

## **Muslim Europe or Euro-Islam: Politics, Culture, and Citizenship in the Age of Globalisation**

*Nezar AlSayyad and Manuel Castells, eds.*  
*Oxford: Lexington Books, 2002. 204 pages.*

The chapters comprising this volume arise out of a conference held in 1998: "Islam and the Changing Identity of Europe." The conference organizers, frustrated with what they regarded as the insular nature of European and Middle Eastern area studies research, wanted to examine Islamic identity and citizenship from a broader interdisciplinary perspective. This volume therefore brings together specialist contributors from the social sciences, political science, Middle Eastern studies, and international relations, to name just some of the disciplines represented.

The editors set the scene by exploring changing realities and perceptions of identity within Europe. They note that in some places, the fact of religious and ethnic diversity has yet to be fully acknowledged and accommodated as part of a European identity that, historically, was forged largely in opposition to "the other" – especially the Muslim "other." As a consequence, Muslim populations in Europe find themselves part of, and to some extent a cause of, a complex process of European identity deconstruction and reconstruction from above and below. The presence of Islam within Europe's borders is forcing a reexamination of what it means to be European, and raising profound and challenging questions about issues of citizenship, participation in civil society, political recognition, inclusion, and exclusion.

Each contributor approaches the discussion with a common desire to avoid reductionism, essentialism, and a view of Muslims as members of homogeneous monolithic communities. Indeed, the diversity within Muslim communities is seen as part of an important dynamic that will help to forge what Bassam Tibi calls "Euro-Islam," a form of Islam that is acceptable (without compromises) to both Muslim migrants (and converts) and secular European societies. Just as there are forms of Islam – each absolutely "authentic" – that are distinctive in Africa, Malaysia, or the Arabian Peninsula, Tibi calls for developing a form of Islam that is adjusted to European society and the values of individual human rights and liberal democracy.

The first five chapters, which comprise part 1 of the book, explore broad theoretical issues, while the second part, consisting of four further

contributions, considers the specific Islamic presence in the United Kingdom (Modood) and France (Wieviorka). A fascinating chapter by Agha Saeed and Laurence Michalak compares and contrasts Islam in France and the United States. Despite very different histories and origins, the authors conclude that the differences and similarities between the Muslims in both countries are not absolute; rather, they are differences of degree. However, many of the similarities between the Muslims of these two societies also are recognizable in other European societies.

In addition, we see similar processes and transformations at work, such as increasing ethnic intermarriage among younger generations of Muslims, the prominence given to *Muslim* rather than *ethnic* identity, and the solidarity achieved through political organizations comprising Muslims of different backgrounds. And yet, as Modood notes in the conclusion to his chapter, the nature of the debates and the contextual struggles facing Muslims in many European countries are often distinctive. While multiculturalism largely characterizes the context of debate in the United Kingdom, the Muslim presence in France has prompted a neorepublican anti-multiculturalist consensus. Religion is at the foreground of debates in France about citizenship and migration; not so in the United States.

Each chapter varies in the degree to which it addresses or answers the implicit question raised by the book's title: Muslim Europe or Euro-Islam? Few of the contributors were "brave" enough to move beyond analysis and theorizing about the past and present to speculate about the identity of Muslims in Europe in the next 50 or 100 years, though some outlined their "desiderata" for the future. No doubt the answer to this question will vary according to country. But just how many generations of Muslim settlement in Europe will it take for the hostility toward Muslims and Islamophobia to be a thing of the past? To what extent will younger generations of Muslims find an identity in Islam – either an active or an associational identity – and to what extent will they be lost and absorbed into a secular, consumerist culture? Will they have a sufficient critical mass to shape their societies' political and social structures in ways that are consonant with Islam? Who will be the critical thinkers supplying the necessary theological and theoretical resources and interpretations to shape a "Euro-Islam" that speaks not simply to intellectuals?

This relatively short book on such a vast subject as Islam and Europe cannot hope to answer all of the questions that we might wish to pose. Therefore, it is best seen as an important contribution to an emerging and

growing literature. But finding the ways and means to make the crucial debates contained in the book seem real, and to move them beyond academic and elite audiences, is the bigger challenge and question to which, perhaps, there is no answer.

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