

MUSLIM MINORITY-STATE
RELATIONS

THE MODERN MUSLIM WORLD

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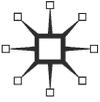
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Violence, Integration, and Policy

Edited by

Robert Mason

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To Omar.

*May you grow up in a global culture of respect,
tolerance, and peace.*

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Foreword

John L. Esposito

More than 300 million of the 1.6 billion Muslims live in diaspora communities. Today Islam is the second or third largest religion in the United States and Europe. Yet, only a few decades ago in the United States and Europe, Islam and Muslims were invisible on our cognitive and geographic maps. Mosques and Islamic centers were few and had a low profile; coverage of Islam and Muslims in the media and at most universities and colleges, let alone in secondary education, was negligible to nonexistent. Scholars of Islam were few and far between and most of the time they were seen as people who dealt with texts, language, and literature, not with the role of religion in modern political and social contexts. Professional associations, such as the American Oriental Society (AOS), the Middle East Studies Association (MESA), and the American Academy of Religion (AAR), had little to no coverage.

Training in Islamic religion, culture, and politics was totally absent in the training of diplomats and the military despite the fact that throughout the 1970s, Islam was used by Gaafar Nimeiry in Sudan, Anwar Sadat in Egypt, Muammar Gadhafi in Libya, and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in Pakistan to legitimate their form of nationalism and governance and to mobilize popular support. All of that was under the radar.

Iran's Islamic Revolution in 1978–79 changed public awareness and with it came an explosion of interest and coverage of Islam. However, for many, globally and in particular in America and Europe, the main event from which Islam was encountered and judged was the Iranian Revolution, the seizure of the American Embassy and American hostages, the establishment of a theocratic state, and fear that others would heed the call of Ayatollah Khomeini to export the revolution in the Middle East and beyond. The primary lens through which Islam and Muslims were viewed and understood focused on the threat from

“radical Islamic fundamentalism,” which would be reinforced by the assassination of Egypt’s president Anwar Sadat, attacks on Western embassies, and the emergence of militant extremist movements in many Arab and Muslim countries.

Writing in 1981, long before Samuel Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations,” Edward Said presciently observed:

For the general public in America and Europe today, Islam is “news” of a particularly unpleasant sort. The media, the government, the geopolitical strategists, and—although they are marginal to the culture at large—the academic experts on Islam are all in concert: Islam is a threat to Western civilization. Now this is by no means the same as saying that only derogatory or racist caricatures of Islam are to be found in the West. . . . What I am saying is that negative images of Islam are very much more prevalent than any others, and that such images correspond not with what Islam “is” . . . but to what prominent sectors of a particular society take it to be: Islam and the West: A Clash of Civilizations? Those sectors have the power and the will to propagate that particular image of Islam, and this image therefore becomes more prevalent, more present, than all others.¹

Political events in the Muslim world and the West, as well as statements by government leaders, policymakers, and media commentators in the 1980s and 1990s perpetuated notions of an Islamic threat and a clash of civilizations. Major magazines, newspaper articles, and editorials spoke of Islam’s war with the West and an impending clash, reflected in American and European media headlines and television programs: “A Holy War Heads Our Way,” “Jihad in America,” “Focus: Islamic Terror: Global Suicide Squad,” “I Believe in Islamophobia,”² “Clash of Cultures: Rise of Islam in France Rattles the Populace and Stirs a Backlash,”³ “The Muslims are Coming, the Muslims are Coming,” “American Jihad.”⁴

Islam was portrayed as a triple threat: political, civilizational, and domestic, feeding a notion of an impending clash of civilizations. Two pieces were particularly influential: Bernard Lewis’s “The Roots of Muslim Rage” (1990) and Samuel P. Huntington’s “The Clash of Civilizations” (1993).⁵ Lewis portrayed Islam and Muslims, not just extremist/terrorist groups, as instigators and protagonists in 14 centuries of warfare with no mention of political causes and their grievances. Islam and the acts of Muslims were responsible for attacks, jihads, and conquests, while the West is described in terms of defensive counterattacks, the crusades, and reconquests. Samuel

Huntington would conclude in his “The Clash of Civilizations,” “Islam (not simply some Muslim countries) has bloody borders.” Syndicated American columnist, Charles Krauthammer, warned of a Pan Islamic global uprising, a “global intifada.”⁶

At the same time, former American presidential candidate and political commentator Patrick Buchanan in “Rising Islam May Overwhelm the West” (and others in Europe) underscored the domestic demographic implications. While the West finds itself “negotiating for hostages with Shiite radicals who hate and detest us,” Buchanan opined, their Muslim “co-religionists are filling up the countries of the West” where they “proliferate and prosper.”⁷ Daniel Pipes put the problem more bluntly in his article, “The Muslims are Coming, The Muslims are Coming.”⁸

9/11 AND MEDIA IMPACT ON POPULAR CULTURE

The 9/11 attacks and subsequent terrorist attack in London, Madrid, Bali and elsewhere proved a dramatic and deadly turning point for Muslim minority communities. The so-called Global War on Terrorism also unleashed an exponential growth in Islamophobia that has impacted Muslim Minority—State relations in America, Europe and beyond. Its protagonists include Far Right politicians, political parties and authors, media commentators and social websites, and hardline Zionists and Christian Zionists. Media (print, electronic and social media) coverage post 9/11 often exacerbated the image of Islam and of Muslims in popular culture, reinforcing a culture of war and impacting domestic and foreign policies. A major study by Media Tenor, “A New Era for Arab-Western Relations,” found that out of nearly 975,000 news stories from US and European media outlets, audiences were rarely presented with a nuanced picture of mainstream Muslims.⁹

A comparison of media coverage in 2001 versus 2011 demonstrated the shocking disparity of coverage. In 2001, 2 percent of all news stories in Western media presented images of Muslim militants, while just over 0.1 percent presented stories of ordinary Muslims. In 2011, 25 percent of the stories presented a militant image, while 0.1 percent presented images of ordinary Muslims.¹⁰

Without coverage that tells the whole story, provides the full context for Muslim attitudes, events, and actions, and sufficiently reflects the faith, lives, and diversity of the vast majority of Muslims, the line between the moderate mainstream and militant extremists

becomes blurred or invisible. “Is Islam a violent religion?” “Does the Qur’an condone terrorism?” “Are there Muslim moderates?” “Why don’t more Muslims speak out against global terrorism?” and “Why is Islam so intolerant toward non-Muslims?” are some questions that should be addressed.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Over the past decade, attitudes and behaviors toward Islam and Muslims have devolved rather than evolved due to well-engineered campaigns that are organized and persistent. They are strongly influenced by an Organized Islamophobia Network (OIN) of pundits, bloggers, authors, documentaries, lobbyists, and elected officials. It is a cottage industry that is meticulously cultivated by ideological, agenda-driven anti-Muslim polemicists, and their funders. OIN has mastered the domain of the Internet with dozens of powerful, well-ranked, and highly visited blogs and websites and currently enjoys a near monopoly.

Islamophobic talking points, conspiracy theories, and narratives are introduced on a mass scale on the Internet as a testing ground. If they succeed in picking up steam, they then carry over to radio, television, conservative newspaper columns/editorials, and best-selling commercial books.

Islamophobia has affected the prism through which Muslims are viewed domestically. As a result, fear of Islam and Muslims has become normalized in American and European popular culture. Far right political and religious leaders and media commentators assert with impunity what would never appear in mainstream broadcast or print media regarding American Jews, Christians, and established ethnic groups. Mainstream Muslims’ civil liberties are often compromised: Muslims are profiled, monitored, or targeted by law enforcement for sting operations; mosques and Islamic institutions (civil rights groups, political action committees, and charities) are targets for surveillance, suspected or accused of defending or supporting extremists without hard evidence.

As the authors in Robert Mason’s *Muslim Minority-State Relations: Violence, Integration, and Policy* show, this phenomenon has impacted Muslim-State relations not only in America, Canada, Australia and Europe but also in Russia, Nigeria, Kenya, Sri Lanka, and Burma. Too often the majority of mainstream Muslims are brushstroked by the actions of a very small minority of extremists and terrorists and,

as a result, become the subject of counterterrorism policies that question their loyalty and indiscriminately target and threaten their civil liberties. Given the significant diversity of countries, societies, and cultures, issues and challenges from different case studies, Muslim-State relations vary as well as overlap. However, based upon the case studies in this volume, there are useful conclusions, policy relevant points, and recommendations for policymakers and civil society. It is a unique and valuable addition to the literature.

NOTES

1. Edward Said, *Covering Islam* (New York: Pantheon, 1981), p. 136.
2. Fergus M. Bordewich, "A Holy War Heads Our Way," *Readers Digest* (January 1995), pp. 76–80.
3. Thomas Kamm, "Clash of Cultures: Rise of Islam in France Rattles the Populace and Stirs a Backlash," *Wall Street Journal*, January 5, 1995.
4. "Algerians in London Fund Islamic Terrorism," *Sunday Times*, January 1, 1995.
5. Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," *Atlantic Monthly* 226:3 (September 1990); Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations," *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1993).
6. Charles Krauthammer, "The New Crescent of Crisis: Global Intifada," *Washington Post*, February 16, 1990.
7. Patrick Buchanan, "Rising Islam May Overwhelm the West," *New Hampshire Sunday News*, August 20, 1989.
8. Daniel Pipes, *The Muslims are Coming! The Muslims are Coming!*, *National Review*, November 19, 1990.
9. Media Analysis by Media Tenor International, Presented at Arab League Conference, April 6, 2011, Cairo, Egypt.
10. *Ibid.*

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book is the result of experiences and insights gained primarily during independent research conducted with Dr. Sherry Sayed Gadelrab in 2012 on British Muslim community relations with the central government. It was interesting to establish that there was a relative paucity of literature on the subject at that time, especially comparative interregional analyses. This was perplexing since community cohesion, immigration control, and de-radicalization policies have become buzzwords around interior and foreign ministries in many states over recent years.

By bringing together diverse case studies from Europe, Africa, and Asia, much can be learnt from different contexts where Muslim-State relations vary greatly according to new, established, marginalized, or conflict-ridden communities; communities being constructively redefined or excluded; and between states that govern Muslim minority groups consistently according to the rule of law and states that are unable to govern effectively or persist in their toleration of cynical policies and public discourses, security-centric decision making, or arbitrary legal ploys. The aim is to learn more about what drives government policy on Muslim minority communities, Muslim community policies and responses in turn, and where common ground lies in building religious tolerance, greater community cohesion, and enhancing Muslim community-state relations.

This volume goes beyond legitimate (and not so legitimate) state security concerns post-9/11, which have often led to a narrowing of domestic policies on Muslim minority communities rather than taking on board and reconciling a full range of historic, social, economic, political, and religious issues, which affect their place in society. The book seeks to redress this problem by drawing attention to key areas of concern and best practice. Although many of the issues identified could be regarded as sociological in nature, they can, and

often do, affect the broader national and international political and security landscape through:

- spill over effects of (non, poor, or good) Muslim community-state interactions and their impacts on community cohesion, political participation, and national security concerns such as radicalization and terrorism
- the (perceived) application of national and universal principles such as human rights, the rule of law, representation/democracy, and self-determination
- the concept of the *Ummah*, meaning the one billion Muslims and governments in other parts of the world who share an Islamic identity and solidarity with minority Muslim groups

This book is therefore important on a number of levels and feeds into broader debates about national identity, integration, and public policy. By drawing on extensive subject knowledge and local field-work, the authors are able to effectively communicate the complexities of history, location, and the contemporary dynamics affecting Muslim minorities in the modern world.

I would therefore like to thank Nasar Meer, Tariq Modood, Agata Skowron-Nalborczyk, Galina Yemelianova, Zacharias Pierri, Fr. Atta Barkindo, Mario Aguilar, Amjad Saleem, and Samak Kosem for their unique and insightful contributions to this volume. I also would like to express my gratitude to John Esposito for his foreword. His work in this field is exemplary, including numerous volumes on Islam and Muslim communities and as founding director of the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding at Georgetown University. This is my second contribution to Dietrich Jung's *The Modern Muslim World* series. I would like to thank him for his support for both projects and for his confidence that they would be useful contributions to his series. At Palgrave Macmillan, I thank Alisa Pulver and Farideh Koohi-Kamali for their assistance with administration and editing and the anonymous reviewer for their feedback.

ROBERT MASON
Cairo, January 2016