
The Future of Islam

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DR. ESPOSITO DELIVERED THIS TALK AT
THE FLETCHER SCHOOL OF LAW AND DIPLOMACY ON FEBRUARY 22, 2001,
AS PART OF THE ISSAM M. FARES LECTURE SERIES.

Islam today is the second largest of the world's religions and the second or third largest religion in Europe and America. Therefore, the future of Islam is not only a foreign but also a domestic religious and political issue. Moreover, from the point of view of history of religions, Islam does not simply develop and exist by itself, but is part of a Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition. Thus to speak of, or in my case, to write a book entitled *The Future of Islam*, requires not only coverage of Islam globally but also a broadening of people's horizons, the ways in which they think about religion, think about religion and politics, and think about the societies in which they live. All must realize that when we speak about Muslims, we need to see that "Muslims are us," an integral part of the mosaic of America and Europe. Problems and contradictions regarding these issues persist and will strongly affect Islam's future in the Muslim world and in the West.

To talk about Islam in the twenty-first century requires that we realize where we are, how we got here, and what is shaping the way in which we continue to react and respond to Islam and Muslim politics. How did America come to engage Islam, not only in our society but also in terms of U.S. policy? In the 1970s, the oil embargo gave us a new sense of the importance of the Middle East. The Iranian Revolution of 1978-1979 raised this importance to the top. That's when our government really focused on Islam and the Middle East. Throughout the eighties, the Middle East was on the absolute front burner with concerns about the stability of U.S. allies in the Middle East, and the spread of Islamic fundamentalism, especially the export of the Iranian revolution, and access to oil.

Our engagement with Islam started from a base of ignorance and a wealth of widely-accepted stereotypes about the Middle East. Against this background,

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Islam in the guise of the Iranian revolution was experienced as a threat. Thus, our interest in Islam was not simply religiously or intellectually/culturally motivated; it developed because of the Ayatollah Khomeini and the Iranian Revolution and then shortly thereafter from the assassination of Anwar Sadat by an extremist group. We were challenged to understand and respond to the impact of traumatic events that were unexpected and seemed impossible: the fall of one of the strongest allies and states in the Middle East and the assassination of an Egyptian president who most Americans saw as an enlightened peacemaker. How were we to understand these events?

ISLAM AND THE WEST: TERMS OF INITIAL ENGAGEMENT

Picture if you will 1979-1980. Americans had very little knowledge of the Middle East. What we did know included the Shah of Iran who, with his beautiful and talented wife, came to America often. They dressed like us, they talked like us, and they were featured on all the talk shows. Iran had the largest military with the exception of Israel at the time. It had oil. Its allies were the U.S., Europe, and Israel, who were helping to sell it arms and helping to train its security forces and military.

The shah had created a White Revolution, promising to bring Iran into the twenty-first century within decades. It was inconceivable that the man would be overthrown. And overthrown by whom? Alongside a picture of the Shah, we have one of an old man with a turban and a long beard who looks like he's ready to die; he never smiles. And you hear that he's been out of the country for some fifteen years; first living in exile in Iraq and now in some small village outside of Paris. How is it conceivable that this old religious leader, living in exile, could lead a movement that would topple the Peacock throne? And then, Anwar Sadat, the "Believer President" and a Nobel Peace Prize winner, is assassinated by an Islamic radical. That's the way in which Islam and Muslim politics were initially experienced by the West and America in particular. It is against that background, therefore, that the average American and European came to understand Islam. It is also against this background that their governments experienced and engaged Islam, an apparent new threat—"Islamic fundamentalism"—taking the lead over the threat of the Soviet Union in the Cold War. This new force of Islamic fundamentalism seemed to generate great power. Our government saw its key allies going down. Experts saw modernization and development theory discredited. Modernization, Westernization, and secularization were turned on their heads when we saw Iran, Egypt, and Lebanon, countries that were the most modern, most Western-oriented, experiencing a kind of religious revolution.

Rather than the traditional religious countries, it was in fact countries with leaders and elites who were modernizing or Western-oriented that felt the greatest impact of revolutionary Islam. Therefore Islam came to be equated with

Islamic fundamentalism and Islamic fundamentalism equated with radicalism and terrorism. Alongside the “Evil Empire,” Ronald Reagan (and later others like Vice President Dan Quayle) posited Qaddafi/Khomeini and Islamic fundamentalism as a new global threat which became the dominant theme and concern of American foreign policy in the 1980s.

POLITICAL ISLAM IN THE 1980S AND 1990S

However by the late 1980s and 1990s this vision was challenged by other surprising events. The notion that Islamic activism is simply radicalism and terrorism is again turned on its head by the emergence of a “quiet revolution,” the non-violent face of Islamic political and social activism. Economies fail in the Muslim world, elections are held in many countries for the first time, and Islamic activists emerge as a leading opposition. Authoritarian regimes, which, like Western governments, saw all Islamists as marginalized, alienated radicals and revolutionaries expected them to be rejected by the populace. This was the received wisdom. However, when elections were held, Islamists emerged as a leading opposition. This is all the more amazing if we remember that in most countries Islamists could not run as a political party; they had to run as individuals. They often could not organize and function politically and they had no access to the media. In many countries, to be an Islamist or to vote for one was to risk losing your job because most jobs were state-created. To be an Islamist was a problem; to vote for them, to have a beard, to have a *hijab* was a major issue.

In Algeria, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) swept municipal and parliamentary elections. They were not simply an opposition; they was poised to come to power—not by bullets—but by ballots! Muslim and Western governments faced the reality of an elected Islamic government. Looking at American and British threats and reactions, we see how governments were semi-traumatized by this election. America had an assistant secretary of state during the Bush administration, Ambassador Edward Djerejian, who actually articulated an American policy on Islam. Djerejian basically said that the United States has no problem with Islam, political Islam, or Islamic movements and that Islamic movements should be able to compete in elections just as secular movements do. The only time America would have a problem with an Islamic movement would be the same problem it would have with a secular movement—if it used the democratic process to come to power and seize power; as Djerejian put it: “one man, one vote, one time.”

But then along came Algeria and what did the U.S. government do? It froze. Why? Because no one ever thought they were going to have to apply this policy that soon. When America was speculating about the political role of Islamic movements, they were talking about the ability to compete in elections.

No one in government was thinking "What do we do if it looks like Islamists are going to come to power and if an ally we're close to gets saved from Islamists by the military?" When the Algerian military intervened and effectively seized power after the FIS had won elections twice, they justified their actions as preventing the FIS from hijacking democracy. Nobody in a responsible position in the United States, British, or French governments talked about the fact that the military had indeed hijacked democracy. And then what happened? The very governments (Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria) that had opened up their political/electoral systems and seen Islamists do well closed their electoral doors in differing ways. Algeria and Tunisia sought to, quite literally, decapitate their Islamic movements. Egypt began to blur the distinction between Islamic moderates and radicals in order to contain all Islamically motivated opposition. Jordan changed election laws and as a result when Islamists did not win as many seats in the next election the media simply concluded that Islamists were rejected. The media never looked seriously at whether or not voting districts or regulations were redrawn or whether or not various forms of harassment had taken place.

So, as we've seen, in the 1980s, Islam is equated with radicalism. In the late 1980s and early 1990s a mainstream Islamic activism emerges and with it, a distinction between Islamic radicals and Islamic moderates. Yet, ironically, what emerges from these developments is a new projection of Islam as a triple threat, a view held by governments and many experts, including Samuel Huntington, Bernard Lewis, Martin Indyk, Martin Kramer, Daniel Pipes, Judy Miller, and others. Such writers reject a vision of political Islam in which a distinction is made between extremists who we need to contain and suppress, and mainstream Islamic activism that is not a threat and can effectively participate within the system. Of course, recognizing moderates has serious consequences. It undermines the ability of authoritarian rulers to legitimate moving against any and all Islamic opposition by saying they're all radical revolutionaries. The debate and differences over how to understand political Islam are clearly demonstrated in the writings of so-called experts. Compare scholars I mentioned above to Lisa Anderson, Richard Norton, John Voll, Esposito, Yvonne Haddad, and James Piscatori. You will see that however different we are, we wind up being identified as two schools of thought. The former group sees political Islam as monolithic and a threat; the latter believes that you have to distinguish between violent extremists who are a minority and the moderate majority of Islamists who, if given the opportunity, participate within the political system and society.

So what emerged in the 1980s and early 1990s was an Islam that had become institutionalized in mainstream social and political activism. Islamists established schools, day care centers, legal aid programs, banks, and insurance companies and also participated in the political system. What happened? What was the response that you see? Most Muslim governments and elites, threatened by a legitimate alternative, moved to contain them, and Western governments supported that containment

either proactively or passively by looking the other way. At the same time many experts talked about Islam's historic relations with the West in terms of fourteen centuries of conflict, usually implying a one-way process of fourteen centuries of jihad rather than speaking of fourteen centuries of crusades and jihad. They ignored the many instances of civilizational encounters and exchange. This emphasis on fourteen centuries of political and civilizational clash provided the basis for the projection of Islam as a triple threat today: political, civilizational, and demographic.

Suddenly articles began appearing warning of the presence of Muslims and their increasing numbers. This is an interesting phenomenon. During a recent lecture in Britain people told me that while non-Muslim elites in Britain, twenty or thirty years ago, were very supportive of mosques being built, ten years ago this support waned as Muslims became more visible and numerous. When you're a very small minority you're not a problem. The problem is born when you start to constitute significant numbers especially in societies that, unlike America, are not used to being that diverse. This is part of the problem that the French have had as well, witnessed in their attempt to ban school children from wearing of hijab and France's decision to adopt a policy of integration rather than multiculturalism. Thus, you wind up with a number of people writing about the growth of Islam in the West as a demographic threat. The questions raised include: Can they (Muslims) be loyal citizens? Is Islam incompatible with Western values, liberalism, democracy, pluralism, etc.? And more importantly, how about the radical terrorist connection?

When considering the future of Islam it's important to recognize where we came from as well as where we still are in many ways; we continue to grapple with Islam as a political, civilizational, and demographic threat. We continue to live in a world that fears a clash of civilizations, both in the Muslim world and here in America and Europe.

Fifteen years ago when I traveled in the Muslim world, whether I was talking to government or non-government officials, everyone resented the term fundamentalism. Now the term is in favor because, like the term communism, it can be used to legitimate continued authoritarianism and the repression of political reform and opposition movements. Today, if you're in Turkey, Tunisia, or other countries, you can use the term fundamentalism to dismiss and discredit your opposition. It is an easy explanation you can use with your Western counterparts to justify the repression of opposition and violation of human rights and to get a supportive, collegial response.

CONTEXTUALIZING TERRORISM

So when we talk about the future of Islam internationally or domestically, we're dealing with questions that we don't ask so uncritically of everybody else, such as "Is Islam particularly prone to terrorism?" Well, we have Christian Serbs

who have committed genocide against Bosnian Muslims; we have Christians who bomb abortion clinics or a Christian Identity movement that probably inspired the bombing of the FBI building in Oklahoma and has been involved in other horrific crimes, but we do not directly associate these acts with the religion of Christianity; we've had Jewish "fundamentalists" who killed Prime Minister Rabin or slaughtered Muslims at Friday prayer in the Hebron mosque; they have committed acts of violence and terrorism, but we do not attribute this violence to Judaism. Our instinctive response to these acts of terrorism committed by some Christians or Jews is to contextualize them, to distinguish between the religious traditions and individuals or groups that exploit or manipulate religious symbols and traditions. When extremist acts occur, newspapers speak about "cults" rather than using a group's self-styled Christian name. Similarly Jewish extremists in Israel such as the assassin of Rabin are referred to as "religious nationalists" rather than "Jewish fundamentalists." We have a way of framing or contextualizing incidents involving Judaism and Christianity that as yet is not extended to Islam.

A continuing problem is that when talking about religion, many people ignore the transcendent and transforming aspects of religion and see religion as an agent that necessarily retards change and development and is more prone to violence. Both this secular bias and a tendency to uncritically equate Islam with violence and as incompatible with the modern world have distorted our vision of the realities of the twentieth century. If we look at mega-violence in the twentieth century, most of it has been done in the name of secular nationalism: the great wars were fought in the name of or defense of various forms of nationalism. Zbigniew Brzezinski, in *Out of Control: Global Turmoil on the Eve of the 21st Century*, has said that the twentieth century was the most violent in history in terms of death, destruction, and bloodshed. We need to take a look at what Brzezinski terms the "megadeaths" of the twentieth century, the 167 million people slaughtered as a result of the metamyths of Hitler, Stalin, and Mao; the wars fought in the name of nation states. We need to remember that most of the megaviolence occurred at the initiative of the West, not the Muslim world. Yet we're continuing to function within a context in which our gut reaction in terms of the future of Islam will be to think of Islam as prone to violence and necessarily incompatible with democracy, modernity, pluralism, and liberalism. We tend to apply these beliefs to Muslims in our midst. That is, we ask these same questions of Muslims here in America when we question "Are they capable of being loyal citizens? Can they be pluralistic? Can they be liberal?"

Muslims are struggling with questions concerning the compatibility of Islam and pluralism and whether Islam needs to be reinterpreted. But what we don't ask is whether or not there's an equal challenge to the West. How liberal are we? How pluralistic are we? Are we able to include Muslims in our pluralism? Take, for example, the issue of the hijab in France. Muslims still do not fit within the comfortable plu-

realistic circle or parameters of many Western societies, a pluralism defined originally by people who, whatever their ethnic and religious differences, represented a Judeo-Christian or secular orientation and context. Muslims are new significant minorities and tend to be seen as separate. This will change as we relate to Muslims as neighbors and as we broaden our religious understanding so that Islam is seen as an integral part of a Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition.

If you remember nothing else, remember the following: while most Muslim countries gained their political independence a short time ago, today they are engaged in struggles or wars of cultural identity; they did not face the issue of cultural identity when they gained independence. When we talk about the future of Islam, we have to see it within that sense, that we are talking about a 40- or 50-year period, which has had a tremendous impact in terms of today.

What do I mean by that? Most of the Muslim countries that gained their independence in the 1940s or 1950s have artificially created boundaries and most of their rulers are monarchs, military, or ex-military. So if we consider the effects of two centuries of European colonialism, followed by 40 or 50 years of authoritarian rule—what do we have? A culture of authoritarianism, which then allows some to say, “There must be something wrong or deficient with Arab culture or Islam.” Yet, if you have societies that have lived under that culture of authoritarianism for so long—what can you expect? The fragility of the state and problems of legitimacy and national identity and unity remain.

To those of you who are students, I would say when you look at a country, don't do what my generation too often did, and tend to overlook the extent to which Muslim states were and are still dominated by authoritarian governments and military and security services. I remember being conscious of a dramatic shift a few years ago when I was on a panel with Michael Hudson and John Waterbury. Because of the new interest in democratization, every time we referred to an Arab country or to most Muslim states, we kept referring to a security state. In the past, we would often talk about a country and analyze its political, economic, or social development without sufficiently emphasizing the authoritarian nature of these governments and their reliance upon military and security forces to assure their stability and security. We tended to overlook the extent to which rulers in most countries were vulnerable to issues of legitimacy and authority. Of equal importance, we ignored the issue of cultural (religio-cultural) identity in national development. This problem can be seen in the formation of modern Muslim states.

SECULARISM, ISLAM, AND THE MODERN MUSLIM STATE

The creation of modern Muslim states represented three general paths: secular, Islamic, and Muslim. Turkey was the only country created as a secular state, Saudi Arabia was a self-proclaimed Islamic state, and then a large group of countries

fell somewhere in between. They could be categorized as Muslim states in the sense that the majority of their population was Muslim. Although most countries adopted Western paradigms or models for political, economic, legal, and educational development, they also retained an Islamic façade by having stipulations, like the head of state must be a Muslim. Few took seriously or resolved the relationship of religious culture and state ideology. Somehow it was hoped that religion would just recede into private life. Neither rulers nor Western-oriented elites faced those issues. The fact is that the modern nation state has failed in many ways. The crises that generated contemporary Islamic revivalism in newly modernizing states occurred because after several decades, Western models of development were not working. Many concluded “The state isn’t turning out to be what we thought it would be, we’re not getting the benefits that we thought we would get.”

As a result, Islam was there to be appealed to, but it was an Islam that had been ignored in the process of development, that people had not been integrating into state and society. Thus, all of a sudden, both Muslim governments and elites as well as Western policymakers needed to grapple with how to understand and deal with the role of Islam. And this problem remains—it is what most Muslim countries (in terms of the future of Islam) are going to continue to be faced with in the next ten to twenty years. Why? Because dealing with this problem today is compounded by the end of the Cold War, and the fact that in the aftermath of the Cold War and the Gulf War, neither the Soviet Union nor the Gulf States can provide the foreign aid, jobs, and revenue sorely needed by less developed countries. These are countries that have poor economies and rapidly growing populations; 40 to 50 percent of their population consists of young people with high expectations, and they struggle under authoritarian rulers whose primary concern is staying in power. This is surely a potentially explosive situation.

In his book, *The Failure of Political Islam*, Olivier Roy discusses the failure of Islamic states or republics, like Iran and Sudan. However, he did not imply that Islam in politics and society is necessarily going to disappear. I would argue that the future of Islam is not to be found in looking toward Islamic republics, although I think it’s inevitable that we are going to see Islamic governments coming to power; instead, the future of Islam will be found in the Islamization of society from below. An example of this phenomenon is found in Geneive Abdo’s new book, *No God but God, the Triumph of Islam in Egypt*. Abdo points out that despite government suppression of political Islam, Egyptian society is increasingly becoming more Islamized from below in terms of symbols, rhetoric, dress, and issues in society. Turkey is also experiencing an Islamic resurgence today. The military may push to contain and repress Islam, but then we often see a counter force from below. I was in a meeting with four Turkish women the other day and they were frustrated. They explained, “We wear hijab, and not only in our country but here, people think we’re Islamists.” One of them noted that she had nothing

against Islamists, but she doesn't belong to an Islamist party. Rather, she's a Muslim woman who believes in wearing hijab as a symbol of her faith. That's what I mean about Islamization in Turkey growing from below—I'm not talking about the power of a particular political party but rather the increased visibility and impact of Islamic faith and values in society.

Islamization of society will of course always have the potential for Islam to emerge as a political force. To that extent, the negative experiences of Iran, Sudan, and the Taliban in Afghanistan as well as entrenched secular bias will continue to raise fears regarding any "mixing of religion and politics." The former prime minister of Singapore was asked about the significant reemergence of Islam in Southeast Asian politics, especially in Indonesian politics. The question was precipitated by a number of Islamically-oriented people who are now in government and parliament in Indonesia as well as in Malaysia, including President Abdurahman Wahid of Indonesia and Dr. Amien Rais, speaker of the national assembly of Malaysia. The prime minister's first response was to refer to this development as militant Islam. What you see is someone who instinctively sees a threat in the fact that religion has become such a significant factor, in particular that Indonesian politics has become more Islamized.

So in terms of the future of Islam, I would say that across the world what you are going to see in the next few decades is more Islamization from below. Accompanying that, if governments open up the system, we'll see strong Islamic reform and opposition movements as well as the possibility of Islamists coming to power through elections. But, in addition, if governments do open up the system, Islamists in the long term will also in many instances become weaker. Under many authoritarian regimes you have no opposition or an opposition that looks like what I call, Volkswagen Beetle political parties (parties that include about six people!) When elections are held and Islamists do well, as in Algeria, it is not just true believers or members of FIS who voted for FIS candidates. Other FIS votes came from those who wanted to vote against the failed policies of the government. A system that is more open will also provide alternative political parties or choices for people, and not only Islamist parties. The existence of other political alternatives creates more competition and pressure and that can help to transform an Islamist party's ideology and agenda; being in power will require results or will bring about dissatisfaction for any party, Islamist or secular. But until the system is opened, little progress can be made.

As you watch the next twenty years, don't buy into the line that says we need "civil society first and then democracy later." Some, when discussing democratization in the Middle East and the broader Muslim world, continue to maintain that democratization is a difficult and dangerous process and should be a long-term goal. Therefore, they advocate supporting authoritarian regimes in strengthening civil society. However, as John Entelis, an expert on North Africa,

said to a conference audience recently, "Think about it, if it's an authoritarian regime, how or why is it going to promote civil society?" Authoritarian regimes, in fact, are threatened by civil society. Many governments don't even have a civil society to strengthen and in the post-Gulf War period; they have actually been moving to contain, control, or repress Islamist movements that are attempting to provide healthcare and develop educational and social welfare institutions. An Islamist movement that is mainstream merely underscores the failure of governments to provide adequate medical and educational services. Emmanuel Sivan makes this point in his article "Civil Society Strikes Back." Thus some governments like Egypt, Turkey, and Malaysia are threatened by the existence of strong Islamically motivated civil institutions. So this is one thing to keep in mind as you watch the development of these societies.

ISLAM'S IMPACT IN EUROPE AND AMERICA

We need now to look at the other side of the coin when we talk about the future of Islam: what will Islam's impact be in Europe and America? This is very important since Islam is the second and third largest religion in Europe and America respectively. Several years ago, both Ted Koppel and Andy Rooney announced that there were as many Muslims in America as there were American Jews. Probably not true yet, but it certainly will be true in the next couple of decades. It is most likely that in the next 20 or 30 years, Islam will be the second largest religion in America and in much of Europe. Muslims are now part of the mosaic of our societies and they have domestic interests, but also foreign interests and agendas as well. They are concerned about what's going on abroad, just as the Irish were concerned about what was going on in Ireland, and Italians were concerned about what was going on in Italy. A tremendous amount of cross-fertilization is occurring between Muslims in the West and Muslim homelands. I have just finished a paper that talks about how in the past it was the Muslim world that was simply impacting Muslims in Europe and in America. Now the flow of ideas from the West is also moving toward the Muslim world. Because Europe and America are open, Muslims can practice their faith more freely, think about Islam, and engage in the interpretation of Islam. Many students trained in Europe and America return to the Muslim world with fresh ideas and insights. Thus today we have a two-way, international super highway of Islamic reinterpretation, reform, and development.

While Muslims are becoming part of our Western landscape, there is a difference between the American experience of Muslim immigration and that of Europe. In Europe most Muslims came to work as laborers. They did not have quite the same leverage or position in their newly adopted societies and therefore they have had a much more difficult time dealing with their New World experience. But what do Muslims in America and Muslims in Europe have in common? They both

share life in societies where they can grow and prosper but also where they are constantly vulnerable to public opinion when the next terrorist attack takes place.

In many ways, Muslims are making it and they are making it professionally in the United States, where many have come as students or trained professionals. You see them in American hospitals, in our colleges and universities, and in many corporations. Yet, although they are very much a part of our society, Muslims are often not treated with the same parity as Jews and Christians. The impetus for the Terrorism Act was the Oklahoma City bombing of the FBI building. Muslims weren't involved in this massive terrorist act. Yet when our government reacted with legislation to the threat of terrorism, whom did they hit disproportionately? Arabs and Muslims. The Secret Evidence Act also excessively impacted Arabs and Muslims. Dr. Mazen Al-Najjar, an academic from Tampa, Florida was recently freed after three and a half years in prison. Do you know why he was in prison? Nobody knew why he was in prison! His lawyers couldn't see the evidence. And neither could he!

In America we're beginning to come to grips with our anti-terrorism legislation that has impacted Arabs and Muslims disproportionately and the Secret Evidence Act that violates the basic principles of our constitution. Ironically, Britain mirrors some of our problems. They have recently passed a terrorism act that was implemented on February 17, 2000. In addition, Britain has an act that is five years old, which can be utilized by the police: they can stop you if you look suspicious. Looking suspicious can mean looking "ideologically" suspicious. Many Muslims are concerned that this has come to mean wearing a beard or hijab or supporting Muslim struggles in Chechnya or Kashmir.

The fact that the United States could enact such legislation and that Britain has now passed its own terrorist legislation that targets some groups, Arabs and Muslims, disproportionately doesn't mean that there isn't a danger from domestic terrorism or that there aren't terrorists who are Muslim who could come to the United States or Europe. But there are all kinds of terrorists and terrorist groups; many are white supremacist, Christian extremist, and non-Muslim. Moreover, laws like the Secret Evidence Act fly in the face of American jurisprudence. The British anti-terrorism Act and other legislation that enables the police to stop and search people who appear to be dangerous can become an excuse for racial profiling or for stopping men with beards and women wearing a hijab. Support for the struggle of Muslims in Chechnya or Kashmir or in Palestine can uncritically be seen as supporting terrorist groups. The ease with which these laws have been enacted and the difficulties in redressing the ills of the Secret Evidence Act stand out more sharply when one realizes the size of Muslim communities and asks whether similar action could be taken regarding Jewish or Christian communities. The rights of Muslims and their involvement in foreign, as well as domestic, politics will remain an important future issue.

What are some of the primary domestic issues that Muslims face, both in Europe and America? First and foremost is the issue of identity. We, the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, ran a conference called, "Becoming American: The Jewish, Catholic, Muslim Experience." It explored the experiences of these faiths regarding key identity issues: What does it mean to become an American? Do I assimilate? Do I integrate? How do I preserve my faith and identity as a religious minority? What does it mean? Do I start my own schools? While there are many similarities, it is also more difficult for Muslims because those groups that had to assimilate in the past, however different, could be seen as part of a Judeo-Christian tradition. But for other groups that were Christian—however much they might have been looked down upon because of their ethnic background—ultimately, they fell within the Christian tradition. Muslims are often seen as distinctively different because few in Western societies have been trained to think about a Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition. Once this family resemblance is acknowledged and inculcated, we will be on the road to a broader form of American pluralism.

Pluralism is a challenge to the faith of many Muslims. For many Muslims, acceptance of the notion of Western or modern pluralism requires a reinterpretation (*ijtihad*) of Islam. In terms of the rights of minorities, Islam recognized Jews and Christians as "People of the Book," as protected (*dhimmi*) people able to practice their faith. However, by modern standards of citizenship and rights, this *dhimmi* minority status would now be a form of second-class citizenship. In terms of how Muslims who are minorities themselves should behave, the ideal in the past was not to create permanent Muslim minority communities. However, in the twenty-first century, there are more Muslim minority communities globally and they are permanent communities. This is a challenge to Islam, or more precisely to Muslim self-understanding, and to Islamic law or modern Muslim jurisprudence. Muslims must now address the issue of how to function and participate fully in a non-Muslim society and still preserve a Muslim identity. Muslims are grappling with the most basic of issues: What does it mean to be an American or European Muslim?

As some young graduate students, children of Pakistani Muslim Americans at UCLA told me in frustration, "My parents live in denial of the fact that they have been here thirty years and they are going to die here. They still act like we are just visiting!" Integral to this issue, with which both the older generation and the younger generations contend and sometimes argue about, is the cultural dimension of change and the relationship of religion to culture. How does one begin to realize that a good deal of what one practices as a Pakistani Muslim or Egyptian Muslim is cultural? And how do you distinguish cultural customs from the unchanging religious dimensions of faith and practice? This requires the recognition of the need and appropriateness of a new transition or transformation, the development, if you will, of an American and European Islam just as there is an Egyptian Islam and Pakistani Islam.

The clearest example of this issue is provided by dress. Muslim dress in Saudi Arabia is different from Muslim dress in Malaysia, Egypt, or Bangladesh. Islamic values have been expressed in diverse ways in different cultural contexts. I once lectured at an Islamic University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. I was the first non-Muslim to lecture there on Islam. An Egyptian professor, who had a big following among more conservative students (some Saudis described them as “fundamentalist” students) was losing some of his influence and tried to reclaim it by discrediting me. He charged that I had shown slides of nude women on my previous lecture trip! I could not imagine what he was referring to. Then I recalled that I had given a lecture on Islam in America and did show some slides of Muslims and mosques in America. I suddenly remembered that I had shown a slide of Arab and South Asian women at an Islamic center. Bengali women in comparison to Pakistani women who also were wearing *saris* had bared midriffs. By this professor’s chosen standards, especially relative to the dress code in Saudi Arabia, that bared midriff was nudity. In a rather startling way, this experience reflects a more deep-seated clash of cultures that sometimes exists between the older and younger generations of American Muslims. Sometimes the older generation of immigrant Muslims proves incapable of distinguishing between Islam as a religion and practices that they inherited from the cultural contexts in which they were born and raised. Unless this distinction is made, many in the younger generation may be lost in the struggle to retain their faith and forge an American Muslim identity.

In many Muslim communities that I visit, I speak at mosques and centers. I talk to the older generation and I say to them “You can’t just get the job and enjoy the neighborhood; you also have to deal with and relate to your colleagues and neighbors.” I ask, “If you move into a neighborhood and your neighbors don’t invite you over or talk to you, how do you feel?” They respond that their neighbors must be “anti-Muslim.” At that I say, “And what if you don’t talk to your non-Muslim neighbors, don’t you think that they have a right to be upset?” Then, suddenly a light of recognition can be seen in their eyes. A related issue involves how we get Americans and Europeans to accept the reality not of Islam *in* Europe or *in* America, and not Muslims *in* Europe or America? But Muslims *of* Europe and America.

WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

So, the future of Islam in the twenty-first century is going to be a situation in which the legacy of the past continues to have a significant impact today. As the legacy of the past, we are still dealing with authoritarian regimes, we are still dealing with a Europe and America that live with Muslims domestically while seeing the Muslim world internationally in terms of the Bin Ladens of the world.

Bin Laden is the best thing that has come along, if you are an intelligence officer, if you are an authoritarian regime, or if you want to paint Islamist activism as a threat. There's a danger in making Bin Laden the poster boy of global terrorism, and not realizing that there are a lot of other forces involved in global terrorism. Bin Laden has become the new symbol, following in the footsteps of Qaddafi, Khomeini, and Sheikh Omar Abdur Rahman. Bin Laden is a perfect media symbol: He's tall, gaunt, striking, and always has a Kalashnikov with him. As long as we focus on these images we continue to see Islam and Islamic activism through the prism of ayatollahs and Iran, of Bin Laden and the Afghan Arabs.

And so the challenge in the twenty-first century is going to be integrating and accepting an Islam that will continue to be among the fastest growing religions. Islam will continue to assert itself from below in Muslim societies. It will also be more and more visible as it penetrates European and American societies. Our goal, therefore, both in Muslim and Western societies, will center on dealing with those who choose to be both modern and more Islamically-oriented. Do we adopt a pluralistic vision that sees them as a legitimate alternative that is a healthy part of the society or as a threat? In many ways the twenty-first century will be a century for Islam. Islam will continue to grow and be a significant force in Muslim countries across the world. At the same time, it will take its place as a major religious tradition in the West. The line—and with it our common discourse—often drawn between Islam and the West will dissolve as we increasingly realize that the cities and centers of Islam are not only Cairo, Damascus, Istanbul, Islamabad, and Kuala Lumpur, but also London, Birmingham, Paris, Marseilles, New York, Detroit, and Washington.

Thank you. ■