Humayun Ansari, Farid Hafez (eds.)

From the Far Right to the Mainstream

Islamophobia in Party Politics and the Media

campus

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Content

Islamophobia: an introduction

Humayun Ansari and Farid Hafez

On 29th November 2009 the construction of minarets in Switzerland was banned in a referendum (a majority of 57.5 percent) after Muslims in the town of Langenthal handed in a planning application to build a 30ft minaret to their prayer room. Ironically, this is a town in which a Sikh temple, complete with 'a gleaming white crown' had been inaugurated a year earlier in 2008 without even a squeak of protest!

The right-wing anti-minaret campaign used posters depicting a woman wearing a burqa in front of minarets shaped like missiles rising from the Swiss flag. The populist Schweizerische Volkspartei (SVP) cast the minarets as a symbol of political power, a prelude to the introduction of Sharia law. Its leader Ulrich Schluer declared: "They are symbols of an Islam which wants to establish a legal and social order fundamentally contrary to the liberties guaranteed in our constitution".[1] Radical feminists argued that the minarets were "male power symbols" and reminders of Islam's oppression of women. A local housewife said: "If we give them a minaret, they'll have us wearing burqas […] Before you know it, we'll have sharia law and women being stoned to death in our streets. We won't be Swiss any more." Another female campaigner, attacking Muslims who condoned forced marriage, honour killings and the beating of women, warned that the failure to ban minarets would be "a signal of the state's acceptance of the oppression of women".[2]

A similar battle was reported to be raging in Germany over plans envisaging one of Europe's biggest mosques in the shadow of Cologne cathedral. The Danes were also engaged in a debate over plans for two similarly capacious mosques in Copenhagen. Likewise in the United Kingdom mosques generated anxieties, threats and fears and became sites of political and cultural struggle where values and rights were vigorously contested. In April 2008 Alison Ruoff, a senior member of the General Synod of the Church of Eng-

1 "Switzerland risks Muslim backlash after minarets vote". 29.11.2009 Telegraph.co.uk.
2 "Women lead Swiss in vote to ban minarets". 29.11.2009 Timeonline.

land and a former nurse and magistrate, called for the building of mosques to be banned, on the grounds that more construction would lead to Islamic 'no-go' areas dominated by exclusively Muslim populations living under Sharia law.[3] In 2009/10 the controversy surrounding mosque building was ratcheted up still further by the English Defence League, which, with support from the British National Party, successfully exploited the growing popular anti-Muslim sentiment. In Harrow, Stoke-on-Trent, Birmingham, Bolton and Manchester, it mobilised significant numbers of disaffected people to mount campaigns generating much vitriol against local Muslim communities. Interestingly, around the same time, amendments to building laws were made in the regional parliaments of two states of Austria—Carinthia and Vorarlberg—with the intention of banning the building of mosques and minarets.[4]

Two examples illustrate the nature of this opposition to mosques in England. On 27 February 2007, following a sustained public campaign, after petitions were raised and signed by 22,000 people, Dudley Council's planning committee turned down plans to build a mosque and community centre on a derelict plot of land. In July 2009, however, following Dudley Council's Appeal, the High Court upheld the Planning Inspectorate's decision to grant outline planning permission for the construction of the mosque. This decision reignited the anti-mosque campaign with the English Defence League spearheading the protests. In April 2010 it rampaged through the town with placards that read "Say no to the mosque" and "Muslim bombers off our streets". The national anthem blared from a speaker system while demonstrators waved the flag of St. George.[5] Then, in Camberley, a town in Surrey and more importantly the location of the Royal Military Academy, more than 6,500 residents, supported by the English Defence League, signed a petition to oppose the application for a planning permission that aimed at constructing an 'outlandish' building on the site of a listed Victorian structure that was previously a school.[6] The proposal for the mosque, originally approved by the local authority, was finally rejected by the local council at a packed public meeting. Hundreds had lined the streets to protest against the mosque, chanting "Hands off our heritage! We want Justice!" The reasoning behind this opposition is interesting to examine. As the 2010 general election

3 02.04.2008 Mail Online.
4 Hafez, Farid (2010). *Islamophober Populismus*.
5 03.04.2010 Telegraph.co.uk.
6 *Comment*, Get Surrey 18.03.2009.

approached, Michael Gove, the Conservative MP representing the constituency who, in his provocative book *Celsius 7/7*, had warned that the West was facing a "total war" from Islamists, somewhat opportunistically called for the withdrawal of the Bengali Welfare Association's application on the grounds that it had become the target of an "inflammatory and offensive" online campaign and was threatening "good community relations". A British Army source contended: "There is a real concern that if this thing gets built, then soldiers could be put at risk" (and not only the officers; senior members of the Royal Family including the Queen, who was present at the passing out parade of her grandson Prince Harry, could also be endangered). With two 100ft towers, the £3 million building would have had a clear view over the military academy, just 400 yards from the parade ground—with the media constantly fuelling its image as a source of Muslim violence and terrorism, it was reasonable to imagine the prospective mosque to be a potential security threat.

Much evidence had thus accumulated by the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century pointing to the spread of popular anti-Muslim sentiment across Europe and the United States. The wide-ranging *Summary Report on Islamophobia*, published in May 2002, revealed in no uncertain terms the prevalence and virulence of anti-Muslim feeling throughout the European Union.[7] Indeed, anti-immigrant racist parties had been gaining ground for some time in almost all European countries. The Dutch Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (VVD), as far back as 1991, had claimed that Islam was a threat to liberal democracy and a hindrance to the 'integration' of immigrants. In the late 1990s, Pim Fortuyn (author of *Against the Islamification of our Culture*) introduced a cruder form of Islamophobia, and his party, List Fortuyn, gained 17.5 percent of the vote in the 2002 elections. The VVD, having adopted most of Fortuyn's proposals, became the senior partner in the coalition government after the general elections in 2010. In

7 Christopher Allen and Jorgen S. Nielsen, Summary Report on Islamophobia in the EU after 11.09.2001 (European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia [EUMC], Vienna, May 2002). The Pew Global Attitudes Project in 2008 found that 50 percent of German and 52 percent of Spanish respondents had an unfavourable opinion of Muslims as did 46 percent in Poland, 38 percent in France and about one-in-four in Britain and the USA. A University of Leipzig survey revealed that 55 percent declared that Arabs were not pleasant people (44 percent in 2003) and 58 percent stated that the practice of Islam should be 'considerably restricted'. See Theunis Bates, "Europe's Identity Crisis Fuels Rising Anti-Muslim Sentiment", 18.12.2010 http://jagahost.proboards.com/index.cgi?board=europeannews&action=display&thread=9699.

2000, Jörg Haider's Freedom Party that has been accused of pronounced Nazi sympathies temporarily became a part of the Austrian coalition government. Later, as Farid Hafez's contribution in this volume highlights, he targeted Islam and Muslims as the enemy within. Since the Cartoons Affair in Denmark 2007, the Dansk Folkeparti (DFP) has become even more influential, emerging with 25 seats in parliament (14 percent). Similarly, in September 2010, Sverigedemokraterna (SD), the Sweden Democrats, initially a neo-Nazi grouping, who deployed negative imagery of burqa-clad Muslim women knocking aside Swedish pensioners and grabbing their state benefits, won enough votes (5.7 percent) to enter the parliament with 20 seats.[8] Back in the Netherlands, the anti-Islam Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV) (Freedom Party)—whose leader Geert Wilders called for the "fascist" Qur'an to be banned along with immigration from Muslim countries—gained a record 24 seats in the June 2010 general election. And in Britain two candidates of the far right British National Party took seats in the European Parliament in June 2009. Since its foundation in the summer of 2009, the English Defence League (EDL)—which claims to be against extremist Islam—has regularly staged marches in urban areas with Muslim communities, shouting anti-Islamic slogans and intimidating local residents. In late 2010, the EDL invited pastor Terry Jones of the non-denominational Christian Dove World Outreach Center in Gainesville, Florida, who achieved notoriety with his book, *Islam is of the Devil* and then just before the ninth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks controversially proposed a bonfire of the Qur'an to address the planned EDL demonstration on 5 February 2011 in its birthplace, Luton. The EDL itself was present at the Ground Zero mosque protest in New York with its banners proclaiming "No Mosque at Ground Zero", "No Sharia" and "The more Islam the less freedom". Wilders similarly spoke at the invitation of the Stop Islamisation of America (SIOA), raising slogans such as "No mosque here! […] New York […] will never become New Mecca".[9] All these actions formed part of the increasing anti-Islamic populist collaboration taking place across the Atlantic, with the English Defence League forging links with America's 'Tea Party'. Additionally some like the Norwegian Anders Behring Breivik take their 'knowledge' from these discourses to construe a manifesto against Islamofacism. Breivik may be the most brutal result of the

8 13.12.2010 http://www.aolnews.com/world/article/europes-identity-crisis-fuels-rising-anti-muslim-sentiment/19670466.

9 14.12.2010 http://www.rnw.nl/africa/article/wilders-ground-zero-no-new-mecca.

spread of Islamophobia in the 'Western world' with his 78 killings in a Socialist Youth camp.

The strict focus on Islam helped these populist-nationalist groups win over voters who did not consider themselves racist, but—in the wake of 9/11 and the bomb attacks in London and Madrid—were concerned about the perceived threat of radical Islam. By targeting Islam, they were also able to tap into wider worries over the slow demise of old national identities in the face of increasing multiculturalism and globalization. The contemporary Western nativist[10] right presents Islam as a threat to "the spiritual foundations of the West" (values such as freedom, democracy and the rights of women). The defence of these liberal values is a key part of the far right's strategy against Muslims. Not only the far-right but also liberals demand Muslim cultural assimilation or expulsion—they advance policy proposals that would render Muslims invisible.

The failure of mainstream European politicians to effectively challenge the nativist arguments of far-right groups, together with the former's opportunistic attempts to win back votes by mimicking the latter's rhetoric and by pandering to the same fears that made right-wing groups popular, resulted in a wider population being attracted to far-right messages. When UK Prime Minister Tony Blair warned of the "real and existential" threat facing "us" from "Islamic extremism", the public translated this into Islam and Muslims generally. Silvio Berlusconi, Italy's Prime Minister, was even more transparent when, in late September 2001, he observed that "we must be aware of the superiority of our civilisation, a system that has guaranteed well-being, respect for human rights and—in contrast to Islamic countries—respect for religious and political rights, a system that has as its value understanding of diversity and tolerance".[11] In Germany in October 2010, Bavarian premier Horst Seehofer, whose conservative Christian Social Union (CSU) party was faring poorly in the polls, announced that Turks and Arabs should no longer be allowed to move to the country because they struggled to integrate into German society.[12] And France's President Nicolas Sarkozy attempted to stem the rising popularity of the National Front (FN) by banning the burqa, even though less than 1 percent of France's five million Muslims wear the dress.

10 The assumption that different cultures are of equal value but essentially incompatible; hence they can neither be bridged nor overcome; assimilation is not possible; hence leading to exclusion on cultural grounds.

11 14.12.2010 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/1565664.stm .

12 14.12.2010 http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/oct/11/germany-immigration-horst-seehofer.

With anti-burqa legislation duly passed in July 2010, French Muslim schoolgirls were transformed into a threat to republican values. Similar legislation was introduced in Belgium and in Spain.

How do we explain these developments? A historical perspective is crucial because the roots of anti-Muslim prejudice lie deep in European history—negative stereotypes, images and ideas have accumulated over centuries of encounter between Muslims and the West. According to Norman Daniel in his introduction to the revised edition of his seminal work *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image*, "The earliest Christian reactions to Islam were much the same as they have been until quite recently. The tradition has been continuous and it is still alive".[13] But to what extent is this true? Fred Halliday, for one, has disagreed and pointed out that there have been many periods in the past when antagonism between Muslims and the West has drawn on assumptions in which negative ideas about Islam and Muslim practices *per se* have not been highlighted. Depending on the context and nature of the conflict, other labels such as ethnic and national origins have been selected, imbued with negative connotations and applied to people who also happen to be Muslim. Halliday also argues that while the enemy in the past might have been Islam, now it is not the faith but the followers—Muslims—who are the 'real' targets of prejudice and discrimination.[14] Although Malcolm Brown and Robert Miles have refuted his criticism profoundly,[15] the same arguments are still widespread in public debates on Islamophobia.[16]

It is impossible to demonstrate an unbroken connection between the attitudes engendered in Europe at the time of the Crusades and those expressed at the beginning of the third millennium. It is equally not possible to attribute antipathy towards Muslims solely because of religious difference as other dimensions of identity have also played an important part in affecting how they have been perceived in the West. The process has been a complex one as the particular aspect of Muslim identity that is re-invented and re-

13 Daniel, Norman (1993). *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image*. One World Publication, p. 11.

14 Halliday, Fred (1999). "'Islamophobia' reconsidered". *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 5, pp. 892–902.

15 Brown, Malcom and Robert Miles (eds.) (2003). *Racism*. Second Edition, London: Routledge, p. 165–168.

16 See for instance the debate started by French Pascal Bruckner entitled the "l'invention de 'l'Islamophobie'" in the French Liberation, 19.12.2010. http://www.liberation.fr/societe/01012303767-l-invention-de-l-islamophobie, and the reply by Farid Hafez in the German Kulturmagazin Perlentaucher, 19.12.2010. http://www.perlentaucher.de/artikel/6639.html.

interpreted to justify frictions depends very much on contingent material factors and the broader social and political influences to which society is subjected. However, it would not be an exaggeration to say that many influential individuals and institutions in the West today have come to perceive Islam and Muslims, particularly since the end of the Cold War, as the principal threat to the survival and progress of Western civilization, a civilization founded on and formed by Christian ethos and values. For instance, in the 1960s, Christian churches reminded their followers of the 'peril of Islam' and dismissed Islam as a post-Christian heresy. Samuel Huntington in his *The Clash of Civilizations* labelled Islam as "the underlying problem of the West" and "Muslim societies as fertile ground for the recruitment of violent religious fanatics and terrorists".[17] And these perceptions were widely shared among influential Western policymakers and opinion formers. So, for example, according to Willi Claes, former Secretary General of NATO: "Muslim fundamentalism is at least as dangerous as communism once was […] [and] at the conclusion of this age it is a serious threat, because it represents terrorism, religious fanaticism and exploitation of social and economic justice".[18] Peregrine Worsthorne, a well-known if controversial British columnist in the 1980s and 1990s, considered all Muslims to be sympathetic to terrorism and to approve of the atrocities perpetrated against the West. At the height of *The Satanic Verses* controversy in 1989, Fay Weldon, an English writer of popular fiction, had the following to say about Islam: "The Bible, in its entirety, is at least food for thought, the Koran is food for no-thought. It is not a poem on which society can be safely or sensibly based […] it gives weapons and strength to the thought police. Look, you can build a decent society around the Bible […] But the Koran? No".[19] When asked to reflect on these comments in 1997 she maintained that she felt that they were still "perfectly valid".[20]

17 Huntington, Samuel P. (1996). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*. Simon and Schuster, p. 214.

18 Television Interview reported from the Inter Press Service, 18.02.1995.

19 Weldon, Fay (1989). *Sacred Cows: a portrait of Britain, post-Rushdie, Pre-Utopia*. Chatto & Windus, pp. 6–8, 12.

20 *Independent on Sunday*, 02.03.1997.

Defining Islamophobia

It is in this context that the 1997 Runnymede Trust's *Islamophobia: a challenge for us all* [*The Report*] was published—seeking to show that "Islamophobic discourse, sometimes blatant but frequently coded and subtle, is [now] part of everyday life in modern Britain", and warning that because "in the last twenty years […]the dislike [of Islam and Muslims] has become more explicit, more extreme and more dangerous"[21], remedial action at various levels of society was required.

While the Runnymede report stated that Islamophobia was becoming "more explicit, more extreme and more dangerous", by the end of the first decade of the 21st century the same phenomenon had become more natural, more normal and—because of this—even dangerous than before. The need for a new approach to tackling Islamophobia is therefore clearly required, as is a new language and greater knowledge both to explain and to respond to the subtleties and nuances of Islamophobia that remain overlooked and consequently are allowed to take root and flourish. The term 'Islamophobia' was defined in *The Report* as "unfounded hostility towards Muslims, and therefore fear or dislike of all or most Muslims". The eight features of the "closed" and "open" views that described Islamophobia in the report were:

- Islam seen as monolithic, static and unresponsive to new realities rather than diverse and dynamic;
- Islam seen as separate and other rather than similar and interdependent;
- Islam seen as inferior to the West—barbaric, irrational, primitive, sexist rather than different but not deficient and as equally worthy of respect;
- Islam seen as an enemy—violent, threatening, terroristic rather than as a partner;
- Islam seen as politically manipulative and not a sincere religious faith;
- Muslim criticisms of the West are rejected rather than considered or debated;
- Hostility towards Islam used to justify discrimination against exclusion of Muslims defended rather than combated;
- Anti-Muslim hostility seen as natural and 'normal' rather than subjected to critique.[22]

21 Islamophobia: a challenge for us all (The Runnymede Trust, 1997), p. 1 (henceforth The Report).

22 *The Report*, p. 4

There is no doubt that this dualistic 'either-or' system does construct Muslims 'Islamophobically' in official and popular discourses by categorising them as either 'moderate' or 'extremist', either 'good' or 'bad'. However, Christopher Allen feels that this model is simplistic, superficial, unclear and inadequate, that Islamophobia, despite its wider usage, is at times little more than an indiscriminate and all-encompassing term, employed to satisfy or appease a vast spectrum of commentators, actors and perpetrators in varying different measures, and that it does not offer sufficiently persuasive explanations. If one wishes to develop a rigorous understanding of this highly complex phenomenon then the "black and white duality of the love or hate of Muslims and Islam as the only options available" need to be interrogated and "all those grey, more indirect forms of Islamophobia that fall in-between, analysed".[23]

Other weighty oppositions and critiques, many challenging the very validity of the concept, that have emerged since the publication of the Runnymede Report, also require serious consideration. For instance, Polly Toynbee's column "In defence of Islamophobia" that was printed one day after the public launch of the Runnymede Report in the liberal-minded English newspaper *The Guardian* opened thus: "I am an Islamophobe. I judge Islam not by its words—the teachings of the Koran as interpreted by those Thought-for-the-Day moderate Islamic theologians. I judge Islam by the religion's deeds in the societies where it dominates. Does that make me a racist?"[24] The column adopted a secular liberal approach against Islam: with regard to the inequality between the sexes, her view was that Islam is "a religion that describes women as of inferior status, placing them one step behind in the divine order of things"; that the Muslim demand of a ban on "criticism and mockery of what they think or believe" would sound the death-knell of free speech; that Muslims were reluctant to criticize the excesses in "Islamic states"; that the structure and procedures of the Saudi "shariah court" made it inherently unjust and that "unreason" was at the heart of religion (in her discussion, Islam). What this analysis of her column's content reveals is pre-

23 Allen asks "for example, to what extent has a 'grey' Islamophobia been underlying the more recent debates about the need for better integration, the 'death' of multiculturalism, the unfolding the establishment and unfolding of the community cohesion programme, the niqab as barrier to social participation, the need for universities to 'spy' on the students and the need to look for the 'tell-tale' signs of radicalisation." See his "K.I.S.S. (keeping Islamophobia simple & stupid)", 16.12.2010 http://www.chris-allen.co.uk/.

24 Toynbee, Polly (1997). "In Defence of Islamophobia". *The Independent*, 23.10.1997.

cisely a set of 'closed' views, as described in the Runnymede Report as characteristic of Islamophobia, running through it.

Even though Toynbee did accept that some Muslims were discriminated against, she insisted that "racism is the problem, not religion". Returning to the issue of Islamophobia in 2005, when her 'misbegotten' incitement to religious hatred legislation was being re-debated, she robustly defended her right to "offend Muslim women". Her argument? "Race is something people cannot choose and it defines nothing about them as people. But beliefs are what people choose to identify with: in the rough and tumble of argument to call people stupid for their beliefs is legitimate (if perhaps unwise), but to brand them stupid on account of their race is a mortal insult. The two cannot be blurred into one—which is why the word Islamophobia is nonsense."[25] While, on the face of it, this justification might seem persuasive, it has been countered with the argument that granted one does not have control over ones skin colour, one equally does not choose to be born in a Muslim family. The construction of a Muslim identity through the process of socialization in such an environment drastically constricts the choices available in terms of ideas and beliefs. Hence the argument that Toynbee applies in respect of 'race', it has been suggested, similarly applies to 'religion'. Indeed, it has been argued that race and other categories of the 'Other' can be equally regarded as social constructions.

A range of weaknesses in the definition of Islamophobia have also been delineated by Nasar Meer and Tariq Modood. Firstly, they emphasise inherent difficulties in the phrase "*unfounded* hostility towards Islam" in the Runnymede definition. "Such a notion", they say, "clearly entails the interpretive task of establishing hostility as 'founded' or 'unfounded'. What may be 'unfounded' to one individual or community is not necessarily so to another." Furthermore, "what the CBMI [Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia] was perhaps naïve in not anticipating was what the term would also be *politically* criticized for, among other things, allegedly reinforcing 'a monolithic concept of Islam, Islamic cultures, Muslims and Islamism, involving ethnic, cultural, linguistic, historical and doctrinal differences while affording Muslims a ready concept of victimology'." Also, finally, "by conceiving of discrimination as a collection of pathological beliefs (also implied by

25 Toynbee, Polly (2005). "My right to offend a fool". *The Guardian*, 10.06.2005.

the use of the term 'phobia'), the term neglects 'the active and aggressive part of discrimination'".[26]

Then, there are those critics who question the reliability of the evidence in support of the existence of Islamophobia: for instance, empirical surveys that reveal a widespread existence of anti-Muslim attitudes have been dismissed by even those intellectuals or politicians who insist on their anti-racist credentials and who doubt the scale of the problem or, indeed, its racial content. Kenan Malik, for example, in his television documentary *Are Muslims hated?* questioned the evidence supporting the reality of Islamophobia's existence. He claimed that the reality of Islamophobia was exaggerated, that it was dangerous to give it undue weight and that it was being used to silence criticism of Islam.[27] In a similar vein, Christopher Allen provided various examples of a wide range of commentators adopting a dismissive attitude towards evidence of Islamophobia, with such critiques viewing Islamophobia as 'unproblematic' and some even sweeping it aside as a 'myth'.[28] This kind of criticism persists in the face of mounting evidence of Muslims *qua* Muslims in the West experiencing physical and verbal attacks, discrimination in housing, education and employment, racial profiling and monitoring by intelligence agencies. For example, in July 2007, *The Times* reported that a range of British intelligence services had monitored over 100,000 British Muslim pilgrims to Mecca.[29] British universities were also "urged to spy on Muslims" by the Department of Education.[30] Yahya Birt and others have identified a further problem with the usage of the neologism Islamophobia, namely that "of etymology, or lexical deconstruction". If Islamophobia is construed, they point out, as the sum of 'Islam' and 'phobia' then this puts religion beyond criticism and those who are critical become exposed to the charge of racism as their well-founded rational objections could be recast as irrational or phobic. As a solution such scholars have suggested "anti-Muslim prejudice" as opposed to Islamophobia to be a less contentious alternative

26 Meer, Nasar and Tariq Modood (eds.) (2009). "Refutations of racism in the Muslim question." *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol. 43, No. 3–4, pp. 341–342.

27 Malik, Kenan (2005). "Are Muslims hated?", 30 Minutes, Channel 4, 08.01.2005, transcript at 15.12.2010 http://www.kenanmalik.com/tv/c4_islamophobia.html.

28 See Allen,Christopher (2004). "Endemically European or European epidemic? Islamophobia in a post 9/11 Europe". In Ron Geaves, Theodore Gabriel, Yvonne Haddad and Jane Ideleman Smith (eds.) (2004). *Islam & The West post 9/11*. Ashgate, pp. 130–145; Rana, Junaid (2007). "The story of Islamophobia". *Souls*: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp. 148–162.

29 *The Times*, 09.07.2007.

30 *The Guardian*, 16.10.2006.

formulation since, they argue, prejudice is more amenable to rational analysis than phobia. They place Islamophobia within the discourse of racism, albeit increasingly as a complex combination of its biological and cultural variants.[31]

Islamophobia and Racism

The above discussion immediately raises questions about the relationship between Islamophobia and racism. Are Islamophobia and racism concomitant and theoretically correlated and interconnected? To what extent do they compliment each other and overlap?

The interpretations of this relation differ as much as social scientists differ on how to define 'racism'. Scholars from the German *Duisburg School of Discourse Analysis* use a very wide notion of racism that does not necessarily link it to biological superiority and inferiority.[32] They argue that racist thinking is not exterminated, but that the forms of articulation and the political and theoretical explanations have changed.[33] Among these scholars there is recognition that Islamophobia can be seen as one dimension of the broader phenomenon of racism—a 'culturalized' form of racism. In their wider concept of racism, religion and hence Islam are integrated as markers of differentiation. Indeed, the European Union Monitoring Centre report in May 2002 recognized that "expressions of Islamophobia have certainly in some instances simply been a 'cover' for general racism".[34] These scholars, along with a number of others, have proposed the concept of 'anti-Islamic racism' that focuses on cultural markers.[35] Hence, according to the philosopher Étienne Balibar:

31 Birt, Yahya. "Defining Islamophobia today: the state of the art", 15.12.2010 http://www.yahyabirt.com/?p=175.

32 Pinn, Irmgard and Marlies Wehner (eds.) (1995). *Europhantasien. Die islamische Frau aus westlicher Sicht*. Edition Diss, p. 188, 192.

33 Ibid.

34 Allen and Nielsen. "Summary Report", p. 49.

35 Pinn and Wehner (1995), *Europhantasien*. See also Attia, Iman (2009). *Die "westliche Kultur" und ihr Anderes: Zur Dekonstruktion von Orientalismus und antimuslimischem Rassismus*. Transcript Verlag, and Fekete, Liz (2009). *A Suitable Enemy: Racism, Migration and Islamophobia in Europe*. Pluto Press.

Today we are speaking about a 'racism without race' […] a racism which—at least at the first glance—does not postulate the superiority of a certain group or *Volk* to another, but confines oneself to claim the harmfulness and inconsistency of (different) lifestyles and traditions.[36]

But then some authors argue that this 'differentialist racism' still is—in its essence—linked to categories such as 'nature', 'blood' and 'race'. While the French political scientist Pierre-André Taguieff argues in favour of a "paradigm shift from an older racism of biological inequality to a neo-racism of cultural difference",[37] the German historian Karin Priester suggests that the "essential point of all racist thinking is the amalgamation of culture and nature, the blood-inherent embedding of cultural and cognitive differences".[38] This perspective is particularly useful when it comes to analyzing the contemporary extremist right. As culture, and hence religion, are 'naturalized', they become increasingly unchangeable in the same way that 'race' has become a reified category in racist thinking.[39]

Ash Amin arguing in a similar vein suggests that "a new hybridised bio-cultural racism has emerged—phenotypical racism—which thrives on quick-fire judgements of surface bodily features, read as proxies of race [and being] […] flexible and mobile, allowing more and more telltale signs to be added, without much need for explanation and accuracy." Here, Islamophobia could arguably be understood as a particular form of this phenomenon. Cultural markers of difference are racialised: "The beard, the skull-cap, the ruck-sack, the hennaed hair, the baggy trousers: each is enough to signal the racial even if none of the markings has anything to do with race."[40] Furthermore this occurs not just in terms of racialisation of visual markers of difference but also more subtly in the deployment of euphemisms in public discourses.

British sociologist Malcolm Brown, however, while acknowledging an overlap of Islamophobia with racism, leans towards an analytical distinction between the two phenomena. He argues that, on one side, the category

36 Balibar, Etienne, Immanuel Wallerstein and Michael Haupt (eds.) (2009). *Rasse, Klasse, Nation: Ambivalente Identitäten*. Argument Verlag, p. 28.

37 Hellmuth, Thomas (2002). "'Patchwork' der Identitäten. Ideologische Grundlagen und politische Praxis des Populismus in Frankreich und Österreich". In: Hauch, Gabriella, Thomas Hellmuth and Paul Pasteur (eds.) (2002). *Populismus. Ideologie und Praxis in Frankreich und Österreich*. Studienverlag, p.9–44.

38 Priester, Karin (2003). *Rassismus—Eine Sozialgeschichte*. Philipp Reclam jun.Verlag, p. 289f.

39 Balibar, Wallerstein and Haupt (2009). *Rasse, Klasse, Nation*, p. 28.

40 Amin, Asha (2009). "The Racialisation of Everything". In Amin, Asha and Michael O'Niell (eds.) (2009). *Thinking About Almost Everything*. Profile, pp. 43, 46.

'Muslim' is still being racialised—for instance, in the British context, he sees an "identification of 'Muslim' with 'Arab' or 'Pakistani' […] which creates an amalgam of Muslims, Arabs, fundamentalists, extremists […]".[41] But on the other side, he observes that "Islamophobia is still articulated in religious terms, perhaps increasingly so".[42] While observing a racialisation of Muslims as well as a distinctive religious component, he concludes that

> it is necessary to make an analytical distinction, between racism and Islamophobia, reflecting the distinction between a racialised *ethnie* and a religious group which may become racialised, but whose alleged differences are not primarily biological or somatic.[43]

Brown hence wants to make an analytical distinction while examining both phenomena in a comparative perspective. At the same time, he underlines that differential racist and Islamophobic discourses can be mixed and "sometimes are barely distinguishable".[44] For Brown and Miles, a unique feature of Islamophobia is its amalgam of nationality, religion and politics.[45]

Christopher Allen too finds "conceptualising Islamophobia as cultural racism" problematic: "a local colouring of say a specifically British Islam—coloured by a high percentage population and influence of South Asian heritage—may become widely regarded as both determinative and fundamental to the expression and manifestation of that faith even though such may not necessarily be regarded as either important or legitimate in other national, geographical or cultural settings. Culturalisation therefore not only strengthens homogeneous perceptions that attribute characteristics without differentiation, but the newly culturalised markers can also inappropriately essentialise Muslims", denying them their diversity and the different expressions of their faith.[46]

41 Brown, Malcom D. (2000). "Conceptualising racism and Islamophobia". In Ter Wal, Jessika (2000). *Comparative Perspectives on Racism*. Ashgate, p. 73.
42 Ibid., p. 74.
43 Ibid., p. 74.
44 Ibid., p. 74.
45 Brown and Miles. *Racism*, p. 164.
46 Allen (2010). *Islamophobia*, p. 135.

Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia

A further approach adopted to make sense of Islamophobia is through a comparison with anti-Semitism. Commenting on Jack Straw's criticism of the veil as a "sign of separation and difference", India Knight described Muslims as "the new Jews".[47] In 1994, in a report on anti-Semitism in Britain, the Runnymede Trust noted important similarities and overlaps between anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, including "a strong religious component in both kinds of hostility".[48] The definition of anti-Semitism in this report as a concept that "subsumes a wide spectrum of attitudes from unconscious and implicit prejudice through to open hostility, and to individual and organised acts of violence", also points to kinship with Islamophobia. Both these phenomena have come to be recognized as cultural racism operating in different forms.

Recently, however, the argument that anti-Semitism and Islamophobia are analogous has provoked much debate. The American anthropologist Matti Bunzl has argued that, although anti-Semitism and Islamophobia have some features in common, with both having been perceived at different times and in different contexts as the 'Other' to Europe, anti-Semitism "has run its historical course with the supercession of the nation-state, [and] Islamophobia is rapidly emerging as the defining condition of the new Europe".[49] For Bunzl, since the two hatreds are place and time specific, they have to be located "in different projects of exclusion". According to his thesis, "anti-Semitism was invented in the late nineteenth century to police the ethnically pure nation-state; Islamophobia, by contrast, is a formation of the present, marshalled to safeguard a supranational Europe".[50] Bunzl argues that today "what stand[s] at the heart of Islamophobic discourse is the question of civi-

47 Knight, India (2006). "Muslims are the new Jews". *The Sunday Times*, 15.10.2006.

48 "A Very Light Sleeper: Persistence and Dangers of Anti-Semitism". *The Runnymede Trust*, 1994, p. 55.

49 Bunzl, Matti (2007). *Anti-semitism and Islamophobia: hatreds Old and New in Europe*. Prickly Paradigm Press, p. 4.

50 Bunzl, Matti (2005). "Between anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: Some thoughts on the new Europe". *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 32, No. 4, p. 506. The term anti-Semitism, coined in Germany by Wilhelm Marr in 1873, was an attempt to establish and rationalise anti-Jewish hostility. Marr classified all Jews as 'Semites' and saw them as a threat to German culture. The pseudo-scientific theories popular in the late 19th century constructed the 'Semitic race' as a clearly defined ethnic group inferior to the 'Aryan race'. See Langmuir, Gavin (1990). *Towards a Definition of Anti-Semitism*. University of California Press.