

**Government Policies and Muslim Radicalism
in France and Great Britain**

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To my husband and parents

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Abstract

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the consequent 'war on terror' and the American and British invasion and occupation of Iraq, has magnified the threat posed by Muslim immigrant communities residing in Europe. Terrorists responsible for the 9/11 attacks were Muslims who lived and trained in Western Europe. Moreover, and since the last quarter of the twentieth century young European Muslims have been radicalized at a rate higher than ever before. This study examines the impact of government policies on immigrant Muslim communities residing in Great Britain and France. It explores whether policies of discrimination against these Muslim communities explain recent waves of terrorist attacks in these countries. Muslim communities living in these countries differ in terms of ethnicity and tradition; however they are predominantly Sunni Muslims and migrants from former French and British colonies. Moreover, although Great Britain and France are both secular democracies, each country has its own idiosyncrasies. France is a *Laic* republic where religion is confined to the private sphere, whereas Great Britain is a secular state in which the Church of England continues to play an important political and social role. This study argues that although government policies are an important variable to be taken into consideration, it does not have a decisive impact on the radicalization of second generation Muslims.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Between East and West

European interaction with Muslims started when Muslim armies invaded Spain in the year 720 AD. Since then Europeans have maintained different forms of economic, social and strategic relations with the Muslim world. Many Muslims who reached Europe at the time married and settled and became European citizens. Still, throughout history, interaction between the Muslims and the Europeans was marked by tension. Hostility was caused by the occupation of Spain, the fall of Constantinople in 1453, and the siege of Vienna in 1683. The biggest influx of Muslim immigrants to Europe started after World War II. However, Europe was then in urgent need for cheap labor for the reconstruction of its cities. In the 1950s a heterogeneous category of Muslims immigrated to Western Europe under the “*Guest arbeiten*” scheme. Germany, France and Great Britain recruited labor from their former colonies. These immigrants were eligible for citizenship in their respective guest countries. They were singled out, according to their economic status, race and ethnicity rather than their norms and culture. Most of them immigrated from the Middle East and South West Asia. Not all immigrants came from poor social backgrounds, some were wealthy people fleeing autocratic regimes. The recession in Western Europe in 1972-1974 resulted in a change in governments’ immigration policies. The new policies restricted immigration to family members, taking into consideration the rights of the families to be reunited, as opposed to the older policy which contained fewer restrictions. Immigration to Western Europe continues today and many immigrants are still

entering these countries as asylum-seekers or refugees. Muslims are the largest and fastest growing community in Europe.

1.2 Islam in Europe

World War II ended leaving behind a devastated and aging Europe badly bruised by hostilities. France and Great Britain employed workers mainly from their old colonies, North Africa and South Asia. Immigrants who initially came to Europe for temporary employment had to remain in these countries after the recession of the eighties and the promulgation of new laws restricting immigration to members of families of the resident foreigners. Many were granted citizenship in their respective host countries. Muslim communities in Europe were never given much attention by European authorities. However, throughout the years their number increased dramatically through family reunions, marriages, and conversions. They became an important political force in European countries that play by the rules of democracy and human rights. It is only then that Europeans realized that their presence is not a casual cultural encounter. They were rather well implanted in the European space. Yet, the difference in culture and ethnicity prevented them from uniting effectively into a political force that could impose its claims. Second generation young Muslims increasingly identified themselves with Islam rather than with nation state. Decades of discrimination and racism resulted in the radicalization of the young Muslim community who finds a cure in becoming practicing Muslims. They were united with radical Muslim groups where Islam and the *Ummah* are the two main causes in their lives. Some of them became militant fundamentalists and posed a real threat to their host countries.

Starting in the 1990s, European Muslims began infiltrating the European public space. They organized protest marches, clashed with authorities, and were responsible for riots, like the

ones that followed the *Hijab* controversy in France. European countries such as France and England started experiencing many terrorist attacks. Their governments have started questioning the causes and aims of these assaults. As a result European countries were faced with the problem of accommodating their Muslim communities. Islam in Europe is now the second biggest religion after Christianity. European governments are now faced with Muslim claims which they are reluctant to fulfill. The European native communities feel threatened. Natives fear that their Muslim communities will change their way of living and impose their own Islamic way on the European society.

1.3 Literature Review

Much has been written about Muslims in Europe in the twentieth century. Some writers, such as Bernard Lewis (1993), explain Muslim radicalism as a form of a “clashes of civilizations”, a theme repeated in Samuel Huntington’s book *The Clash of Civilizations* (1996; see also Benjamin, 2005). In the last few years many political analysts have speculated on this issue. Some writers attribute this radicalism to social and economic reasons, others to social discrimination and political marginalization (Esposito and Burgat 2003). Olivier Roy (2004) and Felice and Dassetto (1996) associate Muslim radicalism to an identity issue and the attempt to reconstruct a new Islam adaptable to the modern Western way of life. Jocelyne Cesari relates it to political marginalization (1995). Roy, like Cesari, studies the political involvement of Muslims in Europe, however he thinks that political Islam has failed because of the inability of Muslim communities to integrate as political entities (1992). Moreover, a great deal of the literature about Muslim radicalism in Europe revolves around the issues of citizenship, discrimination and multiculturalism such as liberalism versus traditionalism, compatibility of

Islamic religious practices and values versus modern Western way of life, and the compatibility of Islam and democracy (Diamond, Plattner and Brumberg, 2003).

Maureen Mauseen (December 2006) analyses the concept of “governance” in accommodating Muslim communities in European countries regarding certain issues. On the other hand a number of analysts tend to examine the traditions and faith of Muslim communities in an effort to explain the causes that are impeding Muslim immigrants and European Muslims from fully integrating into Western societies (Ramadan, 1999). For example Olivier Roy, in his book *La Laïcité Face à L’Islam*, studies the viability of Islam as a religion in a “*laïc*” state like France (2005). In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 9/11, other analysts focused on the inability of European Muslims to identify with their host society (Al-Azmeh, Fokas, 2007) and their aim to attain “*Dar Al Islam*” where all Muslims will live in one “*Umma*” (Lewis, 2003). This study departs from the aforementioned works by examining the impact of host government policies on immigrant Muslim communities.

1.4 Research Question and Case Selection

This study examines the impact of government policies on second generation immigrant Muslim communities living in the United Kingdom, and France. It investigates whether the radicalization of Muslim youth is a product of these policies or the result of a normative system, which manages the everyday life of individual Muslims. England and France were selected for this study because they enjoy some commonalities as well as some differences. The Muslim communities living in these countries differ in terms of ethnicities, and traditions. However, both communities are Sunni Muslims and immigrants of former colonies. Although the UK and France are both secular democracies, each one of them has its own particularities. France is a

“*laic*” republic where religion is confined to the private sphere, Great Britain is a secular state although, the Church of England plays an important political role.

Since a quantitative approach is not possible at this stage, the thesis will be based on books, articles, working papers, thesis and websites as well as other sources dealing with general and specific subjects, concerning Islam as a religion and Muslim immigrants, living in Europe. The study will focus on specific issues. Indicators such as the controversy around the *Hijab* issue, religious teachings in public schools, and in the case of the United Kingdom, government response to British Muslim claims for *Sharia* rule to be adopted in parallel with British civil law are used to allow this research to examine the causes of radicalization among Muslim immigrant communities in the UK and France. Consequently, this thesis tries to answer the following questions: How do government policies impact Muslim attitudes towards their host countries? Do these policies play a role in radicalizing Muslim communities? Why do young European Muslims search in the Koran for answers to their everyday problems? Since Western societies claim to be the defenders and promoters of human rights, is it not the role of Western governments to care for their citizens and especially their youth? What are the reasons behind the increased radicalization of these Muslims? Why after many years of Muslim living in Europe, the issue of assimilation became a debated topic?

1.5 Map of the Thesis

The next chapter examines the Muslim presence in Europe from the Middle Ages till our days. It describes the Christian European relationship with the Muslim East in periods of conflicts and peace as well as their economic, strategic and social interactions. It also considers the process of Muslims’ infiltration and settlement in Western European countries. Chapter three

and four undertake a comparative study of Muslim communities in France and England. They examine the nature of the political systems in both countries, their particularities, benefits and shortcomings. Chapter three looks at the French Muslim community whereas, Chapter four speculates on Muslim community living in the UK.

The *Hijab* issue in France and the ratification of the new law banning it is used as a case study to illustrate the impact of government accommodation and response on Muslim community claims. Moreover, the thesis looks at the identity politics of French Muslims, their integration and assimilation into the French socio-political life. It stresses on the direct and indirect impact of government policy in helping, or hampering, immigrants' mobilization into political pressure groups and their actual political role inside and outside the French government. It measures as well, Muslim opportunities for participating in the government decision-making. On the other hand, British Muslim claims concerning the education of their children and the adoption of *Sharia* laws is used to illustrate British government's reaction to and accommodation of their Muslim community. It also looks at the role that the poor socio-economic status of British Muslim, plays in radicalizing second generation immigrants. The thesis looks as well, at the identity issue of second generation British Muslims and examines its causes. It finally explores the problem of terrorism in the UK and the government's provisions against it as well as its repercussions on the British Muslim community. The conclusion compares and discusses the differences between the assimilation policy of the French Republic and British multiculturalism and whether these variations in government policies differently impacted their respective Muslim communities' attitude towards the state.

This study does not pretend to find a definite solution to the problem of radicalism in the West. However, it tries to assess the importance of one of the variables that might have an

important impact on Muslim youths namely the role of government's policies in radicalizing the Muslim communities. Finally, the thesis considers some possible ways to alleviate the problems generated by Muslim radicalism in Europe.

Chapter 2

Historical Background

2.1 Introduction

Proximity facilitated interaction between the people living around the Mediterranean sea. In antiquity Greece exported its philosophical doctrines to the Middle East, and later the Middle East exported its Christian faith to Europe. Peoples around the Mediterranean Sea have been exchanging goods, ideas and, belief throughout the ages. Later, the Muslim religion spread around the Mediterranean basin. It reached North Africa, the Middle East and parts of Europe. This chapter looks at the history of the Muslim presence in Western Europe namely France and the United Kingdom.

2.2 European Interaction with the Muslim World

European interaction with Muslims started in the eighth century when Muslim armies invaded Spain through the Straits of Gibraltar in 720 AD. “This self-assured sense of divine mission was certainly a key factor in the success and rapidity of subsequent conquests”, wrote Tarik Mitri a Lebanese political analyst (Al Azmeh, Fokas, 2007, 19). The Muslims were driven by their belief in Islam and the necessity to transmit their faith to the whole world. After their conquest of the Iberian Peninsula they headed to France and settled between the outskirts of Toulouse and the Bourgogne (Arkoun, 2006). They lived in Septimania and its capital Narbonne from 719 until 759 AD. In 732 AD Charles Martel and his Frankish army stopped the

Muslim expansion into Europe, winning a decisive battle at Poitiers. Since then the Europeans maintained different forms of economic, social and strategic relations with the Muslim world. Many Muslims who reached Europe at that time married, settled and became European citizens. Still, throughout history, relations between Muslims and the Europeans were marked by hostility and tension. Enmity was caused by the occupation of Spain, the fall of Constantinople in 1453, and the siege of Vienna in 1683.

In 1492 the last Muslim stronghold in Western Europe Granada in Spain, fell to the Spanish inquisition. Few years later the Christian orthodox city of Constantinople was captured by the Ottomans. The fifteenth century witnessed the Ottoman conquest of Asia Minor and other areas in Europe. In the Middle Ages, the crusades wars had poised the European Christians against their Muslim counterparts. The propaganda of vilification of the Islamic religion started with the Islamic invasion. Arabs were identified as pagan, and anti-Christ (Arkoun, 2006). The crusaders mobilized a great number of Europeans to conquer the Christian holly lands through this propaganda.

In the nineteen century England and France started colonizing countries in North Africa, the Middle East and East Asia. Colonization initiated a new wave of immigration into Europe. It is worth mentioning that long before the West started invading and colonizing the Middle East a cultural colonization had began in the early nineteen century, through Christian missionaries dispatched to Syria. Cardinal Lavigier who worked for a rapprochement between the Christians and Muslims, established the African missionary society known as the White Fathers because of their white dresses (Arkoun, 2006). Missionaries established schools and universities in different

Arab countries, namely the Syrian Protestant College of Beirut in 1866 as well as many Catholic French schools that are still operating today.

The biggest influx of Muslim immigrants to Europe started after World War II. Europe was then in urgent need of cheap labor for the reconstruction of its cities. In the 1950s a heterogeneous category of Muslims immigrated to Western Europe under the “*Guest arbeiten*” scheme. Immigration to Western Europe continues today and many immigrants are still entering these countries as asylum-seekers, refugees or even for the benefits these European countries provide in terms of quality of life.

2.3 History of the Muslim Community in France

Following the Spanish Reconquista some Muslims fled the inquisition to the Languedoc-Roussillon, in the south of France where they settled (Arkoun, 2006). In the French town of Narbonne, archeologist Philip Senac argues that Le Fraxinet, where Muslims settled until the end of 972, was not only a strategic place for robbers but a place intended to hinder relations between the Italian merchant cities and the rest of the Christian world. Based on the work of Charles Verlanden, French scholar Francois Clement argues that Muslim slaves or slaves of Muslim origin lived in France between the 12th and the 15th century AD (Ibid). Medieval Europe benefited greatly from the Muslim invasions. The Muslims transmitted their culture, traditions and knowledge of philosophy, geography and medicine to Europe. They helped Europeans improve their living standards, military, tax and law systems. Muslim scholars such as Al Faraby and Avicenna had a strong influence over Medieval European thought. Voltaire praised the flourishing of sciences during the Caliph’s reign. The Arab army’s retreat from Spain was followed by the Ottoman invasion of East Europe.

During the Ottoman period, Western European states maintained diplomatic relations with the Muslim world through “Capitulations”, a diplomatic practice that allowed European countries to be sovereign in their own embassies. Extraterritorial rights, both legal and economic were granted to European countries. Moreover, the Ottoman ambassadors to European countries were given a temporary stay whereas resident ambassadors were dispatched by the European states to Istanbul. From their early encounters, the relationship between European countries and the Ottoman Empire was strained, and governed by rivalry, tension and mutual mistrust. However during the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent and the French Valois King Francois I, in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, the first important strategic relation between the Ottoman Empire and the French Kingdom began. Francois I and Suleiman cooperated against Charles Quint. In 1543, 300,000 Ottoman soldiers led by Barberousse landed in the French town of Toulon to help French troops conquer the town of Nice (Arkoun, 2006). The capitulations granted by the sultan to his French counterpart enhanced commercial relations between the two countries. After Sultan Selim’s defeat against the Russian army of Empress Catherine the Great, and the signing of the Jassy Peace Treaty, which ended the war between the two countries, the Sultan asked for the help of the French Monarch Louis XVI to build his armed forces on the European model (Ibid).

In the eighteen century French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte’s expedition in Egypt strained relations between the France and the Ottoman Empire. After Napoleon’s defeat in Egypt and the signing of the 1802 Amiens peace treaty which ended the war between France and England, the Emperor started mending his relations with the Ottomans. Napoleon’s policy was overtly pro-Ottoman. His alliance with the Ottomans served his interests against his greatest

enemy Great Britain and helped him bend the will of the Russian Tsar¹. The French enjoyed some kind of favoritism during this period. They were the first Europeans to sign a trade agreement with the Ottomans.

These historical facts demonstrate centuries of peaceful relations between the Muslims and Christians of Europe although, relations were also marked by rivalries and conflicts. The slave trade flourished. Muslim slaves served on the royal ships in the 7th and 18th century. Christian slaves were also captured to serve the Sultans and the Ottoman nobility. In the nineteenth century, France's bloody colonization of the North African states strained France's relations with the Muslims. Indigenous Muslims under French rule were denied civil and political rights. They were discriminated against by the French "*colon*". When Napoleon III issued in 1870 the decree of collective naturalization, the majority of Jewish Algerians became French citizens. Very few Algerian Muslims took the French nationality however, because they did not want to adopt French civil law (Arkoun, 2006). Also the naturalization law did not give North African Muslims equal rights with the native French. It is only in the early twentieth century that the last attempt was made for a full naturalization of Muslims in France through the 1919 law. The French government's recognition of Muslim religion in 1905 ended a long period of enmity between the French and Muslims.

North African Muslim immigration to Europe started in the nineteenth century. The first North African immigrants were not viewed as Muslims. Religious practices, problems of cult and cemeteries were not an issue for these Muslims. During the First World War the French recruited whole regiments from their colonies to fight side by side with the French army. North African recruits did not enjoy the same army status as the French and they were under

¹ "The Napoleon series: Franco-Turkish relationship during first empire," at: <<http://www.napoleon-series.org/>> (Accessed 29 April 2009).

continuous scrutiny (Arkoun, 2006). The massive participation of these immigrants was rewarded by the building of the Paris Mosque in 1936, whose inauguration triggered acts of violence by of nationalist and Catholic groups.

After World War II France witnessed the most important influx of North African immigrants. The need for unskilled labor attracted thousands to France. Algeria's independence also initiated another wave of immigration. Algerians who sided with the colonizer fled their country and settled in France. Only a little time later, the recession of 1970 in Europe affected the immigration policy of France. New regulations were put into place allowing only family members of immigrants to enter the country. Immigrants who came initially to remit cash to their home countries decided to bring over their families and settle. They were eligible to citizenship and became French citizens. Immigration to France continues till now but with different dynamics. The Muslim community in France is one of the largest and fastest growing in Europe. France is home to more than half of the Muslim community in Europe. The census of 2000 shows that, out of 4 million Muslims living in France 40,000 are converts of French origin and 800,000 are second generation young Muslims (Arkoun, 2006).

2.4 The Muslim Community in England

For many centuries the Arabs established communities in different parts of Asia and Africa for trade purposes. Britain hired many of these traders from Yemen to sail to England in merchant ships either transiting or settling in the British Islands. They were called the Lascars. Many lascars worked in the ports, railway stations or opened small businesses or even became beggars and slaves. Archeological evidence in different European cities confirms the presence of Muslims in the British Isles, since the beginning of the eighth century. In his book *Surat-el-Ard*,

Muslim cartographer Muhammad bin Mussa Al-Khawarizmi mentioned a number of places in Britain demonstrating a good knowledge of its geography. The Anglo-Saxon king Offa of Mercia imprinted the Muslim inscription of “*La Ilaha Illa Allah*” (there is no God but Allah) on his coins.² A Ballycottin cross bearing a Kufic Arabic inscription of *Bismillah* and dated around the ninth century AD was found in southern Ireland. Furthermore, the prologue to Chaucer’s *Canterbury tales* dated 1386 AD, refers to Muslim scholars such as Averroes (Ibn Rushd) and Avicenna (Ibn Sina). The first known English Orientalist, Adelard of Bath, who lived in the twelfth century AD, was an Arab scholar and the tutor of King Henry the second.

For centuries the Ottoman Empire was the most powerful in Asia. The Catholic Church felt threatened by the Ottoman expansion. Pope Pie II wrote: “in the past we were harmed by the conquest of Asia and Africa... but now we are attacked in Europe. Islam is a complete negation of Europe.”³ Britain, however, entertained very good relations with the Ottomans. During that period many British converted to Islam and settled in North Africa. In Algeria alone there were 5000 English converts, some of them were taken into captivity by the Moors and were forcibly converted to Islam (Rath, Penninx, Groenendijk and Meyer, 2001). The first English convert was John Nelson, who voyaged to Tripoli in 1583. He was the “yeoman” of her Majesty the Queen’s guard (Matar, 1998). Renowned Ottoman eunuch, Hassan Agha, was originally from Great Yarmouth and his birth name was Samson Rowlie. Furthermore, the Ottoman general “Ingliz Mustapha” was from Campbell, Scotland. In the 17th Century, a quarter of the Ottoman timports came from England. In 1606, the English ambassador to Egypt, Benjamin Bishop, converted to Islam in 1630. By the seventeenth century two chairs were established in the UK at both Oxford and Cambridge Universities for Arabic studies (Matar, 1998).

² “Islam Awareness Week: Muslims in Britain,” <<http://www.iaw.org.uk/>> (Accessed 20 April 2009).

³ *Ibid.*

Alexander Ross completed the first translation of the Koran into English in 1649 (Matar, 1998). During this century Britain relied heavily on the Arabic translation of books in philosophy and medicine. Dr Henry Stubbe was the first English scholar to write favorably about Islam. He was described by biographer Anthony Wood as the most noted person of his age. He wrote about the rise and progress of Islam and denounced the vilification of the prophet Mohamed and his religion by Christians. His book was never published, however six manuscripts were passed around in a clandestine way and three of them were preserved and stored in the private library of Reverend John Disney.⁴

The British East India Company was created in 1600. It controlled the spice trade and was ruled by a powerful Indian Muslim dynasty called the Mughals. Many English employees of the British East India Company brought back home Indian nannies and their families. Several of them joined the royal household, such as Abdul Karim Munchi who was Queen Victoria's favorite secretary. During the colonial period Muslims from the colonies migrated to Europe. The colonies contributed in the wealth and prosperity of colonial powers. Britain, conquering Nigeria, Egypt, India and Malaysia, witnessed an influx of immigrants from these countries. Some Indian Muslims came to the island, settled and became British citizens. Some of them established businesses. Indian-born Muslim Sake Dine Mohammed, who came to England with Captain Baker, "an officer with the East Indian Regiment", founded in Brighton a fashionable bath known as "Mohamed's Baths."⁵ He married and settled in Ireland where he wrote and published a book about the British expedition in the West Indies from his Indian point of view. As early as 1857 a shelter home for the rehabilitation of destitute Yemeni immigrants, was

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

opened in London.⁶ In 1913 the journal *Muslim India* and *the Islamic Review* were founded. In 1916 Lord Headley, who also embraced Islam, requested funds from the government to build the London Mosque which was opened in 1941. Conversion to Islam continues in England until now.

The biggest influx of Muslim immigrants from East Asia to England started after World War II. England, like France, was then in urgent need for cheap labor for the reconstruction of its cities. Two additional factors contributed to the increase of Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigration to England: The partition of India and the construction of the Mangla Dam in Pakistan. These events initiated the displacement of large populations seeking new places for settlement.⁷ Some settled in Pakistan and some others looked for job opportunities elsewhere to buy plots of land in their home countries and build houses for their families. However, the 1972-1974, recession in Western Europe resulted in the amendment of Britain's governments' immigration policy. The new policy restricted immigration to family members, taking into consideration the rights of the families to be reunited, as opposed to the older policy which contained fewer restrictions. Immigration to Western Europe continues today and many immigrants are still entering these countries as asylum-seekers or refugees. England is home to one of the largest Muslim communities in Europe after France.

2.5 History of Muslim Radicalism in Europe

Fundamentalism is a global phenomenon which has manifested itself historically in different forms. Human history has witnessed different modes of radicalism. Radical political movements, such as the fascist movements, were the instigators of the bloodiest wars in history,

⁶ "Islam for Today: Muslims in Britain, Past and Present," at: <http://www.islamfortoday.com/> (Accessed 19 April, 2009).

⁷ *Ibid.*

namely the Second World War. Islamic and Christian radical groups were also responsible for many such wars, namely the Spanish Inquisition which reached Northern Europe, the Hundred Years War and the massacre of the Saint Barthelme between the Catholics and the Protestants, and the civil war in Algeria between the Jihadi Islamists and the secularists. Fundamentalists aim at the radical change of society or the political system based on their professed ideas. Whether Islamic, Christian, Jewish, Hindu or Buddhist, fundamentalist groups call for the return to the “original purity and integrity of the faith” (Denoeux, 2002, 57). Throughout the twentieth century many Islamic, Christian, Jewish and other religious fundamental movements were established. It is important to differentiate between Islam, which means embracing a political blueprint, and fundamentalism, which is concerned with the ideology of the faith rather than its politics (Denoeux, 2002). Moderate Islamists work on the gradual purification of the soul and a peaceful change within society towards restoring the rules of Islam and the *Shari’a*. Fundamentalists, on the other hand, do not hesitate to use violence in order to engage in politics, and reach the same objective. Fundamental groups, throughout history, played important roles in the politics of their countries. The Muslim Brotherhood was founded by the Egyptian Hassan Al-Banna in the early nineteenth century in opposition to a new global and secular movement that appeared after the 1919 revolution that ended the reign of the Sultanate. (Al-jubai, 2000) The Egyptian society was then divided into two antagonistic groups: the Islamists and the secularists. The occupation of Palestine and Western support to the Jewish state spurred a big wave of resentment and protest within Arab societies. During the first part of that century, the Arabs mobilized around radical Arab national movements. Religious movements in all Arab countries were repressed and outlawed. Towards the end of the last century, the failed political ideology of Arab nationalism professed by late Egyptian President Jamal Abdul Nasser opened the way to

the emergence of new Muslim radical groups. According Roy (1992) Islamist movements are as old as Islam itself. However, Islamists could not realize their objectives.

A wave of fundamentalism swept the globe towards the end of the twentieth century. A Christian fundamental Protestant grouping called neo-conservatives or born again Christians appeared in different parts of the United States. Former US President Georges W. Bush is one of its advocates. Around the middle of the twentieth century many radical groups appeared in the Islamic world from Asia, to the Middle East and North Africa. Radical groups such as Islamic Jihad forged their ideologies from “*Salafism*”, meaning the return to the ideas of the “*Salaf*” or the pristine form of Islamic faith. “*Salafism*”, is a basic ideology that nurtured, throughout history, many Islamic movements in different times and spaces. The Iranian revolution of 1979 served as a model for the radicalization of both young *Shi’a* and Sunni Muslims throughout the Islamic world. The war in Afghanistan against the Soviet troops fostered one of the most dangerous Muslim radical groups, Al-Qaeda, led by Saudi national Osama bin Laden. Al Qaeda initially armed by the United States government and funded by the Saudi Kingdom to stop the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. This group follows Ibn Taymiya’s principle of “*Jahilya*” which calls for *Jihad* against apostates. After the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan, Al-Qaeda was transformed into a political force and directed towards the west and its Arab and Islamic allies. Rulers such as Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan, Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, the Saudi king and other heads of states in the Arab world are considered apostates according to Al-Qaeda and other fundamental groups. According to Al-Qaeda, it is the duty of every Muslim believer to fight for the eradication of these rulers. Bin Laden performed “*Hijra*” in Afghanistan to escape oppressive rulers.

Extremists gained more cultural space in all Islamic countries. Bin Laden's fanaticism and anti-Americanism attracted young Islamists who killed themselves in terrorist attacks in New York, Spain, London, Paris and other cities. Quintan Wiktorowicz identifies two kinds of Salafi Jihads: The nomadic Jihad and the reformist Jihad. (Wiktorowicz, 2001) The Salafi Jihadis believe in strict adherence to the Koran. These "Jihadis" consider the use of arms in their jihad from "Bilad al Hijra" against the US and the apostate rulers. The nomadic *jihadis*, on the other hand, call for "a defensive *jihad*" aimed at the protection of the Islamic community. Various branches of Islamic *jihad* exist in the Islamic world. *Al Gama'a al Islamiya* in Egypt, the FIS (Front Islamique du Salut) in Algeria, the Islamic reformist movement and *Harakat Al Islah wal Tajdid* in Morocco, the Islamist *Nahda* in Tunisia, *Jamat Al Tabligh*, in Pakistan. These radical movements are influenced by esoteric movements, namely the Sufists, who profess a mystic approach to the faith. (Arkoun, 2006) Modern radical groups organizing in several European cities forge their ideology on these movements which have a strong impact on their culture. Many radical Islamic communities in Europe are based on groups that were established in their countries of origin. The Milli Gorus for instance is a Turkish ethno-national Islamic organization based in Cologne, Germany.

These groups are not without historical legacies. Theories explaining the rise of radical Islamist movements invoke four historical events. Arab defeat in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, the de-linking of the dollar from gold, the 1973-75 oil crisis and, the policy of open economy (*Infitah*) in Egypt and Turkey. In Algeria, Islam was equated with nationalism. It was the common element that unified the Berbers and the Arabs against the French colonizer. In Morocco, for instance religion was used to mobilize popular protest against French attempt to introduce Berber law (Anderson, 1991). In Tunisia, however, Islam did not play an important

role in fighting colonialism. Still, secular welfare states emerged in post-colonial North African states with wide popular support, promoting entrepreneurship, nationalism and discouraging Islamic ideologies. However the political economy of these pre-industrial states was based on welfare policies financed by *rentier* economics. Nevertheless, they soon found that they were unable to cope with public demands (Anderson, 1991). The instability of oil based economic revenues helped Islamists infiltrate secular societies and take over the social service role of governments. In their effort to safeguard their autocratic regimes Arab rulers discouraged ideology-based organization and encouraged identity-based parties (Anderson, 1994). However the repressive measures taken by Arab governments empowered Islamists. Imported Western political liberalization helped Islamists step into the politics of the country. The sweeping first round victory in the parliamentary elections of 1992 prompted the Algerian army to cancel the second round which triggered a civil war that lasted many years. The secular *Front Nationale de Liberation*, (FNL) was replaced by the radical Islamist group, the *Front Islamique du Salut*, (FSI) (Maddy-Weitzman, 1997). In Tunisia however, President Zayn el Abedine Bin Ali allowed Islamists to run for elections as independents. They scored 14% of the votes. Consequently, the Tunisian regime banned all newly formed Islamic movements. The leader of the Tunisian Islamist movement, Rashid Ghannushi was sent to exile in London where he frequently gives interviews, and preaches in mosques influencing young British Muslims. Ghannushi's discourse has grown more radical.

Like in North Africa, fundamentalism also exists in the Indian sub-continent. Pakistan was a Muslim majority state by birth however, the new government was committed to secularism. In 1977 Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto imposed new regulations based on the laws of the *Shari'a*. He banned alcohol and changed the weekend days from Saturday and

Sunday to Friday. Bhutto later, introduced penal court measures in accordance with Islamic jurisprudence. Many Islamic schools or *madrassas* were founded to teach poor young Pakistanis.

The Pakistani population is mostly Sunni. They belong to different Muslim schools of jurisprudence; the *Hanbali* school which includes the *Wahabi* and *Ahl el-Hadith*, the *Hanafi* school which includes the *Barelvis* and the *Deobandies*, and finally the *Shi'a Ithna Ashariya* school. The *Madrassas* indoctrinated most of the leaders of Islamist movements in Pakistan. *Jamaa't Islami* was founded in 1941, and has always been closely linked to the Islamist movement in Afghanistan. *Jamaa't Islami* played a very important role in supporting the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Pakistani Islamists were actively involved in politics after 1977 with the ascendance to power of General Zia-ul Haq. (Roy, 2001)

England and France are still primary destinations of Pakistani and North African immigrants. Analysts believe that Europe is going through an identity crisis as a result of globalization. Sociologist Jan Nederveen Pieterse's argues that globalization in sociology is related to the emergence of a new "world society" (Pieterse, 1995). Native French and Britons feel more and more detached from their pristine culture. They are embracing new habits and building new beliefs. Increased mobility has reduced world distances. People of different ethnicities and cultures are increasingly interacting with each other on all social and economic levels. Globalization reshuffles and re-designs all social, political and economic concepts along global lines, beyond national boundaries (Friedman, 2005). French political analyst Olivier Roy claims that Muslim communities in Europe are built around two criteria: Ethno-cultural and purely religious (2004). Muslims living in Islamic countries identify with the ethno-cultural model. First generation Muslims settled in the West easily identify with their traditional culture. However, second generation Muslims who were born and are living in the West have totally

different aspirations and perceptions. A “neo-ethnicization” or construction of a new culture is underway, according to Roy (Roy, 2004). Traditional cultures do not usually survive second or third generation immigrants in modern societies. Western acculturation, therefore, transcends ethnic and national boundaries. Young European Muslims are detached from the culture of their parents. They are building new cultural and national particularities. Consequently, new Muslim groups are emerging in Europe, and some of them are radical in nature.

Radical Islamist movements in Europe are backed and financially supported by wealthy Islamic states such as Saudi Arabia, Iran and Pakistan, who have found a fertile ground inside the deprived Islamic immigrant communities of the West. Felice Dassetto argues that “Dans l’Islam transplante émerge des leaders mandats par les états ou par des instances Musulmanes” (Dassetto, 1996). Competition between these Islamic states for the leadership of Islam, prompted them to spend huge sums of money in promoting their version of the faith. Consequently, the new modern Islamist movements appearing in Western Europe are mobilizing second generation Muslim immigrants. A new Muslim ideology questioning national belonging through the reactivation of the idea of the “*Umma*”, where Muslims of all ethnicities live together, was adopted by second generation European Muslims (Dassetto, 1996). Starting the 1980’s, new forms of belonging peculiar to the European space emerged. Second generation European Muslims’ reconstruction of a new community or re-Islamisation depends on individual choice. Personal questions related to religion are raised: How to be a good Muslim in a non-Muslim and modern society, in the absence of family, peer pressure and, pristine culture? How can Muslims practice and teach their children the Muslim faith in *laïc* and secular societies?

2.6 Conclusion

History demonstrates the presence of Muslims in Europe centuries before their massive immigration after World War II. However the Muslim population in Europe was very small. The increase in their number in the last few decades explains their claims. They are now an important political pressure group. Their concentration in certain parts of France has given them a significant electoral power. These facts explain the concerns of the native population towards their expansion. In the old days they were not considered a separate entity. They were non-existent in the minds of the French government officials. The next chapter will speculate on the French government's attitude towards and its history dealing with the issues raised by Muslim citizen and whether government policies towards the Muslim community helps explain the rise of Muslim radicalism in France.

Chapter 3

The Politics of French Muslims

3.1 Introduction

The wave of violence that struck the French suburbs on 30 November 2005 was attributed to social and economic reasons. Analysts disagree over the causes that triggered the unrest; however, Jocelyn Cesari believes that the riots in the French *banlieu* should not be solely attributed to economic and social marginality (Azmeah and Fokas, 2007). Marginality impacts a specific sector of society that includes different ethnicities and religious groups, not only Muslims yet, the events in the French suburbs involved only first and second generation North African Arab immigrants of the former French colonies. Immigrants of different race and ethnicities and of the same social class and condition were not involved, Arab Muslims have always been regarded separately by the French people, and according to Cesari issues of ethnicity, poverty and religion are exaggerated. The real problem lies in the fact that Arab immigrants have always been excluded from French political life (Azmeah and Fokas, 2007).

Some political analysts disagree with Cesari. They ascribe the French Muslims' issues and radicalism to either a fundamental opposition between Islam and the West, or the incompatibility of Islam with modernity (Azmeah and Fokas, 2007). Others adopt an essentialist, Orientalist approach which has characterized for many centuries the Arab world in particular and Muslims in general. The Orientalist approach presupposes that all Muslims are fervently religious, observe the five pillars of Islam and try to convert people to their religion (Said, 1993).

What appears to be a Muslim issue may actually be an Algerian or Tunisian or Moroccan or even Senegalese or Turkish issue. Do non-Muslim immigrants experience the same kind of

discrimination? And if they do what is holding back these ethnicities from protesting in the same way Muslim communities do? What is the role of government policies in promoting or discouraging anti-discriminatory and anti-racial sentiments among the natives? Is “political frustration assuming a violent expression, taking the form of “Jihadi Salafism” as some analysts claim, or is it a case of social discrimination and or stigmatization of Islam?

These questions will be looked at by examining the different facets of the French Muslims’ socio-political life, their relationship with the French government, and the French natives. The *hijab* controversy in the French public schools will be the focus of this chapter because of the two year of unrest and disputes it has triggered in France. The next section examines the nature of the French political system where six million Muslim Live and who’s national assembly does not include everyone Muslim deputy.

3.2 Identity Politics in France

In the 1970’s, the French government created subsidized housing in the suburbs of Paris. French citizens of different ethnicities occupied these HLM’s. A few years later, the population of French “*de souche*” started moving out, in part because they did not want to live next to the immigrants. This situation led eventually to the formation of ghettos (Azmeah and Fokas, 2007). “*Les pieds noirs*” as native French call them, were initially brought to France as garbage collectors, workers, builders or the like. The new generation of immigrants are now educated and compete with other French for higher level jobs. The significant increase in their number since the 1980s has turned them into an important electoral force. Their voice is being heard now.

The sons and daughters of second generation North Africans are what the American writer Edward Said calls hybrids (1993). They are unable to identify with their country of origin and at

the same time they cannot identify with the host country. Although they consider themselves French citizens, entitled to all rights and obligations decreed by the French constitution, they are challenging the principles of *laicite* of the Republic and calling for new laws accommodating their identity and religious practice. According to Roy, Islamic religious issues do not necessitate the creation of new laws. Existing laws can solve all the problems put forward by the Muslim religion as much as they do for Christianity, Judaism, and other beliefs. (Roy, 2005)

As this thesis has already demonstrated, integration into French society has never been a smooth procedure. Whatever is the origin of immigrants, French society has always resisted integrating foreigners. In the nineteenth century anti-Italian sentiments claimed many lives in southern France. Until now they call them "*les Ritalles*". French racism against the Jews was manifested in the famous Dreyfus affair. Talking about integrating immigrants after more than a hundred years of their presence in France shows that this procedure has failed. However, a study conducted by the New York University Center for Dialogues, on various ways of integration of immigrants into host societies, concluded that Muslims in France as compared to Muslims elsewhere in Europe, are the most European in terms of mentality, identity and tolerance for other religions.⁸

The Catholic Church considers the integration of Muslims into French society impossible because Muslim faith does not separate between state and religion, as argues the Church. The Koran is a collection of divine messages that cannot be changed. It is a hindrance to Muslim integration. Islam is a religion that calls for conversion. According to the Catholic Church, what is needed is assimilation and not integration of Muslims into society. Islam is perceived in France in particular and Europe in general through a normative approach which assumes that

⁸ Center for Dialogue, "Muslim youth and women in the West: Source of concern or source of hope," New York: University Center for Dialogue, at <<http://islamwest.org/>> (accessed 20 January 2010).

Muslims in the Diaspora or at home try to organize their lives along the normative principles of Islam. Discrimination takes the form of protection against the native culture and values against those of Islam.

Teenage Muslims of North African background living in the suburbs were uprooted from their original societies and cultures. They have been discriminated against by the host culture in different areas such as education, politics, and employment. They turned either religious or delinquent. Reports by the RG (*Renseignements generale*), a police monitoring agency, described the French suburbs in summer 2004 as showing menacing signs of isolation (Laurence and Vaisse, 2006). Moreover, the majority of inmates in French prisons are Muslim and the majority of unemployed youths are also Muslim. The Muslim community in France suffers from alienation, desperation and socio-economic handicap. Muslims are stigmatized by French society as rapists, “*veilers*” and thieves (Azmeah and Fokas, 2007). The “*banlieu*” is always referred to by French police as a dangerous zone where only French Arab Muslims feel free to penetrate. It is home to destitute French Muslim youths with a lost identity.

Identity is the incorporation of each person’s historical experience in his present life. When one says that he is British or French he is adopting a defined cultural and historical experience. (Roy, 2004) Many North African Muslim families came to France hoping to return one day to the “*bled*”. They left their country looking for a better life. Hisham, a young Muslim, believes that his father spent his youth working hard and dreaming about his hometown. He brought up his children the traditional way. (Demaison, 2006) At that time the French government did not do much about integrating immigrants into native society. They were hoping that these people will ultimately retire in their home countries. However, the 1970s economic

crisis led the French government to naturalize immigrants who were no longer willing to go back home.

Young Muslim dissent is also partly due to the attitude of their parents towards the culture and traditions of the host country. Their inability to identify with the host culture compounded with their rebellion against their pristine culture has resulted in confusion, and loss of identity. The headscarf symbolizes identity and freedom, argue veiled Muslim girls. Muslims are now exhibiting their identity in all public spaces through their dresses, their fasting and praying five times a day.

Many political thinkers believe that a new Muslim community is under construction. Every person needs to identify with a community, a nationality, a religion, or culture. What we are witnessing now is the emergence of a new transnational Islam based on “Salafism” where culture, ethnicity, and race have no role or space. This Islam has no political or national boundaries. Its followers only believe in the Prophet Mohamed, the Koran and the Sunna. Many French girls are adopting this new Islam in opposition to the traditional Islam of their parents. The construction of this new Islam is accomplished through local mosques where believers pray and listen to sermons of the *ulama*. It is also promoted by student associations where young second generation Muslims meet and interact. The French National Council of Muslims, for instance, is a “Muslim church” fashioned on the new conservative Baptist model. (Roy, 2004). The Council promotes the interests of the community’s identity in reference to the “*Ummah*” (Ibid). New style Islamic groups in the West are using Western human rights and anti-racial concepts to be reorganized as a distinct minority able and willing to integrate into the multicultural societies of their new countries (Ibid.). Mosques and Muslim student associations promote their faith regardless of ethnicities or pristine culture. Islamic student unions support

new “forms of socialization based on general identity” (*Ibid.*). “Born again” Muslims or converts look to “*fatwas*” with by imported or local “*Ullamas*” who give their Islamic interpretations on all issues. They also surf the net for Islamic sites like “Fatwa.com”, looking for solutions to their problems (*Ibid.*). They will consult Islamic publications of radical Muslim organizations in search for answers that satisfy their individual needs and desires. In these ways Islam gives a cure for the ills of modern life. Some Islamic publications deal with each and every problem of human life. Most of the times, these publications exhibit a distorted idea about Islam.

The integration of second generation Muslims was not achieved through “assimilation and multiculturalism” argues Roy, but rather through the reshaping of the pristine culture and the recasting of new sets of values that correspond with young Muslims new life in the host country (*Ibid.*, 270-271). Many western political analysts tend to believe that Islamic radicalism has been bred in dysfunctional environments, such as Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The fading away of social organizations that used to provide some social and cultural assistance to the deprived sector of the society which is mostly Muslim, opened the way for different radical Islamic groups to emerge. They ceased the opportunity to rally around them young deprived Muslims. Where is the role of the social democratic government? Why did it allow Muslim radical institutions to assume the role of the savior?

French political analyst Olivier Roy argues that the issue is not Islam but the way the French society views itself (2004). Roy argues that France is going through a crisis of identity (*Ibid.*). The increase in the number of, conservative voters is indicative of the native French’s distrust of the system as well as their strong feeling of threat posed by the Muslim community that they once hosted. Native French believe that the Muslim religion is fanatic and submissive. They feel that Muslim claims are threatening their way of life. The prevailing argument among

French officials, following the riots in the French suburbs, was that the Muslims are testing the ground for a broader scheme (Laurence and Vaisse, 2006). However, is there a real threat to the French social and political system or is it a continuation of identity crisis, the alienation wrought by modernization and other factors? And if not, what is the aim of this propaganda?

3.3 France's Political System

In the West the long struggle between the Catholic Church and the state ended with the separation of state institutions from religion. The Treaty of Westphalia (1648) ended 30 years of religious wars in Europe and initiated a new European order, based on the concept of national sovereignty. Since then, Europe slowly has developed new ways of governance inspired by the French revolution and the 1848 European civil wars which called for democracy, freedom, and nationalism. Consequently, separation between the state and the Church became a reality in Western Europe. The February, 1795 Constitution was the first French text confirming this separation. Later, Napoleon Bonaparte signed the "Concordat" with Pope Pius VI reinstating some of the Church's privileges. In the twentieth century, the ratification of the 1905 French law formalized the separation between the Church, and the civil government. The new political philosophy rested on two initial concepts: secularism and *Laicite*. Secularism is not anti-religious or anti-clerical, it is the gradual disappearance of religion from public and political life. *Laicite* however, defines religious status through authority and jurisdiction. A state can be secular without being *laic* and be *laic* and secular at the same time.

France's political democratic system is based on the principles of *Laicite* which aims at creating a neutral space where religious beliefs have neither a role nor are a target. According to Roy, "*La Laicite...a contribue a forger et a fixer l'identite Francaise*" (Roy, 2005, 42). The

political “*Laïcité*” is a set of laws rather than a system of thought. Christianity influenced the principles of “*Laïcité*” in France. “*Laïc*” thought is linked to a precise religious and historic experience. It presupposes citizens’ identification with the nation and the state. The long years of struggle between the Church and the State, was not about dogma but dominance. Jesus said in the Bible, “Return to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God”.

The 1905 French law forbids the government from interfering in the internal affairs of religious institutions. *Laïcité* does not question religious principles. The 1905 law gave the government the task of organizing places of worship. For years chaplains performed their religious duties in public schools, hospitals, and prisons. Nevertheless, following the scarf ban, priests, to avoid double standard, were forbidden entry in certain public schools (Roy, 2005). French laws apply equally to all ethnic, social and religious communities. Anti-discriminatory laws have been progressively promulgated since 1945 and, after the international proclamation of human rights. These laws are based on the republican principle of equality. They stipulate that French citizens are born and remain free and equal in rights and obligations. The constitution of the Fifth Republic asserts that discrimination is a violation of the principles of equality and fraternity. Moreover laws against discrimination are not only found in the constitution but also, in the criminal law, the civil law and the administrative law.

Laïcité has contributed to the secularization of French society. In France, but also in Europe in general, a decline in religious practice among Christians has been noticeable. In the 1950s France was still an observant Catholic state. In the 1960s and 1970s French Catholics became less observant of their religion. Now only around half of French citizens say they are Catholic and many do not believe in God. At the same time, throughout all these years, the number of observant French Muslims increased noticeably. In defending the principles of *Laïcité*

French citizens defend their identity. They feel that Islam is a threat to their political system. French critics and politicians call for an Islam “*a la Francaise*”.

In conclusion, the political system of the French government is anti-discriminatory in nature for it defends the citizens’ human rights regardless of their ethnicity, race, and religion. The next section examines the socio-economic conditions of French and their impact over their mentality and believes.

3.4 Socio-Economic Status of French Muslims

Since France is a *Laic* state, ethnic and religious affiliations are considered a private issue. Consequently, the government restricts recordkeeping. Statistics are conducted by private institutions and by certain public departments in accordance with their needs. According to the estimates of the French Ministry of Interior, French Muslims are 7 to 8 per cent of the total French population of 65.1 million (Couvreur, 1998). Differential birth rates show that the percentage of Muslims under the age of twenty is 20 to 25 per cent. Former Interior Minister Jean-Pierre Chevènement declared that half of the Muslims living in France are French citizens and the other half are waiting to acquire the French nationality. According to official estimates, the rate of fertility among immigrants has decreased since 1982. The fertility rate among Algerian immigrants went down from 4.3 per cent in 1982 to 3.2 per cent in 1992. It has also decreased a little among Africans, where it went down from 5.1 per cent in 1982 to 4.8 per cent in 1992 (Couvreur, 1998). Nonetheless, the fertility rate among immigrants is still high compared to the entire French population. France is the number one immigrant destination in Europe. In 2004, around 140,000 individuals immigrated to France from all over the world, more than 90,000 originated from North Africa (INSEE, 2004).

According to estimates of the same source, second generation North African males are three times more likely to be unemployed than a native French of the same age. Unemployment affects Muslim immigrants more than any other community. Although 30 per cent of North Africans living in France are educated out of the 18.8 per cent of unemployed immigrants in France, 26 per cent of them are Algerians (Couvreur, 1998). The percentage of unemployed Algerians who immigrated to France before the age of 16 is 39 per cent whereas the percentage of unemployed Algerians who immigrated after the age of 15 is zero (Ibid). These statistics reveal that unqualified immigrants who came to France at an older age were ready to take any job offer, whereas younger immigrants who grew up and were educated in the host country faced difficulties finding employment. According to a study carried out by the French anti-racist organization *SOS Racisme* the unemployment rate among Muslim immigrants is twice as high as among the overall French population. A study conducted by *SOS Racisme* about the success rate of 240,000 job applicants competing over 20,000 job offers concluded that applicants with non-European first names are one and half times more likely not to be chosen for the jobs (Couvreur, 1998).

Despite all the obstacles that immigrants are facing in the labor market, the 1996 census shows a progress in their social status. Many are wealthy now and run their own businesses. Statistics reveals that only 29 per cent of North African immigrants are poor and 53 per cent are middle class citizens (Couvreur, 1998).. According to these statistics the socio-economic status of French Muslim community has improved, however discrimination is still strong within the labor market. The following section studies the widely debated *hijab* topic inside French public schools.

3.5 The French Government and the *Hijab* Problem

The violence that hit the French suburbs in November 2005 was expected. The accidental death of two Muslim girls, chased by the French police, shocked the Muslim community. But this was not without reason. The French Muslim community has become more articulate and the number of Muslim women wearing the veil has been steadily increasing since the 1980s. In 1989 three Muslim school girls were expelled from Gabriel-Havez College in Creil (north of Paris) for refusing to uncover their heads. This incident initiated the first controversy regarding wearing the veil in French public schools. The parents of one of the girls appealed to the court. The ruling of the “*conseil d’etat*” was that wearing the scarf in public schools is not a violation of the French law. For many years school directors have tolerated school children wearing ostensible religious garments such as crosses and Jewish yarmulkes.

The *hijab* controversy increased tension among college students. Violence related to these issues became more frequent in public schools, among students of different faiths. In January 1990, three Muslim school girls were also expelled from Noyon College for wearing the veil. One of the parents accused the school director of calumny. Consequently, the school teachers went on strike protesting against the *hijab* in public schools. This time, the court overturned the parents claim and declared that all French citizens should respect the principles of *Laicite* in public schools. In 1994 the French Education Minister Francois Bayrou issued a Ministerial Decree, differentiating between discreet symbols of faith and ostentatious ones. During this same year around a hundred Muslim school girls wearing the *hijab* were expelled from different public schools in France. This time, however the court did not overturn the principles’ decisions, despite a protest led by the students of *Lyces St Exupery* in Mantes la Jolie, in support of the

hijab. Even a twenty day hunger strike by a young Muslim woman from Grenoble could not reverse the decision taken by the school for her expulsion (Weill, 2006).

On the other hand in 1993 the director of *Lycee Ronsard* reinstated two Turkish girls whom he had expelled for wearing the *hijab* after the Administrative Tribunal of Orlean overturned his decision. In 1999 the *Conseil d'Etat* overturned forty-one out of forty-nine expulsions of school girls wearing the veil. It is worth mentioning that the number of veiled girls in public schools, according to the Ministry of Interior's estimate was 1,254 in 2003, a fraction of one over a hundred of the total number of French Muslim girls (Laurence and Vaisse, 2006).

In July 2003 President Jacques Chirac commissioned a group of investigators to examine how the principles of *Laicite* should be implemented in the public sector. The "Stasi commission" issued a report in December of the same year recommending the ratification of a law forbidding school children from wearing ostentatious symbols of religion. Wearing religious symbols in public schools is a violation of the principles of secularism reported the commission. In 2004, a law was issued, banning all visible symbols of faith in public schools. On 2 March 2004, a large majority voted in favor of the law after it was extensively debated in the French general assembly. Although the French Council of Muslim Religion was invited to participate in the debate, it was not granted testimony on the issue (Laurence and Vaisse, 2006).

Law No: 2004-228 regulating the *hijab* issue forbids primary and secondary schools students from wearing ostentatious symbols of religion. It does not apply to other public spaces such as universities or institutes for higher studies. The law does not specify the kind of items to be banned. Large crosses, Jewish yarmulkes' and Sikh turbans are among the banned garments, however a heated discussion regarding the issue was conducted among deputies in the French general assembly. The *Laicite* status of the French Republic was the focus of the debate.

According to some members, such as Minister Luc Ferry, the banning law defends France from comunitarianism and preserves the principles of *Laicite*. He argued that *Laicite* is threatened and the government needs to defend it through the ratification of a universal law that can be applied all over the nation. Luc Ferry argued that radicalism is impeding Muslim integration into French society and undermining France's identity.

It is certain that this law discourages the segregation and the organization of classes into religious, ethnic, and political groups. However human rights deputies argued that the law is discriminatory and facilitates the expulsion of Muslim school girls who will be once again confined to their family homes. On the other hand, women liberation groups voted in favor of the law because they believe that the veil is a symbol of submission and subjugation of women in the society. The majority of deputies voted in favor of the law because they felt the need to safeguard the principles of *Laicite* upon which the French Republic is based. Already some Muslim girls refuse to join physical education activities and life sciences classes. Teachers are encountering radicalized students who criticize certain science and history teachings, and refuse sometimes to attend classes on the ground that the material taught is against their religious beliefs. Nonetheless, the extremist group represented by Jean-Marie Le Pen was against the new law. They believed that banning the *hijab* will accelerate the assimilation of Muslim ethnicities into the French society. Others argued that in imposing the ban on Muslim girls the government is reducing their chances to be educated on the principles of *Laicite*.⁹ According to them, the only effective way for assimilating Muslims into French society is the institutionalization of Islam in France for it is the second largest religion in the country.

⁹ "Bienvenue au Senat, 2 March 2004," at: <<http://www.senat.fr>> (Accessed, September, 2009).

Polls revealed that 70 per cent of French citizens and 40 per cent of Muslim women supported the controversial law (Conseils-Sondages-Interviews, Feb 2004). According to a survey conducted by the group CSA (Ibid) 43 per cent are against it. Nonetheless, the passing of the bill sparked wide protest on February 2004. 7000 Sikhs went to the streets demonstrating against the new law. The French Jewish community expressed minimal opposition to the law whereas the Muslim community went to the streets protesting against it. After the passing of the law, some girls substituted their colorful “*echarpe*” with the *burqa*, the traditional black veil. Former Minister of Education Francois Fillon declared at end of the semester following the ban that 48 students were expelled from schools under the terms of the new law.

The phrase “ostentatious sign of religion” is vague, however. Does it include small crosses, or stars of David or Korans? The Stasi report mainly focused on the wearing of the veil. The Commission stated in its report that some Muslim girls may have freely chosen to wear the veil. Nonetheless, some of them were forced to wear it by their fathers or their husbands or sometimes their brothers. Some French natives consider that the veil is used by women who wear it to attract men. In fact some of the Muslim women are forced by their peers to wear the *hijab*. Furthermore, some Muslim girls are veiled in response to intimidations and pressures by imported Imams. However, others wear it by conviction. They believe that in wearing the *hijab* they are observing Muslim religious obligations. Others feel that the *hijab* helps them move around freely. The *hijab* preserves their dignity and protects them from male aggression.

Hilal, a French Muslim girl living in the Bois de Boulogne, on the outskirts of Paris said in an interview: “It is neither to please my mother nor my father, that I am wearing the *hijab*, it is only to please God”. Hilal’s mother has never worn the veil and considers it as a social handicap (Demaison, 2006). Dounia Bouzar, a French Muslim girl, believes that many young Muslim girls

think the same way Hilal does. According to these girls, commitment to God gives them strength and helps them face the criticism of Muslim and non-Muslim French as well as their own peers. Bousar claims that Islam does not create closeness with the parents. On the contrary the young Muslim girls use it to distance themselves from the cultures and traditions of their parents (Demaison, 2006). They refer to religious texts in defending their rights. For example, when their mothers pressure them to stay home they will answer that, nothing in the texts forbid them to do so, claims Bousar. Girls like Hilal believe that the veil is not an element of docility to men but an element of protection. To these girls, Islam has an answer to all problems and difficulties.

Nonetheless, the polls demonstrate that the majority of Muslim women are against the *hijab*. Remarkably, girls like Hilal are not so-called traditional Muslims. They are second generation North Africans born in France from relatively non-observant families. Some of them do not speak the language of the Koran and never had a Muslim religious education. For a casual observer these young women are taking a stance against secularism and modernity. In fact they are suffering from racism and neglect. They feel that the “headscarf law” is discrimination against them. It is a way to keep them away from proper education. The French media debating the issue did not make things better. On the contrary, it played an important role in stirring up the events which occurred during and following the application of the new law.

The French media played a major role in stirring the sentiments of fear among native French citizens. The front page headline “Fanaticism: the religion of the menace” of the French right wing weekly *Le Nouvel Observateur*, published in 1989, with the picture of a Muslim woman wearing the chador did not go unnoticed. Later, in reporting the incidents of 2003 and 2004 that triggered the riots, the French media was also responsible for stirring French natives

about the Muslim threat over the future socio-political status of their country. On the other hand the left wing press criticisms of the law of the scarf, as being racist, prompted more violent demonstrations by young French Muslims.

The majority of the French are against the *hijab* for it is by itself discriminatory and stigmatizing. The media has also highlighted other controversial Islamic issues. The question of Muslim holidays is one such issue. France is a neutral space where people are considered equal. The veil stigmatizes and labels its barer. It leads to a natural segregation within the global community. Communitarianism is counter the principles of *Laicte*. The French government does not interfere in the religious life of French citizens; however government officials find it their duty to interfere when the national community is threatened.

3.6 The French Government and Muslim Religious Education and Practices

The stance of the French government's regarding religious education in public schools is very clear. France's public institutions are entirely secular. The French government does not interfere in the religious curriculum of private Catholic, Muslim, or Jewish schools. Muslim religious colleges are small in number. The first Muslim school for children between the age of eleven and fifteen opened in Aubervilliers in the suburbs of Paris in 2001. Muslim families send their children to private religious schools to be initiated in the Muslim faith. The first private Muslim college was established in the French town of Lille following the expulsion of veiled Muslim students. Unlike many Catholic and Jewish schools heavily funded by the state, not a single Muslim school is subsidized by the government. They are largely funded by Muslim countries such as Saudi Arabia, through Muslim organizations. The French law allows subsidies for teachers in religious schools. However, the school is expected to operate under a *contrat*

d'association for three years. Through this contract, Muslim schools are only eligible for subsidies if they fulfill a list of requirements stated in the Debre law of December 1959. To be qualified for public funding religious Muslim schools should meet a curriculum and a standard of education fixed by the French government.

The imams teaching in private Muslim schools are mostly imported and funded by Arab Muslim countries. They are completely disconnected from French society and do not speak the French language most of the time. They preach an imported way of thinking incompatible with the principles of modernity and *laicite* of the republic. Former Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin suggested during his term in office in 2005 to educate the Imams on secular history, constitutional law and the French language.

The new generation of French Muslims is more religious than their parents and has no attachment to their countries of origin. They consider themselves entirely French and have all the rights French citizens enjoy. In the past most French Muslims wanted to be buried in their native countries. Now many are asking to be buried in France. Polls reveal that between 24 per cent and 59 per cent of Muslims wish to be buried in France (Couvreur, 1998). The French republic has even helped organize Muslim cemeteries. A study conducted by Michel Tribalat of the National Institute for Demographic Studies, INED (*Institut National d'études démographique*) on a group of 13,000 Muslims, reveals that North African Muslims are the least observant of their faith. A higher percentage of practicing Muslims is found among Turks and Africans and still the Muslim community is more observant than the Christian one (*Ibid.*). The international marketing enterprise, IFPO (French Institute of Public Opinion), conducted a study in December 2007 on 537 eighteen years old French Muslims. The study revealed that the percentage of practicing Muslims is higher than Catholics. Furthermore, among practicing Muslims 44 per cent

are between 25 and 34 years old (*Ibid.*). Seventy-seven per cent of French Muslims periodically attend the mosques for Friday prayers (*Ibid.*). Seventy per cent of French Muslims observe Ramadan fasting, and 74 per cent of these are between 25 and 34 years of age. Moreover, 65 per cent of young French Muslims do not drink alcohol, and six Muslims out of ten wish to accomplish their pilgrimage to Mecca (*Ibid.*). These statistics suggest a rise in religiosity among French Muslims. The increase in Mosques attendance is a clear indicator of the degree of youth's interaction with radical Muslim organizations.

Despite its commitments to other religions, the French government is reluctant to fund the construction of Mosques. In 1926 the Mosque of Paris was the first Muslim religious place to be inaugurated in France. Today, two third of prayer spaces are run under formal associations, regulated by the 1901 law. They are eligible for subsidies from the social action fund and other local departments (Laurence and Vaisse, 2006). Beyond the legal aspect, mosque constructions and restorations are carried out through local offices. Certain municipalities have helped their Muslim communities establish places of worship. In Strasbourg, for instance, the municipality helped restore several old neighborhood mosques. The Rotterdam municipality is now taking into consideration mosques construction in its urban planning. The French law allows the building of mosques and other places of worship. However, many mosque building requests were rejected by different municipalities for political reasons (Laurence and Vaisse, 2006). On the other hand permission for building mosques were given in different times and spaces where electorates play an important role. Former Interior Minister Jacques Debre denounced the rejections of mosque building. Mosque constructions usually include high minarets and big amplifiers for the call for prayer. For these reasons local communities sometimes complain against the mosque's visibility and audibility.

Funding of mosques construction is mostly provided by the immigrants' countries of origin and Muslim countries such Saudi Arabia, mainly through Muslim religious organizations. The French Muslim community argues that if the French government recognizes them as citizens they are entitled for government financial support for mosques construction. Financial difficulties of the French Muslim community have further hindered the founding of big mosques. There are only eight big mosques scattered all over France. Still, this is a proof that Islam is well implanted in the country (Couvreur, 1998). Church organizations have provided Muslims with prayer rooms within their premises. In the capital's suburbs the parking lots of the HLM (*habitation a loyer modere*) inhabited by French Muslims were transformed into places of worship. Muslim men meet in these places after work to pray and socialize. Certain district mosques are mainly used by old people. The young generation meets in mosques such as the *al-Da'wa* Mosque in Paris where almost two hundred youngsters gather every Saturday to attend seminars dealing with different social and religious issues (Couvreur, 1998).

3.7 The Political Role of French Muslims

The French constitution defends French citizens against discrimination. However, the Muslim community mostly composed of Muslim immigrants was banned for a long time from French politics. The French government has always rejected the Anglo-Saxon approach of institutionalized minority politics. Nonetheless, efforts were made lately to involve the Muslim community in the country's political affairs. President Jacques Chirac launched in 2002 the idea of diversification in public offices to recognize the multiethnic nature of French society. His Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin appointed the first two government deputy-ministers from the

beurre community. Halawi Mekashara was appointed Deputy Minister for Veteran Affairs and Tokia Saifi, Deputy Minister for Sustainable Development. Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy also appointed in 2004 a French born woman of North African descent as a Prefect. Moreover President Chirac insisted on integrating children of immigrants in the Ministry of Education and appointed a North African as chancellor in the ministry. Subsequently the communist party started recruiting children of immigrants in high posts. The party appointed as national secretary former head of *SOS Racism*, and as senators two North African women (Laurence and Vaisse, 2006). Furthermore six new deputy prefects of immigrant descent were appointed following the November 2005 unrest. According to Laurence and Vaisse the French government started quietly favoring ethnic and racial minorities in areas of education and public administration. (2006) In February 2004 the French national assembly voted the Lelouche law which increased protection against racial and ethnic discrimination in January 2005, an organization called HALDE (High Authority for Combating Discrimination and Promoting Equality) was established by the National assembly. This organization is open to direct discrimination complaints from any French citizen on the basis of race, ethnicity, or religion. It has a budget of 11 Million Euros. (Halde, 2005)

Furthermore, starting in 2004, private French businesses became more aware of the dynamics of pluralism in the work space. They started recruiting employees from different ethnic groups to fill certain positions they were never previously given the opportunity to occupy. Whether the French government's anti-discriminatory effort have an effect on de-radicalizing Muslim youth, or whether it is too late remains to be seen.

In his effort to unify the Muslim community, former French Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy worked on the founding of a Muslim representative council that can help reshape a

modern French Islam. Consequently, the French Council for the Muslim Religion was established in 2003. It was initially conceived to be a link between the Muslim community and the government; a channel for French Muslims to convey their claims and grievances to the French government. However, as it was noted earlier in the study, the council was not even given the right to testify in support or against the *hijab* law in the general assembly session of March 2, 2004. If the French government is serious about integrating French Muslims it has to respond to the community's needs at the social economic and political levels. Fighting discrimination at the labor market helps employ more immigrants and improves their socio-economic status. On the political level, responding to the community claims to a certain extent may empower the moderates in the community.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter examines the role of the French government in the rise of radicalism within the Muslim community through different socio-economic and political aspects. As proven in this chapter French citizens are given the same rights on paper regardless of their race and religion. However the problems of the French Muslim community have been long forgotten in practice. Recently, the French government started reacting to the community's political claims which is an important step towards integrating the community into French society. However, is the government doing enough in fighting discrimination and decreasing the feeling of alienation evident among members of the Muslim community?

Prior to the issue of *hijab* the problem of Muslim immigration was not a religious one. As noted earlier in this thesis the *hijab* issue was never a national issue prior to September 11. The *hijab* was dealt with individually in a number of schools and most of the time the ruling was in

favor of schoolgirls wearing the *hijab*. Why did it become all of a sudden an issue to be dealt with on the national level? There is no record of increased violence between students of different faiths in public schools and yet the government capitalized on the issue and created a law which prompted violence in the suburbs. Obviously the law was a result of national fear of losing the French character or *laicity*. Chapter four will examine the role of the British government in the rise of fundamentalism among British Muslims.

Chapter Four

Muslims in Great Britain

4.1 Introduction

Unlike France, which has always rejected multiculturalism, Britain embraced it on different socio-political levels. British political ideology focuses on managing interaction among people of divergent cultures and ethnicities. It allows communities to retain their identities and encourages them to organize into cultural and ethnic groups. In concentrated areas Muslim communities can mobilize into political groups. As discussed earlier in this thesis Great Britain differs from France by being secular and not “*Laic*”. The Church of England is established by law and plays an influential role in British public life. This chapter examines the role and influence of the British government on the rise of Muslim radicalism in the UK. Issues such as, education in public schools and the social and economic status of the Muslim British community are looked at, so as to explain the reasons behind the rise of religiosity among the members of this community. This chapter focuses on education in Great Britain to demonstrate the extent to which the British government has gone in accommodating its Muslim community. Moreover, examining the case of the Muslims’ request for the implementation of the *Shari’a* shows that despite its accommodative stance on some issues, the British government is adamant when British identity is in jeopardy.

4.2 Accommodating British Muslims?

The “*Hijab*” issue which instigated weeks of unrest in France was criticized by the British media and public. For the Anglo-Saxons the “*Hijab*” has never been an issue. Everyone in

England is free to dress the way he likes. Rabbis can wear their pleats and “*yarmulkes*”, Christians can wear any size crosses they choose, Sikhs their turbans, and Muslims their beards and scarves. The Church’s involvement in public life has probably made it possible for other religious communities to integrate into society.

England is home to the second largest Muslim community in Europe. The majority of British Muslims are of south Asian origin. They were recruited as labor workers to help reconstruct a devastated England after World War II. As in France, the economic crisis of the 1970s prevented immigrants from returning to their home countries. They were offered British citizenship. At the end of World War II a new political order was established in Western Europe based on the declaration of human rights. Immigrants were given the same rights as natives and benefited from the new governing laws. Minorities were given the freedom of worship and religious education.

Seemingly it has never occurred to European governments that one day they would be faced with the problem of accommodating their Muslim communities’ religious practices. However the growing number of Muslims in Western European states forced them to examine seriously the issue of accommodation when it comes to religious practices in public schools or state institutions, prisons, hospitals as well as the application of the *Sharia* law governing marriages, divorces and inheritance. Political opportunity structure theory argues that the political system and legislation influences the degree of maneuverability and ability of groups to engage into different kinds of activities. (Fetzer and Soper, 2005, 10) Consequently the institutionalization of Islam in Europe greatly depends on the legislation and political system of each and every European country. Virginie Guiraudon notes that the “character of institutions responsible for migrants is important-whether they are centralized, para-public, unitary,

politically insulated, or under judicial scrutiny and whether consultation with interest groups is institutionalized” (Fetzert and Soper 2005, 295). The nature of the British political system is an important variable in shaping immigrant communities’ lives and cultural practices.

4.3 The Policies of the British Government

The British parliamentary system empowers multiculturalism and ethnic diversity. It allows different cultural institutions to achieve political status inside the British government. England is a secular democracy where citizens of different races and ethnicities are represented. The state has always encouraged multiethnic education. The government supported the establishment of religious schools and institutions and believed in the dynamics of interaction between divergent ethnic groups. Britain’s decentralized parliamentary system allowed for local Muslim representation. The United Kingdom is a parliamentary democracy. The lower house or House of Commons includes members elected by popular vote. The upper house or House of Lords includes life peers, hereditary peers and bishops. British Muslims are highly concentrated in certain constituencies. Well integrated and organized Muslims were able to negotiate with the local government important social and economic issues such as introducing *halal* food in the cafeterias of public schools (Fetzer and Soper, 2005).

Although the socio-economic status of British Muslims hinders their capability to mobilize into influential political groups they are nevertheless able to effectively unite on the local level. There are many Muslim organizations in the UK. These include the Council of British Pakistanis, the Bangladesh Welfare Organization, the Kashmir Welfare Organization, the Quranic Arabic Foundation and the Iraqi Welfare Association (Ibid). With the encouragement of the labor government of Tony Blair Muslims formed the Muslim Council of Britain and

participated in the 1997 elections. For the first time two Muslim MP's were elected to the House of Commons and 217 Muslim Councilors won the local elections of May 2000. In 2005, 48 British Muslims, representing three of the major political parties participated in the election. Four candidates from the Labor party were elected. On the other hand prominent Muslims have seats in the House of Lords. On the local level, British Muslims were able to score positive responses to their claims. The Birmingham city office for instance, worked closely with the ethnic communities and responded to some of their demands. (Fetzer and Soper, 2005)

Starting with the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, both labor and conservative parties ratified a series of citizenship laws limiting and regulating the rights of commonwealth citizens from entering the UK. The 1976 Race Relation Act prohibits discrimination against race and ethnicity. However the law does not protect citizens from religious discrimination. Religious right is absent in the British law. In the year 2000, a ratified version of the Race Relation law including protection from religious discrimination was rejected by the Labor government. The next section examines children's religious education, a major area of cultural accommodation claimed by British Muslims.

4.4 British Muslims and Education

According to the Education Act of 1944 all public schools in Great Britain should start their day by a collective prayer. The Act did not specify the worship to be Christian. However in 1988 the Education Act was amended by adding a provision formalizing the Christian tradition. Schooling in Britain is compulsory. There are 25,000 state funded schools in the UK. Muslim children are found in three kinds of schools: Community schools, church schools and Muslim schools (Fetzer and Soper, 2005). Less than one per cent of Muslim children are educated at

home and very few are sent abroad namely to Pakistan (Ibid). In 1997 the Labor government worked for a pluralistic faith schools and approved the founding of the first Muslim primary school (Ibid). At the moment there are only five state-funded Muslim schools compared to 2,110 Catholic schools and 28 Jewish schools.

Muslim schools are required to teach the national curriculum. They are free to adopt a religious syllabus and teach their students the Muslim faith. In 2001 the government promised to increase the number of Muslim schools that should meet new legal standards. Usually Muslim parents choose their children's schools according to local availability. Some prefer single sex schools for their daughters others prioritize good teaching standards over single sex schools. Many Muslim parents enroll their children in Christian schools because of their superior teaching level as well as their ability to offer moral guidance. The schools supervised by the Church of England place no limits on Muslim admissions whereas Catholic schools usually do not accept more than ten per cent of Muslim students. Nevertheless, the majority of Muslim parents send their children to community schools. Due to the concentration of Muslims in certain areas, some inner-city community schools have Muslim majorities.

A study conducted by the Open Society Institute in 2005 specified different areas of concern for British Muslim regarding their children's education.¹⁰ Racism and Islamophobia in public schools as well as inadequate moral and religious tutoring are the main issues of concern for Muslim parents. The government has been active in responding to the needs of minority groups in areas of language, fighting discrimination and improving students' achievement levels. The local government is looking after specific minority needs in the areas of culture and religion. The Local Education Authorities (LEA) worked with some community schools to provide a

¹⁰ Open Society Institute, *British Muslims and Education. Muslims in the UK: Policies for Engaged Citizens* (European Monitoring and advocacy Program, 2005).

room for midday and Friday prayers, *Halal* food for lunches, and after school Muslim religious education.¹¹ LEAs enforced a provision allowing Muslim children to be away from school on *Ramadan* and *Adha* holidays. After a long struggle between the LEAs and Muslim parents, extra curriculum activities in some community schools were reconsidered and modified in a way respectful to Muslim values. Despite all local government's effort to accommodate Muslim students, parents are dissatisfied by what they consider a lack of understanding of their faith. A European Monitoring and Advocating Program study suggests that Muslim parents believe that since September 11 schools are not willing to openly discuss Muslim issues.¹²

Currently one hundred Muslim independent schools are operating in the UK. These schools are not required to follow the mainstream English National Curriculum. They prepare their students for a broader education. A significant time is spent on learning languages such as Arabic and Urdu for Pakistani pupils. Their education standard is improving. However, these schools were criticized by the Office for Standard Education (OFSTED) for lack of adequate premises, health and safety standards.¹³ Consequently, a new legislation was put forward that requires newly established schools to meet the national education curriculum and standards. The existing schools were given five years delay to reach the requirements otherwise they will be forced to close.

The debate regarding Muslim schools in England is centered on the principles of freedom, equal rights, and the interests of the nation. Muslim schools provide Muslim students an education in accordance with Muslim beliefs. They protect them from discrimination and Islamophobia and remove hindrances against the practice of their faith. Nevertheless, some organizations such as the National Secular Society make four arguments against the

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

establishment of new Muslim schools.¹⁴ They believe that Muslim schools are divisive. Children are not exposed to other ethnicities and faiths. They are isolated from the broader society. They believe that isolation hinders the process of integration. They are also concerned about easy indoctrination of Muslim children in radical ideas, because they believe that these schools do not pay enough attention to developing the autonomous and critical judgment of the students. Furthermore, Muslim schools are criticized for their inadequate teachings of the principles of democracy and multiculturalism. Children in these schools are not well trained in tolerance and understanding of other faiths and cultures.

In addition to regular schooling Muslim children attend supplementary schools that teach them the Koran and Islamic values. There are 63 Muslim supplementary schools registered at the LEAs and they are usually found in mosques¹⁵. Children are sent to these schools from the age of 4 or 5 till the age of 13 and 14. Teaching in the mosques is provided by local and imported Imams who have little knowledge of democratic values.¹⁶ Some specialists blame the poor achievement of Muslim children to the fact that they have to attend two hours of Islamic teaching every evening.

According to the Office of National Statistics, among all ethnic minorities Pakistanis and Bangladeshi teachers are the most likely to have little or no qualifications (London Office of National Statistics, 2002). Fifty per cent of Bangladeshi men, 27 per cent of Pakistani men and 40 per cent of Pakistani women have no academic qualifications.¹⁷ In 2000, only 30 per cent of children belonging to these two ethnicities succeeded in different GCSE exams compared to 60 per cent of children of Indian origin and 70 per cent of children of other Asian origins (Ibid). The

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

figures in 2003 reveal an improvement in the level of achievement of students of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin. According to the November 2004 statistics of the National Literacy Trust, 37 percent of Pakistani boys and 50 percent of Pakistani girls passed their GSCEs. Researchers attribute the low achievement of these students to different variables among which is a sense of alienation felt by Muslim children in Muslim schools. Some argue that low academic achievement among these children is due to social and ethnic reasons rather than to religion. Children with poor living conditions usually attend local schools in poor and deprived areas. According to government education organizations such as OFSTED and LEA, these schools have very low academic levels. The Department for Education and Skills is attempting to bridge the achievement gap felt in ethnic minority students through funding support programs. Poor achievement is also related to poor knowledge of English. Children of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin speak their mother language at home and have to learn Arabic, the language of the Koran, as well.

Further studies are quite popular among youngsters of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin. They are twice as likely as white students to enroll in programs in focusing on the General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ), and the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) qualifications. However few of them enroll in work-based programs because of their poor training qualifications.

There are no statistics regarding the number of Muslims attending higher education; however estimates by the Federation of Students Islamic Societies (FOSIS) reveal that there are over 35,000 Muslim students in universities and another substantial number studying abroad.¹⁸ According to the FOSIS few Muslim women are offered university seats. Many parents do not allow their girls to pursue higher education. The money factor is an important variable in

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

university enrollment, making it less likely for students of poor Asian families to enroll. In the UK the religious practices of Muslims in higher educational institutions are not institutionally accommodated. According to FOSIS estimates, 65 per cent of these institutions have Islamic societies that provide Arabic lessons and invite Muslim lecturers. However, currently, Muslim organizations are voicing their need for prayer facilities, counseling services and cafeterias that respect Muslim beliefs and values regarding *halal* food and alcohol consumption.

Muslim parents complain about their disproportionate representation in the community schools' governing bodies which prohibits them from participating in the decision making process. A research conducted by the Open Society Institute concluded that the curriculum in British schools includes little or no Muslim contributions in the field of culture, art, mathematics, sciences, history, astronomy and medicine. Researchers believe that introducing these topics will enrich the curriculum and will be beneficial to both Muslim and non-Muslim students. Introducing Arabic as foreign language alongside French and German would be welcomed by the Muslim community. Many Muslim parents wish that their children can attend religious classes within the community schools.

Many parents think that sex education is better taught at home because how the subject is taught at is often controversial to Islamic values. Many retain their right to withdraw their children from sex education classes.¹⁹ Despite all the efforts of the local and regional government in accommodating British Muslims, a large number is still dissatisfied with what the government has achieved so far. The Muslim community has many other claims which will be discussed in the following section.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

4.5 The Claims of British Muslims

The British Muslim community demands more recognition of its faith through the application of the Islamic law in civil matters. This includes marriage, divorce and inheritance laws. Muslims are thus demanding that the British government substitute the British civil law with *Sharia* law. This request has instigated heated debates inside the British government between conservatives and liberals. For example, the wives of some polygamist are allowed entry in the UK provided their marriages were executed in countries that recognize polygamy.

Curiously enough, the Church of England supported the Muslims in their claim. The Archbishop of Canterbury defended *sharia* law in a lecture he presented on February 2008²⁰. He argued that the Muslim request does not concern Muslims only but all other faiths including Judaism. The *Sharia* is the actualization and the practice of the revealed laws and it should be interpreted by judgment and common sense. Thus one should not consider *Sharia* as rigid codified rules. In his lecture the Archbishop criticized the principles of liberalism which do not take into account the decisions and motives of religious believers. The Archbishop's daring comments were strongly and quickly rejected by Prime Minister Gordon Brown who said that all British citizens must follow British national law. Furthermore, Dr Rowen Williams' lecture was met with protest and requests for him to resign from his position.

The application of *Sharia* law in its actual form has many negative implications. The recognition of Islamic law in areas of marriage, divorce and inheritance can be controversial to the laws of the land. According to Archbishop Rowan Williams it is important to distinguish between cultural and religious issues. Issues like apostasy, polygamy, and many others which strongly contradict English civil law are also controversial among Muslims.

²⁰ "France rejects Muslim Women over radical practice of Islam," *The Guardian*, 12 July 2008, at: <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world>> (accessed 16 January 2009).

Increased legal monopoly has negative implication on the lives of the weakest members of the community, namely women. Muslims are defending their claim by arguing that as long as the Islamic law of marriage is not recognized in the UK women are financially deprived when they face a Muslim divorce. This is in reference to those immigrants who return to their native countries, marry and return to the UK with their wives. For the British government the civil marriage is the only marriage recognized by the state. Introducing *Sharia* laws in parallel to British laws is thus controversial. Some Imams defend Muslim claims arguing that British laws are dear to British Muslims who are only asking for the application of *Sharia* civil laws compatible with the law of the land and in accordance with the universal principles of human rights. However some Pakistani men have refused to give their wives a civil divorce because they are entitled by the British law to give their wives half of their belongings. They instead file for a Muslim divorce in the Pakistani embassy.

The majority of British Muslim are against the application of the *Sharia* law. A nationwide survey of 1125 British Muslims revealed that 91.1 per cent respect the law of the land and 39.1 per cent respect the British law as long as it does not challenge their religious beliefs. Only 40 per cent of British Muslims are for the application of *Sharia* laws (Ameli, Faridi, Lindhal and Merasli, 2006).

These claims raised many questions among native Britons. They feel threatened by Muslims who are dramatically increasing in number. They fear that their country is being transformed into a Muslim state. This fear was translated into the recent founding of the ultranationalist British National Party (BNP). In a recent BBC program called Question Time broadcasted in October 2009, BNP leader Nick Griffin claimed that “We feel we are shut out of our country.” (BBC, October 2009).

The Muslim immigrant community in the UK has failed as well to mobilize around national political groups and integrate into British society, which raises the question: What are the reasons impeding their integration? Is it a matter of identity or government policies towards the Muslim community? Or is this rooted in years of poverty, discrimination, and deprivation?

4.6 The Socio-Economic Conditions of British Muslims

The 2001 census conducted by the office of London's mayor included for the first time a question on religion. The report revealed that two thirds of British Muslims are of south Asian origin. Twenty-four per cent are Bangladeshi, 22 percent cent are Pakistani, 7 percent are Indians and the rest come from other Asian origins.²¹

40 per cent of British Muslims were born in the UK. It is a young community with 50 per cent under 25 years of age. However, only 42 per cent of them are economically active. Moreover, a large percentage of Muslim women are economically inactive. According to the study there are different factors hindering Muslims' employment in the UK. Besides under-achievement and poor educational levels young British Muslims face discrimination and inappropriate training. Their socio-economic conditions make them prone to chronic illnesses and handicaps. According to the 2001 census conducted by the Office of National Statistics and the 2004 census of the General Registry Office for Scotland 24 per cent of Muslim women and 21 per cent of Muslim men are in poor health (Organization National de Statistique, 2004). Ten percent of Muslim men and 11 percent of women rated their health as poor. Fifty-two percent of British Muslims do not own their homes. Seventy-three per cent of Bangladeshi and Pakistani children live in households below the poverty line²². Furthermore, the 2004 census reported that

²¹ Jamil Sheriff and Aziz Sheikh, *Muslims in London* (London: Greater London Authority, 2006).

²² *Ibid.*

17 per cent of prisoners in London were Muslims compared to 8.5 per cent in 2001. The increase in the number of prisoners within the Muslim community is indicative of their deteriorating socio-economic conditions.

Young Muslim delinquents are easy prey to radical Muslim organizations. Muslim radical organizations funded by fundamental Muslim governments approach young unfortunate Muslims and offer them better living conditions against commitment and adoption of their fundamental ideas. These youngsters are then recruited as militants and suicide bombers.

Since September 11 British Muslims have been experiencing a growing hatred. According to a survey by the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS) in 2004, 40 percent of Muslim students have experienced Islamophobia. Another study by the Islamic Human Rights Commission revealed that Jews and Sikhs are recognized under the race definition whereas the Muslims are left unprotected against harassment and discrimination. In other words, civil law considers the Sikhs and the Jews as races whereas Islam is a religion. This is why Muslims are not protected under the above law. Moreover, the Derby Report stated, after an investigation commissioned by the Home Office, that British Muslims are consistently experiencing high level of discriminatory treatments all over Great Britain.²³ The government has not been so far receptive to the claims of Muslims for the amendment of the Race Relation Act to include religious discrimination. According to statistics carried out by London's Mayor's office the Muslim community is underrepresented in government. The 2001 census noted that 8.5 per cent of Muslims live in the capital.²⁴ According to their numbers and concentration into certain localities British Muslims should be represented by 169 Councilors and six MPs. There were actually only 63 Muslim councilors in 2000.

²³ *British Muslims and Education.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

As noted earlier in this thesis, Muslim women are free to wear the *Hijab* wherever and whenever they choose. The French law banning the *Hijab* was extensively criticized by the British media and public, nevertheless, it triggered an open debate on whether or not the Islamic attire should be allowed in British schools and public institutions. Much as in France, some argued that the *Hijab* is a symbol of women's submission and serves to control women's sexuality. In many Muslim societies the *Hijab* is forced on women by their fathers, husbands and spouses. Some Muslim girls were violently attacked by their peers for not wearing the veil. On the other hand, some young British Muslim women feel that the *Hijab* protects them and enables them to move freely around men without being harassed. They argue that men are more open and straight forward with women wearing the *Hijab*. For these women the *Hijab* is empowering and imposes mutual respect between the sexes. The wearing of the *Hijab* implies a rejection of the world where women are considered sex symbols.

Since the July 7 bombings of London's underground, Muslim women wearing the *Hijab* have been suffering harassment and aggression. They feel rejected and isolated from British society. The Head of the Council of Mosques and Imams advised them not to wear the Muslim dress to avoid attack. Some MPs warned the Muslim community from politicizing the *Hijab* arguing that England is not and will not be a Muslim state. On the other hand, the government has been very tolerant with women wearing the *Hijab* in certain areas. A new fire fighters' uniform was designed to accommodate Muslim women in the fire department. London police included the Muslim veil in the uniform so as to allow Muslim women to join the force. In 2000, the British government issued new guidelines allowing women to have a picture with the *Hijab* on their passport. However, health and security issues cannot be compromised. In hospitals women wearing the *hijab* are increasingly refusing to lift their sleeves inside the medical

facilities. Because of many incidents of impersonation Muslim women are now required to remove their *Hijab* discreetly to a women officer for identity check before sitting for the driving test. Despite all these changes undertaken by the public authorities in accommodating the Muslim community, many Muslims still feel alienated and strongly identify with Islam. Despite secularization, statistics show that a majority of 51.9 per cent of native British identify with the Church of England (Fetzer and Soper, 2005). How much accommodation will the British political system offer Muslims in the future? Only the future will tell, then the Muslim community's argument for more accommodation will cease.

4.7 British Muslim Fundamentalism and Identity

First generation Muslim immigrants did not focus on their religious identification. It is only after 1970 that they started to organize into religious institutions and groups. Muslim immigrants in England are organized in different Muslim religious groups, namely Deobandies, Wahabies and Barlevies. The division between them is so big that some analysts believe that it is inaccurate to talk about one Muslim community. Steven Vertovek estimates that there are more than 950 local level Muslim institutions in the UK (Fetzer & Soper, 2005). One could argue that the fact that these Muslim organizations united to form the Muslim Council of Britain refutes the theory of division between them.

A survey conducted by the National Review Online showed that 30 per cent of British Muslims would prefer to live under *Sharia* law and if given the choice they will move to a country governed by this law.²⁵ Surprisingly enough they are second generation Muslims who were born and lived all their lives in the UK. Christian Lunen interviewed 40 young Muslims of different economic and educational backgrounds, races and ethnicities. When asked “what is the

²⁵ Patrick Basham, “Many British Muslims Put Islam First,” *CBCNEWS opinion*, August 14, 2006.

most important issue in your life”)? Sixteen young Muslims of South Asian origin, three of African descent and one white responded that their religion is the most important issue in their life.²⁶ These youngsters feel that living in the West makes it very difficult for them to practice Islam the way they want. Thirty-five out of 40 complained of discrimination, disrespect of their religion, and harassment. All have experienced stereotypes and Islamophobia. When asked, “What is your aim in life? Nineteen young Muslims out of 40 answered to be a good Muslim and serve the *Ummah*. Most of these youngsters were bullied, criticized and attacked in their schools because of their religious and ethnic backgrounds in addition to other reasons mentioned previously in the this thesis. As in neighboring France, second generation British Muslims feel disenfranchised and discriminated against by non-Muslims. They feel discontented toward the Western liberal democratic societies they live in and the consumerism of modern life. They express their disillusion through violence. They are an easy prey for radical Muslim groups who promise them a better and more honorable life. The creation of a Muslim community beyond the constraints of culture, language and ethnicity is a way of dealing with poverty discrimination, and Islamophobia.

While Islamists are believed to be a very small minority, they have already caused enough damage to their country and fellow Muslims. As noted earlier, some British Muslims belong to Muslim extremist groups such as the *Bareilly*, the *Neobandi*, and the *Ahel El Hadith*. All of them follow the mystic ways of Islam. Their relationship with God is felt through a charismatic leader who plays the role of a saint. They propose a re-Islamisation of the Muslim community through a return to *Sharia* law and the prophet’s way of living (Roy, 2004). Extremist groups are now well implanted in the European space. Their only identity is Islam, the *Ummah* and loyalty to their fellow Muslims. Radicalism in the UK is also financed by dysfunctional overseas extremist

²⁶ Christan Lunen, Personal correspondence, September, 2009.

Muslim societies such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Money is channeled through religious welfare societies which elect to help individuals who support the *Salafi* ideology.

Great Britain has witnessed many terrorist attacks which became more lethal after 9/11 and the 2003 invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq. Two of the perpetrators of the July 7, 2005 attack against London's underground were second generation British Muslims and the third was a British Muslim convert who lived most of his life in England. They were seemingly well integrated Muslims of a Middle class backgrounds. Native Britons became increasingly Islamophobic as a result of these attacks. The government responded by a series of amendments to the 2000 Terrorism Act enabling constables, immigration officers, and custom officers commissioned by the secretary of state and the commissioner of her Majesty's Revenue and Custom to detain and question any person at any border area of the Great Britain if suspected of attempting or preparing a terrorist act.

The majority of British Muslims believe that suicide attacks against their host country were a response to British foreign policy support of the US invasion of Iraq and its alleged war against terrorism. The 7/7 attackers were well integrated Muslims, well educated and had good jobs. Prior to the attack very few Muslims were believed to be involved in or to support terrorism. However, lately British intelligence services believe that a large number of British Muslims recently returned home after being trained in Afghanistan (National Review, 2009). Consequently the UK government has adopted new security measures to prevent any further terrorist attacks.

British Muslim fundamentalists have been closely monitored by the British authorities and intelligence units. Muslims have been arrested and questioned if suspected of extremism. According to the Terrorism Act amended in 2006, any suspect can be detained up to a maximum

of 28 days without trial. On June 2006 Prime Minister Gordon Brown passed a bill extending detention time of a suspect up to 42 days without charge.

After the 7 July attacks, many Muslims reported long detentions, lack of objectivity and unfair treatment by examining officers. Many individual incidents of violence against Muslims were also reported. The British media played a major role in stirring up feelings of hatred towards the Muslim community. The British Parliament then passed the Racial and Religious Hatred Act which protects the Muslims community from non-Muslim attacks. The bill makes illegal any discussion that stirs religious hatred.

Most of the Imams in UK mosques are new immigrants who do not speak good English. They are mostly adherents of the *Salafi* school of thought. Some of their views are aggressive and repressive, appealing to second generation British Muslims who find in them a way to release the frustrations caused by their experience of bullying and Islamophobia. They are often transmitting distorted messages of Islam, the Prophet and the Koran. They convey messages such as changing ones nationality is a form of apostasy that is only rewarded by hell, or it is a sin to help non-Muslims because it improves the economy of non-Muslim nations and that adopting laws other than the *Sharia* is an offense to Islam.

Decades of racism, poverty, oppression, segregation and isolationism produced ghettoized angry and frustrated communities. The new generation of young immigrants grew up feeling the cultural divide between them and native Britons. On their arrival to the UK Pakistani and Bagladeshi immigrants were offered jobs with the lowest pay. They lived with their families in the worst conditions. Their children are now educated and long for better living conditions. However they are faced with rejection in the labor market. Muslim fundamental organizations are helping them out and radicalizing them. They are identifying themselves with a global

Muslim community, free from cultural and ethnic limitations. Still, last but not least, these people do not amount to more than 3 per cent of the total number of British Muslims. Despite their small numbers, natives feel threatened by their presence.

4.8 Conclusion

Unlike France, the UK has been very accommodating to its Muslim community. The British government responded favorably to many of its Muslim community claims. As shown in this chapter the government has been very active in helping young Muslims improve their educational level through financing educational projects in Muslim and community schools. On the *Hijab* issue the British government has also been very tolerant with women working in different public offices.

Although it took the state a long time to recognize its Muslim community, when it finally did, it was quick to respond to its claims. Applying *Sharia* law alongside British civil law is very unrealistic because they strongly contradict each other. Nevertheless, the British government has been quick in acting favorably to its Muslim community's demands to respect its religious teachings, the demand for *halal* food in refectories, and to provide prayer rooms and many other demands.

The Church of England is supportive of the Muslims' claim of applying *sharia* laws on civil matters. The long interaction between religious institutions and state's rules and regulations made it easier for the Muslim community to negotiate successfully their religious issues with the state. Britain's inherited Church-state relationship and the laws regulating it, encourage Muslims to negotiate with the government the same kind of relationship the government has with the Church of England. Young radical British Muslims armed with their

new human rights values are trying to achieve with the British state the same status the Church of England has had for centuries. As already noted, the percentage of radicals in the UK is very small. As was mentioned earlier in this study, although, only 3 per cent of all British Muslims are radicals, they were able to undertake several terrorist attacks that need thorough planning and good finances.

In July 2008 UK's secretary of state for Communities and Local government announced the founding of Muslim board of scholars and communities leader responsible for promoting loyalty to Great Britain and how to be a British Muslim in the twenty-first century respectful of women's rights and the laws of the country. A large amount of money was already spent on the education of community leaders and Imams responsible for Muslim children's religious teaching.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

5.1 Negotiating Culture

Whether inherent or invented, cultures exist and their importance cannot be ignored. They are essential in the construction of social groups. In every community some cultural features are more resilient than others and their existence depends on their necessity. Religion has proven to be the most resilient of them all. Nationalism is a nineteenth and twentieth century invention. Nation state building required new sets of traditions and values (Hobsbaum, 1983). Cultural metonyms were re-casted to fit the new position of European nations after the two world wars. Human rights values and the nation-state ideology were introduced to forge a new European identity. New boundaries and differences were created. French citizens identify with the nation. Ethnicity, race, and religion lost their place in France's public life. In the United Kingdom, however, multiculturalism enhanced the divide between races and ethnicities not only at the immigrant community's level but also between the English, Welsh, Scottish, and Irish peoples. Multiculturalism does not only imply tolerance and acceptance of other cultures, it also requires state recognition of ethnic, racial and religious rights, a fact that proved to be controversial in advanced democracies.

5.2 Comparing the Policies of the British and French Governments

This thesis has examined the role of government policies in radicalizing Muslims in both France and the United Kingdom. It explored the source of this new wave and its impact on both

French and British societies. The government's role in the rise of religious radicalism is considered in relation to their political systems, their similarities and differences.

The study concludes that although government policies are an important variable to be taken into consideration, it does not have a decisive impact on radicalizing second generation Muslims. Statistics reveal that in *Laic* France the Muslim community is better integrated than in secular Great Britain whose efforts at accommodating its Muslim community has yielded relatively little.

European countries have different approaches to immigrants' integration into their societies. The collectivist or pluralist model of government assumes that community institutions are necessary for the communities' integration and assimilation into the host country, whereas the individualist approach professes a better integration of immigrants in the native society through identification with the nation as a whole. The British model emphasizes immigrants' assimilation through race, and ethnic relationships, while France's model insists on a global and nationalistic approach. Moreover, the Church's involvement in British politics gave British Muslims a good argument in support of their requests.

This thesis has shown that the British multicultural and secular political system is much more flexible than the French individualist and *Laic* political system. The British government was more accommodating of its Muslim community in areas of education and religious practices than the French government, who banned all religious signs in public institutions. However the British government's accommodation efforts did not help make the country less prone to Muslim terrorist attacks. The magnitude of the 7/7 attacks on London's underground could have been almost as lethal as those of 9/11.

Second generation Muslims in both countries are using modern Western values to defend their claims for accommodation. The human rights based argument is a powerful tool, however it does not work in the same way in both countries. In England, for example, Muslims are using human rights arguments in order to receive more government aid for their schools. This argument does not work in France, where the public education system is purely *Laic*.

On the other hand, in democratic society, majority rule supersedes minority claims, and the latter is always subject to various socio-economic and political discriminations. No matter whether the minority is religious ethnic or racial its claims are always overruled by a majority who does not agree to them. A survey conducted in 2001 and 2002 by Roper Europe, on public support for state accommodation of Muslims religious practices in the UK and France, revealed that the majority of the population is against government financial aid to Muslim schools. Almost 50 per cent of the population in both countries favors the status quo, 20 per cent do not approve state funding of Muslim schools and, around 30 per cent in England and 40 per cent in France favor state funding of Muslim schools (Soper and Fetzer, 2003).

Although government policies may not promote radicalizing young Muslims, perhaps government social and financial care to the second generation of Muslims may help to deradicalize them.

5.2 Towards Greater Integration

Religious integration in Europe has never been an easy process. After decades of persecution and two world wars Judaism was finally recognized as Europe's second religion. Decades of religious fanaticism ended in the secularization of Christian Europe. The atrocities of the two world wars resulted in the emergence of a great number of atheists and non-believers

among the citizens of Western Europe. The world is now witnessing a return to religious values and beliefs. Europe is experiencing a crisis of identity as a result of globalization. What appears to be a conflict between *Laicite* and Islam is in reality a struggle between religion and *Laicite* and secularism. Instead of developing more secular traditions native Europeans are supporting new religious organizations and radical political parties such as the rightwing party of Jean-Marie Le Pen in France and the nationalist party in England (Roy, 2005). Confronted with a new wave of Islamism, European natives fear losing their identity whereas, second generation European Muslims are in search of a lost identity. Islamists succeeded in creating a global Muslim identity whose rules and regulations transcends cultural divides and appeals to Muslims everywhere in the world.

Some analysts argue that opposition to the attitude of Western governments towards conflicts in the Muslim world radicalized young European Muslims. Second generation young European Muslims are infuriated by Western governments' policy of double standards practiced in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The policy of successive US administrations in the Middle East is seen by the observers and the media as provoking horrible reactions because of the images portrayed on television of the horrors in Muslim war zones. Dutch cartoons representing the Prophet Mohamed with a bomb under his turban radicalized young European Muslim's and increased their desire for revenge.

The September 11 events have changed the attitude of European natives in respect to Muslims religious accommodation. It has created inside the native communities a feeling of insecurity and threat. The United States pressured European governments over security issues. Many laws were ratified, restricting movement and regulating the lives of Muslims inside and outside the European continent. The governments' security measures intensified the feeling of

alienation already strong among second generation French and British Muslims. They became more and more attached to their Muslim identity. Today the French and British governments are determined to fight any symbol of religious extremism. The new security laws are discriminatory and sometimes abusive. For example, the wife of a French man, wearing the *burqua*, was denied citizenship on the ground that she is not fit to integrate into French society. A new French law is being ratified forbidding Muslim women to wear the *Burqua* for it is against the principle of equality between the sexes. Radical European Muslims are a minority within their communities. However the majority of European Muslims suffer from increased hostility, abuse and Islamophobia.

History is marked by long lasting confrontations between the Christian West and the Muslim East. The issue between them has always been that of socio-economic and political dominance. Curing the ills of traditional Muslim societies is only part of the problem because radicalism in Europe is a product of European Islam. Consequently invading Iraq did not solve the problem either. On the contrary it is akin to adding oil to the fire.

With the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 the West has lost a powerful enemy. The loss of the Soviet Union as an antagonist prompted the creation of another powerful enemy, mainly the world of Islam (Said, 1993). In order to maintain its hegemony the United States of America was in urgent need of a new enemy. A crusade war was envisioned to establish a new world order on the premise of the theory of the so-called 'clash of civilizations' (Fukuyama 2006). The invasion of Iraq may be part of this vision.

9/11 created the feeling of Islamophobia in Western societies. Western governments stirred people's emotions and nurtured the sentiments of fear in their hearts and minds. The Western media was also instrumental in stirring sentiments of hatred against the Muslim

communities in Europe. Hostilities against Muslims were translated in different kinds of abuses and sometimes physical attacks.

“We are not hated for who we are, we are hated for what we do” wrote Patrick Buchanan (Buchanan, 2004, 80). The United States intervention in Iraq allowed the incubation of terrorism in that country. It has increased the number of young Muslim candidates ready to blow themselves up for a just cause. A hidden enemy was created. With or without government’s accommodations this enemy is ready to strike at anytime and anywhere.

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