

## INTRODUCTION

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Since the events of 11 September 2001, there has been an incremental growth of concern in many predominantly non-Muslim countries about the nature of Islam and its relationship with non-Islamic societies. In the states which public discourse conflates under the ideologically loaded label of 'the West' (hereafter the inverted commas are taken for granted) and in some non-Western states with Muslim minorities, the stances adopted by politicians and public commentators have often echoed Samuel Huntington's notorious 'clash of civilisations' thesis. Other voices, by contrast, have pleaded for an end to the Islamophobia widely regarded by Muslims, and by many non-Muslim observers, as endemic in Western or Westernised political and media cultures. At the same time, lively debates within Islamic theological circles have generated, on the one hand, claims that in modernised form the religion can and should accommodate itself to Western values without compromising its own fundamental principles. On the other hand, defiant Islamist critics of Western decadence have preached a return to the literal truths of the Quran and sometimes invoked them as warrants for violent action against enemies of the faith. Paradoxically, the transnational resonance of such anti-Western critiques is largely attributable to the tools of the very processes of globalisation against which they are directed.

What is certain is that changing attitudes to Islam and Muslims have had a profound influence on political cultures and national identities, as well as on policies regarding immigration, security and multiculturalism. Indeed, the complexity of the very notion of Islam and the multiple responses that it elicits are such that there is no uniform approach to its representation or social construction. Nevertheless, one of the paradoxical benefits of the national and international tensions crystallised by 9/11 has been the growth of academic and intellectual interest in Islam, Muslim societies and the situations of Muslim diasporas as immigrant communities. The lists of academic publishers in these areas have swollen, specialist journals have proliferated and university courses have multiplied. The more thoughtful media, whether conventional or internet-based, have

organised searching debates on the implications of the new intensity of interaction between Islamic culture(s) and non-Islamic ones.

These developments are all to the good, insofar as they foster deeper understanding among academic and wider publics, with the possibility of reducing the pervasiveness of negative, exclusionary, homogenising stereotypes held by non-Muslims and Muslims about each other. Precisely because both Islam itself, and responses to it, are becoming increasingly internationalised, it is important that analyses of these phenomena should be nuanced, non-reductive, sensitive to the particular cultures in which they are encountered and conscious of the heterogeneity characterising Muslim societies. This must include gaining a sense of key parallels, differences and interactions within and between the various nations or other communities affected.

The overarching aim of this book is to make a contribution to this process of filling perceptual gaps, thereby giving real meaning to the notion of studying Islam in its international context. The book offers a set of eleven essays dealing with perceptions and public representations of Islam and Muslims at a time when international and national contexts make those identifications inescapably political. The geographical coverage of the collection is broad: chapters are based on case studies of events and processes in a wide range of countries, either considered individually or in comparative perspective. They include analyses relating to Britain, France, the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland, India, the United States, and Australia, as well as a more generic comparison of Western and Islamic concepts of international relations.

The essays are not directly concerned with government policy, but with the broader spheres of public opinion and debate, grass-roots politics, ideological beliefs, the media and public culture. The collection is therefore multidisciplinary and, correspondingly, multimethodological. It draws on a broad range of fields in the social sciences, humanities and arts, using qualitative or quantitative methodologies according to the nature of the respective topics under investigation. The methodological approaches are not mutually exclusive but complementary. Insights and methods deriving from theory of international relations combine with intellectual history to shed light on aspects of contemporary Muslim political thought, but intellectual history equally feeds into political analysis of debates within and between contemporary social movement organisations in a predominantly non-Muslim, European society. Political anthropology and ethnographic study are based on fieldwork involving individual interviews but also on qualitative analysis of written or visual texts. The

perspectives offered by literary and film criticism are combined with attention to ideological and political contexts of cultural production, while theoretical as well as practical aspects of museum curation are used to shed light on the dilemmas of representation of Islam within Western, non-Muslim cultural environments. The methodology of critical discourse analysis offers a valuable approach to investigation of political debate in the press but so too does quantitative content analysis. Experimental methods in political psychology, using quantitative measures applied to relatively small sets of participants, generate results which offer highly productive insights into the interplay of values, emotions and social contexts underlying non-Muslim public attitudes towards groups representing Muslims and Islam. On the wider canvas of mass public opinion a classical quantitative approach is equally fruitful in shaping the analysis. However, while the diversity of disciplinary approaches and their related methods gives richness and variety to the collection as a whole, all of the chapters have been written to make the arguments interesting and intelligible to non-specialist readers from different disciplinary backgrounds to those of the authors.

The book is organised on the principle that the chapters cover issues which overlap and interlock with each other in a variety of ways. The first four chapters focus primarily on self-perceptions and self-representations of Muslims in relation to Western or other predominantly non-Muslim societies. The emphasis in subsequent chapters is more heavily on perceptions and representations of Muslims by mass publics or by particular groups within multicultural, predominantly non-Muslim societies. Among the questions running through the collection are the following:

- How do Muslim thinkers conceptualise the relationship between the 'land of Islam' and non-Islamic societies in a world of nation-states dominated by Western powers?
- How do self-representations of Muslim men and women engage with majority representations of Islam within predominantly non-Islamic societies?
- How do radical Muslims define themselves in relation to the definitions given of them within the mainstream media in predominantly non-Muslim societies?
- How do Muslims, and especially Muslim women, participate in the politics of non-Muslim societies without renouncing their distinctive cultural identities?
- How does Islam fit with public perceptions of multiculturalism and integration?

- How do public attitudes towards Muslims intersect with democratic values in a climate of anxiety over actual or potential security threats from Muslim sources?
- To what extent do reductive assumptions equating Islam with *Islamism*, and *Islamism* with terrorism conflate with anti-immigrant attitudes?
- What challenges does Islam pose for European anti-racist movements, when ethnically-linked Islamophobia coincides with, and cuts across, other forms of racism?
- How are these tensions reflected and refracted in literary, filmic, photographic and other cultural representations within non-Muslim societies, between those which deliberately or inadvertently promote negative stereotypes of Muslims and those which seek to challenge reductive characterisations?

The opening chapter of the collection is the one with the broadest field of view. John Turner sets out to uncover an Islamic paradigm of international relations which has hitherto remained largely unacknowledged outside Muslim cultures. Turner recognises that there is a wealth of literature devoted to the study of Islam within the academic field of International Relations, a sub-discipline that has grown exponentially in recent decades, and especially since the crisis precipitated by 9/11. However, the majority of commentators have viewed Islam as a factor to be understood in relation to existing, Western paradigms of International Relations and have thereby neglected its specificity.

In Turner's view, this may be explained by the fact that Islam has tended to be perceived at once as a non-Westphalian discourse and as a theoretical concept grounded in neither positivist nor post-positivist inquiry. While international relations have historically been conceptualised through the Western experience, the Islamic standpoint assumes that the sources for inquiry have been revealed through the Quran and Sunnah. Perhaps because of its Western-centric focus, the importance of religion in international affairs has largely been marginalised by International Relations scholars, who have tended to reduce religion to simply playing a monolithic role that is at best merely a part of power politics or simply a tool of persuasion. Following the recommendation that religion must be taken into account in International Relations theorising without rejecting previous theories or disregarding research methods developed in the 20th and 21st Centuries, Turner's chapter supports the argument that it is possible for alternative, non-Western-centric concepts of international relations to exist and to deserve being explored by Western theorists.

Not all schools of thought in Islamic theory of International Relations view the relationship with the non-Muslim world in terms of violent, inevitable struggle for dominance. Non-traditionalist reformists believe it is necessary to engage with modernity, but to develop a specifically Islamic modernity by learning from the West without allowing the Islamic world to be absorbed or dominated by the West. Conversely, the strand of thought which Turner labels Salafist/Jihadist does see the world in terms of a zero-sum, winner-takes-all game in which militant Islam must be the winner in pursuit of the sacred duty to unite the world under Islam.

Although it vigorously rejects the charge of advocating violence, the utopian goal of global unity within a single Islamic Caliphate is shared by the radical Islamist party, Hizb ut-Tahrir. The British branch of the party is examined in detail by Danila Genovese in Chapter Two, focusing particularly on the interrelationship between external representation of the group and its own representation of itself. The research for the chapter was conducted on the basis of Genovese's own interviews and personal conversations with the leaders and members of the party, on the one hand, and analysis of news reports or other articles produced by leading media institutions and scholars on the phenomenon of radical Islamism in the UK, on the other.

The argument put forward by Genovese is that there is a mirroring effect between the essentialised representation of Islam and Islamism in the Culturalist and Orientalist approaches of external commentators and the self-representation voiced by the Islamist radicals themselves, especially in the context of a veritable fetishisation of politics and power on their part. Thus, there is a perverse and paradoxical dynamic whereby categories imposed from outside become unconsciously internalised within the group, but in inverted form, as in a mirror, which in practice deprives the party of political relevance or effectiveness. Genovese argues that the current neglect of this element in the analysis of Islamism could mask a refusal to address the West's own failure to make a serious political examination of the phenomenon itself.

The same failure to engage seriously with Muslim self-understandings and aspirations, even with those of ethnic minorities established within Western societies, contributes to the problem of coming to terms with Muslim practices in relation to dress and public behaviour. Against the backdrop of wider controversy over the building of mosques and other aspects of the complex accommodation with Muslim minorities, the willingness of many politicians and public intellectuals to justify legal discrimination against Muslim women, or other forms of normative pressure on them, in the name of freedom and equality exhibits clashes between

different civil and human rights considered essential to liberal democracies. The controversies in several European countries concerning the wearing of the *hijab* (Islamic headscarf or veil) by many Muslim women are particularly notorious instances of the paradoxes involved.

Basing herself on a discourse analysis of articles in a number of major Danish newspapers, Signe Kjær Jørgensen, in Chapter Three, examines the criticisms levelled at Asmaa Abdol-Hamid, a prominent, headscarf-wearing, Muslim female candidate for a left-wing party during the campaign for the 2007 parliamentary election in Denmark. The chapter shows how the legitimacy of her candidature was challenged in the light of a feminist critique, while Asmaa Abdol-Hamid herself invoked a multiculturalist, feminist discourse of her own in order to defend her aim of being elected as a member of parliament. At the same time Abdol-Hamid attempted to counter other secularist and nationalist positions that were used to criticise her. The chapter demonstrates the multiplicity of symbolic meanings which can be attached to the Muslim headscarf, with the result that it can always be open to contestation in Western social environments.

Abdol-Hamid's claim to have a right to wear the Muslim headscarf as a positive, personal choice in relation to her identity, and not as an emblem of cultural acceptance of the oppressive subordination of Muslim women by Muslim men, chimes with the subjective accounts given to Chloe Patton in the course of a visual ethnographic study involving members of a Melbourne Islamic youth organisation to examine how young Australian Muslim women, when presented with the opportunity to create photographic self-portraits, used their headscarves to challenge dominant representations of their identity as 'dark'.

Using innovative social research methods to facilitate empirical insights beyond the scope of conventional text-based approaches, the chapter focuses in particular on the ways in which metaphoric journeys from darkness to light signify positive changes of state in a wide range of discursive settings. Further, Patton shows that the young Muslim women who participated in her study experienced metaphoric darkening of their identity, not only through hostile media representations of Islam in general but also through the well-intentioned but demeaning expressions of paternalistic concern for their well-being, which they frequently met in their day-to-day social dealings with non-Muslim Australians.

The first of the chapters dealing predominantly with the other side of the picture, by examining non-Muslim attitudes towards Muslims, opens with an application of theory developed in the field of political psychology to a case study of public opinion. In Chapter Five Tereza Capelos and

Dunya van Troost explore political attitudes towards groups representing Muslims and Islam at a time when perceived threats to Western societies challenge the political tolerance of non-Muslim populations towards Muslim minorities and call established policies of integration into question. The Netherlands, with its long-established reputation for acceptance of diversity, is one such society, where tensions surrounding its substantial Muslim population have intensified national debates over multiculturalism and integration. From the standpoint of political psychology interesting questions arise as to the interaction between tolerance, on the one hand, and Islamophobia, as a form of intolerance, on the other, since both involve cognitive and emotional dimensions. In an experimental setting with Dutch participants, Capelos and Van Troost manipulate the emotional appraisal of an interaction with a fictitious Islamic group, and use a range of measures to examine how emotions of anger or fear intersect with ideological values and political attitudes. The chapter shows that while individuals' support for democratic values reverses the otherwise negative impact of fear on political tolerance, it has no effect under conditions of anger. This research is timely in a period of widespread threat perceptions, where support for tolerance and civil liberties is eroding.

Negative European perceptions of Islam and of Muslims are investigated further in Chapter Six by Ebru Canan-Sokullu, who examines the political debate surrounding Turkey's potential accession to the EU from the viewpoint of mass public opinion, focusing particularly on the interplay between Islamophobia and fear of immigration into Europe. Because the opinions and preferences of mass publics play an indispensable role in this debate, the chapter investigates (i) whether publics consider Islam to be compatible with democratic values; (ii) whether Turcoscepticism is entrenched in the fear of an influx of immigrants into Europe; and (iii) how these factors affect public positions on Turkey's EU membership in Germany, France, Britain and the Netherlands. Taking a comprehensive view of the existing polling data, Canan-Sokullu provides a rigorous investigation into comparative public attitudes towards Turkey over the period from 2004 to 2007. The analysis reveals a common misinterpretation of public opinion in these EU countries: Islamophobia is not the central issue at stake, but the climate of opinion is anti-immigrationist and this fear contributes to popular anxiety towards Turkey.

Returning in Chapter Seven to the vexed question of how the status of Muslim women is perceived by non-Muslim publics, Matteo Gianni and Gaetan Clavier examine the case of Switzerland, another of the European societies currently undergoing transformations of their multicultural,

social and political dynamics. The increasing demographic, social and political visibility of the Muslim population in Switzerland has been playing a crucial role in the trend and Muslims have been the main target of public debate over the meaning of multiculturalism and integration. To contribute to understanding the implications of this broad trend, the chapter investigates the Swiss French-speaking media's representation of Muslims and Islam as a category in identity/difference constructions. In particular, a content analysis of stories selected from media coverage over the period from 2004 to 2006 shows how gender issues contribute to the specific constructions and representations of Muslims and Islam in Swiss public space.

The nature and the extent of Islamophobia are hotly debated issues in France, particularly since the law banning religious symbols in schools in 2004, then the more recent ban in 2011 on the wearing of the *burqa* (full head and body covering) or *niqab* (full-face veil) in public places. In Chapter Eight Timothy Peace addresses a hitherto neglected aspect of this debate—the way in which it has divided many on the Left in France, especially amongst anti-racist groups. The chapter traces the roots of these divisions, which have been exacerbated by the rise in acts of anti-semitism in parallel with increasing Islamophobia. Peace sheds light on the reasons for the splits and internal tensions within organisations such as the MRAP, France's principal anti-racist association. The chapter sets out to explain the logic behind the various conflicting positions held by antiracist campaigners, including the refusal of many to engage actively in the fight against Islamophobia. Peace argues that the divisions within these groups are a consequence of deeply embedded norms and discourses within the anti-racist movement which have been thrown into practical disarray by the emergence of 'the Muslim question'.

The question of Western stereotyping of Muslims, which runs through many of the chapters in the collection, is central to Ahmed al-Rawi's discussion of one of the forms of Anglophone, predominantly American, popular culture in Chapter Nine. The author traces the increasingly negative image of the Arab in English-language popular fiction after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and successive conflicts in the Middle East, with the climax of this process following 9/11. Reeva Simon, Janice J. Terry and many other scholars researching into the stereotyping of Arabs have emphasised the effect of biased Middle East news coverage on the perceptions held by popular fiction writers. Al-Rawi endorses this idea, but further argues that there is a connection between the distorted Arab image and US and British foreign policy in the Middle East. With reference to

novels by Harold Robbins, Paul Erdman, Maggie Davis, Michael Thomas and Laurie Devine in particular, he discusses how popular fiction writers express the anxieties and aspirations of their cultures and subsequently their governments, suggesting a pattern of thought that views the Middle East as part of an Anglo-American Empire. Any destabilising factors like militant Islamic groups or Arab national movements in the region are presented as threats, so the characters involved in these movements are vilified, and such views correspond with official government stances. In this respect writers of popular fiction play an important role in enhancing the moral and national value of foreign policy issues.

While the sub-genre of popular fiction examined by al-Rawi tends to perpetuate negative stereotypes, Priyasha Kaul focuses in Chapter Ten on the interesting and unusual case of a product of popular culture in a predominantly non-Muslim society that focuses on the climate of suspicion and exclusion in which Muslims have to live. The chapter explores the identity politics of 'being Muslim' in contemporary India through an analysis of the critically acclaimed but commercially unsuccessful 2007 Bollywood film, *Anwar*. Although the marginalisation of Muslims as a religious minority in India has been touched upon in other recent films, *Anwar* emphatically places the issue firmly within the larger dynamics of the contemporary geo-political environment. It is the story of an idealistic Muslim young man named Anwar, who finds himself 'caught' in a Hindu temple, branded as a terrorist and ultimately killed in the midst of a media and political frenzy. Kaul uses the film as the basis for exploring the articulations of voluntary and involuntary identities and the ways in which the global and local spheres interact to produce complex everyday lived realities of exclusion.

Finally, in a first-hand account of her own experience, Mirjam Shatanawi presents an insider's look at the role of the museum in the public debate on Islam. In today's heavily politicised climate, museums aim to act responsibly and aspire to build bridges between a diversity of cultures but they cannot escape the force of existing representations. Consequently, museums position themselves as mediators for cultures in confrontation. Yet although the intentions of museums might be to challenge the current debate on Islam, the author suggests that their chosen strategy of producing alternative images of Islamic cultures actually weakens their undertaking, and might even turn out to be counterproductive. Examples are drawn from two exhibitions shown at the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam; the permanent Islam Gallery (1954–1970), and the more recent exhibition *Urban Islam*, co-curated by Mirjam Shatanawi in 2004. The chapter

discusses the negotiation processes that took place during the making of both exhibitions as well as their reception by the press and visitor groups.

Taken as a whole, the collection provides a range of important, overlapping, mutually supporting insights into a set of problems, (mis)perceptions and representations, which characterise the present period of uncertainty in the long historical dialectic between monoculturalism and multiculturalism, where Muslims form significant minorities in many non-Muslim societies. The tendency of politicians and the media to communicate homogenising, often patronising and implicitly or explicitly exclusionary stereotypes of Muslims as the obverse of more or less chauvinistic stereotypes of the nation has been noted throughout the collection, but so too several chapters have drawn attention to the difficulty for Muslims to resist internalising negative stereotypes or the danger of inverting them within frameworks of hostile Islamist counter-ideology. The empirical findings in many of the chapters are not encouraging for those who wish to see multicultural societies transcend the present anxieties of adaptation. Too often, religion and other markers of ethnicity combine with economic and political factors to engender zero-sum demands for the Muslim Other to renounce or repress beliefs, traditions and behaviours which do not fit with the norms of the dominant group, or to remove themselves physically, rather than find patterns of mutual accommodation for reciprocal benefit. However, the less prominent but more hopeful story is that slow adaptation is taking place nevertheless.