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Muslim identity

The European context

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Abstract

Islam is a minority religion in Europe; however, the number of Muslims is rapidly increasing and with this increase comes the issue of Muslim identity and what it means to a 'new look' Europe. Muslims like people in other religious groups come from different nationalities, social backgrounds and economic levels. Yet in countries across Europe, Muslims have established a common community, because of their 'affiliation' to Islam; their religion is their identity. Identity is an issue fundamental to all our lives. Each one of us is a complex collection of loyalties, associations, beliefs and personal perspectives. However, for many, the question of identity may seldom cause personal conflict or trauma as people live within established communities with shared beliefs and perspectives. For others, particularly those who live in fragmented communities or belong to minority or marginalised groups as in the case of the religious minority group discussed here it may be a question that pursues them all their lives. The most commonly accepted way of defining identity within Western society, as an individual within a liberal democracy, is discussed in this paper, followed by a consideration of minorities within those democratic communities and in particular one religious minority, Muslims, in the European context.

Liberal Democracies and Minorities

Most people in the modern world subscribe to the ideal of democracy, where the concept of the rights of the individual is seen as fundamental. Another obvious feature of this world is the nation state defined by boundaries that frequently include people of diverse cultural, religious and tribal identities. The evolution of the nation state shifted loyalties from a tribal cultural focus to that of national. Parekh (1999: 2) explains that the nation state

> "set about dismantling long-established communities and uniting the 'emancipated' individuals on the basis of a collectively accepted and centralised structure of authority."

Gradually, the power of cultural and religious communities was subsumed into that of the nation state with individuals becoming the defining unit within that state and with in many cases communities no longer the dominant source of power. However, no evolutionary process is simple and straightforward and the relationship between the nation state, group and individual identities in different contexts illustrates the varying rates of development and the complexity of the balance.

Though many of us may aspire to live in an individual-focused, democratic, nationally defined society, there are many examples of tensions between the whole and parts where religious and cultural identities remain paramount and take precedence over the national. Why does this tension arise? The answer lies to some extent in Von Herder's detailed description of every individual's elementary need to belong, what Margalit (1990: 443) explains as "familiarity with a culture determines the boundaries of the imaginable." Without any effort or accomplishment on an individual's part, a person is part of a group and has an anchor for self-identification. It is only with this 'security' that a person can venture out into the 'liberal world'. For this movement from the part to the whole to take place, there must be some attraction, association and affiliation to provide the confidence necessary for successful integration.

Can one propose that the formation of the nation state meant that all people living within these boundaries owe their allegiance to the one community or society? The answer here is a profound 'no' for the majority of nations in existence. As boundaries and borders were artificially created, there was no way of ensuring the commonality of all persons situated within these lines. The commonality came/comes from factors around individuals not necessarily shared by all members of the nation. Each person is as Maalouf (1998: 28) points out "endowed with a complex identity" that includes (ibid) "language, beliefs, lifestyle, family relations, artistic and culinary tastes, French influences, European, Occidental" and many more. He explains that what he terms (*ibid*: 9) "multiple affiliations" can provide the person with a vital enriching experience if the individual is able to live freely and allowed to assume the diversity of his being. However, issues of identity become complex when one particular affiliation dominates over all others leading to the development of a minority group bonded by this predominant affiliation.

Dealing with the issue of integration of minority groups into the nation state is complex as there are several layers to be considered: legal, religious, social, linguistic and cultural to list just a few. From a legal perspective, provisions have been taken to ensure the rights of minorities at the international level. Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966: 179) declares that,

> "in those states in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language."

The right of minority is applicable, therefore, to the entire group as a single entity. There is, however, some disagreement among academics in liberal societies on the issue of minority cultures; Kymlicka for example, who regards himself as a liberal, emphasises that minority groups should be protected only for the sake of the groups, and maintains that conflicts should be dealt with from within. Walzer (1992) takes the issue of minority cultures a step further and claims that cultural identity should neither be supported nor penalised by public society. Rather, the expression and perpetuation of cultural identities should be left to the private sphere. This may not always be the best resolution as is becoming more and more evident in Western liberal democracies such as the U.K., Holland and France.

Immigration, Minorities and Identity

As suggested above, tensions may exist where there are different group affiliations within one nation state as in the case of Lebanon, India and Sudan. The situation becomes even more

complex in the case of immigration, when an existing clearly defined nation or society has to accommodate groups with new identities introduced into a nation with its own clear identity. This raises a whole new set of issues to do with minority cultures particularly if the nation has had no previous experience with such minority groups.

New immigrants have their own identity and beliefs; they may identify with other immigrants because they share the same ethnicity, religion or language. Immigrants may also identify themselves in relation to the existing citizens of the nation, and vice versa. Identity here is being created by what the immigrants are not rather than what they are. Yuval-Davis (1993:628) tells us:

> "A cultural 'other', the immigrant or a member of another community who does not share the same myth of common origin, is constructed as an alien and consequently as a potential 'enemy' who threatens 'our' national and cultural integrity and uniqueness."

Maalouf (1998: 34) explains that people often have the tendency to acknowledge themselves through the affiliation that is most attacked.

> "The affiliation that is a cause - colour, religion, language, class - invades the whole identity. Those who share it feel solidarity; they gather together, mobilise, encourage each other and take sides. For those, affirming their identity becomes inevitably an act of courage, an act of liberation."

Yuval-Davis also discusses the idea of belonging, a sense of belonging that is invisible but incredibly strong. She comments further that citizenship alone cannot encapsulate the notion of belonging, a state that generally originates in ethnic bonding where new immigrants gravitate towards their own cultural and social groups. If such social contexts do not exist, another affiliation may take precedence as is evident in Europe where religion in the case of Muslims has become the affiliation that connects individuals from disparate social and cultural backgrounds such as Egypt, Iran, Bulgaria, Palestine, Pakistan and Turkey. This belonging can become politicised when threatened, a threat that applies not only to established minority groups like the Aborigines in Australia, but also to immigrant groups such as the Pakistani community in Britain. What a government or the state has to realise, if immigrants are to become part of society, is that identity is a multilayered construct and that people will have loyalties within their community as well as to their community as a whole. Loyalty to the state as a citizen can only be part of this identity and this loyalty must be gained, not forced. According to Habermas (1992:108)

> "A nation of citizenship can sustain the institutions of freedom only by developing a certain measure of loyalty to their own state, a loyalty that cannot be legally enforced."

In order to gain immigrants' loyalty a state must recognise them, both as individuals and as part of their community or group. Not only does recognition make a new minority group more secure, but it is also a basic human need and fundamental to democracy as Seglow (2003: 92) explains: "Only through the secure receipt of recognition by others are human agents able to achieve an adequate relation to self." Taylor looks at the need for recognition of minority groups through dialogue. He references the notion of honour in the societies of the past or how it used to be, i.e. based on social hierarchies and inequality. Now he claims we have the modern notion of dignity, a notion that everyone shares and the only one which is compatible with a democratic society. Therefore emphasis is on the need for open dialogue in our contemporary changing societies; through dialogue we will achieve a sense of dignity for all groups and therefore reside in a vibrant multicultural society.

Minority Groups and Recognition

Seglow identifies two types of recognition for minority groups; the first he refers to as 'narrow recognition', which involves giving the minority group some protection or autonomy in the form of new laws. Critics, such as Barry claim that this form of recognition denies individual freedom, is impartial and creates tribalistic tendencies in a society. These may seem like fair comments in nations which base themselves on liberalism, individualism and democracy. (See Yuval-Davis and the notion of belonging). Seglow does acknowledge this criticism and compares narrow recognition against the second form of recognition, referred to as 'wide-recognition'. Wide recognition is defined as being when a particular minority identity in question is publicly accepted and acknowledged as having its own particular perspective and view of the world though different from the majorities. This type of recognition requires all citizens of a particular state to respect each other and their mutual identities. Seglow maintains that both forms of recognition need to co-exist for the overall recognition of a group to be achieved. For example, the opening of a Muslim school in a city would be regarded as narrow recognition, but unless the Muslim group is publicly acknowledged in the society i.e. wide recognition, the

establishment of the school will be resented and may have repercussions.

Walzer (1992: 100) as a critic of group rights and recognition of these groups maintains that a "sharp divorce of state and ethnicity" is needed, a situation he refers to as the non-discrimination model. This model has been applied in the U.S with reasonable success because of what Walzer refers to as 'New World' pluralism. This involves voluntary movement by immigrant groups knowing that they may have to integrate into the new society. Glazer (1975: 25) agrees that this model may be appropriate in certain contexts such as when the government aims at "integrating disparate groups into a single national culture, based on a common language, shared history, and political institutions." On the other hand, he (ibid:26) proposes the groups rights model if a society operates on the assumption

> "that it is a confederation of groups, that group membership is central and permanent, and that the divisions between groups are such that it is unrealistic or unjust to envisage these groups identities weakening in time to be replaced by a common citizenship."

Europe has/is attempting to take the route of group rights and multiculturalism, but what exactly is meant by terms such as pluralism, multiculturalism, integration and assimilation?

Defining pluralism, multiculturalism and integration

A working definition of plurality is important in the context of the current research because as Waldron (1992: 757) explains when he refers to plurality as "a kaleidoscope of cultures", it is a fact of our modern world. Its most common interpretation is as a reference to the fact that there is plurality or diversity of cultures, religions, lifestyles and value systems. A more extended use of the term incorporates the notion of value which undoubtedly includes most contemporary societies striving to achieve acceptance and tolerance of diversity. A third use of the term plurality, one which we would hope is not true, is that pluralism is the existence of all the different diverse cultures around the world and that because of their differences we cannot hope to bring them together in vibrant multicultural societies. To believe that one can keep his/her culture separate or to believe in total immersion in a culture is no longer feasible; acceptance that even in our own area plurality exists is the first step forward, after which we must find ways and measures with which to deal with it.

In my view for the purposes of the current research plurality within modern society is as Waldron explains an unavoidable development. If plurality is a fact, we need to embrace it and work together in order to create as vibrant a society as we possibly can leading to a multicultural society, one in which integration of different groups can and does take place. Plurality should not be difficult to accept as even within cultures people are different in different ways. Breaking it down even further, an individual may experience plurality within themselves; differences based on their particular upbringing, social status or education. However, individuals still identify themselves with some wider 'common culture' as Herder and Margalit (cited in Murphy 2003: 34) discuss; this is particularly true in the case of cultures or groups who have "a deeply-held coherent philosophy or value-system"; this can be said to be true of European nations and also the Islamic faith as a whole.

One can identify two types of pluralism which exist today: descriptive pluralism and normative pluralism. Descriptive pluralism implies that limited respect for different cultural beliefs exists in a society. It means that the people of the society are open but not committed to various possible cultural elements. Different cultures are searching for a common good. It is essential that a common ground is created between them and in the course of this process each culture must be willing to compromise. This may be difficult to achieve particularly in the nations of Europe because people are being asked to make changes to accommodate people who may have recently 'joined' the society. However, if common ground is found it means that different cultural elements can exist together and different groups can also maintain their own distinct cultural elements or what may be referred to as a 'natural' multicultural society.

The second form of pluralism is known as normative pluralism, which means that there is unlimited and unconditional respect for all cultural elements. Everything is acceptable and nothing can be judged as being culturally 'wrong'. For example, Ireland would accept that female genital mutilation is a cultural practice and therefore may be practiced and U.S citizens should have access to fire arms at whatever time they see fit. As these examples suggest, normative pluralism is not really feasible as it begins to interfere with the basic rights and laws of a society. Normative pluralism does not have the ability to evaluate a cultural element and therefore must accept that culture of any kind is good just by the fact of its definition as culture. From this definition one could assume that a society may soon break down after a period of experimenting with

normative pluralism; there needs to be some set of norms or rules which exist above these cultural elements in order to create a stable society. "For a society to function, the value of unity must ultimately triumph over the value of pluralism." Pluralism should therefore be secondary to primary values such as health, housing and education; it is also about accepting differences and the fact that beliefs may sometimes just be incompatible and that a way around this problem must be sought.

If a society achieves some of the above then it can be said to be on the route to being a multicultural society. As Parekh (1999: 3) discusses, "most contemporary societies are culturally diverse, but only some of them are multicultural or culturally plural." If a society is multicultural, it welcomes and cherishes plurality, makes it central to its self-understanding and respects the claims of all its cultural communities in its laws and policies. Multiculturalism must be a process of inclusion i.e. it must not just remain a pluralist society in that it is made up of different groups, but these groups must also engage with one another. Multiculturalism as defined by Mac Einri (2002: speech at Merrion Square) is a process of "validating diversity and harmony between different groups; instead of building higher walls, it offers security of identity while promoting a creative and dynamic hybridity."

Care must be taken though in the process in achieving this multicultural society, with the types of pluralism that I have already described, but more importantly the process must not be a forced one, it must be instigated and carried out by people. Malik (2002: *Lecture given at Institut Français*) says: "There is a difference between multiculturalism as a lived experience and multiculturalism as an enforced ideology."

Critics of multiculturalism such as Malik and Barnett claim that state-sponsored multiculturalism patronizes ethnic minorities and causes them to develop resentment towards each other; that open dialogue and multiculturalism lead to the negative notion of a multidimensional society; one where we are reducing the possibility of a 'common' culture. "Given the abandonment of foundations of thought and life, all we have are constellations of ideas." Barnett (1994: 137) also claims that in societies with minority groups, people may become afraid to question issues regarding the group for fear of being labelled as discriminatory; therefore creating animosity towards the minority group.

What does it mean to talk about the integration of any minority group into the majority culture and in particular the integration of the Muslim community into European societies? Integration has been defined as the process by which a "minority achieves equality without having to sacrifice certain cultural elements." This may be seen as the opposite of assimilation, which is defined as when "the minority eventually melts into the majority." This definition given by Erikisen (2004: 78), like many other definitions of integration, addresses only the minority culture. At the recent Integration Policy conference in November 2004 in the Netherlands, Ms. M.C.F. Verdonk, Netherlands's Minister of Immigration and Integration defined integration (2004: 5) as "wanting to take part, participating in the society in which you live." Here too there is only reference to the immigrants or the minority group. Ms. Verdonk (*ibid.*) does mention further on in her speech that this outlook on integration depends on the person or group "being able to take part". I think this is key when we look at integration - the idea that integration is not just the responsibility of the minority or migrant group, but is the responsibility of the whole society. As J. Niessen and Y. Schibel (2004: 12) outline in the Handbook on Integration for Policy-makers and practitioners, "integration is a shared responsibility". They also refer to the importance of integration occurring at all levels and therefore the need for different programs aimed at different sectors of society; religion being just one of the issues dealt with in the integration process.

The definition that covers the most ground and that encompasses all of the above aspects is the definition given by the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) on their website. They define integration as a "dynamic and two-way process: it places demands on receiving societies and the individuals and/or the communities concerned." With regard to immigrants or minority groups "integration requires a preparedness to adapt to the lifestyle of the host society without having to lose one's own cultural identity." From the point of view of the host society,

> "it requires a willingness to adapt public institutions to changes in the population profile, accept refugees as part of the national community, and take action to facilitate access to resources and decision-making processes."

Defining integration may initially seem like a relatively simple exercise, but when considered in any kind of detail it becomes clear that it is far from simple. The term has recently become automatically associated with the process leading to a multicultural society outcome and therefore having positive connotations. What governments, official bodies and even grass root level groups fail to comprehend is that there are several views

and definitions of these issues including integration. How can we assume around the countries of Europe that everyone will follow the definition of integration laid out by the respective governments, when the majority of governments do not have a clearly constructed framework for implementing their integration policies? Each minority group, in this case Muslims, must be looked at in its own context, thereby ensuring that a way is found to take both the minority and the majority cultures into account. If this is true, can one really define integration as being positive or negative?

Religious Issues and Religious Minorities

Groups are classified as minorities due to different circumstances, be it because of common ethnicity, cultural beliefs, linguistic patterns and religious beliefs. A religious minority may share nothing amongst its members aside from their common spiritual beliefs; however, with mass immigration and the search for an identity, any commonality will draw people together. This seems to be in Europe where an individual arriving into the vast diversity of cultures, religions and social beliefs may search for the commonality shared by other newcomers, as appears to be happening in the case of Muslims.

If we consider the notion of religion as 'part' of culture or as a 'basis' of culture we find that it allows people to have more meaning in their lives than just the narrow approach of the 'Enlightenment model' that explains our cultural transitions in terms of sociological determinism and individualistic rationality. As Taylor (1995: 29) explains most people live from an "unformulated but embodied understandings" of themselves. These embodied understandings mean that our (*ibid*: 33) "cultural humanity is a constellation of spiritual factors underlying our living out of communal meanings." Taylor (2002: 134) emphasises that the spiritual rootedness of culture should be cherished as a people "without a functional home culture are incapacitated". This means that people with similar religious beliefs will feel that they share a common culture or at least an understanding of each other's culture.

It is important to look at the place of religious minorities in the context of society and in particular their compatibility with democracy. Modernity and with it democracy have been defined in terms of individual freedom, and academics such as Vanaik (1997: 161) believe that "no religious system has natural to it the values of gender equality or citizenship democracy." On the other hand Rajan (2002) believes that religion and democracy are compatible as long as religion does not see itself as the legitimate holder of power. Both philosophers make important points and if one were to look at them along with Taylor's discussion of the place of religion in culture, it would be correct to say that religion is an area which must have a particular place in society but that perhaps it must only be a place and not the entire cultural makeup of society.

The question arises here as to whether religion is present in the public spaces of our modern democratic societies or whether they are secular. If they are how can one look at the integration of a religious minority culture? Murphy (2003: 36) claims like Taylor, that religion is a fundamental component of culture.

> "The impression given by the media is that a pluralist society is by definition a secular society, so that it is wrong that the ethos of any religion should, in any way whatsoever, be reflected in the civil law. The fact that a particular law reflects one group's ethos does of itself amount to a violation of the rights of others: the law cannot but reflect some ethos."

So the two, culture and religion, are intertwined, being both reliant and interlocked with each other. "A faith which does not become culture is a faith which has not been fully received", according to Pope John Paul (1982). This debate about the place and importance of religion dates back to the time of the early philosophers Vico and Montesquieu who both claimed that religion was necessary to have a vibrant society. Vico believed that the harmony of reason and religion represents the highest stage of human development. Neither can exist independently as human actions are motivated by passion and "scarcely any two human beings were able to agree" (Translation Bergin & Fisch 1984). On the other hand, religion on its own creates superstitions and blind dogmas, so we must have both reason and religion. Both men however, also believed that as societies reached 'a higher stage' i.e. the concept of 'Enlightenment', they would also grow more and more similar so there would be no need to be concerned with diversity based either on religious beliefs or cultural beliefs. As we are aware in our modern world this has not and will more than likely, not occur. However, the place of religion in society is very important when dealing with the place of minority religious groups.

Rajan's theory seems to give great significance to religion, a fact that in the contemporary world is fundamental as states find themselves dealing more and more with the actions and beliefs of extreme religious groups. However, original

theories regarding the place of religion focused on the liberal ideology of citizens as primarily individuals invested with different kinds of rights, of which the religious right is but one. One such theory was proposed by Rawls (1993) during the Kantian phase in 1971. 'A Theory of Justice' claims that governments and states must appeal to the moral conceptions of persons and to co-operative virtues. Members of society, according to this theory, should have a choice of affiliation in any group they choose and equal liberty of conscience, whether religious or non-religious expression, is the only position acknowledged; Rawls refers to it as 'overlapping consensus'. The state is therefore relying on its people to create an equal and tolerant society, while it maintains a policy of non-interference in religious matters. People need the religious groups as guidance and a place they can turn to in face of the minimalist role of the state. Scanlon (1998: 70) points out that this can be a mistake especially, as I have already mentioned, in today's changing societies:

> "Religious toleration is a risky policy with high stakes. The risks involved lie not too much in the formal politics of laws and constitutions (though there may be risks there too) but rather in the informal politics through which the nature of a society is constantly redefined."

An example of encouraged religious freedom with negative outcomes is Holland where recent events (murder of Theo Van Gogh and trial of accused) illustrate a direct conflict between the absolute theocratic views of a religious minority and the liberal views of the state. One of those 'Ayaan Hirsi Ali' concerned in the making of the documentary which provoked the murder and herself of Muslim origin argues that immigrants must be made to abide by the liberal ideologies of Western European countries because left to their own devices immigrants with extreme religious views may be a menace to the structure of liberal societies.

The cases of Holland and also Great Britain bring us back again to Rajan's proposal that democracy and religion are compatible providing religion is not in control and effort is exerted into maintaining a balance between the demands of the minority and the rights of the whole.

Muslims as minorities

It is important to look both at what binds Muslims together and identifies them as a group and at how they define themselves in terms of other Muslims and non-Muslims. Ramadan (2004:9) points out that there is no 'Islamic theology' as in Christianity; Islam is viewed as a relationship between god and the individual, a 'relationship' leading to the view that faith in Islam is natural and essential in every human being who ultimately belong to god.

Therefore, a Muslim's essential identity is his religion because in the end nothing else has any value:

> "Above and beyond the diversity of their national cultures (Muslims), the essence of their faith, their identity, their being in the world, is the same; they define themselves on the basis of points of reference that explain their sense of belonging to the same community of faith, and at the same time, more profoundly, root them in the universe of Islam." Ramadan (2004:9)

Above all else, Muslims will look to fellow Muslims and above all other identities Muslims will identify themselves with the ummah or Islamic family, so even when they reside in 'dar-al-harb', Muslims belong to a group which transcends all borders and allows them to hold on to their faith. A hadith by the prophet Mohammed states that

> "a Muslim is strong by his brother and that Muslims are like one body: if one part becomes afflicted with some illness, the rest of the body shares in that affliction with insomnia and fever." (Prophet Mohammed: Hadith)

Scholars such as Ramadan, Doi, al-Siddiq and al-Ghannouchi take issue with the historical terms dar-al-Islam and dar-al-harb, arguing that if Muslims have the right to practise their beliefs in a country, that country cannot be regarded as dar-al-harb. They believe that if Muslims apply Islam in the correct fashion it is valid in every time and place, in keeping with the idea of 'ala-miyyat al-Islam' or the universal dimension of Islamic teaching. Shari'a accepts the integration of everything that is not against an established principle and is therefore adaptable according to Ramadan.

It is clear from the work of scholars and theologians like Ramadan that a strong bond exists amongst Muslims that is derived not from nationality or ethnicity but from belief. If this is true, can it be hoped that a Muslim minority culture can be integrated into Irish society or are Muslims happy to be left to their own devices as long as they can practise their beliefs.

Duties of a Muslim living in a non-Muslim land

Before considering the present situation of Muslim minority groups, it is important to examine the Qur'anic and classical jurists' view on Muslims as

minorities in non-Muslim lands, an unanticipated situation as explained by Doi (1987: 45):

> "No one then imagined that a time would come when Muslim Empires would decline and some of the areas once ruled by Muslims would be ruled by non-Muslims and that Muslims would have to live as minorities under non-Muslim jurisdictions.'

Terminology used to distinguish between Islamic countries and non-Islamic countries highlights the lack of information or guidelines for Muslims living in non-Muslim lands. Anywhere outside the Muslim world at the beginning of the Islamic Empire was referred to as dar-al-harb or land of conflict, and anywhere within the Islamic Empire was referred to as dar-al-Islam or land of Islam. Dar-al-harb did not refer to the presence of war in a country rather that neither the legal system nor the government were Islamic.

During the reign of the Islamic Empire there were a large number of non-Muslim minorities or dhimmis, residing within the boundaries of the Empire who did not wish to convert. Under the guidelines of Islam these people were free to practise their faith and live according to their beliefs as long as this did not interfere with the majority Muslim population. A tax 'al-jizya' was paid to the Muslim state which in turn protected these non-Muslim minorities according to a system that operated successfully for centuries for Jews and Christians living on the Arabian Peninsula and in Eastern Europe. Rules regulating the presence of non-Muslim minorities in Muslim lands were clear while guidelines for Muslims in non-Muslim lands did not exist as this situation did not arise.

Muslims travelling through non-Muslim lands or spending a period of time within them were expected were to remain true to Shari'a and to God. Khadduri (1955), of the same school of thought as Ibn Taymiyya and al-Mawdudi, explains that Muslims living in non-Muslim lands must be regarded as a temporary situation and they are still subject to Shari'a law. Al Shafi'I (1980: 169) tells us:

> "Any Muslim in the 'Land of Disbelief' must emigrate toward the 'Land of Islam'. He can remain there only if he lives according to Islamic religious norms or if he is not able to emigrate because of illness, weakness or constraint."

Reza (1991: 110) regards such travel as a form of 'hijrah', allowing Muslims to justify their presence in a non-Muslim land as a duty to Islam, and a way of teaching people about Islam while Ibn Taymiyya, al-Mawardi and al-Sadaq suggest that Muslims serve Islam better while living with non-Muslims. This is, however, only when converting people to Islam and not where Muslims become 'naturalised' into a non-Muslim society. Abu Salieh (2002:6) explains "Classic Muslim jurists regard with an evil eye a Muslim who migrates from the Land of Islam toward the Land of Disbelief." These views of Muslims in non-Muslim lands, see residence as temporary, and fail to take into account today's situations of Muslims who are 'permanent' or citizens of non-Muslim countries.

Contemporary Studies of Muslims as minorities

Modern-day academics and theologians have begun to consider these classical guidelines in a changing world. Some believe in the reformation of Islam to suit the times, while others hold on to the beliefs and values of the classical jurists.

Khalidi identifies three clichés as central to understanding how integration can hope to be achieved in modern Europe, clichés that both Muslims and non-Muslims must understand if the integration process is even to begin. The first of these focuses on the belief that Islam has no 'church' or as he defines the term, place of worship. A place of worship is pivotal to a religion and its worshipers. For Islam, this place is the mosque, a place where people can gather and exchange ideas, and develop a sense of belonging. Recognition of this function of the mosque gives Muslims a place to turn to and non-Muslims a centre to which they can voice their questions or concerns. It seems that this cliché may be considered redundant in modern Europe as mosques have become a focal point for Muslims and the message of Islam, and mosques are identified by Muslims and non-Muslims as the spiritual and social centre for Muslims.

Khalidi's second cliché concerns the notion that Islam is a religion and a way of life, suggesting that Muslims may be unwilling or be incapable of changes to some aspects of their life style when taking up residence in a new state. The 'majority' culture may in turn be hostile towards the new Muslim residents viewing them as being unable to fit into the majority 'way of life'. Khalidi (1992: 26) argues that every religion is in fact a way of life and that to try and separate it from other aspects of society is to do an injustice:

> "All religions claim at one time or another not only to what and how men worship, but also to how they behave, organise themselves into a community, observe certain properties and so forth."

Religion may therefore be said to influence all decisions and actions taken on the part of individuals or states. It could be argued that

awareness of different religions needs to be raised ensuring that individuals accept different approaches to how individuals live their lives; creating not a secular society, but one encompassing all religions. S. Abu Sahlieh (2002) argues for the importance of national rather than religious borders and asks if this is not a pivotal question when trying to maintain classic Islamic norms.

The third cliché ties in closely with the second discussed above, but relates directly to the role of the state. Khalidi, along with other scholars, states that Islam is not in a pure platonic form; thereby negating constancy, a fact true of every religion. Islam of one time and place is quite different from the Islam of another time and place. The early Islamic Empire saw a clear differentiation between the spiritual and legal roles of the Caliph as defined by al-Ghazali. Khalidi believes that Islamic scholars need to look at theoretical reinterpretation and social reintegration.

It is also important to distinguish between Islamic principals relating to religious ritual and those concerning secular affairs and society: the first are detailed and precise while the second provide general guidance rather than a fixed framework. According to Ramadan (2004: 145):

> "Muslims need to decide individually and independently using their reason, their freedom and their imagination, what their commitment will be with regards to the social and political levels."

Ramadan and Parekh feel it is normal for groups to wish to 'protect' themselves in the first decades in which they reside in a new country to protect against the loss of their culture through too much contact with outsiders. Both believe that this phenomenon should be acknowledged and accepted as 'normal' when trying to integrate a minority culture/group into a society. (*ibid*: 52) "This is how all the initial steps towards adaptation undergone by all immigrant populations should be understood." Following this 'protection' stage, Ramadan stresses that Islamic theologians need to consider how Muslims can begin to become part of mainstream society while retaining aspects of their cultures or religions viewed as fundamental to their way of life. This protective state, which Ramadan argues changes with the times and context, should be viewed not as positive or negative but as a normal part of the integration process, and assistance and guidance should be provided to Muslims to facilitate movement to the participatory stages of integration (*ibid*: 9):

> "Western Muslims, because they are undergoing the experience of becoming established in new societies, have no choice but to go back to the beginning and study their points of reference in order to delineate and distinguish what, in their religion, is unchangeable or thabit, from what is subject to change or mutaghayyir."

Ramadan explains that this process involves looking at three components of Islam. These consist of al Maslaha or common good, Itihad or the effort on the part of Muslims to live their lives according to Shari'a laws, and Fatwa or legal decision or verdict, directly relating to integration in non-Muslim majority cultures. Over the centuries, Islamic scholars have had different views on these three components; however over time a framework has been drawn up that Muslims all over the world (the ulama) refer to, a framework drawn from several sources, locations and times to arrive at the one Muslims refer to today.

Ramadan asks why we cannot redevelop this framework to suit today's societies. If the existing 'framework' is looked at and thought through and the distinction between what is law and what is culturally created, is established, a Muslim should be able to live peacefully in the West. In addition to the framework, Ramadan also stresses the need for a 'conscience clause' allowing Muslims to state that certain actions or behaviours are against their faith. This, I believe, is very important in Western societies as it should provide a sense of transparency of the religion, remove misunderstanding and thereby prevent hatred and hostility

Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah, (1999) who writes extensively on Muslims as minorities, stresses the need for Muslims to accept their 'new' nationality and country of residence, in order to avoid humiliation 'al-muslimu la yudillu nafsa' and a sense of being marginalised from main-stream society. "It is absolutely essential to respect the laws of the land that you are living in!" He works on the prerequisite that government aspects of Shari'a do not apply in minority status situations, due to the understanding that Western societies cannot be regarded as land of war or dar-al-harb if they allow minorities to practice their religions freely and without persecution. Instead, they are regarded as lands of treaty or dar-al-shifa. Theologians such as Malik go further and say that they should be known as countries of Islam or dar-al-islam because they allow for the freedom of religious practice and expression. Ramadan (2004: 95) explains:

> "Islamic law and jurisprudence command Muslim individuals to submit to the body of

> positive law enforced in their country of residence in the name of the tacit moral agreement that already supports their very presence."

This raises once again the notion of identity and belonging in a country or with a group of people. Do Muslims in the West consider themselves first Muslims and then nationals or vice versa? Ramadan claims that this is a false question, taking us back to Khalidi's second cliché on religion and a way of life. Ramadan argues that nationality and faith are not of the same order while Khalidi claims that all religions are a way of life making it difficult for one to separate the different 'layers' of identity. Ramadan considers nationality as just an element of identity or how people are related to one another in a given space. Faith, meanwhile, justifies life and existence itself; tying in with stress the need to 'adapt' to the new societies, both clear argue that being a Muslim is a way of living. This shared belief amongst all Muslims of faith as the essence of their identity separates them from many other groups who may see religion as just one of the many layers of their identity.

Ramadan raises questions that help clarify why religion has such a central role in the lives of Muslims. It is clear that elements of Muslim identity that are based on religious principles need to be separated from cultural factors that have to do with a way of life and can be adapted for different societies. Many Muslim minorities suffer from a dualistic vision of themselves, seeing themselves as eternal foreigners living parallel or marginalised lives outside main-stream society, as in the current Western European context. Ramadan believes it is necessary for Islamic theologians to decide what it means to be a Muslim and to formulate universal principles to which Muslims in the West must hold if they are to remain faithful. If this happens, according to Ramadan, it will be possible to be a good Irish Muslim or a good Dutch Muslim.

Several meetings took place during the 1990s which addressed issues of concern for Muslims living as minorities, but there has been no attempt to deal with the issues raised by academics such as Sheikh bin Bayyah and Ramadan. In fact much of the work on integration done by scholars in the West calling for a new ijtihad or living according to the laws of Shari'a has been problematic. Ramadan stresses the need to avoid the creation of two separate groups/universes that do not mix and only compromise in the limited areas in which they intersect. A trivial attempt is all that has been made, and more-in-depth research including what Muslims feel is needed in order to achieve the required universal principals. To illustrate the existence of two separate universes Raza (1991:33) focuses on Muslim communities in Britain and their existence on the margins of society. He suggests they know:

> "almost nothing about the context in which they are resident so they cannot propose any solutions to the problems faced by the communities. Any solutions they do offer are escapist or obscurantist".

Past attempts at integration have been what can be referred to as 'symbolic acts'; for example Muslims vote in elections, but there is no sense of involvement or of their voices being heard, leading to what I would refer to as tolerance but not integration. This means that at a superficial or institutional level there appears to be integration but at the local and cultural levels, fundamental to identity and a sense of belonging, the Muslim community exists as a separate entity. It could be argued that this is happening in the case of the Irish Muslim community.

The situation in Europe

Ahmed (1993: 5) addresses the importance of religion for a Muslim:

> "Muslims would like to be able to visit their mosque and say their prayers peacefully without interruption, without being beaten up, without being picked up for interrogation. They also like the privacy in their homes where they can lead their lives as Muslims,"

This presents an idea of isolation and suggesting that Muslims just want to be left alone. This is not integration, but this is what seems to be happening in many European countries.

A global survey carried out by the Pew Research Centre, located in the Netherlands, found that the majority of people in Europe believe that Muslims coming into their country want to be distinct from the broader society rather than adopt their new country's customs. 'Blame' for this occurrence cannot be entirely placed on either the Muslim community or on the majority culture; rather a lot of the 'blame' may have to be attributed to government immigration policies. The attitude of the majority of governments in Europe is one of 'separate but equal'. This separation is maintained by the belief in European societies that it is taboo to discuss friction openly, an attitude coming from what Masci (2003: webpage) describes as "a laissez-faire approach; one that has treated Muslim minorities as a temporary phenomenon that will eventually go away and hence, can safely be ignored".

Distance continues to grow and has led to severe problems in recent times particularly in the Netherlands, France and Denmark as explained by Bawer (2003):

> "The distance between mainstream society and the Muslim subculture can be especially striking in the Netherlands, whose relatively small, ethnically homogeneous native populations had, until recent decades, little or no experience with large-scale immigration from outside Europe."

De Volkskrant (2005), editor of the Financial Times in the Netherlands, claims that even though the Netherlands is viewed as the 'most liberal' society on earth,

> "in the eyes of most Dutch people, integration means adapting to a humanistic tradition, to the separation between church and state, and distancing oneself from the norms and values of one's motherland."

This attitude is widespread across European societies and maintained through the laissez-faire attitudes of the governments. Bawer (2003: webpage) argues that European societies are unable to accept 'non-white' people as citizens of their society; and claims that "it just doesn't come naturally".

What is the solution or is there a solution? Central to the integration of the Muslim minority in European countries is the need to look at them as a community. I have already established that a Muslim will centre their lives around the community; it is a primary component of their existence. Bodi (2002), following the path of Parekh, emphasises the need to address Muslims as a community and not as individuals, he says that this is particularly true in Britain. Another fundamental endeavour that needs to be undertaken by all European governments is the need for openness and engaged dialogue. The sense of taboo concerning the discussion of issues relating to minority groups needs to be addressed and removed from the psyche of the majority culture.

This openness needs to work both ways; is it is also the responsibility of the Muslim community and its leaders to become more open and willing to engage. Ouardiri (1993: 17) sums up this need explaining:

> "the European Muslim is something else. He is a citizen, therefore equal to others ... He must respect laws and must serve his homeland in accordance with requirements of citizenship ... But here is the problem. For the faithful Muslim citizen, above citizenship there is his faith, with its laws, its practice, its principles and its values....He is therefore confronted with a dilemma. The law that governs citizenship is sometimes in contradiction with the one of his faith. Is Islam incompatible with the European citizenship or the reverse? For the Muslim, the obstacle comes from the narrowness of secular laws and not the opposite. Facing this situation, Muslim citizens must either expose themselves to a refusal on behalf of the authority and, in the name of secularism, to live a reduced and incomplete Islam in relation to divine prescriptions; or to claim from this authority a larger political, legal and cultural field in order to express legally and live indispensable Islamic values."

Conclusion

The situation in Europe is both a reflection of the lack of agreement between Muslims when it comes to the interpretation of Islam, but it is also an indication of the lack of integration happening in European countries. European society now finds itself in the midst of several Muslim groups for which there is no central body. Within these groups Muslims find support and are able to identify with their fellow Muslims and therefore do not feel any need to integrate into the mainstream society. There seems to be a lack of want or need for Muslims to place themselves in situation where they do interact socially with non-Muslims. This may be due to the 'myth-making' by leaders in the community and also due to the lack of a clear interpretation of the Qur'an for Muslims.

Through intense dialogue with different members of the Muslim community, the European governments need to identify some of the 'needs' that are distinct to Muslim communities. By identifying these needs awareness will be raised and some of the myths surrounding the Muslim communities can be addressed. Governments also need to address the fact that religion is obviously the driving force behind the Muslim communities and therefore cannot be ignored. At the same time Muslim communities need to be willing to engage in intense dialogue with governments, in doing this they too can begin to address some of the myths surrounding the majority culture in the European country which they are in.

At the grassroots level, both the majority community and the Muslim communities need to address myths and begin to work together. It is not enough for people just to live side by side, they must become aware of their neighbours as people and not only as a Muslim, a Christian or any other identifying factor.

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