



**Statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee,  
Subcommittee on European Affairs**

***“Islamic Extremism in Europe”***

A Statement by

**Dr. Robin Niblett. D.Phil**

**Executive Vice President, & Director, Europe Program  
The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)**

**April 5, 2006  
Dirksen Senate Office Building**

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#### **Introduction**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity to address you and members of the Senate Subcommittee on European Affairs on the issue of Islamic Extremism in Europe. Islamic extremism has emerged over the last five years as one of the central threats to Europe’s security and social cohesion. Its rise has exposed serious and deep-rooted deficiencies in European society, economy, and values. It is a central part of Europe’s current crisis of identity, which has been driven also by the recent dramatic enlargement of the European Union and by the failure of its member states and citizens to ratify its proposed Constitutional Treaty last May. The rise of Islamic extremism in Europe also poses important security considerations for the United States in the fight against international terrorism. How European governments and societies deal with it will be an important determinant of the sort of partner Europe will be for the United States in the coming years.

It is worth noting at the outset that the rise of Islamic extremism has awoken a particular fear in Europe. European nations are now aware that they contain within their borders immigrants, and first, second, and third generation citizens who see their own governments, countries, and fellow-citizens as the enemy. Driven by Islamic extremist ideology, a very small but important minority are willing to kill and maim, potentially on a massive scale, in the name of that ideology. The attacks in Madrid a little over two years ago and in London last July were the most visible and shocking manifestations of this new reality. As significant, but less-well reported, has been the foiling by law enforcement and intelligence agencies of over 30 plots to perpetrate similar spectacular attacks throughout Europe since September 2001, a large proportion of them in the last eighteen months and including plots involving chemical and biological weapons.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the October 2005 arrest of seven Muslim men in Denmark in connection with an alleged terrorist plot involving suicide vests in Bosnia (Dan Bilefsky, “Cartoons Ignite Cultural Combat in

The European experience reflects an important difference from the United States where, following the devastating attacks of September 11, 2001, the threat posed by Islamic extremism has been kept and been addressed primarily off-shore. While domestic intelligence services and the Department of Homeland Security keep a careful watch on its potential appearance inside America's borders, from the U.S. perspective, efforts to tackle Islamic extremism are more matters of international intelligence, military and covert action abroad, foreign policy, and foreign assistance. For European governments, it is the internal problem that is most complex and daunting. It is not only a matter of rolling up existing cells or working to identify extremist individuals, it is also a case of ensuring that the sense of alienation felt by much of Europe's large and growing Muslim population does not serve as a bridge to draw more individuals over to the side of terrorist action. And it is a case of ensuring that external circumstances, such as the continuing conflict in Iraq, the failure to achieve peace between Israelis and Palestinians, or political instability in North Africa do not exacerbate Europe's internal problem.

With these points in mind, I will address three issues in this testimony. First, what is the state of current thinking on what has led to the rise of Islamic extremism in Europe and what are the connections to violent terrorist action? Second, armed with the experience of the last two to three years, how do European governments now perceive the threat and what steps are they taking to address this phenomenon? And, third, I will touch briefly upon the transatlantic dimensions of this danger.

### **The Driving Forces of Islamic Extremism in Europe**

The rise of Islamic extremism in Europe has flowed from a combination of external and internal forces. Externally, Europe became, from the late 1950s onwards, a principal destination for Islamic radicals and other individuals opposed to the political status quo in their home countries in the Middle East. They sought refuge from political persecution or arrest at home in European cities such as London, Munich, and Amsterdam. Once in Europe, they continued to organize and promote change in their native countries under the more or less watchful eye of national intelligence services.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, they

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Denmark," *The International Herald Tribune*, December 31, 2005); arrest of seven youths in an anti-terrorist raid in Holland (Roger Cohen, "A European model for immigration falters; Dutch facade of tolerance under strain," *International Herald Tribune*, October 17, 2005); the arrest in April 2005 of members of the "Hofstad Network" in Holland who were accused of planning a string of assassinations of Dutch politicians as well as an attack on the Netherlands' sole nuclear reactor and Schiphol Airport (Ian Bickerton, "Van Gogh murder trial tests belief in Dutch justice system," *Financial Times*, July 12, 2005); the discovery of a plot by a London based group to acquire 500 kilogrammes of the toxin saponin (Steven Fidler, "London chemical plot foiled," *Financial Times*, November 22, 2003); the further arrest of eight second-generation South Asian immigrants, reportedly trained in al Qaeda camps, and charged with assembling a dirty bomb; and in the year after the Madrid 3/11 bombings, Spanish police uncovered a Pakistani cell attempting to bomb a high profile target in Barcelona, and a North African cell planning to attack the High Court with a truck bomb (Elaine Sciolino, "Spain continues to uncover terrorist plots," *New York Times*, March 13, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> The British experience was illustrative of this trend, with the British tendency to observe extremist groups that were banned in other European countries until recently earned London the nickname "Londonistan." For more on this, see Stephen Ulph, "Londonistan," *Jamestown Foundation Terrorism Monitor*, vol. 2, issue 4, February 26, 2004

sought to recruit new converts to their cause from among young Muslims already living in Europe. In this sense, Europe has become part of the battleground of a growing Islamic civil war between different schools of Islam and, in particular, between governmentally-controlled schools and those groups which currently seek to promote a more global approach, from the conservative and sometimes extreme Muslim Brotherhood to the violent Al Qaeda.

Internally, Islamic extremism has been fed by the growing sense of frustration and alienation felt by second and third-generation children of the Muslim economic immigrants to Europe of the 1950s and 1960s. As has been well documented by scholars of Islam in Europe, these economic migrants were welcomed when they took many of the low-paying jobs that helped fuel Europe's economic boom in the 1950s. They were generally treated, however, as "guest workers" who would eventually return home. Instead, supported by generous family reunification policies and the lack of economic opportunities in their home countries, most economic migrants chose to stay in Europe. Rather than integrate, many of them formed separate communities within national European societies – driven by their desire to maintain their own culture and religious customs, by the homogeneity and impenetrability of European societies, and by policies in most European countries that managed these two phenomena by following policies of multiculturalism, which permitted and even facilitated the emergence of parallel societies within these countries, a trend that was reinforced by the decision to house many of these immigrants in housing complexes far away from urbanized city centers.

By the time the children of the initial immigrants grew up, many of the low-paying jobs had disappeared, especially in the textile industries in the UK and in the jobs once needed to help French and German reconstruction after the Second World War. Growing levels of unemployment in Europe hit localized immigrant Muslim communities hard, with unemployment levels, especially among the young, anywhere from two to three times the 10% average in the Eurozone. Even so, their presence has led to growing racial tension with the poor and unemployed locals, bringing an additional dimension of separation between the two communities. This tension was exposed clearly in rioting between Muslim and white youths in Oldham and Bradford in North England in the summer of 2001, and more recently in the riots last November in French *banlieues* (suburbs).

The difficulties that young Muslims often face in escaping poverty and social and economic marginalization have been exacerbated by education systems in many European countries that reinforce social rigidities. In Germany, for example, the proportion of children of Turkish origin who make it to the top of the education system's three tracks – the one that leads to university – stands at only 12%, compared to 47% for German students as a whole; while 40% of immigrant children attend the lowest branch of secondary school, twice the average German proportion.<sup>3</sup>

This alienation of large swathes of Europe's Muslim communities has interacted with the rise of Islamic extremism as a global phenomenon to form a mutually reinforcing and combustible mix. The 1990s witnessed not only the continuing decline in the prospects

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<sup>3</sup> Program for International Student Assessment report, cited in Katrin Bennhold, "In Germany, immigrants face a tough road," *International Herald Tribune*, December 26, 2005

of many Muslim immigrants in Europe, but also, outside Europe, the rise of a new Islamic resistance, exemplified initially by the mujahedeen in Afghanistan, by the resistance to Russian forces in Chechnya, (intriguingly) by the fatwa issued against Salman Rushdie – the first time that Islamic law had attempted to penetrate directly inside a European country – and, most dramatically by the attacks in New York and Washington in 2001. The late 1990s and early 2000s have also witnessed the spread of the internet for communication and for posting messages; and the emergence of new Arab satellite TV channels, independent of national governments and inspired by orthodox Muslim groups. These new media have given Muslims in Europe the opportunity to develop the feeling of belonging to an imagined collective Muslim international community or “umma” that cuts across their ethnic backgrounds. Pakistanis in London now express an unlikely solidarity with Palestinians living on the West Bank.

The examples of the growing numbers of Islamic jihadis and the ubiquitous messages of those who preach the virtues of a return to strict interpretations of Islam are giving a new sense of identity to young Muslims who feel that they do not belong to their adoptive homes. Gathered together in ethnically homogeneous enclaves or ghetto-like apartment complexes in the suburbs of many of Europe’s major cities, young men are increasingly enforcing their own versions of Sharia law upon the daily life of their Muslim brothers and sisters. The European Council for Fatwa and Research, for example, which is composed of imams primarily from non-European countries and is led by the Qatar-based Youssef Qaradawi, issues verdicts on questions of how to interpret divorce law and the appropriateness of accepting interest on life insurance policies.<sup>4</sup> Young women, in particular, are finding that their ability to lead independent lives is increasingly circumscribed, not just by the enforcement of dress codes and forced exemption from social activities in the name of Muslim female piety, but also by familial pressure to accept arranged marriages at a young age to men (often relations) from the “homeland.”

The position of second-generation Muslim women in these communities is complicated by the continuing practice of bringing in child brides from the immigrants’ homelands, whose arrival – generally from backward rural areas, unable to speak more than their native language – continually retards the possible integration of their families into their domestic societies. The figures prepared for France’s Council for Integration in 2004 are quite sobering in this respect. They estimate that 70,000 young women living in France are in arranged or forced marriages. Other groups estimate that, in Denmark, 90% of immigrants had imported a spouse from their homeland, while a Dutch study put their figure at 70%.<sup>5</sup>

At a minimum, these trends are leading to a growing separation between large parts of Europe’s Muslim populations and the societies within which they live. At worst, they are opening up opportunities for certain individuals to be recruited into groups that espouse terrorist violence as a means of resisting oppression and pursuing their political goals. The emergence of so-called “garage mosques” in Madrid and other European cities reflect a splintering of religious Muslim instruction throughout Europe that is offering

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<sup>4</sup> Ian Johnson, “Islamic justice finds foothold,” *Wall Street Journal*, August 4, 2004

<sup>5</sup> Marlise Simons, “Muslim women take charge of their faith,” *International Herald Tribune*, December 2, 2005

venues for radical preachers to inculcate in the minds of disoriented young Muslims the route of martyrdom or violence as a solution to their personal crises of identity. For many young Muslims who feel that they belong neither to their home country nor to their ancestral home, belonging to a radical Islamic group brings new levels of certainty, which can then be exploited by terrorist leaders for recruitment purposes.

Radical preachers and other recruiters have proved quite adept at converting young Muslims to their cause while the latter are in prison, generally carrying out sentences for minor criminal offences. Mohammed Bouyeri, the murderer of the Dutch TV producer Theo van Gogh, was reported to have become more devout while in prison on a minor assault charge, and, after his release, fell under the thrall of Syrian militant Abu Khatib, around whom the Dutch “Hofstad Network” was first brought together.<sup>6</sup> Another example is Richard Reid, the “shoe bomber,” who was converted to Islam while serving time in a British young offenders’ institution, and upon his release started attending the Finsbury Park mosque run by fundamentalist cleric Abu Hamza.<sup>7</sup>

More recently, the ongoing conflict in Iraq has served as a powerful rallying cause for young Muslims in Europe. In a posthumously released videotape, Mohammad Siddique Khan, the oldest of the London bombers and the one considered the leader of the group, praised Abu-Musab al-Zarqawi, and spoke of “words having no effect” in the face of “atrocities perpetuated by [Western] governments” in Iraq.<sup>8</sup>

In contrast with the United States, therefore, where September 11 marked a watershed in controlling the domestic spread of Islamic extremism, September 11 marked the first in a series of recent moments that have galvanized the recruitment of individuals to the terrorist cause in Europe.

### **Current European Concerns and Responses**

The terrorist attacks that have taken place in Europe over the past two years and the regular uncovering of plots by Muslim extremists in cities across Europe have driven home for European governments, law enforcement, and security services the seriousness and potentially long-term nature of the threat that they now face. With the projected growth in the size of Europe’s Muslim populations over the next twenty years, just the smallest proportion need to be attracted to commit acts of violence for this to pose a potentially overwhelming challenge to European security. In Germany, for example, immigrants now account for 22% of 15 year-olds, compared with 9% for the population as a whole. If they grow up in increasingly alienated communities, the risks of some of their number following the example of groups in Amsterdam, Paris, or Leeds will increase.

In this context, the concerns of European policy makers are coalescing around several themes:

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<sup>6</sup> Glenn Frankel, “From civic activist to alleged terrorist,” *Washington Post*, November 28, 2004

<sup>7</sup> “Who is Richard Reid?” BBC News, December 28, 2001,  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/1731568.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/1731568.stm)

<sup>8</sup> BBC translation of tape released on Al Jazeera, September 1, 2005,  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/4206800.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/4206800.stm)

That rioting in Paris last fall, Muslim reactions to the “cartoon” controversy, and a continuing influx of Muslim immigrants will feed an expanding popular backlash in Europe against Muslims which will, in turn, drive new converts into the extremist Islamic camp.

That a larger proportion of Muslim communities might be sufficiently radicalized or isolated to offer a popular base either of support or of acceptance within which extremists can circulate, making the work of law enforcement and intelligence services that much harder.

That well-educated young Muslims, especially those studying in the areas of information technology, computer sciences, chemistry, and biotechnology might be drawn to the cause of Islamic extremism and put their knowledge to the service of groups wanting to carry out spectacular attacks on European soil.

That there will be a further expansion and deepening of cross-border linkages across Europe among radical Islamist terrorist groups.<sup>9</sup>

That returnees from Iraq might bring organizational and operational skills to Europe that could further increase the lethality and frequency of attacks.<sup>10</sup>

That European countries offer an infinite number of potential targets for terrorist attack and that no country is immune from being considered a target.

That European police, intelligence, customs, and judicial services are not well enough organized to confront this fluid new threat.

European governments are undertaking four broad sets of strategies to combat these concerns.

*They are trying to take collective as well as individual steps to lessen their vulnerability to the threat posed by terrorist groups* – these steps are primarily in the field of asylum law, police and intelligence cooperation, and judicial coordination. EU governments instituted a Single Arrest Warrant in 2002 to enable police forces to arrest suspects in one country for offences committed in another. They have increased substantially their use of Europol to track suspects across the EU (the 4,700 cases dealt with in 2003 represented a 40% increase on the previous year). They are aligning national criminal laws for terrorist offences, and are introducing biometric information on visa applications for better tracking and cross-referencing. More recently, at an extraordinary meeting of EU Interior Ministers on July 13, 2005 in the wake of the London bombings, ministers agreed

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<sup>9</sup> Robert Leiken notes this trend with reference, for example, to the Dutch Hofstad group, which was connected with networks in Spain, Morocco, Italy, and Belgium. Robert S. Leiken, “Europe’s angry Muslims,” *Foreign Affairs*, July/August, 2005

<sup>10</sup> EU counter-terrorism head Gijs de Vries has highlighted this threat in particular. See “Euro-terrorists pose ‘home threat’,” *Associated Press* February 2, 2005

on measures to force communications companies to retain telecommunications data, to institute the use of a new European “evidence warrant,” to improve the cross-border exchange of information concerning terrorist offenses, and to work more closely on terrorist financing.<sup>11</sup> In August 2005, high ranking officials from Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Spain announced a coordinated approach on stricter quotas for immigrants along with fingerprinting for all visa applicants. This was followed by the inaugural flight of what has been dubbed “Air Europe,” where 40 illegal Afghan immigrants were returned to Afghanistan on a special flight designed to expeditiously return illegal immigrants to their nations of origin from the five major European capitals.

*They are trying to improve the social integration of these communities by offering better economic opportunities to young Muslims living in deprived neighborhoods.* The French response to last November’s rioting by estranged Arab youth in the *banlieues*, for example, has included proposals aimed at expanding apprenticeships, offering employers tax incentives to hire young staff, and working with local authorities to target youth unemployment. However, the French government’s proposal to create a “First Job Contract” (CPE), that would circumvent France’s rigid labor laws and enable employers to freely fire employees under the age of 26 within their first two years of employment (and theoretically, therefore, give employers greater incentive to hire young people) has met with widespread popular disapproval and demonstrations by middle class, primarily non-immigrant university students.

*European governments are also combating the “ghettoization” and separation of their Muslim populations from the rest of society by instituting programs that are designed to force Muslim communities to integrate better with the rest of domestic society.* In February of 2004, in an attempt to initiate the integration process better at the border, the British government announced that prospective immigrants must demonstrate a level of proficiency in English and knowledge of British history and culture in order to obtain citizenship. The Netherlands has instituted its own program that obliges immigrants to take 375 hours of Dutch language classes and watch a film entitled “To The Netherlands” that displays images of Dutch history, culture, and daily life, including, as has been widely reported, shots of topless women and homosexual kissing. Governments are also taking steps to stamp out dangerous outside influences: in the Netherlands for example, the government has blocked two satellite television stations, Lebanese Al Manar and Iranian Sahar TV1, that were broadcasting messages supporting terrorism.<sup>12</sup> On a different track, some European governments have decided to try to tackle the tendency of many Muslim families to import young brides by raising the minimum age for immigrant spouses. In Denmark and Sweden the minimum age has been raised to 24 and in the Netherlands it has been raised to 21. These changes reflect the realization that, if Muslim women constantly start out their lives in Europe as newly-arrived immigrants, then their children, the next generation, are likely to find it harder to integrate also.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> July 13<sup>th</sup> Extraordinary Council Meeting of Justice and Home Affairs Ministers, [http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/jha/85703.pdf](http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/jha/85703.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> “Netherlands blocks Islamic ‘hate-tv’ channels,” *Agence France Presse*, January 26, 2006

<sup>13</sup> Marlise Simons, “Muslim women take charge if their faith,” *International Herald Tribune*, December 2, 2005

Finally, *European governments are trying to break as far as possible the linkages between Islamic extremist ideology and Muslim youth across Europe*, with measures to block entry to or expel radical imams; criminalize incitement to hate and violence; and to encourage the growth of Islamic groups with closer ties to local communities. In this respect, increasing numbers of European governments have decided to follow the long-standing practice of the French government, which has used legislation created in 1945 to summarily expel radical preachers, including eight alone last year. On February 16, 2006, the British Parliament passed the new Terrorism Bill that criminalizes the glorification of terror-inspired violence and bans certain extremist groups. Shortly before the passage of this law, a British court imprisoned fundamentalist cleric Abu Hamza al-Masri (the spiritual leader to both “shoe bomber” Richard Reid and the “20<sup>th</sup> hijacker” Zacarias Moussau), for seven years for “inciting murder and racial hatred.” The UK government also decided to ban the extremist Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation), a party that espouses the creation of a global caliphate using non-violent means and that operates also actively in Denmark.<sup>14</sup> For its part, the Italian government passed legislation in August 2005 permitting the rapid deportation of foreigners considered security threats and/or with terrorist connections, and then immediately used the new legislation to deport a number of imams.

In their place, European governments are trying to encourage the emergence of more moderate Islamic organizations, led as far as possible by Muslim citizens rather than immigrant preachers. On November 30, 2005, for example, Italian Interior Minister Giuseppe Pisanu established the Consultative Council for Islam (*Consulta Islamica*) that acts as a representational body for Italian Muslims to air grievances and settle Islamic provisions in hospitals, prisons, and cemeteries. Similarly, in 2002-2003 French Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy, helped initiate the French Council for the Muslim Religion (CFCM), that is two thirds elected by the wider French Muslim community and one third appointed by mosques, aimed at helping alleviate growing tensions between the Muslim population and the government. This group aims to create a governmental counterbalance in the French Muslim community to organizations like the Union of French Islamic Organizations (UOIF), a powerful and influential Muslim organization that has been largely dominated during its history by groups loyal to the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>15</sup> European governments have also taken a more hands-on approach, instituting policies that call for imams to be educated or born in the country they preach in (as in France); for foreign imams to attend classes to learn doctrine in the language of their adopted homeland (as in the Netherlands); or for some regulation of the sermons that imams preach (as in Spain).

These steps toward integration are not being taken solely by European governments and authorities. There has also been a strong Muslim response to the increasingly tense situation across Europe, with a growing search by clerics and ordinary Muslim citizens for forms of Islamic practice and living that are sufficiently flexible and modern to enable them to live and participate actively in European society. In the northern British city of Leicester, for example, the local council embraced immigrant communities by setting up

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<sup>14</sup> Dan Bilefsky, “Cartoons ignite cultural combat in Denmark,” *International Herald Tribune*, December 31, 2005

<sup>15</sup> Marlise Simons, “Muslim women take charge of their faith,” *International Herald Tribune*, December 2, 2005

interfaith councils which have subsequently helped integrate later immigrant waves and which have helped shield Leicester from the racial troubles experienced by neighboring Birmingham and other Northern British cities.<sup>16</sup> Young Muslim women are also leading the way in many cases, seeking a university education and demanding more freedom in choosing their marriage partners, while at the same time maintaining their Islamic beliefs, breaking the chain of second generation children alienated by parents who refused to integrate into their adopted societies.

### **Limits to Progress**

While European governments are now engaged in a flurry of activities designed to root out Islamic extremism from their societies and reverse the levels of social alienation and separation that many Muslims experience in Europe today, the fact is that true integration will take a long time to achieve. And during this period, the threat of new attacks by the violent minority will be hard to stop.

*From an operational stand-point, EU-level cooperation against extremism and terrorism remains very difficult.* European governments must overcome the inevitable obstacles not only to cross-border cooperation between their national law enforcement and intelligence agencies, but they must also drive greater cooperation within their national jurisdictions between departments and agencies that possess the institutional inertia of most government bureaucracies. Despite the introduction of the Single Arrest Warrant, for example, the German Constitutional Court refused to honor a request last July submitted under the Arrest Warrant by Spanish authorities for Germany to hand over suspected Madrid Bombing suspect Mamoun Darkanzali. The Court ruling held that the German legislation adopted to support the EU Arrest Warrant was “unconstitutional.” In addition, the failure to ratify the EU’s new Constitutional Treaty last year has delayed indefinitely arrangements to move aspects of judicial and internal security cooperation from a consensus to a qualified majority voting approach, a change which would have made overcoming many of these obstacles more manageable.

*The limits to Europe’s ability to institute economic reforms that will open new job opportunities in deprived economic areas and reduce high levels of unemployment among immigrant communities are self-evident.* Resistance to economic reform in Germany, France, Spain, Belgium, and Italy, to name but a few European countries, has been widespread over the past two years. So long as Europe’s economies remain in the doldrums, the social deprivation of many Muslim immigrants as well as other European citizens caught in persistent unemployment will persist.

*In the area of promoting greater social integration between Muslim communities and European societies at large,* European governments are being simultaneously driven to act in these areas and constrained in the sorts of steps that they can take by the growing public hostility toward Islam and Muslim immigration across European public opinion. The support in the polls for far-right anti-immigrant parties like Jean-Marie Le Pen’s French *Front National*, Belgium’s *Vlaams Blok*, the United Kingdom’s *British National*

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<sup>16</sup> Graham Bowley, “New Islam in an old English town,” *International Herald Tribune*, October 31, 2005

*Party*, as well as the strengthening of anti-immigrant sentiment in European mainstream political parties are all a reflection of growing fear of immigrant communities. The combination of European anti-Muslim feeling, tougher policing of Muslim communities, and efforts to control radical preaching risks creating a vicious cycle. Perceived European intolerance will evoke a Muslim counter-reaction and play into the hands of extremists whose actions then further inflame European anti-Muslim feeling. And, without governments being able to address broader Muslim grievances, banning Muslim groups and stricter laws on incitement toward hatred will merely drive the extremists underground. At the same time, being able to discern which Muslim groups to treat as the best interlocutors for European governments in addressing Muslim grievances has exposed the extensive divisions within European Muslim communities. Governments generally lack clear counterparties with whom to discuss and negotiate change.

*Many of Europe's new "citizenship" programs seem similarly limited in their potential impact.* Ultimately, there is little point in imposing tests about British or Dutch culture as new immigrants arrive if immigrants are unable to or do not wish to become part of the culture once they are inside. Assimilation of Muslim immigrants into European culture and values needs to take place over the long-term within European societies, not in the short-term at the border.

*European governments also face serious opposition to some of the measures that they are undertaking from domestic human rights groups and the judiciary.* One of the clearest examples was the opposition that Prime Minister Tony Blair's Terrorism Bill faced in the House of Commons and in the House of Lords, which succeeded together in watering down some of its bolder initial proposals. One practical problem was where to deport immigrants and immigrant preachers perceived to be threatening to public order. The United Kingdom has had to sign memoranda with Lebanon, Libya, and Jordan guaranteeing that people extradited to those nations will not be tortured or face the death penalty. The British government is currently in discussion with Algeria on a similar agreement.

*Beyond these practical obstacles to combating Islamic extremism and potential terrorism, there also appears to be a deeper, structural stand-off between European societies and their Muslim communities.* The historical homogeneity of European societies means that there is an expectation that Muslims should integrate into national European identities, not that Muslim and other communities should interact with local cultures to produce the sort of melting pot of national identities that has characterized the evolution of American society through its history. Many Muslims resist this expected adaptation of their beliefs and culture, and resistance will mean stressing differences rather than similarities.<sup>17</sup> Unlike many other immigration waves within Europe (for example, the Spanish and Portuguese immigrations that took place in the 1970s and 1980s or those of the Central Europeans today), the inter-linkage between Islam and people's daily life often means that Muslim communities demand adaptation from their new homes as a price for their integration. Demands for changes in which doctors attend women patients, dress codes for young women in schools, or separate bathing times in

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<sup>17</sup> For more on this point see Francis Fukuyama "A year of living dangerously," *Wall Street Journal*, November 2, 2005

public pools tend to increase the sense of popular hostility toward Muslim communities whenever they become large enough to be able to impose their views. The growing popular perception is that Muslims are now trying to re-impose on European societies some of the social strictures that Europeans spent a large part of the last century overturning.

*This European sensitivity is particularly acute today, when Europeans themselves are uncertain about what sort of identity they are trying to promote or protect.* Europeans are unsettled by the impacts that economic globalization are having on the viability of the European social model. The recent EU enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe and possible further enlargement to Turkey has challenged for many Europeans what are the borders of Europe. And many of the cultural and religious beliefs that defined Europeanness in the past have now become, in many instances, rituals that are devoid of their original spiritual meaning. Defensiveness over Europe's own identity will make it that much harder for European leaders and societies to compromise with Muslims over the best ways to accommodate the two groups together.

Fundamentally, Europeans will not be able to change their modes of social integration into ones that resemble those of the United States in just the next two to three years. Even if handled right, the steps that European governments have undertaken will take at least a generation to work their way through. In the meantime, we are likely to witness a lot of European treatment of the symptoms rather than causes of the recent rise in Islamic extremism in Europe. At the same time, European governments will have to remind themselves that, just as a lack of social integration does not necessarily lead to Islamic extremism or violence, nor will greater integration or assimilation mean the end of extremism or the risk of terror.

### **Implications for the United States**

The evolution of Islamic extremism in Europe carries both long-term strategic and near-term security implications for the United States. In the near-term, the danger is that, as Robert Leiken and others have argued, Islamic radicals who are European citizens might serve as perpetrators of future terrorist attacks in the United States.<sup>18</sup> Citizens from most West European states have the right to travel to the United States visa-free and could circumvent, therefore, many of the controls put in place since 2001 to monitor and protect America's borders.

In this context, it is worth noting that the U.S. government and its European counterparts have succeeded in taking a number of practical steps in recent years to try to confront this and other risks posed by international terrorism.

- U.S. intelligence and European intelligence agencies regularly exchange information on potential threats, and the United States and EU countries have set up joint investigation teams composed of law enforcement and judicial officials to track and disrupt potential terrorist groups;

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<sup>18</sup> Robert Leiken, "Europe's Angry Muslims," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2005

- Bilaterally, the United States and the EU signed Mutual Extradition and Legal Assistance Agreements in 2003 to help expand law enforcement and judicial cooperation to combat international terrorism;
- U.S. and EU officials worked together in the UN to push Resolution 1373 to combat international terrorism and instituted new procedures to tackle the financing of terrorist groups;
- U.S. and EU officials are working closely also in other international agencies such as the International Civil Aviation Authority (ICAO) and International Maritime Organization (IMO) to strengthen international standards such as the International Port Facility and Vessel Security Code;
- The United States and the EU have established a Policy Dialogue on Border and Transportation Security. The two sides have also come to agreement on sharing information about passengers flying to the United States and U.S. customs officials are stationed at some twenty European ports as part of the U.S. Container Security Initiative.

While positive, each of these initiatives remains a work in progress, with plenty of room for improvement. For example, European willingness to share classified information with U.S. authorities on terrorist suspects or accept extradition requests can be circumscribed by concerns that suspects could face the death penalty when tried in U.S. courts. And the U.S. provision of intelligence to European courts is affected by the inadmissibility of classified information as evidence in certain cases.

This being said, European Islamic extremists do not need to travel to the United States in order to take their war to America. American citizens living in Europe or Europe-based assets are likely to offer easier targets. Equally important, the war in Iraq has offered Islamic radicals from Europe and elsewhere a battleground on which to confront and kill Americans, an opportunity which, judging by the break-up of recruiting cells in Paris, Madrid, and other European capitals, some number of Europeans have taken up.

In the long-term, there are two broader sets of concerns for U.S. interests. One is that Islamic extremists based in Europe could increasingly provide the spark that ignites popular revolts against moderate Arab governments in North Africa, the Middle East, and the Gulf region, or against other vulnerable allies of the United States, such as Pakistan. Many of the Islamic extremists who have sought refuge in Europe have done so with a view to spurring change back in their home countries and returning as conquering heroes, much as Mohammed returned and drove his enemies out of Mecca after his years of self-imposed exile in Medina fourteen centuries ago.<sup>19</sup> Governments in Arab capitals sympathetic to the United States, from Rabat to Riyadh, are especially concerned about the seemingly unchecked proliferation of Islamic extremist movements across Europe

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<sup>19</sup> Robert Leiken (ibid.)

and what returning members of their European diaspora might mean for their countries' political stability.

A less well-defined risk for the United States is that European governments faced with large, growing, and restive Muslim populations might tailor or manage some of their foreign policies toward the Arab world in ways that cut across U.S. and transatlantic interests. U.S.-European cooperation in the Arab-Israeli peace process or in dealing with Iraq over the long-term are obvious areas where this could be a consideration.

## **Conclusion**

The level of frustration and alienation among many members of Europe's Muslim communities has not abated. At the same time, the risk of another terrorist attack perpetrated by Islamic extremists in Europe remains high. All European governments are potential targets, not only those explicitly supportive of the United States in its foreign policies in the Middle East. If there is another attack, the popular backlash against Muslims in Europe will be severe. Even without another attack, the integration of Muslim communities in Europe will be a difficult and protracted process. The many internal obstacles to integration will continue to be exacerbated by external forces over which national European governments have little if no control. Europeans are awake to these dangers and are doing their best to respond, but we are at the beginning of the process.