THE FUTURE OF ISLAM IN EUROPE

Introduction

One's attitude to Islam colors one's perception of the future of Islam in Europe and one's perception of the future of Islam in Europe influences one's attitude to Islam and Muslims. In this chapter I will look at two scenarios concerning the future of Islam in Europe, which are in opposition to each other. *Eurabia* is a term coined by the British-Swiss Jewish historian Bat Ye'or and describes the expectation that Europe will be Islamized. [1]In contrast *Euro-Islam* is a concept introduced by Bassam Tibi, a Syrian born Muslim and German citizen, which sees Islam becoming Europeanized.[2]

An attitude of fear of Islam and Muslims is often caused by or gives support to the expectation of Europe becoming *Eurabia*. Not only among Europeans in general, but particularly among Christians in Europe, the *Eurabia* scenario seems to receive more support popular than the *Euro-Islam* scenario. For example, a questionnaire carried out by me among several groups of Christians in the Netherlands, shows that 60 percent of the respondents agree with Geert Wilders, a Dutch MP and head of an extreme right party, who warns against the growing Islamization of the Netherlands and Europe.[3] In September 2008, I received an e-mail from a Dutch Christians citing examples of how Europe submits to the demands of Muslims.[4]

---

[1] Bat Ye'or, *Eurabia: the Euro-Arab axis* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005)

[2] Bassam Tibi, "Europeanisation, Not Islamisation," *Sign And Sight.com*, http://signandsight.com/features/1258.html. (accessed April 14, 2009).

[3] For further information see chapter 5 and Appendix D.

[4] Hans Holtrop in an e-mail,entitled "Europa is bezig zich in een hoog tempo te onderwerpen aan de Islam "(Europe is Islamizing in a rapid speed) on September 9, 2008 which was sent to all Christian organizations and institutions in the Netherlands in September 2008. Holtrop, a Dutch Christian, cites many examples from newspaper articles in France, the Netherlands and Belgium of how Europe is submitting to Islam.

Those who expect the *Eurabia* scenario consider Islam to be a problem in Europe. They speak of a clash of civilizations pointing out that Islam threatens European values of secularization and freedom of speech. They refer to extreme Muslims who reject European values and who seek to establish a Khalifat in Europe in which the shari'a law becomes the constitution. People with an attitude of *Islamophobia* often agree with or only see indications that support a *Eurabia* scenario, but they seem unable or unwilling to see the developments that support a *Euro-Islam* scenario.

Those who expect the Euro-Islam scenario point to Islam's adaptation to Europe as seen in the emergence of Islamic political and civic leaders and associations. They point, as well, to changes in religious authority, changes in describing Islam's status as a minority culture, a desire for gender equality, and changes in interpreting the meaning of shari'a.

In this chapter it will be argued that the majority of Muslims are willing to find their place in Europe. Therefore a *Euro-Islam* scenario is more likely than a *Eurabian* scenario. Nevertheless there often is reluctance on the part of European governments and citizens, including Christians, to create space for Islam and Muslims resulting in an attitude of cold tolerance.

Background on Islam in Europe

Islam has increasingly become part of Europe's social, cultural and political and religious landscape. In the course of a few decades, it has become Europe's second religion after Christianity. The arrival of millions of Muslims in Europe from the 1960s has permanently changed the future of Europe and has been called "the greatest religio-demographic change on the European continent since the time of the Reformation"[5]

---

[5] Penelope Johnstone and Jan Slomp, "Islam and the churches in Europe: A Christian perspective," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 18., 2 (October 1998), 355.

Since the 1950s Western Europe has seen the arrival of migrant workers and asylum-seekers, many of whom come from Muslim countries. For the first ten years the only arrivals were men of working age, whose main aim was to earn money to send back home and then to return home. This expectation never materialized largely due to changes in immigration laws. They decided to stay in Europe and their families came to join them. This radically altered the structure of the Muslim community in Western Europe leading to new social and religious priorities and demands on the host community.

In the Eastern part of Europe, the emergence of the Balkan Muslim population as autonomous political actor is one of the major changes of the last decade. The Islamic religious institutions of the Balkans experienced a renewal of activity, creating their own political parties, various newspapers, cultural associations and charitable societies or intellectual forums.[6] European Muslims come primarily from countries formerly colonized or dominated by the most influential European countries.[7]

Robert J. Pauly identifies the following key characteristics of Islam in Europe:

1. Geographically, most Muslims are located in low-rent housing in the suburbs on the peripheries of major urban centers in Europe.
2. Demographically, Muslim communities in Europe are younger and possess higher growth rates than is true of the European majority.
3. Economically, Muslims face considerably worse economic circumstances than the majority of others living in Europe (e.g. high unemployment, resulting in perpetual struggle for subsistence, housing problems).
4. Socially, the Muslim community in Europe is quite diverse when we look at their ethnic and cultural background and their religious denomination and practice.[8]

---

[6] Ibrahimi Nexhat, "Islam's First Contacts With The Balkan Nations," *Yahoo! Geocities*, http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Delphi/6875/nexhat.html. (accessed April 14, 2009).

[7] Jocelyne Cesari calls them "a postcolonial minority culture". Jocelyne Cesari, *When Islam and Democracy Meet: Muslims in Europe and the United States* (New York: Palgrave, 2004), 12.

[8] Robert J. Pauly, *Islam in Europe: Integration or Marginalization* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004). Although Pauly focuses particularly on France, Germany, and the UK, his conclusions generally apply to most European countries.

Future Scenarios

When speaking of the future of Islam in Europe, two opposing scenarios dominate the media presentation, namely that of *Eurabia* and *Euro-Islam.* In the remainder of this chapter I will look at several religious, social, and political aspects of Muslims in Europe in order to get some clarity on which of the two scenarios is most likely to take place, or whether both miss the mark.

Eurabia

Introduction

This scenario expects that Europe will be Islamized. The term was originally coined by the British-Swiss Jewish historian Bat Ye'or in 2005 in her book *Eurabia: the Euro-Arab axis* to describe what she identified as a secret project between European politicians and the Arab world for the "Islamization" of Europe.[9]

Those who see this scenario as true, such as the Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci, historian Bernard Lewis, author Robert Spencer, and Dutch MP Geert Wilders, generally believe that Islam is hostile to and incompatible with the values of the western world. In the view of these advocates the presence of a substantial numbers of Muslims in Europe is a deliberate strategy which will produce the result that Muslims will form a demographic majority within a few generations, that all or most Muslims seek to Islamize Europe, and that part of the European political and cultural elite supports this goal.

According to the worst-case *Eurabian* predictions, by the end of the twenty-first century, most of Europe's cities will be overrun by Arabic-speaking foreign immigrants, much of the continent will be living under Islamic "shari'a" law, and Christianity will have

---

[9] Bat Ye'or, *Eurabia: the Euro-Arab axis* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005). The term *Eurabia* is unfortunate since not all Muslims in Europe are Arabs.

ceased to exist or be reduced to a state of "dhimmitude"[10]. In the *Eurabia* scenario Christians and Jews will become oppressed minorities in a sea of Islam; churches and cathedrals will be replaced by mosques and minarets; the call to prayer will echo from Paris to Rotterdam and to London; and the remnants of "Judeo-Christian" Europe will have been reduced to small enclaves in a world of bearded Arabic-speakers and burka-clad women.[11]

Those who expect the *Eurabian* scenario consider Islam a problem to modernization in Europe. They particularly speak of a clash of civilizations and describe how Islam threatens European values such as secularization and freedom of speech. Also the presence of extreme Islamists in Europe is used to support a *Eurabian* scenario. I will look at this in more detail below.

Islam as a perceived problem

European societies respond predominantly negatively to the growing visibility of Islam in their midst. Dr. Jocelyne Cesari, Research Associate at the Centre for Middle Eastern Studies and visiting professor at Harvard University, who has done extensive research on Islam as a minority in secular and democratic contexts, believes that in Europe we can speak of "a meta-narrative on Islam" that portrays Islam "as a problem or an obstacle to modernization."[12]

---

[10] *Dhimmitude* is derived from the *dhimmi,* which literally means protected. The term *Dhimmitude* has several meanings, denoting an attitude of concession, surrender and appeasement towards Islamic demands.

[11] For a critical analysis, see Carr Matt, "You are Now Entering Eurabia," *Race & class* 48, no. 1 (2006): 1-22.

[12] Cesari, *Islam and Democracy*, 21.

A clash of civilizations?

The advocates of *Eurabia* believe that the tensions in many European societies created by the arrival of millions of Muslims, is a result of a clash of civilizations.[13] Others say it is a result of ethnic and religious Muslim-Christian tensions in the West.[14]

Also many Christians consider Islam a threat to European civilization. A questionnaire that I conducted shows that 46 percent of the Christians agrees with and another 33 percent did not explicitly disagree with the statement "Islam is a threat to our civilization."[15]

Those who define the tense relationship between Islam and Europe as a clash of civilizations point out that there are differences between cultures of Western and Islamic societies.[16] Some, like Huntington believe such differences rest on political systems, for example democracy and its varied forms.[17] Others, consider social values, including gender equality and sexual liberalization and specifically identified as homosexuality, abortion, and divorce, the main clash between the West and Islam.[18] Those who fear or expect a *Eurabia*, particularly refer to two values that people hold dear in Europe and which seem to be under threat due to the presence of Muslims in Europe, namely secularism and freedom of expression.

---

[13] Samuel Huntington's influential book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order,* presents a model of explaining future interactions among states in the international system. In this book Huntington considers the Islamic resurgence one of the main challenges of Western civilization. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1997).

[14] Robert J. Pauly, *Islam in Europe: Integration or Marginalization?*, 21. Pauly believes Huntington misperceives the nature of the threat Islam poses to the West. "Put simply, Huntington issues a warning as to the potential for instability rooted in a clash between the Western and Islamic civilizations that is actually more likely to develop as a product of rising ethnic and religious Muslim-Christian tensions in the West."

[15] For more details, see chapter 5 and appendix D.

[16] It is hard to speak of a single Islamic civilization or culture, because there are substantial contrasts among one billion people living in diverse Islamic nations.

[17] Huntington considers the separation of spiritual and temporal authority, the concept of the centrality of law, social pluralism, representative bodies and individualism part of the core of Western civilization, which are significantly different from other cultures, causing a clash of civilization. Huntington, 56-78.

[18] Pipa Norris and Roger Inglehart, researched the political and social values in many countries around the world and concluded that the most basic cultural fault line between the West and Islam concern issues of gender equality and sexual liberation. See Pipa Norris and Roger Inglehart, "Religion and Politics in the Islamic World," in *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics,* 133-156.

Islam: a threat to secularization?

The arrival of a large number of Muslims in Europe has reopened the file on the relationship between the church and the state in Europe.[19] Secularization is a fundamental aspect of democracy in Europe. In Europe the term secularization has an ideological function and manifests itself as an element of European identity.[20]

One characteristic of the secularist mindset is the idea that religion has no share in the common good of societies. This attitude is practically unanimous in Western Europe, no matter what the relationship is between the state and organized religion. It also includes both religious organizations' independence from most forms of political authority and the protection of religious freedom guaranteed by that same power. Secularization also leads to the tendency to discount or ignore matters of religion in social interactions between citizens and stands for the diminished social influence of religion and its institutions in public life.

Those who expect a *Eurabia* scenario point out that the secularization of Europe makes the various manifestations of Islam in Europe problematic or even unacceptable. Islam is considered to be the diametrical opposite of the principle of secularization. The establishment of Islam is perceived as a potential threat to this cultural norm, because people believe that for Islam there is no separation between politics and religion.

In several European countries, the public expressions of Islamic identity clashes with the neutrality of the public space. Islam is by nature a religion that permeates all aspects of its adherents' lives, both in the public and the private spheres. In France, where the concept of

---

[19] According to Fetzer en Soper "the migration and settlement of large numbers of Muslims into Western Europe poses a new challenge to the existing church-state arrangements in countries and has resurrected somewhat dormant religious disputes."Joel Fetzer and Chris Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France and Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 6.

[20] Wikipedia, "Secularization", Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secularization (accessed April 13, 2009). According to Wikipedia, secularization generally refers to the process of transformation by which a society migrates from close identification with religious institutions to a more separated relationship.

Austin Cline, "Secularism vs Secularization: What's the Difference? Why Do People Confuse Them?" About.com., http://atheism.about.com/od/secularismseparation/a/Secularization.htm (accessed April 14, 2009) Austin Cline, Regional Director for the Council for Secular Humanism, writes: Thus, the difference between secularism and secularization is that secularism is more of a philosophical position about the way things should be, while secularization is the effort to implement that philosophy.

laïcité shapes contemporary policy about the place of religion in public life, the consensus in the media in 2004 was that *laïcité* was in peril and that Islam was the cause.[21] The discussions in several European countries among politicians and civilians on the allowance of headscarves reveal societies struggling to reconcile a new social reality with a set of relatively consistent secular values. In their book *Integrating Islam: Religious and Political Challenges in Contemporary France,* Jonathan Laurence, assistant professor of political science at Boston College) and Justin Vaisse French historian, adjunct professor at Sciences-Po (Paris) discuss several aspects of Islam in France. They point out that "in France the debates and the anxieties about the headscarves are about fears that the emergence of a public Islam challenges the particular institutions that guarantee life together in the Republic – a public space from which ethnic, religious and other characteristics are erased."[22]

People who fear Europe becoming Eurabia consider the space given to Muslims to practice their religion and to live in accordance with their values examples of the Islamization of Europe.[23]

Islam: a threat to the freedom of speech?

Another area that seems to point to the growing influence of Islam in Europe and which is used to support a *Eurabia* scenario is the discussion regarding the freedom of speech.

Several incidents in Europe, such as the publication of Salman Rushdie's book *The Satanic Verses*, the publication of controversial cartoons of Mohammed in a Danish

---

[21] John R. Bowen, *Why the French don't like the Headscarves: Islam, the State and Public Space* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006), 31.

[22] Jonathan Laurence and Justin Vaisse, *Integrating Islam: Religious and Political Challenges in Contemporary France* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute, 2006), 164.

[23] Hans Holtrop, a Dutch Christian, in an e-mail, entitled "Europa is bezig zich in een hoog tempo te onderwerpen aan de Islam "(Europe is Islamizing in a rapid speed) on September 9, 2008 sent to all Christian organizations and institutions in the Netherlands in September 2008 refers to the following as examples of how Europe submits to Islam: Muslim women asking to be exempt from lessons in sports and biology, that swimming pools have special openings hours for Muslims, that Muslim have successfully demanded that Christmas celebrations will no longer take place at primary schools, that Muslims demand rooms to pray at Europe's universities, that Muslims demand a change in our history books to include their history etc.

newspaper, and the implementations of laws to forbid hatred on religious grounds indicate

that the presence of Islam in Europe has stirred up the discussion on what the value of free

speech means. Some believe that the religious demands of Muslims to not be offended or

insulted clashes with the value of free expression of speech.[24] It could point to a clash

between the liberal Western mindset where the mind rules supreme and nothing is sacred and

of the integral nature of Islam to Muslim ways of life.[25] One might also consider it a clash of

two important values: a) freedom of expression and b) respect for the religious sensibilities of

others. The question that comes up is whether or not it is a democratic right to take an

argument to the point where somebody is offended by what we say.[26]

People like Rushdie, who believe that freedom of speech should not be used to stir up

racial hate, think that this same freedom of speech gives them the democratic right to stir up

religious hate. For many people religion is not just a set of intellectual beliefs, but a way of

life.[27] Christians should be able to identify with Muslims in this respect. Perhaps Christians

in Europe have become too accustomed to having their religious convictions offended by their

environment and may have actually helped the process of the erosion of free speech instead of

helping people practice a form of self-censorship when using their right of freedom of

---

[24] Salman Rushdie, "Defend The Right To Be Offended," *Open Democracy*, http://www.opendemocracy.net/faith-europe_islam/article_2331.jsp#/ (accessed June 5, 2008). Rushdie believes that this value comes under threat because of religious demands made by Muslims that people do not offend or insult them because of their religious convictions.

[25] Sarah Lindon, "Words On Images: The Cartoon Controversy," *Open Democracy*, http://www.opendemocracy.net/faith-europe_islam/article_2331.jsp#/ (accessed June 5, 2008).

[26] Salman Rushdie, "Defend The Right To Be Offended," *Open Democracy*, http://www.opendemocracy.net/faith-europe_islam/article_2331.jsp#/ (accessed June 5, 2008). According to Rushdie "you never personalize, but you have absolutely no respect for people's opinions. You are never rude to the person, but you can be savagely rude about what the person thinks."

[27] Shakira Hussein, "They Do Not Villfy Our Ideas, They Vilify Us: A Reply To Salman Rushdie," *Open Democracy*, http://www.opendemocracy.net/faith-multicultarism/article_2349.jsp#/ (accessed June 8, 2008). Hussein,writes: "Racial hatred is increasingly being recoded in religious terms, and frankly I don't think it is our "ideas" that are at issue much of the time. Committed atheists are subjected to Islamophobia along with devout believers on the basis of their Arabic names or "middle-eastern appearance". Nor is religious identity simply about our "ideas" in any abstract sense. It's about the community to which we belong, our families, the significance of certain days, places, or events."

speech.[28] At the same time, Muslims in Europe will have to understand that freedom of expression is a value that is important to Europeans. Muslim coming from countries where freedom of speech is not a right must take some time to adjust to this difference.

Islamic Rejection of Europe

Those who expect *Eurabia* point out that Muslims reject Europe and seek to destabilize societies through violence and terrorism in name of Islam.

Although many young Muslims and intellectuals are actively looking for a way to live in harmony with their faith while fully participating in European society, one should not be blind to the fact that there also are Muslims who reject Europe. Such rejection sometimes grows out of fear, which results in another phobia.[2930] There is a perception among Muslims that Western culture is decadent and debased. This perception is fueled by regular statements in the Muslim media that reflect and often exaggerate moral decay in Western societies. This negative stereotyping of the West has been termed *Westophobia*.[31] Although the sentiment might be real, the term *Westophobia* is not as widely used as *Islamophobia*. One definition given of *Westophobia* is that "*Westophobia* refers to entrenched and endemically hostile

---

[28] Ibid.

[29] Michael Ancram, "Clash or Dialogue of Civilisations?" (speech, Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, May 16, 2003) Michael Ancram, http://www.michaelancram.com/sp_display.aspx?id=69 (accessed April 13, 2009). Ancram, UK member of Parliament, refers to 'westoxification' and said: "Fear is at the core. Fear on each side of being dominated by the other. Not the desire to conquer each other, but the fear of being overwhelmed and run by the other. …..So I believe it is between Islamic Fundamentalists and the west. Their mindset is not one of conquest but of fear. They fear what has been called "Westoxification". The fear of "westoxification" is the fear that another culture, in this case that of "the west" can seduce followers of other cultures or ways of life, in this case followers of Islam, away from their Faith and the way of life which goes with it. "Westoxification" is a particularly apposite term for it is both addictive and seductive, and yet at the same toxic."

[30] Michael Ancram, "Clash or Dialogue of Civilisations?," speech delivered to Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, May 16, 2003, Oxford.

[31] George Carey, "The Cross and the Crescent (The Clash of Faiths in an Age of Secularism)," September 18, 2006, The Beach Lecture, Newbold College, Bracknell. http://www.glcarey.co.uk/Speeches/2006/Cross%20and%20Crescent.html?.html (accessed April 14, 2009). Carey, former Archbishop of Canterbury, stated that "in recent years a deep-seated Westophobia has developed in the Muslim world."

attitudes to the West and to perceived cultural traits of the West."[32] Another term which

seems to reflect the same sentiment and might be a synonym is *Occidentalism*. Zadar, a

visiting Professor of Postcolonial Studies of City University in London and author of over

forty books on various aspects of Islam, believes that Occidentalism seems poised to become

the dominant discourse of the future.[33] Riddell and Cotterell mention the following causes for

antipathy toward the West among the Muslim masses:

1) The Israeli-Palestinian conflict;

2) United Nations sanctions against Iraq;

3) American military presence in Saudi Arabia;

4) Negative stereotyping of non-Muslims in Islamic sacred scripture;

5) The legacy of history;

6) Globalization;

7) Westophobia in Muslim media;

8) Conspiracy theorizing.[34]

In Europe one also finds extreme Islamists who have come to Europe to use the freedom

here to fight against what they see as violations of the Islamic truth. [35] Some believe they can't

participate in Western societies and seek to establish a Khalifat in Europe.[36] Although they are

---

[32] Peter G Riddell & Peter Cotterell, *Islam in Context: past, present and future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004 (second edition), 160.

[33] Ziauddin Zadar, "Why do they hate us?" review of *Occidentalism: A Short History of Anti-Westernism*, by Buruma, Ian, *New Statesman* (October 4 2004).

[34] Riddell & Cotterell, 160.

[35] Robert Leiken, "Europe's Angry Muslims," *Foreign Affairs* 84, no. 4 (July/August 2005). Leiken warns for first-generation jihadists who have migrated to Europe expressly to carry out jihad. They are aliens, typically asylum seekers or students, who gained refuge in liberal Europe from crackdowns against Islamists in the Middle East. Among them are radical imams, often on stipends from Saudi Arabia, who open their mosques to terrorist recruiters and serve as messengers for or spiritual fathers to jihadist networks.

[36] Ramadan, *Western Muslims*, 24-27. Ramadan discusses six various trends of thought within Islam and he admits that some of these streams cannot conceive of participating in Western societies (e.g. the scholastic traditionalism of the *Taliban* and *Tabligh- I Jamaat*) or refuse any kind of involvement in a space that is considered non-Islamic (e.g. *Salafi Literalism*) Others, like political literalist *salafism*, which in Europe is found among the *Hizb al-Tahrir* and *Al-Muhajirun* wed a literal reading of the Texts with a political connotation concerning the management of power, the caliphate, authority, law. He also points out that *Salafi* reformist thought, that adopts a reading of the sources that is based on the purpose and intentions of the law and jurisprudence, is very widespread in the West.

fringe groups at the moment, one should be aware that the lack of integration of Muslims has

the potential to foster social and political instability and conflict.[37] Failure on the part of the

society to help Muslims integrate into society leads to alienated and marginalized Muslims

who are vulnerable to extreme Islamists.[38]

It is important to distinguish between radical Islamists[39]and conservative Muslims,

because conservative Muslims interpret the Qu'ran conservatively without becoming jihadic

warriors.[40] One example of this last group is the Muslim Brothers who are an activist

movement with an enlightened conservatism and a devoutly religious outlook that continues

to attract young educated Muslims.[41]

While failure to integrate Muslims could lead to a growth of radical Islam in Europe,

integrating Muslims in European societies and helping them understand and embrace both

explicitly and implicitly European values can also lead to tensions within the Muslim

community. Muslim men may feel threatened by the loss of social control over Muslim

women who are drawn to modern individualistic values and forms of emancipation as a result

of their public education.[42]

---

[37] Pauly 167, 168. Pauly gives three examples in which such conflicts are manifested in contemporary Western Europe: a) the above-average crime rates in urban districts in which Islamic communities are situated; b) the confrontations between younger generations of Muslims and the police that periodically escalate into large-scale riots; c) the rising support for far-right political parties.

[38] Leiken, "Europe's Angry Muslims". Leiken states that "the social malaise felt by Muslims in the suburbs of major cities can turn into extremism and terrorism."

[39] Klausen, 46. Klausen finds that the new radical Islamist groups combine a global utopianism with a paranoid conception of power.

[40] Klausen, 45. Klausen suggests that these people should be described as neo-orthodox.

[41] Cesari, *Islam and Democracy*, 143. Cesari points out that this movement "wants to reconcile the exigencies of Islam with secular life without losing their soul."

[42] Fadela Amera and Sylvie Zappi, *Breaking the Silence* (: California University Press, 2006), 25. As Helen Harden Chenut, who translated Amara's book and wrote an introduction to it, states: "There is little doubt that the message of female emancipation and individual rights clashes overtly with fundamentalist assertion of religious and patriarchal authority."

Introduction

Euro-Islam conceptually expects that Islam will be Europeanized and Islamic values are compatible with those of Europe, and the two will exist side by side. The concept of *Euro-Islam* was introduced in 1992 by Bassam Tibi, a Syrian born Muslim and a German citizen. He is a political scientist and professor of International Relations at Gottingen University in Germany, and a professor at Cornell University. He is an advocate of reforming Islam. *Euro-Islam*, then, is the idea that Muslim migrants in Europe bring their identity into harmony with Europe and its cultural system. Tibi explains his concept of *Euro-Islam* as an Europeanization of Islam.[43]

Another *Euro-Islam* advocate is Tarik Ramadan, a Swiss Muslim academic whose views on Islam reflect a reformist perspective. Ramadan calls for creating a new European-Muslim identity and encourages Muslims to participate in Europe's social and cultural life. He calls for Muslims to essentially conform to European culture, but maintain Muslim ethics. Ramadan asserts that Islamic principles be separated from their cultures of origin and anchor them in the cultural reality of Western Europe.[44]

Islam's adaptation to Europe

The rapid growth in the number of Islamic centers more than six thousand in Western Europe in the past three decades are accompanied by an increase in Muslim funeral parlors, *halal* butcher shops, Islamic schools, etc. serves as a clear indication that Islam has begun to establish itself in the democratic and secularized context of Europe. Ramadan believes that

---

[43] Bassam Tibi, "Europeanisation, Not Islamisation,", Sign and Sight.com http://www.signandsight.com/features/1258.html. (accessed December 28, 2008).

[44] Tariq Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the future of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 4. Ramadan has been called Islam's 'Martin Luther' in the West for his controversial views that challenge the mainstream Islamic beliefs. He teaches theology at the University of Oxford.

Europe is currently living through a silent revolution in Muslim communities in the West in which more and more young people and intellectuals are actively looking for a way to live in harmony with their faith while participating in the societies that are their societies, whether they like it or not.[45]

The fact that Islam is beginning to adapt to the European context can particularly be noticed in: (1) the emergence of Islamic political and civic leaders and Islamic associations; (2) changes in religious authority; (3) changes in describing Islam's status as a minority culture; (4) a desire for gender equality, and (5) changes in interpreting the meaning of *shari'a*.[46]

The Emergence of Political and Civic Leaders and Associations

European Muslim leaders play an important role in the accommodation of Islam in Europe. A significant number of them are people that have in one way or another chosen to live in Europe and indicated their acceptance of European norms and institutions by engaging in civic and political life.[47] Research shows that Europe's new Muslim political elite are first generation immigrants that focus on national politics and use the national language. They are integrationists and people who consider Islam to be significant in their personal lives.[48]

Initially the religious needs of immigrants in Europe were met by the governments of Muslim countries (e.g. Morocco, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Algeria). They collaborated with

---

[45] Ramadan, *Western Muslims* , 9. Ramadan encourages Western Muslims to go back to their sources and distinguish between what in their religion is unchangeable (*thabit*) from what is subject to change (*mutaghay-yir)*.

[46] In chapter 9 of her book *When Islam and Democracy meet*, Cesari mentions several other reforms, such as interfaith dialogue, the concept of democracy, the status of the Apostate and human rights.

[47] Jytte Klausen, *The Islamic Challenge: politics and religion in Western Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).Jytte Klausen, Professor of Politics at Brandeis University and Research Associate at The Center for European Studies, at Harvard University, estimates there are between 1,500 and 2,000 individuals in six European countries (Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Great Britain, France and Germany), who are elected or appointed leaders in a national or regional civic or political organization and who are of Muslim faith or background. She interviewed 300 of them and she portrays the results of this in her book.

[48] Klausen, 28. According to Klausen the 9/11 attacks became a catalyst for a new wave of Muslim associationalism and created the emergence of national faith-based umbrella groups or councils that focus on national political participation and that consider their support for integration as their chief objective.

the local European governments, but gradually European governments sought to limit foreign government influence in the practice of Islam in their countries. All European governments with sizable Muslim minorities have initiated consultations with a broad swath of Muslim religious organizations and prayer spaces, and they have pursued the domestication of Islam as well as of other major religious communities by institutionalizing church-state relations. Even in France, with the model of *laïcité* the state has been very active in their creation of the French Council on the Muslim Religion.[49]

Changes in Religious Authority

One can see a democratization of authority in Islam in Europe when compared to Islam in the native countries of the European Muslims.[50] During the pilot of the course Sharing Lives with Bible school students, which will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5, I have seen an example of this.

On November 21, 2008, I visited a mosque in Amsterdam, whose board consists of predominantly young people from different ethnic backgrounds and I was welcomed by the chairman of the board of the mosque, a 24-year old woman. She explicitly mentioned that the board operates independently of national or international bodies.

The changes in the structure of Islam in the West particularly affect the status of religious leaders. The bureaucratic leader, paid by or otherwise associated with the Islamic institutions of influential Muslim countries, is increasingly replaced by the community or "parochial"

---

[49] Klausen, 138. Klausen writes: "Rather than simply tolerate the existence of Islam *in* France, the government has made it a policy goals to create an Islam *of* France."

[50] Cesari, *Islam and Democracy*, 124. Cesari points out that Muslims are in the process of creating new institutions and forms of authority appropriate in their new environment.

leader, whose activity is concentrated in the mosque or Islamic association of a particular neighborhood or city.[51]

Islam's Status as a Minority Culture

Within the Muslim community in the West an intense debate goes on over the legal conditions connected to minority status. The main Islamic concepts in this regard are *Dar al Islam* (House of Peace) and *Dar al Harb* (House of War). Most Muslims in Europe consider the classical distinction between these concepts void.[52] At the moment there is no consensus about the name to be given to *Dar al Harb*.[53]

A Desire for Gender Equality

It is not hard to imagine a clash on gender issues when comparing the sexually liberal Western societies with the far more conservative societies of North Africa, Turkey, and the Middle East. Dr. Amina Wadud, an Islamic studies professor at Virginia Commonwealth University, located in Richmond, Virginia, considers gender one of the most crucial contemporary issues facing Islam and Muslims.[54] In many European countries, discussions are going on with regard to the wearing of the veil, and several countries have passed laws forbidding Muslim girls from wearing headscarves while at school. Often Islamic headscarves are seen in a negative light and considered to be a symbol of mounting Islamism.[55] The link is

---

[51] Cesari, *Islam and Democracy*, 139. Cesari believes that within the gradual restructuring of Muslim communities in the West, "the emergence of 'parochial leaders' constitutes a noteworthy phenomenon."

[52] Ramadan, *Western Muslims,* 66. After giving some details about the debates that have gone on about these concepts, Ramadan concludes that these concepts seem "neither operational nor relevant in our time."

[53] Ramadan, *Western Muslims*, 75. Ramadan lists some options that are used. Some prefer to use the concept of *dar-al-ahd* (abode of treaty) or *dar-al-amn* (abode of safety). Others prefer to speak of *dar-al-dawa* (abode of invitation to God) Others prefer the notion of *shahada* (testimony) and refer to the Western countries as *dar al-shahada*.

[54] Amina Wadud, *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam* (Oxford: One World Publications, 2006), 79.

[55] Bowen, 98. Bowen points out that in France "the scarves were seen as the key to a whole host of problems. Ban the scarves and things will, somehow, get better: boys will stop harassing girls, Islamists will stop harassing secular Muslims, and teachers will get more respect."

made between Muslim women wearing a scarf and the failure of Muslims to integrate into European society or between the scarf and Islam's aversion of modernism.

Developments are taking place within Islam, particularly among Western Muslims towards more gender equality. In her books and teachings, Dr. Wadud explains, defines and redefines several key concepts of Islam,[56] and reinterprets Islam and its primary sources in such a way that it no longer justifies the gender inequality and patriarchism.[57]

Dr. Wadud, a hero for some and a heretic for others, is an example of how people that are fully committed to Islam seek to reform it from within. [58]

Changed Meaning of "Shari'a"

Those who support the *Eurabia* scenario are afraid that in the near future "shari'a" law (the body of Islamic religious law) will be operative throughout Europe. By means of a questionnaire I found that 64 percent of the Christian respondents agreed or didn't explicitly disagree with the statement "For Muslims jihad means to subjugate foreign lands and people."[59]

In this light is it important to notice that Muslims in Europe seek to define their identity within the framework of European legal orders and to apply the "shari'a" law within the European contexts. The "shari'a" contains religious as well as legal norms of Islam. It is constructed from the Qur'an and the Sunnah and developed in the context of a Muslim majority situation. Muslims in Europe are in the process of defining which aspects of it are

---

[56] For example *tawhid* (the unicity of God); *khalifah* (moral agent); *taqwa* (moral consciousness).

[57] Wadud, 88. She believes that "an alternative interpretation of the Qur'an from a female-inclusive perspective is instrumental in reform movements in modern Muslim societies."

[58] Wadud has been the subject of much debate and Muslim juristic discourse. In August 1994, she delivered a Friday sermon in a mosque in Cape Town, South Africa. At the time, this was largely unheard of in the Muslim world. As a result, there were attempts by some Muslims to have her removed from her position at the university. There has been objection and some support from Muslims around the world to Wadud's imamate. In spite of the criticism, Wadud has continued her speaking engagements, and has continued to lead mixed-gender Friday prayer services. In 2005, she was invited to lead a congregation of about thirty people in Barcelona, Spain and also in 2005 she led a Friday prayer of over 100 male and female Muslims in New York.

[59] For more information, see chapter 5 and Appendix D.

also applicable in the European context. Muslim scholars, such as Tarik Ramadan, differentiate between the universal principles, which remain the same through the ages and the practice of these principles, which are relative at a given moment in history.[60] Mathias Rohe, judge of the Court of Appeal in Nurenberg, Germany sees a 'de-territorialization' regarding the non-legal parts of the *shari'a*.

> The provisions, the legal consequences of which can only be enforced with the help of a state sanction system, remain territorially connected to the exercising of Islamic state power. All other provisions are principally universal and are therefore also open for application and further development within the regional environment.[61]

Sometimes, in specific cases, Muslim jurists must determine how a Muslim can adapt to the Western context.[62] These rulings point to the development of a European *shari'a*. This situation is exemplified by some of the Islamic institutions that have been established, such as the Islamic Shari'a Council in England (*Angrezi Shari'at*),[63] and the European Council for Expert Opinions and Studies (also called the European Council for Fatwa and Research).[64] Also of importance is the Islamic Charta of the German Central Council of Muslims, because

---

[60] Tariq Ramadan, *Western Muslims*, 95. Ramadan believes that to apply the *shari'a* for Muslim citizens or residents in the West means explicitly to respect that legal and constitutional framework of the country of which they are citizens."

[61] Matthias Rohe, *Muslim Minorities and the Law in Europe - Changes and Challenges* (New Delhi: GM Publications, 2007), 53. In this book Rohe discusses whether and to which extent norms of the *shari'a* can be applied in Europe.

[62] Ramadan, *Western Muslims*, 97. Ramadan points out that sometimes Muslims need to object to certain matters that are required of them, by pointing to the conscience cause. At other times the latitude of the national constitution needs to be constrained by the personal choice of a Muslim in order to live in accordance with their faith.

[63] Rohe, 54. The Council, established in 1980, is responsible for mediation particularly in the area of the law on a person's legal status (matters relating to marriage, divorce). Decisions by the Council which cannot be challenged, can be enforced by state courts.

[64] European Council for Fatwa and Research, *First collection of Fatwas* (Cairo: Islamic INC, 1999). Founded in 1997. it has 30 members, 22 of whom live in Europe, the rest in the Arab world. By publishing its expert opinions the Council aims at providing emigrated Muslims with advice regarding problems they are faced with in everyday life. Since 1999, the Council meets every year and presents a volume containing its expert opinions in Arabic. Forty three of their opinions (*fatwahs*) that came out of their first two meetings are collected in English in "First collection of Fatwahs". These opinions deal with the following topics: mission/general questions of faith; ritual purity and prayer; questions concerning property; gainful employment and housekeeping; marriage and divorce; family and the Muslim household; food; character and tradition; general.

in this organization for the first time organized Muslims formulated their position about the adherence to Islam as well as to European citizenship.[65]

In the areas of family law and laws of succession, the existing European legal system gives space for the possibility of applying Islamic laws.[66] In some European countries, the legislator has made legal provisions for defined groups.[67] Other areas in which Muslims have a legal opportunity to apply their own laws are within the framework of optional civil law and economic contracts, such as mortgages.[68]

Assessing the two scenarios

The bulk of Muslims in Europe arrived in the 1960s as guest workers with the idea of making money and returning home to their families. In the 1980s it became clear that that was not to be. Instead, women and children and other relatives joined the husbands and Islam took root in Europe. Gradually, Muslims, governments, and European citizens realized that they have a future together. How this future will look is not yet clear. What is clear is that adjustments have to be made by both Muslims and the European societies.

As has been shown earlier there are many who believe that Europe will do most of the adjusting resulting in Europe becoming *Eurabia*. They seem to assume that Islam will be immune to the pressure of secularization. Philip Jenkins, who in his book *God's Continent,*

---

[65] Rohe, 143. This Islamic Charta made in 2002 stressed that Muslims are content with the harmonious system of secularism and religious freedom provided by the Constitution and that they don't intend to create 'a state of God'. In some articles it is pointed out that Muslims willingly accept the German legal order including the rights of women to take place in elections, the right to change religion and the provision of German Family Laws, the Law of Inheritance and Procedural Law.

[66] Rohe, 117. Rohe points out that the application of Islamic family law –within the limits of public policy – has become everyday business in German courts. Islamic law has largely preserved its dominant position especially within the area of personal status (marital and family law). However, the application of such provisions must comply with the rules of the German public policy.

[67] Rohe, 20. For example, in its new Personal Status Law, 1992, Spain has recognized the Islamic formal way of contracting a marriage as an option.

[68] Rohe, 23. In the UK a special concept of "Islamic mortgages" was developed, which allows Muslims willing to purchase chattel to avoid conflicts with provisions concerning *riba* (when paying interest on 'normal' mortgages.

Christianity, Islam and Europe's Religious Crisis, argues against a *Eurabia* scenario, points

out that

> both Christianity and Islam face real difficulties in surviving within Europe's secular
> cultural ambience in anything like their familiar historic forms. But instead of fading
> away, both have adapted to Eurosecularity and there are continuing to adapt. The fate of
> Islam in cotemporary Europe must be understood in the wider religious context, so that
> both Islam and Christianity are considered together in terms of maintaining their hold
> on believers, and in their relationship with the secular order.[69]

Many Muslims in Europe face the challenge of how to maintain a spiritual life in a

modern secular society. According to Cesari, the greatest problem Muslims in Europe have is

"how to transfer legitimacy from the Muslim world to the West? How to transfer theology

from the Muslim world to the Western world?"[70]

Those who believe we are heading for *Eurabia* point out that hard-core Islam is

incapable of modernity and that there is no such thing as a moderate Islam. Professor

Mahmood Mamdani, President of the Council for Development of Social Research in Africa

(CODESRIA) Dakar, Senegal argues that those people who believe that Islam is incapable of

modernity, fail to distinguish between fundamentalism as a religious identity and a political

identity that uses a religious idiom, such as political Islam.[71]

Earlier in this chapter I demonstrated that Islamic scholars work are working towards

creating a *Euro-Islam* that is both compatible with their own religious sources and their lives

in Western Europe.[72] This process is far from complete and new fatwa's have to be produced

for those who want to be faithful Muslims in a secular society. In the meantime there might be

---

[69] Jenkins, 3.

[70] Cesari, *Islam and Democracy*, 154.

[71] Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004), 17. In this book Mamdani. is critical of those who consider Islamic civilization as if it were a veneer with its essence an unchanging doctrine in which Muslims are said to take refuge in times of crisis and he is also critical of those who divide the Islamic community between good and bad Muslims, whereby good Muslims are modern, secular and Westernized, but bad Muslims are doctrinal, antimodern, and virulent.

[72] Rohe, 156. Rohe writes that the declarations and opinions formulated by European Muslim organizations make clear that a clash of civilizations between Islam in general and western values is far from reality.

some confusion and uncertainty,[73] or even conflict between Muslims who interpret Islamic values and the Qur'anic truths differently and those that decide to leave Islam altogether and speak critically about it.[74] In fact, some element of conflict seems inevitable as Jenkins points out:

> In the last forty years, some millions of Africans and Asians have moved from traditional-minded societies dominated by Islam to European nations that differ from them in virtually every basic assumption about social arrangements and political structures, and that were themselves making an epochal transition in their own sexual mores. Against such a background, it is inconceivable that conflicts should not have erupted. Rather than despairing or seeing culture clashes as irreconcilable, we might rather be impressed at just how much convergences of values and beliefs has occurred.[75]

Based on the readings and research as presented in this chapter, I conclude that a *Euro-Islam* scenario is more likely than a *Eurabian* scenario.

Nevertheless, even if the majority of Muslims are willing to find their place in Europe, they do not wholeheartedly embrace all Western values, particularly in the area of family and personal morality. What many Muslim clerics describe as the Muslim point of view in regard to family or moral issues is largely a means of keeping their distance from the cultural underpinnings of the West, and thus functions as an implicit critique of Western democracy.[76]

Despite the fact that there are a remarkable number of cases concerning Islamic legal orders, which do not cause any problems in European legal practice, the potential of

---

[73] Cesari, *Islam and Democracy*, 154, 155. Cesari points out that there still is a lot of uncertainty surrounding the teaching of Islam in a European context and she mentions several consequences: the widespread tendency in contemporary Islam to categorize everything as either haram or halal; schools of jurisprudence (hanafite, malekite, shafi'ite, hanbalite) are often regarded with suspicion, and sometimes wholly rejected and the differences between Sunni and Shiite Islam tend to be minimized.

[74] E.g. former Dutch-Somali MP and former Muslim, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, who made the film *Submission* exposing the way Islam treats women; and former Muslim, Iranian-born Dutchman Ehsan Jami, who in December 2008 made a film "An interview with Muhammad," in which he critically looks at the life and teachings of Muhammed.

[75] Jenkins, 204.

[76] Cesari, *Islam and Democracy*, 157. Cesari writes that the internalization of democratic values by some Muslims, and Muslim leaders in particular, is colored by a good deal of skepticism for the universality of certain principles.

conflicting legal principles between Islam-orientated rules and those of the European legal order is considerable.[77]

Although the *Euro-Islam* scenario is more likely to become reality than the *Eurabia* scenario, the outcome is not only dependent upon the Muslims themselves. The outcome is dependent upon whether or not Muslims manage to bring Europe and Islam in harmony with each other and whether European governments and citizens, including Christians, are willing to create space for Islam and Muslims to find their place in Europe.

Governments are willing to develop programs and policies to help Muslims socially, culturally, and religiously find their place in Europe. But how will these programs work for the rank and file citizens? The September 11 attacks and the suicide attacks in Europe only exacerbated the predominantly negative and fearful attitude of Europeans towards Islam and Muslims.

Also among Christians in Europe, Islam and Muslims are looked at in a negative light. Fear, prejudice, and suspicion of Islam and Muslims are real, and seem to be "fuelled" every time another incident takes place involving Muslims. People often talk about Islam in an abstract way, instead of seeking to build meaningful relations with their Muslim neighbours. They only look at the Islamic textbooks instead of how individual Muslims practice their faith.

The phrase that best characterizes how Europeans, including Christians, generally deal with the growing visibility of Islam in Europe is one that is used by Bowen in his book *Why the French don't like the Headscarves*, namely *cold tolerance*.[78] Such cold tolerance might be the result of an attitude of fear.

---

[77] Rohe, 117.Rohe believes that conflicts mainly arise from the application of provisions reflecting classical Islamic Law, which preserve a strict separation between the sexes with respect to their social roles and tasks.

[78] Bowen, 120.