

ISLAM IN FRANCE AND BRITAIN:  
THE HIJAB AS A POINT OF CONTENTION

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the wearing of the *hijab* as a means of situating the current debates in and around Islam in contemporary Europe, in particular, the France and Britain.

As a visible symbol of Islam the *hijab* resonates with multiple meanings within and outside the Muslim community and offers up a gendered and spiritual representation of identity. By its predominance in the discourse of immigration in Europe, the *hijab* is the site of diversity that the European state(s) must navigate around.

In probing the wearing of *hijab*, this research ponders what new constructs of identity are taking place within Britain and France and what role does the media and current discourses on Islam (in Europe etc, pre and post-Sept 11<sup>th</sup>) play in shaping of the subject? And as much as Europe's landscape is altered by Islam, the paper also investigates how Islamic and Islam communities are affected by a whole generation's presences in Europe.

This thesis looks at developments within Islam and argues that through a coalescing of Islamic thought, based on a growing transnationalism and a revitalization of the concept of the *umma*, a new Islamic identity is emerging possibly parallel to but not necessarily contradictory to the nation state.

Keywords: Islam; *hijab*; France; Britain; Euro-Islam; *umma*; transnationalism; diaspora; multiculturalism; Rushdie Affair; *foulard*

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## INTRODUCTION

Within the European context itself there are factors, which are beginning to change the way Europe is feeling and thinking about itself and about Islam. These factors range from the changing meaning of state sovereignty to the larger pressures of globalization, and they must be analyzed in the larger context of state and civil society relations in an era of global change.

(AlSayyad & Castells 2002:1)

### PURPOSE AND AIM OF PAPER:

Islam is now the largest religion in Europe after Christianity, with at least 15 million people in Western Europe adhering to the Muslim faith (Hunter & Serfaty 2002:xiii). While the numbers of Muslims vary from nation state to nation state, two of the largest Muslim populations found in Europe today are in Britain and France (Peach & Vertovec 1997:15). Yet, Islam as a presence in Europe is felt acutely throughout the continent. Post September 11, 2001, and the fall of the World Trade towers, Islam in its many manifestations in Europe has come under the microscope of sociologists, political scientists and the media, in an attempt to make sense of 9/11, the very nature of Islam and the new European citizens who practice this “other” faith. In endeavoring to understand the current interplay between Europe and Islam, especially the heightened tensions between Muslim immigrants in Europe and the West at large, I will look at the headscarf (otherwise known as the veil or the *hijab*<sup>1</sup>) as a potent symbol of Islam in constant conflict. Using the *hijab* as an entry point into the present discourse(s) surrounding Islam, this paper aims to do the following:

1. On a domestic, national level, locate Muslim immigrants within models of membership (citizenship and belonging) in France and Britain;
2. Look at the emergence, within second-generation Muslim immigrants in France and Britain, of an identity based on religion rather than ethnicity;
3. Argue that due to pressures from above (on a government level) and below (on a community level), a reformation is taking place in Islam in Europe and

by extension, Muslim communities in the West, whereby through the (re)construction of a transnational Muslim community (on a global level), an attempt to create 'one' homogenous, Islam is simultaneously occurring.

With regard to the third point, and the primary focus of this paper, in probing the wearing of *hijab*, I hope to show that what is in fact taking place in Europe is a coalescing of various Islamic ideologies and practices to form a "one true Islam". Islam, as a universal religion has so far been divided into many factions, with diverse practices and interpretations of core beliefs, as practiced by first generation immigrants and often linked in their practices and interpretations to nationality or ethnicity (to "back home"). The new generation of Muslims in Europe is looking for one distinct identity and a distinct Islam, which would unite the Muslim diaspora and which would present a true universal interpretation, rather than a geographically specific understanding of the religion. It can be argued that a new transnational Islam, or an Islam formed of globalization, is being shaped, which provides one model of thought versus various strands and interpretations of Islam. The first level of this unification manifests itself as a globalized, political Islam, which shares an interest in diasporic troubles such as have emerged in Palestine, Bosnia, and Kashmir. The evolution of a transnational Islamic ideology, I argue, can be situated in time since the late 1980s and the rise of political Islam in Saudi Arabia and Iran. The attempt to 'sell' a particular brand of Islam as the true Islam is by no means an elite conspiracy theory, and instead has geo-political ramifications. In spatial terms, this "battle" for hearts and minds has played out between Saudi Arabian Wahhabism and Iranian Shia doctrine for control over the young throughout the Muslim diaspora, from Egypt to France, to Britain, and as far-a-field as North America and Australia, and it has seen the resurgence of the concept of the Muslim *umma* or universal Muslim community. I argue that the wearing of *hijab* by Muslim communities, who never did so in the past, is an example of a new 'larger' Islam and the emergence at an attempt to create a monolithic Islamic thought or interpretation.

It is important to look at these new productions of Islam because this emerging transnational identity and the amplification of one interpretation of the religion may be at

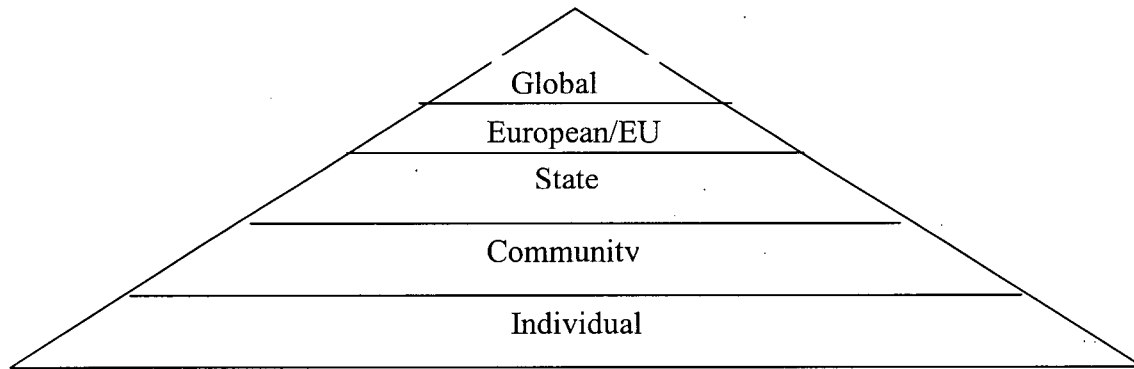
the heart of the cultural conflict between Islam and Europe and/or the West. Questions that arise from this paper and need to be further investigated center around whether the concept of a homogenous, united Muslim *umma* is at odds with the nation state? If Islamic thought is arguably being made uniform (by pressures from within and outside Islam), and Muslims in Europe are in the process of creating their own separate 'culture', where can we place the individual and community's allegiance to the nation's state's 'culture' versus allegiance to this transnational religious culture? As the *umma* is being revitalized, will this 'new' Islam move towards liberal or more conservative practices and beliefs? And what of the future if these two modes of behaviour are incompatible, that is, what if a monolithic Islam is conservative and exists in opposition to the more liberal principles of Europe and the West? Is then, the wearing of the *hijab* less a sign of devotion, but instead an important political step in the creation of identities separate from the identity of the nation?

Lastly, in looking at a growing transnational and uniform Islam, it should be emphasized that the nation state is still a very active and present player in the lives of Muslim communities. For this reason, I look not only at the revitalization of the concept of the *umma* (the global or international aspect of Islam), but also how domestic politics and policies in France and Britain shape their Muslim communities, their strategies for coping within the domestic/national sphere and thus indirectly contribute to the production of the *umma* and 'one' Islamic identity.

Sallie Westwood and Annie Phizacklea in their work on transnationalism write: "critics who have suggested we are now in the era of postnationalism need to re-examine the ways in which they have arrived at this conclusion" (2001:7). Westwood and Phizacklea point out that there is neither a nation nor a globalization that has so far ruptured the national project. But the nation state as suggested by opening quote is undergoing internal changes, especially in the European space, due to membership in a larger polity (the EU), immigration and regionalism. Many of the 'reactions' of a state toward Islam, as discussed later, are seen as that state's attempt to reinforce control over its own fluctuating national narrative and identity.



If we create a pyramid of levels to understand how Islam is framed we can see the global or transnational level is at the top, the “European space” or supranational next, then the state or national level, the community level, and finally the individual.



This paper, in locating the problematization of Islam in Europe and the West, will touch mainly on the role of Muslim communities in navigating state policies in a global context. The ‘European space’ as a supranational polity (that is the EU) is not dealt with in the scope of this paper, but what is looked at on the European level, is one of the strands of the reformation of Islam, also known as ‘Euro-Islam’.

#### DEFINITION OF MAIN TERMS:

For those of us who are interested in the study of societies and space in the era of globalization there are some important positions of which we must be mindful. We must be aware that even if there is a “Global culture,” and “Islamic culture,” or a “European culture”, these are cultures that are marked by the control and management of diversity. (AlSayyad 1996)

In approaching the subject of Islam in Europe, a number of definitions or boundaries of terms have to be set. In talking about ‘Europe’, reference is made to Europe in two distinct manners – one, as the fifteen EU member nations, prior to this recent round of expansion (that is, as a political entity) and two, as a model of behaviour or a concept, whereby Europe is read as the West and “European” as “Western” [I do not necessarily see Europe in this manner, but the understanding of Europe as an integral part of the

‘West’ or ‘Western behaviour’ is often reflected in Europeans’, and non-Westerners’ views of Europe]. In both cases of usage, the boundaries of my geographic Europe lie at Austria and do not include the new EU nations of central and eastern Europe. I don’t look at Eastern Europe, because a number of local populations are Muslim, whilst in western Europe, except for a growing number of converts; most Muslims are either recent immigrants from outside Europe (Central, Eastern or Western) or children of immigrants. Another reason this paper doesn’t deal with any Central or Eastern European nations is because a number of these nations have just recently become immigrant nations and policies of multiculturalism or pluralism are for the most part quite recent and arguably imposed upon them by EU membership. In the case of France and Britain, both nations chose their domestic immigrant-related policies as part of a national narrative, due to a large and continuing influx of foreigners from former colonies.

In discussing immigrants as opposed to locals or natives, again a definition of terms is called for. A lot of the literature covered for this paper referred to Muslims as immigrants, regardless of their being born in Europe or having immigrated; this creates a further sense of ‘othering’. AlSayyad writes in Muslim Europe or Euro-Islam (2002), that conflicts are no longer “about migration in the traditional sense, because so many Muslims in Europe are no longer migrants”. And although they are still viewed by some as recent arrivals, Muslim populations have in fact been present in Europe for a long time. In fact, “several generations of Arab, Indian, black African, North African, and Turkish Muslims have been born in France, Britain and Germany, and elsewhere. The view that Muslims in Europe are guest-workers who will eventually go home has long been untenable...” (AlSayyad 2002). In trying to overcome this idea of “foreignness”, I will refer to the first generation of Muslim who came in the 1950s, 60s and 70s en masse to Europe as guest-workers and ex-colonial subjects, as ‘Muslim immigrants’ and to the subsequent generation, often born in Europe as ‘new European Muslims’ or ‘second-generation Muslim immigrants’, as in the case of France and Britain, where most of the young second-generation Muslim immigrants were either born citizens (to citizen parents) or became citizens in their youth. In referring to children of immigrants, regardless of religion, I will use the term “new European citizens”. And while the

children of immigrants are not migrants themselves or 'new' to Europe, they are in the context of their fellow country folk, relatively 'new' to Europe.

As noted in a endnote to this chapter, the head-scarf referred to in this paper is in fact the *hijab*, or more explicitly, the head covering which encloses all the hair of the wearer, the ears, the neck and sometimes parts of the chin. The headscarf or *foulard*, that since 1989 has been allowed in the French *lycée* is a less conservative version of the *hijab*, and does not cover the chin or all the hair of the wearer. In fact, the *foulard*, a French term, is more like the *dupatta*, the head covering worn mainly by women from the Indian sub-continent, and is a diaphanous strip of material, which covers most of the hair<sup>2</sup>. The *burqah* is the only actual veil of Islam, and offers the wearer complete face coverage. The term veil is therefore incorrectly used when referring to *hijab* or the head covering which is at the middle of French controversy.

Lastly, with reference to the terms Islam and Muslims used in this paper, both are used in a generalized group sense. There is no 'one' voice of Islam or Muslims in Europe or indeed the world, as one finds with Catholicism or the Church of England (Hunter & Serfaty 2002). In fact, there are various sects within the religion, from Shia to Sunni, to variances within them (Ismaelis and Borrás), who are differentiated through their beliefs (usually, the prophets they follow), and regional differences of practice (North African Islam versus Islam of the Indian sub-continent), not to mention, as with any group, differences based on socio-economic backgrounds, diasporic travels etc (Peach & Vertovec 1997: 25). [Some may say that it is this very division integral to Islam, which is forcing young Muslims living outside the Muslim world as minorities to push for a stricter codification of what it means to be Muslim.] In talking about general Islamic trends in Europe, the term Muslim as a broad all-encompassing whole is used, for lack of better terminology. Wherever possible, differences in Muslim beliefs and practices will be pointed out.

One of the dangers of using the term Muslim to mean all practitioners of Islam is the stereotyping, often negative, that follows. The idea that Muslims as a political group,

demanding certain group rights, are fundamentalist or would-be terrorists is, while grossly reductive, a media-reinforced image taken by many as a reality. Vertovec and Peach comment that on the cover of the 15th June 1992 issue of the international edition of Time magazine, which featured a photograph of a mosque in the background and in the foreground a “robed arm holding an automatic weapon; under the photograph appeared the special issue title ‘Islam: Should the World Be Afraid?’ ” (Peach & Vertovec 1997: 4) Nearly ten years later, very little has changed and in fact the fear or image of a militant Islam has grown alongside the concept of a ‘clash of civilizations’ (Huntington 1996). “The terms ‘Muslim’ and ‘Islamic’ increasingly appear[ed] in European public space with rather rigid images attached to them” of being irrational, anti-women, anti-Western, anti-modern, anti-democratic, prone to mob-like public behaviour <sup>3</sup> (Peach & Vertovec 1997: 8). Through such widespread stereotyping of Islam, its practitioners and the Islamic world, many Muslims today feel they have become an ‘acceptable’ target to stigmatize and that Islamophobia is not only condoned but often used as a “successful instrument of political mobilization” (Peach & Vertovec 1997: 4). The term ‘Islamophobia’, itself a political construct, will be discussed later in relation to its employment as an instrument of unification of the *umma*.

Secondly, in continuously referring to a group, an un-intentional objectification occurs, whereby even in writing about the group as part of a larger society, they are immediately removed from whole and viewed as a separate species. As this paper will attempt to show though, in a multiculturalist framework, where group rights are assigned, individuals are in fact encouraged to do the above and group themselves under one umbrella in their hope of availing themselves of certain rights. As Muslim councils are set up in various European nations, there is an understanding that some group consensus must be reached for any voice(s) of Islam to be heard or taken note of. In grouping themselves together, the members of such councils, umbrella organizations, and local political representations must create a group identity that often overrides their own differences and forces others to conform to a new set of standards. This political process is in many ways one of the catalysts in the formation of this new version of Islam, particular to second-generation immigrants to Europe. In trying to create an Islamic identity, aspects of one particular

version of Islam are adopted and applied as the 'true Islam'. With widespread unemployment, fears of persecution, the need to be heard on local and national levels and in attempts to fight rising xenophobia, "a new self-consciousness for European Muslims" is taking place (Peach & Vertovec 1997: 5).

#### BIASES AND METHODOLOGY:

In writing about Muslims in Europe, that is, in looking at a group as a subject through an 'objective' lens, one has to be aware of one's own biases. As a student of European Studies, I am attempting to bring my interdisciplinary perspective to this paper and look at the *hijab* as a sociological symbol and geographic marker in the European and global landscape. The *hijab* occupies overwhelming dialogic space in both the mainstream and academic world. What Muslim women wear on their heads, writes Itrath Syed, is "an obsession that everyone, the media, Muslim community leadership, the general public Muslims and non-Muslims alike seem to have" (Syed: 2004)<sup>4</sup>. I agree, and understand that by this very paper I'm contributing to that obsession, in attempting to comprehend the *hijab* as a symbol of Islam. As a one-time resident of Britain, the role of visible minorities in Europe (the non-white immigrant) in forming a new British and European fascinates me. In terms of identity politics, what does a pluralist identity mean, not only for the second-generation immigrant but for the nation state as well? How does a nation state that might wish to see itself as stable (arguably, fixed and unchanging in its national narrative) through history, deal with this other? How does a community that may give regional alliances or religious ties more priority than its adopted nation state navigate a world of reduced religiosity, regionalism and even nationalism? As a non-Muslim Indian woman, for me, Islam has always been the 'other' and Muslims the 'outsiders', even in a nation of over one hundred million Muslims<sup>5</sup>. In fact, the Indian example of dealing with the Muslim community, whereby a separate set of civil laws pertaining to Muslims (based on *Sharia*) is a continuation of laws set under British colonial rule has often acted to further separate Muslims from other Indians. In this way, aspects of multiculturalism, whereby group rights are singled out, often remind me of India.

In investigating the current situation of Islam in Europe/the West, I am interested in the existing data on Islam in Europe and I attempt to formulate a case to understand what is occurring to Muslim communities in Europe based on this existing data rather than any new sources. With regard to the existing data available, I categorize it in three ways:

1. Scholarly published work: Online and print journal articles, essays and books on Islam in Europe, critiques and analysis of multiculturalist, assimilationist and integration practices, and works on identity politics;
2. Mainstream media pieces: Various print and online newspaper and magazine articles the wearing of *hijab* in France and Britain and on Islam post 9/11; and
3. Web applications: Websites of Muslim organizations, youth movements and personal essays on wearing and tying the *hijab* and on Muslim faith.

While my theoretical framework is established primarily on my readings from the first category of works, the media and various web applications are also used to get as comprehensive an image as possible (without original data) of what is occurring at the present in Islam in Europe. Of course the key to understanding the 'whole picture', through a fragmented lens, is picking the right pieces; hopefully through combing through various levels of works – from scholarly to mainstream to the personal - as many pieces of the puzzle as possible will be examined.

One of the more surprising elements uncovered in looking at scholarly work on Islam, is the uniformity of claims and concerns by Muslims throughout the diaspora. Issues of mosque construction, the wearing of the *hijab*, halal meat in schools, etc are prevalent in all Muslim communities, regardless of host nation or the status of the community (as a minority or a majority) within the nation. This is not to say that Islam is monolithic, in fact while there is general agreement on the specific issues for the community, views on the issues themselves are divided and center around ferocious debates on what actually constitutes an/the Islamic practice. In this regard, discussions on Islam in a particular nation state are not limited to that national context alone nor do these discussions in the long run affect only that particular Muslim community. While nation state policies differ

and thus alter the outcomes of claims made to the state (and their Muslim communities), the language used by Muslim communities and the issues fought for are often reproduced comparably from one nation to another. Either through internet sites, organized *umma* networks or family ties, the discourse and theory on Muslim claims is in itself as universally applicable as the religion, so that work on the *hijab* in Turkey and Canada are relevant to the European context, as is work on mosque construction in Australia. This 'linkage' of dialogue and praxis is not restricted to group claims alone, but also to political world issues, and the *umma* is thus constructed and solidified through everyday practices (such as wearing the *hijab*, going to mosque) and through larger contentions such as the Israel-Palestine conflict, the control of Kashmir, the Gulf Wars, the Rushdie Affair and Bosnia. This homogeneity in claims and language is interesting when juxtaposed with Islam's historically inherent heterogeneity. While Islam is not a monolithic religion there and in fact suffers internally and externally because of its lack of unity, the attempts at unification occur around monolithic subjects that are arranged to appeal and apply to all Muslims. These points of contention act as rallying markers around which a globalized Islam, where a political unity if not an ideological unity is accomplished, is worked out and fought over by Islamic states, different sects and individual imams representing various factions.

Within this framework of a globalized, political Islam, individual Muslim voices are not without agency. The role of websites in this paper is seen to give a space of articulation to what communities are actually saying. The language used in general on these Muslim youth sites<sup>6</sup> is again a language borrowed from another movement – that of black power. The sites refer to Muslim men and women as “brothers and sisters” and suggest strategies of dialogue and discussion as ways to stand up for one's beliefs in an unwelcoming world. The idea of 'Islamophobia' and Muslim youth as disenfranchised is inherent in all the websites. The aim of most of these sites appears to be to create an internet community and also provide Muslim youth with forums to understand Islam and its/their place in Western society. Issues such as Palestine and Israel and Chechnya are common on all, while Kashmir factors mainly on the British sites (possibly as Pakistani Muslims care more for the Kashmir issue than do other Muslims). [I refer to the readers of these

websites as a 'transnational cyberpublic'<sup>7</sup> who are focused on issues of land and borders, without themselves being grounded as group, in a tangible, bordered space. In some ways then, this group is caught between a future of 'nations' as imagined communities without states, and the present of a fixation on a locality.] In these web forums, the dialogue between youth signifies a genuine interest in balancing Islam and their lives in non-Islamic countries. Interestingly, most of these sites seem to come out of the UK and France. Sites generated by US Muslim youth seem to question the dogmas of Islam much more than their British or French counterparts<sup>8</sup>. What is made apparent through these websites is the divisions in the reformation process of Islam. Some websites call for a change in Islamic ideas based on a re-reading of the *Quran* (the Euro-Islam model), while others demand a complete re-thinking of Islam, and an acknowledgement that parts of the *Quran* are out of date and not relevant to a life in a globalized (read modern) world (the progressive model). Other models of transformation are out there as well, ones which call for a political Islam and argue for a 'truer' (read conservative) interpretation of the *Quran* and holy texts, though they appear to be at the fringes. These models of a 'new' Islam appear to have some links to their geographic origins, with, as mentioned above, the more "progressive" models seem to come out of North America. One can speculate one reason for this difference in degrees of progressiveness (or boldness) is possibly due to the socio-economic and educational gap between Muslims in North America and Europe. It is my impression that these North American Muslim youngsters, writing and visiting these websites, appear to be from professional, middle-class homes, where a stricter public religious adherence may be judged to impede the promised social mobility that is more attainable in North America than Europe. What is certain is that in a post-Rushdie world, the *umma* as a political, organized tool is emerging not only on city streets but on the internet as well. Through dialogue with each other and with Islamic scholars, young Muslims are constructing their own [virtual] space and identity.

#### THE HIJAB AS A TOPIC OF SCRUTINY:

The *hijab*, as noted earlier, has been picked as an entry point into understanding the relationship between Europe (and by extension the West) and Islam as a practice



embedded with symbolic currency. The *hijab* is a visible Islamic image and has been a site of contention in European and world politics and discourse. By studying this symbol of Islamic practice, I hope to understand the disruptions that occur between present Western cultural policy models and Islam. The *hijab* resonates with multiple meanings within and outside the Muslim community and reactions to it, from policy makers to the public, vary between tolerance (seemingly never full acceptance) and abhorrence. Even within Islam and Islamic nations, opinions are divided on the role, requirements and politicization of the *hijab* and its meaning. The *hijab* is generally seen as a gendered and spiritual representation of identity. As a matter of choice, the wearing of *hijab* is not universally adopted or required in Islam and the donning of *hijab* is seen as a significant religious gesture within the Muslim community. In recent years an increasing number of young, often university-educated women have decided to wear *hijab* for the first time. Often, these European Muslim women have decided to wear *hijab* even when their mothers have not. *Hijab* is often seen as an inherent part of the Muslim costume, but was until recently a sign of ethnicity as well. Pakistani and Indian Muslim women did not wear *hijab*, while their North African counterparts did. What then is the significance behind the resurgence of the *hijab* and its inauguration in a number of distinct ethnic Muslim communities? And how do we make sense of *hijab*, with its many implications of servitude and domination by one gender over another, in a post-feminist cultural context?

#### CASE COUNTRIES: FRANCE AND BRITAIN:

In narrowing my focus, I will look at the role of the *hijab* in the politics of France and Britain in particular. Adrian Favell in Philosophies of Integration: Immigration and the Idea of Citizenship in France and Britain, writes that, "France and Britain are an obvious choice of 'most similar cases': two old nations with comparable national political traditions, colonial involvements and post-war immigration" (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2001:8). Favell also points out that, given these similarities, "What is most striking about the French and British perspectives is the *prima facie* differences between their respective policy frameworks" (2001:8).

Both nations' Muslim immigrant populations originated from ex-colonies and came post-World War II as blue-collar labour to the west, filling jobs in factories and mills, on the newly enlarged transport systems and hospitals. The de-colonization process, characterized by the large-scale movement of people from former colonies to the countries of former colonizers, and sometimes leading to confrontations over identity issues, (AlSayyad 2002:9) is best played out in France and Britain, where Muslim populations have not succeeded as well as other ex-colonial groups (economically and academically) (Modood & Berthoud et al. 1997:69) and traditionally have remained, even into the second-generation, isolated from national mainstream culture (Peach & Vertovec 1997:4).

France and Britain are also seen as nations with highly centralized political systems, though the British system addresses local politics and allows the local level to influence national political outcomes much more so than the French system. Romain Garbaye in his study of Muslim communities in Lille and Birmingham notes that the modes of centralization in France and Britain are very different and that the differences in the role of the local political body on the national agenda, has affected the treatment of immigrants in both nations. In Britain, the local authorities are not only "service deliverers" but also "institutions of local democracy" and are often the first arena in which claims by immigrant groups are made. The 'two-layer cake' organization of the domestic political sphere puts local authorities in charge of a number of services such as health, housing and education. Garbaye argues that in France, on the other hand, the municipality is "less a service deliverer to the local community than a means of representation of the local community in front of the central government." The 'marble cake' organizational model found in France, "distributes competencies between [the] central and the local government". This not only allows the central state to play a more active role in local affairs but also diffuses the local political actor of much agency and undermines the local arena as a space for political mobilization (Garbaye 2000).

Despite such local differences, there are other similarities, such as the two nations' strong imaginings of what constitutes their respective nation states that are also important. In their national myths, both Britain and France are homogenous populations, *in at least modes of behaviour, if not racially*. Each nation has a fixed idea of what citizenship entails and the role of the citizen with regard to his/her interaction with the state. While both sets of Muslim immigrants came post WWII and from ex-colonies, immigrants to Britain came in the early 50s and 60s<sup>9</sup> and came as citizens of the Empire. In France citizenship wasn't immediate, except for Algerians born pre-1962 (the year of Algerian independence from France) along with their offspring who were considered French at birth (Favell 2001:67). Other immigrants, mainly from other African colonies and including younger Algerians, came as guest workers, with the clear idea that they would one day return home (to Morocco, Algeria etc). In the British case, immigration from the ex-colonies wasn't confined to predominantly Muslim groups and large groups of Hindus, Sikhs and some Christians from the Indian sub-continent and East Africa arrived as well. In addition, Britain saw a large number of West Indians coming 'home'. This diversity in immigrant groups arguably pressed the British into constructing a domestic policy that would not only integrate but also manage very separate groups of people with regard to British 'mainstream' society.

The differences in approach to immigration (alluded to in the earlier Favell quote) are best performed through the rendering of membership in the nation as seen by looking at how one becomes 'British' or 'French'. In theory, being 'British' is used to describe an inclusive model of citizenship based on belonging to the Empire (as opposed to being English, Scottish, Welsh or Irish) that is/was made available to all its subjects in its dominions. The term "British" in itself was never used to infer a homogenous culture and retained a didactic space, within which non-white immigrants could locate themselves. In practice, the concept of what constitutes 'Britishness' today is still under debate and is generally viewed differently by ethnic groups and generations. Modood, Beishon and Virdee in their study on new forms of identity in Changing Ethnic Identities (1994), write that while "British" is a term without any technical attachment to a race, non-white

Britons still see colour come into play in being called British. As one South Asian interviewee reported:

A British person is a person who is a British subject, or is born in Britain. There should be not be any discrimination...as far as being British is concerned, but I have noticed that there is a 'colour-bar' in operation in that white people may lessen our Britishness. (Modood et al. 1994:97)

In using 'British' as a self-identifier, both second-generation Caribbean and South Asians, felt compelled to hyphenate the term (e.g. Black-British, British-Asian) as a means of locating their ethnicity within 'Britishness'. Gilles Kepel in *Allah in the West*, compares the term 'British' to a Russian doll, where the racial and ethnic (and recently religious) subdivisions:

Fit into wider categories: for example, the subcategories 'West Indian' and 'African' fit into the broad group 'Black', and the 'Asian' category subdivides into 'Pakistani' and 'Bengali' and so on. (1997:101)

In their follow up work of 1997, entitled *Ethnic Minorities in Britain*, Modood, Berthoud, Lakey, Naroo, Smith, Verdee and Beishon, write that for many South Asians (and Caribbeans), being British was nothing more than a "legal title". Thus, their hyphenated selves represented their legal status (citizens of Britain) and their primary cultural identifier (Asian, Black etc) (Modood et al. 1997:329). Into this mix, a new development was the increase of young Muslims in Britain describing themselves via their religion as opposed to their ethnicity, race or nationality, so that British -Asian or British-Pakistani, often fragmented into, British-Muslim or Bangladeshi-Muslim. In the more in-depth survey of 1997, Modood et al found that 74% of Muslims considered their religion to be very important to the way they lived their lives (a primary identifier of identity) versus 43% Hindus and 46% Sikhs (Modood et al. 1997:301).

In addition, Modood writes that from the 1960s onwards the anti-racist movement in Britain adopted the term 'black' to refer to all non-white Britons in the hope of enhancing anti-racist action and forming a bond against white racism (Modood et al. 1994:102 and 1997:294). Modood writes that 'black' became a situational identity for South Asians,

coming alive in only some situation and not others. A 1989 telephone poll on Network East, a BBC South Asian television program had nearly two-thirds of its 3000 calls, rejecting the term 'black' for Asians (Modood et al. 1994:104). In their survey of 1997, Modood et al, found even less use of 'black' by South Asians than the Network East poll, though they found Punjabi Indians (one majority within the British-Asian community) to "passionately argue for political 'blackness'" (Modood et al. 1997:294). Modood et al (1997:294), also found that young, second-generation South Asians of Indian and African-Asian background and those from working class families were more likely to consider themselves 'black' (again only in certain situations) than middle-class, older Asians and in particular, Muslims. In both sets of self-conception, Bangladeshis, the last big immigrant wave to Britain (in the early 1970s) were the least likely to identify with the term 'black' or British (Modood et al. 1997:295).

France on the other hand, following the ideals of the French Revolution, treated the existence of distinct ethnic or racial groups as nonexistent (Favell 2001:9). Under the banner of the universal rights of equality, liberty and fraternity the Republic recognized individuals rather than groups and a French citizen is a citizen through desire and behaviour (the contract between the individual and the state)<sup>10</sup> and in turn owes allegiance to the nation and has no officially sanctioned ethnic or religious identity. As Favell points out, the "racial and ethnic classification" that are inherent in British immigration policy and multiculturalism (and necessary for the implementation of policy), are 'taboo' in France and are not even factors of consideration in the structure of state policy.

In looking at French laws on immigration and citizenship the term '*étranger*' ('alien') applies to those without French nationality. Christine Barats –Malbrel, in her work on post-war legal developments surrounding non-nationals in France, writes that the blanket term *étranger* acts as an inherently homogenizing term (1999:78-9), not taking into account nuances of cases. By this administrative designation, one either belonged or not to the French nation state. Unlike 'British', a citizenship aimed at overcoming national/ethnic differences prevalent across the Empire, being a French national does not

exist in binary opposition to any other form of 'belonging'. Within the French republican tradition, there have been, however, variations of inclusion. According to Favell, the late 1970s and the early 1980s saw a rise in the spirit of diversity, best epitomized by Jack Lang's (Minister of Culture) idea of *droit à la différence* (the right to be different), initially conceived of a way to increase institutional autonomy of the regions. The *droit à la différence* also functioned in relation to North African immigrants, calling for a political pluralism through the expansion of their right and an increased visibility of Islam in French life. This new spirit, Favell argues, challenged the effectiveness of the centralized state, its role in attaining integration of the nation as a whole and the Parisian elite's control. "In this respect the French experience was completely in line with the international evolution of liberal politics: towards deregulation, increased individualism and a more laissez faire relation between state and society."

If inspected closely, pan-European developments in the late 1980s, such France's growing engagement with the European Community, the shift in competences of economic policy and later border control<sup>11</sup> from the national to the supra-national level, and the re-emergence of regional allegiance present throughout Europe, made more accessible through the Council of Regions, led to a crisis of identity and control (Favell 2001:51-2). A series of challenges, based on growing regionalism, declining solidarity, and the European Community, "amounted to a font of potential change to the idea of centralized state control and national polity unity" (Favell 2001:52). The rise of the Front National under Le Pen, especially as a regional player, put the question of immigration and *droit à la différence* into the limelight of national politics. Immigration became the issue upon which nationals could focus the frustrations felt in a changing economic and political landscape. The idea of a homogenous France, built around its Catholic cultural past and its Republican history appeared comforting to many. Favell writes that, "'*différence*' = 'not one of us'" (Favell 2001:53).

This growing xenophobia coupled with and the historic ideals of Universalism, led to suggested changes to the nationality laws in 1986 and the implementation of these suggestions, after fierce debates within the state in 1993. These laws, which came to be

known as "*le lois Pasqua*", focused primarily on the voluntarism for citizenship by second-generation immigrant children (Barats- Malbrel 1999:85 and Favell 2001:67). The theory behind the *le lois Pasqua* was that French citizenship was something that should be 'deserved' and not automatic. To be a citizen and part of the French nation, called upon the subject to show active participation in the nation. Favell writes that the theory behind the *le lois Pasqua* was the presumption that:

To become French, it has to be the case that an individual's identity is not definitively determined by their racial or cultural origins, or indeed any other national identity that might clash with their new adopted French identity. The autonomy to choose...is thus the first precondition to the possibility of integration. (Favell 2001:69)

This inclusion of the act of individual *volonté*, basically emphasizes the French nation as an association of "self- elective membership", and sets up a social contract based on prior agreed beliefs and duties such as social integration, political participation and social acceptance between the state and the individual. Such a citizenship calls upon a higher individualist price for those who may veer from the accepted *public* norm or who do not 'belong'. [The French model distinguishes between the public and the private]. In such a scenario, immigrants have to forfeit more of themselves as 'others' to meet the standard of citizenship and gain membership to the club. The French hoped that by imposing a moral code on citizenship, an allegiance to the state could be formed, rather than, in the case of Muslim immigrants, to Islam or another nation state. Favell argues that this technical preoccupation with who belongs and the redrawing of policy lines to that effect fails to address the actual issues of high unemployment and isolation found amongst French Muslims, especially in the *banlieus* and against the growing appeal of political Islam (Favell 2001:156).

Along with this divergent idea of what constitutes a citizen/ *citoyen*, France and Britain also differ in the attitude of the state toward religion. The strong anti-clerical/anti-Catholic church sentiments of the Enlightenment and the Revolution of 1789, present in France with varying degrees, has committed France to secularism (Birnbaum 2001). The concept of secularism or *laïcité* and the law of 1905 calling for a separation between

church and state are very much part of the French national self-image. This separation of religion and the state is difficult to acknowledge within the context of Islam as a religion demanding total obedience and faith, in both the private and public sector of life. Pierre Birnbaum writes that for most French of North African origin (that is, of the Muslim faith), the acknowledgment of the predominance of common law over ethnic or religious allegiance is acceptable. But within this acknowledgement and acceptance of what constitutes French citizenship, many advocate a more pluralist society and an 'Anglo-American' form of multiculturalism (Birnbaum 2001: 239, 244).

The secularism of France, Pierre Birnbaum contends, is not anti-religion but anti-communalism (2001:245). Loyalty to the state requires that the decisions of the individual be made as Frenchmen and not as part of a religious (or ethnic) group. Patrick Weil writes that between the individual, a religious group and the state, "the latter is both expected and seen to act as protector of the individual against group pressure" (Weil 2004). This brings multiple identities into conflict, without a space for navigation and posits the state with just as much power (and paternalism) as it aims to wrench from religion. As discussed in further detail in Chapter 2, the headscarf or the *hijab* is then at odds with and inherent part of the French concept of France as a secular state.

Lastly, Britain in contrast has the Church of England (the C of E) as its state religion and the monarch as the head of the Church. This inclusion in the British mainstream of religion has made it somewhat easier for Muslims (and Sikh and Hindu immigrants) to receive such concessions as religious education in school, space and local government funding for places of worship and the acceptance of religious wear in public jobs and spheres. But, even in Britain, Islam has not had as clear a path to recognition by the British establishment, as have other 'immigrant' religions such as Sikhism. Unlike in France, the issues with Islam in Britain have not been over religious practices or indeed a collective Muslim identity. In fact, some may argue that British multiculturalism as a model has gone too far in separating the British themselves into the very distinct communities feared by France. With recent riots and increasing disenfranchisement of young Muslims (especially men) citizenship in Britain, in not setting a standard of what



'belonging' to the nation means, appears to have failed to unite its citizens as much as have French integrationist policies. In both France and Britain, Muslims as a collective, have done badly in the education system and suffer from high unemployment. While France has seen distinct conflict between Islam and the state, in Britain issues have revolved more around disturbances to society via youth gangs, using Islam as a vehicle of commonality. Like the 1958 race riots in Nottingham, the book burnings and riots in Bradford and other Northern cities in 1989 and 2001 were a shock to the British system, calling for a new look at domestic policy. Unlike 1958, the riots were not race-based but instead pitted a religion (or identity around a religion) against mainstream British society and ended up bringing Muslims to the forefront of the public eye once again.

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<sup>1</sup> A variety of names are used for this head covering associated with Muslim female believers. Le Monde, dated December 12, 2003, describes the numerous differences in what the West somewhat incorrectly calls the 'veil'. But, for the purposes of this paper, the word hijab will be used, referring to the headscarf covering all hair, the ears and a portion of the wearer's chin. (See Appendix I for various web pages showing the many types of hijab and other Muslim dress.)

<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, the *dupatta* as a head covering is not limited to Muslim women alone, and tends to be a regional head gear, favoured by Northern Indian women and Pakistani women, regardless of religion and worn along with a salwar suit.

<sup>3</sup> Of course, such essentializing of Islam is not limited to Europe alone. In his essay on Sydney mosques, Kevin Dunn (Representations of Islam in the Politics of Mosque Development in Sydney, August 2000, Royal Dutch Geographical Society) shows how on an "(inter) national level", negative constructions of Muslims and Islam circulate broadly, showing Muslims as fanatical and intolerant etc.

<sup>4</sup> Itrath is a MA Women's Studies student, a *hijabi* herself with whom I've had a few conversations on the hijab (a subject she recently presented on at UBC) and progressive Islam.

<sup>5</sup> 101,596,057 Muslims to be exact, per the 2001 Indian Census Data. Muslims are the biggest religious minority in India, at around 12% of the population;

Available at: <http://www.censusindia.net/>

<sup>6</sup> Such websites are: Islamonline.net, Oumma.com, TheRevival.co.uk, Islamfortoday.com

<sup>7</sup> I initially thought of the term 'transnational cyberpublic' (cyberpublic as one word) after conversations with a group of computer programmers, who assured me that within their field this is nothing new, but on googling the term, see that Ravi Sundaram already uses it in discussing the [Hindu] Indian diaspora in a paper presented in June 1996 at the 5Cyberconference in Madrid.

Sundaram's essay gives a very good theoretical framework to looking at cyber space.

Available at: <http://www.telefonica.es/fat/esundara.html#bio>

<sup>8</sup> Some US sites, more questioning and critical than their French or British counterparts are: [altmuslim.com](http://altmuslim.com) and [muslimwakeup.com](http://muslimwakeup.com)

<sup>9</sup> The Bangladeshi's came later in the 70s and their progress in Britain is somewhat different with relation to other Muslim immigrants to Britain, such as the Pakistanis and Indians.

<sup>10</sup> The Deep Roots of French Secularism, BBC News Online, December 18, 2003

Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/europe/3325285.stm>

<sup>11</sup> The prime example of national competencies moving to a supra-national level is the Schengen Agreement, signed in 1985, with its Convention implemented in 1990, which aimed for the gradual abolition of common internal border checkpoints and formal controls across Continental Europe.

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## ISLAM IN EUROPE

It is not easy to be a Muslim in Europe today. (The Independent 1993)

### ISLAM AND EUROPE: A COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP:

One of the earliest Muslim visitors to Western Europe in modern times was a certain Mizra Abu Talib Khan, an Indian of Perso-Turkish background, who traveled to England and France between 1798 and 1803, and wrote an extensive and detailed account of his travels, adventures and impressions (Lewis 1994:1).

On visiting the Houses of Parliament, Talib Khan wrote that the English, unlike Muslims, did not accept any divinely revealed holy law and instead relied upon their own man-made laws, formed by the “exigencies of the time, their own dispositions, and the experiences of their judges” (Lewis 1994:1).

This comment reveals an essential difference between classical Islamic practice and modern, Western views on the nature of law and authority. For Muslims, the most sacred text, the *Quran*, is the primary source of holy law and clear directions on behaviour and practices given by the *Quran*, are eternal commandments, equally valid for all times and all places. Where the *Quran* is allusive or unclear, the second major source of Islamic law, the utterances of the Prophet Mohammed, is used for interpretation. This codified body of traditions, also known as hadith, is binding as well, but differs from the *Quran* in one key aspect- where the *Quran* is an undisputed text, there are number of different hadiths, some contradictory to others and some accepted by specific branches of Islam (Lewis 1994:4).

In Islamic law, religious and worldly dealings are divided into five categories (Lewis 1994:5):

1. Required, commanded;

2. Recommended;
3. Permitted;
4. Disapproved; and
5. Forbidden.

Thus, under the above five categories, a practice like eating pork is disapproved of, but not forbidden, for a Muslim may eat pork to save his life, but not commit murder, which is forbidden" (Lewis 1994:3). The *hajj*<sup>1</sup> is required or commanded, whilst the wearing of *hijab* is contentiously viewed as either required or recommended.

Theoretically, since there is no separation of religion and state in Islam, some Muslims tend to reject secular society, demanding considerable autonomy to conduct affairs within their communities in accordance with Islamic principles (AlSayyad 2002:10). According to this view, Islam is a totalizing force, which dictates every aspect of a Muslim's life – that is, it is a more powerful force in public life than is generally the case for Christianity and Judaism, Europe's other major religions. It is in issues situated around this absence of a partition between the public and the private sphere, the individual and the community - culturally based special concepts imagined very differently between east and west - that classical Islamic teachings are at odds with Western Europe and the concept of state versus church. The lack of division between the private and the public and the inherent conflict built into the role of the believer in the context of his/her citizenship versus membership of the faith is one that Muslims in both the diaspora and in Muslim nations navigate on a daily basis. Studies by Tariq Modood in Britain amongst British Asians showed religion as a large influence in the lives of Bangladeshi and Pakistani youth. The study also shows though, how the role of religion drastically diminishes in the lives of Muslim youth based on their age of entry into Britain, especially between those born in Britain and those who immigrated in their late teens (Modood et al. 1997:308).

Bernard Lewis writes that:

In the early centuries of Islam, when the juristic schools were being formed and the major legal treatises were being written, the status of temporary or permanent non-Muslims under Muslim rule was a current and universal issue, and therefore

needed elaborate consideration and regulation. The corresponding problem of Muslims under non-Muslim rule hardly arose and where it did, received only minor and fleeting attention. (1994:7)

Between the classical era and World War II, Islam and the West have experienced a variety of ups and downs in their relationship with each other. But to scholars on Islam, the migration of Muslim labour to Western Europe, post –World War II, is a particularly interesting phenomenon that poses fundamental problems to classical Islamic law. What this movement, en masse, represents for the first time is Muslims *choosing* to live under non-Muslim rule for extensive periods of time.

Europe's own relationship with Islam has always been a complicated one. From the tenth century AD onwards, with the beginning of a Christian recovery, and Byzantine advances, increasing trade routes and exchange of peoples, Europe's contact with Islam has been characterized by both mutual alliances and hostilities (Lewis 1994:10). Vertovec and Peach write that "contrary to popular belief, Arab/Muslim expansion across North Africa and Spain occurred more through alliances and federations than by the sword", culminating in a common Hispano-Arabic culture (1997:12). Europe's distorted image of Islam was only constructed between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. These "wildly constructed images of Islam, elaborated and amplified historically" were used as political tools to overcome Europe's inferiority complex in relation to strong Islamic empires and cultures and to later inspire Christian crusades and legitimize colonial expansion (Vertovec & Peach 1997:12).

AlSayyad and Castells note that, historically, the formation of European identity:

Was created in opposition to others – who were named "infidels" or "barbarians".

In fact, in many cases it was the defense of Christian identity against Islam that set the ground for the existence of so-called European culture. (2002:4)

In Orientalism, Edward Said writes that the Orient was "Orientalized", as a conscious process of categorization in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, on the part of the Occident, and through this categorization, manifested itself as a power domination over the Orient, whereby the peoples of the Orient, "inhabiting the decayed Ottoman Empire", existed as a place

“isolated from the mainstream of European progress in the sciences, arts and commerce” (Said: 1978). It is in this context, that a multi-ethnic society formed with people of non-European origin may have become disturbing to many Europeans. “When one’s identity becomes blurred, it is more difficult to accept the other. And when one’s identity feels threatened, it becomes hardened in nonnegotiable ways” (AlSayyad & Castells 2002:4).

Aijaz Ahmad in his critique of Said’s interpretation of orientalism as a European theory that both serves and justifies European and occidental domination of the Orient and is produced for European colonial and post-colonial purposes alone. Ahmad points out that “Said’s denunciations of the whole of Western civilization is extreme and uncompromising...and orientalism always remains the same, only more so with the linear accumulations of time: (Ahmad 1992:202-3). While much of the same language used in the traditional discourse of orientalism and colonialism persists in today’s dialogue about Muslims and Islam, arguably: (1) There has been a shift in localized power dynamics with the increase of migrants from the “orient” to Western Europe; and (2) Certain aspects of ‘modernity’ are in fact orthogonal to classical Islamic teachings. The once clear power paradigms of Occident over Orient or Christian over Muslim are not necessarily as entrenched or fixed as imagined in Said’s Orientalism. Thus, Ahmad puts forth, the idea of an Orient (and by extension, the people of the Orient) with agency to control its own future, world perceptions of itself, as well as its self-perception.

Along with this new awareness of authority on the part of people originating from the Orient and with an increase in multi-cultural and multi-ethnic populations and the horizontal expansion of the European Union, European national identities are becoming increasingly nebulous. Links between geography and culture are also becoming tenuous, with everything from fusion foods to fusion modes of dress and architecture. In the EU especially, there is an increasing “decoupling between the instrumentality of the state” (i.e., citizenship) (AlSayyad & Castells 2002:3) and the ethnic, cultural, and historical roots of identity. The very constructs or stories that lie at the heart of national identity discourse are being questioned and re-vamped for a new age. Thus, precisely at the time that Europe has had to adapt to the growing presence of Islam among its people, national

identities are being deconstructed and reconstructed, both from below and from above, from inside the nation and from outside.

In a world of global communications where traditional paradigms of behaviour are in flux, both in the developed north and developing south, local subcultures often appeal to ethnic, racial and religious symbols and allegiances in an attempt to avoid dissolving into the majority culture. In this process, we see the identities of former colonizers undergoing major transformations along side adaptations in their immigration populations and just as fundamental alterations in the lands of the ex-colonies. For migrant populations then, the one sure foot on 'back home' is slowly being dislodged as countries of origin go through their own periods of development and 'modernization' via satellite television, the internet, Hollywood movies and visits from the diasporas.

Clearly, as with the identities of Muslims in the developing world, the identities of Europe's Muslim populations are not fixed but vary across time and place. In the short term, identity appears to be situational, whereas in the long term, some aspects of identity are maintained while their content changes (AlSayyad 2002:11). Islam and Muslims are not timeless or monolithic. And mainstream Islamic tradition is one of personal pietism rather than political activism. In this context, the multivalent character of the headscarf offers up an instructive symbol for contemporary Islam.

In the last three decades, periodic economic crises, from the Oil Crisis of 1973 to the economic decline of the late 1980's, seem to have hurt Europe's Muslim immigrants far more than most other immigrant groups <sup>2</sup>, forming in the twenty-first century, a new economically underprivileged class. In both Britain and France, Muslim immigrants, first and second generation are suffering persisting patterns of discrimination, often confining them to ghetto like accommodations in the zones or cites of Aubervilliers and Pantin, the tenements of East London, and the terraced council flats in <sup>3</sup>. [Pakistani immigrants to Britain are an anomaly with 77% owning their own homes (The Statistics, Guardian 2002)] This discrimination, I argue is partially based on lack of education, economic success and ethnicity [Hindus and Sikhs, for example, seem to have overcome diversity

and are viewed as communities of economic success.] In Thatcher's Britain of the 1980's, a severe savaging of the manufacturing industries, traditionally the foundations of the British economy led to acute effects on many communities of British Muslims. First-generation Muslims in Britain who had come as replacements to fill the vacuum of labour in mills and factories and were now located in specific industries in particular areas of Britain (mainly the North) now found themselves without jobs, without any other skill set, often not speaking English and vulnerable within a welfare system that was being overhauled with cutbacks. For the Bangladeshi community in particular, who had only recently arrived in Britain, getting a strong foothold in this new world was to become very difficult. Shireen Hunter and Simon Serfaty write that due to this lack of economic stability, Muslim populations in Britain (and France) were often not in a position to find funding for or build mosques, Muslim institutions (schools, teaching colleges) or cultural centers, as were other immigrant groups (2002: xv) <sup>4</sup>.

At the same time, during the period of the 1970s and 1980s, as Muslim immigrants, traditionally male workers were bringing over families and establishing networks of settlement in Western Europe, political events in the Muslim world were leading to a competition for the title of the 'true Islam' the world over, especially in Europe. This battle over the hearts and minds of European Muslims, not only complicated the process of identity formation as a group, and later, for the second-generation as individuals, but also further divided Muslim populations by creed and nationality.

Some anti-Western Muslim states tried to manipulate Europe's Muslims to their own ends or to pressure European countries to adopt certain foreign policy postures. These efforts often resulted in tensions between the Muslim communities and indigenous societies and called into question the Muslims' loyalty to their country of residence. (Hunter & Serfaty 2002: xv)

The crucial question that now exists in Europe with regard to Islam and with European Muslims, is not one of whether "Islam can be expelled from European soil, as during the Spanish *reconquista* six centuries ago" (Hunter & Serfaty 2002: xv), or even whether a total assimilation will occur in parts of Muslim populations in Europe, but instead, how



Europe and Islam can navigate together a common, shared space that is created from the best both have to offer. The question is how the “defiant minority” can carve out a successful sphere for itself within national and supranational polities. Despite mutual apprehensions, since mass migration of Muslim male workers began in the 1950s, diverse patterns of adjustment on both sides of the question have occurred. For both Britain and France, issues of *hijab* and mosques are not at the heart of the debate, but instead how Muslims’ socio-economic conditions can be improved, especially in the case of the youth – the new citizens of Europe.

1989: A YEAR OF AWAKENING AND THE CONSTRUCTIONS OF AN *UMMA*:

In retrospect, 1989 now seems a pivotal point for Islam in Europe. Various incidents in Western Europe and the Muslim world seemed to ignite a once quiet population, who suddenly appeared to have a set ‘agenda’, somewhat in conflict with the dominant discourse. The most infamous occurrence of that year, was, of course, the Rushdie Affair<sup>5</sup>, when in January of 1989, Salman Rushdie’s The Satanic Verses, was publicly burned in Bradford (Appignanesi & Maitland 1990: xiii-xiv). Demonstrations against it in India and Pakistan developed into riots, Iran’s Ayatollah Khomeini issued a *fatwa* against the book and author, and imposed a death sentence on Rushdie and his publishers, and in May of that year, fifty thousand British Muslims demonstrated against the book in central London. The Satanic Verses and Rushdie’s portrayal of the Prophet Mohammed as a ‘shady businessman-turned prophet’ angered Muslims all over the world and appeared to be a catalyst in the formation of a visible *umma*, especially in Western Europe and the US.

Later that year, in two different cities of France and Britain, teenage Muslim girls would wear headscarves to school, resulting in furious debates (what the French would later call *l’Affaire du foulard*) on what was considered acceptable school-wear in non-Muslim countries. The conclusions of both cases, diametrically opposite to each other, were not

only significant as symbols for the systems of integration in France and Britain, but affected future discussions on the wearing of head-scarves and *hijab*.

The Rushdie Affair and the two head-scarf incidents were the first signs to mainstream Western Europe that Islam was present on its soil as a unified community, willing to use its large numbers for a political voice to be heard. Both the Rushdie and *foulard* affairs painted Muslims hover, primarily as intolerant and troublesome, with a political strategy to change the fundamental faces of their 'new' nations. Charles Husband writes on the Rushdie Affair, that:

English representations of events in the Iran of Khomeini...have been unambiguously detached from their geography and translated into the popular imagery of Islamic fundamentalism as a feature of British Pakistani communities... Khomeini's *fatwa*, of course provided a linking of 'oriental political pathology' to 'Islamic fanaticism'. (Husband 1994:81)

As previously indicated, with reference to the five categories of Islamic law, Muslims share certain tenets in common, such as being required to attend the *haji*, eating halal and fasting during Ramadan, but are also often divided over issues ranging from small to large beliefs. Such shared practices act as common bonds. In a minimal sense this is 'community', but the unity ends there. The doctrine of an *umma*, however, says that a 'community of the faithful' exists regardless of internal distinctions and forms a part of the faith (ad-din) itself (Baumann 1996:82).

Muslims face particular difficulties in negating or escaping the imposition of a reifying dominant discourse (Baumann 1996:82). To successfully work within the political structure and have their demands met, Muslims are called upon to form a group with a representative to speak for them. Yet, by forming a group, they are then viewed as a threat or a disturbance to the social fabric. The dominant discourse turns all Muslims into one community defined by its culture or public agenda, so that public perception was that in 1989, all Muslims were against Rushdie. In such a scenario, individual Muslims feel pushed to either defend or negate the stereotype set up by the dominant discourse, whilst

trying not to disown the doctrinal commitment to a unified *umma* (Baumann 1996:82). Ranna Kabbani, looking in retrospect at the Rushdie Affair, writes in the Guardian (2002):

It was the Rushdie controversy that forced us into the open. An invisible community then - if such a word could be used for a group as diverse as we were, divided by language, national origins, race and class...We were caught between two tyrannies: Khomeini's impossible death sentence...and the harsh "liberal" *fatwa* against our religious identity, with its blanket dismissal of us as alien, barbaric. Such was the polarization, that even those who had hardly perceived of themselves as "Muslim" before, except in family ritual or personal reference, were suddenly forced to stand up and be counted as "warriors" for subtlety in either side's position.

One of the key differences between the Muslim populations in Britain and France was the organizing of political representation on both the local and national level by the communities, prior to 1989. In Britain, the Council of Mosques in Bradford had already founded a name for itself as a body that could swing a pivotal voting minority and had been wooed by Labour (Husband 1994:88). In 1987's general election, there were already 27 ethnic minority candidates, four of whom were elected (Husband 1994:87). Two years later, areas like Leicester, Bradford and East London had noted sizable ethnic, and in particular, Muslim voting populations who were increasingly and variably mobilizing to increase their impact upon party and local politics in Britain. Husband notes that given the 'Asian' demographic location, in a few specific, highly urbanized areas, Asians as a whole group (Hindu, Sikh and Muslim) had access to "potential political leverage" on a local or ward council level. On the other hand, "because of the absence of proportional representation in the British electoral system", the national impact of the Asian or more specifically, Islamic vote, was minimized (Husband 1994:86).

After the Rushdie Affair, the Muslim Council of Britain, "an umbrella organization dedicated to the common good" was set up in November of 1989 as a representative body

for more than 250 Muslim organizations from all over Britain. The MCB's website clearly states as its *raison d'être*:

The need to coordinate efforts on wider issues of common concern became apparent in the course of the Rushdie affair. This created a climate of trust and cooperation between many diverse groups... and in April 1994, a meeting of Muslim organizations ...adopted a working paper 'Towards an Islamic consensus on National Affairs'<sup>6</sup>.

In contrast, French Muslims have only recently, as of December 2002, managed to form a common organization, the French Council for the Muslim Faith (the CFCM)<sup>7</sup>. The CFCM unlike the MCB is an association started under the auspices of the French government. The MCB while acting as a negotiator between the state and British Muslims does not answer to the state and is not dependent on the state for continuation. The CFCM is the first body, however, to represent France's five million Muslims—Europe's largest community. Oliver Roy writes on Islam in France that “far from being a rising force, Islam in France has failed to provide itself with truly representative institutions” because while there exists a sizable French Muslim population, they haven't as yet formed a united Muslim community (Roy 1994:54). Divisions between Muslim elites (to be differentiated from the Muslims in the *banlieus*) in France based on ethnic allegiance is still common, with the control of mosques often fought over by Imams from Egypt or Algeria. In Britain, while there haven't been any studies to show particular links between Pakistanis and Bangladeshis (in part because these groups are geographically located in different areas of Britain, Pakistanis in the North and Bangladeshis in and around London), the rise of the British Muslim identity is symbolic of a budding unity amongst the young at least. In looking at French Islam in its current form, it will be interesting to see if the second “*affaire du foulard*” of 2003, won't in fact work as the Rushdie Affair did to Britain, and create a unified French Muslim voice.

One of the main consequences of 1989 was that on a local level with the two headscarf incidents, French Muslims realized that as united body or group, they could make changes to their daily lives and incorporate their beliefs into the legal framework of the

non-Muslim nations they inhabited. Another consequence of 1989 and the Rushdie Affair was the initial consciousness of the power of the *umma* or worldwide Muslim community. Paul Lubeck, writing on global networks, talks about the nature of “multiple situated” identities converging around the nodes of various networks, one of which is the concept of the *umma* (2002:75). Lubeck, using Manuel Castells theory on network societies, associates the globalization process with an increase in the significance of “space flows” versus the “space of place” (2002:76). ‘Space flows’ form a network transcending geographic borders and instead situate themselves around the metaphorical idea of community and identity, rather than as found in ‘space of places’, that are manifested through the nation state and citizenship. Lubeck writes that:

Since one of the longest-standing Muslim self-definitions is membership in a global identity, it is readily apparent that Muslim cultural capital encourages the formation of networks straddling national borders and cultures. (2002:76)

The global *umma* then as a transnational network has already been historically institutionalized across the Muslim and non-Muslim world through trade routes, missionary activity, brotherhood ties and pilgrimage obligations. In fact, if the *umma* is looked at in purely network terms, the nexus of the network is the *hajj* pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. *Hajj* routes, much like earlier traditions of pilgrimages in the Christian world (for instance, the road to Santiago de Compostela), are embedded into the very geography of Islam and the Muslim diaspora. The *hajj* pilgrimage is then an important integrator for Muslims (Lubeck 2002: 77) as are to a lesser degree, ancient Islamic centers of learning in modern day Syria and Egypt. As national identities have become fragmented, through globalization and supra-national structures like the EU, the unified, timeless *umma* becomes a safe space in which to build identity, especially for groups already marginalized from mainstream national discourse. And despite secular, modernizing trends in the first half of the twentieth century in post-colonial Muslim nations, Lubeck notes that numerous Islamic scholars and theorists continue to advocate Islamic political integration through the global *umma*. With the advent of effective global communications systems, the possibility of a truly globalized and united Islam seems finally attainable (Lubeck 2002: 78). Cultural theorist Bryan Turner writes that:

[the] paradox of the modern systems of communication is that it makes Islam simultaneously exposed to Western consumerism and provides the mechanism for the distribution of a global Islamic message. (Lubeck 2002: 79)

Turner seems to suggest that a binary opposition naturally comes into existence between a globalized Islam and the West – yet what form this globalized and politicized Islam is to take is still under discussion and debate.

Amélie Blom in her study on the Rushdie Affair and trans-national protests, uses Roland Robertson's definition of globalization, "both the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole" (Blom 1999:192) to investigate the construction of the *umma*<sup>8</sup>, the transnational community to which all Muslims wherever they live, are said to belong. The transnational language of the protests, Blom writes, was primarily used as an advocacy tool by minority and migrant Muslims (Blom 1999:193). The *umma*'s protest of a worldwide offense to Muslims lent legitimacy to their migrant Muslims' national and local protests. The actions of these minority Muslim communities were also a signal of the insufficient national membership they felt they enjoyed in their respective non-Muslim nations. Interestingly, if the time line of the protests is followed, we see that most of the protests (except in South Africa) took place prior to Khomeini's *fatwa*, but gained serious consideration after its proclamation. The *fatwa* itself, issued by a Shia, should only have pertained to Shiates, and not all Muslims. Interestingly, Khomeini called for all Muslims to follow his decree – a direct attempt to rework Islam to Iran's conception (and Shia outlook) of Islam. The workings of a network of Muslim communities can be observed in the events leading up to the Bradford book burning and the London protest.

Before the book appeared in India, a ban was already in place in the country, ordered by a prime minister worried about the Muslim Indian vote in upcoming Indian elections. The Satanic Verses had already been out in Britain for about a year and won the Whitbread Award for 'best novel' in England, when the head of the Islamic Foundation in Madras, India wrote to his friend, the public relations director of the Islamic Foundation in Leicester, UK, telling him about the ban in India and the offending passages. It should be

noted, that these two organizations, one in India and the other in Britain, were Sunni organizations, and looked at Sunni Saudi Arabia (with its brand of extreme Wahhabism) for funding, leadership etc. In Leicester, the offending passages were copied and sent to various Muslim organizations. The public relations director from the Islamic Foundation in Leicester flew to the Saudi headquarters of the Organization of Islamic Conference to canvass the leadership. As a result, telexes were sent to all member countries calling for a ban on the book. In South Africa, where a Muslim minority post-Apartheid, was finally visible, a trip by Rushdie to speak out against apartheid had to be cancelled due to threats from the Muslim community. Nadine Gordimer, one of the organizers at the time said, “we have suffered all sorts of harassment and insulting accusations from the extremists in the Moslem [sic] community.”

The protests and book burning that would take place later in Bradford were formulated on a ‘global idiom’<sup>9</sup>, and showed British Muslims’ membership in the global Muslim diaspora, almost in contrast to their lack of membership in Britain, where many felt Thatcher’s response against banning the book to be anti-Muslim. The language of the protests called for an apology “to the Community of Islam”, urged the “*Umma* to stand up for the honour and dignity of its Faith...” and declared a “war on those who divide the Muslim community” (Appignanesi & Maitland 1990: 41, 47, 64 and Blom 1999:197). In the Rushdie Affair, while Saudi Arabia and Iran jostled for the leadership of the Muslim diaspora (with Iran triumphing), and both calling for a ‘united Muslim response’, Muslim communities themselves, seem to have understood the need to unite, not necessarily picking either Saudi Sunnism or Iranian Shiasm as the way to follow. Blom writes that for Islamic organizations in Britain, afraid of losing Muslim youth and cultural values to the larger idea of Britishness, the protests around the book were understood as a good way to offer a ‘counter-narrative’ to Rushdie and the media’s representation of Islam and to mobilize the young to identify with Islam (1999:202). In fact the older generations’ means of protests (of letter writing to the press, marches through various cities), were considered useless tactics by the young and soon surpassed by youth militant organizations such as the Youth Movement in Bradford who led the infamous book burning. [In contrast, the protests in France were far less serious or extreme.]

To Britain's Muslim community, especially the older generation, the protests around the Rushdie Affair offered them a channel to express the religious aspect of their identity, which had been generally hidden under anti-racist dialogue and policy identifying them as part of the racial group of Asians, or Blacks<sup>10</sup>. The Rushdie Affair, not only gave voice to a brewing identity (British-Muslims), but also heralded the mainstream's realization that a shift in the very identity politics of Britain had occurred. Until the Affair, immigrants from the former colonies had traditionally defined themselves by their area of origin – Pakistan, India etc. What the Rushdie Affair showed was the formation of a new identity, based not on geographic origins, but religious connections. The Anti-Racism movement of local politics (especially prevalent in Labour boroughs in London) had been of mixed-success through the 1980's. Group rights had been won across the board, but only for groups that the state recognized as legitimate. The inability of British courts and media to comprehend an identity based solely on religion (strangely so after dealing with Northern Ireland) had left many immigrants from the Indian sub-continent feeling disenfranchised from the state. The Anti-Racism movement picked up where the state left off and thus ignored religion as a boundary to identity. Tariq Madood writes:

The defining of immigrant groups without reference to religious identity – largely a consequence of the view of religion as a matter of private life, not collective action or public policy – certainly has generated the charge amongst some Muslims in Britain, that secular Multiculturalism seeks to deliberately emasculate Muslim communities. ( Madood & Werbner 1997:8)

In one of the first cases in Britain that tried to prove that Muslims were their own 'racial category', to be protected under anti-racism language and policy, *Tariq v. Young* (1989), the courts judged that Muslims were not an ethnic group and instead they were defined rather by one religion but from many locations<sup>11</sup>. Earlier, the *Mandla* case<sup>12</sup> had decided that Sikhs were an ethnic group, as they originated from one geographical location (the Punjab). Thus, Islam and its followers could not be considered a racial or ethnic group because of the multi-national nature of the *umma*. This contrariness of the courts which



led to the stifling of Muslim voice and combined with a trend among young Muslims to define themselves by their faith, rather than their ancestral nationalities of Pakistani or Bangladeshi, made the situation somewhat explosive. Finally it seemed that the Rushdie affair gave Muslims in Britain, unclassified as a 'minority group' under British law<sup>13</sup>, a common point to rally around after years of being denied an identity.

The Rushdie protests in Britain (and to a lesser degree in France) were also a means by which internal struggle could be overcome in the diverse Muslim community of both nations. Blom writes that the Rushdie Affair prompted Muslim communities to finally deal with:

The question of 'who has the monopoly on the meaning on what is Islam?' and to 'who will represent the community to the majority society?' (Blom 1999: 204)

For the young Muslims, struggling to navigate between a religious identity inherited from their parents, (who had for the most part grown up in Muslim nations), and a world where they were a minority, with an unrecognized agenda, the idea of a homogenous Islam and a world-wide one at that, was not only reassuring but also promised a voice at last.

#### ISLAMOPHOBIA, POST-9/11 EFFECTS ON MUSLIMS WORLDWIDE, & EURO-ISLAM:

In 1997, The Runnymede Trust, an independent think-tank in Britain, produced a report entitled, Islamophobia: a challenge for us all, which detailed the growing hostility aimed at Muslims in Britain. Almost ten years after the *Tariq v. Young* case, Muslims in Britain still felt a lack of a separate voice from the group Asian voice; they felt the claims they had as a community remained divergent from other Asians. Giles Kepel in Allah in the West notes that the Muslim campaign in Britain (originating in Bradford in the 1980s), enacting religious taboos, such as the observance of halal meat in schools, and the organization of communal networks around the first mosques, "set in train a process of

identity differentiation affecting all aspects of daily life.” Kepel notes that the fight in Bradford for halal meat in schools united the different currents of Islam and allowed their leaders to move away from the previous fragmentation and divisiveness (characterized in the mosque building process), and created a unified voice to demand a separate public identity. In this context, the Runnymede Trust report institutionalizes the newly coined phrase ‘Islamophobia’ as “unfair discrimination against Muslim individuals and communities” (Runnymede Trust Report 1997) and creates a discrete and distinctive space within the political and legal world for Muslims. The report states that:

The word 'Islamophobia' has been coined because there is a new reality, which needs naming: anti-Muslim prejudice has grown so considerably and so rapidly in recent years that a new item in the vocabulary is needed so that it can be identified and acted against. (Runnymede Trust Report 1997)

In writing against discrimination against Muslims, the report draws similarities to the coining of the phrase, ‘anti-Semitism’. In the same vein, the new term acts as a signifier of distinct discrimination against Muslims in particular but also draws a tight border around the group, asking its members to further identify with it rather than the more amorphous term, “Asian”. If under the *Mandla* ruling, Muslims in Britain do not constitute an ethnic group because of their transnational make-up, then as shown by the report, they are unified as a group under a common threat and public hostility. The report gives as an example of the manifestation of hostility as:

Widespread and routine negative stereotypes in the media, including the broadsheets, and in the conversations and 'common sense' of non-Muslims - people talk and write about all Muslims in ways they wouldn't dream of talking and writing about all Jewish people, for example, or about all black people. (Runnymede Trust Report 1997)

The above claim embeds within Muslim communities a sense of persecution, which is not unfounded. A growing division amongst Asians themselves in Britain fuels Islamophobia. Distrust from mainstream and other immigrant groups was best manifested in anger against construction of mosques, and the desire not to be confused as ‘Muslim’. An example that captures this great dislike and mistrust of Islam, comes from the Sikhs

post Sept-11<sup>th</sup>, who were often incorrectly identified as being Muslim and attacked, marching as a group and holding up signs asking to be identified as Sikhs not Muslim, and yet making no mention of the inherent injustice of attacking any one of any group for 9/11! [Interestingly, as discussed in Ch. 3, Sikh immigrants to France feel it particularly unfair that they may have to remove their turbans because of the *hijab*.] As mentioned earlier, the language of Muslim youth websites often reflects this feeling of being aggrieved and discriminated against on a par with victims of anti-Semitism or anti-black racism in America. In a broader interpretation of acts of discrimination, state acts such as going to war with Iraq and the handling of the Bosnian crisis are seen as further implications of the West's hostility to and disregard for Islam.

Part of the issue at hand is that the claims made by Muslim communities in the diaspora are made around religious matters. The language used for their justification is often seen to be outdated or backward by many in the West who see their own development as linear, progressive and historically just. This divide in 'language' or communication is most apparent in discussions around the *hijab*. The fear of Islam as a totalizing force and a threat to modernization is prevalent in most of the discourse on the subject. This creation of a binary opposition, Islam vs. the West/modernity, is further accentuated in Muslim states such as Egypt and Turkey, where Islam is seen as holding the nation back from progress.

Post September 11, 2001, and the fall of the World Trade Center towers, debates over Islam as a threat to modernity and the West have been re-introduced into the public sphere with language reminiscent of the racist tones of orientalism and with an additional new hysteria. In an increasingly globalized world, where the populations of most large Western cities are ethnically and religiously mixed, the 'fundamentalism' of Islam is no longer identified with barbaric hordes outside the gates of civilization but instead viewed as an enemy within or a potential time bomb about to explode. The first Gulf War was a turning point in the post-Cold War reality, where the demonization of Islam and by implication, Muslims, was a wake-up call for the Muslim diaspora. In the void left by Communism, political Islam appeared to become the new adversary.

Homa Hoodfar writes that in response to being equated with terrorists and a “backward” religion, Muslim communities in Europe and North America have had to develop strategies of coping with a vociferous antagonism (Hoodfar et al. 2003:xii). Hoodfar notes that since the first Gulf War in 1991, Muslims seemed to use the following five tactics in navigating mainstream culture and its representations of Islam and Muslims (2003:xii):

1. Dissociation from other Muslims and the Muslim community;
2. Escape into the Muslim community and dissociation from mainstream Western culture;
3. Attempt to understand the anger towards Islam and explain Islam; and
4. Self-assertion of an Islamic identity.

The self-assertion of an Islamic identity, Hoodfar writes, is primarily a tool of the young, often born in the West, secure of their citizenship rights, and unlike their parents, having no other ‘homeland’ or myths of return to turn to. To many young Muslims, September 11<sup>th</sup> and its after affects – attacks on Mosques and Muslims was a final reminder of their status as outsiders.

Muslims born and raised in the West and imbued with the doctrine of individual rights, liberty and freedom of religion were shocked then [during the first Gulf War] as they are today to realize that not only are they identified as ‘other’ but also as an enemy within. (Hoodfar et al. 2003:xi)

Frustrated by what was viewed as unjust exclusion and negative stereotyping and in an effort to claim a space within the dominant society, many young Muslims in the diaspora have turned to declaring their presence silently, but with loud repercussions, by their clothing. In this context, clothing such as the *hijab*, the Palestinian head scarf, the male *shalwar-kameez* and the growing of beards have become potent symbols of communication. “Despite living in a post-modern society where differences are supposedly tolerated and respected, if not understood and celebrated” (Hoodfar et al. 2003:xii), this self-assertion through clothing has made mainstream Western culture

somewhat uncomfortable and often posited far more significance on the outfit than was intended by the wearer.

The language of the discourse on immigration politics has also been affected by 9/11 and the restoration of cultural integrationist ideas is evident even in countries once committed to multiculturalism like Britain (Casciani 2003) and the Netherlands (Peter 2002). Angus Roxburgh of the BBC writes that "opinion surveys all over Europe have detected growing public distrust of Islam in the two years since the 11 September attacks" and:

There is now a lively debate across Europe over whether assimilation or integration or multiculturalism is the most desirable way forward...there appears to be a growing trend towards assimilation. It's a process that's already caused a storm among Islamic communities in Europe and abroad, and may be fraught with as many problems as the "opposite" policy of multiculturalism. (Roxburgh 2004)

Christian Joppke in a liberal critique of multiculturalism questions why the, "*description* of multi-cultural or –ethnic reality [should] result in the *prescription* that the state has to duplicate or even to further this reality in its laws and policies?" (2004:4) Britain, the Netherlands and Australia have all for various reasons reduced their multicultural policies. Within Britain the idea of making 'new citizens' swear an allegiance of loyalty to the state is being presently debated. Multiculturalism in Europe in particular seems to have marginalized and ghettoized ethnic and religious groups (Joppke 2004:18). While best intentioned, multiculturalist policies have created parallel institutions for groups to exist in, resulting in a further detachment to mainstream national society than already existing through separate cultural and language practices. By focusing on cultural rights, other issues such as high unemployment, socio-economic disparities and troubles navigating the education system seem to have been avoided by the state. There seems to be, on the part of critics of integrationist policies, an implied set of concepts that suggest that in place of multiculturalism there can only exist a monoculture. Within such a framework, the individual or the group (whether immigrant or not) is robbed of the ability to hold pluralist identities. Integration should not be equated with assimilation. I would argue that integrationist policies still allow a space for separate 'cultural' practices,

but place an emphasis on a primary identity that is common to the whole nation rather than a community. It may be argued that by choosing a common identity, a hierarchy of belief systems is created, a possible inevitable occurrence inherent to any identity. Multiculturalism itself reproduces this hierarchy, only this time with a culture 'from home' in place of the nation's identity. A national identity does not necessarily further enhance the nationalist cause or detract from a global human rights agenda. As noted in the beginning, nation states' identities and narratives are continually evolving and yet the nation state is here to stay. The aim of the state and its members should be to collectively construct an identity that involves the whole membership, which does not imply that all nations will one day look the same through a process of equalization of cultures. In such a situation, contention points such as France as a Catholic, homogenous nation and French Islam as a religion at odds with universalism would both be resolved by finding common ground, a common ground possibly particular to the French nation alone.

Within such sites of dialogue between Muslim diasporic communities and their place in the non-Muslim world, in particular, Western Europe, Muslims as individuals and communities are often categorized into three 'types' citizens:

1. The fully 'assimilated' or 'Westernized' Muslim;
2. The marginalized or alienated Muslim, often viewed by non-Muslims and Muslims as traditionalists; and
3. Muslims who want to combine their Islamic beliefs with European modes of behaviour.

It is this third group who pose a challenge to assimilationists and Muslim traditionalists alike and who propagate the idea of a Euro-Islam. Interestingly, the *hijab*, while now controversial and banned in public schools in France and soon possibly in other countries (BBC 2004), is viewed as a middle way between the 'Westernized' Muslim and traditionalist sensibilities.

Euro-Islam or a European brand of Islam is closely linked with the debates on assimilation or integration. Within a multicultural integrationist framework, whereby theoretically a minority group could keep its core identity whilst living with the legal

framework of the dominant group, Euro-Islam appears to be a viable option. This strand of Islam, one that aims to reconcile the basic tenets of the faith, such as social justice and submission to the will of God, with the realities of contemporary European life, is not new, however, the events of Sept. 11 and afterward have lent it new urgency. Tariq Ramadan, the Swiss grandson of the founder of the Egyptian Islamic Brotherhood and a proponent of Euro-Islam and one of the leading Islamic thinkers for many second-generation Muslim immigrants, believes that Europe's new citizens need to, "separate Islamic principles from their cultures of origin and anchor them in the cultural reality of Western Europe" (Le Quesne 2003). Ramadan also advises young Muslim Europeans to, "get away from the idea that scholars in the Islamic world can do [the] thinking for us. We need to start thinking for ourselves" (Le Quesne 2003).

Ramadan is accused by some French intellectuals as being an anti-Semite and by some Muslims as a traitor; similarly Euro-Islam has also come under attack from Muslim traditionalists and secularists alike. To those wary of a faith-based citizenship, Ramadan's following of young European Muslims is troubling and Euro-Islam's aim to create a Muslim citizen identity "is contradictory" (Sciolino 2003). To Muslim traditionalists, a European model of Islam would inevitably be a watered down version of the faith, with anything incongruous to European life, removed and discarded and following man-made laws instead of the *Quran*. Ramadan, partly due to having done most of his past work in French, is extremely popular with the young French Muslims of the *banlieus* and less well known in the English speaking part of the Muslim diaspora (that is, Britain, Canada, the US and Australia). Interestingly Ramadan seems intent on expanding his audience (and popularity) and has recently published his book, Western Muslims and the Future of Islam, in English, thus targeting the larger Muslim youth audience of the Anglophone world. [There is also talk of Ramadan, leaving French-speaking Geneva, and neutral Switzerland, to move to a university in the US.]

The phrase 'Euro-Islam' is viewed as a novelty both in English and in other European languages and is more a political than an ideological matter, a matter of both culture and civilization and of coexistence in Europe, rather than religion or religious beliefs alone.

Dr. Enes Karić, the Minister of Education for the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina and a Muslim scholar, writes that Euro-Islam is “a kind of ‘civil Islam’, [or] a ‘secular Islam’” and that the protagonists of Euro-Islam, both Muslims and non-Muslims, aim “to create a manifestation of Islam that will be ‘socially desirable’ in Europe; an unobtrusive Islam” (Karić nd). To Karić and a number of other Islamic scholars, Euro-Islam is not just a matter of geography but an attempt to confine the growth of numbers of Muslims, limit the increasing strength of the *umma* and national characteristics of Islam, and distort the true universal meaning of Islam. Karić asks why a ‘Euro-Hinduism’ isn’t proposed as well, and argues that:

The very name of Islam indicates that it is not linked, as a faith, to any particular continent nor determined by any particular continent, nor is it limited to the people through whom it made its appearance in history, nor even to the person of its founder, nor is its name determined by any other historical or geographical element. ( Karić nd)

Ramadan as a modern Muslim scholar (with an authority inspired by his traditional familial roots) proposes in Western Muslims and the Future of Islam, that his goal is to create an independent Western Islam, not anchored in the traditions of Islamic countries but in the cultural reality of the West (Ramadan 2004:63). Ramadan writes that a grass roots movement is already in place, whereby young Muslims in the West are constructing a new ‘Muslim personality’, which:

Remains faithful to the principles of Islam, but dressed in European and American cultures and definitively rooted in Western societies. (Ramadan 2004:4)

Ramadan argues that for any change to occur in Islam, it must start from within the diasporic community or *umma* and that Western Muslims must think for themselves, without relying on the “insidious paternalism” (Ramadan 2004:6) found in Western governments. He acknowledges that he consciously decided not to deal with problems of political security, that is fundamental, militarized Islam. A review of the book is not feasible here, but by avoiding discussing militarized Islam directly and the threat it poses to young, disenfranchised Muslims, Ramadan appears to be skirting some particularly contentious issues, such as present day terrorist attacks linked to Islam and the anger of



the Muslim world toward America and the West. Ramadan does mention topics around the issue of a militarized Islam, but out of possibly a fear of alienating his readers, does not unequivocally condemn it.

In as much as a division of language exists between Western states and Muslim communities, Ramadan's work arguably further encourages this divide by appealing to a solution found within the community alone and in using the language of Islam to present his case. [Ramadan in a recent debate with French Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy, called for a moratorium on the practice of stoning in the Muslim world arguing that calling for an outright ban would not work, as the language of Islam must be used to change Islam]. Yet, while Ramadan's insistence on using the language of religion to make changes to the religion itself is disquieting, it is not necessarily without effect. In interviews conducted with young Muslim woman in the West, scholars find that the many of the young women use the scriptures of the *Quran* to navigate their pluralist identities. In this respect, Ramadan is trying to reach out to young Muslims in the West in a language of their own and not a language of 'old, white, dead men'. One of the problems with interpretation of religious scriptures though, is the power it gives to the interpreters and the undependable nature of interpretation itself, which can alter from one agenda to the next, finding support for numerous, possibly dangerous arguments.

In writing on the *umma*, Ramadan quotes the Prophet as saying, "The *umma* is one body; if one of its members is sick, the whole body experiences the fever and the affliction" (Ramadan 2004:90)

Ramadan asks his reader to question whether this means that this brotherhood knows no limits and uses the *Quran* and the *Sunna haddith* to explain that:

1. Muslims are not responsible for other Muslims who choose to live elsewhere (in a non-Muslim state) and are bound by tacit or explicit agreement to another state;
2. As part of the duty of Muslim communities, they must intervene when fellow Muslims are persecuted for their religious beliefs; however

3. If a treaty or alliance exists between states, that would hinder this intervention, Muslim communities must respect the existing agreement. (Ramadan 2004:91-2)

Furthering his argument of civil allegiance, Ramadan states, that “Muslims are bound by the terms of their contract”, that is a contract between the individual and the state in which he/she lives (Ramadan 2004:94). The ‘contract’ thus manifests itself through visas, citizenship papers and international agreements and “are legally binding on Muslim residents, as they are on citizens under the authority of the national constitution...except in a specific case where they would be forced to act against their conscience” (Ramadan 2004:94).

It is then using this concept of a ‘conscience clause’ that we understand where certain points of contention arise for Muslims in the West. In as much Islam is evolving and attempting to fit into a new paradigm where the public and private are so heavily differentiated, the nation state must also evolve to incorporate its citizenry. Neither side need transform completely, and for either side to have such a fear is reductionist.

In his conclusion, Ramadan writes that Muslims in the West bear a great responsibility to build their own future. “There is no doubt that some will continue to identify themselves over and against the West as ‘the other’, and to complain that in these places no one loves Islam or Muslims”, contends Ramadan (2004:224). But, he writes, there is no hope in maintaining an unhealthy victim mentality or that change can come from scholars in the East. Instead, Ramadan sees “clear signs today, particularly among women, that things are changing and that...Muslim are aware of the challenges they have to confront.”

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<sup>1</sup> The *hajj*, also spelt *haj* or *hadj*, is defined as a pilgrimage to Mecca during the season of *Dhu'l Hijja*, and made as an objective of the religious life of a Muslim.

<sup>2</sup> If we look at Britain, the Thatcher years and the 1990s have produced an astounding amount of wealth for British Asians. Figures put Asian wealth in Britain at within this category of ‘wealthy’ Asians, a large percentage are Hindu (of Indian origin) or from British East-Africa. Recent studies done in Britain, indicate that of all immigrant groups, Muslims (Bangladeshis and Pakistanis) are lagging far behind in economic power than Caribbean or Indian migrants.

See statistics on British Bangladeshi and Pakistani households economic disparity in comparison to other Britons (white, Caribbean and Asian) at:

(1) Muslim Council of Britain <http://www.mcb.org.uk/mcbdirect/statistics.php#4>

(2) Guardian Online [http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk\\_news/story/0,3604,738670,00.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,3604,738670,00.html)

(3) Public Studies Institute: [http://www.psi.org.uk/news/pressrelease.asp?news\\_item\\_id=71](http://www.psi.org.uk/news/pressrelease.asp?news_item_id=71)

<sup>3</sup> In France, the infamous *banlieus* or housing projects; In Britain, northern industrial housing complexes and tenements in the East End of London.

While figures are hard to come by in France, UK housing puts 43% of Bangladeshis live in council or housing association properties - 50% higher than the national average.

<sup>4</sup> The first Hindu Temple in Britain was constructed in the 1950's and the first Sikh temple was built in 1911 in London. The largest Sikh gurdwara outside India was built in Southall in March 2003 costing 17million UK Pounds, of which all the money was raised locally.

Per statistics on the British Embassy to Austria website and Statistics UK 2004 Yearbook.

Available at: (1) website:[http://www.britishembassy.at/downloads/insightuk\\_religion0401.pdf](http://www.britishembassy.at/downloads/insightuk_religion0401.pdf); and

(2) [http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme\\_compendia/UK2004/UK2004.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_compendia/UK2004/UK2004.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> The term "Rushdie Affair" is used here to refer to all the events surrounding the publication, banning protests, diplomatic tensions and eventually the analysis of The Satanic Verses and its affects on Muslim communities worldwide and nation states with Muslim citizens.

<sup>6</sup> History, Structure and Working of the Muslim Council of Britain.

Available at: [http://www.mcb.org.uk/MCB\\_acheivments.pdf](http://www.mcb.org.uk/MCB_acheivments.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Also known as the French Council of the Muslim Religion.

France Creates Muslim Council (2002, December 2002). BBC News Online.

Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2593623.stm>

<sup>8</sup> Blom uses the alternative spelling: *ummah*

<sup>9</sup> Two points need to be made here:

1. The counter protests, pro-Rushdie and The Satanic Verses also used a 'global idiom' and references universal ideals of freedom of speech; and
2. The recent protests against the French ban of the *hijab* mimic the Rushdie Affair in their organization and language (a worldwide protest, offense against the worldwide Muslim community.)

<sup>10</sup> The term 'black' came into being in the early 1980s as a way to replace the old umbrella term of 'New Commonwealth immigrants', but was seen by many British Asians as problematic. On one level, the term black was just under umbrella under which to place a group, which no longer considered itself 'one'. In the case of British Asians, the need to differentiate from one another on the level of Asian alone, based on religion and education, had gained importance. Also, for a lot of East African Asians, the very fact of not being 'black' has led to their expulsion from Kenya and Uganda. And for the West Indians, often perceived of integrating into British culture more easily than peoples from the Indian sub-continent, being lumped with an 'alien' culture was not that desirable. The black power politics of the US had also given to the term 'black' more meaning than just an umbrella for all non-white Britons to huddle under. Lastly, ethnic minority surveys showed that coloured British were in fact (at least on education and employment criteria) dividable into three groups, who performed very differently.

<sup>11</sup> European Union Anti-Discrimination Policy Paper, From Equal Opportunities Between Women And Men To Combating Racism. (nd) Directorate-General for Research Working document. Part of the Public Liberties Series. Call Number: LIBE 102 EN. Accessed at EuroParl

Available at: [http://www.europarl.eu.int/workingpapers/libe/102/text2\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.eu.int/workingpapers/libe/102/text2_en.htm)

<sup>12</sup> Mandla and another v Dowell Lee and others. [1983]. 2 AC 548

Available at: [http://www.hrcr.org/safrica/equality/Mandla\\_DowellLee.htm](http://www.hrcr.org/safrica/equality/Mandla_DowellLee.htm)

<sup>13</sup> Tariq v. Young (1979) judged that Muslims were not an ethnic group (and rather defined by one religion but from many locations)

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## **HIJAB**

### THE *HIJAB* IN ISLAM AND POST-COLONIAL HISTORY:

The scarf, an article of clothing, has sadly become a litmus test for a Muslim woman's faith and devotion to God.<sup>1</sup>

Veiling is the most salient emblem and women the newest actors of contemporary Islamism. (Göle 1996:1)

On one end of the debate of Islamic dress codes, the *burqa* or the *niqab*, which covers the wearer's complete face and hands, is considered mandatory (by a minority of *Quran* and *hadith* scholars). At the other end, some scholars argue that the *Quran* and *hadiths* recommend rather than demand that women cover up everything except their face and hands, and that such recommendations can be seen as merely suggestions for modest behaviour. Others write still that some covering in the form of the *hijab* is indeed mandatory.

The only references to clothing in the *Quran* are:

Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that will make for greater purity for them: and God is well acquainted with all that they do. And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their *zeenah* (charms, or beauty and ornaments) except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their *khimar* (veils) over their bosoms and not display their *zeenah* except to their husbands, their fathers ...and that they should not strike their feet so as to draw attention to their hidden *zeenah* (ornaments). (*Quran* 24:31-32)<sup>2</sup>

O Prophet! Tell your wives and daughters and the believing women that they should draw over themselves their *jilbab* (outer garments) (when in public); this will be more conducive to their being recognized (as decent women) and not harassed. But God is indeed oft forgiving, most merciful. (*Quran* 33:59)<sup>3</sup>

Interestingly, the *Quran* is really not that explicit about the exact definition of modest dress. By reading the *Quranic* verses above, women are advised to cover their breasts and put on their outer garments in a way that enables them to avoid harassment. In addition, women are advised not to draw attention to their "beauty" (*zeenah*)<sup>4</sup>. This term has been translated as both beauty and ornaments. The Muslim Women's League's USA website states that the literal meaning for *hijab* is "curtain" and that in the *Quran* the term *hijab* is not used as a reference to women's clothing. Instead the word *hijab* was used to mean the screen behind which the Muslims were told to address the Prophet's wives. When the Prophet's wives went out, the screen consisted of a veil over their face. It does not appear that the other Muslim women adopted the covering of the face at the time<sup>5</sup>.

In the *hadith*, the most commonly quoted references are<sup>6</sup>:

Aisha said, "Asma, daughter of Abu Bakr (that is, Aisha's sister), entered upon the Apostle of God (*pbuh*) wearing thin clothes. The Apostle of God turned his attention from her and said, "O Asma, when a woman reaches the age of menstruation, it does not suit her except that she displays parts of her body except this and this," and he pointed to her face and hands. (Sunan Abi Dawud)

Except for the *hadith* collection by Sunan Abi Dawud, no other *hadith* talk of coverings or female modesty. The Muslim Women's League writes, that "when reviewing both *Quran* and *hadith* text, neither suggest a strict dress code or define modesty nor suggest any punishment for violations. Because the *Quranic* reading does seem to suggest that some covering is obligatory and by Dawud's writings seem to imply that displaying one's face and hands is acceptable, most Shia and Sunni scholars have understood this mean that the *hijab* is obligatory<sup>7</sup>.

Regional versions of Islam have shown that there is a cultural evidence of the historically diverse forms of Muslim women's dress, from the sari and *shalwar kameez* (with *dupatta*) found on the Indian sub-continent, to the *tobah* or Sudanese dress, to the *jalabib* in Egypt and the *burqah* in Afghanistan (Hoodfar et al. 2003:xiii). Homa Hoodfar writes that these varieties in dress across the Muslim world, demonstrate that 'Muslimness' has had very little to do with a particular dress code<sup>8</sup>. In the history of the Muslim diaspora, the *hijab* has been adopted as a token of pan-Islamic "legitimacy" only in the last twenty

years and has been emphasized as obligatory and the divine way to dress by conservative clerics (Hoodfar et al. 2003:xiii). More recently, some Islamist political groups have adopted the strategy of presenting one “Islam” and one transnational culture, with a particular rendering of Islamic attire as the ‘authentic’ version (Hoodfar et al. 2003:40). In her landmark book, *The Forbidden Modern*, which deals with the modern state of Turkey and its history with the veil (or as it recently has been referred to by the local press, the *turban*), Nilüfer Göle writes:

If the traditional way of covering oneself changes from one Muslim country to another in terms of “folk” dresses, the contemporary Islamist outfit is similar in all Muslim countries: it is through the symbolism of women’s veiling that a community of identity and the Muslim community (*umma*) is reconstructed and reinvented at the transnational level. (1996:5)

Public debate within the Muslim diaspora over what is actually written in the *Quran* and the *hadiths* is considered un-Islamic with relation to questioning dress codes and in particular the *hijab*. This inability to discuss the issue has made many moderate Muslims, especially Muslim feminists, question why the discourse should suddenly be shrouded in blasphemy (Hoodfar et al. 2003:xiv). But, as ethnic division within Muslim communities, especially those in non-Muslim nations, increases with the entrance of new Muslim immigrants and concurrently, as “Muslims” as a group are targeted, the necessity for a common hybrid Muslim identity that transcends ethnic and cultural boundaries and asserts a common Muslim identity becomes crucial (Hoodfar et al. 2003:14). One of the symbols then of this new hybrid Islam is the *hijab*.

Within the Islamic world, women are divided between following any dress code, wearing the *hijab* or wearing *niqab*. In some instances, the dress of the Muslim woman ends up meaning more to others than it does to the woman herself with often far-reaching political and social implications. In most of the Muslim world after colonialism, the drive towards modernization led to “de-veiling” movements. Such de-veiling movements, supported by men and women alike, signaled an alienation of traditional religious leaders from the new ex-colonial political structures, and through legislation confirmed a “European” cultural model as one to emulate (Hoodfar et al. 2003:10). But the drive toward modernization of the public political body in such Islamic states as Turkey, Egypt and Iran (under the



Shah), and the inclusion of women in the national debates often ended at de-veiling. The continued absence of democratic participation led to a populace that connected 'Europeanisation' (and ultimately modernization and de-veiling) with the corruption and censorship of the new governments (Hoodfar et al. 2003:13). Into this political void Islamist universal ideology appeared, like the Egyptian Islamic Brotherhood (formed in 1928, the same year a group of Egyptian women defiantly stripped off their veils amid public debate), that silently proclaimed political opposition to these secular governments. In this context, clothing, especially the dress code of women, became a political tool to threaten the secular establishment. Leila Ahmed, another Muslim feminist, writes that the twentieth-century adoption of 'Islamic dress' has had a deleterious effect on the women's rights movement by unconsciously affirming traditional patriarchy and buying into the colonialist discourse (1992:166-7). Ahmed argues that because of historical affiliations, Islamists say if to be 'Western' is to be unveiled, then to be veiled is to be Muslim.

Göle points out that, in fact, the Iranian Revolution reinforced the relationship between veiled women and radical Islam. The Revolution and subsequent drives at Islamization have used the veiled bodies of women as a political symbol to underline the division between Islam and the West (Göle 1996:83). Hoodfar writes that:

The black-veiled women [in *niqab*] who participated en masse in the 1978 Iranian revolution became the most powerful symbol of the revolution and its rejection of the previous government's gender ideology and Westernization. (2003:10)

The collective hysteria witnessed by the Western media covering the Revolution was thus linked to feminine irrationality and the "female body with its 'convulsions' and 'hysteria' was equated with the chaotic order of the revolution" (Göle 1996:83). Göle argues that if, in the West, the body is posited as a space of self-control, the private, the secular, the Muslim 'body', is in turn wild, overly public and bound in religiosity. Thus by using the body as a site for symbolic politics, this dichotomy of East and West, is further translated to a civilization issue.

In looking at the *hijab* and attempting to overcome the binary set of values shared by both Islamists and the West, one cannot limit oneself to writings on the headscarf in Europe

alone. The *hijab*, transported, adopted, reproduced, and reinterpreted throughout the Muslim *umma*, calls for a diasporic reading and to this extent, relevant studies and scholarly work engaging the subject in Egypt, Turkey, and even as far a field as Canada prove useful. In looking at the politics of veiling, and the interplay between state and community, a more global-focused approach is necessary.

#### RELIGION AS IDENTITY:

*Pour les jeunes, la religion est une bouffée d'oxygène qui permet aux jeunes d'affronter l'inactivité et 'le mépris des gens de Lille-Centre, qui les rejettent'.*  
(Negri & Vincent 1995)

Since 9-11, the worry of the French establishment that Islamic extremists are luring its Muslim youth (The Economist 2003 and Sciolino 2003) has heightened. With soaring crime and high unemployment in its housing projects that are homes to mainly Muslims of North African, Arab and West African descent, Muslims and their problems of integration are hardly new to France. A continued frustration at the establishment, its lack of initiatives to help these new citizens, and a deep sense of exclusion from mainstream France, has driven Muslim youngster to turn to religion for a sense of identity and purpose. The case of Zacarias Moussaoui, also from the *banlieue*, and his links to 9/11 and al-Qaida have the French worried about other homegrown threats (Hundley nd). A common complaint expressed in the epigraph above, namely, that, the young turn to religion as a breath of fresh air or a blast of oxygen in their otherwise disenfranchised lives. The real problem is arguably not Islam or fundamentalist Islam but instead jobs and a sense of 'belonging' to France in more ways than just by identity papers (Hundley nd).

Coupled with growing tensions over fundamentalist Islamists, who the establishment feels is seducing the disaffected young French Muslims, is the concern that girls are choosing to wear the *hijab* young and continuing to do so into adulthood. The trend is most marked among educated teenagers, whose exasperated mothers either never wore

the *hijab* or who actively fought to be liberated from it (Astier 2003). To many, this return to the *hijab* by a generation which was weaned on secularist ideals from the French Revolution, is just another sign that France is losing its Muslim youth to extremism. Two separate issues are tangled in this affair. The first is one of identity: what it means to be French. The second is security, and specifically the fear of where a radicalized French Islam might lead (The Economist 2003). These are “affected young girls with their brand-new veils” says Chahdortt Djavann, author of a recent new book, Down with the Veils! (The Economist 2003). For some young Muslim girls, living in rough suburbs (*banlieue*) where rape and violence are on the increase, wearing a headscarf or the *hijab* is purported to send a message to would-be harassers of the same faith that the girls are off bounds (Sciolino 2003). No studies have been done which link the wearing of the *hijab* with the incidence of sexual assault or rape, but this ‘myth’ of safety rests on the misconception that only ‘bad’ girls are harassed and continues to exist in a space where not all the girls have donned the *hijab*, and those who have can claim additional piousness. For others, it is a classic second-generation phenomenon, in which religious identity is more marked in the children of immigrants than among their parents who first stepped off the boat (The Economist 2003). Hanif Kureishi chronicles this need by second-generation immigrants, for a solid identity, especially an ever-growing Muslim identity, in his novel, My Son the Fanatic (1997). By wearing the *hijab*, women and girls are declaring not only their religion, but also their commitment to the religion and thus through the act of wearing, creating a community of other *hijabi* women.

The situation in the *banlieue* of Paris and industrial cities of Lille and Levré is reminiscent of Northern England, with segregation and high unemployment being the key problems. Poems written in *verlan*, the French back-slang of the *banlieue*, talk of youth being caught between two worlds – both alien and unwelcoming.

*J'neco ap La Marseillaise...  
 Au déblé, j'suis céfran...  
 Fierté d'être un djez a Paris  
 Tous les soirs, c'est Allah que je prie.<sup>9</sup>*

This image is consistent, as mentioned in the last chapter, with young Muslim voices in Britain as well, who have come to lay claim to the term British Muslim, versus British

Asian (or British Pakistani), as a way of understanding their identity and moving away from an identity based on ethnicity. Ranna Kabbani writes in the Guardian, that the term "British Muslims" was coined in that era of media hysteria during the Rushdie Affair (Kabbani 2002) and was soon adopted by young Muslims in Britain as a way of differentiating their agenda from that of other British Asians. Alison Shaw (2000) in her study on British Pakistani families and their concept of kinship or *biradari* and cousin marriages, shows that for first generation Pakistani immigrants to Britain, marriage of their young to Pakistani families back home, through family ties is an important part of maintaining culture. In this context, a marriage to a non-approved Pakistani, or Asian or even another Muslim is considered taboo. Shaw points out that as second-generation British Pakistanis become college educated, the adoption of a new stance with regard to marriage is increasing. The reformist position is one in which (2000:190):

Proponents attempt to disentangle aspects of what they see as 'outdated tradition' from the 'genuine' spirit of Islam. In this, they may be acutely critical of aspects of their 'culture', while considering themselves committed Muslims.

The theme of the 'genuine' spirit of Islam is a recurring one in the discourse Muslim youth use when talking about wearing *hijab* and other Islamic practices. Chantal Saint-Blancat in her article entitled Islam in Diaspora: Between Reterritorialization and Extraterritoriality, writes that in asserting themselves as Muslims, youth in Europe create their identity by a double distancing act – "from the cultures of origin, and from the expectations and gaze of the Other, in this case, the societies of residence" (Saint-Blancat 2002:141). The possibility of an Islam devoid of cultural practices and instead based on the holy texts alone allows for a pure and universal Islam to be fashioned, one which to many young Muslims living in the West, would not only enhance the unity of the *umma* but lend legitimacy to many Islamic practices. This genuine Islam, writes Saint-Blancat, is driven from the ground-up and 'has the function of reterritorializing the sacred in the social' (Saint-Blancat 2002:143). For the second-generation of Muslims in Europe, one essential difference in the Islam they practice as opposed to the Islam transported from 'back home' by their parents, is that their parents' Islam was developed in Muslim countries, where practitioners were in the majority. For the new citizens of Europe, their

Islam is contextualized within a minority setting. While religion for their parents is closely tied to 'tradition' and 'culture', the children of these immigrants are forced to explain and understand their religion, the traditions imposed by their parents and the links between the two on a daily basis. Shaw writes that, "in recent years, concerns over maintaining an Islamic identity in the context of a secular state have gained importance. These are now perhaps the most pressing contemporary issues for British Pakistanis, especially of the younger generation" (2000:291) In fact, the importance of a Muslim identity has displaced the 'myth of return'. As Saint-Blancat also points out, the 'myth of return' has no hold on the young, their brief excursions to 'home' are often difficult and there is an implicit understanding that 'home' has now been resituated. In this new location, where Muslim youth seem to feel equally disenfranchised, an Islamic community becomes the one steady, immutable space. In a paradigm of 'home as not home', where deterritorialization, is the norm, young Muslims as actors are attempting to reshape their identities in time (the present versus the past of their parents) and in space (secular states) and their Islam between the private and the public.

Within this domain of shifting boundaries and territory, the state itself is undergoing changes, especially in Europe. As more and more state competencies are transferred to a higher body, Pierre Birnbaum writes, "the state, which is no longer the center of the nation, may not be in a position to rule on religion from above," he said. "It may not have the power to integrate" (Schofield 2003). Some may argue that a return to integrationist policies is the state's response to its inevitable loss of control. Rather than ethnicity, as seemed the case forty years ago, religion appears to be the greatest threat to the cohesion of the nation or the 'imagined community', as defined by Benedict Anderson. In France, a stand against the *hijab* could be seen as the French state's attempt to impose a national character on a space that has already devolved (or evolved) past being a concrete, united 'imagined community'. On the other side of the Channel, a direct response to devolution (and the division of British into sub-categories and the re-emergence of identities based on English, Welsh and Scottish) has been to co-opt the fracturing identities and make sense of them. The latest British Census of 2001 (2001 British Census ) has included a question about religious affiliation and in the British Yearbook of 2004 (Statistics UK

2004 Yearbook ), a section of the compendia compiled by National Statistics, the government statistical and data collection body, is devoted to religion in Britain and various "communities of faith". Control for the British, thus appears to take the form of creating statistics and situating them within the national narrative. Of course it should be noted here that unlike France, Britain as state with a recognized state religion (Church of England), already incorporates a number of tools to manage religion and make it part of mainstream life. Prince Charles has already stated that upon inheriting the crown, he wishes to be viewed as the 'defender of faiths' (Parekh report 2001:204 and Madood & Werbner 1997:9), and would not identify exclusively with one faith. Significant to the British experiment, is the Inter Faith Network, an organization that links the representative bodies of Britain's various religions, from Islam, to Sikhism to the Bah'ais. In particular, the Three Faiths Forum and Calamas Foundation are organizations that work on relationships between Christians, Jews and Muslims (Statistics UK 2004 Yearbook ).

Ironically enough, the groups who have most easily comprehended the need for legitimizing identity based on religious affiliation are the churches (Anglican and Catholic). Church attendance in Britain has fallen drastically since the 1960's with numerous parishes having to close down out of lack of funding (especially in the Catholic faith, where government funding is less)<sup>10</sup>. By contrast, attendance in mosques across Britain has increased, especially among the young. The Anglican Bishops have for a long time used their influence to involve the leaders of the city's religious minorities in major civic occasions. On his visit to Bradford, South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu (Lewis 1997:141), preached on racial justice before a mixed crowd of ten thousand. At the service, members of all the city's religious communities (Jewish, Catholic, Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh) were present and took part in giving readings on the theme from their own religious traditions. Subsequently, in the fight to receive public monies to help with the creation of a Muslim girls' school and a revision to the religious curriculum of the Bradford school system, it was the political clout of the Bishops that enabled such changes to take place.

This inherent difference between the role of religion (and its acceptance into the public domain) in France and Britain sets the groundwork for understanding how the *hijab* is interpreted in both countries and how strategies for coping with the *hijab* and Islam (in its present situation in the private and the public) are produced and applied.

L'AFFAIRE DU FOULARD: THE FRAMING OF ISLAM IN FRANCE:

Few things seem to scare the French as much as the sight of Muslim schoolgirls wearing headscarves. (Cue 1994)

In 1989, Ernest Chenieres, principal of a high school in Creil, a working-class suburb of Paris told three teenagers that they could not attend school if they continued to wear the head scarf (also known in French as *le voile islamique* or *le foulard*) associated with conservative Muslim societies. This was the beginning of a lengthy controversy, which led to vigorous debates in French society over civil rights and the separation of church and state in France, a country with a century-old tradition of secularism in public schools. The teenaged girls at the heart of this controversy were Fatima and Leila Achaboun, daughters of a religiously observant Moroccan family and Samira Aaeedani, of Tunisian descent (AlSayyad 2002:12)

Gilles Kepel writes that as the Berlin Wall fell that year, France was mired in public discussions on *le foulard*. Contrary to the impression that France was looking backwards, using the veil as emblematic of an identity crisis, within a changing global context, Kepel argues that France was in the process of re-defining itself as a post-modern state. In France as elsewhere in Europe labour movements were deconstructing under neo-liberalist economic pressures and new groups of disenfranchised, unemployed workers and youth were appearing, especially of North African descent. The end of the 1980's, Kepel notes, also saw the climax of anti-racism programs in France (as in

Britain), which had been set up to voice the demands of immigrant youth and help with their integration into mainstream culture. Due to shortages in government funding and systemic failure to actually integrate their target audience, these programs were undergoing both massive cuts and their own 'identity crisis'. The disappearance and loss of influence of these urban anti-racist program, consisting of youth centers and job centers, left a void in which the issue of the veil seemed magnified.

That summer of 1989 saw the construction of two mosques, one in Lyon, the other in Charvieu. Both were hotly contended in local elections, with the mayor of Charvieu's re-election campaign handing out leaflets claiming that, "a mosque would bring all the Islamics [sic] in the region down on us, including Islamic fundamentalists" (Kepel 1997:181). In the absence of the anti-racism movement which would have taken up the fight, a Islamist spokesman for the newly established Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), an Algerian radical Islamic movement (initially organized to fight Algeria's authoritarian regime the National Liberation Front and banned in Algeria), gave an interview on behalf of Muslims in Charvieu. In so doing, he indirectly linked French Islam with the terrorism in Algeria. A few months later, when *l'affaire du foulard* hit, the act of donning the veil, interpreted as re-islamisation of young schoolgirls, was inexorably linked in the mind of the public to radical, Islamic politics.

Lionel Jospin, France's Education Minister at that time decided that the girls should be "persuaded" to remove their veils in class, but if they refused to do so, they should still be allowed to attend class. He believed that the denial of this right would be a form of religious discrimination. However, French teachers, whose union threatened to strike over the issue and many other members of the Socialist Party, to which Jospin belonged, rejected his decision. Finding the cabinet divided over the issue, Prime Minister Michel Rocard referred the matter to the Council of State, the highest council of government, for a decision (AlSayyad 2002:13). A ruling by the Council of State, basing their decision on the 1905 Law on Separation of Church and State (under the Third Republic), declared that religious symbols could not be worn in public school if they "constitute an act of intimidation, provocation, proselytizing or propaganda; threaten health, security or the



freedom of others or disturb order” (Sciolino 2003). The decision to let students wearing the veil attend classes was still left up to the discretion of the school administrators.

Apparently only temporarily laid to rest, the scarf controversy in France did not go away and in January of 1990, three schoolgirls were expelled from a school in Noyon, a town north of Paris. One of the expelled schoolgirl’s parents filed a defamation action against the school principal. As a result, teachers went on strike to protest the wearing of the Islamic headscarf in school. A second ruling was published in October of that year, calling on teachers to emphasize the need to respect the principle of *laïcité* in public schools. In 1992 the Council of State overturned its original ruling, which had been to allow each school to settle the issue as it saw fit, by ordering a school to reintegrate three teenage girls who had been sent home for wearing a headscarf (AlSayyad 2002:13). The ruling was then modified to state that the wearing of headscarves was valid as long as it was not “aggressive or proselytizing” (Sciolino 2003).

Adrian Favell writes that by 1994, with the government’s return to the hard-line, “which coincided well with heightened tensions about Algeria, new controls on immigrants, and high-profile police operations against militant groups” (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2001:183), the wearing of the head scarf, which had become more popular, was viewed by the French as a political statement in sympathy with the Islamic fundamentalist movement. The wearing of scarves by Muslim girls was seen as dividing Muslims from non-Muslims and thereby circumventing the principle of separation of church and state. In September of that year, a third ruling (*Circulaire Bayrou*), named after the Education Minister François Bayrou was published, making a distinction between “discrete” symbols to be tolerated in public schools, and “ostentatious” symbols, including the Islamic headscarf, to be banned from public schools (Favell 2001:183). In October 1994, police were called in to prevent twenty-two Muslim girls wearing scarves from entering a high school in the northern industrial city of Lille and “the compatibility of a Muslim and French self-identity was once again put into doubt” (Favell 2001: 183).

In 2000, the French Constitutional court ruled that even though the Education Minister had banned “ostentatious religious signs,” schools were not to suspend students who wore scarves of no obvious religious proselytizing was involved (AlSayyad 2002:13-14). An unwritten understanding was reached that the headscarf was acceptable as long as the hairline, neck and earlobes were left exposed – thus separating a headscarf (as with a bandana) from the actual Muslim symbol of *hijab* (a head scarf which covers the visible hairline, neck, earlobes and sometimes even part of the chin) (The Economist 2003). The risk of further marginalizing Muslim girls from the educational system, possibly their only avenue toward emancipation, it was decided, was not worth taking.

Finally, the matter seemed to be put to rest. That is until, December 11, 2003, when the much-anticipated Stasi Report was published and two sisters, Lila and Alma Levy-Omari chose to wear a full headscarf or *hijab*, covering their ears, hairline and neck, to school. The Levy sisters’ donning of *hijab* came at the inopportune time of the publishing of the Report. The Report, based on the findings of a commission that had been requested by the current President Jacques Chirac in July of 2003, to look into the contemporary condition of secularism in France and headed by former minister Bernard Stasi, advised the government to ban conspicuous religious symbols in public schools (Wyatt 2003). Christian Joppke suggests that the commission was ordered by Chirac as a way to limit the growing popularity (and political success) of Nicolas Sarkozy, Interior Minister and main instigator in the founding of the French Council of Muslim Faith (CFCM) (In conversation 2004). Caroline Ford suggests that the commission came in the wake of growing anti-Semitism in Paris and elsewhere in France (Electronic communication, 2004), a phenomenon blamed primarily on Muslim youth.

The public discord and debates swirling around the wearing of the *hijab* since 1989 and the Report’s commission and subsequent recommendations, symbolize the defiant nature of the act of wearing *hijab* in the French political psyche. In a France, struggling to maintain its secular tradition and assimilationist policies of turning foreigners into good Frenchmen (The Economist 2003), the growing desire amongst its “new citizens” (*nouvelles citoyens*) to create an identity based on religion or aspects of their religion is

almost intolerable. Along with the ban, the Stasi Report also suggested including Eid and Yom Kippur as national holidays for state schools, the creation of a national school for Islamic studies and the deconstruction of France's urban ghettos, which are often heavily populated with one ethnic group, through urban renewal projects (Sciolino 2003). The Stasi Report also charged that some organized groups were testing the secular French state by demands on public services in the name of religion and culture. In its entirety, the Report looked at various issues surrounding the incorporation of religious, in particular Islamic demands on the state, from burial rights to issues of racism and xenophobia and rising anti-Semitism (2003). Bernard Stasi on announcing the Report's conclusions stated:

There are, without any doubt, forces in France which try to destabilize the Republic, and its time for the Republic to react (Sciolino 2003); and  
*Nous avons eu la conviction qu'il y avait indiscutablement dans notre pays (...) des groupes islamistes qui cherchent à mettre en cause les valeurs de la République et à tester la résistance de la République. (Le Rapport de la Commission Stasi sur la Laïcité 2003)*

The above comments seem out of place in the language of the Report, which strives to be rational and claims to be criticize all visible manifestations religiosity in the public school system (and the public sphere, by extension), and not Islam alone. On one hand the report recommends the inclusion of Jewish and Muslim religious holidays, while asking students to cover up or uncover their 'symbols' of religion. At best, these suggestions, contrary in nature, are explained as the Report's attempt to balance their views between fierce secularism and accommodation of religions other than Christianity. At worst, the Report appears to use other minority religions and the issue of what students wear, as a Trojan horse to attack the French fear of a politicized Islam. This schizophrenic approach to Islam in France avoids the actual dilemmas facing the state, such as high unemployment in the Muslim community, violence and harassment, and discrimination in jobs and housing and social unrest. The government as of this writing has already rejected the suggestion of the inclusion of the two religious holidays but the ban on the headscarf seems to be a sure success, with the bill being favoured by 69% of French people (The Economist 2004) and having recently been passed by Parliament in a 494 to

36 votes (BBC 2004). It now goes to the upper house, the Senate, for approval. The ban is widely seen as a test of the limits modern France is willing to impose on its ethnically and ideologically diverse citizens and as a political sign by the center-right government to more conservative elements in France who otherwise may vote for the National Front (BBC 2004).

For supporters of the ban and those arguing in defense of France's current model of *laïcité* and integration, the fear is that by giving into one demand (the wearing of the *hijab*), there will be many more, from separate doctors for women to segregated public swimming pool hours to an increase in *halal* butchers. Already in Britain, where school girls are allowed to wear the *hijab*, a court case brought by a female student who wants to wear the *jalabib*, or black flowing gown (Guardian 2004), has raised eyebrows and made conservatives on both sides of the Channel welcome the limits the ban imposes on a Muslim agenda. The fallout from the Report has been larger than just affecting the wearing of the headscarf. A municipal authority near Lille in the north of the country reneged on a five-year-old understanding under which the local swimming pool reserved seven hours a week for women-only bathing. As the system had clearly been introduced to accommodate the Muslim community, it appeared to confirm the trend set by the Stasi report towards setting limits to inclusionary measures (Schofield 2003).

Critics of the ban call it anti-Muslim and anti-democratic. In place of a fundamentalist Islam, France seems to offer up a fundamentalist secularism. La Riposte asks, "*la droite prétend défendre "la laïcité". Mais qu'est-ce que la laïcité, dans la bouche de ces réactionnaires?*" (Oxley 2003). Opponents of the ban fear that it will drive Islam further underground and cause new resentments in Muslim youth. "The headscarf question is political manipulation...the strife is only just beginning." say some Muslim youth leaders (Henley 2004). François Bayrou, now leader of the UDF (*Union pour la Démocratie Française*), a coalition partner of the Chirac's UMP's (*Union pour un Mouvement Populaire*), has come out against the ban, suggesting as well that such a ruling would be, a "whiff of oxygen for fundamentalists" (Yahmid 2004). The first victim of the debates will possibly be the French Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM), the now divided

government-sponsored umbrella group supposed to help Muslims find their place in French society. The CFCM a recent result of Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy talks <sup>11</sup> with various French Muslim leaders, "risks falling apart," said the mufti of Marseille, Sohaib Bensheikh, a leading moderate member. "I'm very much in the minority and don't feel very comfortable there" (Henley 2004).

The language of the proposed ban, if adopted to go into affect for the 2004 school year, has come under fire as being too vague. For supporters and opponents of the ban alike, the banning of "conspicuous" symbols allows a space of interpretation of the ban for the students and for the government. Lawmakers have argued that the ban should be for all 'visible' religious symbols and that the ambiguous wording in effect, will allow the state the ability to broadly interpret what constitutes a religious symbol (Malala 2002). Laronche and Saubaber in *Le Monde*, on the issue of language write that the actual definition of what renders a symbol as conspicuous, that is, obvious to the eye and worn with a religious significance in mind (*ostensible*) rather than just discernable (*ostentatoires*), is a matter of semantics.

*Restera ensuite à trancher la question sémantique: signes "ostensibles" ou "ostentatoires"? La premier terme, posera "inévitablement un problème d'appréciation."* (Laronche & Saubaber 2003)

Luc Ferry, the current minister of national education, is quoted as telling the National Assembly's legal affairs committee that any girl's bandanna that is considered a religious sign (as opposed to a fashion statement, presumably) will also be banned (Sciolino 2004). The CFCM is endeavoring to secure the exclusion of what they term the "small *hijab*", from the ban, which they say would basically made up of a coat, trousers and a head cover, arguing that the allowance of the 'small *hijab*' would diminish tensions amongst the French Muslim population.

In the matter of the *hijab*, the saying 'politics makes strange bedfellows' appears quite appropriate. Those opposing the ban consist of a centrist like Bayrou, who fears that such a ban will drive Muslim youth into the arms of radicals, the Foreign Minister, Dominique de Villepin who in private has said that he felt the planned ban would cause Paris problems with Arab allies (though Villepin later denied making such statements in

private and supported the ban on a tour of the Gulf Arab states), the Catholic Church, which has called the ban a danger to religious freedom, France's five thousand or so Sikhs, whose young men would have to remove their turbans on attending school, Jewish groups and some French Muslims. The ban is criticized for threatening to drive Islam further underground and to play into the hands of the National Front and their anti-Arab/Islam agenda, which has dominated French politics since the early 1980s. Protests in Arab countries such as Egypt and Syria have revolved around the argument that the *hijab* is a religious obligation and not a display of faith. In France, the language against the ban is one of human rights and the freedom to express/practice one's religion. The *hijab* is controversial in the Muslim lexicon of faith, I feel, and no clear reading of its 'obligatory' nature is available. A poll among French Muslims put 42% in favour of the ban and 53% against the ban – with a difference of only 11%.

What further confuses the question is the support the ban has received from surprising quarters. The country's leading Muslim cleric, the moderate Dalil Boubakeur, rector of the Paris mosque, has urged young Muslims to obey the law and only suggested a several-month grace period so that observant families could become accustomed to the new law (Schofield 2003). The bill also has the guarded backing of one of the highest authorities in Sunni Islam - the Grand Sheikh of Egypt's al-Azhar mosque has decreed that Muslim women may ignore the obligation to wear a headscarf if the law where they lived demanded so (BBC 2004). Along with established Muslims, leading intellectuals of the French Left have also called for the ban, including a number of French feminists, Muslim and non-Muslim, who have signed letters against the head scarf, arguing that it cannot be tolerated in schools because it is an "symbol of oppression" and an "instrument of propaganda for an intolerant version of Islam"<sup>12</sup>. Muslim women seem as divided on the issue, with 49% in favour and 43% against (The Economist 2004)<sup>13</sup>. The National Front supports the ban against the *hijab*, but not the extension of the ban to other religious symbols.

The issue over the *hijab* is more complicated than just a balancing act between French ethnic reality and the nation-state's historic principles, or even national politics and the desire to win votes from the far right. The proposed ban would become effective in the

public schools and affect Muslim girls the most. The location of this debate, the *lycée*, and the issue of gender play a far larger role than first seen. In the case of the *lycée*, Erik Bleich, in his essay on education policies in Britain and France, writes that France uses its schools to reaffirm its cultural boundaries, leaving little place for ethnic minority cultures in its education institutions (1999:61). The role of educational institutions, in particular the *lycée*, is to turn out good French citizens, especially with regard to immigrants. Public discourse, government documents and state policies, writes Bleich, trumpet the value of the French system for “integrating foreigners into the established fabric of society” (1999:67). The French concept of integration allows cultural maintenance but only in the private sphere, with the public sphere demanding more convergence. Bleich points out that from 1945 to 1970, French schools did not even differentiate immigrants or ethnic minorities from other pupils, and while the early 1970s to the mid-1980s saw a brief foray into a less assimilationist paradigm (as also noted by Favell, 2001), since the late 1980s, there has been a return to more integrationist rhetoric in state policy and education policy (1999:67). While critics of this system may see French educational policy in particular as ‘monocultural’, the French would argue it to be ‘acultural’, neutral and universal (Bleich 1999: 67).

The role of gender in the debate is best shown in the poll figures given above, where it appears that of the Muslim population, French Muslim men are more against the ban than French Muslim women! While Muslim women seem split over the ban, the irony of the situation, whereby a piece of clothing worn by women is supported more by men than the very women wearing it, is obvious. What the poll does not discuss, is where the opposition to the ban by women lies – is it just against the ban on the principle of religious freedom, or is it in favour of the *hijab* itself, and if so, is there a particular demographic in support of the *hijab*? Caroline Ford in a recent talk at the University of British Columbia suggested that the ban on religious symbols, primarily the *hijab* (as other symbols, like the cross can still be worn if done so discreetly), is mired in gender politics (2004). The re-Islamisation of the target audience, French Muslim girls/women, is seen as troubling, specifically because of their gender. Arguably, as carriers of culture, a generation of girls returning to Islam would produce another generation with strong ties

to Islam. Ford suggests that like the doctrine of *laïcité*, defined in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (1842) and the subsequent 1905 ruling of separation between Church and state, the ban on religious symbols in public schools originates from a fear of increased female religiosity, or more aptly, the return to religion by women (2004). The rhetoric around the *hijab* recalls the debates on the intensification of Catholic faith/practice by French women in late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century France (Ford 2004). Ford also argues that women, as a collective, were/are seen as a 'soft target' by the state. That the ban would cause controversy was surely expected, but that thousands of Muslim women, the world over, would enter the public political sphere and protest, Ford suggests, may have come as a surprise to the state who saw Muslim women as victims of a patriarchy, passive and removed from the public body (2004).

#### THE BRITISH CASE: TENSIONS WITHIN MULTICULTURALISM

On December 21, 1989, at the Altrincham Grammar school, near Manchester, Pakistani sisters Fatima and Aisha Alvi, wearing traditional white headscarves came to school. The school governors had a year before decided that headscarves in school laboratories and gym were hazardous, and subsequently banned the wearing of such in all classes. However for the sister, the scarves were a matter of religious faith. The girls were asked to remove the scarves and upon refusing to do so, were sent home. This occurrence continued every school day for a month (AlSayyad 2002:12).

Altrincham's sixteen governors met on January 23, 1990, to discuss the matter and their deliberations took two hours. The governors felt that by enforcing the ban they were unnecessarily giving rise to religious tensions. After the meeting, the Chairman Gilbert Thompson said, "I know we are setting a precedent, but we have to take account of changes in our society." It was decided that female students would be allowed to wear dark blue scarves, the school's colors; however, they were still banned from wearing scarves in the labs and gym. Muslim leaders in Great Britain responded favourably to the decision. (AlSayyad 2002:12).



The decision to allow the headscarf or *hijab* in schools in Britain was indicative of the British model of dealing with diversity under official multiculturalism. In 2003, the Metropolitan Police, the largest police force in Britain, amended its uniform code to allow male Muslim officer to wear a Muslim turban if so desired (BBC 2003). For many years Sikh officers of the Met had already been able to wear turbans while in uniform and since 2002 female Muslim officers had been permitted to wear the *hijab* (BBC 2003). In another step towards diversity, the Met in 2002 also developed an alternative police badge that would not incorporate the St. Edward's crown topped with a Christian cross in attempts to woo Muslim police officers (BBC 2002).

While Muslims in Britain are as a group still lag behind white Britons and other immigrant groups (the Chinese and East African Asians in particular), in education test scores<sup>14</sup>, employment and income, the riots during the summer of 2001 in heavily Muslim inhabited northern cities of Oldham, Burnley and Bradford, have spurred the government and British institutions to incorporate Muslims citizens, especially second-generation immigrants into British mainstream. But British multiculturalism seems at times tearing at the seams. While the British model has ensured the increased visibility of ethnic minorities on TV, newspapers and in films<sup>15</sup>, and the "Asian" market as a new target for advertisers (Patel 2003), an increased separation in living areas has taken place, with London boroughs and northern cities having a majority of Asian residents<sup>16</sup>. The riots of 2001 have been officially blamed in part on the "parallel lives" and "separation of communities" in North (Malala 2002). Both the white community and the Asian community (primarily Muslim Pakistani) in Bradford suffer from high levels of unemployment and a sense of disenfranchisement. While the white youth turn towards the BNP, the Muslims turn towards religion. In both cases, each side feels the other gets a better deal, whether from the government or from the police. In his damning report on Bradford race relations, Sir Herman Ouseley (Executive Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality 1993-2000), and head of the Bradford Race Review (2001) writes:

Bradford and cities similar to it [are] living in a state of 'virtual apartheid', which, if not addressed, [will] lead to more riots across the country. The challenge is to reverse the trend of 'them and us' and promote a sense of pride in the people.

The above sentiments are further mirrored in the Home Office's independent report (chaired by Ted Cante, The Community Cohesion Report 2002) on the race riots in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley, which suggests that a lack of respect for diversity in both the white and immigrant communities, helped fuel the distrust that led to the riots <sup>17</sup>. Cante in his report notes that:

There has been little attempt to develop clear values, which focus on what it means to be a citizen of a modern multi-racial Britain and many still look backwards to some supposedly halcyon days of a mono-cultural society, or alternatively look to their country of origin for some form of identity.

On both sides, Cante writes, there is a perceived sense of unfairness and misconceptions of actual government assistance to minorities and 'special treatment' by police, local authorities of white Britons. The report also points out that further "development of potentially more segregated communities is possible, through more mono-cultural schools, or the creation of housing areas, which are likely to be dominated yet can be combated through by a particular community" (The Community Cohesion Report 2002); the effect of segregation can be combated through the younger generation and such proactive solutions as the 'twinning' of schools with predominantly different ethnic make-up, joint sports programs, youth parliaments and '*universal citizenship education*' for young people.

The report by the Home Office also points out that "politics from back home", are often used by local, minority politicians to win votes, and as a "factor in priorities and decision making, overriding the merits of the local circumstances." By this practice then, issues from 'back home' on the sub-continent are constantly being reinforced under a new cultural matrix in Britain. Tensions between Muslims Hindus (and Sikhs) have a long history from Moghul rule over Northern India to the partition of India in 1947, which saw horrific suffering on all sides. After partition, resentment from the Indian side was focused on the nation state of Pakistan, encouraged by subsequent Indo-Pak wars of 1948, 1965 and 1971. The continuing territorial dispute over Kashmir has kept alive this heritage of distrust (Baumann 1996: 82-82). In addition, with an increase of Hindu

fundamentalism in India, this resentment of Pakistan has come to encompass all Muslims, be they Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi. Carried through immigration from the Indian sub-continent, and reproduced throughout the diaspora, in the context of other British minority groups, Muslims often find themselves marginalized and viewed with suspicion. In his ethnographic research into Southall, a largely Asian suburb of London<sup>18</sup>, Baumann shows that Muslims are often marginalized not only by white Britons but also by other groups (Hindus, Sikhs, and Christians) from the Indian sub-continent due to this continuing history and by their different migratory pattern since Muslim labour came from even poorer areas or villages of the Punjab, Northern Pakistan and Kashmir than did Sikhs and Hindus of those regions (1996:83). While Hindus and Sikhs in the second-generation, have seemingly been able to move beyond the working class, statistics on Muslim levels of education and employment rates still remain below the national average<sup>19</sup>. Coupled with this economic insecurity, Baumann writes, the myth of return is far more widespread among Pakistanis and Bangladeshis than by Indians (regardless of religion).

Baumann also notes (as does Shaw 2000) that preference within Pakistani families for 'cousin marriages', necessitate continuous contact with kin 'back home' and gives Muslims an aura of clannishness. The stereotype that Muslims always stick together, Baumann says, is prevalent in Southall, and amongst British Asians elsewhere in Britain. Added to these elements of a historical distrust and unequal economic stature, is the view that with their plethora of demands from halal provisions at school and segregated swimming and physical education lessons, Muslims in Britain, as a community, give other "Asians a bad name" (1996:85) and 'refuse to fit in with the rest of society.'

After the summer riots of 2001 and then 9/11, a resurgence of anti-Muslim sentiment led to reports of Sikh and Hindu groups working with the British National Front and the formation of the "Asian Friends of the BNP group to act as a supporting body and conduit for funds for people sympathetic to the party's anti-Islamic stance" (Harris 2001). While British mainstream politics seems eager to incorporate the Muslim voice and local politics in Muslim majority towns mandate certain requests, a palatable resentment

towards the Muslim community is felt by white Britons, Black British and other British Asians.

In a larger context of being 'British', the following quote by Trevor Phillips, the black head of the Commission for Racial Equality, speaks volumes for the current state of multiculturalism in Britain:

People think we tolerate any old nonsense because it's part of their culture: that's nonsense. To make the idea of a British Muslim a reality means paying as much attention to "British" as to "Muslim". (The Economist 2004)

Using similar, but less harsh rhetoric, David Blunkett, the Home Secretary, also hopes to revitalize the idea of integration and put limits on multiculturalism. In his often-misquoted essay entitled, "What Does Citizenship Mean Today?" written for the Foreign Policy Centre, Blunkett writes that part of the challenge against the far right, who have made in-roads across European politics, is to give "content and meaning to citizenship and nationality" (Blunkett 2002). Blunkett discusses a new model of multiculturalism, one with limits, which would encourage a more active concept of British citizenship and would through its practice articulate common attributes within the diversity of modern-day Britain. In this vision of citizenship, Blunkett offers up a shared identity based on membership to a "political community, rather than forced assimilation into a monoculture, or an unbridled multiculturalism which privileges difference over community cohesion". This call for integration with diversity is reflected in the Bradford Race Review report and the Home Office Report on the race riots, which encourage the promotion of 'cohesion' and creation of a multi-ethnic community based on ideals of British citizenship. Working within such a paradigm would allow the term 'British' to be re-appropriated to include all Britons, regardless of ethnicity or religion. As Christian Joppke writes:

The 'multi-ethnic Britain' described in this report [the Home Office Report], was certainly one of 'communities', yet one without a meta-'community' in the singular to tie them all together. (Joppke 2004)

In such a framework, where immigrants and second-generation minorities are called upon to play a more pro-active role in the formation of citizenship and a 'meta-community', and a variety of reports has shown "parallel lives" of ethnic groups, results of the Guardian poll in 2004 of Muslims in Britain is troubling. According to the poll, carried out by ICM research for the Guardian newspaper, in answer to the question, "Do you think the Muslim community in Britain needs to do more to integrate into mainstream British culture?", 33% percent of British Muslims polled said "Yes, needs to do more"; 28% said "The community has got it about right"; and 26% said, "No, the community has done too much already." In answer to another question, whereby respondents were asked if they approved or disapproved of the new citizenship ceremonies and the modern oath of allegiance to Britain, said, 35% approved, 18% didn't know and 46% disapproved! With regard to separate educational institutions (one of the factors affecting the creation of community and increasing the suspicion between communities, living very separate lives, per the reports on the race riots), 44% of respondents said that if they had to choose between a state school and a Muslim school, they would pick a state school. 45% said they would pick a Muslim school.

While the *hijab* per se hasn't caused the same furor in Britain as it has in France, its acceptance in Britain is an anomaly within Europe (see the reports of the headscarf debates in Germany – and the recent decision by the Southern state of Baden-Wuerttemberg, to ban teachers in public schools from wearing headscarves to work<sup>20</sup>). Instead of working as an example to imitate, images coming out of Britain of *hijabi* police-women and girls in primary school, dressed by their parents and wearing *hijabs*, seem to act as a cautionary tale to other European nations of a misguided diversity. Ironically, according to Favell, British legislation is unlike other European states (and thus a source of conflict with the European Court of Justice and the European Court of Human Rights) and based on normative justifications, and its constitution "is not at its philosophical foundation constitutionally-based" (Favell 2001:207). Yet without any constitutional guarantees and a lack of a bill of rights Britain seems to guard the rights of its citizens more than other constitutionally based states within Europe. Criticisms of British multiculturalism aside, the question of why the *hijab* should generate such strong

feelings of antagonism in some Muslims and non-Muslims, while treated with deference by others still remains. Very few states, communities or individuals can claim to be truly indifferent to the *hijab* as a symbol. What then makes the *hijab* such an obtuse sign, rendered with numerous and often opposing meanings?

THE *HIJAB* IN [MUSLIM] FEMINIST DISCOURSE: A MULTIVALENT SIGN:

The *hijab* is like a yellow star for women, the first step towards their physical elimination<sup>21</sup>.

*Khalida Messaoudi*

A woman to an Islamist is like a Jew to a Nazi <sup>22</sup>.

*Rachid Mimouni*

Muslim feminist scholars appear to be divided, supplying a variety of disparate interpretations and meanings on the 'veil'. The *burqah* / *niqab*, within the debates of a "Muslim" dress code, is driven in modern times mainly by the Wahabbi/Salafi strain of Islam, common in Saudi Arabia, some other Gulf Arab states, Afghanistan and Iran (where it was made mandatory in 1979). This interpretation puts the burden of modesty on the woman's shoulders, through face-veiling, rather than having the man do their part by "lowering their gaze" as the *Quran* commands. Feminists argue that placing the burden primarily on women without calling for the accountability of men to control themselves and their sexual appetites is in violation of the spirit of the *Quran* which is about self-control and self-restraint <sup>23</sup>. Muslim feminists who support *hijab* or even the *niqab* do so out of a sense of providing choice and control for Muslim women and not necessarily as a sign of piety; they argue that the veil as a cover, allows Muslim women to navigate their worlds and the private and public sphere. François Burgat writes that, "rather than being a manifestation of an implication of their imprisonment, it is increasingly the case that the veil allows [women] to go out, and to listen to the Imam's *khutba* (sermon) on Fridays – a traditionally male practice that today has been largely adopted by many of the *muhajjabat* (women who wear the *hijab*) living in towns" across

the Arab world (Burgat 2003:140). Fadwa El Guindi (1999) another Muslim feminist sees arguments of Islamic authenticity of veiling as moot. For her, it is important to point out that Arab culture carries connotations of sacredness in the private domain and just as Muslims convert ordinary mundane space into temporarily sacred space through the ritual cleansing and performing of prayer, so too, El Guindi (1999:94-95) argues, Muslim women carry their sacred private space into public by use of the veil. Göle supports this view writing that the revival of the veil is built upon the act of pointing out the 'forbidden' in the public sphere. "As distinct from Western societies, private life in Muslim societies is directly associated with the sexuality of women and the forbidden zone", and thus Islamic society, argues Göle is not only ordered by the regulation of inner and outer spaces, but also 'on the privacy of women' (1996:94). The private (in terms of practice and space) is therefore then expanded to include the public, rather than to remain in a fixed sphere, behind closed doors.

With successive numbers of young, educated women in both the West and Islamic world, turning to wearing *hijab*, while striving to be doctors and lawyers, the question of the *hijab* as a rejection of imported and imposed modernity is now problematic (Burgat 2003:144). El Guindi writes that:

In the mid-seventies a phenomenon became noticeable in the streets of Cairo, Egypt that seemed incomprehensible to many observers of the Egyptian scene and bewildering even to the local people. This was the strong, visible and growing presence of a young urban college student completely "veiled" from head to toe, including the face. Confused at the thought of a future "veiled" doctor, engineer or pharmacist, many observers speculated as to the cause of this development. Was this an identity crisis, our version of America's hippie movement, a fad, youth protest, or ideological vacuum? An individual psychic disturbance, life-crisis, social dislocation, or protest against authority? (1999:51)<sup>24</sup>

Within this new space of legitimacy that it has carved out for itself, the *hijab* is a 'vocal', destabilizing signal since it is a permanent reminder to a broad range of audiences. Göle writes that with the appearance of the veil/turban/headscarf in Turkish universities, the standard arguments for veiling as 'ignorant', 'traditional' or a 'rural' phenomenon, fell short (1996:95-96). It could no longer be interpreted, as in classical Western feminism, as oppressive to its female wearers. The veil of the *hijab* instead becomes a symbol of an

allegiance to a system of representation and socialization (Burgat 2003:142). As Islam politicized itself, writes Göle, it encouraged women towards the political public sphere, simultaneously and paradoxically calling on them to wear a *hijab* or veil. "Rising Islamist movements, on the one hand, call for the return of women to their traditional settings...on the other hand, they replace the traditional portrait of a Muslim with a politicized, active one. By donning the *hijab*, the Muslim woman on the Turkish university campus and the veiled female doctor or engineer, creates a space as an individual whereby she transgresses traditional Islamic gender roles while still reproducing and maintaining as a community, pre-modern Islamic traditions. Thus the system of meaning embedded in the act, "gives priority to the agency and the relationality of social actors" (1996:86)

What women wear seems to be a predominant theme in politics, history and literature as somehow women and their clothing are a measure of a society's 'morals'. Even in a post-modern, post-feminist setting, what young girls wear and don't wear is detailed and analyzed. From being used in cases to explain rape, to dividing women into sexualized categories, clothing acts as a non-verbal message that is easily interpreted in various cultural contexts - taking on a myriad of meanings. As a negotiable sign, clothing can be "a potent political tool for rulers and the ruled" (Hoodfar et al. 2003:3). Clothing is also a way to express a demarcation between the body (the private) and the public, to set social boundaries of the 'self' from the 'other' at both the collective and individual levels and to visually create a community.

France's Stasi Commission reports finding that a number of young French Muslim girls found themselves forced into wearing the *hijab* and welcomed a ban in schools as a way of escape from a oppressive dress code<sup>25</sup>. In their survey of Muslim girls and women in Canada (of similar immigrant ethnic/national and social backgrounds as seen in the British and French case) and their decisions around the *hijab*, Alvi, Hoodfar and McDonough found that the *hijab* had become a 'revolutionary' and empowering symbol to many young Muslim women. This opinion is mirrored in Göle's work as she looks at young women in Turkey who took up the veil, even in the face of objections from their



'modern' Kemalist mothers. Employing the language of classical Western feminism, that is utilizing the concepts of 'freedom of choice' and the 'freedom of the individual', young Muslim women are consciously opting to wear the veil as a way to navigate their surroundings – that is between mainstream non-Islamic culture and their family traditions, contrary to perceived notions of being 'forced' to don the *hijab*. Göle found that for many university students, the freedom to wear the *hijab* occurred outside their homes, once they were at university and freed of parental supervision! These veiled women were not simply 'passive conveyors of the provincial traditional culture', but instead active participants in modernism (Göle 1996:88, 92).

Hoodfar writes that by taking the *hijab* a number of young women were "freed from arguments or headaches" with their family over their behaviour (Hoodfar et al. 2003:20). In a strictly gendered environment where girls/daughters have much less freedom than sons/brothers, especially after puberty, the headscarf, interpreted as a sign of piety, allowed the girls freedom to pursue more 'normal' lives within a Western/modern context, whilst still reassuring their parents that they would not do anything against Muslim morality. "By taking up the veil, they symbolically but clearly announced to their parents and their community that, despite unconventional activities and involvement with non-Muslims, they retain their Islamic mores and values" (Hoodfar et al 2003: 20). For other women, donning the *hijab* allowed them easier interaction with the opposite sex, without the worry of having their intentions misunderstood. In the case of Turkish university students, Göle asks, like Hoodfar, how Islam the confiner of women to the private sphere has become the core ideal for these 'modern' and 'education-oriented' women? The *hijab* for these women then, is indirectly a feminist act sanctioning their place in the Islamic world. Along with taking up the *hijab*, these women have also turned to the *Quran* as a direct source of information on Islam. Finding arguments in the *Quran* and *hadith* on the equal treatment of women and men in terms of marriage and education, the women have fought for their voices to be heard in traditionally patriarchal households. Göle notes that the political movement of Islam and the veil have enabled women to escape from the '*mahrem*' or 'forbidden' sphere into the public one, and

‘regardless of its conservative attitude...the Islamic movement empowers women to claim their individual freedom’ (1996:114).

The notion of individual ‘freedom’ rather than the traditional ideals of ‘duty’ are powerfully performed with reference to marriages in particular. While sons may have a voice in such matters, girls have limited opportunities to speak out and parents use Islam as a means to justify control. One of Hoodfar’s interviewees explained how taking *hijab* in the West showed her seriousness to her faith and that in studying Islam she realized that Islam gave her the power to agree or disagree with a marriage. “My using Islam as the basis of my rejection of the marriage, without reference to my right under Canadian law [sic] made it easier for my father to save face amongst his friends” (Hoodfar et al. 2003:23). For many Muslim youngsters, education along with their much broader contacts with Muslim of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds has allowed them to separate cultural traditions and norms from what they view as religion. More importantly, these youngsters by becoming educated in the mainstream and religious studies can privilege those interpretations of Islam that are more acceptable to them. As one woman pointed out, veiling and learning about Islam has enabled young Muslim women to “have their cake and eat it too” (Hoodfar et al. 2003:24.) [The case for using Islamic language and couching arguments in Islamic language is reflected acutely by Tariq Ramadan and is central to Euro-Islam.]

Reem Meshal writes that while one expects to find a correlation between ethnicity and the wearing of *hijab*, its use among all ethnic groups suggests that cultural origins play a diminishing role in shaping attitudes towards this practice (Meshal 2003:73). In choosing *hijab*, women are taking part in a process of identity construction whereby through contrast with the majority ‘other’, they create their own group and identity. The goal of a standardized Islam becomes an important community-building tool and a way to identify with other “Muslims” (even if this definition is constructed by mainstream society.) Hoodfar notes that Somali female refugees to Canada, the most recent arrivals from the Muslim diaspora, tend to give up their traditional dress in favour of the *hijab* as a way of

‘fitting in’ with other Muslims in Canada (Meshal 2003:75)<sup>26</sup> and reaffirming their membership with the group.

Meshal’s study of Muslim women showed that as expected, women who did not wear *hijab* reported feeling more integrated into Western society (2003:96). Conversely, a much lower number of women who wore *hijab* (10%) felt very integrated, while a substantial number (21%) felt they were not integrated at all (2003:96). Meshal writes that in the Muslim world, the *hijab* is a signifier of two societal trends, one an Islamic revivalism with somewhat traditional gender roles and the other a process of Westernization that espouses classic Western feminist values. In the West, Muslim women find the latter already in existence in the dominant culture and for a small number, donning the *hijab* is in opposition to the agenda of gender as set by Western feminists. At the same time, these women and others who accepted the *hijab* feel that they are the ‘true’ feminists, even by Western feminist standards, as the *hijab* desexualizes them and allows them “more time on the development of their spiritual and intellectual selves” (Meshal 2003:100). While a women’s options are not limited to flaunting or shrouding her sexuality, the debate over the *hijab* is often perceived by Muslim and non-Muslim woman in this dichotomous paradigm alone. Natasha Walter, a young journalist with the Guardian writes that:

Many women in the west find the headscarf deeply problematic. One of the reasons we find it so hateful is because the whole trajectory of feminism in the west has been tied up with the freedom to uncover ourselves. A century and a half ago few women in the west would leave the house without wearing a hat - to bare one's head in public was immodest, and it was the taunt of immodesty that kept women in their traditional roles. Taking off their covering clothes, gloves and hats as well as painful corsets and long skirts, was tied up with a larger struggle to come out of their houses, to speak in public, to travel alone, to go into education and into work and into politics, and so to become independent. (Walter 2004)

And one of Meshal’s Muslim respondents says:

Living in a Western world [I find] far too much emphasis on looks and size. I guess we all have to look like Cindy Crawford to be accepted. How absurd these Western women are. And they claim to be feminists? I’d rather be judged for what and who I am. (Meshal 2003: 100)

Yet, Muslim women, wearing the *hijab* or not, are caught between their private and public images. "Militant in society and traditional in the private sphere is the idealized image of women as held by political Islam" writes Göle (1996:118). The educated women choosing to wear the *hijab* and using the *hijab* as a tool for accessing the public domain, from education to the workplace, appears to eventually come into conflict with traditional Islam and especially men. The space given to Muslim women by political Islam to expand their horizons and their subsequent social practices push Islamic discourse to its limits. Eventually, the restriction on female roles as mothers and wives comes into conflict with the actual systems of behaviour as adopted by these women. Göle writes that in response to the emerging conflict between Islamic men and women, both genders use the idea of a utopian Islamic society to circumvent this clash. As an example, in a truly Islamic society, the state would assist with motherhood, providing a wet nurse and thus allowing the Muslim mother to still live here life outside the home. Of course this does not occur in the present experienced reality, and arguably, would only be available to a few even in a utopian Islamic state. Tariq Ramadan writes somewhat obtusely:

They (Muslim women) are fighting for recognition of their status, for equality, for the right to work and to equal pay, but that does not mean that they want to neglect or forget the demands of their faith....The desire for liberty and rights, for men as well as women, cannot mean forgetting one's individual, familial, and social responsibilities. (2004:143)

As a subtext then, the *hijab* while viewed by classical Western feminists as oppressive, is arguably viewed in contrast by young Muslim 'feminists' as a subversive sign and a useful tool in breaking away from a particular set of patriarchal cultural traditions, while still holding the wearer to a Islamic dominant discourse set by men. While difficult to understand (and accept), the trajectory into self-determination that has been taken in the past by western feminists is not necessarily the same that will be taken by all women at all times. The 'future' of Islamic feminism and Muslim women contextualized in the West, is yet to be fully circumscribed.

- <sup>1</sup> An Islamic Perspective on Women's Dress. (1997, December) Muslim Women's League  
Available at: <http://www.mwlnusa.org/publications/positionpapers/hijab.html>
- <sup>2</sup> The Noble *Quran* online at: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/Quran/>  
Available at: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/Quran/024.qmt.html>
- <sup>3</sup> The Noble *Quran* online at: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/Quran/>  
Available at: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/Quran/033.qmt.html>
- <sup>4</sup> An Islamic Perspective on Women's Dress. (1997, December) Muslim Women's League  
Available at: <http://www.mwlnusa.org/publications/positionpapers/hijab.html>
- <sup>5</sup> An Islamic Perspective on Women's Dress. (1997, December) Muslim Women's League  
Available at: <http://www.mwlnusa.org/publications/positionpapers/hijab.html>
- <sup>6</sup> The *Hadiths* Online. Partial Translation of Sunan Abi Dawud: Book 32, Number 4092. Clothing (Kitab Al-Libas)  
Available: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/hadithsunnah/abudawud/032.sat.html>
- <sup>7</sup> An Islamic Perspective on Women's Dress. (1997, December) Muslim Women's League  
Available at: <http://www.mwlnusa.org/publications/positionpapers/hijab.html>
- <sup>8</sup> Alvi, S.S., Hoodfar, H. & McDonough, S. (Eds.) (2003) Introduction. In The Muslim Veil in North America: Issues and Debates. Toronto: Women's Press xiii
- <sup>9</sup> Double Culture. (1996) Poèmes de la banlieue (en verlan). In Aguillou, P. & Saïki, N. (Eds.) La Téci à Panam: Parler le langage des banlieues. Paris: Michel Lafon. [Hosted by Sunderland University, UK]  
Available at: <http://www.sunderland.ac.uk/~os0tmc/teci/main.htm>

J'neco ap = Je ne connais pas  
deblé = bled /un village algérien  
céfran = français  
djez = un Algérien

- <sup>10</sup> I read the other day that Canada is one of the few 'western' nations to show an increase in church attendance, especially in Ontario/Toronto where new immigrants have rejuvenated dying parishes. Canadian immigration has implicitly sought out 'Christian' immigrants for years, namely from parts of India, Indians from the Middle East, the Philippines and Taiwan.
- <sup>11</sup> Also known as the French Council of the Muslim Religion.  
France Creates Muslim Council (2002, December 2002). BBC News Online
- <sup>12</sup> More than 60 prominent French women, including Isabelle Adjani and fashion designer Sonia Rykiel, have backed a campaign by Elle magazine to ban what they called a "visible symbol of the submission of women".  
Astier, H. The deep roots of French secularism. (2003, December 18). BBC News online  
Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3325285.stm>  
France Awaits Headscarves Report (2003, December 11). BBC News online.  
Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3307995.stm>
- <sup>13</sup> The question asked was "Are you in favour of or opposed to a law banning signs or dress that conspicuously display religious affiliation?" As an overall community, Muslims answered 42% in favour and 53% against the law.
- <sup>14</sup> In the most recent GCSE the data broadly shows the following improvements with the percentage of pupils getting five or more grades A\* to C at GCSE/GNVQ:

- White - Up 1.8 percentage points to 51.3 per cent.
- Black Caribbean - Up 3.7 percentage points to 32.9 per cent
- Black African - Up 3.3 percentage points to 40.7 per cent.
- Indian - Up 2.6 percentage points to 65.2 per cent
- Pakistani - Up 3 percentage points to 41.5 per cent
- Bangladeshi - Up 2.2 percentage points to 45.5 per cent
- Chinese - Up 4.7 percentage points to 74.8 per cent.

- National average in 2003 - 50.7 per cent

<sup>15</sup> BBC local presenters like Nina Hossein, Asian radio stations, big budget movies like *Bend it Like Beckham* etc., have put British Asians firmly in the centre of British mainstream entertainment

<sup>16</sup> 2001 British Census. This was the first Census to ask for ethnic and religious affiliation. The data puts boroughs such as Brent, Newham and Tower Hamlets at having 48-66% of residents as Asian. Tower Hamlets is primarily Bangladeshi, while Brent and Newham populations are majority Gujrati Hindu and Punjabi Sikh, respectively.

Available at: [http://www.britishcouncil.org/diversity/race\\_population.htm](http://www.britishcouncil.org/diversity/race_population.htm)

<sup>17</sup> Community Cohesion, A Report of the Independent Review Team (2002).

Available in full at: [http://www.irr.org.uk/pdf/independent\\_review\\_team.pdf](http://www.irr.org.uk/pdf/independent_review_team.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> The 1991 Consensus (Local Basic Statistics) figures put 60% of Southall's population as ethnically from the Indian sub-continent

<sup>19</sup> See Madood's 1997 survey, *Ethnic Minorities in Britain: Diversity and Disadvantage*. Summary available on the Policy Studies Institute (also the publisher) website at:

[http://www.psi.org.uk/news/pressrelease.asp?news\\_item\\_id=71](http://www.psi.org.uk/news/pressrelease.asp?news_item_id=71)

A summary of various economic statistical data on Muslims in Britain is also available on the Muslim Council of Britain's website at: <http://www.mcb.org.uk/mcbdirect/statistics.php#4>

<sup>20</sup> German State Backs Headscarf Ban (2004, April 1), BBC Online News.

Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3591043.stm>

<sup>21</sup> Burgat, F. (2003). *Face to Face with Political Islam*. London, New York: IB Tauris and The French Ministry of Culture 140

From a declaration made on the radio station RTL in 1984 by the feminist Khalida Messaoudi

<sup>22</sup> Burgat, F. (2003). *Face to Face with Political Islam*. London, New York: IB Tauris and The French Ministry of Culture 140

At an Open Conference in Geneva, 1999

<sup>23</sup> Rare in the West, the practice has gained some exposure through the court case of Sultaana Freeman, a Florida niqabi who is suing for her right to a photo-less drivers licence.

<sup>24</sup> El Guindi, F. (1999) *Veiling Resistance*. *Fashion Theory*, Volume 3, issue I. 51 –80

Available at: <http://www-rcf.usc.edu/%7eelguindi/VResistance.htm>

<sup>25</sup> *Le Rapport de la Commission Stasi sur la Laïcité* (2003, Decmber 12) *Le Monde* online

<sup>26</sup> The Somalis in Canada have as yet little formal organization to support their community and depend on existing Mosques and other Islamic organizations for community support.

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## CONCLUSION

### THE FUTURE NEGOTIATIONS OF THE *HIJAB* AND THE *UMMA*:

Writing out against the veil or *hijab*, many Muslim feminists borrow language from Jewish persecution by the Nazis in an attempt to vilify the veil. But as El Guindi points out, the adoption of the veil by a young generation threatens to alienate a young generation against feminism and create an Islam in opposition to feminism (1999). And with an increasing rhetoric of anti-Semitic dialogue used in defining their new Muslim identity<sup>1</sup>, in reaction to Palestine and Israel, the holocaust and its horrors provides a difficult ground from which to navigate and borrow language. What is needed appears to be for this period of transformation, a language that bridges the individual and the community, private responsibilities and public actions, and the notions of fixed and fluid Islamic principles. If the new generation of Muslims in the West/Europe are the generation forced to redefine their Islam, then one can only assume that their children will further redefine their parents' Islam and so on. The *hijab*, caught in this moment in time and space, is emblematic of this transformativite period, and itself not fixed in meaning. A politicized Islam does not have to be a reactionary or fundamentalist Islam, and instead acts as a vehicle for change.

One of the results of the proposed ban on the *hijab* in French schools has been the politicization of young Muslim women in France and Britain. Literally moving out from the private to the public sphere, young women have taken to the streets in the thousands in support the wearing of *hijab*. The demonstrations have shown a significant amount of transnational organization through websites<sup>2</sup> and word of mouth, reminiscent of the Rushdie Affair. On January 17, 2004, demonstrators, mainly *muhajjabat*, marched through London, Paris, Cairo, Beirut, Stockholm, Srinagar and the West Bank in support of French Muslims. In Paris, protesters, from young girls to women, formed a sea of color in fanciful scarves of all sizes. Men, some with beards and long robes, also joined in the march and a small group set out a prayer mat and prayed (Ganely 2004). The very process of setting out a political agenda, working as actors with agency and taking charge

of an issue is in itself empowering. For these young girls to return to the private, male dominated spheres of traditional Islam will prove difficult. The very boundaries of the arena of discourse, whereby Muslim women and girls have often found themselves marginalized, have been re-drawn. If women are indeed the carriers of culture, then the culture carried by these new Muslim girls will be very different from the traditional associated with Islam, and by Islamic men and the West.

In the neutral space of the worldwide web, where territory transcends concepts of public and private (and certainly national and gendered boundaries), a number of Muslim women's websites are also present, explaining *hijab*, *niqab*, the rights of Muslim women and calling for Muslim men to shoulder the burden of modesty. These websites, instruct young Muslim women on matters from their rights to education, their right to consent to marriage, to reasons to adopt *hijab* and how to tie a headscarf. Most of these websites use the *Quran* as a basis of explanation and attempt to create a sense of female community through advice and dialogue<sup>3</sup>. Already, signs of 'revolution' of the *hijab* are appearing. In a modernizing twist, *hijab s* and other female wear (such as the *jalabib* etc) are now available via online shopping. In fact, a *sharia*-accepted swimsuit (Hawley 2000) and *hijab* fashion shows, primarily for middle and upper class young women revisiting Islam, are becoming common across the Muslim diaspora (Dent 2003). How these changes can interact within the context of the state is dependent on Muslim women/communities and the state itself – with both parties setting out their positions clearly.

Lastly, with the rise of a transnational cyberpublic, made up of Muslim youth attempting to renegotiate the boundaries between their Islamic selves and their Western context, the question remains as to what direction this reformation will take and whether traditional, older imams (often imported from the Muslim world) will still have any effect on this 'new' Islam. Interestingly, the protests against the *hijab* ban in France saw very little influence of 'older' leaders on the youth who took to the streets. While this paper presents an Islam, which is relatively liberal, in looking at the responses of the young to the *hijab* ban (against the ban, in the face of Council leaders and Imams who suggested

they support the ban) we have to accept that not all actions by this youth will be considered “liberal”. Ramadan himself a ‘leader’ in Euro-Islam is cautiously liberal in language and in his re-reading of the *Quran*. Yet, to assume that Islam is incompatible with the West or modernity is deterministic and reductionist, as the terms modernity, the West, and Islam are forced into fixed categories, leaving no room for any growth or change. In a final empowering of themselves, young Muslims may choose a path towards compatibility that may seem (like the *hijab*) on the surface, initially incompatible with the West’s and Europe’s professed ideals (and in fact, with their parent’s Islamic principles). What is for certain is that revitalization is taking place, powered by the young living in the Muslim diaspora, who will in the next decade change the face of Islam.

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<sup>1</sup> Various articles talk about this phenomenon including:

(1) Fuller, H. (2004, February 11). Anti-Semitism infuses French debate of scarves. The International Herald Tribune online.

(2) Friesen, D. (2004, January 19) Europe Grapples with Rising Anti-Semitism. NBC News.

(3) French Anti-Semitism Reports surge. (2003, March 27) BBC World News.

<sup>2</sup> Such websites as Islamonline.net, Oumma.com, TheRevival.co.uk all advertised the protest prior to January 17, 2004 and urged their readers to go out in support.

<sup>3</sup> Such websites are: How to wear *Hijab* [ [http://home.clara.net/najm/hijab .htm](http://home.clara.net/najm/hijab.htm)] muhajabah.com, and jannah.org.

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## Islamic Clothing Definitions

Hijab Tips  
Fabric Care  
Shopping  
Contact Us

### PHOTO

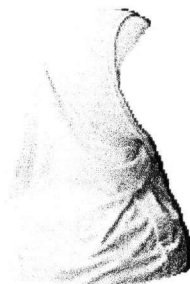
### NAME

### DEFINITION



#### Abaya

Long sleeve slipover, one piece, dress cut design



#### Amira Hijab

Slipover hijab with two pieces one piece serves as a hair cap, the other piece is the actual hijab that you slip over. The one piece amira hijab design has the hair cap conveniently attached to the hijab. "Amira" means princess in Arabic, this has been the "coined" word for this style of hijab. Designs may vary in size, check description online.

**Regular Length-** Usually 15" from chin to bottom

**Shoulder Length-** Usually 10" from chin to bottom



#### Hijab

45" perfect square fabric, made of polyester in various textures

**Chiffon-**A lightweight , sheer, plain weave fabric with a dull surface

**Turkish-** Soft "gauze" like, tightly woven lightweight fabric

**Georgette-**a lightweight, plain weave, crepe fabric with a pebbly texture and slightly raspy hand



**Jalabiyya**

Our men's collection have various ensembles, jalabiyyas are long sleeve, "long dress" type for a man



**Jilbab**

Long sleeve type jacket/coat that is worn as an actual outfit. Wear a full lightweight outfit underneath for modesty

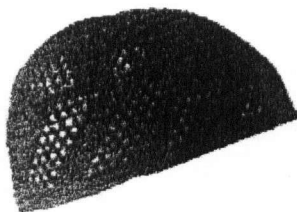
**Kuwaiti**- refers to slipover style with no buttons

**Jordanian**- refers to button down jilbab style



**Khimar**

Refers to extra long, circular hijab piece, similar to an amira hijab cut.. Our khimars always come with a triangular piece underscarf



**Kufi**

Men's Islamic hat

**Moroccan**

Refers to any style jilbab, abaya or men's attire with a decorative "hood" on the back of the neck. Usually a decorative piece and not actually worn over the head



### **Niqab**

Our full face burqah refers to face veil with layers that cover the entire face, and eyes completely



### **Shayla Hijab**

Rectangular fabric that is wrapped around in various way

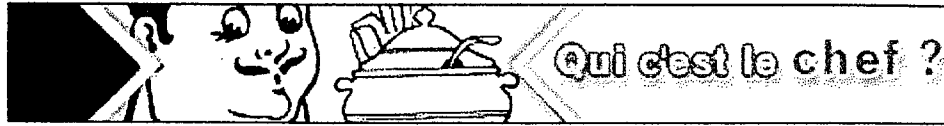
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## les quatre grands types de voile portés par les musulm

LE MONDE | 11.12.03

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### LE FOULARD LÉGER

Le foulard léger, ou bandana, s'est imposé comme instrument de médiation. Certains établissements scolaires ont demandé aux jeunes filles voilées de porter, en signe compromis, ce simple fichu, noué sur les cheveux. Laissant voir les oreilles, le cou et des cheveux, il apparaît beaucoup plus discret que le *hijab*. Il peut s'agir d'un bonnet de couleur, ou d'un simple fichu noir ou blanc.

### LE HIJAB

Le hijab (ou *hidjeben* dialecte maghrébin) est formé sur la racine arabe *hajaba*, qui signifie cacher, dérober aux regards. Ce voile cache les cheveux, les oreilles et le cou, et laisse voir que l'ovale du visage. Promu par exemple par les Frères musulmans, souvent par une tunique ou un imperméable, il s'est généralisé dans le monde musulman, remplaçant des tenues traditionnelles comme le *haïk* au Maroc.

### LE NIQAB

Le niqab est un équivalent arabe du tchador iranien. Le mot vient de la racine arabe qui veut dire trous, parce qu'il ne laissait que deux "trous" pour les yeux. A l'origine, vêtement saoudien qui s'est répandu sous l'influence de l'islam wahhabite. Ce voile complété par une étoffe ne laissant apparaître qu'une fente pour les yeux. Certaines femmes y ajoutent des lunettes de soleil et des gants.

### LA BURQA

La burqa est, à l'origine, le vêtement traditionnel de certaines tribus pachtounes à long voile, de couleur bleu ou marron, couvre complètement la tête et le corps de la musulmane. Un grillage cache les yeux. Depuis quelques années, cette tenue est aux yeux du monde occidental, le symbole du régime des talibans en Afghanistan imposée à toutes les femmes.

ARTICLE PARU DANS L'ÉDITION DU 12.12.03

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