

Muslims in Europe: Precedent and Present

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Muslims and Islam have been at the center of some of the most vital post-9/11 debates. In Europe, the controversy has intensified due to the conflation of the aforementioned discussions and the arguments currently raging in Europe surrounding European identity. In such parleys, the assumption has been that Muslims in Europe are an alien presence with a short and temporary history. This article seeks to demonstrate that historically speaking, this is not necessarily a foregone conclusion. The integration of Muslims and the recognition of Islam may take place through a variety of different ways owing to the specificities of individual European nation-states. However, they will need to consider the past precedents of the Muslim presence in order to appropriately organize the present and in looking to the future.

Introduction

It can no longer be seen as Islam *versus* the West;
it is Islam *and* the West or Islam *in* the West.¹

... the Hebrew-Christian background is
the root of European cultural identity.²

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In 615, supporters of Muhammad, Arabia's prophetic preacher, fled from their hometown to the Christian kingdom of Abyssinia. Having escaped persecution in their own land, they lived as a community of the new prophet's followers that was numerically insignificant in a predominantly non-Muslim kingdom. About fifty years later, `Uthman ibn `Affan sent Sa`d ibn Waqqas (a maternal uncle of that same prophetic preacher) as an envoy to China, thereby starting a process that within two generations would produce a community of Chinese Muslims who would be the main figures in Chinese trade for hundreds of years to come.

After the passage of roughly 1,400 years, similar situations could be seen all over what would become the European Union (EU) due to migration (although, unlike the Abyssinian situation, not usually because of persecution), indigenous conversion in member states,³ and normal demographic developments. Around one-third of all Muslims now live as demographic minorities in their host countries. By and large, they have thrived in these lands, including those of the EU, where legal standards promise general security and economic conditions promise general prosperity.

After 9/11, however, these EU communities were subjected to a huge amount of public scrutiny by the mainstream media, political circles, and European societies in general. Further tensions developed due to the 7/7 attacks on the London transport system in 2005. Many discussions assumed that Islam's nature was, in general, alien to European civilization and thus viewed members of these communities as suspect and potential threats to European societies. Clearly, many Europeans felt that the "threat" of *Eur Arabia* (an amalgamation of *Europe* and *Arabia*) was becoming a reality.

Several questions need to be raised at this juncture of European history, given that the European project is considering how to fulfill itself with such internal diversity. Although the Muslim presence in Europe is numerically close to insignificant when considered as a whole, the recognition and institutionalization of Islam in Europe are, nevertheless, symbolic of many challenges. This article cannot possibly explore all of these challenges fully, for doing is a long-term task. However, it does consider what some of those challenges are, even if complete solutions are open to discussion. But before that, it is necessary to put the Muslim presence into its proper historical context.

Muslims in Europe: Precedent

Suhayb ibn Sinan al-Rumi has been described as a blonde-haired and fair-complexioned Greek-speaking Byzantine slave. Born the son of Sinan ibn

Malik, who governed a city near the Euphrates in Basra on behalf of the Persian emperor, while still an infant he was captured by a Byzantine raiding party and subsequently sold into slavery in Constantinople. He eventually escaped and fled to Makkah, where he embraced Islam and is reported to have been selected as the temporary commander of the Muslim community and invested as such by `Umar ibn al-Khattab himself during the search for a permanent a leader.⁴

Unrelated to this anecdote of the first “European Muslim” is the Muslim armies’ expansion into several areas of the Mediterranean region on the European side during the seventh century, including Cyprus, the first future EU member that had any significant contact with Muslims. At that time Cyprus was ruled by the Byzantine Empire, which was then fighting the Levant’s nascent Muslim community. Although `Umar rejected plans for neutralizing this strategically important island, his successor `Uthman agreed, after intensive battles with the Byzantines, to let the Syrian governor conquer it.

Later on, Muslims entered Europe from its southwest corner: the Iberian peninsula. In a way, this means that Islam’s presence in the future United Kingdom officially started during the seventh century when Muslims landed at Jabal al-Tariq, known today as the British colony of Gibraltar.⁵ This eventual conquest of Europe ceased at Poitiers (France) in the early eighth century, and Islam established itself in most of the Iberian peninsula, especially in the south. The spread of Islamic rule took three years and consisted of few battles and significant local support.⁶ For example, Muslims are said to have first come to al-Andalus (Islamic Spain) in response to a local chieftain’s request.⁷ Al-Andalus is of singular interest to historians of Islam in Europe, as it represents the first and longest period of Islamic rule in Europe. But it is curious for other reasons as well, for it represents something that was a novelty in western Europe until the twentieth century: a multi-religious and multi-ethnic society.⁸

They [Christians in Spain] were by no means hostile to Muslim rule, but learnt Arabic (though they also spoke a Romance dialect) and adopted many Arab customs. Besides the Christians there were many Jews in the chief towns, who, having suffered under the Visigoths, actively aided the Muslim conquest, and do not appear later to have thought of revolting.⁹

Historians continue to examine and re-examine this phase in Spanish and European history for a variety of reasons. From the Western European perspective, this was the land from which the roots of the European Renaissance

sprung and countless innovations originated. Muslims (including converts from Christianity in al-Andalus), Christians, and Jews all worked together to create an area of Islamic civilization in Europe that left its mark for centuries to come.¹⁰ The Zahiri legal school, one of Islam's famed jurisprudential schools, developed in that land, although Andalusian Muslims generally followed the Maliki school (albeit after a brief adherence to al-Awzai'i's school),¹¹ as did some of the great Sufi teachers, among them Muhyidin ibn al-'Arabi and Shu`ayb Abu Madyan.¹²

Similar to Christianity and Judaism, Islam's roots lie in the Near East. However, just as Islam acted as a cultural stimulator in the Fertile Crescent, Central Asia, China, and Africa, so did it create Islamic cultures in Europe. In al-Andalus especially, historians have noted the Muslim intellectual enterprise that, in turn, carried on the classical Greek and Persian elaborations of science and philosophy. Previously lost to Europe as a result of neglect and destruction, these corpuses of works were later rediscovered by the scholars of Christian Europe. Studying them in Arabic, along with commentaries written by Muslim scholars, they translated them into Latin during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and thus initiated a series of events that are now viewed as precursors to the Renaissance. The translations from Greek, in particular, into Arabic rescued the classical Greeks' achievements from oblivion. The Muslim intellectuals of the day, unlike some of their counterparts in Christendom (or Muslim thinkers of other periods), preferred to translate the texts into Arabic and then evaluate them, rather than just close the door to possible sources of knowledge and enrichment.

Yet Europe learned far more than just the works of Aristotelian physics and the like from al-Andalus, where a "true Hispano-Arab culture had been created," for several breakthroughs in mathematics, medicine, and other sciences were also made there.¹³

First, the contributions of the Arabs to western Europe were chiefly in respect of matters which tended to be the refinement of life and the improvement of its material basis; second most Europeans had little awareness of the Arab and Islamic character of what they were adopting; third, the "gracious living" of the Arabs and the literary tradition that accompanied it stimulated the imagination of Europe and not least the poetic genius of the Romance peoples.¹⁴

That culture ended with the Spanish Inquisition; however, other Muslim societies were emerging in northern, eastern, and southern Europe.¹⁵ Further eastward, Slovenia is said to have had good relations with the region's

Muslims as far back as the eighth and ninth centuries. In 827, Arab Muslims led by Asad ibn al-Furat ibn Sinan (a judge of Qayruan) landed in Sicily. Unlike another Mediterranean island, Cyprus, which oscillated between Muslim and Byzantine rule until the end of tenth century, Sicily remained under Muslim rule until 1093, when King Roger I finally conquered it. Both he and his son and successor Roger II rejected the usual policy of undue discrimination against a land's Muslim inhabitants after it was conquered by Christians. Sicily never returned to Muslim rule, and while Byzantium lost Cyprus in 1191, it remained under non-Muslim (and non-Hellenic) rule only until 1571, when the Ottomans conquered it.

Less than a century earlier, Muslim civilization began to end in al-Andalus. Although some isolated and secret groups continued to exist in the Iberian peninsula until the twentieth century,¹⁶ Islam was declared illegal with the end of the Reconquista in the fifteenth century. Eastward, other Muslim communities began to materialize in Europe. The spread of Mongol armies during the thirteenth century into northern and eastern Europe left permanent Muslim communities in various localities, including the Tatars of Lithuania. These Tatars, it should be noted, are not to be "regarded as direct descendants of the Tatar Mongols of Manchuria ... They are distant scions of the Turkic-speaking Volga-Kama Bulgars."¹⁷ Although the exact year is uncertain, Lithuanian history records Islam's entry into that part of Europe as occurring in 1397, when Lithuania's Duke Witold captured some Tatars.¹⁸ By the eighteenth century, however, they had lost their native language and adopted Byelorussian. Islam remained a force of unity for them, and even up until the present day they have maintained a group consciousness.

The Khanate of the Golden Horde left many traces in its wake, as did the Tatar migrants. Many settled around Vilna in Lithuania, but so many went on to southern Poland that the census ordered in 1631 by King Sigismund III counted more than 100,000 Tartars.¹⁹ These Tartars swore on the Qur'an to fight for Polish independence in 1795 and also opposed the Russians in 1830 and 1863 during the country's uprisings. This history earned them respect and a favored place within Poland for two centuries.²⁰ The community suffered a grave loss during the Nazi occupation of Poland: close to 250,000 Tatars, among them the majority of the community's intelligentsia, were killed.

The final pre-modern chapter of European Muslim history, a full account of which is beyond the scope of this article, is the Ottoman-ruled lands of southeastern Europe.²¹ The final spread of this highly significant Muslim European state took place with the conquest of Crete from the Venetians in

1669,²² a development “that eventually resulted in one of the largest Muslim communities in the Greek world.”²³ Just as many other Muslim communities in contemporary southeastern Europe, however, this one no longer exists. The Ottomans’ main legacy in those future member states of the EU, as far as Muslim populations are concerned, are in Greece (which has a large Muslim community), Austria, and Cyprus (a little less than 20 percent of the population is Muslim). Other countries also retained Muslim populations, such as Romania (there were 300 mosques in Dobrudja alone after independence²⁴) and Hungary, but they are beyond the scope of this study. In addition, there is a long history of interchange between Europe and the Muslim world through trading relationships and, later on, colonial enterprises. More in-depth research is needed to uncover the history of the Venetians and the Genoese in the Arabian Gulf prior to the Portuguese, as well as other connections with Muslims beyond Europe.

As a result of these histories, many Muslim communities are still found in eastern, southern, and northern Europe; the majority of the western European communities are of more recent origin and are due to migration from former colonies (e.g., the United Kingdom, France, and the Netherlands)²⁵ or recruitment drives to end labor shortages (e.g., Germany, Sweden, and Denmark).²⁶ Conversions to Islam are also on the rise, with particular challenges and problems.

Despite mainstream Europe’s refusal to acknowledge this history, it is clear that Islam’s history there has a rather long, albeit complicated, tenure. One might suppose that this would make Europe’s incorporation of Muslims and recognition of Islam as a European religion rather straightforward. However, there are other issues to consider.

Moving from Precedent to Present

MUSLIMS AS EUROPEANS. The reality of past precedents for the Muslim presence in Europe does not necessarily lead to incorporating Muslims into the national social framework of European states. German state policies toward Turkish residents may not have pushed them to send their dead to Turkey (as they frequently did), but neither did they assist or encourage their integration into Germany on the basis of any form of pluralistic liberalism. In the current political climate, France’s version of secularism and citizen-based republicanism has meant that there are a number of obstacles to fulfilling a completely pluralistic framework, as witnessed by the current *foulard* debate.²⁷

In all of these countries and across the EU, the greatest challenge to emerging definitions of pluralism and how to cope with it invariably comes from Muslim communities. With them came not only small, isolated ethnic or national minority groups, but also populations of peoples with specific cultures and a faith that is spreading among indigenous Europeans. Being faced with cultural pluralism is difficult enough for societies that are relatively heterogeneous (*sic*), but Muslim communities have proved to be particularly problematic. Muslims who insist upon being French while remaining Muslim are not simply a problem to be managed as an individual; rather, due to the public nature of their faith and their presence in a political system that abjures any public expression of religion, they are speaking directly to the question of what being “French” really means.

These challenges have drawn some of the continent’s commentators to portray Muslims in Europe as impossible to incorporate, except in a way that would bring chaos. In the late 1990s in Greece, Metropolitan Damaskinos orchestrated demonstrations against the building of mosques in Kimmeria and Pelekiti,²⁸ and in the Netherlands there was still the anti-Muslim Pim Fortuyn, the populist right-wing politician. Further examples abound. Evidently, there are differences between the two: Greece is the quintessential Orthodox Hellenic ethnic national group, which is Orthodox Christian. And as long as this remains the case, genuine integration will be hindered. Damaskinos was only exhibiting a logical, if rather zealous, example of that thinking in practice. Fortuyn, on the other hand, represented a different type of anti-Muslim sentiment, one that is more anti-Muslim – he saw them as carriers of Islam, which he identified as a threat to Dutch culture. Both examples represent types of anti-Muslim sentiment. But while Fortuyn was probably more vehemently opposed to Islam *qua* Islam, the Netherlands remains an officially multi-cultural society; Greece cannot be genuinely multi-cultural, as it remains the official embodiment of a mono-cultural ethnic identity.

It may be the case that after 9/11, feelings against Muslims and Islam intensified. For instance, Italy’s Northern League exploited the situation to reduce the immigration issue to “fighting against terrorism.” In August 2002, the party’s number two whip suggested that it was time for the state to close down Islamic centers and mosques “frequented by possible supporters of terrorism.” Clearly, 9/11 provided an excuse for anti-Muslim sentiment to be expressed under the pretext of protecting Italy from a fifth column. These limited occurrences, however, do not obviate the larger EU picture of security and opportunity for Muslim communities. And thus the immigration to the EU from predominantly Muslim countries continues.

The above-mentioned Italian groups are recognized as extremist, and the lack of a more complete recognition of Islam in Italy appears to be related more to intra-Muslim community difficulties than to the state. The Dutch government may have banned ostentatious symbols in some spheres of public life (i.e., hijabs), but the country's Equal Opportunities Committee successfully pushed forward moves protecting a woman's right to wear it. Spain's leading archbishop might say that the government's policies are taking Spain back to the time of the "Moors," but the government still finds ways to facilitate the practice of Islam with public funds.²⁹

ISLAM AS EUROPEAN. When analyzing the latter move by Spanish authorities, the discussion becomes less about Muslims as European citizens than about Islam as a European faith and as part of the European framework in societal terms. In this, the state's neutrality in matters of faith, rather than in matters of a relationship to religious institutions, is taken almost as a given. However, neutrality does not necessarily mean non-recognition of Islam, nor does the existence of a state-church link, as in the United Kingdom, mean that the state is not neutral. The neutrality of the law vis-à-vis individuals, regardless of their faith, is generally accepted. In 1991, the European Court upheld the principle that a state church cannot, in and of itself, be considered illegal on the basis that it violates religious freedom.³⁰

If the different situations of Muslim populations across the EU are considered, it is difficult to identify any pattern relating their social status to the existence of a state religion. Denmark has an official state religion and recognizes Islam, whereas Luxembourg has no official religion and does not recognize Islam. The Netherlands does not officially recognize any religion, but the government funds religious schools. The question is not so much about having an official religion, for this may actually help improve majority-minority relations, depending upon the attitude of the church involved. Rather, and more to the point, the issue is one of recognition, of whether or not the state needs to officially recognize Islam in the hope of facilitating its practice among Muslim Europeans. In this regard, facilitation may be justified under the principle of equality, but only insofar as Christianity, the predominant religion, is already facilitated as a matter of structural historical continuity.

In this context, classifying EU countries into concordat, state-church, and secularist countries is inadequate, although it was useful in earlier European history. For example, Silvio Ferrari notes that during the nineteenth century, "the conclusion of a concordat or the emanation of a law of separation meant

a clear choice of position and entailed a series of consequences in all sectors of the legal system.”³¹ Two centuries later, however, the absence of such a concordat does not necessarily signify inferiority, nor does an official link with the state in the form of a state church system necessarily signify superiority. Such assumptions belong to a different historical paradigm, one that no longer exists in Europe, as the current record shows.

In Belgium, recognizing Islam as a religion means state funding, subsidies, and free religious instruction. If Muslims were to organize themselves into a representative body, this would mean even more benefits. Spain’s Muslim community took this step, and thus the state signed an agreement that included, among other things, “religious attendance, education, and the formation of public educational, sanitary, penitentiary and military centres; as well as the status of the religious ministers and locations for the cult, and the fiscal system applied to them.”³² Luxembourg insists that this step be taken before it provides any benefits or special treatment (such as financing “religious professionals”). So far, this step has not been taken. Other European countries are considering different arrangements. For instance, the United Kingdom recently floated the idea of having a mufti.

Ireland and Denmark do not recognize Muslims as a religious group *per se* or Islam as their religion, and yet both fund Muslim schools. On the other hand, Denmark’s non-recognition of Islam (only in some areas; there are prison chaplains, for example) results in several peculiarities, such as the state’s non-recognition of Muslim marriage ceremonies. In the Netherlands, the state does not extend official recognition to religious communities. But if they are organized under public law, as in Germany, they do receive a series of tax exemptions, state subsidies for television time, and other benefits.

Austria and Greece, due to historical reasons, have adopted unique methods to recognize and institutionalize Islam. Austria has a *shura* council and a grand mufti who enjoys a direct relationship to the national education ministry,³³ and yet the country’s far Right still targets Muslim Austrians. Greece’s institutionalization of Islam has not helped the incorporation of Greek citizens who are also Muslim Turks. On the contrary, its approach dictates that the Turkish Muslim community be instructed predominantly in Turkish. As a result, the Muslims find themselves socially handicapped due to their non-mastery of Greek.

What Type of Recognition or Representation?

Given the above context, it is difficult to link the relative status of Europe’s Muslim communities to the recognition or institutionalization of Muslims or

Islam. Some type of recognition or institutionalization might occur, but it may not necessarily act as a suitable mechanism for addressing serious problems. Among the most acute of these problems is the portrayal of Muslims and Islam, now commonly known as *Islamophobia*:

From the most northerly member state of Finland and its largely assimilated Muslim community, to the southern-most tips of Spain, where the presence of Islam can be reached across a narrow stretch of the Mediterranean; from the most westerly of nations, where Eire struggles in its infancy as an immigrant rather than an emigrant nation, to the most easterly extremes of those such as Austria, where the spectre of fascism has again begun to raise its ugly head, Muslims in the European Union (EU) have never had such an intense scrutiny placed upon them.³⁴

Muslims are dreaded and loathed not just in Serbia, but throughout Europe. In France, they have been dubbed “blood-thirsty savages” (by Brigitte Bardot,³⁵ no less) and an aromatic affront to civilisation (by Jacques Chirac). Jean-Marie Le Pen’s National Front has fought two elections on a singularly anti-Muslim ticket. The designer fascism of the Deutsche Alternative party in Germany is fuelled by anti-Muslim sentiments. The Progressive Party of Denmark openly campaigns on a “Denmark with no Musselmen” ticket, as does the Swedish New Democratic Party.³⁶

The EU is not Kosova, to which Ziauddin Sardar was referring. Despite being an indirectly identified issue for the UE to combat as far back as 1993, Islamophobia still exists on a wide scale. In 1993, the EU Copenhagen European Council established quite clearly that an “applicant country must have stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and respect for and protection of minorities.”³⁷ Before and since, it has been a substantial part of the EU’s social policy to protect minorities, including religious minorities, and it does not hesitate to extol the freedom of religion as one of its great virtues. What this means beyond the abstract, however, is open to acute debate.

As we move from one Christian millennium into the next and Christians war with Muslims within Europe, the way that European legal systems treat Muslims becomes a matter of great moment both for Muslims and for hopes for freedom of religion. For countries often accustomed to the idea that freedom of religion has largely been won, the presence of large numbers of Muslims within their borders tests whether notions of neutrality towards different faiths and acceptance of difference are rhetoric or reality.³⁸

Theoretically, the freedom of religion and religious belief is the legal stipulation in all EU states; however, as noted above, the concept of justice and related issues (e.g., religious freedom) are interpreted differently under different socio-political circumstances. Several states, including “France, the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium all had their own particular ‘headscarves affair,’”³⁹ often do not give Muslims (and other religious minorities) the day off on their religious holidays, and fail to accommodate religion-based dietary requirements in public institutions. The point here is that it is difficult to portray these events as state-sponsored Islamophobia, for there is, as yet, no consensus on what constitutes Islamophobia or the freedom of religious belief.

Therefore, it is important to understand what certain symbols mean to certain communities in order to avoid the extremes of forced assimilation. Integration, which may take place on the basis of shared values, also includes an official respect for diversity that entails an understanding of what forms of diversity are – and are not – acceptable:

They (non-Muslim citizens of Europe) need to accept that Europe’s population has changed, that it no longer has a single history and that the future calls for mutual understanding and respect. They need to face up to their ignorance and reject the clichés and prejudices that surround Islam. They must start discussing the principles, values and forms that will enable us to live together.⁴⁰

With the rise of extreme Right and xenophobic groups that “seem to make Muslims the new Jews, salvaging much of the traditional anti-Semitic arsenal,”⁴¹ the alternatives to integration and multi-cultural policies do not seem particularly attractive. Hence, it has been suggested that representing Muslims in some new way would be progress toward a more integrated status for them in the EU. Unsurprisingly, controversy surrounds the prospect. Some sections of European societies are ambivalent, considering this as the state’s direct intervention into spiritual systems, a practice that liberal political thought has traditionally rejected.⁴² The tension here is also related to the paradox between the state’s promise of universal rights for all citizens on the one hand, and the suggestion of particular provisions for members of specific communities on the other.

Of course, as citizens, Muslims already have the right in Europe to contest elections or elect their representatives to national governments and to elect European delegates to represent their region within their nation-state on the European level. As such, they are represented through a variety of

mechanisms that cover particular identities: local councils, city mayors, national parliaments, and the European Parliament. But such representation is of Muslim citizens as something other than Muslims. These elections, institutions, and representative bodies are all parts of processes that cover Muslims as citizens in various contexts, but not as Muslims *per se*. As Muslims, they are often invisible, a condition that leads to laws and policies that do not take into account that aspect of their lives. Generally speaking, however, this does not cause a great many problems. But there are some, if only a few, aspects of Muslim life that warrant particular and specific consideration that, in turn, necessitate some sort of representation.

The EU has already recognized such an idea, since several of its member states often practice a type of collaboration between themselves and faith groups.⁴³ Collaboration may manifest itself in various guises, such as concordats; nonetheless, representing faith groups as groups does occur. Europe's Christian populations are often represented in limited fashions through their churches, which are institutions that have certain links with the mainstream and thus represent Christians as Christians to the mainstream. Muslim groups will need to find appropriate ways to represent themselves to the mainstream, both as minority communities and as a faith. The two types of representation are not always the same; thus, the Board of Deputies in the UK represents Jews as a minority group, while the chief rabbi represents an interpretation of Judaism in the British Isles.

Some Muslim communities have already begun experiments in this regard. The Spanish state-church strategy has two main phases: (1) to uphold certain universal rights regarding specific issues that are unanimously held by all concerned, including a declaration to the effect that no human being may be forced to believe any spiritual principle, and (2) the state then negotiates with the various communities on a set of standards that both agree to uphold, with the government representing the state and the representative body representing the particular community. This is what currently exists between the Spanish state and the Islamic Commission of Spain.

In Greece, the situation is slightly different: a state-sanctioned office of mufti can issue religious verdicts for the faithful while, at the same time, interact with the more mundane and less spiritual political arena. This is not altogether unsurprising, since the importance of the Shari`ah to Muslims should not be underestimated. In a number of member states, Muslim communities have formed institutions dedicated to applying the Shari`ah in modern contexts, with varying degrees of success, outside of the state's sphere and within civil society. It remains to be seen what will be of most use and

benefit in the current climate, where issues of Muslim religious authority abound and affect policies relating to the licensing of chaplains, educational provisions, and strategies designed to counter radicalism.

Various questions and concerns surround representation, both from the non-Muslim and the Muslim communities. Any viable organization would need to reflect the diversity of Muslims living in the locale as well as the grassroots realities for the same reason. Heterogeneity among the Muslim communities themselves may prove to be the greatest obstacle, as attempts at organization among Europe's very diverse and disparate Muslim communities has been rather difficult in Germany, France, Belgium, and other EU members.⁴⁴ This makes any state-Muslim link impossible. Driving this point home, Faye contends that the presence of communal unity and coherent organizational resources partially explains the success of Jewish communities in the UK, in contradistinction to Muslim communities. The British government, as far as Faye is concerned, uses such a lack of unified representation to the disadvantage of the British Muslim community.⁴⁵ Obviously, membership in such representative bodies is voluntary, since compulsory membership is contrary to European law – and advisably so, considering the scope for misuse.

The Ottoman Empire's *millet* system, which sought to give state authorities conduits through which they could govern their populations, who were defined according to their religion, was somewhat similar to this. The various church hierarchies were responsible for the Christian populations and they, in turn, were responsible to the Ottoman state. In this way, the religious communities were integrated into the state fabric; however, as a result, individual citizens were forced to adhere (at least officially) to a particular religious clerical organization (a church) in order to function as a citizen within the state. The clerical organization would thus be the community's official representative, even though it may or may not be representative of the community as a whole. As a result, similar arrangements in the modern context evoke various degrees of antipathy, since people fear that such policies will assist ghettoization or reflect only a select portion of the community.

This system had advantages in the medieval period. However, given that the basis of citizenship in the EU is individual as opposed to collective, it cannot be linked to membership in a religious community. In addition, while there may be religious representative bodies that are capable of representing their religious communities when they wish to present their needs to the state authorities, they differ markedly from the *millet* system. The representative body in the EU is not a coercive state official organ that has official

legislative powers over its members (who have no right of exit); rather, the representative body consists of consultative bodies, made up of voluntary members, that consult with the state.

If such issues are given due consideration, it is possible that the *millet* system's advantages might be upheld. But its disadvantages are done away with from the start, the result being, perhaps, something analogous to the Board of Deputies in the UK. Such bodies could provide "faces" to the communities in negotiating certain avenues within which they would try to integrate themselves into Europe, thereby ensuring the state's plural basis and citizenship's role of safeguarding the liberal aspect. If these issues are resolved, the question of what sort of powers and authority the institution should have will inevitably arise. Are such institutions best conceived of as strictly representational bodies concerned with advising decision makers and state representatives, or as of being vested with a degree authority over those whom they represent?

Investing such bodies with significant authority would signal the creation of a modern *millet* system within the EU, a move that would point to its weakening as a union of citizens as well as communities. The Greek case, which is the result of historical circumstances arising from treaties between Turkey and Greece, is an anomaly that one cannot expect the rest of the EU to emulate. On a theoretical basis, this would be less a union of pluralistic liberal states than a union of separatist communities. If the liberal (i.e., the citizen as the basic unit) basis of the state remains the overriding principle, such bodies would have no more authority over their members than NGOs.

However, a model with grounding in current European legal practice and without a need for any legal or policy shift could be considered, one that incorporates aspects of the Spanish and Greek models and thus would result in the full representation of Muslims as Muslims. Ironically, considering its history of the Inquisition, Spain may have the most advanced system *vis-à-vis* Muslim representation.⁴⁶ A body that places no compulsory membership upon Muslim citizens does exist and has the ability to legally sanction certain religious ceremonies (e.g., marriage). Other bodies would have to be created under the aegis of certain standards in order to be acceptable to the state as a professional body, but such details could be worked out after a representative body is established – perhaps for the very reason of establishing the limits.

In terms of providing religious authority, some experiments are already underway. The need for state-sanctioned muftis has not yet been proven, and other mechanisms can provide religious authority in a more organic fashion.

Arbitration boards staffed by Muslim legal experts are easy enough to create and do not require any state intervention. In fact, such boards already exist in several EU states, taking advantage of the principle of alternative dispute resolution that is already entrenched in European legal systems. The basic premise is that two parties voluntarily submit to an arbitration body on the condition that the arbitrator's rulings are binding upon both parties. The state legal system then implements these rulings through the normal legal channels on the basis that the parties have already accepted the binding nature of the arbitration body's decision.

It might be argued that these two types of institutions would be better off if they were completely separate and distinct from each other. However, considering the importance of the Shari`ah for Muslim communities, Islamic courts are potentially just as inevitable as representational bodies. Provided that the representational bodies are genuinely representative, linked arbitration boards would likely be more flexible, transparent, and professional.

This is not a particularly novel approach among religious communities, for the UK's Jewish community established and has been operating under a similar system for quite some time.⁴⁷ Such schemes, while not perfect, are tools whereby the liberal concept of individual citizenship is protected and a limited degree of voluntary authority can be transferred to the community. The most pressing concern in this regard is that those who do not wish to participate voluntarily are inevitably suspected of being less "pious" than those who do, despite there being perfectly valid reasons within their own traditions for such wariness. This often results in communal peer pressure.

Integralization: Different Times and Different Places

In this article, I have revealed that a Muslim presence within European societies has had a long precedent. From the Middle Ages and through pre-modernity until the present day, Muslims have played an important role in developing European thought and culture. Sometimes this has occurred in an active, positive manner; other times less so. Nevertheless, Muslims have had an extensive impact. Recognizing this is a political or social decision just as much as it is historical fact. At present, however, the concern is not simply recognizing Europe's Islamic history, but rather recognizing Islam and representing its people (Muslims) in the hope of integrating them into Europe. The history of Europe has left the state predisposed toward dealing less favorably with religious communities that have no identifiable ecclesi-

astical authority, something that, along with other factors, has hindered the integration of Europe's Muslim communities into the social mainstream.

Integration, in at least some form, is necessary both for Europe's social cohesiveness and the prosperity of Muslim communities – integrated communities are not discriminated against, and discriminated-against communities are not integrated. How this integration is to be accomplished has yet to be decided. Such an undertaking is not necessarily accomplished through the prism of recognition, for discriminated-against communities might still be recognized. Hence, as noted above, some remain concerned that recognition might assist ghettoization or separatism, as, for example, in Cyprus. There, recognition and identity politics has resulted in the overarching identity (Cypriot) being strongly displaced and, in some cases, replaced by the ethno-national (Greek/Turk) one.

For example, in Lithuania, the Muslim community has been recognized by society at large, as well as state institutions, as an integral part of the nation, unlike, it could be noted, other minority communities. There are legal signs of this, but legal recognition is not the key factor. Recognition might help the community, but it is the community's integral nature that serves it, as well as Lithuanian society as a whole, more than anything else. Perhaps in appreciation of this, new generations of Muslims ("New Europeans") who are confident in their faith and sense of belonging are speaking for Muslims in mainstream debates and discussions. Often helpful in this regard are indigenous citizens who have embraced Islam. In some countries, such as Italy and Sweden, they are involved publicly as "cultural mediators." Their efforts contribute not only to Muslim concerns being noted by the mainstream, but also to Muslims being accepted as *part* of the mainstream (i.e., as Muslim Europeans). The process of becoming *integral* (integralization) is underway.

Such an effort faces certain obstacles. Nezar AlSayyad and Manuel Castells report that the modern idea of a "European identity" has been created in opposition to "others," namely, infidels or barbarians.⁴⁸ More recently, such personas have been applied to the United States and, for a brief time, to Japanese and Asian economic competition. For much of its history, however, the "European" was defined in opposition to Islam,⁴⁹ a fact that makes any widespread normalization of the new reality difficult. In this regard, Pandeli Glavanis notes that "the Muslim presence impacts on the nature of modern European identity in that it challenges the very idea of Europe."⁵⁰

In spite of this, in historical terms many Europeans were once Muslim and, through both conversion and immigration, Islam is today the fastest

growing religion in Europe. In the short term, many more Muslims will become citizens through the accession of some eastern and southern European countries to the EU. In the long term, Turkey is next on the agenda. Such developments mean that the discussions surrounding identity in Europe will continue, for unless a monumental shift occurs huge numbers of Muslims will continue to live in Europe.

How such debates will resolve themselves is uncertain, but the trend suggests a degree of identification with their societies, which is likely to continue alongside that process. Sociologists have noted this in a variety of European contexts. For example, there is “the development of hybrid identities and the emergence of a new category of French Muslims who feel a sense of belonging and allegiance to France while remaining loyal to their religion”⁵¹ and for “many young Muslims in Germany, the goal became not to assimilate themselves into the secular values of the West, but instead to adopt a true Islamic identity while living in the West.”⁵² Shireen Hunter and Remy Leveau also believe that “Muslims increasingly want to become engaged within the social and political life of their country of residence and citizenship while retaining their Islamic character even if there is no consensus within the community about what exactly being Islamic means.”⁵³ Even in the domain of the spiritual, some Muslim scholars have transformed Europe from being *dar al-kufr* (the abode of unbelief) to *dar al-Islam* (the abode of Islam). This is not, contrary to some estimations, dependent upon the number of mosques in a given region⁵⁴; rather, it represents a significant paradigm shift in which Muslims are viewed not as “temporary sojourners” awaiting a “return,” but as those who may consider European societies as their permanent homes.

There is a growing consensus among such intellectuals as Tariq Ramadan and such scholars as Mustafa Ceric that Muslims must embrace those parts of their heritage that allow for and promote inter-communal building for the wider society.⁵⁵ In this way, they could make the mainstream’s issues those of the minority, and vice versa. History shows that Lithuanian Muslims and Chinese Muslims have existed as Muslims in those countries for centuries as fully Muslim, fully “integrated,” and fully integral.⁵⁶ On this issue, Faysal Mawlawi, one of the scholars on the European Council for Fatwa and Research, compares Europe’s Muslims to those of Arabia in the early stages of the *Muhammadan* mission.

In his commentary, Ramadan notes that while the early prophetic community was responsible for bearing witness to Islam among its own people in a particular way, Europe’s Muslims are called upon to bear witness in

another manner. The current “new world order” is one in which spirituality and the idea of a sacred life have been largely forgotten in favor of an economic and utilitarian worldview. Muslims should hardly submit to such an environment; rather, they should secure their position within its heart and then seek to be a positive internal influence.⁵⁷ Part of that process involves their active realization that regardless of their numbers, they are native, central, and integral to Europe. This realization is at the heart of the discourse of Ramadan and other intellectuals.

Reflections

The success of such a task, however, depends upon several factors and levels. On the mainstream level, legal obstacles to the practice of Islam on a member state level are not particularly restrictive.⁵⁸ Legally, all EU states recognize the freedom of religion, for no legislation has been designed to specifically outlaw the practice of Islam. However, in rare cases, judges have used legislation in a restrictive manner, the hijab controversy that has arisen in France and spread across the EU being perhaps the most poignant example. Thus, social obstacles do remain and are sometimes expressed through legal sanctions, but more often in other ways. For example, Sweden has official policies on multi-culturalism, but local authorities opposed building a mosque in central Stockholm. Spain recognizes the Muslims’ public associations, but this has not resulted in their full integration into mainstream society. More legislation cannot be a panacea for such issues, for although following such a path might restrain the rise of far Right parties,⁵⁹ it does not prevent their existence. This is a concern for all sectors of society that may face exclusion; for Muslims, who are demographic minorities in terms of religious belief, ethnicity, and power, such a concern is especially relevant.

On the community level, the success of an integralization process appears to depend greatly on the Muslim communities’ voluntary acculturation to their status as citizens in EU member states. This appears to be the trend, as Muslim communities begin to emphasize the historical record of Islam’s links to Europe. Indeed, Europe’s culture, history, and intellectual heritage is, as discussed above, intimately tied to Islam in varying degrees according both to region and historical period. This process, however, not only depends upon the demographic minority using internal mechanisms, but also on the mainstream removing obstacles (if not providing positive options) to active participation.

The history of Muslim minorities living in other countries, such as China or India, may not supply the EU with blueprints for good governance.

However, if their situations are investigated, insights on a variety of political and social issues may be brought to light and applied elsewhere. The ongoing history of indigenous Muslims in the EU is already a source of great interest, especially to those for whom the identity of “European” (or of the relevant member-state) is not simply a conscious preference but the only natural choice. Converts to Islam and their offspring, a growing community, are often naturally integrated in ways that migrant communities are not. Moreover, and not coincidentally, the EU sees converts in very public and active roles.

Owing to their already integrated states, these people are often qualified as cultural mediators, for converts (and thus interested in learning more about their new faith) have a certain amount of education in Islam. For this reason, they are regularly seen as educators within their communities, and a growing number of them and “New Europeans” (i.e., migrants or those of their descendants who have made the mental and psychological migration to Europe as well) are becoming educated in classical institutes of Islamic learning overseas and then returning to represent their communities to the mainstream. For them, the oft-cited “myth of return” is not only dead and buried, but the reality of their situation as native and innate is clear.

The benefit of this to a community should not be underestimated. Fetzer and Soper are completely correct when they link the absence of native-born leadership and scholarship to the disadvantaged position of Muslim European communities.⁶⁰ The future may be uncertain, but it is at least clear that in some EU countries the attempt to direct the development of European Muslim communities from “home countries” has either failed or is failing.⁶¹ The psychological migration of European Muslim communities is underway, and as it fulfils itself the ownership of all aspects of Islamic scholarship will naturally be turned over to those who are European (and thus best equipped to understand European societies) and conversant in all relevant spheres pertaining to the contemporary twenty-first-century situation.

Relations with the mainstream in terms of representation on this track take place beyond the minority-majority equation. For those who are unwilling to commit “cultural apostasy,”⁶² the discourse of minority relations with minority concerns is rejected from the outset. These new discussions involve *citizens*, not minorities; there is no such thing as minority citizenship. Such developments are yet more signs of how fundamentally modernity has changed the world and how societies are still learning to find their way forward. In this regard, the EU, whether as the EU or as individual member states, may have valuable lessons from which other countries and regions can learn. Muslim populations in the West have traditionally been consid-

ered as the “Islamic periphery” hitherto. Incorporated as integral, essential, and dynamic parts of Europe, they may prevail where the center has thus far failed: the creation of authentically Islamic embedded modern cultures.

Engaging with modernity on its own home ground is likely to be of great benefit to both Muslims and non-Muslims within the region and throughout the world, rather than only “contesting rearguard actions on highly symbolic, though still very significant, issues such as the right of girls to wear the hijab in state-run schools.”⁶³ Fetzer and Soper note “the laudable and realizable aim” of Muslims in the West to “find partners who will, like them, be determined to select in what Western culture produces in order to promote its positive contributions and to resist its destructive deviation both on the human and environmental level.”⁶⁴ Hence the vision not of an exclusivist Muslim community, but rather of a Muslim community that is an integral part of European society and European culture on many levels, one that is mediated through Islam.

The West may continue to try to modernize the East, but it does so at the same time that Muslims are already effecting change from within the West. Constructive engagement is already underway on a variety of levels, despite the presence of evident and clear obstacles. Being a demographic minority is irrelevant in this regard, for history shows that “minorities” have always changed the course of civilizations.

Endnotes

1. Akbar Ahmed, *Living Islam* (London: BBC Publishing, 1993), 157.
2. Italian Deputy Prime Minister Gianfranco Fini, suggesting that there should be a reference to this effect in any European-wide constitution. See www.agi.it/english/news.pl (November 1, 2002).
3. H. A. Hellyer, “A Minority within a Minority: Muslim Europeans” (paper delivered at the “Citizenship and Discrimination in Europe” conference held at the University of Warwick, 2002).
4. There is no evidence whatsoever to suggest that this had anything to do with the westward spread of Islam.
5. This is an obvious corruption of *Jabal al-Tariq*, Arabic for “the Mountain of Tariq,” named after the Berber who landed there.
6. W. Montgomery Watt, *History of Islamic Spain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1965), 14.
7. *Ibid.*, 13.
8. Although for a time, Sicily under King Roger was similar.
9. Watt, *History of Islamic Spain*, 32.
10. *Ibid.*

11. Ibid., 63.
12. A study of the history of *al-turuq al-sufiyah* (the mystical paths in Islam) reveals that from these two individuals alone came countless mystical orders, including some that are of particular influence among European Muslims, such as the Ba'Alawiyyah and the Shadhaliyyah.
13. Brigitte Marechal, "Introduction: The Past," in *Muslims in the Enlarged Europe: Religion and Society*, eds. Brigitte Marechal, Stefano Allievi, Felice Dassetto, and Jorgen Nielsen (Leiden: Brill, 2003), xvii, referring to Arab predominance in a Hispanic social, cultural, and geographic environment.
14. Steven Vertovec and Ceri Peach, "Introduction: Islam in Europe and the Politics of Religion and Community," in *Islam in Europe*, eds. Steven Vertovec and Ceri Peach (London: MacMillan Press, 12), citing W. Montgomery Watt.
15. This article was researched before the EU's latest expansion and thus contains mostly references to the old fifteen member states. However, I also explored Cyprus, Slovenia, and Lithuania as well, since they were the most likely applicant states at the time to become members.
16. Boas discusses the fate of many of these communities in some detail. See Roger Boas, "The Muslim Expulsion from Spain," 2003. Online at www.freewebs.com/qalam2/muslimexpulsion_boase.htm (accessed April 21, 2004).
17. Gerd Nonneman, Tim Niblock, and Bogdan Szajkowski, *Muslim Communities in the New Europe* (Reading, UK: Ithaca Press, 1997), 35.
18. According to the fifteenth-century Polish historian Jan Dlugosz. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Marechal, "Introduction: The Past," xviii.
21. Its contribution to Europe cannot be overstated. However, as Turkey is not a EU state or an imminent member, it lies beyond the scope of this particular work.
22. The Ottomans later spread to some parts of Ukraine, but such territory was relinquished in 1699 as part of the Treaty of Karlowitz. See Molly Greene, *A Shared World: Christians and Muslims in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 18, footnote 21.
23. Ibid., 4.
24. Marechal, "Introduction: The Past," xix.
25. Which prompts one author to describe the migrant's attitude as: "You were there, so we are here." See Frank J. Buijs and Jan Rath, "Muslims in Europe: The State of Research" (an essay prepared for the Sage Foundation), 2002. <http://users.fmg.uva.nl/jrath/downloads/@RSF%20European%20Research%20on%20Islam%20and%20Muslims.pdf> (accessed May 18, 2003).
26. Jorgen Baek Simonsen, "Globalisation in Reverse and the Challenge of Integration: Muslims in Denmark," in *Muslims in the West: From Sojourners to Citizens*, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 126.
27. Dominic McGoldrick, *Human Rights and Religion: The Islamic Headscarf Debate in Europe* (Oxford University Press: 2006).

28. Stefano Allievi, "Relations and Negotiations: Issues and Debates," *Muslims in the Enlarged Europe*, 353.
29. Giles Tremlett, "Spain being 'taken back to Moorish times,'" *The Guardian*, (July 7, 2004). Online at www.guardian.co.uk/spain/article/0,2763,1255588,00.html.
30. Cited by Peter Cumper and Steven Wheatley, *Minority Rights in the "New" Europe* (London: Kluwer Law International, 1999), 182.
31. Silvio Ferrari, "The Legal Dimension," *Muslims in the Enlarged Europe*, 225.
32. A full discussion of the legal limits can be found in Javier Martinez-Torron, "The Legal Status of Islam in Spain," in *Islam and European Legal Systems*, eds. Silvio Ferrari and Anthony Bradney (Vermont: Ashgate, 2000), 47-71.
33. Brigitte Marechal, "Modalities of Islamic Instruction," in *Muslims in the Enlarged Europe*, 93.
34. Christopher Allen, "Endemically European or a European Epidemic? Islamophobia in a Post 9/11 Europe," in *Islam & The West: Post 9/11*, Ron Geaves et al., eds. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004): 136.
35. Bardot described the situation thus: "My country, France, my fatherland, is once again being invaded, with the blessing of our successive governments, by an excessive influx of foreigners, notably Muslims, to which we are giving our allegiance." See Joel S. Fetzer and J. Christopher Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 130.
36. Ziauddin Sardar, "Where Are My Muslim Brethren?" Online at www.new-statesman.co.uk/199904190010.htm (accessed on July 3, 2004).
37. P. S. R. F. Mathijsen, *A Guide to European Union Law* (London: Sweet and Maxwell, 1999), 500.
38. Ferrari and Bradney, *Islam and European Legal Systems*, ix.
39. W. A. Shadid and P. S. van Koningsveld, *Religious Freedom and the Position of Islam in Western Europe* (Amsterdam: Kok Pharos, 1995), 4.
40. Tariq Ramadan, *Islam, the West, and the Challenges of Modernity* (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 2001), 57.
41. Stefano Allievi, "Muslims and Politics," *Muslims in the Enlarged Europe*, 213.
42. Ferrari, "The Legal Dimension," in *ibid.*, 229-30.
43. *Ibid.*, 232-33.
44. Shadid and Koningsveld, *Religious Freedom*, 52-53.
45. Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 8-9.
46. Shadid and Koningsveld, *Religious Freedom*, 41.
47. Antony Bradney, "Legal Aspects of Islamic Integration in Europe," 2003. Online at: <http://euro-islam.info/PDFs/Bradney.pdf> (accessed July 7, 2004).
48. Nezar AlSayyad and Manuel Castells, eds., *Muslim Europe or Euro-Islam: Politics, Culture, and Citizenship in the Age of Globalization* (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2002), 4.

49. Pandeli M. Glavanis, "Discrimination on the Grounds of Religion or Belief: An Overview of the Current Debate," ENAR Seminar and Forum for Discussion, 2003. Online at www.enar-eu.org/en/events/regdisc/Pandeli%20Glavanis.pdf (accessed July 23, 2004).
50. Ibid.
51. Shireen Hunter and Remy Leveau, "Islam in France," in *Islam, Europe's Second Religion: The New Social, Cultural and Political Landscape*, ed. Shireen Hunter (Washington, DC: Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 2002), 4.
52. Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 105.
53. Hunter and Leveau, "Islam in France," 4.
54. Allievi, "Relations and Negotiations," *Muslims in the Enlarged Europe*, 355.
55. Mustafa Ceric, "Keynote Speech," AMSS (UK), 2004.
56. Personal communication with `Umar Faruq `Abd-Allah, June 2004.
57. Tariq Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 73.
58. Ramadan, *Islam*, 57.
59. Abdal Hakim Murad, "Tradition or Extradition?" 2003. Online at www.the-modernreligion.com/world/extradition.html (accessed July 2, 2004).
60. Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 9.
61. Evidence for the Turkish example in Germany can be found in *ibid.*, 102-04.
62. Abd-Allah citing Jackson. See Umar Faruq Abd-Allah, "Islam and the Cultural Imperative: A Nawawi Foundation Paper," n.d. Online at www.nawawi.org/downloads/article3.pdf (accessed August 1, 2004).
63. Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 19.
64. *Ibid.*, 50.