A Brief History of Islam in Europe

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CHAPTER FIVE

Struggling Europe
(1950 CE–)
I. Setting the Stage

We now come to the last period of Islam in Europe, which has a relatively short timespan compared to the previous periods. But then this period is the start of new developments that have not yet ended. It is also a period characterized by several developments that have no precedent in Europe’s history with Islam.

The first development is that after two devastating world wars Europe managed truly to unify itself, at least more so than in previous centuries. This unity was different from those of preceding centuries because it was based on economic cooperation and political-legal values like individual freedoms, rule of law and democracy.

The second development was the secularization of the European public domain. By this we mean the decreasing relevance of religion as personal piety or as a factor of societal importance. The authority of the churches and their clergy dwindled and Christian-Democratic political parties were religious only in name.

The third development was unique mainly to the western parts of Europe, and that is the settlement of large numbers of Muslims within European societies and, in consequence, Islam becoming a feature of the new Europe. The Muslim communities in Europe, and particularly the migrant communities in Western Europe, combined national, ethnic, religious and local identities which were disturbing to many in Europe since they challenged the strong sense of a single national identity. The challenge became a security threat when Muslim youth radicalized and some even committed terrorist attacks on European targets.

The fourth development that is significant to these times was globalization and transnationalism. Political and economic structures, but also cultural and religious identities, had become interwoven on a global scale. People identified and connected with causes and communities that were not only local but spread over the world. In the case of Muslims in Europe, one of the manifestations of this development was the notion of a single global community of believers (umma) that transcended local and national identities.

1. A New Europe

Why refer to Europe as ‘struggling’ if it managed to pull itself from the ashes of two world wars with such vigour and determination, and even established a European union? Notwithstanding the many achievements of this period, we may observe that
Europe is still going through a process of transformation. This transformation is multifaceted. On a historical – and perhaps psychological – level, Europe had to come to terms with the fact that it was not the world power it had been for centuries. After the 1950s and 1960s, when European colonies gained their independence, Europe lost most of its political power to the United States (and, until the 1980s, to the Soviet Union) and as of recent times seems to lose its economic power to Asian, South American and perhaps even African rising economies.

On the other hand, on an internal level, Europe was, and still is, in a process of political and economic unification. Whereas clerical or cultural unity of the past centuries was often more imagined than real, Europe since the 1950s has managed to create a true unity, first economically, then legally, and gradually also politically. This unification is a complex process with its crises and criticisms. However, while many may criticize the degree of integration of European states into the Union, or the role of the European Commission and European Court of Human Rights, few question the existence of these institutions. In that respect, many Europeans still share the notion of a European unity, regardless of the form it will ultimately take. Relevant to the topic of Islam, as we will see below, is the fact that this unity was also expressed in political-legal values, such as individual freedoms, democracy and the rule of law. Many of these values were enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights of 1953, which applies to all member states of the Council of Europe which, in addition to all states in Europe, also includes states like Russia, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Turkey.

Another important aspect of the transformation of Europe is religion. In the 1950s and 1960s, the authority of the clergy as well as that of religion itself reached an all-time low worldwide, a trend that was known as secularization. But the idea that religion had receded with the rise of modernity – the so-called secularization thesis – was challenged by the re-emergence of religion, both as personal piety and as a societal force, from the 1970s onwards. Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and new forms of religion have again become important to many. The one region where this resurgence of religion was relatively limited was Europe. Here, secularization remained dominant in the public domain: religion was considered a private affair and public manifestations thereof – whether in politics, public celebrations, state functions, social behaviour or public morality – were limited. Secularization as described here is a cultural process rather than a political or legal one: religious manifestations were not prohibited (on the contrary, they were ensured by the freedom of religion), but merely 'not done', either because they had lost their meaning or because they were frowned upon as relics from times when they had merely caused
conflict. Secularism, on the other hand, is a political-legal institution to separate state and clerical powers that had been established since the nineteenth century and remained unaltered in most European countries.

If we take these characteristics of the new Europe – unification as an economic power, unity in political-legal values, and secularization – it is surprising that during the first decade of the twenty-first century the presence of ‘Islam’ in Europe was experienced as a serious challenge to this very same unity. Some authors even warned that Europe might be on the brink of destruction.¹ This feeling of anxiety, more than anything else, warrants the characterization of a ‘struggling’ Europe – because if a relatively small group of Muslims can pose such a threat to the values and integrity of Europe, then surely something must be amiss with the stability and foundation of those values. On the other hand, we must bear in mind that the warnings against the ‘Islamic threat’ to Europe came predominantly from American authors. This is significant because, from the perspective of many of these American observers, Europe’s main problem is its lack of religiosity combined with too much liberalism and political generosity (as opposed to the United States which, according to these authors, is more religious, patriotic and security-minded). These characteristics of Europe, American authors argue, allow the new religion of Islam to make quick and successful incursions into European life.

I agree with the American authors’ observation that Europe is being challenged, but disagree with their diagnosis. Europe has reached a stage in its history where the political, legal and social balance of creed, coexistence and conflict have entered a new constellation. Also, the presence of Muslims and Islam is in many respects a new challenge for Europe. But, as I will argue in this chapter, it is not the existence of the new European constellation that is challenged, but the presumptions that uphold it. If there is a conflict between ‘Europe’ and ‘Islam’, it is not with the European political and legal values on which the constellation of the new Europe is based, but with the cultural values that are presumed to be its underpinnings.

2. Islam in the New Europe

From the previous chapters we know that the physical presence of Muslims in the geographical area of Europe is not new. Muslims ruled as empires in the Iberian Peninsula for nearly 800 years, in Greece for 500 years, in the Balkans for 300 years, and in Sicily for 100 years. As subjects under non-Muslim rule, Muslims stayed on
even longer: they lived in Spain for 900 years, in Sicily for 400 years, and still live in Lithuania and Poland after more than 600 years, and in most Balkan countries after more than 500 years.

However, when we come to speak of Islam in Europe from 1950 onwards, a distinction needs to be made between Western and Eastern Europe with regard to the presence of Muslims. Since the late sixteenth century very few Muslims have resided in the European region west of the Warsaw-Vienna-Trieste line (a region that, for lack of a better term, I will refer to as ‘Western Europe’). The arrival of large numbers of Muslim migrants in these lands from the 1970s was therefore a development that confronted the native Western Europeans with a situation that is a historical novelty. The presence of large numbers of Muslims and the visibility of Islam – mosques, women with headscarves, bearded men in jalabas, halal restaurants – was not only sudden, but also new for Western Europeans.\(^2\)

The novel situation turned into a confrontation in two ways. On the one hand, the discussion arose to what extent these migrant Muslims needed to be socially, economically or culturally part of Western European societies. The debate wavered between the need for those Muslims to adapt (‘integration’), on the one hand, and society’s obligation to accommodate differences (‘multiculturalism’), on the other hand. The other confrontation was the radicalization of Muslim youth, with some of them resorting to violence. Europe was shaken up in bewilderment and terror by the bombings by Muslim extremists in New York (2001), followed by attacks on European cities: Madrid (2004), Amsterdam (2004), London (2005), Glasgow (2007), Toulouse (2012), Brussels (2014) and the occasional news that similar attacks had been thwarted in several European countries. These attacks not only prompted fear of Islam in the European mind, but also justified the idea that Muslims could not and did not want to be part of Western societies, especially when it became apparent that many of the perpetrators were young men who had been educated in Western European societies and done relatively well there.

The situation in Eastern Europe, on the other hand, is quite different from that in Western Europe (and we must remind ourselves that this geographical distinction is made for the purpose of this discussion only). First and foremost, Muslims and their Islamic cultural, institutional and architectural heritage have existed here for centuries. In addition, the Eastern European countries with established Muslim communities have been under a communist regime for over four decades – with the exception of Austria\(^3\) and Greece. During that period, Islamic life was incorporated into the state system but was quite limited by virtue of the doctrinal secularism – sometimes amounting to state-sponsored atheism – of the commu-
nist regime. These regimes were dismantled in the 1990s, after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. In Yugoslavia, this process was accompanied by a devastating civil war. Although the conflict was between (Orthodox) ‘Serbs’, (Catholic) ‘Croats’ and (Bosnian) ‘Muslims’ – note the interesting different use of adjectives and nouns in the reference to religion and ethnicity – the role of religion in this conflict still remains unclear, as we will see below. In the new Balkan states that emerged from the fall of the communist regimes and from the Yugoslavian civil war, Islam gradually re-established itself as an institutionalized part of society and the state. In addition, however – and here we may observe one of the few parallels with Western Europe – orthodox and even radical forms of Islam emerged among the younger generation.

3. Identity, Loyalty and Security

In Western as well as Eastern Europe there is a tendency among Muslims to emphasize their religious identity, and since the 1990s they do so mainly in conservative ways. This development is in parallel with – but mostly independent of – an emerging Islamism in most of the Muslim world. Many a European considers the emerging ‘Islam’, both within and outside Europe, as a phenomenon that is alien to everything that Europe stands for politically, socially, culturally and historically. The rise of this phenomenon therefore becomes a challenge at best and a threat at worst when these worlds inside and outside Europe become connected.4

Scholars have called this connectedness ‘transnational Islam’, a notion that in this book’s terminology has both a physical and a virtual dimension. Physically, Muslims migrate and move across borders, whether as migrants or political refugees into Europe (including several radical Muslims who acquired asylum in Europe because they faced torture or the death penalty in their homelands) or as students outside Europe (many European Muslims study Islam in Turkey, Pakistan and the Middle East). In doing so they maintain economic, social and religious ties that cross national borders.5 The virtual dimension is that pious Muslims keep Islam as their main frame of reference and identity, irrespective of national or cultural boundaries.6 In doing so they identify with a global Muslim community (umma) rather than a homeland or national culture.7 Transnational Islam, in brief, can be defined in terms of an ideological sense of belonging to a – real or imaginary – world-wide community of Muslims (the umma),8 as well as through its ethnic and national diaspora networks, migrant organizations, educational and cultural links, the Internet and
Satellite television, etcetera. This transnational Islam is a development that is typical among the generation Muslims born since the late 1980s.\(^9\)

Transnational Islam does not mean that European Muslims represent a unified or single community – on the contrary, they have multiple and shifting identities, resulting in varying loyalties:\(^{10}\) Pakistanis in England may identify with England as well as with Pakistan, and for their religion may refer to the local imam in Birmingham, or to the Muslim customs of Lahore or Peshawar, or to any Muslim cleric on the Internet whom they deem authoritative. This English-Pakistani Muslim may feel loyal to England, but may cheer on the Pakistani cricket team, and he or she may feel affronted by English discourse on Islam but also by the Islamic fundamentalist tendencies in Pakistan.\(^{11}\) Indeed, the loyalty of many Muslims to the umma does not exclude a similar national loyalty, for they show considerable commitment to and pride in their European country of settlement.\(^{12}\) However, the consciousness of belonging to a global religious community definitely contributes to a sense of Muslim uniqueness,\(^{13}\) and according to some observers this may lead to isolation or even radicalization.

These turbulent developments among Muslim communities within Europe are bewildering to many Europeans who are used to a single cultural identity and an ensuing single national loyalty. To many the emerging Islamic identities in Western and Eastern Europe are seen as alien and even threatening to ‘Europe’. The loyalty of Muslims is being questioned – is it with their new home country, or with their country of origin, or with some imaginary Muslim community? – adding fuel to the already heated debates on integration. Citizens with more than one identity or nationality are suspected of having loyalties across the confines of national borders and therewith contribute to a fear of ‘the insider enemy’ or fifth column.\(^{14}\) The sensation of threat was enhanced by the terrorist attacks by European Muslims, and the many reports of global networks of such extremists who were out to fight ‘the West’ in a jihad that was to be conducted from outside Europe as well as within. The combination of these factors has contributed to what has been called the ‘securitization’ of Islam in Europe, meaning that Muslims and their religion were perceived as a security threat to ‘Europe’.\(^{15}\) The ‘in’ of ‘Islam in Europe’ thus acquired another meaning when Islam became a global and transnational phenomenon.
II. Physical Islam

1. Living with the Unbeliever

Counting Muslims

How many Muslims are living in Europe at present? This may seem an innocent statistical question, but has become for many – especially for those warning against ‘Islamization’ of Europe, or an impending ‘Eurabia’ – an issue of concern. Bernard Lewis in 2004 warned that Europe would have “Muslim majorities by the end of the twenty-first century,” and downplayed this ominous prediction several years later with his statement that “in the foreseeable future” Muslims would constitute “significant majorities in at least some European cities or even countries.”

Another persistent ‘fact’ that circulates on the Internet is that Muslims will comprise “at least 20 per cent of Europe’s population by 2050”.

Trying to answer the question about the number of Muslims in Europe is not easy because it confronts us with two problems: quantifying Muslims and qualifying what is a Muslim. Quantifying Muslims is problematic since most European countries do not keep records of their population on the basis of their religious affiliation. This means that all figures relating to religion are based on estimates and must therefore be taken broadly. Recalculations in Germany, for instance, conducted by the government in 2009 raised the previously used estimates of 3.1–3.4 million Muslims to 3.8–4.3 million, an increase of almost thirty per cent. On the other hand, recalculations in the Netherlands in 2007 lowered the number of Muslims from 950.000 to 850.000, a decrease of more than 10 per cent.

Another problem is the relative and absolute nature of these numbers and related percentages. For instance, the United Kingdom ranks third in all of Europe in absolute numbers of Muslims (after France and Germany), but takes sixteenth place (after Belgium and Sweden) in percentage. Also, the picture can change dramatically depending on the view one takes. For instance, the percentage of Muslims is close to 12 per cent in Bulgaria and 6–8.5 per cent in France, but less than 4 per cent in the entire European Union. Such differences apply in particular on a domestic scale. While the overall percentage of Muslims in The Netherlands in 2010–2011 was 6 per cent, it was 28 per cent in the city of Amsterdam and 37 per cent in Rotterdam.
Similar demographic differences between cities and countryside can be observed in most European countries.

Taking all these caveats into consideration and using the available statistics, we may use the following estimates. The number of Muslims in ‘Europe’ is estimated to be 15–17 million (approximately 3 per cent) in Western Europe, 17–19 million (approximately 3.5–4 per cent) in the European Union and 24–26 million (approximately 4.5–5 per cent) in the entire European continent that borders on Russia, Belarus and the Ukraine.

However, these quantitative data bring us to the problem of qualification: on what basis do European statistics categorize people as Muslim – or, for that matter, a Catholic, Jew, or non-believer? Most official European estimates are based on the assumption that people from Muslim-majority countries are Muslim. How this assumption may affect the statistical calculations was illustrated by the aforementioned 2007 recalculation of Muslims in the Netherlands, because it became clear that many Iraqis and Syrians were not Muslim but Christian, and that many Iranians and Alevite Turks did not consider themselves ‘Muslim’.

Once we start to qualify what ‘Muslim’ means, the figures may alter drastically, especially when people are being given the option to identify as Muslim – or not. In Germany, for instance, recent studies have indicated that only 75 per cent of Turks define themselves as “quite religious”, 40 per cent of Iranians consider themselves without religion, and more than 10 per cent declared themselves as Christians. In France, 59 per cent of the North Africans and Turks identified themselves as “Muslim” and 20 per cent as “without religion”. In Sweden, only one third of Swedish Muslims indicate they are “practising”. Similarly, Albania is said to be the only European country with a Muslim majority population (70 per cent Muslim), but scholars have indicated that its population does not consist of a majority of Muslim believers. The only exception, perhaps, is the Turkish Muslim community of Thrace in eastern Greece that identifies strongly with Islam, partly because it remained isolated from the secularization process in neighbouring Turkey, and partly because it felt the need to reassert itself vis-à-vis the dominant Orthodox culture. Suffice it to conclude that the term ‘Muslim’ is highly complex.

Muslim Identity

What, then, makes a person in Europe a ‘Muslim’? With the risk of oversimplifying, we may resort to the following categories. First we can make a division between cultural (or sociological) Muslims and religious (or devout) Muslims.
characteristic of the cultural Muslims is that religious dogma has no influence on their lives. They may be agnostic, indifferent or respectful, and many may observe certain rituals or practices such as circumcision, religious feasts or marriage. But they do identify as Muslims, sometimes in a manner that is reminiscent of Jews who may be non-religious or even atheist, but strongly identify as ‘Jew’.

The other category of Muslims are those for whom religion plays an important part in their lives, whether as a strict scriptural doctrine or as spiritual guidance. Among these ‘religious Muslims’ we may make a further division based on generation: there is a veritable generation gap between the younger generation for whom religiousness is mostly associated with higher knowledge of Islamic doctrine, and their parents for whom religion is mainly rituals for which they refer to the interpretations of their local cleric. This new generation of what I suggest calling ‘puritan Muslims’ (formerly also called ‘fundamentalist’, nowadays often referred to as ‘salafi’ in Western Europe and ‘Wahhabi’ in Eastern Europe) has an interest in the study of religious texts and the critical questioning thereof, and try to live their lives in accordance with the prescripts of these scriptures. As a result, these Muslims, who are often highly educated, are turning away from traditional sources of leadership and develop an interpretation of Islam that, to their minds, reflects a ‘pure’ or ‘universal’ Islam. This does not necessarily lead to interpretations that are very different from those of classical doctrine: often it is an exercise of the re-appropriation of religion by the individual believer – he or she had to reconfirm the doctrine for him- or herself rather than merely taking it for granted.

One consequence of this focus on religious doctrine is that Islam becomes more detached from ethnic or national identity, and is increasingly perceived as a personal choice. In addition, these European Muslim puritans emphasize their religious-universal commonalities rather than religious-ethnic differences, so that differences among sects and juridical rites of Islam tend to diminish. But overall, Islam to the puritan Muslim has become a way of life that encompasses all human activities, including those which are otherwise quite secular, such as sports and rap music, which have become new forms of Islamic lifestyle.

Why, then, this religious resurgence among younger Muslims in Europe? To answer this question we must distinguish between developments in Western and Eastern Europe. In Eastern Europe, Islam was already part of the identity of certain communities, as we saw in the previous chapter, and this identity resurfaced after the ending in the late 1980s of communist rule and the ensuing civil wars. In Western Europe, on the other hand, the emergence of an Islamic identity happened
in a context of migration. Scholars have pointed to the importance of both ethnicity and religion as identity markers for migrants in general, and Muslim migrants in Europe in particular. However, since the 1990s European Muslims have undergone a gradual shift in identity marker from ethnicity to religion. For instance, the term ‘Muslim’ became common use only from the 1990s onwards in both Western and Eastern Europe. Before then, ethnic and national labels were used: Pakistani and Moroccans, Berber and Kurds, Bosniaks and Pomaks. These names revealed the national, ethnic and linguistic patchwork of ‘Muslims’ in Europe. Most Moroccans, for instance, are Muslim but some are also Jewish, and most Arab-speaking Moroccans live in France while most Berber-speaking Moroccans live in Belgium and the Netherlands. The Bangladeshis and Pakistanis who live predominantly in the United Kingdom are mostly Muslim, but also Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh and Christian. And among the Bosnians we find Serbs and Croats as well as Christians and Muslims (the latter called ‘Bosniaks’). The linguistic and ethnic differences also explain the differentiation between mosques on ethnic or national grounds – Albanian, Pakistani, Moroccan – each with its own religious doctrine, customs and organization. The new generation is gradually breaking with this trend and identifying mosques on religious grounds: liberal, conservative, salafi etcetera. Their choice of marriage partner is also increasingly determined by religion rather than ethnicity or nationality – a trend that is not uncommon in migrant communities when their faith has no tradition in the society of settlement.

The emphasis on religion as an identity marker for the next generation of Muslims of foreign origin in Western Europe – who are often born and raised there – is not to mean that they are more religious per se. As indicated above, a religious identity can be cultural as well as pious. Why, then, would people identify with a religion if they were not religious? Here the notion of Othering offers an explanation. Since the late 1990s, Western public discourse has vilified Islam for reasons that sometimes might have been very justifiable, but the effect was that young people felt pushed into a corner because they were given no alternative of identification other than assimilation into the society of residence, while the other identity – the culture of the homeland of the parents – had lost its meaning to the generation born and raised in the West. As a reaction, they identified even more with that same Islam that was the source of criticism, whether out of defiance or for lack of an alternative. The main problem that Western society had with the Muslim Other, namely their social-religious identity, became precisely the rallying point for these Muslims.
Conversion

As in previous centuries, not all Muslims in Europe were migrants; some of them were local converts. The number of native Western Europeans who have converted to Islam in the period since 1950 is not known; in 2004 it was estimated to be no more than one per cent of the Western European Muslim population, but it appears to be steadily rising, with recent estimates of almost 7 per cent in the United Kingdom and 2 to 6 per cent in France.

While we have seen that in previous periods conversion to Islam took place mainly to get access to the cultural and political polity of the Muslim ruler, such considerations are not in play here. The literature on Western European converts to Islam has come up with a number of other motives. One motive which has always existed is conversion for the sake of marriage, either to enable a non-Muslim man and Muslim woman to marry (Islam does not allow such marriage) or, the opposite, when a non-Muslim woman who married a Muslim man (which is allowed under Islamic law) felt the need to join her husband in his faith. This relational conversion has been overtaken, however, by a larger number of single adolescents who convert to Islam for other motives; some find in Islam the spirituality they seek, others a reasoned structuring of life and society, and yet others because it grants them the intimate membership of a close community. An interesting aspect of these conversions is that there seems to be a correlation between the rising criticism of Islam and the increase in conversions to Islam.

The general response of the environment to such conversions is generally one of puzzlement. Given the negative image that the larger European public opinion has of Islam, conversion to that religion is tantamount to an irrational act. For that reason the voluntarism of the conversion is often questioned, in particular with regard to female converts – given the alleged bad reputation of Islam with regard to the position of women, how can a European woman in her right mind embrace such a religion? An additional factor that contributes to the suspicion of the motives for conversion is the fact that converts – not only those converting to Islam, but converts in general – tend to be zealous in their new religion, and quite a few of the European Muslim extremists involved in terrorist acts were Muslim converts, just as many of these converts have travelled to countries like Chechnya and Syria to participate in the local civil wars as a matter of jihad. No wonder that conversion to Islam is eyed suspiciously by intelligence agencies as a potential security threat.

In this respect we must make an addendum to the notion of conversion: much wider spread than ‘ordinary’ conversion to Islam by non-Muslims is the many young
Muslims who have ‘found’ their religious roots and become religious, often in a zealous or conservative manner. These conversions are similar to those of the so-called ‘born-again’ Christians in the United States, and are therefore often labelled with the same term: ‘born-again Muslims.’ The difference with their Christian counterparts is the motivation for the return to religion: in case of the born-again Muslim, he has been described as “a Muslim who having adopted or absorbed many modern or foreign influences makes a show of discarding them in his search for personal identity and cultural authenticity.” But in both cases of conversion the voluntarism of the conversion is questioned and the cause of conversion is sought in factors outside the will of the person: for women this is usually said to be the oppressive role of men (fathers, husbands, brothers), while for men it is said to be the indoctrinating power of Islam itself or that of fanatical clergy. While these situations may very well be the case, the resulting image is that Muslims, and in particular Muslim women, are powerless, without will or agency.

So far we have discussed people turning to Islam. But the opposite also happens – strictly speaking this is also conversion, but from the perspective of Islam it is considered the prohibited act of apostasy. Apostasy is considered forbidden by most religions, but legally the act of apostasy is no longer a problem in Europe as freedom of religion includes the freedom to abandon one’s religion, while culturally the act of apostasy is not frowned upon in Europe and in some social circles even welcomed. This poses a predicament for European Muslims: the more religious they have become, the more condemnable apostasy from Islam is to them, but at the same time they live in an environment where the opposite sentiment dominates. It has resulted in two conflicting situations. On the one hand, Muslims who want to change religion or abandon Islam have come under enormous pressure and even threats from their Muslim peers. On the other hand, there is the pressure from outside the Muslim community to modify or preferably give up one’s Islam as the only way to integrate into European society.

Visibility of Islam

Speaking of ‘Islam’ in Europe implies, among others, that there is something recognizable as such. The manifestation of Islam can be observed either by architectural presence or by Muslims’ behaviour or a visibility that is – rightly or wrongly – identifiable as Islamic. In the political-legal constellation of modern Europe, such visibility or behaviour is generally not problematic as it pertains to personal liberty in general and the freedom of religion in particular. Insofar as there is unease in European
countries it is about Islam’s visible presence through mosques, religious dress and behaviour.

In the case of mosques, Western Europe has witnessed an enormous increase in prayer rooms and Islamic centres where the faithful gather for prayer, but gradually also the construction of so-called purpose-built mosques usually with the visible architectural signs of a dome and one or more minarets. The latter has been considered by some scholars as a sign of final settlement and integration into European societies (why else would Muslims invest in such expensive and permanent projects?), but the European public generally perceives the purpose-built mosques in Western Europe as ‘out of place’ or otherwise alien and therefore undesirable. The use of traditional (‘Oriental’) architecture is interpreted by critics as questioning the norms and values of the host country or, as is the case with the minaret in particular, as a symbol of Muslim domination. The Swiss 2009 referendum outcome prohibiting the building of minarets (not mosques) is quite telling in this respect, because Switzerland was at that time a country with only four minaret-bearing mosques.

Critics of the architectural representation of mosques are not limited to non-Muslim Europeans. Some Muslim European architects reject what they call ‘homesick mosques’ and have proposed futuristic glass mosques to emphasize their transparency. Similarly, many Muslims in south-eastern European countries consider their Ottoman-style mosques symbols of traditional and peaceful Islam, and are anxious about the construction of many new ‘Arab’ style mosques funded by the Gulf States that they perceive as the representation of a growing influence of so-called ‘Wahhabism’. In Western Europe, on the other hand, it is these ‘Wahhabi’ Muslims (better known as salafi Muslims) who joined the chorus of mosque critics, arguing that the typical mosque with dome and minaret is not Islamic at all, but representative of cultural additions to the originally simple structure of a walled and partly roofed courtyard. This has given rise to a curious paradox: the simple brick and concrete mosque structures used by these puritan Muslims may look quite ‘integrated’ into the Western European architectural landscape, but some of them are under the scrutiny of national intelligence services for potential radicalization tendencies among the young salafi congregations, while the ostentatious ‘Oriental’ mosques get all the public attention and criticism because of their Otherness, but their congregations are mostly traditional and otherwise pose no security risk in the eyes of the intelligence services.

Religious dress is yet another manifestation of religious visibility. The opposition to Islamic dress, and in particular the headscarf, has been particularly pas-
sionate in Western Europe. Muslim women may consider it a symbol of identity and piety, but to many native Europeans this is a symbol of growing conservative Islam in general, and women’s oppression in particular. This view was shared by the European Court of Human Rights which in two controversial rulings argued that a headscarf had a negative impact on a secular environment, was a sign of proselytization, and was in general a symbol of intolerance and gender inequality. While these debates took place in Western Europe, the headscarf and conservative Islamic dress have also become fashionable in south-eastern European countries. While the headscarf, or the turban and kaftan may be a normal sight in Bulgaria, Macedonia, Eastern Greece or Bosnia, many Muslims as well as non-Muslims in these countries considered the new conservative forms of religious dress contrary to the traditional form of Islam. It is interesting to note, therefore, that the only two Muslim-majority countries in Europe, Kosovo and Albania, have banned the headscarf from state institutions, including universities – a ban that is shared only by France.

The visibility of Islam in Europe further shows in behaviour that Muslims may consider typically Islamic. Such behaviour is predominantly related to religious rituals, and sometimes these clash with the practicalities and culture of the non-Muslim environment, in particular in Western Europe. Prayer and fasting, in particular, have occasionally resulted in problematic situations, either at work or in the public domain. In particular Muslims who have taken or demanded space for their ritual 5-minute prayer have at times come into conflict with employers or colleagues who argue that such behaviour pertains to the private domain and should therefore not be allowed or accommodated at work. Dietary rules of halal food and the prohibition of alcohol can also be problematic – the latter especially has become an impediment for devout Muslims to socialize with colleagues or neighbours since, according to European custom, social events usually involve alcoholic beverages, and often take place at cafes or bars.

In addition to these known manifestations of Islam, new forms of behaviour have arisen in Europe that Muslims have attributed to Islam and that have caused conflicts within both Western and Eastern European societies. An example is the physical separation of men and women, which is practised in particular by young European Muslim puritans. The refusal by these Muslims to even have physical contact with the opposite sex not only causes dismay in European societies, but is also problematic in jobs where social interaction is considered vital, or in the case of medical treatment. An exponent of this segregation is the wearing of the full-face veil (also called burka or niqab). Reactions against such behaviour are vehement
throughout Europe: in Western Europe because it is considered contrary to European values (of which we will come to speak below), and in Eastern Europe because it is considered contrary to Islam.

2. Secular and Religious Rule

The ‘Muslims’ – as we will continue to call them – who came as migrants and guest workers in the 1950s and 1960s, and later came on their own accord to find work in Western Europe, were until the 1980s treated as labour migrants who were bound to return. Later, many more economic and political refugees and migrants flocked towards Europe, targeting in particular the Mediterranean countries as the place of entry. Only when many of these labourers and refugees brought their families over – which they were entitled to as a right of family unification, as stipulated by the European Convention on Human Rights – did it dawn on the Western European societies and governments that a situation of permanence was taking place.

European countries had quite different attitudes in their shift from a policy of labour migration to one of incorporating large communities with foreign cultures into their societies. France for a long time maintained the strict differentiation between citizens (that is, those with French nationality) and non-citizens; it took Germany until 2000 to grant long-term citizens German nationality; the Netherlands and the United Kingdom championed ‘multiculturalism’ which allowed for far-reaching cultural and linguistic differences; and Greece maintained that Muslim-minority rights were only for Greek Muslims who live in the province of Thrace and not for the many Muslim migrants living in other parts of Greece. But by the late 1990s most European countries felt a need to gear these approaches towards a policy aimed at ‘integrating’ the many communities of foreign origin into their new societies: in the case of France, for instance, allowances needed to be made for cultural differences, while in the Netherlands and United Kingdom the policy of multiculturalism had to be curbed in order to let people partake in the larger social, economical and cultural structure of society.

The European – and particularly Western Europe – policies of ‘integration’ focused on two domains: social-economical and cultural. To stimulate people of foreign origin to take part in society in terms of education and jobs, for instance, primary importance was attached to the need for proficiency in the national language of that society: first as an option, later as a condition. But with the second and third
generations who were born and raised in Western European societies and who had
gone through the educational systems of those societies, the discussion on integra-
tion shifted to the domain of culture: public and political opinion demanded from
these young people that they adopt the norms, values and customs of the European
societies where they lived. This demand focused most prominently on Muslims.
Some advocates of this cultural integration argued that Muslims needed to adopt
European political and constitutional values (assuming that the Muslims did not do
so), while others went further by putting more emphasis on cultural and customary
values that Muslims needed to embrace (which many Muslims resisted since that
conflicted with their identity and was tantamount to assimilation). 68

The issues of integration, acculturation and assimilation are typical for any mi-
grant community at any time in history. Our interest here is the question what issues
of European ‘rule’ were typical for Muslims and, therefore, Islam. This means that we
need to take a closer look at policies and political-legal structures of European states
that related to religion in general and Islam in particular. The most significant of
these are secularism, freedom of religion and the impact of Islam-criticism.

European Secularism and Religious Freedom

We have distinguished before between ‘secularization’ as a process of decreasing
religiosity among people and ‘secularism’ as a system that governs the relation
between state and religion or religious institutions. 69 Almost all European countries
adhere to more or less strict interpretations of secularism, meaning that the state
is (officially, at least) neutral towards religion and will not favour one religion over
another, nor deny the existence of certain religions. Not all countries will adhere
to this principle and profess their preference for a national religion, as is the case
in Greece, for instance. Within this framework of secularism, however, there are
quite a few differences among the Europe countries, by the use of which we may
distinguish between what I propose to call ‘active’ and ‘passive’ secularism. Active
secularism is a state’s policy to remove religion from the public domain as much
as possible so that the domain is religiously neutral. An example is France where
religious parties are not allowed in parliament and religious manifestations are
prohibited in all public institutions, including public schools. Passive secularism, on
the other hand, merely demands the state’s neutrality in its dealings with religion,
but leaves everyone free to manifest their religious preferences in the public and
political domain. This is the case in most other European countries, albeit in many
different forms.
So while in most European countries there is no separation between religion and politics (think of the many Christian Democrat parties), there is often a distinction between the state and the religious communities (or: ‘church’). The separation of ‘church and state’ is in Europe commonly explained as non-interference by the state in matters of doctrine and organization of any religion. But here, also, there are different national traditions that stem from historical developments. Generally speaking, religious communities in Eastern European countries adhere to the legacy of the Ottoman millet system because religious communities maintain a form of autonomy as regards the state. In the case of the Muslims, their so-called ‘Muslim Communities’ are formally recognized in most Eastern European countries, and their spiritual leaders, or muftis, hold office in countries from Lithuania, Poland and Austria to Bulgaria and Greece. The state recognition of these Muslim communities implies that they are entitled to regulate matters like mosque maintenance, religious education, the appointment and payment of clerics. In most cases the representative bodies of these communities receive funds from the state to fulfil these duties to the community.70

In Western European countries, on the other hand, such a relationship is non-existent, with a few exceptions (in Belgium, for instance, clerics of recognized religious communities with proper representation receive their salaries from the state). Most states, however, maintain formal communication with most of the religious communities, just like the south-eastern European states do. This was only the case with established religious communities, however, like Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and not with the new religions like Islam or Hinduism that had been brought in by immigrants (not to speak of the many other new and exotic religions that flourish among Europeans). When Western European states wanted to establish a similar form of communication with their Muslim communities in order to discuss issues like integration, radicalization and terrorism, this turned out to be more difficult than anticipated. The national, ethnic, linguistic, generational and even religious differences among the Muslims were such that they did not manage – or were unwilling – to unite in a single organization that represented all Muslims of a country. In desperation, European governments like France, Germany and the Netherlands broke with the tradition of secularism, that is non-interference in religious affairs, and actively prompted their Muslim communities to organize themselves. This resulted in the emergence of national Muslim bodies in these countries. How representative they are of the entire Muslim national community in each country remains to be seen, because they mostly appear to represent the first generation.71
The constituent principle of secularism is religious freedom, which had become one of the most distinctive features of Europe in the period after the 1950s. The European Court of Human Rights has made it clear that this freedom means not only that the state should not interfere in matters of religion, but that it should also actively guarantee that the faithful can freely practise their religion.\(^{72}\) This has prompted some European states to change laws on burial and slaughter in order to accommodate the religious needs of non-Christians, such as Jews, Muslims and Hindus. In other instances, European states make sure that the faithful who are hindered in the free practice of their religion due to their stay in government facilities such as prisons, army barracks or public hospitals are provided with access to clergy and prayer rooms and are given religious diets.\(^{73}\)

Freedom of religion also means that religious communities are free to organize themselves and to regulate their own affairs in accordance with their own wishes, including their own religious laws. This will always, however, be under the scrutiny of the national law of the land. Here we see the fine line between, on the one hand, the principle of liberty, including the freedom of religion and, on the other hand, certain rules that need to be followed by all citizens. With regard to Muslims a point of friction in this respect is family law. Until the nineteenth century, religious communities were free to regulate their own family affairs. By the early nineteenth century, and particularly under Napoleon’s rule, family law had become a state responsibility, resulting in the promulgation of national civil laws that applied to all citizens regardless of their religious beliefs. Couples were free to celebrate their religious unions according to their own traditions, but before the law only civil marriage counted. This situation created a parallel legal structure of civil and religious institutions that each adjudicate on the basis of their respective laws (but with the civil law being dominant). In most European countries the Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox and Jewish communities still maintain their own councils (also called ‘religious courts’). In Eastern Europe, such councils also exist in the Muslim Communities.\(^{74}\) At the time of writing, such Muslim advisory or judicial bodies (‘Sharia councils’) did not exist in a formal manner in Western European countries, except the United Kingdom.\(^{75}\) There are two reasons for this omission: one is that Muslims cannot agree on a single set of Islamic rules, and the second is that the establishment of such Islamic bodies proved to be highly controversial.\(^{76}\) We will discuss this issue of ‘Sharia courts’ in Europe in more detail below.

In addition to the freedom to regulate the religious affairs of their communities, Muslims also have the right to pursue religion in politics, just like Christians have been doing in the past century. The only European country where this is not allowed
is France. However, initiatives to establish Muslim or Islamic parties on a national or local (municipal) level are either non-existent or have met with little success.\textsuperscript{77} The representation of Muslims in political positions, like municipal councils, parliaments or government, is therefore often not on a religious ticket as ‘Muslim’, but on a political ticket such as socialist, liberal and even Christian Democrat. Romania is the only European country where the constitution reserves one seat for every national minority, including Muslims, provided they are represented by a single organization.\textsuperscript{78}

Romania is an exception, however, and its constitutional provision is based on minority rights rather than religious rights. It is typical of modern Europe that minority rights pertain to ethnic, national or linguistic minorities, but are not extended to religious minorities.\textsuperscript{79} The reason for this omission is that the protection of this category of people is supposed to be achieved by the constructs of secularism and freedom of religion: states are not to interfere with the beliefs and internal regulations of religious communities. The question then arises whether Muslims, given their special position in Europe, should nevertheless demand specific minority rights. Among Muslims it is a matter of debate whether they are to perceive and organize themselves as a religious minority (as is argued by the prominent Muslim cleric shaykh Qaradawi\textsuperscript{80}) or as European citizens with a distinctive Islamic identity (as is argued by the equally prominent Muslim intellectual Tariq Ramadan\textsuperscript{81}). This debate seems mostly theoretical, however, as the Muslim communities in Europe – in particular Western Europe – are quite differentiated and dispersed. Moreover, it is not entirely clear from what kind of minority rights Muslims would benefit more than they already do under the freedom of religion.\textsuperscript{82}

Tolerance: A Clash of Fundamental Rights

The feeling among Muslims in Europe, and in particular Western Europe, is that their Islamic identity is under a constant barrage of criticism and ridicule with impunity.\textsuperscript{83} The combination of hostility towards Islam and fear or dislike of Muslims has become known as ‘Islamophobia’, which we will discuss in more detail below. This trend has also been a cause of concern for European governments. For one, this situation might cause young Muslims to radicalize since it emphasizes their alienation from the European societies in which they live. But governments have also been apprehensive that it might disrupt societal harmony and violate the Muslims’ freedom of religion. The question therefore arose whether tolerance should be enforced and, if so, how?\textsuperscript{84} This question was mostly phrased in terms of one of the
fundamental rights embraced by the European states: equality and non-discrimination. Governments could – and they often did – take action in this field, especially in the labour market, although it was not always successful.

But most public attention was geared to the other aspect of toleration: respect and recognition. Regulating such basic forms of human behaviour and interaction proved extremely difficult, however, due to another fundamental right: freedom of opinion. Little could be done against the defamation and criticism of Islam since these expressions pertained to the freedom of opinion and speech. Of course, this freedom was not absolute, and insult, slander and hate speech are considered criminal offences in most European jurisdictions. The issue here, however, is a principal one: European laws protect people, not religions. From this point of view religions, ideas, ideologies and all other abstractions remain subject to the freedom of opinion, including criticism. But how far can one go in expressing one’s opinion with regard to a religion in the knowledge that this will offend and hurt the faithful? The European answer is: very far. The reason therefore is that the freedom of opinion and expression is considered a cornerstone of European democracies: only by continuous critical debate can a democracy be sustained. This principle is enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights which says that the freedom of opinion may be limited only when that is “necessary in a democratic society”. The European Court of Human Rights has interpreted this provision to mean that, in the interest of a functioning democracy, freedom of expression must be allowed to the extent that it may even “shock, disturb or offend”. In other words, the freedom of opinion and expression is so important that it may override good manners or decency.

This explains the reluctance of European states to intervene in public and political discourses about Islam that were sometimes indeed shocking and offensive. Criticizing or ridiculing religions, ideas or ideologies is not prohibited by law, even if it is offensive to the adherents to those religions, ideas or ideologies. Only people who are targeted are protected by the law. This distinction between protection of people and their convictions shows in the difference between anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. While in the case of anti-Semitism the criticism and abuse is directed against Jews rather than Judaism, in Islamophobia it is generally directed against Islam rather than Muslims. Legally, this makes quite a difference, because persecution of those guilty of anti-Semitism is easier than persecuting those who direct their criticism, satire, abuse or hate speech against Islam. *

* The distinction between beliefs and believers is not always easy to make. In a case in the Netherlands where a banner was hung out of a building with the text “Stop the cancer called Islam. We won’t
In addition to the two fundamental rights – non-discrimination and freedom of opinion – we need to add a third fundamental right to the equation: freedom of religion. While Muslims in Europe may have to endure disproportional criticism of their religion, they also experience more freedom of religion than they would have in most Muslim countries (this is perhaps more true in Western Europe than in Eastern Europe, where the boards of the Muslim Communities keep a check on Islamic doctrine). The freedom of religion in Europe allows Muslims to develop their own interpretations of Islam, whether liberal or conservative. Many Muslim ‘puritans’ in Western Europe, in consequence, are critical of their countries of origin that, in their opinion, are not ‘Islamic’ in a correct manner. Some of those countries would not tolerate such views and enforce a state doctrine of Islam. Muslims in Europe, on the other hand, enjoy the freedom of religion to live and manifest their religion in ways they see fit. But while they make use of that freedom, they must also suffer the consequences of another freedom that allows for criticism of that very same religion.

3. Wars and Terrorism

In the period under discussion here, Europe was confronted with two major violent conflicts in which Islam allegedly played a role: the Yugoslavian civil wars and the acts of terrorism by Muslim extremists. In the following we will briefly discuss these two conflicts with an emphasis on the question what role Muslims or Islam played in them.

The Yugoslavian Wars

Yugoslavia, the kingdom of several Balkan nations since 1918 CE, became a socialist federal state of six republics under Marshall Tito after World War II. After Tito’s death in 1980 CE, the federal state of Yugoslavia began to unravel, and old grudges and aspirations that had been suppressed in the previous decades emerged: Serbs in Kosovo complained at the way they were treated by the Kosovan Albanians; Croatia submit to Allah”, the Supreme Court ruled that the offensive remarks were directed towards Islam, not Muslims, so that there was no criminal offence (Dutch Supreme Court: HR 10 maart 2009, LJN BFo655). But in a similar case in the United Kingdom, however, concerning a banner with the text “Islam out of Britain – Protect the British People”, the English court ruled that the offence was clearly directed against Muslims (ECHR, Norwood vs UK, 16 Nov 2004).
and Slovenia resented the fact that their income through tourism was to be spent on the poor regions elsewhere in the federacy; Bosnian Muslims discussed autonomy on the basis of Islamic principles. In 1989 the new Yugoslavian president, Milosevic, first tried to revoke the autonomy of the federal nations but, realizing that he could not accomplish that, switched to the notion of Greater Serbia. A break-up of Yugoslavia would be allowed, he argued, as long as all territories where Serbs lived – including those outside the borders of the republic of Serbia – remained within a Greater Serbia. When Slovenia and Croatia declared independence in 1991, Serbia claimed the Serb territories in those lands and triggered a war that lasted from 1991 until 1995 CE.

The main theatre of war was the territories in and around Bosnia-Herzegovina where the three main populations, Orthodox Serbs, Catholic Croats and Muslim Bosniaks (‘Bosniaks’), had coexisted for centuries. The factions fought each other but also formed alliances against each other. Muslims and Serbs teamed up against Croats in Herzegovina, rival Muslim forces fought each other in north-west Bosnia, Croats and Serbs fought against Muslims in central Bosnia. But the overall aim of their respective armies and militias was to carve out a territory for each people (‘nation’) to the exclusion of others who were forcibly removed. The Bosnian Muslims were least successful in these ethnic-religious projects, and as a result constituted the largest group of refugees from former Yugoslavia into Europe. Finally, in 1995, the Dayton peace accord settled the conflict by creating a complex government structure in a carved up Bosnia-Herzegovina. In 1999, another war broke out between Serbia and the autonomous state of Kosovo over the conflicts between the Orthodox Serb and Muslim Albanian inhabitants of Kosovo. This conflict was settled with military force by NATO.

The horrors of the resulting ethnic-religious cleansing were a brutal reminder of those that had taken place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The need for a religious and ethnically pure state was apparently still there, and four decades of strictly secular communist rule had not changed these aspirations. This was not only the case in Yugoslavia. In Bulgaria, for instance, a policy of Bulgarianism was adopted in the 1980s claiming that Bulgaria had always been a Christian state, resulting in suppression of religious freedom and forced assimilation of the Muslim communities to Slavic norms, including mandatory name change and a ban on certain clothes and on any language other than Bulgarian. This policy drove 370,000 Turkish Bulgarians to move to Turkey in 1985.

The origins and developments of the Yugoslavian wars have been sketched here in an admittedly simplistic manner since they merely serve as a general background to describe the role and position of Muslims in this part of Europe, but also to raise
the question that we for the purpose of this book are interested in: what was the role of religion, and in particular Islam, in these conflicts? Many scholars and observers have tried to analyse the causes of these wars and different opinions exist on the importance of the role of religion therein. To Samuel Huntington, this conflict was an example to prove his point that religion plays a major role in conflicts between civilizations. Some have compared the Yugoslavian war with the conflicts in Lebanon and Northern Ireland, in which “it is obvious that religion has not been a purely passive onlooker of the war, but has been actively involved and engaged in it.” But others argued that the main conflict was of an ethnic or nationalist nature and that religion was only an indirect aspect of that conflict or that religion had been abused for political purposes.

Given the fact that religion was of little importance in the daily lives of most Yugoslavians prior to 1990 CE, a depiction of the conflict as a collision of religious communities seems incorrect. However, the conflation of ethnicity and religion into a national identity proved a volatile cocktail. And even if the secular elites had little affiliation with the religious part of their identity, the religious rhetoric that was being used greatly influenced the rank and file in the conflict. Religion provided the different nationalisms with a religiously mystical aura: the Croatian and Serbian warriors carried Catholic and Orthodox crosses, respectively, and the Bosnian Muslims would use the battle cry “Allahu akbar”. And all sides felt the need to accompany their acts of ethnic cleansing with the destruction of religious artefacts and buildings of their adversaries, as they were considered the main symbols of the opponent’s identity.

In the case of the Muslims, however, the conflation of religion and ethnicity was not as conspicuous as it was with others. The Serbs could clearly identify with Orthodoxy, and the Croats with Catholicism, but the ‘Muslims’ – as they became known – identified with various ethnic and national identities: Bosnian, Albanian, Bulgarian, Turkish. ‘Muslim nationalism’ therefore took on different forms: Islam played a larger role to the Bosnian Muslims, while ethnicity was more important to the (predominantly Muslim) Albanians. Among the Bosnian Muslims there had since the late 1970s already been an Islamic revival or Islamic renaissance, and this trend intensified during the war. The leader of the Bosnian Muslims during the wars, Izetbegovic, was one of the main proponents of that trend, and he had written extensively on the relationship between Islam and the state (writings which were interpreted by some as a call for an independent and Islamic Bosnia).

Religion, therefore, including Islam, was a powerful factor in the Yugoslavian wars. However, it cannot be seen in isolation from other factors, such as ethnicity,
nationalism, economics or politics. From this point of view one could indeed argue that the wars in Yugoslavia were neither civil, ethnic nor religious wars – they were all of them combined. Nevertheless, religion remained strongly connected with nationalism, and the sentiment of a religious-ethnic ‘pure’ state has always been strong since the nineteenth century, and possibly will remain so in the future, although it may be pursued by different means. An example of such different means is the ‘Millennium Cross’ in Macedonia, a 66-metre high cross built between 2002 and 2008 CE on a mountain top overlooking the capital Skopje. The cross – the largest in the world – was funded by the Macedonian Orthodox Church and the government to celebrate two thousand years of Christianity. In a country with a third of the population being Muslim, it is not surprising that this construction is interpreted as a symbol to emphasize the Christian identity of the state – just as Bulgaria had done thirty years earlier.

Extremism and Terrorism

The other form of violence that involved Islam and Muslims in Europe after 1950 CE is the attacks on civilians by Muslim extremists in the first decade of the twenty-first century. These attacks had shaken Europe’s sense of confidence and safety and set in motion an unprecedented security effort. The focus in trying to understand this Muslim anger – “why do they hate us?” – was at first primarily pinpointing the religion of the perpetrators since that was how these people explained their actions. Other researchers, however, argued that the radicalization of Muslim youth in the West was primarily rooted in external circumstances and that there were more reasons for Muslim anger beside innate Islamic anger or militancy itself. It became clear that there were specific grievances among Muslim youth in Europe other than a general hatred for the West and Western lifestyles. The source of their resentment was not what the West is, but what the West does. The Western actions that caused resentment among European Muslims were, on the one hand, Western military interventions in Muslim-majority countries (or the lack of such intervention, as is the case in the Syrian civil war that started in 2011) but more so, on the other hand, the negative attitude of the European native population vis-à-vis the Muslims in Europe.

The fact that European governments could not – and often did not want to – act because the defamations and criticisms of Islam were considered part of the freedom of expression merely added to the general feeling among Muslims in Europe that they were left unprotected from public scorn and abuse. The other development that
caused grievances among many of the Western European Muslims was their position at the lower end of the social-economical ladder. They experienced higher unemployment rates, under-representation in higher jobs and offices, over-representation in prison. Discrimination – whether real or perceived – was experienced not only in education and employment, but also socially. Muslims in Europe, and in particular in Western Europe, felt ‘under siege’.

The combination of all these factors had led to feelings of alienation, exclusion and disenfranchisement among European Muslims. Whether this sensation was justified is not important – the perception was already enough to make it real. This psychological factor is of critical importance in understanding the motives for terrorist acts by European Muslims, even those who were well educated and from middle class families. Their sense of not belonging and exclusion arguably drove these youths into the ideology and acts of jihadi terrorism. Of course, these explanations merely provide the general contours of what is conducive for Muslims to radicalize, because in the end it is the particular psychology and choices of each individual Muslim that determines whether he or she will actually embark on that process.

The awareness of sources other than Islam feeding into Muslim anger brought about a change in policy among Western European governments: in addition to security and judicial measures, the key word for the counter strategy became ‘integration’. Radicalization of Muslim youth might be prevented, so ran the argument, if they were made part of European society to the extent that they actually felt a sense of belonging. The German intelligence service was most explicit in doing so when it defined its new strategy in the catch phrase “successful integration equals prevention of extremism and terrorism.” Hence a flurry of activities financed by security services, like social programmes for school dropouts, intellectual empowerment of those considered vulnerable to radical rhetoric, training of young cadres, and social reinforcement of neighbourhoods. Such initiatives were taking place mainly in countries like England, the Netherlands and Spain, and to a much lesser extent in Germany and France. Often cooperation was sought with local mosques and Islamic organizations. In some instances municipal councils approached imams and scholars (in)directly in order to influence Islamic discourse among their Muslim constituencies.

The fact that security agencies were actively engaging with domains that traditionally belonged to the civic and social realm also created confusion and suspicion among Muslims. Questions were raised about money made available by the ample funds of security agencies for social events or discussion seminars on issues like civil responsibility. While such involvement usually takes place behind the scenes,
it took on more explicit forms, as when the German intelligence service established the ‘Confidence Working Group’ with the purpose of engaging in dialogue with representatives of Muslim organizations in Germany. As a young Dutch Moroccan once said in a public meeting about integration in 2008, “They may talk about our welfare, but that is only because we are a security concern.”113 This development has been called the ‘securitization of Islam’, meaning that Islam is considered a national security issue and as such affects all kinds of laws, policies and measures relating to immigration and integration.114

4. Europe and Its ‘Neighbourhood’

In the previous chapters we discussed numerous forms of diplomatic interactions between European and Muslim sovereigns and states. Charlemagne sent envoys to Baghdad and plotted with Moorish governors against the caliph in Cordoba, Western European nations sent ambassadors to Istanbul to secure first economic and later also political interests. This process continued in the twentieth century, but on a different scale: it was not individual European states but the European Union which identified a Mediterranean and North African (MENA) ‘neighbourhood’ that it wanted to remain as stable as possible. At the same time, the European Union was involved in a seemingly endless negotiation with Turkey about its membership of the European Union.

Exporting Stability?

It was in the European interest to create a stable environment at its borders for a number of reasons: wars or unrest had to be prevented from infecting the European Union zone, economic refugees from Asia and Africa had to be stopped from illegally entering, and the European Union was to benefit from trade with its neighbours. A set of political and economic measures was developed to create stable ‘neighbourhoods’ in the former communist eastern European countries and in the Mediterranean and North African region.

In November 1995 CE, on the date exactly 900 years after Pope Urban II called for the first Crusade, a new phase of relations was heralded by the historic partnership between the 15 EU members states and 12 states from North Africa (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia), the Middle East (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Palestinian Authority, Israel), as well as Turkey, Cyprus and Malta.115 One of these measures
was the so-called ‘Association’ agreements with individual countries in which economic advantages were promised in exchange for good governance. This so-called ‘Europe-Mediterranean Partnership’ was lopsided: while the North African and Middle Eastern countries had considerable economic interests in cooperation with the EU, the European side was predominantly concerned with the ‘3 Ds’: the lack of democracy, the explosive demography, and the lagging development in these countries.

Islam played a very limited role in these interactions and contacts.\(^{116}\) This is remarkable, given its role in social and political developments on both sides of the Mediterranean. Its absence is understandable from the European perspective, however, given the fact that the EU has no competence over religious affairs\(^ {117}\) and that Islam had become a highly sensitive issue that better remained untouched.\(^ {118}\) Even the formally established EU-Arab dialogue that was officially “to encourage understanding between cultures and exchanges between civil societies”\(^ {119}\) was of little use in this respect, because it gradually dissolved into a differentiation of policies and bilateral contacts between individual European and Arab states.\(^ {120}\) Nevertheless, practices and initiatives were developed on an informal level that foster dialogue ‘with Islam’ within the framework of intercultural and interfaith dialogue of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.\(^ {121}\)

Still, Islam, and in particular political Islam as it manifested itself in the Middle East and later also in Turkey, was a source of concern for Europe, firstly because the volatile mix of Islamic fundamentalism, terrorism and migration was considered a threat to Europe’s security,\(^ {122}\) but also because of the anxiety about the direction in which the trend of political Islam was to go: would it develop into a political tradition similar to that of the Christian Democrats in Europe, or into a theocratic regime which might be hostile to Europe just like Iran’s Khomeini had proclaimed America as the ‘great Satan’? Even though Europe advocated democracy as the primary system of good governance, it was very weary of what might be called the Hitler syndrome: the possibility that the Islamists in Arab countries would participate in the democratic process in order to gain access to power and subsequently dismantle the democratic order and establish their own Islamic regime.

This concern made the European Union prefer to support undemocratic but stable regimes rather than pushing for a potentially unstable democracy. It has been argued that this position was detrimental to European credibility to those in the Middle East and North Africa who genuinely advocated democracy, and was the cause of the development of anti-Western sentiments. President George Bush was one of the first to admit this in 2003, in a statement that otherwise received little
attention: “[s]ixty years of Western nations excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did not make us safe ... because in the long run, stability can not be purchased at the expense of liberty. As long as the Middle East remains a place where freedom does not flourish, it will remain a place of stagnation, resentment, and violence ready for export.”

This recognition prompted American and European endeavours to promote democracy and freedom in the Middle Eastern region. In the eyes of many Muslims, that policy failed miserably with the violence that erupted in Iraq after the American-British invasion in 2003, and the Western refusal to recognize Hamas after its landslide victory in the 2004 Palestinian elections. In the Muslim world one points to double standards at work in Western foreign policies when promoting democracy for some while denying it to others. As we have seen, this bitterness is shared by Western European Muslims with regard to the foreign policies of their national governments and the ensuing resentment among Muslims provided new recruiting ground for Islamic extremism.

The Arab Spring revolts of 2011 finally brought about the situation that had for so long been dreaded by Europe: the toppling of dictators and the establishment of forms of popular rule that was by many heralded as ‘democracy’. At the time of writing the outcome of these new political constellations is still unknown as only few appear to have maintained some kind of stability, while others have succumbed to the feared situation of chaos and violence. In Turkey, on the other hand, the Islamist AK Parti has had a huge majority since 2002, and has managed to implement a religiously motivated policy within the strict secular system of Turkey although opposition to the alleged autocratic rule of the AK Parti is growing. The eastern and southern Mediterranean region, therefore, has produced a distinctive Islamic political and social voice that Europe will have to deal with. So far, the European attitude has been one of acceptance and cautious involvement in the political processes in these countries.

Importing Extremism?

In the aftermath of 9/11, Europe felt threatened by ‘Islam’ from two sides: the (sometimes violently) anti-Western sentiments in the Muslim world, as well as the rising orthodoxy among Muslims within Europe, on the one hand, and the radicalism and terrorism among some of them, on the other hand. The connection between the Muslims inside and outside Europe became one of the main concerns of the European security agencies. However, severing any link between the two was an impos-
sible task in a world dominated by globalism and transnationalism where Europe’s Muslim population had access to ideas, people and organizations abroad by means of modern media.\footnote{126} Insofar as Muslims from outside tried to influence their sisters and brethren in Europe, such endeavors were not so much undertaken by governments of Muslim countries vis-à-vis their nationals in Europe,\footnote{127} but much more by foreign Muslim individuals and organizations. For instance, many mosques in Western Europe recruited imams from abroad, mainly because they did not have their own imams and lacked the ability to train their imams within Europe, and such recruitment was permitted as a matter of freedom of religion. The result of this arrangement was that Western European Muslim communities remained dependent on their countries of origin, and that they were often exposed to religious leaders who had little knowledge of the European context.\footnote{128}

Another situation that yielded unexpected results was the asylum granted to Muslim foreigners who were persecuted in their homeland for extremism and had fled to Europe, and who could often not be extradited if torture or the death penalty awaited them in their countries of origin. Such was the case, for instance, with members of the Muslim Brothers who had found refuge in Europe.\footnote{129} Many of them were conservative and politically opinionated, initiating discussions among European Muslim youth in support of Islamist opposition movements in the Middle East and of the various wars in Bosnia, Algeria, Chechnya and Afghanistan. They encouraged the viewpoint that European Muslim youths belong to the worldwide Muslim community or umma, and that it was their duty to defend this community, even with violence if need be. This vision drew the conflicts from outside into Europe. Western Europe became a target of Middle Eastern radical Islam with the spill-over of the Algerian civil war into France in 1994. The attacks of 11 September 2001 and the involvement of European nations in the 2003 war in Iraq further globalized the theatre of operations into Europe.\footnote{130}

The main influence on European Muslims appears to come from foreign Muslim organizations.\footnote{131} Many of these organizations see it as their duty to educate and inspire European Muslims in the ‘true’ spirit of Islam, not unlike the way Christian missionary organizations go out to help and support minority Christians in Muslim lands. While these organizations are mostly concerned with the spiritual wellbeing of Muslims in Europe, they sometimes also gear them towards an isolationist position vis-à-vis their European environment, or even towards radicalism. In the particular case of the Yugoslavian civil war of 1991–1995, the plight of the Bosnian Muslims made a great impact on Middle Eastern Muslims, prompting not only an influx of military volunteers during the war, but also after the war humanitarian
support and strenuous efforts by Islamic organizations from Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Iran to ‘re-Islamize’ the secularized Bosnian Muslims. While their impact at first may have been small, we have seen that concerns have been expressed about the increase in Middle Eastern-style mosques and garments, and Middle eastern-style orthodox views on gender and non-Muslims.

But not all Islamic-political sentiments were imported. The new generation of European Muslims developed their own opinions and ideas. The Syrian civil war that erupted in 2011 and the establishment of a ‘caliphate’ in northern Iraq by the Islamic State organization (known as ‘IS’) in 2014 were illustrative for events that took place abroad but greatly enticed Muslim youth in Europe. It showed how much European Muslims are engaged with the political turbulences in the Middle East, and how these events reflect on their lives in Europe. All these foreign elements contributed to the complexity of and growing concerns about Islam in Europe. These concerns have been compounded with the new development since 2011 of hundreds of European Muslim youth joining the ranks of extremist Islamic militant organizations in their jihad against the Syrian regime, and some even taking part in the atrocious wars of conquest undertaken by the IS. The net result of all these developments was that they added fuel to the already existing concern that linked ‘Islam’ with ‘security’.

Turkey and the European Union

Turkey was already a member of the Council of Europe (which also includes countries like Russia and Azerbaijan) and had applied for EU membership as early as 1959. The main obstacle, however, was the Turkish human rights track record and lack of democracy. Turkey’s prime-minister Tansu Çiller argued in 1995 that a delay in granting Turkey membership of the EU would not only be considered an insult to the Turks, but would also play into the hands of the Islamist Refah Parti (the predecessor to the AK Parti). According to Çiller, these Islamists would surely take Turkey away from Europe and further into the fold of the Middle East: “Now it’s me versus them [the Turkish Islamists – MB]. I represent Westernization, secular government, liberalization, the link with Europe.” In 1999, the European governments offered Turkey the concrete prospect of full membership of the EU, and the two sides entered into protracted negotiations.

But then the political landscape in Turkey changed drastically: the Islamist AK Parti won landslide victories in the elections of 2002, 2007 and 2011. Çiller’s dark forebodings did not come true, however, because the Turkish government under
the AK Parti has, more than any of its secular predecessors, actively campaigned for Turkish membership of the European Union. This may seem remarkable, given the generally assumed friction between Islamic politics and ‘the West.’ But it has also been argued that the AK Parti aimed at linking up with European politics where secularism enjoyed a happy marriage with a strong tradition of Christian Democratic politics. This might have been very appealing to an Islamic party in a country where secularism was so strictly enforced that religiously motivated parties had been dismantled and outlawed.137

When Turkey under AK Parti leadership was indeed making progress in fulfilling the requirements for EU membership, a debate erupted among the European partners about Turkish membership. Proponents held that fulfilment of requirements should lead to membership since that was promised, and that Turkey would greatly contribute to the European economy, while opponents back-pedalled on the prospect of Turkish membership for three different reasons. One was political: admission to the EU would make Turkey with over 70 million inhabitants the largest of all the EU states and that would seriously change the balance of power within the EU. Another reason for opposition was concern about security because the admission of Turkey would extend the borders of the EU to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iran and Syria and by consequence to a zone rife with conflict and instability. These opponents thought it wiser to keep Turkey as the buffer state between the EU and Asia Minor. An interesting aspect of these two arguments is that they neglect the fact that Turkey, as a member of NATO since 1952, has been co-responsible for the defence of Europe, and has been sharing military and national security details relating to Europe ever since.

The third reason for opposition to Turkey as an EU member state – even if it were to fulfil the formal conditions for membership – was of a cultural nature, arguing that Turkey was not ‘European’.138 We mentioned before the remark by a EU commissioner that the admittance of Turkey to the EU would render the liberation of Vienna in 1683 “in vain”. This imagery was magnified with the concern that, once admitted to the EU, millions of Turks would enter the EU looking for work and, in consequence, raise Islam to the status of the largest religion in Europe. This was rebutted in 2002 by the European Commission’s director general for enlargement, who pointed out that the EU “is not a club of Christian peoples” and that membership was based on political, not religious or cultural principles.139 But the former president of France and then head of the convention working on the EU’s constitution, Valerie Giscard d’Estaing, replied that Turkey was “not a European country” and that its admittance to the EU would mean “the end of the EU”.140
The Turks themselves did not share these cultural arguments against their participation in the EU. For Turkey, Europe represented a political and economic cooperation, not a religious or cultural unity. The alleged ‘Christian’ identity of Europe was no cause for concern or debate in Turkey in that it might lose its Turkish or Muslim identity by joining the EU. Of the approximately 5 million Turks living in Europe, more than half perceived the EU as an economic integration project, and only 20 per cent believed that the EU is a “Christian club”.

Only the AK Parti used a moderate Islamic discourse, but merely to present itself as a bridge between Christian Europe and Muslim Asia and Middle East.

International Actions against ‘Defamation of Islam’

In parallel to these European endeavours that were directly related to its border areas, Europe also had to deal with the effects of globalized politics. European participation in military interventions in Muslim lands could have repercussions at home, just like incidents and politics at home in Europe might affect Muslim lands far away. These exchanges took place on numerous levels, ranging from the Internet to meeting rooms of the United Nations. Although Europe’s image in the Muslim world was slightly better than that of the United States, several incidents (in particular the Rushdie affair in 1982, the Danish cartoons in 2006 and the Dutch film Fitna in 2008) were quite damaging. While the United States launched a new strategy of ‘public diplomacy’ after 9/11, the European Union tried to engage its Muslim neighbours in dialogue, as we have seen above.

But while Europe tried to mend the fences by improving its image, the Muslim perception of the West being anti-Islamic became so strong that Muslim countries, united in the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), initiated diplomatic pressure to stop what they considered Western Islamophobia. The OIC did so by actively campaigning for an international ban on the defamation of religion that would force European countries to re-introduce the blasphemy laws that they were in the process of gradually abolishing. This initiative started in 1999 when the OIC introduced a resolution in the United Nations Human Rights Commission demanding that “defamation of Islam” had to be combatted. This resolution was passed, and although it had no legal effect (resolutions in international law are non-binding statements) it was definitely a diplomatic victory for the OIC. The resolution was then passed again every year, although its title changed from defamation of ‘Islam’ to defamation of ‘religion.’ This agenda was pushed ever more forcefully after 2001 and again after the 2002 report on European Islamophobia, the Danish cartoons...
(in 2006) and the Dutch film *Fitna* (in 2008). From 2005 onwards, the resolution was also passed annually by the General Assembly of the United Nations.

The ‘Western’ nations – mainly represented by Europe, North America and Australia – did not budge, holding on to the freedom of opinion and expression, but the situation was diplomatically quite uncomfortable, especially when the levels of Islam-critique in the West acquired forms that the Western governments themselves disagreed with but had to allow as a matter of freedom of expression. Even though these instances were minor, and often the initiative of a single person (think of the Burn a Quran Day in 2010, and the Internet film about the prophet Muhammad in 2012), they received wide attention in the Muslim world, fuelling the image of an Islam-bashing West. In 2011, a diplomatic compromise was reached on the issue of defamation: the Muslim countries united in the OIC agreed that blasphemy laws were not needed in Europe to protect Islam, but that they would jointly combat intolerance, discrimination and violence that was based on religion.
We started this book with the premise that in order to understand Islam in Europe, we need to understand the situation in Europe at each particular time, and how ‘Europe’ in that period was conceptualized by Europeans. With regard to Europe since the 1950s, it has been argued that Europeans have continued their construction of a common legacy or identity that has been called the “grand narrative of Europe.” According to Talal Asad, Europe “is ideologically constructed in such a way that Muslim immigrants can not be satisfactorily be represented in it.” What, then, is this construction, this grand narrative?

With the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, the ‘Question of Europe’ emerged: the debate on European identity, sovereignty and loyalty within the setting of the larger Europe. The debate on the essentials of this ‘Europeanness’ focused primarily on political and judicial institutions, bypassing the cultural and religious dimensions of European societies. Leading intellectuals in this debate, such as Jurgen Habermas, Charles Taylor, Alain Touraine and Will Kymlicka, who tried to eliminate differences and forms of ‘otherness’ with notions like multiculturalism and pluriformity, discussed these issues in terms of citizenship, group recognition and rights.

While these debates were confined to the realm of political-legal discourse, a parallel debate took place within the domain of religious-cultural discourse. In these debates the notion of Europeanness as a common civilization or culture was introduced, often phrased in religious terms like ‘Judeo-Christian civilization’. This idea was not new, but tapped into the nineteenth-century concept of ‘Europe-as-Christendom’ that was set within the key of ‘Otherness’: “the construction of the idea of Europe was defined by means of the ‘Others’ which it excludes, and vice versa.” An interesting aspect of this religious-cultural identity is that by the late twentieth century it had incorporated secularism as an integral part of that European civilizational narrative. Even though the European was identified on the basis of his Judeo-Christian heritage, secularism was conceived as a next progressive step in the European civilizational narrative. The Other was then identified as being not secular.

In the following we will elaborate how this European self-perception reflected on Muslims in Europe. We will be discussing the mechanisms of Islam-criticism and of the negative image that Muslims generally have in Europe, but we must keep in mind that in doing so we are talking about images and perceptions. This does
not necessarily reflect reality. Yes, European Muslims may suffer from discrimination, but they are not second-class citizens as was the case in previous centuries; they have access to education and are represented in high positions in the judiciary, politics and government and gradually also in business, the media and academe. Yes, the majority of European public opinion may have a negative impression of Islam, but the European Muslim enjoys a religious freedom that is unparalleled in most Muslim majority countries. Yes, many Europeans may have qualms about Muslims and their un-European cultures, but Europe has embraced parts of these same cultures in a manner that can be best described as neo-Turquerie: interior decoration items like lamps and furniture with Moroccan and Afghan designs became fashionable, just like the waterpipe cafes and certain forms of clothes like the baggy pants and embroidered long-sleeved shirts, and both pop and classic musicians use Arabic or Pakistani music or collaborate with musicians from Muslim lands.

1. Images of Islam and Muslims

Criticism and Islamophobia

We have seen that Islam and Muslims have been under heavy criticism since the 1990s, and in particular since 9/11. The sentiments, causes and justifications behind this criticism are complex and often intertwined.

First, criticism of Islam has a longstanding European tradition, as we have seen in the previous chapters. But from the nineteenth century onwards Europe developed a tradition of criticism of religion in general, and Christianity already had its fair share of criticism and abuse, first in the nineteenth century and then again in the 1960s and 1970s. In European majority public and political discourse, religion does not enjoy a status of prestige, as we have seen. The manifestation of Islam through dress, behaviour, and manners of speech is manifest in Western, and to a lesser extent in Eastern Europe therefore runs counter to the dominant European notions of the position of religion in the public domain.

The criticism of Islam from this perspective is mostly in line with the earlier forms of criticism of religion that consider it backward, irrational and oppressive. Some critics of Islam are therefore not necessarily targeting Islam as such but are critical of religion in general, and they are concerned with the fact that in a quite secularized Europe a new community is manifesting itself with a distinct religious
identity. Other critics of Islam can be found among the devout Christians who are continuing the centuries-old theological criticism of Islam as a ‘wrong’ religion. But while the secular Europeans may distrust Muslims for being violent and fanatical, religious Europeans are less inclined to think in that way about Muslims.\textsuperscript{151}

Another source of criticism was related to social practices of European Muslims, for instance their high rate of involvement in crime or their alleged lack of integration in European society. While these issues in themselves were indeed reason for concern (crime rates among the youth of immigrant origin – not just Muslims – were disproportionately high, and people of immigrant origin – again, not just Muslims – tended to isolate themselves in communities that had poor socio-economic prospects), they were often linked to Islam. In the case of Moroccan or Pakistani young criminals, for instance, their behaviour was explained by the fact that they were Muslim and that Islam as a violent religion instigated this behaviour. This was a typical issue of the \textit{homo Islamicus}: the actions of ‘Muslims’ were explained as being motivated by Islam. These arguments were generally dismissed by the academic and most of the political community, but were recurring themes in public discourse. Quite a few new political parties have arisen since the 1990s that have adopted this view by equating their opposition to further immigration in their countries with strong anti-Islam rhetoric.\textsuperscript{152} Their popularity may be seen as a reflection of such beliefs among the population.

A third important reason for the criticism of Islam was the many acts of intolerance and violence that were committed by Muslims in the name of Islam within but even more so outside Europe during late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries: Islamic regimes like those of Pakistan, Iran and Saudi-Arabia, movements like the Taliban, Shabab or Boko Haram, the replacement of the secular PLO by the Islamic Hamas in Palestine, and the suicide attacks all over the world, including those in Europe. Islam, so it seemed to the European observer, once it becomes part of a political or societal discourse, is prone to becoming violent or oppressive. The manifestations in Europe of intolerance and violence in the name of Islam were being interpreted as dark forebodings of what was being witnessed in many parts of the Muslim world.

Criticism and anxiety about Islam and Muslims were therefore often rooted in practical and tangible issues that were of public concern – a resurgence of fundamentalism, immigration, terrorism, loss of national identity – but in many instances tended to be focused on Islam and Muslims. This focus reached such proportions in the late 1990s that a new word was coined for it: Islamophobia. The near impossibility of defining this term – is it racism, religious intolerance, an equivalent of
anti-Semitism? – has put many scholars to work. Suffice it here to say that some define Islamophobia in terms of a behavioural attitude (hostility toward Muslims), while others define it as an emotion (unreasonable fear of Islam and Muslims). Islamophobia is classed with xenophobia and anti-Semitism but, as we have seen, whereas the latter two target people (foreigners and Jews, respectively), Islamophobia combines anti-Muslim with anti-Islam sentiments, which makes legal action against this form of defamation difficult.

In addition to a dismissive or discriminatory attitude towards a Muslim for being somehow inferior (the centuries-old image of the irrational, fanatical Other), the late twentieth-century Islamophobia has added a second component: the fear of the compatriot Muslim as a potential threat (either because he cannot or refuses to integrate, or because he may pose a security threat). While the first attitude puts the Muslim in a very uncomfortable position shared by many minorities in Europe, the latter attitude puts the Muslim in a corner from which there is no escape but to disappear, either by leaving, or by dissolving (assimilating) into the native society. The call for assimilation shows itself in numerous ways: Muslims should not hold foreign nationality (in several instances impossible since some countries do not allow nationalities to be revoked by their citizens); should pledge their allegiance to their new state by a variety of means (including citizenship tests which, as an aside, are failed by most native citizens who have taken them for fun); and, most importantly, should not show their Muslim-ness (hence the fierce objections to the headscarf and the mosques with ‘Oriental’ architecture). The extreme consequence of these views on assimilation is that Muslims should give up their religion altogether – a liberal version of the forced conversion of former times, and although hardly expressed in those terms we see time and time again how Muslims who openly denounce Islam are embraced by the critics of Islam.

The ‘Third Wave’

While in previous centuries the Muslim as the European Other was often physically situated in a far-away place, that situation has altered dramatically for Western Europe since the 1970s. The coming of migrants who adhered to or identified with Islam was not merely a confrontation with the Other, but also reinvigorated the image of Islam as a religion that is out for conquest. According to scholars like Bernard Lewis and Bassam Tibi one needs to conceive the massive migration of Muslims to Europe as a “third wave” that may prove successful after the first two ‘waves’ were repulsed at the battles of Poitiers (732 CE) and Vienna (1683). The imagery of the two ‘waves’ may
be psychologically powerful but, as we have seen in previous chapters, is historically debatable. In the case of the battle of Poitiers in 732 CE, historians have pointed out that the defeated Muslims were not an invasion army out to conquer the heartland of Europe, but one of the many raiding armies that for decades had crossed the Pyrenees for loot and spoils – a practice they continued even after the defeat at Poitiers. In the case of the siege of Vienna in 1683, we have seen that the ‘Europe’ as a representation of a Christian commonwealth that was saved from the Turk at the battle of Vienna in 1683 is a myth that was created retrospectively.

The image of Islamic conquest is the source not only of fear for some Europeans, but also of hope for some devout Muslims. The famous Muslim scholar Yusuf Qaradawi remarked in 2007 in a televised interview: “Perhaps the next conquest [of Europe] will be the conquest of da’wa [preaching] and ideas. There is no need for conquest to be with the sword. We may conquer these countries without armies. We want armies of preachers and teachers.” From a missionary point of view, these remarks are understandable, but from the perspective of the current European situation, they merely confirm the notion of the Muslim’s hunger for conquest. This fear was reinforced – or justified, according to some – by the Muslim extremist attacks of 9/11 in 2001, and the consecutive attacks in European cities. The notions of a ‘third wave’ and of an aggressive Islam that is out to ‘take over’ tap into the European collective memory of a perpetual conflict with Islam.

Although the notion of ‘taking over’ seems to reverberate through the centuries of European-Muslim relations, it has distinctly different meanings to the modern as opposed to the pre-modern European. To the pre-modern European ‘taking over’ meant the fear of actual conquest by Muslim armies. To the modern European, on the other hand, the notion of ‘taking over’ is much more nebulous. Military conquest is surely not a realistic option, but other forms of domination apparently are to be considered. To some, the notion of an Islam that ‘takes over’ is represented by the physical presence of Muslims in Europe and, consequently, the values they bring with them. As early as in 1995 the secretary general of the trans-Atlantic military coalition NATO argued that Islamic “fundamentalism” had replaced Communism as the new threat to European “civilization”. Many more such warnings and anxieties were to follow, whereby the allegedly anti-European tendencies among Muslims in Europe were often directly connected with similar sentiments in Muslim countries outside Europe. The threat was therefore not only from outside Europe, but also from within.

But what, then, is this threat? Since it cannot be the physical presence of Muslims since their numbers are so small – except in certain cities where they live in
concentrated numbers – it must be what they stand for: Islam. We must therefore rephrase the question ‘is Islam a threat to Europe’ into: does the presence of Muslims in Europe represent a presence of Islamic values that contradict or even threaten European values? And, if so, do these values represent an impediment to integration or, worse, a set of values that Muslims want to impose on their environment? We have already seen that some authors warn that this is indeed the case. European politicians have been elected on the basis of this view. The problem, however, is an assessment of these values – both the Islamic and European values: what exactly do we mean by them? We will discuss this in the next section.

A Conflict of Values

It would be too simplistic to reduce the values upheld by Muslims to the tenets of Islamic theology. We have seen in the previous sections that Muslims in Europe – and anywhere else, for that matter – are not necessarily believers. Neither is everything a Muslim does inspired by Islam or in accordance with Islamic orthodoxy, nor is everything that Islam prescribes adhered to by Muslims. On the other hand, there are Muslims in Europe who claim that they strictly adhere to precisely these tenets. But then again, they differ among each other on the correct interpretation of these tenets. And what European Muslims actually hold to be Islamic rules or tenets may very well differ from those upheld by Islamic doctrine. It is therefore almost impossible to give definitions or general overviews of ‘Islamic values’ that may or may not conflict with European values.

Rather than trying to define the Islamic values that Muslims in Europe adhere to, we might ask ourselves what European values are allegedly violated by European Muslims in the name of Islam. In this approach it is helpful to make use of the two aforementioned sets of European values: political-legal, and religious-cultural. The political-legal values, such as democracy, liberty, equality, rule of law, are at the core of modern European legal and political systems. The religious-cultural values, on the other hand, are at the core of what is considered by many to be a European identity. Acknowledging that these two sets of values are not entirely clear in their definitions, they do provide clarity when discussing the confrontation with Islamic values, as we will do now.

European political-legal values are elaborated in political systems as well as in legal systems where they are enshrined in constitutions and in human rights treaties, in particular the European Convention on Human Rights. How do the many dif-
different Islamic theological values as practised by European Muslims relate to these European political values? On the one hand, we may observe numerous practices justified by Islam that are considered contrary to European values, such as gender segregation, the position of women, face covering, the attitude towards non-believers. At the same time, however, it is precisely a political-legal value like liberty that allows people to behave in accordance with their own wishes or rules, even if others find them reprehensible. This applies also to the notion of equality that grants every person the right to enjoy an equal position before the law, but does not determine what that person should do with that position. Equality and liberty allow people to put themselves in a position that may be considered unequal and illiberal. In short, European political-legal values, including the rule of law and the notion of equality, provide the freedom to be different. It is therefore not surprising that European Muslims support European political-legal values. Muslims may be angry about discrimination and Islamophobia, but they are in need of the basic freedoms and liberties provided by the European political-legal system in order to maintain their religious identity. It is the legal and political values of Europe that grant Muslims the freedom to be what they want to be: Muslims.

The anxiety about European values that may conflict with Islam should therefore not be sought in Muslims’ alleged rejection of European political-legal values themselves, but their use (or abuse) of these values. An example is the notion of sharia. Based on what we know from research so far, we may tentatively assert that the devout and orthodox among European Muslims who want to live in accordance with the rules of Islam (‘sharia’) focus on four domains: religious rituals, family law, financial transactions, and interaction with the non-Muslim environment. While most of these sharia rules as being practised by European Muslims are generally allowed within a European context of legal liberty, there is distinct opposition in Europe – mostly in Western Europe – to such practices. The reasons for this opposition are manifold. Some argue that a separate infrastructure of religious rules, in particular related to family relations, creates a segregation that is undesirable from a social as well as a legal perspective. Socially, such practices might be detrimental to Muslim women, because their community might deny them the liberties of European life by exerting considerable pressure on them to submit to the traditions and laws of Islam. Legally, it is argued that a state’s rule of law should not permit parallel legal structures. While all these arguments are valid by themselves, one may point to different experiences within Europe. In Eastern Europe, for instance, as we have seen above, the self-regulation of Muslims is much more institutionalized,
and therefore strictly speaking ‘segregated’, mainly as the legacy of a centuries-old practice (although, of late, these practices have also come under criticism and scrutiny\textsuperscript{166}). And in Western European countries there has been a long tradition of Catholic, Protestant and Jewish family courts operating parallel to the national civil courts.

The alleged infringement of ‘Islam’ on European values can also be surmised from the angle of religious-cultural values. While political-legal values are relatively easy to identify, the religious-cultural values are more ambiguous. They represent the European grand narrative mentioned above. The religious component of this narrative holds that Christianity, either as a religious value-system or as a religious tradition or civilization, is said to have shaped the identity and unity that we call Europe.\textsuperscript{167} It is important to note that this religious dimension of European values is not exclusively embraced by devout Christians but also by the non-religious: to them, Christianity represents the cradle of modern European civilization rather than the articles of faith of any of the Christian denominations.

The religious-cultural component of the European narrative is not only historical, but also very temporal. European values in this meaning represent values that are mostly enshrined not in laws but in customs, and are held as self-evident truths: ‘the way we do things around here’. I contend that these values are central in the conflict between ‘Europe’ and ‘Islam’. Apart from the terrorist attacks, most ‘conflicts’ between Islamic and European values that make headlines in European news relate to differences of social interaction. The European public generally considers not shaking hands with members of the other gender insulting, and the wearing of headscarves degrading, to name the most conspicuous examples. Interestingly, the European political-legal values allow for such behaviour, as no law prescribes how to greet or what to wear. It is precisely this difference between the two sets of European values that causes much of the confusion about what is acceptable and what not in a European society.

The two sets of values – political-legal and religious-cultural – together make up for the peculiar situation of European secularism which is to some the most typical confrontation with Islamic values. As we have discussed above, European societies have developed the customary practice of not publicly manifesting religion, even though that would be perfectly admissible by law. Religious dress in public has become rare, and even self-proclaimed Christian politicians will seldom refer to Scripture to make their point. Despite a strong tradition of Christian Democratic politics in many European countries, and regardless of references to the Christian identity of Europe, religion is mostly absent from the European political and public domains.
This is often referred to as secularism, and according to several observers this is the point where Islam clashes with European values. I would argue, however, that the issue here is not secularism but a typical European cultural tradition of handling religion. In the United States, for instance, we observe a completely different tradition of secularism where religion plays a very prominent role in the public and political domain. Manifestation of religion – whether Islam or any other religion – is therefore bound to clash with the European way of handling religion, but not with the American way. This clash is much less prominent, on the other hand, if secularism is defined as a political-legal institution of separating religion and the state. It is precisely this separation that is embraced by many European Muslims because it guarantees their freedom to practise their faith according to their own wishes and without state interference.

The clash of values between ‘Islam’ and ‘Europe’ therefore is not that European Muslims adhere to values that are prohibited by law – on the contrary, the political-legal values allow for diversity and liberty – but by the religious-cultural objection that ‘this is not how we do things here’. The French law of 2011 banning the face veil illustrates this dilemma: on the one hand, the French State Council advised against such ban on the basis of the political-legal principle of personal autonomy which allows a woman freely to wear what she wishes; and, on the other hand, the legislature deemed the face veil contrary to the cultural principle that open-faced encounters in public are a matter of ‘social contract’.

2. The Study of Islam

The study of Islam in Europe has changed considerably since the last decades of the twentieth century, on the one hand because the study of Islam gained popularity and European scholars have broadened this academic domain, and, on the other hand, because European Muslims have now also engaged in an intensive study of Islam for the purpose of knowing its foundations as well as of adopting these tenets in their every-day lives in European societies.

European Scholarship

European scholarship of Islam after the 1950s was mostly still confined to the philological discipline of Arabic studies, but soon became immersed in area studies (Asia, Middle East, Africa) where the disciplines of anthropology and political science
dominated. In consequence, Muslims and Islam were to be studied not only as representations of texts that dated from the past, but as living entities of today.\textsuperscript{173}

The European scholars of Islam and the Muslim world received a wake-up call with the publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* in 1979.\textsuperscript{174} He argued that the academic objectivity claimed by these scholars was false, since many were infatuated with preconceived notions of Orientalism (see the previous chapter) about their objects of study. This image was perpetuated by the colonial supremacy of European countries in the Muslim world, and was reinforced by scholars in their academic work, Said claimed. Although Said’s accusations were too broad and not always sufficiently substantiated,\textsuperscript{175} they did hit a nerve in the European academic world. The word ‘orientalist’ gained a pejorative meaning, and various academic disciplines set out to reconsider their academic premises and methodologies. (This self-reflexion, in turn, sometimes swung too far the other way with academics blaming European colonial domination for all kinds of shortcomings in the Muslim world.)

In addition, the arrival of Muslims in the West brought a new challenge to the European study of Islam. Until the 1980s, studying Islam meant a trip to the library or to some faraway exotic land. But now Islam was in Europe, and Muslims were fellow-citizens in European societies and fellow-students in European universities. European scholars had to become used to the fact that Muslims and Islam, as objects of study, were part of the shared habitat of researchers, and that they responded to lectures and studies about them.\textsuperscript{176} The fact that the politically and socially charged atmosphere in (mainly Western) European societies had put Muslims in a permanent spotlight during the late 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century merely added to the complexity of this interaction.\textsuperscript{177}

The attacks of 9/11 and subsequent attacks by Muslim extremists in European cities have yet again changed the research agenda of Islam in Europe. During the first decade of the twenty-first century, most of the research on Islam and Muslims in Europe became embedded in the overall theme of security. This situation was not necessarily by scholarly design, but often prompted by the practical circumstance that national research funds during this period tended to prefer research proposals that had relevance to practical needs of the time.\textsuperscript{178}

Nevertheless, a steady stream of studies on Islam and Muslims both within and outside Europe emerged from universities, think tanks, and investigative journalists. Most studies tended to discuss the Muslim identity in ethnic and national minority terms rather than religious terms. As opposed to what was quite common in public and political discourse, very few of these studies referred to Islam as a source of Muslims’ actions. On the contrary, importance in this respect was attached much
more to culture, ethnicity and migration. Most scholars identified religion as a secondary motivator like faith or identity, which highlighted existing issues and conflicts rather than being their instigating factor.\textsuperscript{179}

**European Muslim Studies of Islam**

While the theological approach was gradually removed from European academic studies of Islam, European Muslims expressed the need for precisely that: the study of Islam as theology. The purpose of that kind of study was different from what was conducted at most European universities, however: these Muslims were not studying their religious behaviour or texts, but their own faith. In some Eastern European countries, such studies could be pursued at Islamic theological institutions and seminars. In Western European countries, on the other hand, there was an absence of a tradition as well as an infrastructure for the theological study of Islam.\textsuperscript{180} Moreover, the Muslim communities in these societies lacked religious authorities that could guide or instruct them in these studies. This posed a problem with the growing need since the 1990s among Muslims for knowledge of Islamic theology. Their response, generally speaking, was twofold: some actually went abroad to study, while others resorted to self-study.

For Western European Muslims in particular the self-study was not easy, for they had limited access to Islamic theological literature and, more problematically, were often unable to read it since they were losing the native language of their parents. And even if they had overcome these hurdles, they needed some guidance in navigating the voluminous body of Islamic literature. Most Muslim students tried to find their way by means of the Internet; others by connections they might have with religious institutions abroad.\textsuperscript{181} Private initiatives emerged: lecture series, classes in mosques and Islamic centres, and the establishment of private Islamic seminars. The problem of finding instructors with sufficient theological background remained, however. This situation was quite different from that in Eastern Europe where Muslims might turn to their muftis or leaders, or might study at one of the few Islamic theological faculties or seminaries. But even in that case, quite a few of the Muslim youth in Eastern Europe preferred to study abroad, either in Turkey or in the Middle East.\textsuperscript{182}

One particular feature of Islamic studies as pursued by European Muslims deserves further attention. This is the so-called ‘minority fiqh’, the scholarship of Islamic theology that proclaims adaptations of Islamic rules to the particular context of Muslims living in the West.\textsuperscript{183} The underlying argument of this scholarship is that
sharia serves the needs and interests of Muslims and should therefore accommodate them rather than make their lives more difficult. As a result, rules of sharia should be adapted to the circumstances if need be. For example, a strict interpretation of sharia rule would oblige a Muslim in Scandinavia to fast the long hours of summer, or prohibit him from working in restaurants or establishments where pork or alcohol is served, or from participating in elections or political processes in non-Muslim countries; ‘minority fiqh’, on the other hand, would provide solutions for Muslims in the West to somehow move forward on the social-economic scale by participating without neglecting the essential tenets of their faith.\\footnote{While it is unknown to what extent European Muslims actually follow the interpretations of minority fiqh, the development of this scholarship by several international Islamic organizations is an interesting example of globalizing Islam: Muslim scholars of different nationalities, and even of both sunni and shi’ā origin, join in regular meetings to discuss questions sent by Muslims in the West and, after long deliberation, issue their decisions (fatwas). This particular branch of applied Islamic theology therefore has become a truly global or at least transnational undertaking, whereby knowledge from abroad is fed into a local European setting of political-legal freedoms and religious-cultural rejection.\\footnote{Minority fiqh is not uncontested. The abovementioned procedure and its theological methodologies are advocated by Islamic theologians like Yusuf Qaradawi in Qatar and Taha Jabir Al-Alwani in the United States, but are criticized by their colleagues from both the conservative and liberal sides of the theological spectrum. Conservatives, predominantly from the Gulf region, reject the minority fiqh methodology with the argument that Muslims are to abide by sharia rather than the other way round. Liberals, on the other hand, reject the fact that Muslims in the West are considered minority or are given exceptional treatment within the Islamic theological framework; according to them, Islamic theology needs thorough revision in order to meet the needs of all Muslims in the modern world.\\footnote{Whether this cauldron will – or should – lead to a ‘European Islam’, as some observers argue, is too early to tell, but we will reflect on this question in the next, and last, chapter.}}