

Determining a Newfound European Islam

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Abstract

This article explores the implications of the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks for Muslims in Europe already experiencing a whole host of challenges in relation to the securitisation of integration, Islamophobia, and political and economic marginalisation. It is argued that while the incident appreciably dented the relationship between Muslims and the French state, the events have wider implications for Muslims across Western Europe regarding acceptance, tolerance and equality. It places pressures on both the Muslims in Western Europe, and the states in which they reside, to draw inwards, narrowing the terms of engagement, ultimately handing further powers to governments to legislate and police without always considering human rights or civil liberties. Simultaneously, Muslims, facing the brunt of exclusion in society in the current period, run the risk of entrenchment. Rather than interpreting these events as a separation of communities, the opportunities exist to engage in meaningful dialogue. It has the potential to promote humanist religious values, all the while participating in society within the limits of Islam, which remain relatively broad and inclusive for the vast majority of European Muslims. Alternatively, dominant societies run the danger of casting their nets wide, inducing Muslims to see integration and engagement as the least desirable option. This article suggests ways forward to empower the Muslim centre ground in order to push violent extremist elements further to the margins.

Keywords

Charlie Hebdo – Western Europe – Islamophobia – tolerance – racism

Introduction

In January 2015, two events in Paris shocked the world. Employees of Paris-based satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* were gunned down by takfiri-jihadi militants of French-born Algerian descent. Days later, Jewish customers at a kosher supermarket in the outskirts of Paris were held hostage, and then shot by their French-born Malian attacker. The events brought to the fore concerns over an interminable 'clash of civilisations', the unassimilability of Muslim minorities, and the violent conflict that ensues because of political and cultural disconnect. All three were in their early to mid-30s, born and raised in the suburbs of Paris. With a personal biography of social marginalisation, criminality and anomie, the assailants claimed they were members of the Islamic State. As the cartoonists, innocent bystanders and police officers were brutally shot and killed over a few frenzied days, primed voyeurs were then subjected to countless press opinion and discussion advocating all sorts of conclusions about the causes and solutions considered as the essential struggles. But the result, once again, is a perennial cycle of violence, a demonising media, political machinations further targeting Muslims, eventually followed by further violence towards Muslims.

This concise essay is a sociological analysis of identity, citizenship, belonging, religion, racism and politics at the heart of the subject of Muslim radicalisation in Europe. The explanations are found in the milieu of anti-Muslimism, culturally, economically and politically in play today, not merely in specific Western nation states but also across vast swathes of the world. Issues also exist within communities preventing European-born Muslims from adequately resisting the allure of adventurism associated with effectively a form of criminality. Rather than considering the appalling Paris events as an opportunity to foster dialogue and understanding, it is likely to result in the normalisation of anti-Muslim and Islamophobic racism and radicalism, combined with fear and myopia on the part of Muslims. Indeed, it does so due to the collapse of the Western European imagination. However, the potential for change may well emerge among the same young Muslims of Western Europe at the centre of the present concerns.

The Historical Paradigm

It is well documented how the transatlantic slave trade facilitated advances to industry, industrialisation and commerce, sustaining a form of international

political economy with capitalism as king. Today, more widely than ever, the world is divided between the haves and the have-nots, between the empowered and disempowered, not just between black and white, but also between the Muslim world and the rest of the world. And since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, this Muslim-non-Muslim distinction has steadily increased, economically, politically, culturally and ideologically.¹

Many Muslims who came to Western Europe after the end of the Second World War did so to fill unwanted employment opportunities shunned by indigenous populations seeking higher expectations in the labour market. Employers and policymakers invited 'guest workers' to take up these jobs in the hope their sojourn would be temporary. But it was not. The outcome was a function of policy but also design.² Employers benefited from keeping wages down. Economies gained from a pliable workforce. Minority Muslim communities were law-abiding and balanced with regards to cultural wants and needs, while maintaining loyalty to their new nations. However, racism, inherited from colonialism, Orientalism and cultural ethnocentrism, did not dissipate upon their arrival, nor as they settled over time. Instead, racism adapted itself by centring first on colour, then race, to ethnicity, and eventually, to religion.³ Today, second and third-generation Western-European-born Muslims, as distinct ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups, continue to face the brunt of discrimination, vilification and isolation.⁴

There are approximately 30m Muslim minorities of various backgrounds in Western Europe. The vast majority originate from once-colonised lands originally migrating to their mother countries in order to take up work in declining industrial sectors of various economies. The processes of integration however were somewhat thwarted by issues of discrimination, racism, xenophobia and vilification over the years. So much so that it required Western governments to legislate in order to protect the rights of citizens of different cultural and religious backgrounds.⁵ But in spite of the efforts of better-minded people the problems continue. Present-day third generation Muslim minorities face a

1 Gabriele Marranci, 'Multiculturalism, Islam and the clash of civilisations theory: rethinking Islamophobia', *Culture and Religion: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 5:1 (2004), 105–117; Jack Goody, *Islam in Europe* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004).

2 Jørgen S Nielsen, *Muslims in Western Europe*, second edition (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995).

3 Ceri Peach and Giinther Glebe, 'Muslim Minorities in Western Europe', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 18:1 (1995), 26–46.

4 Tariq Modood, *Multicultural politics: Racism, ethnicity, and Muslims in Britain* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005).

5 Sami Chakrabarti, *On Liberty* (London and New York: Allen Lane, 2014).

daunting prospect in relation to opportunities or otherwise for social mobility through education and employment.⁶ The conditions of social discontent create the seeds for radicalisation, for all groups, but for Muslims in particular, as they have suffered disproportionately in relation to the othering of groups in various societies.

At the level of nation states, different Western European societies have narrowly determined what it is to be a 'good citizen'. But the overriding conversation in relation to differences focuses on Islam as somehow antithetical to the needs and aspirations of nations with long histories of contact with the religion over the centuries. The prevailing discourse is not about diversity or pluralism, but about how to curb seemingly excessive Muslim demands, ones which were perfectly accommodated or in the process of being so until recent periods. Moreover, these nations have narrowly defined a form of exclusive and self-serving citizenship as ethno-nationalism, promoting a neoliberal outlook which is anti-social democratic. Extending to a global level, many Western European nation states sustain their economies with dubious economic and political interests in far flung corners of the world. More disconcerting is the way in which Western European powers and America collude as a coalition to intervene in Muslim countries supposedly to prop up democracy and freedom but in effect they sow seeds to expand their tentacles into new opportunities.⁷ Connecting all of these local, national and international concerns is a discourse fusing the impression Muslims are in some way a predicament for the globe as a whole, with a particular focus on terrorism and extremism acting as a unifying topic for media and political ends.⁸

All the while, the forces of neoliberal market economics rampage societies, leaving many struggling, in particular those at the margins of society, namely former traditional working class communities, minority communities from once-colonised lands and new immigrant groups placed at the bottom of society irrespective of colour or religion. All of the processes are accelerated by globalisation, which is now about finance, not about trade and commerce *per se*.⁹ Further, the role of the internet cannot be underestimated in this process. It takes the attention away from other concerns in relation to climate

6 Tahir Abbas, *Islamic Radicalism and Multicultural Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011).

7 Robert Dreyfuss, *Devil's Game: How the United States Helped Unleash Fundamentalist Islam* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006). Dir Adam Curtis, *Bitter Lake*, BBC Films, 2015.

8 Deepa Kumar, *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire* (New York: Haymarket, 2012).

9 Owen Jones, *The Establishment: And How They Got Away With It* (London and New York: Allen Lane, 2014).

change, the problems of the food industries, the unevenness of national and international economic development, or the tax avoidance of the rich and the most successful of corporate interests.¹⁰ The debate reveals the outcome of a polarising binary opposition dynamic leaving little room for sustained debate over the solutions. But the black-white dualism is enhanced by the Muslim-non-Muslim dualism. In the past, People of colour were exploited by the Western world. Today, it is the people of the faith of Islam now at the mercy of Western powers. A similar 'othering' process exists at present, i.e., people of colour were judged how Muslims are seen today; namely dangerous, menacing, exploitative of women, lecherous, inferior or backward/primitive.

Historically, considerable contact, exchange and intercultural relations between Islam and Europe helped to define and shape each other's character.¹¹ As Islam ascended, it absorbed European Christianity. As Islam waned, Christian Europe disdained Islam, even though it benefited from it considerably. As Europe grew, it split into nation states competing aggressively until the conflict could no longer be sustained. The ideals of the European Union were harnessed as a response to internal challenges. But European harmony is fragile. Critically, European-ness has become blinkered and inward looking, focusing on exclusivity and a selective historical memory. The failures of Europe today are the ignominies of its imagination in the twenty-first century, but they also result from the disappointments of the past. In effect, Western European inventiveness has stagnated. The constant focus on neo-liberal economics and the need to uphold the designs of hyper-capitalism at the expense of all other social and philosophical systems endures. Free market principles have triumphed. The approach, however, has shown its limitations, yet it seems the whole world has signed up to neoconservative neoliberal approximations to economics and society.¹² As such, Muslims are not merely entombed in a cultural and intellectual vacuum; they live in dominant societies seeking only to reproduce the economic status quo. The current malaise is partly caused by Muslims in Western Europe facing a logjam. Unable to go forward, they sometimes withdraw. Those furthest away at the peripheries are the most vulnerable to internal conflict and external persuasion.

10 Nafeez Mosaddeq Ahmed, *A User's Guide to the Crisis of Civilization: And How to Save It* (London and New York: Pluto, 2010).

11 H.A. Hellyer, *Muslims of Europe: The 'other' Europeans* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

12 Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

Despite checks made by governments to curb the powers of monopoly corporations, to prevent firms from colluding and price-fixing, and to ensure they are taxed so as to facilitate a welfare state of sorts, capitalism today has become an unfettered method of promoting self-interested motivations and aspirations. It is pulling away a very small body of the world's population into a self-sustaining elite cadre, while much of the rest of the world lingers a very long way behind.¹³ The exploitation of the Muslim world today reflects similar concerns between dominant and dominated which characterised those from the 'Dark Continent'. Traditionally, a left-leaning standpoint in societies functioned as a means to check the workings of dominant capital and its effects upon media, politics and the nature of social relations. But the left has all but capitulated, save for the last bastions of dedicated thinkers and activists, in South America in particular.¹⁴ Liberals have always been inclined to waver with the mood music of the time and still do so today¹⁵—especially those who do not 'do God'.¹⁶ It was a long and bloody struggle to begin to overcome the discernible discriminations of white racism towards black groups. The Muslim objectification is so deeply structured and cultured in the present day it will take a mammoth effort on the part of all to begin to change it.¹⁷

The Political Dimension

So-called ethnic 'ghettos', where specific Muslim groups are sometimes found living, rarely out of choice, are not a reflection of communities necessarily choosing to live among themselves. Instead, their experience is about the failures of government policy to effectively implement integration and equality policy and practice.¹⁸ At the same time, former 'white' working classes have also suffered because of deindustrialisation, technological innovation and globalisation, and they have also faced cultural, economic and political

13 Danny Dorling, *Inequality and the 1%* (London and New York: Verso, 2014).

14 Tariq Ali, *The Extreme Centre: A Warning* (London and New York: Verso, 2015).

15 Nick Cohen, *What's Left?: How the Left Lost its Way: How Liberals Lost Their Way* (London: Harper Perennial, 2007); David Goodhart, *The British Dream: Successes and Failures of Post-war Immigration* (New York: Atlantic, 2014).

16 Christopher Hitchens, *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (New York: Atlantic Books, 2007).

17 Bhikhu Parekh, 'The future of multi-ethnic Britain: Reporting on a report', *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 90:362 (2001), 691–700.

18 Deborah Phillips, 'Parallel lives? Challenging discourses of British Muslim self-segregation', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 24:1 (2006), 25–40.

disenfranchisement.¹⁹ In local area communities, it is the poorest and most marginalised of Muslim minorities, along with the indigenous former working classes, competing most for the least. For most Muslims, they retain their ethnic, faith and cultural norms and values as a form of solace, which some majorities may regard as a retreat into regressive practices. However, though they also suffer from marginalisation in society, ostracised 'white' groups have the history of their nation, whether imagined or real, and the co-ethnic partisanship of the dominant hegemonic order at their disposal.²⁰

Combined with this gloomy condition, the dominant political discourse continues to blame the assailants for their 'values' or 'crises of identity', rarely scrutinising the workings of wider society so as to appreciate the holistic character of social conflict. Issues of freedom of expression, or categorising certain values as alien, are routinely instrumentalised to ensure the focus is on the sufferers, subsequently used as dupes for the shortcomings of wider societies.²¹ Attacks by takfiri-jihadis in London, Paris, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Madrid and Sydney were all carried out by the sons of immigrant minorities caught between cultures. Rather than supported and developed as individuals and communities in society, through mechanisms not always of their own agency, the far fringes of marginalised groups vented their frustrations back towards the centre. All of these attackers were the insiders-outsiders of society. As an alternative to ameliorating matters, however, liberal elites and the political classes generate capital from their plight.²²

At present, anti-Muslim feeling across wide sections of Western Europe is normalised; from Pegida (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the West) in Germany, to mosques attacked, firebombed or daubed with hate-graffiti. Random attacks occur on countless Muslims on the streets of cities all over Europe, almost on a daily basis. All the evidence suggests matters are deteriorating for Muslims in Western Europe. Islamophobia is not curtailed, nor are rising levels of violence against Muslims. The reality is coupled with increasing levels of antisemitism, some of which is as malicious, destructive

19 Anoop Nayak, "Last of the 'Real Geordies'? White masculinities and the subcultural response to deindustrialisation", *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 21:1 (2003), 7–25.

20 Harris Beider, *White working class voices: multiculturalism, community-building and change* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2014).

21 Salman S. Sayyid, *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the Emergence of Islamism* (London and New York: Zed, 2003).

22 Tahir Abbas, 'Muslim Minorities in Britain: Integration, Multiculturalism and Radicalism in the Post-7/7 Period', *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 28:3 (2007), 287–300.

and opaque as hate crimes against Muslims.²³ On the other hand, aspects of the 'Islamophobia industry' prevent Muslims from raising concerns and dealing with profound questions emanating from the religious and cultural experience within Islam and Muslims. Significant bridges have yet to be established between the enlightened-secular standards of free inquiry, coupled with critical investigation and a spiritual humanism intellectually and philosophically driven in relation to Muslim groups from within.²⁴ To be precise, the need to establish the ownership of 'Muslimness' among Muslims has yet to fully materialise. What does exist emerges independently of affected communities, which is benign but lacks the essential connectivities. Ultimately, it creates polarised opposites, fuelling extremisms on all sides.

With a history of post-war immigration of 'guest workers', Muslim minorities in Denmark have also faced the full brunt of discrimination and disadvantage.²⁵ The political mood in Denmark has increasingly shifted to the right over recent years, and although there was never a problem of home-grown radicalism until recently, around a hundred or so young Danish Muslims are presently in Islamic State. El-Hussein, the man implicated in the January 2015 Copenhagen shootings, was born and raised in Denmark, but he fell out the bottom of society into alienation and criminality. Analysts looked to ascertain how he became 'radicalised', placing onus on his apparent Islamisation or the 'cell' he was part of, but it is probably the case he was motivated by the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks, hence the almost copycat nature of his own acts. El-Hussein was also likely associated with other similar disillusioned young men, but he decided to kill others, not they. But the Danes, unlike the French, were not led by emotion. Denmark did not follow France in turning the events into a question of the identity of the nation itself.

Saïd Kouachi, Kouach Kouachi and Amedy Coulibaly in Paris, Man Haron Monis in Sydney and Omar el-Hussein in Copenhagen, implicated in acts of terrorism during a period of three months from the end of 2014 to the start of 2015, were all killed by the security services. The truth of their journeys from angry young men to Islamic political radicalism to those prepared to kill others with impunity will never be fully known. However, it is clear these radicalised men were not just a product of society; they were also creations of inadequate policing, security and intelligence policy and practice.

23 Nasar Meer, 'Racialization and religion: race, culture and difference in the study of anti-semitism and Islamophobia', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 36:3 (2013), 385–398.

24 Tariq Ramadan, *What I believe* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

25 Jørgen S. Nielsen (ed.), *Islam in Denmark: The Challenge of Diversity* (Maryland: Lexington, 2011).

Local and Global Challenges and Solutions

As the local and global become inextricably connected, nation states return to ethno-nationalism as a way to protect their identities to compete on the world stage. An essentialist discourse divides societies, placing emphasis on a repackaged country brand competing within a global market. Various impoverished, dispossessed, marginalised and minority groups are not simply forsaken in this race to success, but their so-called limitations are instrumentalised.²⁶ Authoritarian nations allude to strategies of securitisation, 'muscular liberalism' or anti-multiculturalism as a way to ensure the permanent 'othering' of some of the most 'othered' groups in societies.²⁷ Invariably, the emphasis of much of the present discussion is on the Islamic State, however considerable focus is also placed upon historical paradigms and contemporary political contexts in various sites of conflict, which feed off as well as add to a whole host of considerations. The paradigms generated perhaps go against the grain of much anti-capitalist, anti-globalisation and post-colonial belief, but Muslims and non-Muslims alike have to come to terms with the situation so all may benefit from the outcomes.

It could be stated Islamic militancy is on the rise across the world today, but it is also important to point out it does so largely because of the vacuum left after states have failed; those which have faced external pressures and internal strife for considerable periods. The thesis very much applies in the case of Syria and Iraq.²⁸ Furthermore, the Islamic State uses different kinds of methods of violence, combining both military and guerrilla tactics. They have territorial gain and an income which is key to their development of a so-called Islamic State, using a host of media tools to spread their cause and to inveigle others to join them. It is a revolutionary movement with a particular theological framework, using technology and in particular the internet to expand their reach. Nevertheless, the theoretical questions remain the same. Can the existence of the Islamic State be explained without talking about Islam or Muslims? If so, and if Muslims became 'good Muslims' everywhere in the world, *ceteris paribus*, would the Islamic State be a particular concern? The answers rest somewhere in between two polar extremes.

26 Arun Kundnani, *The Muslims Are Coming! Islamophobia, Extremism, and the Domestic War on Terror* (London and New York: Verso, 2014).

27 Justin Gest, *Apart: Alienated and Engaged Muslims in the West* (London and New York: Hurst, 2010).

28 Patrick Cockburn, *The Rise of Islamic State: ISIS and the New Sunni Revolution* (London and New York: Verso, 2015).

In attempting to describe the root issue, Sunnis of a particular type are of interest. Sectarianism cannot go unheeded in this analysis. Thus, in essence, the conflict seemingly emerging out of Islam is as old as Islam itself. But what is novel about the Islamic State are its aspirations to the end of times thesis, combined with notions of a political ideology stemming out of political objections. It acts as a convincing pull for those who feel and experience greatest marginalisation, alienation, disenfranchisement, subjugation and frustration at the lack of effectiveness of the nation-states in which they find themselves.

Clearly structural crises affect Muslim groups, but developing a policy framework to help deliver cures by using a 'take me to your leader' approach is to a certain extent neo-colonial. It is important to concentrate on the particular region to identify specific ways forward. Moreover, many of the sending countries have difficulty with trust in the political process, which is necessary for stable democracies. Material and economic issues are also unchecked. As young people become vulnerable, they also become outraged. Some of these young men, and women, who end up in the Islamic State have no real appreciation of Islam at all. Young people are easily manipulated in wanting to develop a sense of themselves for a whole host of reasons, but where a specified political Islam provides a particular prepared model.

A great deal of attention is dedicated to the view that this conflict is not about Islam or Muslims at all; however, this perspective would be in denial about a dilemma that uses the mask of Islam few right-thinking Muslims anywhere in the world would recognise as Islamic in any way. Therefore, it is necessary to accept how the lived experience in the West contributes to pushing young people towards extremism.²⁹ To look at the structure of societies and their popular culture is vital, where structural disadvantage is measurable, conflated by the extreme centre of the political spectrum which pushes out dissenting voices further to the periphery. Hence, these are local and global challenges, but where the opportunities are limited in a climate where the 'us and them' dichotomy is designed by the powerful, with those affected by it tending to be the most powerless. The spotlight on Islam and Muslims, however, is frequently made by those who want to give the impression that everything else impacting on people associated with these categories is insignificant in determining both the push and the pull.

Practical solutions can impress on the youth, media, education, and professionalisation of organisations. But ultimately the context is important, and appropriate action must be taken according to the struggles as they emerge.

29 Olivier Roy, *Holy Ignorance: When Religion and Culture Part Ways* (London and New York: Columbia University Press/Hurst, 2010).

Those gravitating towards zones of conflict in the Middle East do so as a function of push and pull factors, but other individuals are also vulnerable and they ought to be protected from getting involved in activities ultimately harmful to them and wider societies. There are no magic bullets; correctives must be nuanced, specific and also tweaked as required. But huge generalisations are dangerous. Scale and proportion are required. Such is the power of the media even right-minded people can end up over-stating the crises, ultimately fueling a perennial cycle of fear, hate and violence. Many other struggles impact on Muslim communities across the globe, but misinformation, which is routinely pumped out by dubious institutions with self-serving interests, fuels protestations on all sides. Muslims have far greater struggles than merely violent extremism.³⁰

It is crucial to state the percentages involved in violent extremism is incredibly small. Second, Muslims have many other predicaments at everyday levels which are simply not heeded. Third, around the world today Muslims are the victims of violent extremism far more than any other group. Shias, Sufis, Christians and Jews are all subject to its might. Religion provides the justification, but conundrums of integration, alienation, power, authority or social class cannot be underestimated. Ill-informed policy-making with its unintended consequences must also be reconceptualised. In many of the instances of Muslim-originated violence found in Western Europe in the last few months alone, the role of the policing, security, and intelligence services is disturbing, not in how they have managed to prevent these atrocities or otherwise, but in how many of the young men involved in the violence were on their radars, and in cases had been picked up and allegedly mistreated by them.

In scrutinising the local and global, in the context of today's world, with its reliance on information technology, it is clear that social media is a significant tool in radicalisation. The media is used by the Islamic State to exploit existing gripes and prevailing narratives, using the fear and insecurity Muslims undergo, combined with the history of the Muslim world's interaction with the West, cleverly fusing together an array of protestations in an eschatological outlook ostensibly attracting vulnerable minds. Education, awareness, empowerment and engagement are the frames in which sets of solutions should be developed. Muslims must accept, whether they like it or not, wish it or not, they have to be part of the answer. The requirement is to go beyond Islamophobia and radicalisation, for now the challenges are

30 Tahir Abbas (ed.), *Muslim Britain: Communities under Pressure* (London and New York: Macmillan USA/Zed, 2005).

graver than ever. But the powers should accept that they too have a role in creating the predicament, and this should be taken seriously by all.

Differentiating Islamisms and the Way Ahead

Islamism is very much a political phenomenon, which is confusing to observers across all spheres. It is argued that in order to deal with the problem of radicalisation there is a need to improve the integration of Muslim minorities in Western Europe. The ways in which Muslims are susceptible to Islamophobia also needs to be checked by the political process. However, there exists a substantial opportunity on the part of policymakers and Muslim communities to focus on particular types of Islamism.

Islamisms can be characterised in a number of ways, with takfiri-jihadism causing the greatest concern for all groups. Nevertheless, variations on Islamism exist at various community levels which could be enhanced and even supported by direct methods of engagement and inclusion. It effectively empowers a large body of those who would be thought of as 'moderates' by the political establishment.

The following postulates a broad system of classification including those on the areligious side of the spectrum of opinion and practice.

- 1 *Anti-Islamism.* This is the political and cultural desire to remove religious identities from every aspect of the lives of Muslims as citizens of the state.
- 2 *Cultural Islamism.* This is the need to uphold various Islamised notions of identity and practice, but it does not in any way interfere or restrict processes of integration. It is more than anti-Islamism as it begins to introduce Muslim identities in practice.
- 3 *Radical Islamism.* This is the need to uphold and apply a more literal reading of Islam in the context of a response to the challenges faced that seemingly affect the global picture but also local-area lived experiences. It is more than cultural Islamism because it chooses to draw firmer lines between what is deemed acceptable or not, and what is desirable or not, narrowly defining acceptable or unacceptable practices of Muslims and non-Muslims.
- 4 *Violent Islamism.* This is the need to bear arms and exact a militarist solution to grievances that affect the Muslim world. This is also known as takfirism. It is more than radical Islamism as it seeks to present an explicitly

Islamised solution, based on a literal reading of the Koranic texts, inspired by ideologues, where murder is seen as legitimate.

It is in society's interests to promote cultural and radical Islamism as it is likely to improve cohesion in the long-run through greater participation and political engagement. It is also important to empower this body of people in order to disempower the violent Islamists. Anti-Islamists are a lesser threat to any group in society as they take on board a fully assimilationist mode unless they too espouse violence and intimidation as solutions. The question is how to prevent the kinds of events seen in the case of the Woolwich murder of 2013 or the Charlie Hedbo killings of 2015 using this model. The answer lies in giving young Muslims a stake in society, and a belief that they have a positive contribution to make. In order to do so a political sea change is required.

In sociology, the importance of social conflict, identity crises, failed integration and foreign policy are crucial to understanding the drivers of radicalisation, but issues exist elsewhere too. In the context of policy interventions, both radicalisers and de-radicalisers are a product of government policies across Western Europe. In an attempt to push forward both agendas to eliminate those who do not quite fit into either camp, it opens up a range of possible scenarios on the ground. It is done doubtlessly to obtain better intelligence results, and to keep one step ahead of would-be attacks. In many instances, acts of terrorism are prevented, but some slip the net. Hence, it becomes a major concern for everyone else in society living with the implications.

In an intense political climate, governments introduce increasingly stringent counterterrorism and deradicalisation legislation in the hope of thwarting future attacks on European soil. While this is necessary to maintain safe and secure conditions for liberal democratic societies to successfully operate, a danger is legislation places the entire onus on Muslims as 'suspect communities'.³¹ It undermines the very freedoms Western European societies have struggled so hard to preserve. For example, policymakers are currently placing great emphasis on providing the UK government with greater access to personal digital data. However, the risk here is the UK ends up with additional information but with no greater intelligence. These developments are reactionary, not pre-emptive, as online radicalisation is not a new phenomenon.³²

31 Tahir Abbas and Imran Awan, 'The Limits of UK Counterterrorism Policy: Implications for Islamophobia and Far Right Extremism', *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy* (2015).

32 Gary R. Bunt, *Islam in the Digital Age: E-Jihad, Online Fatwas and Cyber Islamic Environments* (London and New York: Pluto, 2003).

In many senses, online radicalisation has existed since the dawn of domestic internet. Neither does unlimited data necessarily result in effective intelligence, as exposed by revelations from the likes of Edward Snowden. As an alternative to protecting the interests of the many in relation to security, governments are known to use this information to gain competitive advantage.³³

In the final analysis, and to return to a concentration on young Muslims in Western Europe, the solutions to radicalisation may not automatically exist in faith or Islamic theology *per se*, nor in the political powers in control, and nor their policies and practices. They may well transpire in the hands of Muslims themselves. Hope prevails in those very same young Muslims at the centre of the current uproar. Through their hybridisation and re-acculturation, they are potentially able to connect crucial discontinuities between faith and reason, politics and society, and culture and identity. Western European-born Muslims are increasingly playing a valuable cultural role in their societies, through popular culture, fashion, music, food, dance, literature or film, for example.³⁴ Young Muslims are redefining what it is to be both Muslim *and* European. They are emerging in an array of cultural fields harnessing their creative energies. However, their precise impact has yet to be fully felt given the wider dominant contexts in which they operate. There is hope in the near future that a body of capable young people will emerge as catalysts in the progressive transformation of Western European Muslims and the societies in which they live.

33 Dir. Laura Poitras. Perf. Edward Snowden, Glen Greenwald, William Binney et al., *Citizenfour*, Praxis Films, 2014. Film.

34 Maruta Herding, *Inventing the Muslim Cool: Islamic Youth Culture in Western Europe* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2013).