work became increasingly concerned with Islam as a factor in the interplay between East and West. This article discusses his recent series of works *Terrorist* to analyse the artist's efforts to simultaneously criticize the accusing gaze of the West and reclaim the right of self-representation.**

"This series is the result of two years of thought, research and travel. It is a reflection of a world where the word 'terrorist' is thrown about thoughtlessly. What is a terrorist? What are the origins of a terrorist and in an international context who defines 'terrorism'? The West, with its personal definition of terrorism, gives itself the right to take over a country, while in the Middle East the West is clearly accused of being a full-fledged terrorist. In exploring these questions, I portrayed the people in whom I have the most faith: my mother and sisters." With these words Khosrow Hassanzadeh introduces his most recent work *Terrorist* (2004). In the four-piece series Hassanzadeh portrays himself and his family members against a backdrop with images referring to their personal religious beliefs, accompanied by labels describing each portrayed "terrorist" with characteristics such as nationality, religious denomination, and personal history. The combinations of images and texts reveal that Hassanzadeh addresses contemporary Western perceptions in which Islam is heedlessly associated with terrorism. His "terrorists" are Muslim terrorists, and at the same time, ordinary believers who are under scrutiny because of their faith.

**"Terrorist" # 2**

KHOSROW HASSANZADEH, COURESY OF KIT TROPENMUSEUM AMSTERDAM

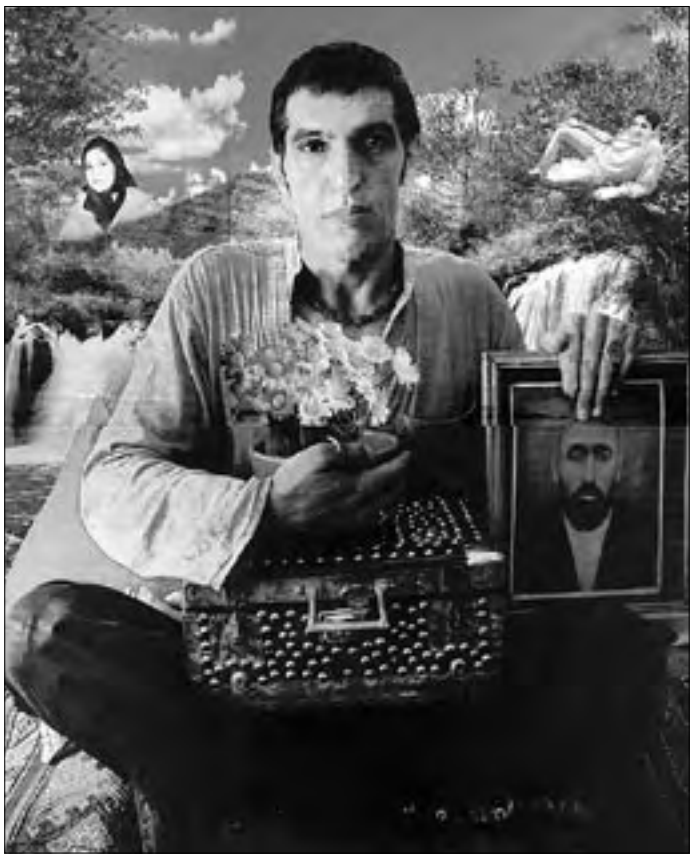
### Discovering Islam

The emphasis on Islam in the *Terrorist* series reflects Hassanzadeh's development as an artist whose career became increasingly tied with the Euro-American art world and its concomitant perceptions of Iran as a Muslim country. After a short training at Tehran's Art Academy, Hassanzadeh made his first paintings in the mid-1980s. International recognition came only in 1999 when his *War* series, a gloomy diary of his memories as a volunteer soldier during the Iran-Iraq war, was exhibited at the Diorama Arts Centre in London. The exhibition proved to be a turning point in Hassanzadeh's career. His work, increasingly addressing an outside observer, represented by his Western audiences, ultimately changed orientation. He began to observe Iranian society with the eye of an outsider, "looking in at his own society with a strictly incriminating eye" and "looking out for signs of culture and identity."[1]

It is at this point that Islam made its way into the paintings of Hassanzadeh. While his early works contained no references to Islam or Muslim society whatsoever, the newer series were loaded with them. Both *Chador* (2000), a response to Western perceptions of the veil as a symbol of the oppression of Muslim women, and *Ashura* (2000), a re-interpretation of the Shiite ceremony focusing on the female saints of Shiism, set out to challenge the dominant Western views of Muslim women. *Prostitutes* (2002), a tribute to sixteen prostitutes killed by a religious fanatic in Mashhad, increased Hassanzadeh's fame in the West as a representative of a presumed Iranian "counterculture." Meanwhile, Hassanzadeh's orientation was gradually changing from a direct commentary on Iranian society to including a reflection on Western obsessions with Islam.

### Ethnic marketing

Hassanzadeh's shifts in focus are tightly interwoven with the changed positions artists from the Middle East occupy in the global art world. Since 9/11, exhibitions featuring artists from the "Middle East" or the "Islamic world" are booming in the West. Most of these exhibitions start from the–debatable–premise that contemporary art can serve as a means to inform audiences about the current state of affairs in the region.[2] Moreover, the Middle East is "hot" and museums and galleries, just like publishing houses and other commercial institutions, need the marketing appeal of ethnic labelling to boost visitor counts or art sales.[3] All the same, the idea that an artist's national or religious background has an indelible effect on an artist's practice is highly controversial in the art world, and particularly in the Middle East. Many artists, including Khosrow Hassanzadeh, have been struggling against this notion for years. They argue that terms like "Islamic," "Middle East," or even "Iran" are loaded with religious and political subtexts and that the use of such terms in exhibition concepts draws away attention from the artistic value of their work. Ironically, it is precisely Hassanzadeh's raw commentary on Iranian society that prompted most curators to include his work in their exhibitions.



KHOSROW HASSANZADEH, COURESY OF KIT TROPENMUSEUM AMSTERDAM

**"Terrorist" # 1**

### Reclaiming independence

Set against this background, the *Terrorist* series can be analysed as a critique on the ways the international art world approaches artists from the Middle East, as Sohrab Mahdavi has done in his review of the series. He argues that by portraying himself and his mother and sisters as terrorists Hassanzadeh wants to take possession of the accusing gaze of the "other," i.e. the West. Thereby, the work seems to criticize the common practice of the art world to demand that artists in the Middle East scrutinize their identities and reformulate them according to Western needs. Although *Terrorist* aims to reclaim the right to self-representation and independence, "It fails on both registers: 'self-representation' here is an appropriation of Western values and the work can only become 'independent' if the artist's intended viewer is Western."[4] Nevertheless, this "radical failure" only reinforces the artist's message, making it unique in the non-Western art scene. Artists like Khosrow Hassanzadeh are in a catch 22 situation. They have to rely on the Euro-American art market to function as artists in a gradually globalising art scene. Yet they feel uncomfortable with its crude marketing policies that emphasize their "otherness" and keep them in assigned roles of "Muslim" or "Middle Easterner." Hassanzadeh describes himself as an "Occidentalist," someone who moves back and forth between the mutual imagery that East and West produce. The question is if in the current hypersensitive political climate artists will be able to take up such sovereign positions.

*A retrospective of Khosrow Hassanzadeh is on view at the Tropenmuseum Amsterdam from 22 September 2006 through 7 January 2007.*

**Notes**

1. Sohrab Mahdavi, "Terrorist," in *Tehran Studio Works: The Art of Khosrow Hassanzadeh*, ed. Mirjam Shatanawi (London: Saqi Books, 2006), 124.
2. As reflected in the titles of recent exhibitions that featured works by Hassanzadeh: *Inside Iran* (Amsterdam, 2006), *iran.com* (Freiburg, 2006), *West by East* (Barcelona, 2005) and *Musulmanes, Musulmans* (Paris, 2004).
3. Tirdad Zolghadr, ed., *Ethnic Marketing* (Zürich: JRP Ringier, 2006).
4. Mahdavi, "Terrorist," in *Tehran Studio Works*, 124.

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## ISIM EVENTS

13 – 15 October 2006
**Conference**
***Youth and the Global South: Religion, Politics, and the Making of Youth in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East***
*Venue:* Dakar, Senegal
*Organizers:* African Studies Centre (ASC), Council for the Development of Social Science in Africa (CODESRIA), International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) & ISIM

19 October 2006
***Onderhandelen met islamistische bewegingen?***
**Ramadan Festival Debate**
*Venue:* University of Amsterdam
Panellists among others: Jan Schoonenboom, Tariq Shadid;
Chair: Radi Suudi

26 October 2006
**ISIM in Utrecht**
***Sharia in Europe—Scope and Limits***
Lecture by Mathias Rohe
*Venue:* Utrecht University

10 November 2006
***Reflections on Muslim Intellectual History:* Farewell Conference of Professor Abdulkader Tayob**
*Venue:* Radboud University Nijmegen
Speakers: Mona Abaza, Nasr Abu Zayd, Asef Bayat, Martin van Bruinessen, Abdou Filali-Ansary, Muhammad Khalid Masud, Roel Meijer, Abdulkader Tayob

30 November 2006
**ISIM in Utrecht**
***The Alevis in Flux: Reformulation and Institutionalization***
Lecture by David Shankland
*Venue:* Utrecht University

21 March 2007 – 25 March 2007
***"Muslim Women" in Europe: Bodily Performances, Multiple Belongings, and the Public Sphere***
**Panel at 8th Mediterranean Research Meeting**
*Venue:* Florence & Montecatini Terme, Italy
*Convenors:* Ruba Salih (University of Bologna) & Annelies Moors (ISIM)
*Sponsors:* EUI & ISIM

### ISIM Ph.D. and Staff Seminars

*Venue:* Leiden University

17 October 2006:
***Uncoordinated Networks: Muslim Educational Institutions and the Will for Reform in India***
Lecture by Rémy Delage

31 October 2006:
***Sacred Places and Sacrificial Paradigms: Idd el-Hajj Discourses in Tanzania***
Lecture by Gerard van de Bruinhorst

14 November 2006:
***"Love Marriages" Revisited: The Shaista Almani Case***
Lecture by Tanya Sheikh

28 November 2006:
***Islamic Law and Society in Morocco, circa 1870–2006: The Genesis of a Modern Legal System***
Lecture by Léon Buskens

12 December 2006:
***The Bosnian Ulama and the Negotiation of Islamic Revivalism in Multi-Ethnic Bosnia***
Lecture by Önder Cetin

6 February 2007:
Lecture by Joe Stork

20 February 2007:
***I Love Moroccan Music, Because I Am Moroccan: Dutch-Moroccan Youth and Their Musical Exploration of Identity***
Lecture by Miriam Gazzah

6 March 2007:
***Gender and Family Law Revisited***
Lecture by Annelies Moors

20 March 2007:
***Seeking Guidance in French Islam: Media Muftis and Telephone Fatwas in Paris***
Lecture by Alexandre Caeiro

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# Public Debates about Islam in Europe

MARTIN VAN BRUINESSEN

On 22-26 March 2006 in Florence and Montecatini Terme, Italy, Stefano Allievi and Martin van Bruinessen convened a workshop titled "Public Debates about Islam in Europe: Why and How 'Immigrants' became 'Muslims,'" sponsored jointly by ISIM and the Robert Schuman Centre of the European University Institute. The workshop was part of the Seventh Mediterranean Social and Political Research Meeting of the European University Institute.

The workshop focused on current debates on Islam and Muslims in Europe, in which the issue of integration is increasingly defined as one of (in)compatibility between Islamic and European values. In many countries of Europe the relation between the "indigenous" population and immigrants has been marked by cultural conflicts, and it has been especially conflicts over Islamic symbols that gained a high visibility.

The content of discussions on immigration has tended to shift towards the cultural and symbolic level. Political actors, the media, and public intellectuals have increasingly focused on supposedly Islamic specificities. Immigrants have increasingly come to be identified as Muslims first, both in the perception by the host societies and in their self-perception.

The privileging of religious identity in the public debate has tended to marginalize other social aspects, and many questions are more and more frequently debated in religious terms. Immigration has, in an important sense, become "Islamicized." Reactive identities (i.e. identities defined in opposition to others) have become more salient and "act" specifically as such in the cultural, political, and religious fields. Muslims are cast in the role of the ultimate, and essentially different, outsider, and images of Islam are projected against which spokespersons for autochthonous European cultures and values define themselves. The workshop focused on the modalities of these processes, and on the role of various actors (intellectuals, media, politicians, established churches, etc., as well as Muslim actors themselves) therein.

## PAPERS PRESENTED

- **Gerassimos Karabelias** (Pantheion University, Athens)
  "The End of One-Nation One-State? Muslim Immigrants and the Issue of Islam in Post-Cold War Greece"
- **Katrine Romhild Benkaaba** (Université Aix-Marseille III/University of Copenhagen)
  "How Islam enters Danish Public Policies of Integration"
- **Zora Hesova** (Freie Universität, Berlin)
  "German Turks and 'Parallel Societies': Germany's Fears about Social Cohesion"
- **Rudolph Peters** (University of Amsterdam)
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- **Corinne Torrekens** (GERME–Université Libre de Bruxelles)
  "Local Political Process Discovering Islam in Belgium: Managing Religious Pluralism, Negotiations, and Muslim Ethnicity in Brussels"
- **Anna C. Korteweg and Gökçe Yurdakul** (University of Toronto)
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- **Riem Spielhaus** (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)
  "Germany Constructing Its Muslims"
- **Maurizio Albahari** (University of California, Irvine)
  "Performing 'Religion' and 'Muslim Migrants,' from behind the Charitable Fence to the Public Spotlight: Mechanisms and Stakes at the Edges of the Italian State"
- **Marcel Maussen** (University of Amsterdam)
  "Mosque Establishment and the Social Construction of Cultural Differences and Islamic Presence. Public Discussions in Marseilles and Rotterdam"
- **Martin van Bruinessen** (ISIM / Utrecht University)
  "After Van Gogh: The Roots of Anti-Muslim Rage"
- **Loïc Le Pape** (IREMAM, Aix-en-Provence)
  "The Ambiguous Place of Religion in the Public Sphere: From Islam to Islamism"

## NEW FELLOWS

- **Irfan Ahmad (NWO Rubicon Postdoctoral Fellow)**
  *Contesting Islamism: Immanent Critique of Jamaat e-Islami of India*
  1 August 2006 – 31 March 2008

- **Maurits van den Boogert (Brill-ISIM Fellow)**
  *The Western Canon of the Study of Islam*
  1 September 2006 – 31 August 2007

- **Léon Buskens (Sabbatical Fellow)**
  *Islamic Law and Society in Morocco, circa 1870-2006: The Genesis of a Modern Legal System*
  1 September 2006 – 31 January 2007

- **Rémy Delage (ISIM Visiting Fellow)**
  *Discourses on Muslim Reform in the Indian Public Space: Islamic Education System, Urban Governance and Processes of Assignation*
  15 September 2006 – 15 December 2006

- **Omar Farouk Bajunid (IIAS/ISIM Visiting Fellow)**
  *Islam in Contemporary Cambodia*
  1 December 2006 – 28 February 2007

- **Jeannette Jouili (ISIM Postdoctoral Fellow)**
  *The Ethics of Islamic Arts: Normativity, Creativity, and 'Fun' in the Muslim Diaspora in the West*
  1 October 2006 – 30 September 2007

- **Julie McBrien (Affiliated Fellow)**
  *Constructing Post-Soviet Muslim Public Space: Everyday Religious Life in a Kyrgyz-Uzbek Town*
  1 October 2006 – 30 September 2007

- **Joe Stork (ISIM Visiting Fellow)**
  *In the Shadow of Terror: Political Violence and Human Rights Prospects in the Arab Middle East*
  1 November 2006 – 28 February 2007

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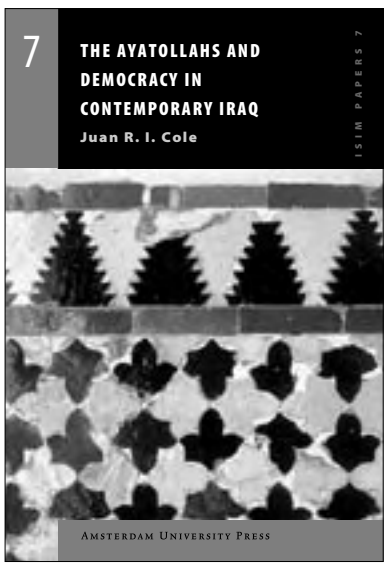
# ISIM Book Series

In cooperation with Amsterdam University Press, ISIM has taken the initiative to launch the ISIM Book Series. The Series will publish innovative and interdisciplinary research on trends and movements in contemporary Muslim societies and communities, bringing together expertise in anthropology, sociology, political science, social history, cultural studies, and religious studies. The aim of the Series is to present cutting-edge scholarship on Islam and Muslim societies in different parts of the globe. It seeks to expose both the distinctive and comparable aspects of trends and developments in Muslim societies. The editors invite monographs and edited volumes that are both theoretically informed and grounded in empirical research. Proposals will be reviewed by experts in the field, under the direction of an international editorial board. Titles from Amsterdam University Press in the US and Canada are distributed by the University of Chicago Press.

For more information about the Series, please contact Mathijs Pelkmans at review@isim.nl. Guidelines for book proposals and manuscripts are available at www.isim.nl.

# ISIM Paper




■ Paper 7: Juan R. I. Cole
*The Ayatollahs and Democracy in Contemporary Iraq*

Iraqi Shiism is undergoing profound changes, leading to new elaborations of the relationship between clerics and democratic principles in an Islamic state. The Najaf tradition of thinking about Shiite Islam and the modern state in Iraq, which first developed during the Iranian constitutional revolution of 1905–1911, rejects the principle that supreme power in an Islamic state must be in clerical hands. Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani of Iraq stands in this tradition, and he has striven to uphold and develop it since the fall of Saddam Hussein. At key points he came into conflict with the Bush administration, which was not eager for direct democracy. Parliamentary politics have also drawn in clerics of the Dawa Party, the Sadr movement, and the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, all of which had earlier been authoritarian in outlook. Is Iraqi Shiism experiencing its enlightenment moment?

Juan R. I. Cole is Professor of Modern Middle East and South Asian History at the University of Michigan.

# ISIM Dissertation

■ Mujiburrahman
*Feeling Threatened Muslim-Christian Relations in Indonesian's New order*

Muslim-Christian relations have played an important role in the social and political dynamics of Indonesia. Tense relations and mutual suspicions between Indonesia's Muslim majority and its significant Christian minority were reflected in Christian fear of the prospect of an Islamic state and Muslim anxieties about domestic Christian missionary activities. At first the regime made heavy-handed efforts to contain inter-religious conflict, but its attitude towards vocal Muslim groups shifted from suppression to accommodation. These socio-political developments in turn contributed to violence coloured by Islamic and Christian sentiments after the fall of the regime.

Mujiburrahman was an ISIM Ph.D. fellow from 2001 to 2005. He is presently a lecturer at the State Institute of Islamic Studies (IAIN), Antasari, Banjarmasin, Indonesia.

ISIM Papers and the ISIM Dissertation Series can be ordered online through www.isim.nl or www.aup.nl or by email: orders@aup.nl.

Earlier publications in the ISIM Papers Series are available on the ISIM website.

# New Position Abdulkader Tayob

In June 2006 Professor Abdulkader Tayob, ISIM Chair at Radboud University Nijmegen, left ISIM to take up a position as the head a new programme on Islamic Studies at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. The position involves establishing an international research and teaching programme focusing on Africa. We are delighted, and hope, that this programme will be a basis for a continued cooperation, and for expanding even further ISIM's network in Africa.

During his tenure at ISIM, Professor Tayob made valuable contributions to the research programme of ISIM, in particular as Programme Director of the Contemporary Islamic Identity and Public Life programme, as well as to research and teaching activities on modern Islam at Radboud University Nijmegen. Furthermore, he directed the ISIM project Rights at Home and brought it to a successful completion.

No doubt, the students, colleagues, staff members, and fellow scholars at ISIM and Nijmegen will miss Professor Tayob's friendship and scholarship, even though we hope to continue collaborating with him in the coming years. ISIM will organise a Farewell Conference in honor of Professor Tayob on 10 November 2006 at Radboud University Nijmegen.

# New Editor ISIM Review

As of 15 June 2006 Mathijs Pelkmans has joined ISIM as the new Editor of the *ISIM Review*. Mathijs obtained his Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Amsterdam in 2003. For the past three years he was Research Fellow at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology where he focused on religious frontiers after socialism, particularly in Kyrgyzstan. He is author of *Defending the Border: Identity, Religion, and Modernity in the Republic of Georgia* (Cornell University Press, 2006) and has published on Muslim-Christian relations, territorial borders, and postsocialist change in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Besides being the new editor of the *ISIM Review*, Mathijs will also join the editorial board of the new ISIM Book series. We cordially welcome Mathijs Pelkmans to ISIM.

# New Brill-ISIM Fellowship

ISIM is pleased to announce the establishment of a Brill-ISIM fellowship in cooperation with Brill Publishers. Within this fellowship the Academic Project Manager for the Third Edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Maurits van den Boogert, will study the historical development of the *Encyclopaedia*, its shifting parameters, and its significance for the study of the Muslim world today. The *Encyclopaedia of Islam* and all publications derived from it effectively form a canon of knowledge on Islam based on Western scholarly traditions. The Third Edition, which is currently being prepared, will have a greater emphasis on social scientific research and Islam outside the Middle East than the two previous editions.

***Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire***

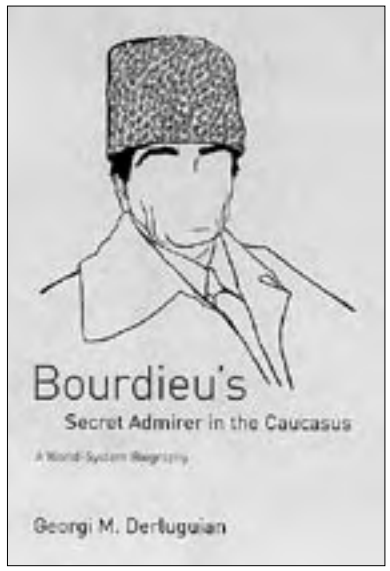
By **Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri**
London: Penguin Books, 2005.

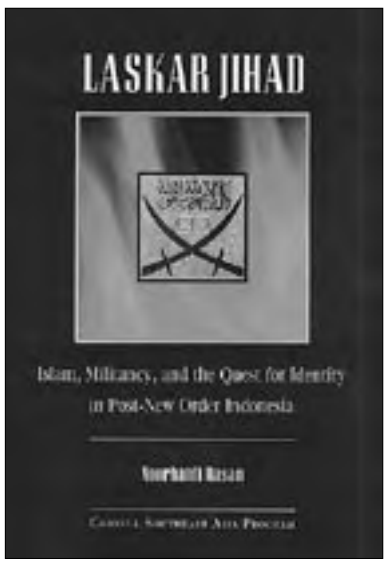
A provocative book, which argues that the accellerating integration of economic, political and cultural powers in the world is actually a force for the good. No longer silent and oppressed masses, the world's populations form a powerful network that contains the seeds of radical global and social transformation. The authors provocatively suggest that this is the key to democracy on a global scale.

***Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus: A World-System Biography***

By **Georgi M. Derluguian**
Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005.

Derluguian provides a gripping account of the dynamics unleashed by the demise of Soviet socialism in the conflict-torn North Caucasus. Balancing on the line between biography and world-system theory, the author forcefully adds a human face to structural forces and highlights the importance of linking micro-sociological observations to grand history.

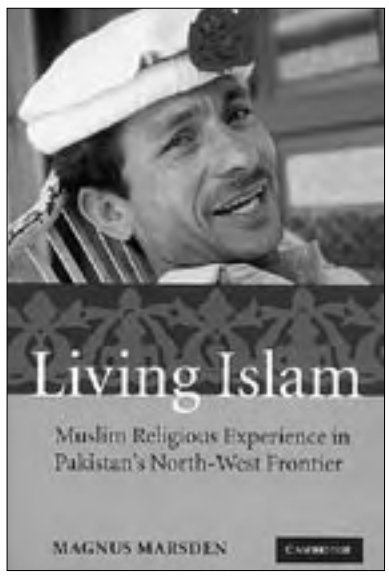



***Laskar Jihad: Islam, Militancy and the Quest for Identity in Post-New Order Indonesia***

By **Hasan Noorhaidi**
Ithaca, NY: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 2006.

Indonesia's Laskar Jihad took part in inter-religious fighting in the Moluccas and other regional conflicts in the brief period between 2000 and late 2002 when it demobilized. The author studied the movement's emergence and demise at close quarters and presents a unique analysis of its roots in the transnational Salafi movement and of the local political factors that contributed to shaping it.




***Living Islam: Muslim Religious Experience in Pakistan's North-West Frontier***

By **Magnus Marsden**
Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2005.

Looking beyond simplistic and often negative images of the place of Islam in Pakistan, Marsden shows that the life of a good Muslim in the Chitral region is above all a mindul life, enhanced by the creative force of poetry, dancing and critical debate. By encasing a thorough ethnographic study in larger debates, the book offers a powerful contribution to an understanding of the relation between religion and politics.

***Why They Don't Hate Us: Lifting the Veil on the Axis of Evil***

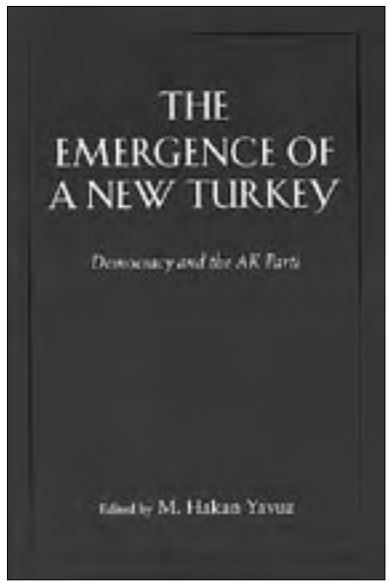
By **Mark LeVine**
Oneworld Publications, 2005.

LeVine argues that the idea that most Muslims hate the US or the West is a useful fabrication that helps fundamentalists on both sides to maintain political, economic or cultural power in their societies through the spread of what the author calls an Axis of Arrogance and Ignorance. By insisting on the reality of complexity, LeVine powerfully shows the fallacies of dominent rhetoric and conceptions about Muslim societies.

***The Emergence of a New Turkey: Democracy and the AK Party***

Edited by **M. Hakan Yavuz**
Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2006.

An interesting set of essays that attempts to explain the phenomenon of Turkey's Justice and Development Party (AKP), which has its roots in a series of Islamist parties but has restyled itself as a non-religious conservative liberal party, bringing the country closer to accession to the EU. Several contributors focus on the political economy of the party's rise; others address changes in Turkish secularism, the AKP's relations with the military, gender, foreign policy and the American intervention in Iraq.



# Reza Abedini

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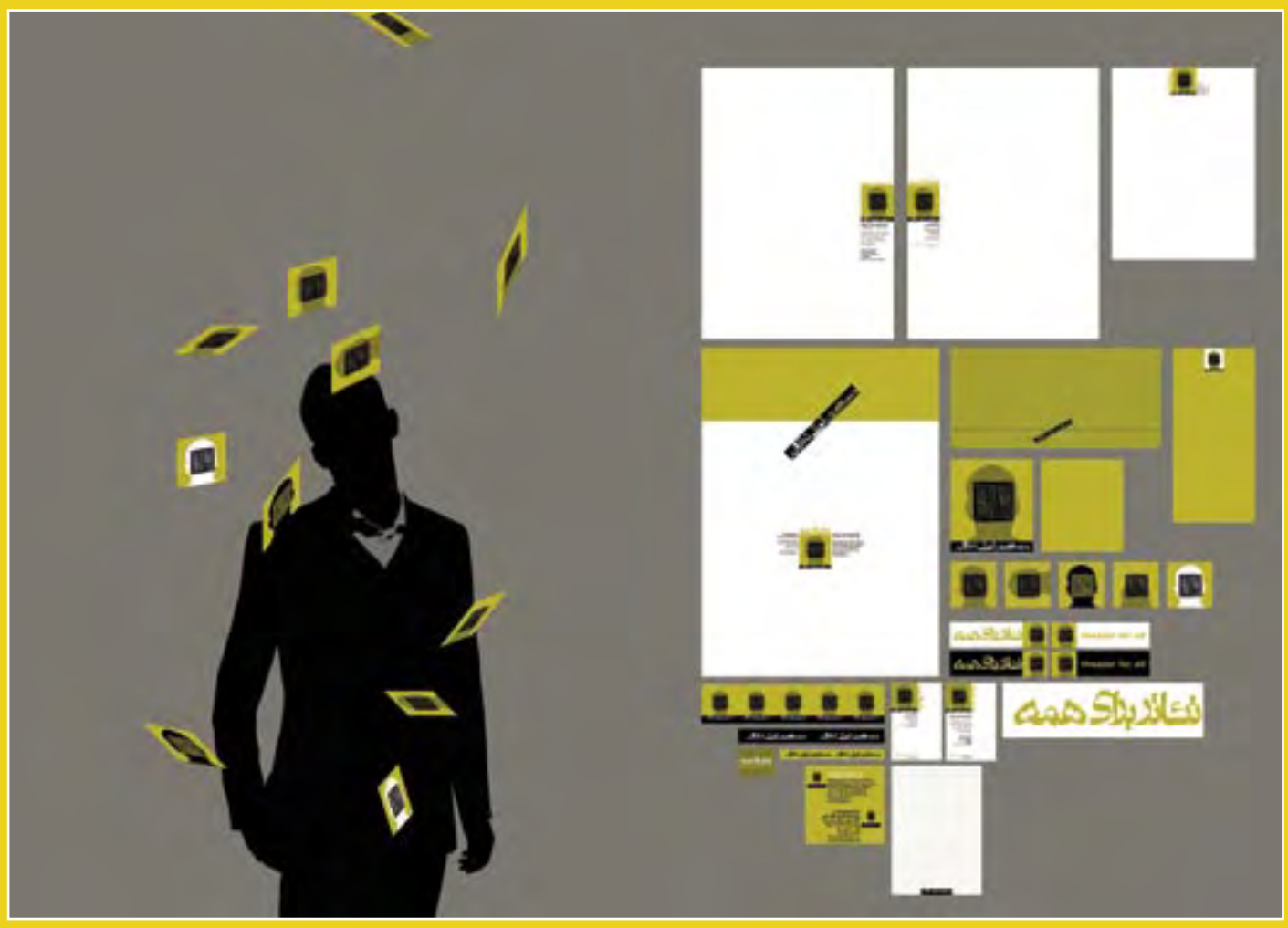
Reza Abedini, Iranian graphic designer and professor of graphic design and visual culture at Tehran University, emphasizes in his work the relationship between visual tradition and modern form. His passion for graphic design, particularly Persian type and typography, has led him into linking literature and aesthetics in search for a unique visual dialectic that reflects Persian poetic sensibilities. In his recent project for the International Fajr Theatre Festival in Tehran Abedini designed about 60 logos, posters, billboards, stationary and advertisements each of which is based on a central logotype, a combination of a face and a mask.

Reza Abedini has been granted the Principal Prince Claus Award 2006.

For more information see: www.princeclausfund.org.



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# Abedini

**Suburban life, Kashgar, Western China, 2000**

PHOTO BY HOCK KHOE / COURTESY OF RIJKSMUSEUM VOOR VOLKENKUNDE, LEIDEN

# Urban Dynamics

**Traffic in downtown Kashgar, Western China, 2005**

PHOTO BY HOCK KHOE / COURTESY OF RIJKSMUSEUM VOOR VOLKENKUNDE, LEIDEN