State Responses to ‘Muslim’ Violence: A Comparison of Six West European Countries

Erik Bleich

This essay examines contemporary state responses to associations between Muslims and violence in Britain, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain. It stresses the critical role of violence as a spur to recent policy developments, but argues that state actions since 9/11 have to be seen in the context of rising associations between Muslims and violence since the 1980s. States have responded to these associations with an overlapping three-pronged strategy that consists of enacting generic anti-violence policies, repressing religious violence and integrating religious minorities.

Keywords: Muslims; Violence; Policy-Making; Europe; Integration

Most researchers analysing the political dynamics between Muslims and European states have focused on cultural tensions between immigrant Muslims and European societies. Some authors have cast the salient divergences in broad civilisational terms, while others have zeroed in on specific issues such as the treatment of women, food regulations, burial rights, the observance of holidays and prayer requirements. According to these perspectives, cultural differences generate political negotiations over the extent to which minorities are required to adapt to prevailing norms as opposed to the degree to which states and host societies must accommodate those outside the cultural mainstream (Carens and Williams 1996; Modood 1992; Runnymede Trust 2000; Savage 2004; Sniderman et al. 2004; Statham 2004; Zolberg and Long 1999). Although authors writing in this vein diverge substantially, they share a belief that political tensions and policy responses can be explained primarily with reference to value differences among diverse populations. Viewing Europe’s religious politics through such a ‘cultural adjustment’ lens often makes good sense,
since many of the disputes at local and national levels do involve conflict over values, cultures and identities.

A cultural adjustment perspective is insufficient, however, if one seeks to understand many of the most significant policy changes which European states are undertaking today. I argue that state actions in response to religious-cultural difference are frequently motivated by *associations with violence*. The state’s fundamental role in maintaining order and the responsiveness of vote-seeking politicians to public opinion offer compelling reasons for governments to take action when confronted with threats of violence. In addition, sociological theories of folk devils and moral panics, communications theories of social amplification of risk, and policy-making theories of focusing events each suggest that violence is likely to generate media attention and public reactions, thereby opening windows of opportunity for significant policy change (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Birkland 1997; Cohen 1972; Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994; Hall 1993; Hill 2001; Kingdon 1995; Kuhn 1996; Pidgeon et al. 2003).

This essay defines policy-relevant violence as acts perceived as a direct threat of, or that cause physical harm to, persons or property against the wishes of the targeted individual or group.¹ This definition of violence is designed to include the range of acts that are the most likely to capture the attention of state actors and therefore to generate a policy response. In the cases considered here, I argue that associations between Islam and violence have underpinned many of the concerns about the place of Muslims in Europe today. Muslims have become increasingly linked with violence in both public and political debates over the past two decades. These associations—as much as concerns about cultural adjustment—have spurred significant policy changes in a wide variety of European states.

To make this case, the first section of this essay briefly reviews the quietism surrounding religion in Europe between the end of World War II and the 1980s. It then traces the growing association between Muslims and violence in Europe from the late 1980s onward, arguing that this pre-dates the events of 9/11 and goes well beyond the realm of terrorism. For example, Muslims are increasingly connected in the public mind with violence against women, general criminality and violent anti-Semitism. Although in all cases it is a small minority who threaten or undertake violence—and indeed, many of the perpetrators may not be acting based on their faith, or, if they claim to be, their actions are likely to be repudiated by the majority of European Muslims—public opinion polls demonstrate that the association between Islam and violence has taken root across Europe.

The second section demonstrates that European countries have responded to associations between violence and religion by formulating a series of new or intensified policies. It also shows that there has been a striking similarity in the nature of all six countries’ responses, which can be characterised as an *overlapping three-pronged strategy*. First, states have sought to neutralise the ‘religious’ element by developing generic anti-violence policies that often intentionally avoid any mention of religion. This can be seen the most clearly in *policies that target ‘international’*
terrorism while avoiding explicit mention of Islam and are careful to include examples of non-Islamic terrorism in their purview, even though they were generated as a direct response to Islamic terrorism. Second, states have developed and exercised specific policies to repress perpetrators of religious violence—such as an increased monitoring of religious actors deemed to be dangerous, and high-profile arrests and/or expulsions of religiously motivated actors. Third, states have sought to integrate religious minorities more vigorously through policies that either enable or compel the integration of Muslims on their territories. Although analytically distinct, the three strands overlap in numerous ways, such as when general anti-terrorism laws permit greater monitoring of religious sites, or when policies to repress religiously motivated crimes are intended to protect and to integrate Muslims or other religious minorities.

The argument is based upon evidence gathered from six European countries since the end of World War II. Focusing on six countries represents a middle-range research strategy that permits broader generalisations than single-country studies, while allowing for more contextual and historical evidence than would be possible in statistically oriented studies of a larger sample of states. Britain, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain were selected because of their variation as early and late immigrant receiving countries, as traditionally Catholic, Protestant and mixed countries, and as states with an institutional range from formal secularism to an official state religion. Such diversity makes it possible to probe correlations between different types of state and different policy outcomes, as well as to investigate potential similarities in outcomes despite significant divergence in country type.

From Immigrants to Muslims to Associations with Violence

Although a large percentage of postwar migrants to Northern Europe came from the Southern and Eastern portions of the continent, millions of these immigrants originated in North Africa, Turkey, South Asia and other regions of the globe with large Muslim populations. Even after the oil shocks of the 1970s dramatically reduced the inflow of male workers, successive waves of immigration due to family reunification and asylum-seeking brought more migrants from predominantly Muslim countries to Europe, and especially into Southern European countries that were formerly sources of emigration. Estimates of Europe’s Muslim population are speculative, as few countries systematically count inhabitants’ religious affiliation and as the depth of attachment to Islam is impossible to measure for each individual. The US Department of State (www.state.gov/g/drl/irf/) produces annual reports on international religious freedom that include religious demographics for each country. Its 2004 report gives reasonable estimates of Muslim populations across Europe (see Table 1).

As significant as Muslim immigration to Europe has been, it is important to recognise that, for the major part of the postwar era, these immigrants were not primarily defined by their religion. Until recently, it was far more common to identify them by their immigration or citizenship status (immigrants, asylum-seekers/refugees,
or foreigners), by their economic function (guestworkers), or by their race, ethnicity or nationality (Black, Arab, South Asian, Turk, etc.). This was partly a result of state rules that automatically categorised people by an established institutional logic, and partly a result of the modes of organisation of the migrants themselves.

Over the past 20 years, however, Islam has become an identity consciously deployed by a significant percentage of Muslims, and it is one that states and societies use with increasing frequency to identify segments of the population. By activating this dimension of identity, Muslim immigrants have revived discussions about state policies toward religion that were rare in the earlier postwar era. The contentious issues surrounding religion have differed from country to country; however, funding for religious schools, religious education within state schools, mosque construction and headscarves have been hotly debated in a variety of European states (EUMAP 2002; Fetzer and Soper 2005; Hunter 2002; IHF 2005). Tensions have cropped up in other areas too, such as ritual slaughter, Islamic rules for burying the dead, and even national blasphemy laws.

Such cultural conflicts have been central to public, political and scholarly debates about integrating Muslims in Europe. Far less often openly discussed—except on the political far right—are the unstated yet pervasive and politically meaningful associations between Muslims and violence. Although the dramatic and deadly events since 9/11 have crystallised the security implications of Muslim immigrants in the public eye, perceived linkages between Muslims and violence in Europe have much deeper roots. The growing association between Muslims and violence has emerged in three domains since the late 1980s: in the area of violence against women; in debates about immigrant criminality, as immigrants and Muslims are increasingly seen as overlapping categories; and in overt violence attributed to actors motivated by their self-proclaimed Muslim identity.

Many public discussions about the role of women in Islam are explicitly linked to discussions of violence. Muslim men have been accused of compelling their wives, children, sisters or fellow students to wear headscarves (Carens and Williams 1996; Stasi 2003: 46–7). Politicians, the media and social groups have also tied gender violence to Islam through discussions of ‘honour killings’ or ‘honour crimes’. While experts tend to argue that such crimes are motivated more by particular cultural

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Muslims in six European countries</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Muslims (millions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
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<td>UK</td>
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*Indicates the middle point of an estimated range.
practices than by religion, most victims in Europe are young women whose families come from predominantly Muslim countries. The Dutch cabinet, British and European police forces, and the prestigious German periodical Der Spiegel have each taken up this topic. In addition, although more commonly associated with African immigrants than with Muslims, the World Health Organisation notes that some Muslim communities believe that female circumcision (female genital mutilation) is required by their religion (www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs241/en); its practice has also generated significant concern in a number of European countries (Carens and Williams 1996: 162–7).

Muslims have also become linked to violence through the vector of immigrant criminality. In many European countries, especially those with active extreme-right political parties, crime and immigration are frequently discussed in the same breath. Although the ties between criminality, immigrants and Muslims are not always explicit, two factors illustrate the connections. First, there is a widespread perception among Europeans that immigrants are more likely to be involved in crime than non-immigrants. The 2000 Eurobarometer revealed that 58 per cent of European Union citizens surveyed ‘tend to agree’ with the statement that immigrants were ‘more often involved in criminality than the average’ (SORA 2001: 40). This was the majority opinion in 12 of the 15 member-states, and on average only 30 per cent of Europeans surveyed ‘tend to disagree’ with the claim.

In addition, scholarship is beginning to focus on the prevalence of Muslims in European prisons. Sociologist Farhad Khosrokhavar (2004: 11) declares that Islam is most probably the ‘primary prison religion’ of France. In prisons near the hotspot banlieues, he finds that Muslims often make up more than 50 per cent of the population. Although there are no official statistics on the religion of inmates, 2001 French Ministry of Justice data on prisoners and non-prisoners by age and by place of father’s birth suggest a large disparity in populations, as evidenced in Table 2.

Moreover, Khosrokhavar (2004: 24) notes that, especially in Britain, but to some degree also in Germany and the Netherlands, higher rates of deviance among

### Table 2. Percentage of male prisoners and males in ordinary households by age and place of father’s birth (France or Maghreb)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>% males in prison</th>
<th>% in ordinary households</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>France Maghreb</td>
<td>France Maghreb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18–24</td>
<td>38.8 39.9</td>
<td>75.5 8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25–29</td>
<td>42.4 35.4</td>
<td>74.5 7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30–34</td>
<td>43.7 26.3</td>
<td>74.3 7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35–39</td>
<td>47.7 24.5</td>
<td>74.9 6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40–44</td>
<td>58.6 13.8</td>
<td>75.6 5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45–49</td>
<td>61.3 11.6</td>
<td>74.7 5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50–59</td>
<td>59.6 14.0</td>
<td>73.7 5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>68.0 8.0</td>
<td>75.0 3.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Muslims are likely to raise eyebrows in the near future. According to the Financial Times of 27 December 2001 and 30 June 2002, the number of Muslim prisoners doubled in Britain between 1993 and 2000, making followers of Islam the third-largest and fastest-growing religious group in prison. In Italy, although the government keeps no official data on the religion of inmates, an Open Society Institute publication notes that foreigners make up 29.5 per cent of the prison population as opposed to 3 per cent of the total population, and that ‘six of the ten groups most represented in prisons are from majority Muslim countries’ (EUMAP 2002: 257). As these types of data become more widely known, public perceptions that ‘immigrant equals Muslim equals criminality equals violence’ are likely to be reinforced.

Beyond these indirect links are more direct examples of violence based on a self-proclaimed Muslim identity; examples which, although few in number, are likely to register with European publics because of their dramatic nature. The Rushdie affair in Britain was the first major event to make international headlines. Following publication of The Satanic Verses (Rushdie 1988), a significant segment of the British Muslim population began to protest against the book, arguing that it was disrespectful, provocative and blasphemous. After weeks of marches and attempted lobbying, British Muslims burnt copies of the book outside Bradford’s city hall to attract media attention to their cause (Modood 1992: 81). This—coupled with Ayatollah Khomeini’s death-sentence fatwa and the seeming embrace of the verdict by some British Muslim leaders—provoked, in political scientist Elaine Thomas’ words, ‘public fears of obscurantism, barbarism, and violence’ (1998: 296, 344–5). As Thomas demonstrates, concerns about violence were only one part of the ensuing lengthy public debate over the role of Muslims in British society. Nonetheless, the Rushdie affair was a turning-point that raised the profile of religiously motivated violence on European soil.

In recent years, a very small number of Muslim clerics have been implicated in incitement to hatred or violence. In late 2004, Britain charged Abu Hamza al-Masri (with ‘encouraging followers to murder Jews and other non-Muslims’) and Abu Qatada who, reportedly, was the ‘spiritual counsellor’ of Mohamed Atta, the principal architect of the September 11 attacks. In a high-profile case in France, Abdelkader Bouziane was expelled from the country following publication of an interview in Lyon Mag, in which he reportedly stated that the beating and stoning of women was authorised by the Koran (Le Monde, 24 April and 6 October 2004). Similar tensions surrounding inflammatory statements by Muslim clerics have garnered headlines in the Netherlands, Germany, Spain, Italy and several other European countries (IHF 2005). Such provocations to violence by ‘rogue imams’ are typically condemned by most mainstream Muslim leaders. However, the impact of these stories has the effect of raising questions such as ‘Is There an Imam Problem?’, the title of a special report in Prospect written by political scientist Jytte Klausen (2004).

At times, violence perpetrated by Muslims (or by individuals associated with Islam) has been overt and widely publicised, even prior to the watershed moment
of 9/11. In 1995 and 1996, the Algerian-based Armed Islamic Group (GIA) detonated a series of bombs in Paris and Lyons, killing 12 people and wounding over 150. And a wave of anti-Semitic attacks on people and property that took place in Europe following the September 2000 onset of the second Palestinian intifada was attributed to Muslims by a report commissioned by the European Union Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia (Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung 2003: 24). This finding was echoed within France by official sources (Commission Nationale Consultative des Droits de l’Homme 2003).

For Europeans, the September 11 attacks therefore fit into this broader context of perceived links between Muslims and violence, especially since many of that day’s perpetrators had been part of terrorist cells based in Europe. The subsequent attempt by British citizen Richard Reid (the ‘shoe bomber’) to blow up a transatlantic flight highlighted the fact that Islamic terrorism was not confined to people of Middle Eastern or North African origin but could be carried out just as easily by European citizens. The 11 March 2004 bombings in Madrid, the assassination of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh by a Muslim extremist later that year, and the July 2005 London bombings have provoked further debates about the connections between Islam and violence.

Opinion surveys demonstrate that European publics are making a link between Muslims and violence. In a TNS Sofres survey of 1,000 people, carried out in France on 26–27 September 2001, 79 per cent of respondents thought a terrorist attack on French soil was probable within months, and 63 per cent also judged ‘serious incidents with the Muslim community’ to be likely within the same time frame. Moreover, 37 per cent of those surveyed agreed that ‘Islam is a religion on the whole not tolerant that contributes to producing fanatics’ (www.tns-sofres.com/etudes/pol051001_chron_r.htm). The Jerusalem Post of 1 July 2005 reported that, in Italy, a 2003 sampling of 2,200 teenagers between the ages of 14 and 18 found that over half believed that Muslims supported terrorism and 47 per cent stated that Muslims were ‘fanatic fundamentalists’. The YouGov/Sunday Times Survey conducted in Britain on 9–10 February 2006 among 1,617 respondents revealed similar trends, in that 87 per cent of those asked thought that it was very or fairly likely that there would be another successful attack by Islamic groups in Britain on the scale of the July 7 bombings.

The most widely available comparative data from recent years on perceptions of Muslims and violence have been collected by the Pew Global Attitudes Project. Its 2005 survey, conducted between 20 April and 11 May, examined public opinion in 17 countries, among which were Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Spain, each with around 750 respondents. At least 70 per cent of respondents were ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ concerned about Islamic extremism in their country and at least 80 per cent were similarly concerned about it in the world at large. More tellingly, as Tables 3 and 4 show, around half of those queried believe that some religions are prone to violence and, of those who believe this, overwhelming majorities hold the view that Islam is the most violent of the major religions. It is clear that many Europeans
harbour significant uneasiness about the presence of Muslims in their societies and that this uneasiness has grown over the past few years.

**State Responses to ‘Muslim’ Violence**

States have responded to such growing associations between Muslims and violence with an *overlapping three-pronged strategy*. The three elements of the strategy are analytically distinct, yet they overlap in that specific policies may fall into more than one category. The three elements of the strategy are:

- generic anti-violence policies that avoid reference to religion;
- policies designed to repress religiously motivated violence; and
- policies to enable and to compel integration of religious actors into national life.

**Generic Anti-Violence Policies**

In the past few years, European Union countries have responded to violence associated with religion by devoting substantial attention to anti-violence policies that consciously omit specific reference to religion. For example, earlier initiatives agreed to in the 1999 Tampere Programme having been judged insufficient in the aftermath of 9/11, the EU launched an anti-terrorism action plan and passed a framework decision striving to harmonise definitions of terrorist offences and penalties among member-states. After the 11 March bombings in Madrid, the

**Table 3.** Views on whether some religions are prone to violence (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Some religions prone to violence</th>
<th>All religions about the same</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Table 4.** Views on which religion is the most violent (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Islam</th>
<th>Christianity</th>
<th>Judaism</th>
<th>Hinduism</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Don’t know/refused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Council appointed Gijs de Vries as the EU counter-terrorism coordinator; in November 2004 it adopted its Hague Programme to expand the scope of EU action; and in December 2004 it updated its action plan and adopted specific measures to counteract aspects of terrorism.7

Britain, France, Germany and Italy have also fortified their anti-terrorism provisions. Several initiatives were in place prior to 2001, yet it was September 11 and subsequent events that generated striking developments in domestic laws. Britain supplemented its 2000 Terrorism Act in November/December 2001 with its Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act, and has since enacted its 2005 Prevention of Terrorism Act and 2006 Terrorism Act. France proposed a law in November 2001 and followed it up with a series of anti-terrorism measures (Cesari 2004: 37), including, in 2003, an updated version of its ‘vigipirate’ plan to warn of possible attacks, to increase security, and to facilitate responses to terrorist acts.8 Germany also established a wide range of new security measures. Interior Minister Otto Schily stated in September 2002, ‘Following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the sets of security measures I and II have successfully created the legal framework that will allow terrorism from any quarter to be countered’.9 Likewise, Italy passed its own fortified anti-terrorism law in August 2005, spurred to action by the London bombings in July of that year (Laurence 2006).

European policies have facilitated the cross-national tracking of suspects, interruption of financial flows to potential perpetrators, and arrests and sentencing of accused terrorists. These initiatives have sparked debates about their effectiveness and about the willingness of governments to forego civil liberties in exchange for security. Yet equally interesting is the fact that states have largely taken the religion out of religious violence by responding to it with general anti-terrorism measures. Many of these laws were crafted with Islamic terrorism in mind, but most states have opted to minimise the specific connection to Islam by referring to ‘international’ terrorism and by including at least some non-Muslim groups on their watch-lists or in their public pronouncements. For example, in early May 2004, Spain’s Interior Minister responded to a question about potential legal reforms against Islamic terrorism by saying, ‘We prefer to speak of international terrorism, in this case with a radical Islamic ideological basis’ (El Pais, 2 May 2004). These policy changes are self-consciously non-religious in order to neutralise tensions associated with religion.

Repressing Religious Violence

At the same time, states have not entirely shifted the focus away from religion. They have also responded with high-profile measures specifically targeting perpetrators of religiously motivated violence. In particular, many European countries have stepped up monitoring of suspected radical Muslims. There have been official government investigations into the practice of Islam, increased training and hiring of national security agents with relevant expertise, tape recording of religious services and scrutiny of particular mosques, public statements about tabs kept on potential
suspects, and extensive use of stop-and-search provisions in Muslim communities. There have also been proposals to track more closely foreign imams and foreign funding of domestic mosques and even a governmental proposal to require regular reporting to the police by anyone suspected of radical leanings.

Increased monitoring has resulted in raids, round-ups, arrests and trials of hundreds of suspected Islamic terrorists. Britain, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain have each engaged in the active repression of potential perpetrators of religiously motivated violence. In addition, many of these countries have translated the monitoring of mosques into expulsions of so-called ‘rogue imams’. France has been among the most active states in this field, having reformed its statutes in 2003 to widen the grounds for expelling contentious imams. More than two dozen religious leaders were deported from France between 2001 and April 2004, with more than a dozen expulsions coming between July 2003 and April 2004. Germany passed a law, that took effect in 2005, making it easier to expel ‘spiritual inciters to disorder’. Even Britain—historically allergic to restricting freedom of speech and relatively liberal on residence rights—has taken steps against radical imams. Following 11 September 2001, the Home Office fired or suspended three chaplains for distributing anti-American literature to Muslim prisoners. Furthermore, Britain enacted laws in 2003 allowing the government to strip dual nationals of their British citizenship and to deport them if they threatened the national interest. Within days of the law coming into force, the Home Secretary moved to withdraw the citizenship of radical cleric Abu Hamza al-Masri in preparation for deporting him. In the Netherlands, the November 2004 slaying of Theo van Gogh prompted immediate proposals to take away Dutch citizenship from radicals with dual nationality, to shut down fundamentalist mosques, and to deport extremist preachers. In February 2005, the Dutch Immigration Ministry moved to expel four imams accused of radicalism.

A limited number of European countries have further supplemented their legal arsenal for punishing acts motivated by religious hatred. As a counterweight to the restrictive elements of its 2001 Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act, Britain created a set of ‘religiously aggravated offences’ that enhance penalties for crimes motivated by religious hostility. Enacted during the post-9/11 wave of attacks on Muslims across Britain (EUMC 2002: 29–30), the law built on 1998 provisions that created racially aggravated offences which themselves failed to protect Muslims from specifically Islamophobic actions. The British Parliament, through its Racial and Religious Hatred Act of 2006, also enacted provisions against incitement to religious hatred designed to crack down on those who use threatening language intended to stir up hatred. If the pre-existing incitement to racial hatred provisions offer any indication, any new law against religious incitement will not generate many cases. Yet, the British government is both symbolically and pragmatically seeking to grant itself greater powers to repress religiously motivated hatred, going well beyond what it was prepared to do prior to 9/11. France first enacted laws against incitement to religious hatred in the 1970s; however, between November 2002 and February 2003, French politicians propelled a hate-crimes bill through Parliament with the rapid and
unanimous support of the National Assembly. Although barely invoked since its passage, it serves as a symbol of France’s intolerance of the waves of anti-Semitic violence that have hit the country since late 2000 (Bleich 2007).

**Enabling and Compelling Integration**

European polities have supplemented policing and surveillance measures with steps that promote the integration of religious minorities. In 2003, the EU held a roundtable discussion to reflect on how to build bridges between faith communities within Europe. It highlighted best practices such as the German Intercultural Council’s ‘Abrahamic teams’ initiative, the Brussels-based European Jewish Information Centre’s ‘Classroom of Difference’ educational unit, and the leadership in the media of the Dutch Program Service’s multicultural programme manager (EUMC 2003: 94–6). While these initiatives are small-scale, each is funded by a governmental body in an effort to foster interfaith dialogue and tolerance. Government leaders have also attempted to demonstrate their responsiveness to Muslims through symbolic acts such as Queen Elizabeth’s first visit to a British mosque in 2002 and through proposing legislative changes (in the Netherlands and in Britain) in the use of blasphemy laws, either to include protection for non-Christian faiths or to scrap such laws on the grounds that they only protect Christians.12

In addition, religious consultation and representation have risen on governmental agendas. Immediately following the murder of Theo van Gogh, Dutch officials met with Islamic leaders and wrote to mayors and town councils urging them to hold similar meetings. Several European cities and states, and the EU as a whole, have also actively encouraged the formation of faith-based representative bodies, especially within the Muslim community. France’s 2003 Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM) has been the highest profile and most formalised organisation in this vein (Laurence 2005), yet Spain’s Islamic Commission has been recognised by the state as an official interlocutor since a bilateral agreement of 1992. In Italy, the Interior Minister set up a Consultative Council for Islam in 2005 to advise the government on policies relating to Muslims and to facilitate the eventual establishment of a formal accord between Muslims and the state (Laurence 2006). The Italian government also sponsored a religious freedom bill in 2003–05 aiming to place Islam ‘on the same legal footing as any other religion in Italy’, with the Interior Minister arguing that ‘the social integration of moderate Islam is...one of the most powerful weapons in the fight against terrorism’.13 The European Union Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia has advocated the support of Islamic communities’ involvement in local policy-making (EUMC 2001: 54–5). Its 2001 study demonstrated the range of interactions between city governments and Muslims across Europe, from Turin’s passive approach through Rotterdam’s subsidies to a Muslim umbrella organisation—SPIOR—that acts as a liaison to the local authority (EUMC 2001: 26–32).
In recent years, European governments have proved to be more willing than ever before to fund initiatives specifically for the Muslim community. In 2005, the Dutch Ministry of Education approved the Free University of Amsterdam’s plan to offer a Masters degree in Islamic spiritual guidance and contributed $1.9 million in subsidies to help launch the programme. Municipalities in the Netherlands have also financed privately organised Dutch language and culture training programmes for imams and Muslim chaplains. France has announced the establishment of a university-based degree programme in ‘contemporary French civilisation’ aimed at giving future imams a background in French institutions and society. In Britain, both city and EU monies were used alongside private donations to construct a new $19 million Muslim community centre attached to the East London Mosque. In the wake of the Madrid train bombings, Spain allocated $3.5 million to create a foundation to assist minority religions with integration, marking the first time the government has offered sustained financial support for non-Catholic faiths. France quickly followed suit by establishing its own foundation in March 2005, albeit without public funding because of its statutory separation of church and state. The foundation serves as an organising body for collecting and distributing tax-deductible donations targeting needy Muslim causes such as mosque renovation, imam training, and support for France’s Muslim representative bodies. Although none of these contributions is tremendous in scale, each marks a significant step towards supporting projects designed specifically with Muslims in mind.

In the broader scheme of European integration strategies, Christian Joppke (2004) has traced the rising scepticism about policies that reify cultural differences (see also Joppke’s contribution to this volume). Paralleling this trend, European states have balanced policies that enable the integration of religious minorities with policies that compel integration by obliging a degree of cultural conformity. Immediately following the murder of Theo van Gogh in Holland, the Netherlands’ Immigration Minister, Rita Verdonk, proposed ‘that imams be required to speak Dutch and to include Dutch culture in their preaching’ (Financial Times, 5 November 2004). Following the ensuing violence against mosques and churches in Holland, a German politician argued that Muslim sermons in her country be conducted only in the German language. In early December 2004, the French Interior Minister announced plans to require future imams to participate in university programmes covering French institutions in order to practice in France. European Union officials also endorsed a constraining form of integration when, during a meeting in November 2004, justice and interior ministers agreed on non-binding guidelines calling for immigrants to learn the language of their host country and to adopt ‘European values’. Calls for tighter policies on imams have been coupled with concrete policy steps, though thus far they have been fewer in number and less extreme in nature. In 2002, the Netherlands began requiring foreign religious leaders on temporary permits to take a compulsory course emphasising Dutch language acquisition and the religious and philosophical traditions of the country. And, as of August 2004, the British
government mandated that anyone entering the UK to work as a minister of religion should prove a command of the English language.\textsuperscript{15}

The most notable policy compelling integration in recent years is undoubtedly the 2004 French law banning religious symbols worn by students in state schools.\textsuperscript{16} Although cast in religiously neutral terms that apply to visible symbols of all faiths, the law’s purpose was clearly to ban Muslim headscarves. The legislation grew out of recommendations made by a group of experts who examined the role of secularism (laïcité) in the French Republic at the behest of President Chirac. The Stasi Commission interviewed dozens of actors with opinions on a potential law, carefully weighing the costs and benefits of such a significant move. In a section of its 2003 report entitled ‘Affirming a Firm Secularism that Brings People Together’, the Commission unanimously—with just one abstention—proposed passage of the ban, arguing that ‘the question is no longer of freedom of conscience, but of public order’, citing ‘tensions and confrontations’ in schools, and ‘pressures’ and ‘constraints’ on young women to wear the veil (Stasi 2003: 58). Violence thus played a central role in unifying expert opinion on limiting religious expression in schools. Paralleling the French policy but on a smaller scale, five of the 16 German federal states have outlawed headscarves for state-school teachers, with Bavaria’s culture minister explaining the action by stating that ‘the veil is widely abused by Islamic fundamentalist groups as a political symbol’.\textsuperscript{17} In addition, in the wake of the July 2005 London bombings, the Italian government instituted heavy fines and jail time for wearing a \textit{burqa} in public (Laurence 2006), and the Dutch Parliament and Cabinet have voiced support for banning the \textit{burqa} outside the home.\textsuperscript{18}

Associations between Muslims and violence have had an undeniable impact on a range of policies in Europe in recent years. However, it is important to delineate clearly the extent of their influence. At times, the passage of laws or police raids and deportations directly follow acts of violence that are acknowledged by decision-makers to have motivated the actions; in these cases the effect of violence is immediately apparent. In other cases, policy-makers may be influenced by associations between Muslims and violence in conjunction with other factors, such as more classic concerns about cultural differences. This has been the case in the French and German states’ headscarf bans, and it emerges clearly in the Dutch Parliamentary debates in which the bill’s sponsor, Geert Wilders, argued that the \textit{burqa} is a ‘symbol against women’ that prevents integration—a cultural concern—but also that it is linked to terrorism and should be banned because the Netherlands ‘has problems with a growing minority of Muslims who tend to have sympathy with the Islamo-fascistic concept of radical Islam’—a concern about violence. Similarly, in France, even though politicians’ motives for prohibiting headscarves included reaffirming Republican and secular values, the Stasi Report makes plain that local violence was a central reason for recommending the ban. Violence associated with Muslims has had a significant effect on many domains of European policy-making, yet its precise impact relative to other factors must be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
While it is often possible to identify particular policies with one of the three strands outlined above, at times policies overlap in interesting ways and fall into more than one category. Generic anti-violence revisions to the criminal code, for example, are frequently employed by authorities to address violence specifically associated with religious actors. Laws against incitement to religious hatred allow the state to repress religiously motivated violence while at the same time demonstrating to religious minorities an interest in protecting—and therefore integrating—all state inhabitants. Banning headscarves may serve to undercut religiously motivated violence, but it also enables integration among women who do not choose to wear a veil, and compels integration among women who would otherwise elect to don a headscarf. Just as European states are covering their bases through a range of policies, so, too, may they seek out steps that achieve multiple goals with one policy.

Conclusions

The extremist attacks of 9/11 and beyond have heightened associations between Muslims and violence in Europe. But these associations have their roots in events and interpretations within Europe which stretch back to the late 1980s. This essay argues that associations between Muslims and violence have spurred significant policy changes in each of the countries examined here, going well beyond the political and policy wrangling over cultural differences most often discussed by scholars. The extent to which Britain, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain have pursued similar policy strategies is striking. These states have different relationships with established religions, different confessional histories and demographies, and different Muslim populations and immigrant trajectories, all factors found to be politically meaningful in a variety of contexts (Fetzer and Soper 2005; Freeman 1995; Inglehart and Baker 2000; Minkenberg 2002). However, none of these states has responded with a paradigm shift in its treatment of religious minorities; nor has any state simply ignored events and maintained the status quo. Each has followed an overlapping three-pronged strategy of promoting generic anti-violence policies, repressing specifically religiously motivated violence, and enabling and compelling the integration of religious minorities.

Examined from another angle, it is important to recognise that, while violence has generated similar policy approaches in a number of European countries, no two countries have reacted in precisely the same way. Identifying and explaining the variation in state responses to religious tensions is an important avenue for further exploration and is one that has been the subject of recent scholarly interest (Fetzer and Soper 2005). Future work in this field can also strive to specify the types of violence most likely to provoke policy changes, and the types of change they are most likely to provoke. Is it the case, for example, that dramatic Islamic terrorist acts are certain to produce strong state reactions? Is there something about the type and timing of violence that dictates whether the state will repress perpetrators, negotiate with them, or both? Moreover, why is it that recent acts of violence have become
intricately associated with Islam, whereas many potentially parallel examples of violence—such as mafia violence—have been viewed primarily through the prism of criminality? Closer studies of state responses to religious violence in Europe offer the opportunity to forge connections with scholarship on other forms of political violence, such as ethnic conflict, gang violence, organised crime, urban violence, terrorism, or violent workers’ strikes.

Finally, it is worth noting that, thus far, European states have ratcheted up repressive powers with respect to Muslim minorities while at the same time striving to integrate Muslim voices into decision-making processes and to oppose anti-Muslim violence. Such a balanced approach is not inevitable. Any new deadly attacks associated with religious motives may occasion a reassessment of prevailing policies. Using tremendously rich survey research, Sniderman et al. (2004) have demonstrated that situational triggers—such as emphasising the inability of certain groups to fit in to society and priming respondents to highlight national identity—significantly enhance opposition to immigration. Extending the logic of these findings, a violence-centric perspective suggests that Muslims are increasingly likely to be marginalised if they are associated with violence.

If this is the case, then the construction and manipulation of images of Muslims within Europe has much greater political significance than commonly supposed. The more individual European Muslims are conflated with terrorism, with violence toward women and Jews, and with general criminality, the greater the likelihood that future high-profile acts of violence will cause strong reactions and a repressive paradigm shift within Western European countries. Under these circumstances, the politics of influencing European publics’ associations between Muslims and violence may emerge as one of the most important arenas of analysis in the years to come.

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Notes

[1] Although violence seems an intuitive concept, specialists employ widely varying definitions of the term, ranging from a narrow one that includes only an action that ‘immediately inflicts physical damage on persons and/or objects’ (Tilly 2003: 3) to a broad one that incorporates ‘actions that inflict, threaten, or cause injury’, where injuries may be ‘corporal, psychological, material or social’ (Jackman 2002: 387, 405). See also Brubaker and Laitin (1998); Das et al. (2000); Heitmeyer and Hagan (2003); Imbusch (2003); and Tedeschi and Felson (1994).
See Expatica, 11 February 2005; Christian Science Monitor, 19 October 2005; BBC News, 22 June 2004; Spiegel Online, 2 March 2005. In France, Gaspard and Khosrokhavar (2003: 61–2) give an example of a similar type of murder. France’s Ni Putes, Ni Soumises movement also highlights violence against women by concentrating on its presence in the ‘cités’, or disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Although the movement explicitly discusses connections between violence and Islam, it does not focus primarily or exclusively on this link in its analysis (see Amara 2003).

New York Times, 20 October 2004. Abu Hamza al-Masri was the imam of the Finsbury Park Mosque, which both Richard Reid and Zacarias Moussaoui reportedly attended before their arrests.

The EUMC subsequently distanced itself from the findings, citing methodological problems in the analysis; the agency responsible for undertaking the research has defended its conclusions.

It should be noted that European Muslims have also been the targets of violent acts for decades. In particular, following 11 September 2001, the European Union Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) launched a study of Islamophobia in each of the 15 member-states, finding startling examples of physical violence against Muslims in most countries, the targeting of mosques and Islamic cultural centres for damage, and widespread ‘verbal abuse, harassment, and aggression’ (EUMC 2002: 7).


See the Prime Minister’s website at: http://www.premier-ministre.gouv.fr/information/actualites_20/securite_un_plan_vigipirate_38900.html?var_recherche=terrorisme. It specifically cites 11 September 2001 as a motive for the changes.


France began its monitoring programme following the bombings of the mid-1990s (UPI, 31 December 2001) and currently has undercover agents reporting weekly to the Ministry of the Interior (ANSA English Media Service, 26 August 2004). On the Netherlands, see New York Times, 10 November 2004. In Spain, the Interior Minister’s proposal for a law permitting the state to monitor ‘small mosques’ especially closely was quite contentious and eventually withdrawn (El País, 2 May 2004). In Germany, both the state and the media have engaged in the monitoring of mosques (Ottawa Citizen, 17 November 2004). Italy’s special operations forces (DIGOS) have used listening devices and wiretaps to monitor activities in the Cremona mosque (BBC Monitoring International Reports, 27 February 2004). On Britain, see New York Times, 25 January 2005. Police in the Netherlands have reported observing up to 10,000 Muslims as ‘potential terrorists’, UPI, 16 June 2004, and an official in the Dutch Justice Ministry revealed that more than 150 individuals were being actively investigated for suspected militantism (New York Times, 4 November 2004). On Spain, see New York Times, 24 October 2004.

In the Netherlands, these proposals followed the assassination of Theo van Gogh in November 2004 (Deutsche Presse-Agentur, 9 February 2005).

The Government Reply to the Report from the Religious Offences Committee, Session 2002–03, HL 95, Cm 6091. It appears unlikely that blasphemy provisions will be overhauled in either country.

The bill grants legal recognition to religious groups that agree to respect Italian laws. The Northern League vowed to prevent passage of this bill. ANSA, 23 November 2004, 20 January 2005.
Spiegel Online, 14 November 2004; Die Welt, 15 November 2004. This proposal was also floated in the Netherlands in 2002 (Guardian, 1 October 2002). In neither country does it appear likely to become law.

The mandate also requires them to prove that they are ordained or have been practicing as a minister for at least 12 months out of the preceding five years. See http://www.workpermit.com/news/2004_08_23/uk/immigration_rules_for_ministers_of_religion.htm; also Kraler (2007).

Article 1 of Law 2004–228 of 15 March 2004 states ‘Dans les écoles, les collèges et les lycées publics, le port de signes ou tenues par lesquels les élèves manifestent ostensiblement une appartenance religieuse est interdit’ (In state primary and secondary schools and colleges, the wearing of symbols or clothing through which pupils overtly demonstrate their religious affiliation is forbidden).

Agence France-Presse, 11 November 2004. The other regions that have outlawed headscarves are Hesse, Lower Saxony, Baden-Wuerttemberg and Saarland. Hesse has applied the ban to all civil servants.

BBC, 16 January 2006; Aljazeera, 9 March 2006; BBC, 17 November 2006. Local authorities in Belgium and Italy had also previously enacted or enforced bans on burqas, justifying the move by arguing that appearing masked in public presents a threat to security (IHF 2005: 46, 100–1).

The ‘EU Plan of Action on Combating Terrorism—Update: Contribution from Europol’ demonstrates that EU police are devoting significant attention to the specific threat of ‘Islamic terrorism’ (see http://www.statewatch.org/news/2005/may/europol-terr-plan.pdf.

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