Overhauling Islam: 
Representation, Construction, 
and Cooption of “Moderate Islam” 
in Western Europe

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In the wake of September 11 and the attacks in Amsterdam, London, and Madrid, governments in Western Europe have initiated bold and controversial new policies aimed at the institutionalization of a moderate, Euro-friendly Islam. Official agendas range from relatively benign encouragement of the integration of immigrant populations and discouragement of “extremism,” to the explicit attempt to impose a state-approved formula for the organization of Islamic communities. Despite widely divergent legacies of church-state relations and seemingly disparate nationalist traditions, European governments appear to be converging on a common solution to their Muslim problem—“religion-change” and the construction of an “acceptable” Islam.

This essay will highlight the growing trend among European governments to adopt interventionist policies in the religious affairs of Muslims since September 11, focusing on two that are particularly central to the agendas of the respective state: (1) institutionalizing representative Islamic bodies and empowering designated Muslim interlocutors, and (2) facilitating the construction and maintenance of

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Islamic spaces. It will demonstrate how, increasingly since September 11, security concerns have led European governments to move beyond the periodic quick-fix solutions of crackdowns on Islamic militants and tightened immigration controls, opting for a more proactive strategy: the repositioning of the state as arbiter and chief architect of a “moderate” European Islam. For many government leaders today, the question is no longer how to help Muslims feel at home in foreign societies, but how to ensure that these societies produce the right kind of Muslim. Their concern is not how to outsource Muslim spiritual leadership so as to maintain allegiance to their native lands, but how to fashion loyal Muslim citizens that share European values.

This study will begin with a brief look at the historical trajectory of state-Muslim relations in Western Europe since the end of WWII, paying particular attention to evolving perceptions of the “Islamic threat” as they have informed popular discourse and driven public policy. Then an overview of the current scholarship on the state’s accommodation of Islam in Europe will highlight the dearth of available studies on the subject and point toward an interdisciplinary approach that integrates specific religious factors into assessments of Muslim identity construction in the West. Finally, a consideration of the evidence since September 11, 2001 will show how West European governments have converged on two particular strategic policies aimed at creating a new kind of official Islam that operates within state-sanctioned parameters and espouses Western liberal ideals. While these interventionist policies are rooted in decades-old European initiatives to “domesticate” Muslim populations, the present study will demonstrate that security concerns post-September 11 have led to a dramatic acceleration of the “religion-change” agenda across multiple countries, as well as an intensification of state involvement in Muslim affairs.

This recent agenda is by no means the only, nor even the primary, mode of interaction at work between European governments and Muslim minorities today. As an aggressively interventionist maneuver, it operates alongside more traditional, long-established integrative policies that respect religious freedoms and work with, rather than through, Muslim representatives. The overall rhetoric of public officials across Europe continues to stress inclusion and the need for “dialogue” between Muslims and the state in the spirit of enlightened multiculturalism and pluralism. The following evidence, however,

suggests that the European powers have begun to rethink the scope and consequences of their policies of multiculturalism and pluralism as they apply to each country’s growing Muslim population.

**THE EVOLVING “ISLAMIC THREAT”: 1945-2001**

Western paranoia about Islam can be traced back to the first Islamic conquests in the 7th century, when Muslim armies from Arabia and Syria began to overrun the fading Byzantine Empire, including the Holy Land. During the Middle Ages, the first crusaders were dispatched to Jerusalem with the assurance of martyrdom if they died fighting the infidel Muslims. Later developments of the Western missionary movement produced a body of literature that often demeaned and even demonized Muslims in an effort to convert them to Christianity. Western scholarship of Islam, while contributing significantly to the understanding of Islamic doctrines through expert linguistic and textual analysis, often took the form of an “Orientalism” that served to portray Muslims as archetypal “others” who posed an ambiguous threat on the margins of Western civilization. Today, the perceived “Islamic threat” has moved from the margins of colonial and academic consciousness to the core of Western anxiety about the changing world.

The most comprehensive study conducted on the phenomenon of “Islamophobia” in Europe found that, “A greater sense of fear among the general population has exacerbated already existing prejudices and fuelled acts of aggression and harassment in many European Member States.” This same report noted that “a greater receptivity towards anti-Muslim and other xenophobic ideas and sentiments has, and may well continue, to become more tolerated.” United Nations General Secretary Kofi Annan weighed in on the subject in 2004, telling a meeting of international dignitaries convened for the purpose, “[W]hen the world is compelled to coin a new term to take account of increasingly widespread bigotry—that is a sad and troubling development. Such is the case with Islamophobia.”

Europe was not always so concerned about Muslims in their midst. The first Muslims to settle in Europe in modern times were soldiers

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5. Ibid.

from North and Sub-Saharan Africa who fought with the Allies to liberate Europe from the Nazis, followed by workers recruited after World War II as a source of cheap labor to help rebuild the ravaged European economy. The new arrivals, typically unskilled young males from former or transitioning colonies, were granted visas as foreign labor or “guest workers” in return for regular wages and compliance with the laws of the land. With little incentive for the state to assume responsibility for the political, social, or spiritual needs of these “temporary” residents, from the outset, European governments generally addressed only the most basic material needs of its “ethnic minorities.”

In 1973, with the slowdown in Europe’s economic expansion due in large part to the worldwide depression caused by the Gulf oil boycott, European governments began to phase out guest-worker programs and Muslims lost their jobs. It soon became clear, however, that many of the Muslim “guests” were losing sight of their original intention to eventually return home and were planning to stay in Europe. Tens of thousands of young Muslim men, suddenly unemployed, were now more of a burden than a boon to the struggling European economy. Some governments tried in vain to encourage the workers to repatriate to their home countries. The vast majority refused to do so, preferring a welfare-supported life in Europe to impoverishment in their home countries. In an effort to ensure some measure of social stability among this population of restless, unemployed young males, European governments began to allow the reunification of immigrant families. Guest workers and their families suddenly became “immigrants,” creating a new reality.

European governments began to provide expanded services for their “ethnic” (Muslim) minorities, including outsourcing the maintenance of their religious needs to the immigrants’ home countries. This served both to keep the workers happy and to see that they maintained their loyalty to their homelands, encouraging their repatriation at the earliest possible time. The Saudi Arabian government established a Centre Islamique et Culturel de Belgique in Brussels, which was to become a source for logistical support and funding to Islamic communities throughout Europe under the auspices of the Muslim World League. European governments gave the Turkish diyanet and similar ministries in Algeria and the Levant free

reign to administer to the needs of their émigré constituents, effectively facilitating the reproduction within Europe of a church-state dynamic common throughout the Muslim world: the predominance of an “official Islam” administered and controlled by government bureaucracies, in this case, geographically distant bureaucracies headquartered in Riyadh, Ankara, and Algiers.

European anxieties about Muslim immigration intensified throughout the 1980s as the number of resident Muslims grew, and the conflicts and political turmoil in the Middle East began to spill into European cities. All across Europe, the state initiated more progressive policies aimed at integrating Muslims into their particular national cultures and/or protecting the state from potential threats posed by unassimilated migrants. France repealed its age-old legal ban on ethnic and religious organizations, adopted an informal “sanctuary doctrine” by which political dissidents were granted asylum, and, in 1986, passed the first anti-terrorism law of its kind in Europe, allowing police to detain terrorism suspects for four days without charging them. During this period, the Dutch actively encouraged the proliferation of Islamic organizations to represent the growing Turkish and Moroccan Muslim communities, and the British took a similar approach towards their mostly Arab and South Asian Muslim minorities.

At the same time, as Muslims became more visible, relations between Muslim and “indigenous” Europeans became increasingly

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11. For example, the Netherlands government first admitted that most immigrants would not return to their home countries in a report prepared by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1983. This document also identified the Dutch strategy for integrating its immigrant population, “integration with the preservation of identity.” See Thijl Sunier and Mira Kuijeren, “Islam in the Netherlands,” in Muslims in the West, ed. Haddad, 147. In Britain, the headmaster of a largely Asian/Muslim school, Ray Honeyford, sparked a scandal when he made racist comments in a right-wing journal, precipitating Muslim protests throughout Britain, especially in Bradford. See Steven Vertovec, “Islamophobia and Muslim Recognition in Britain,” in Muslims in the West, ed. Haddad, 23. In France, newsmagazines in the mid-1970s loudly proclaimed that immigration was out of control and that the “threshold of tolerance had been surpassed.” See Yvan Bastant, L’immigration et l’opinion en France sous la V République (Paris: Seuil, 2000).


13. Under this policy, France granted asylum to Khomeini and his followers, as well as certain Palestinian groups and Maghrebi opposition movements. See Jeremy Shapiro and Suzan Bénédicte, “The French Experience of Counter-Terrorism”; available online at: http://www.brookings.edu/views/articles/fellows/shapiro20030301.pdf, 5-7; accessed 15 December 2005.


strained. Several events brought Muslim protestors into the public squares of European capitals, including the United States bombing of Libya in 1984, the 1989 Rushdie affair in Britain, and the (first) headscarf affair in France in the same year. The publication of The Satanic Verses, a satirical novel by British Muslim Salman Rushdie, perceived by Muslims worldwide as defaming the Prophet Mohammad, resulted in a fatwa by Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran sanctioning the killing of the author. The murder of a translator of the novel as well as the staging of angry public protests by British Muslims, burning copies of the book, and demanding that stores ban it from their shelves, raised concern in the West that Muslims had not appropriated Western concepts of free speech and have a propensity for violence. British public opinion stood firmly behind Rushdie, while turning suddenly and sharply against the Muslim community for its supposed inability to recognize fundamental tenets of liberal society.¹⁶

The (first) French headscarf affair of 1989 had similarly deleterious effects on the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims in that country. The controversial expulsion of two French Muslim girls for wearing the traditional Islamic hijab in school sparked a nationwide debate over religious freedoms in France and the prospects for Muslim integration into French society. The government argued that the hijab presents an intrinsic obstacle to Muslim assimilation and perhaps even a threat to the secular principles of French nationalism. In the interests of keeping public order, France instituted a blanket legal ban on the flaunting of religious symbols in public spaces.¹⁷ This law would be tested and reaffirmed to public fanfare with the second “headscarf affair” in 2004.¹⁸

In both the British “Rushdie affair” and the French “headscarf affair,” young Muslim communities exercised what they viewed as their right to express their religious values by confronting the secular state; both cases resulted in mutual distrust and misunderstanding. This trend continued into the 1990s, as Muslim immigrant groups grew in number and visibility throughout Europe and political conflicts overseas spread to European streets. The most significant foreign conflict to impact domestic European politics was the Algerian civil war, which led to a string of shocking terrorist bombings in Paris in


Europe grew apprehensive about transnational “jihadi Islamism” brought from the Middle East by members of the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist resistance movements seeking asylum from the oppression of autocratic regimes in Egypt, Syria, and the Gulf. Their ideas began to take root especially in Britain, Germany, and Spain, but public authorities were slow to respond. While British intelligence services continuously monitored domestic radical Islamists such as Abu Hamza al-Masri, who preached violence in the Finsbury Park mosque after returning from the Afghan jihad, they made no serious attempt to limit Islamists’ activities. 19 This was the general pattern of state-Muslim interaction through the turn of the twenty-first century: growing concern about a foreign-dominated Islamic presence in increasingly secular European society, growing willingness to solve “the Islamic problem” through public policy, and a general tendency to see Muslim self-expression as a “temporary” phenomenon best dealt with through reactive legislation and police action.

This trend accelerated dramatically after September 11 when European governments and their citizens realized that the hijackers’ networks extended deep into Europe. Public discourse in Europe shed much of its ambivalence about Islam and shifted to a much more absolutist appraisal of ethnic minorities. Since September 11, numerous studies, articles, and public commentaries have characterized transnational Islam and the increased Muslim immigration in Europe as a potentially existential threat to Western society. Provocative titles such as While Europe Slept: How Radical Islam is Destroying the West from Within,20 Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis,21 Londonistan,22 and The Rage and the Pride23 are now bestsellers in Europe and America, reflecting the growing resonance of such alarmist sentiments in Western societies.

This “clash of civilizations” interpretation of the Muslim problem in Europe has not gone unchallenged. A wealth of scholarship has sought to portray the reality of Islam in Europe as more of a two-way “challenge” than a zero-sum struggle for survival. For example, in Islam and the New Europe: Continuities, Changes, Confrontations, editors Sigrid Nökel and Levent Tezcan portray the introduction of recalcitrant Muslim populations to European societies as a potentially constructive and beneficial arrangement for both parties, as each

20. Bruce Bawer, While Europe Slept: How Radical Islam is Destroying the West from Within (New York: Doubleday, 2006).
pushes the other to adapt and reform their institutions to the global, heterodox world. Other authors provide a more nuanced argument, noting that Muslim integration into Europe is not intrinsically threatening to Europe as a whole, since the different cultural and political traditions of the specific host countries determine the extent to which a given Muslim community’s integration is “problematic” or “challenging.”

Regardless of the exact character or intensity of the “challenge” posed by Islam in Europe, consensus is growing in public discourse that Islam poses a “threat” to the status quo. Whether Muslim integration represents a genuinely “existential threat” to European civilization, or in fact a potential source of mutual benefit and reform for both parties, is open for debate. Clearly, however, the pre-existing climate of fear and mistrust between Muslims and non-Muslims in Europe has been exacerbated in past decades by violence committed in the name of Islam. It seems quite certain that this anxiety will continue to pervade both popular and academic literature on the subject, as has been evident in the Muslim reaction to the Danish cartoon controversy, and more recently to Pope Benedict’s lecture which was perceived as depicting Islam as a violent, non-rational religion.

RECENT SCHOLARSHIP ON MUSLIM IMMIGRATION

Until recently, scholars have devoted little attention to specifically religious aspects of Muslim immigration in Europe, focusing primarily on the economic, political, or cultural factors involved in the

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assimilation of an “ethnic minority” or a “foreign worker” population. Thus, Europe’s approximately 15 million Muslims have been more frequently analyzed according to ethnic background, gender, political participation, and socioeconomic factors such as


Employment and remittances.  

Erik Bleich illustrates how this secularist logic continues to drive European governmental policy, even after the recent rise in violence around the world committed in the name of Islam.  “States have largely taken the religion out of religious violence,” he writes, “by responding to it with general antiterrorism measures. . . . [M]ost states have opted to downplay the specific connection to Islam by referring to ‘international’ terrorism and by including at least some non-Muslim groups on their watch lists or in their public pronouncements.”  

Jorgen Nielsen, writing about the situation prior to September 11, also downplayed the purely religious aspect of the Muslim integration debate, positing that it has “less to do with religion than with ethnic pluralism and race and their interaction with religious pluralism.”  

Even Muslims in Europe, as noted by Y. N. Soysal, often justify their claims to ostensibly religious rights (the headscarf or hijab, religious or halal butchers, Islamic schooling, etc.) on the basis of “natural” and human rights guaranteed by European constitutions, “rather than drawing on religious teachings and traditions.”  

A strong impulse seems to be at work among many European scholars as well as European governments to avoid exceptionalizing Islam and Muslims—to assume that the continent’s Muslims are motivated by exactly the same economic and social (as opposed to spiritual) forces that motivate European Christians, members of other religious groups and nonbelievers.  However, a number of articles and works have been published in recent years that focus specifically on Muslims as religious actors, institutionalizing a spiritual tradition alongside a purely material one, and considering the relationship between this tradition and the state.  

Current scholarly debate on the subject has tended to grant Muslims a primary, active role in refashioning their own religious identity and institutions in dialogue

with society and polity. From this perspective, the state exercises indirect control over the construction of Islamic norms and institutions by asserting its “expectations” and serving as a rubber stamp to legitimize Muslim communal identity. Thus, the internal makeup of European Islam ultimately emerges out of Muslim initiative, while the secular state reserves only the right to set the external limits of group activities in keeping with legal standards.

Noting the relative dearth of research on “precisely how a society reacts, what barriers it throws up or even removes as regards the rise of Islamic institutions,” Rath, Penninx, Groenendijk, and Meyer shed much needed light on the dynamic interplay between Muslims and the state since the first large scale Muslim immigrations to Europe after World War II. However, the authors did not anticipate the extent to which security concerns would come to dominate the popular discourse on Muslim integration in the twenty-first century (as illustrated by the survey of “Islamic threat” literature, above), and thus fundamentally alter the playing field for European Muslims.

Two studies done in 2003, one by Joel Fetzer and Christopher Soper, and the other by Carolyn Warner and Manfred Wenner, provide more current appraisals of the situation, focusing on political opportunity structures and ideological trends that facilitate or constrain the institutionalization of Islam in the increasingly security-conscious Europe. But as is true for Rath et al. and many other social scientists, the usefulness of their argument is ultimately contingent on a political environment in which Muslims are the primary agents in maintaining their religious traditions. As will be seen, this dynamic does not necessarily hold in post-9/11 Europe, when governments have proven themselves willing, and increasingly eager, to remake religious traditions and institutions in their own image.

Perhaps the most thorough analysis of the relationship between

42. Ibid.
Islam and state today comes from a 2006 study by Jonathan Laurence. Laurence argues that beyond simply “compelling integration” among Muslim immigrants, European governments since the early 1990s have been engaged in a process of “domesticating” Islam by attempting to sever its transnational ties and selectively encourage a state sanctioned form of Islamic identity. The government-sponsored institutionalization and corporation (cooption) of previously decentralized, transnational Islamic institutions is, in effect, a way of imprinting European values and norms on a resistant Muslim population. Laurence pinpoints the “transnational” (or “universalist”) nature of Islam as the greatest perceived threat to the European social order—an ingrained sense of connection that bonds Muslims in Britain, France, and the Netherlands to their brethren in Chechnya, Somalia, and Palestine, and supposedly hinders the development of local nationalism. This sense of threat has led to intensified efforts to form Islamic umbrella organizations that might streamline relations between the state and Muslims to parallel those with other European religious bodies.

The intention, then, is essentially to reformulate Islam to fit the existing church-state accommodation of Christianity and Judaism. Islam needs to become increasingly centralized, localized, and independent of foreign influence (especially foreign imams) if it is to become assimilated into liberal European society, a process fraught with a number of other subtle adjustments to the “traditional” character of the faith. The goal of the state with regard to Muslims is the same as it was previously with Catholics and Jews: to ensure that they defer ultimate allegiance to the nation and secular law, and to separate an individual’s private religious identity and obligations from his/her public civic identity.

Since September 11, Laurence noted an apparent shift towards increased government interventionism at the expense of communal Muslim autonomy. This essay goes beyond Laurence’s thesis, however, in presenting evidence that state policy currently seeks to manipulate even Muslims’ private religious identity in the interests of national security. While the majority of scholars cited above would agree with Fetzer and Soper’s basic assertion that, ultimately, “state policy is determined in response to the religious needs of Muslims,” this study argues that, in fact, the situation today may have been reversed, with the needs of Muslims being “determined” by state security policy. Whenever possible, European governments have sought to “consult” with Muslim representatives in order to craft new policies on immigration, association, and civil rights affecting their communities. But the very act of selecting and publicly recognizing certain Muslim voices as more or less legitimate, more or less representative of Islam’s

45. Laurence, “Managing Transnational Islam.”
future in Europe, implies a wide range of ethical and political prejudices that may or may not coincide with a Muslim’s own preference for the relationship between Islam and the (un-Islamic) state. This study will provide numerous examples from different Western European countries supporting the thesis that the state is increasingly working to recreate Islam as a Westernized, liberal, manageable religion on par with other faiths, and to bring about a generation of obedient Muslim Europeans whose first loyalties lie with their countrymen.

**EUROPEAN STATE POLICY AND THE AGENDA OF RELIGION-CHANGE**

Three main categories of state policy in Europe contributing to a deliberate strategy to bring about religion-change have been identified. These categories of analysis include: (1) recognition/incorporation of Islamic organizations, (2) mosque/Islamic school building, and (3) treatment of Muslim clergy (imams). In particular, this study looks at the first two categories, recognition/incorporation of Islamic groups and mosque/Islamic school building, as indicative of the broader trend, with the remaining category discussed in a forthcoming companion piece by Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Michael J. Balz. Briefly, Haddad and Balz argue that European governments appear, for the most part, to have used France as a model for crafting policies aimed at producing “moderate” imams who can bind their Muslim constituency to the legal and moral precepts of European society. Through various new immigration restrictions, language and culture tests, expanded police powers, and special imam training programs, Europe has adopted what might be considered a process of coercive integration of its Muslim population. Our focus in this study demonstrates another side of this policy, whereby the state uses recognition and incorporation of Islamic groups and utilizes the construction of Islamic space as a tool for implementing a policy of religion-change.

**Recognition of Islamic Organizations: Cultivating Moderate Representatives?**

European governments have increasingly taken an active role in facilitating and funding Islamic spaces. Since September 11, numerous states have intensified their efforts to recognize and incorporate representative Islamic institutions. While European policies on this issue are varied according to each state’s inherited perspective and policies regarding church-state relations, the past few years have seen

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an unprecedented flurry of state-sanctioned incorporation of Muslim councils, high-profile consultations with Muslim representatives, and exclusive patronage of “moderate” Muslim groups throughout Western Europe. As with mosque building, the agency of Muslims themselves in establishing representative groups is significant, and frequently, Muslim initiative provides the primary impetus for official state recognition. The final stamp of approval, however, continues to lie with the state, which offers the choice between a marginalized, short-lived association and an integrated, materially secure institution equal to that of other faiths.

Jonathan Laurence identifies three common features of this state incorporation of Islamic institutions designed to “domesticate” both the official exported and the unofficial political forms of “transnational Islam.” These three “instruments of nationalization” include: “a charter or founding document in which participating Muslim organizations confirm their respect for the rule of law; the establishment of technical working groups that include representatives of [both the extremist and moderate forms of] Islam alongside state representatives; and, crucially, the nomination or election of a representative council that can serve as an interlocutor for state-church affairs.”

Beginning in 1974, similar efforts were initiated in European states that supported religious organizations. For example, in Sweden where the Church is supported by the Commission for State Grants to Religious Communities, Muslim national umbrella organizations began to appear at the encouragement of the state. The United Islamic Communities in Sweden (FIFS) was formed that year in order for the state to funnel funding to Muslims. They represented about three-fourths of all Muslim communities, regardless of ethnicity and religious affiliation. However, due to dissension in the ranks, a group of Sunni Arabs (with some Shiites) split from FIFS in 1982, and formed United Muslim Communities of Sweden (SMuF). Another split occurred in 1990, with the formation of the Union of Islamic Centers of Culture (IKUS), which primarily represented the Suleymanci as well as the Somali communities. Efforts at reconciliation brought about The Muslim Council of Sweden (SMR) in 1990, formed by FIFS and SMuF, to enhance their relations with Sweden’s majority population. Their goal was not only to increase the number of mosques and Islamic schools, but also provide outreach and information to non-Muslims about Islam as well as participate in public debate. The leaders of FIFS, SMuF and SMR are considered close to the Muslim Brotherhood, while IKUS members tend to be more sufì and pietistic, and lean towards Turkish Islam.

Another example comes from Belgium, where the government, at

the urging of the Catholic Church, officially recognized Islam in 1974, as a Belgian religion along with Catholicism, Anglicanism, Protestantism, Judaism, and Orthodoxy. This recognition provided the religious community with an opportunity to seek public funding for imam salaries, religious education, and other services. Efforts to create an umbrella organization were characterized by internal Islamic disagreements and government reluctance to recognize the Islamic and Cultural Center (ICC) as representative of the entire community. An effort by the government to install a more representative body, Superior Islamic Council (HRMB), was rejected by the minister of justice, who insisted that the law required that members be elected. When the ICC organized an election in 1991, and chose representatives, the government did not recognize the elected officials on the grounds that they had connections with the Muslim Brotherhood. In 1996, the Belgian government appointed a Provincial Council of Elders (VRW) made up of secular Muslims to organize an election, but the Muslim community rejected the Council because they had no Islamic training. The Belgian government’s insistence that the Muslim interlocutor(s) be representative of all Muslim groups, a condition not required of the other recognized faiths, demonstrated the interference in the religious affairs of Muslims.\textsuperscript{51}

France presents the most dramatic example of the trend towards state incorporation and recognition of friendly Islamic institutions in the post-September 11 period. As home to Europe’s largest Muslim population, France began to explore options for incorporating representative Muslim councils as early as 1989.\textsuperscript{52} It was not until 2002, however, that then French Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy “took up the Islam dossier” and organized a series of meetings that resulted in the creation of the French Council for the Muslim Religion (Conseil Français du Culte Musulman, or CFCM). Sarkozy “personally negotiated the composition of the CFCM’s executive office between representatives of the Moroccan and Algerian embassies, the World Muslim League, and the major federations” and arranged for Dalil Boubakeur, rector of the Grande Mosque de Paris, to serve as Council president and spokesman.\textsuperscript{53} Given his long-established ties to both the French and Algerian governments, Boubakeur seemed the obvious choice to head up the council. Two-thirds of the council seats were to be filled by direct election of participating mosques and one-third by consensual appointment of the different federation boards.\textsuperscript{54}

Concerning the French Interior Ministry, the CFCM has two key

\textsuperscript{52} Laurence, “Managing Transnational Islam,” 270.
\textsuperscript{53} Laurence, “From an Elysée,” 53-54.
functions. The first provides government authorities with an officially recognized Islamic organization with Muslim interlocutors they “could deal with. . . .”\textsuperscript{55} Secondly, and perhaps more important, the CFCM is part of a deliberate attempt to “de-radicalize Islam” by “co-opting hard-talking groups”\textsuperscript{56} and bringing unassimilated Muslim populations under stricter government control. Probably the single greatest concentration of such “hard-talking” rival voices to the state-supported CFCM is the Union of French Islamic Organizations (UOIF), whose leadership maintains loose ties to transnational networks such as the Muslim Brotherhood of Munich and Switzerland, has a marked tendency to use Islamist rhetoric, and controls 250 mosques in some of the poorest and least assimilated Muslim communities in France. According to one international observer, the French government hopes the CFCM can “co-opt and soften the [UOIF]”\textsuperscript{57} by making it a stakeholder in a government-sanctioned, relatively transparent shared enterprise.

Thus far, the government’s success in co-opting the UOIF through the CFCM has been uncertain at best: the Union has emerged as a powerful voice in the CFCM, winning nearly half of all regional council seats in the first elections and putting up a strong showing in subsequent elections. Far from being marginalized or “softened” overnight, the UOIF and its Islamist supporters seem to have grown in influence throughout France. On the other hand, there is reason to believe that the UOIF has at least partly tempered its “radical” and contentious rhetoric since becoming involved in the CFCM. During the “headscarf affair” in 2004, for example, a UOIF-affiliated student group called for demonstrations against the French ban on headscarves, despite an official CFCM decision to refrain from demonstrations in order to contest the law through “institutional means.” In a showing of solidarity with the umbrella council’s stated position, the UOIF cracked down on the errant student affiliate by replacing its leader “with someone more moderate.”\textsuperscript{58} The CFCM thus serves as a prototypical example of how the state can insert itself within a presumably internal Islamic discourse as “a guarantor of public order and as a broker between opposing sides,” and thus potentially engineer a more agreeable Islamic institution.\textsuperscript{59}

The British government has had comparatively less success over a longer period of time with its “favorite Muslim umbrella organization,” the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB). The MCB was founded in 1997 at the behest of Home Secretary Jack Straw and his immediate

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{58} Laurence, “From an Elysée,” 59.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 58.
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predecessor, Michael Howard, to serve as a “semi-official channel of communication” between Muslims and the government.60 According to the MCB website, the council’s inauguration was the result of several years of discussions and consultations with over 250 different Muslim organizations throughout Britain, and today comprises 400 affiliated national, regional, and local organizations, mosques, charities, and schools. The MCB represents a major effort by the government to provide moderate Muslims with a forum to express their opinions.61

Though it remains technically independent, the Muslim Council of Britain is largely regarded as a pet project of Tony Blair’s Labor government. The British government has publicly and exclusively embraced the Muslim Council since its inception, and was the driving force behind the Council’s reconsolidation in 2002.62 The MCB’s longtime Secretary General, Iqbal Sacranie, was knighted in June 2005, and the MCB’s elite senior leadership has access to government ministers.63 One recent example of the benefits bestowed exclusively to the MCB by the British government is the case of the 2006 Festival of Islamic Cultures—a nationwide, year-long series of events aimed at “promot[ing] the mainstreaming of Muslim cultures within UK everyday life.”64 According to one report, the British Foreign Office coerced the original festival planners into accepting the MCB as co-organizer by “insisting” that an MCB official be included in the board of trustees.65 The British government’s unremitting support of the MCB seems all the more striking, given the mounting criticism of the MCB’s professed sympathies for radical ideologues like Jamaat-i-Islami founder Sayyid Abu Ala Mawdudi, and Islamist militant groups like Hamas.66

Even before the London subway bombings of July 7, it appears that the British government was looking for alternative Muslim representatives, and for additional means of cultivating moderate Muslim organizations and allies. In May 2005, The Guardian reported a set of leaked Home Office cabinet documents detailing a secret project code-named “Contest” that would “lead to an unprecedented

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62. See, for example: Tony Blair, “Prime Minister’s Speech to the Muslim Council of Britain,” 5 May 1999; available online at: http://www.number10.gov.uk/output/Page1329.asp; accessed 4/25/06.
63. The Observer, 14 August 2005.
level of government intervention in the political and religious practices of Muslim communities, "aimed at the estimated 10,000 British Muslim youth suspected of harboring sympathies to al-Qaida. Project "Contest" recommended that the government should locate and support moderate spiritual leaders, as well as promote and fund moderate Islamic media: newspapers, television, and radio stations. In addition, the British government's secret plan called for creating 'Young Muslim ambassadors' who would help project a Muslim-friendly image of Britain. Massoud Shadjareh, of the Islamic Human Rights Commission, criticized the plan as 'an attempt to make Muslims more 'government friendly' rather than 'British friendly.'" The more troubling question for him was: "Who will define who is moderate and who is not?"

Then came the events of July 7 and the failed copycat attacks—both traced back to homegrown British Islamists. The British government responded by creating seven special "working group" committees, containing a relatively diverse selection of 100 Muslims throughout Britain. These professional and working-class Muslims would act as fresh representatives of the Muslim community to determine what went wrong on July 7 and produce comprehensive reports on how to solve the problem. The press criticized the project as typical of the New Labor government, "[S]omething had to be seen to be done, and quickly . . . The political imperative of being seen to talk to Muslims and for Muslims to be seen to help—both important in their own right—became more pressing than actually achieving the alleged task." Madeleine Bunting of The Guardian aptly summed up the government's response to July 7:

"The government . . . wants a profound shift in the culture and mindset of the Muslim community, and it wants it quickly. The combination of ambition—a giant project of social engineering—and impatience doesn't augur well, but the biggest problem is who's going to do the work. The government knows that getting too involved will be counter-productive, so it wants Muslims to put their [own] house in order. But which ones?"

There are indications that the Muslim Council of Britain is "out of steam," too insular and unrepresentative of the larger Muslim population, which has led the British government to create the post-July 7 working groups in an attempt to identify new voices who can

68. Ibid., 31 May 2004.
69. For more on this question, see Ron Geaves, "Who Defines 'Moderate Islam' Post-9/11," in Islam in the West, eds. Ron Geaves, Theodore Gabriel, Yvonne Haddad, and Jane Idlemann Smith (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2004), 62-74.
70. Madeleine Bunting, "Muslim Voices have been lost in the rush to make headlines," The Guardian, 10 October 2005, 23.
71. Ibid.
speak more legitimately for their people, while hopefully adhering to the state-sanctioned script.

Italy shares the same motives as Britain when it comes to establishing representative Islamic institutions. Italy's Interior Minister Giuseppe Pisanu called for the establishment of a “Consulta” to be the point of contact between the government and the “95 percent” of resident Italian Muslims that are “moderate.” Unlike its British and French counterparts, Italy's informal council explicitly seeks to represent both observant and non-observant Muslims, male and female groups, serving vital social and political functions more akin to an ethnic or cultural group than a strictly religious one. But Italy's newly-created Consulta shares a crucial characteristic with the British MCB and the French CFCM in that it is essentially bound to, and dependent on, the state government. The Consulta was established “to provide input for government on issues regarding the integration of Muslims in Italian society,” and as Interior Minister Pisanu noted, “the initiative is intended to help and support moderate Muslims, who are our natural allies in combating extremism.”

The Consulta's government-friendly role parallels Italy's other Islamic institution, the Grand Mosque in Rome. Elizabeth Rosenthal writes in the *New York Times*, “Unlike [some popular Islamic centers], where young men wander in and out all day, the Grand Mosque is only open to worshipers on Fridays. For the rest of the week, its primary function is to serve as liaison between Islam and the government.” The Grand Mosque's imam, Mario Scialoja, is a former Italian diplomat and convert to Islam, who divides his time between meeting with Islamic ambassadors and Italian politicians. Thus, Italy's central mosque hosts none of the informal social functions that have emerged in the West to serve immigrant communities attached to Islamic prayer spaces, but instead prioritizes its role as a conduit for official political-religious interactions that blur the line between mosque and state.

Despite early efforts by Muslims to create umbrella organizations in the Netherlands, national-level representative bodies have had little staying power. Both the Federation of Muslim Organizations of the Netherlands (FOMON) in 1974, and the Islamic National Committee in 1984, failed to flourish, due in large part to internal dissent, but also because the Dutch government refused to recognize organizations that were not inclusive of all Muslims, particularly the Indo-Pakistani Ahmadiyya movement considered “heretical” by mainline Muslims.

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73. “Pioneering Islamic Body Meets Wednesday”; available online at: www.adnki.com; accessed 9 March 2006.
74. Ibid.
Consequently, the Netherlands tended to relegate most state-Islam relations to the municipal level. However, since September 11 and especially since the murder of filmmaker Theo Van Gogh by a Muslim extremist in 2004, the Dutch Interior Ministry has taken a more proactive role in promoting moderate Muslim leaders and representative groups. A clear indication of the shift in Dutch government attitudes towards intervention in Islamic institutions is presented in a lengthy December 2004 report by the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD), recommending that the nation exert an all-encompassing effort to foster a more moderate Islamic ideology. Not restricted to government bureaucracies, this effort must engage the media, academia, and the communities themselves to counterbalance the radical range of ideas. Alliances with existing moderate Islamic organizations must be sought and collaborative initiatives promoted since moderate Muslims have not been able to blunt the more radical voices in the community.77 “Consequently, one of the strategies to counter the processes of radicalization is to enhance the resistance capability of the moderating forces. Attempts should be made to support and encourage them in such a way that affects a successful division between radical and moderate forces within the relevant group or community.”78

Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende of the Netherlands seems to have followed up on the AIVD's recommendations. In September 2005, he presided over the signing of a “code of conduct” by three Muslim leaders, who pledged to root out Islamic extremism in their communities by working with local authorities to identify extremists, and by being “particularly vigilant about how they teach certain passages of the Koran.”79 For its part, the local government council agreed to establish an office to help elevate the status of Muslims and work to counter the discrimination to which they are subjected. Prime Minister Balkenende's public appearance at the Aya Sofya Mosque in Amsterdam emphasized his government's moral and material support for those Muslim institutions and leaders deemed “moderate” and “vigilant” in adhering to Dutch law.

Since September 11, the German government has adopted an approach to Islamic representative institutions significantly resembling the British and French model. German politicians from former Prime Minister Gerhard Schroeder forward have “tapped” Nadeem Elyas, head of the Central Council of Muslims in Germany, as the “official

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78. Ibid., 22.
face of German Islam,” without whom no official meetings or dialogue between Muslim and Christian or talk shows seem complete, despite the fact that the Council represents perhaps 2 to 3 percent of Germany’s Muslims.

81. Ibid.
82. Ibid.
84. Ford, “France Tries to Soften. . . .”

It is crucial to note that Germany’s favored Islamic institution is not, however, distinguished by any particular doctrinal moderation or presumed compatibility with German modern ideals. On the contrary, the reason for the Central Council’s popularity appears to be a direct result of its connections to that portion of the German Muslim population most feared by the secular state: the Islamists. Half of the Central Council’s member mosques are reportedly under observation by German intelligence for known Islamist activities. According to Ursula Spuler-Stegemann, a professor of religious history at the University of Marburg, while the government is constantly looking for interlocutors, it appears to engage the Islamists instead of the majority of moderate or secular Muslims, since the Islamists are the “ones coming forward.”

Given such reports from Germany and comparable evidence from France and Britain, the agenda behind state recognition of Islamic institutions in Europe is more multifaceted than originally conceived. It is not simply a case of empowering and co-opting moderate institutional voices; increasingly, it appears to have become a part of a strategy to focus a spotlight on radical, potentially dangerous institutions, opening up to them a direct channel of communication, and using that channel as a means of benign manipulation. The end result, however, remains the same—the moderation of Muslims by means of state policy.

Mosque and Islamic School Building

Perhaps the most visible sign of State efforts to construct a modern Euro-Islam is increasing state involvement in the construction of mosques and Islamic schools. For the most part, the thousands of Mosques, prayer rooms, religious associations, Islamic schools, and community centers in Europe continue to be financed by foreign governments and nearly all are “under de jure or de facto foreign influence.” The Algerian government controls the Grand Mosque of Paris, the Saudis built and maintain the Grand Mosque in Rome, and the Turkish government is similarly autonomous in funding and
managing its many mosques in Germany, the Netherlands, and elsewhere. "But increasingly, both Muslims and European governments are asking why Ankara—or Riyadh or Algiers, for that matter—should be funding and shaping European Islam." 

Since the late 1980s, many European nations have begun to wean their Muslim populations off dependence on transnational connections by helping them build religious centers with European money. In this regard, the Netherlands has sidestepped the official stance on separation of church and state by using a broader policy of “urban renewal” to facilitate the construction and renovation of mosques in poor (Muslim) neighborhoods. Up to the present day, however, there seems to be no standard government policy for the construction and subsidizing of mosques in the Netherlands; interdepartmental squabbles and varying attitudes of municipal councils have prevented the development of a single consistent approach to facilitating Islamic prayer space.

In the absence of firm national policy, the issue of mosque construction in the Netherlands is primarily handled at the local level by officials who live in the communities involved. This arrangement has allowed for greater Muslim-Christian cooperation in determining the role of government in relation to religious needs, but has also opened the process to greater public scrutiny. The city council directly subsidized many of Rotterdam’s thirty-six mosques, “partly for fear of fundamentalist influences from abroad.” In the case of four large proposed mosques in Rotterdam in the 1990s, the municipal authorities required that mosques provide no social functions other than as prayer spaces, in order to avoid becoming “symbols of cultural segregation.” The extent to which these requirements were ever enforced remains unclear, but the implication is that city-funded mosques were discouraged from serving functions that have become popular, or even integral, to Islamic prayer spaces in the West. Despite the fact that churches and synagogues routinely serve as hubs of social, political, and leisure activity throughout the nation, it is considered culturally “divisive” to allow the mosque to hold similar functions. Thus, long before 9/11, the Dutch worked to cultivate and regulate a particular kind of unthreatening, single-purpose Islamic prayer space promoting cultural integration at the expense of “attendant social functions.”

In 2004, estimates hold that France had approximately 1,500 mosques and prayer halls serving 2 to 3 million of the 5.5 million practicing Muslims in France, but only one has been officially

89. Ibid.
90. Fetzer and Soper, “Explaining the Accommodation,” 2.
recognized: the Grande Mosquée de Paris. Initially, the French government appointed the head Imam of the Grand Mosque, but soon handed over management to the Algerian government. Due to France’s strict separation between church and state—a tradition handed down since the French Revolution and reaffirmed in a 1905 law—the state cannot fund the construction of religious spaces.

Since the early 2000s, however, the French interior ministry under the leadership of Nicolas Sarkozy has begun to circulate plans for a controversial “backdoor funding” of mosques, beginning with a large mosque in Marseilles. Since state funds cannot be used for building a mosque, the French government would ostensibly fund parking lots, cultural centers, and other auxiliary infrastructure surrounding proposed mosques, thereby relieving a significant amount of financing from the mosque builders. Calls to implement Sarkozy’s plans have intensified since the London bombings of July 7, with civic leaders arguing that the project would “counter extremists’ attempts to indoctrinate young Muslims…” The issue is likely to be tied up in the courts for the foreseeable future, as former President Jacques Chirac, Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin, and French public opinion remain opposed to the implicit departure from laws that govern church-state separation.

Chirac and Villepin have counter-proposed a “Foundation for the Works of Islam,” part of a broader project including imam training that would “organize and develop a modern and tolerant French Islam” by collecting and distributing tax deductible donations for the construction of mosques and other charitable causes. The CFCM would administer and select the foundation’s charitable causes—the same government-initiated umbrella organization cultivated by Nicolas

91. Johnson and Carreyrou, “As Muslims Call.”
92. According to Laurence, “Managing Transnational Islam,” 2006: “In 1982, the Algerian government took over responsibility for the GMP’s finances and began using the mosque as a conduit for spreading its official state Islam: by creating prayer spaces and attempting to co-opt existing ones following the post-1981 boom in prayer associations. The GMP is organized as a federation with five regional Muftis, and it currently controls 250 prayer spaces and associations around France. The GMP’s rector has authority over 150 imams (just over 10 percent of all Imams in France), most of whom are imported from Algeria.”
95. Ibid.

Germany currently has around 2300 mosques or prayer rooms, most of which have been organized since the 1990s.\(^98\) In keeping with Germany’s longstanding policy of treating Muslim minorities as “guest workers” with no claims to long-term residency, German mosques have primarily been financed and administered by the Turkish directorate for religious affairs (DIB), the quasi-ministry of the Turkish government that trains and dispatches imams to half of the Turkish mosques in Europe, providing Germany with a “quintessential model of exported ‘official’ Islam.”\(^99\) Alongside this official Turkish government network of prayer spaces, which explicitly seeks to “instill love of [Turkish] fatherland, flag and religion,” there is the Islamische Gemeinschaft Milli Görüs (National Vision, IGMG), an independent alternative (“arch rival”) to the official Turkish directorate, that encourages long-term integration of Turkish-German Muslims and the use of German language in mosques and Islamic schools.\(^100\)

Unlike France, public funding for prayer spaces in Germany is levied legitimately by state governments (länder), which since the 1980s, have taken a more active role in shaping the kind of Islam in which its Muslim minorities participate. The state has funded Islamic schools in Berlin and a number of Islamic social welfare and cultural organizations throughout Germany. In 2005, the länder in North Rhine Westphalia mandated that public schools teach Islam in religion courses. “The clear intent of this decision,” according to Fetzer and Soper, “is to encourage Muslims to learn more about their faith in the public schools, and to insure that the version of Islam they are taught is fully compatible with liberal democracy.”\(^101\) In the process, “European governments end up bolstering the very extremists they hope to marginalize,” notes Carla Power in Newsweek.\(^102\) One recent example of this appeared when a German court ruled that Muslims had the same right to religious instruction in public schools as Christians. The Berlin city government needed an organization to teach classes on Islam, and, “Who stepped forward? Only the ultraorthodox Islamic Federation, which now runs Turkish-language Islam classes for 4,300 children at three dozen Berlin schools.”\(^103\)

Heading north, the largest mosque in Scandinavia was built in Oslo, Norway, in 2004, with a combination of private contributions and government loans.\(^104\) In May of the same year, the Danish government

\(^{98}\) Fetzer and Soper, “Explaining the Accommodation,” 2.


\(^{100}\) Ibid., 10.

\(^{101}\) Fetzer and Soper, “Explaining the Accommodation,” 29.


\(^{103}\) Ibid.

OVERHAULING ISLAM

built its first mosque inside a prison. In Sweden, where the Swedish Lutheran State Church had a privileged position until 2000, funds have been provided for Muslim construction of mosques and for support of schools, imams, and other religious activities.

In Britain, the Home government recently appropriated municipal, EU and privately donated funds to build a $19 million Muslim community center attached to the East London Mosque. Britain’s education secretary also recently announced plans to grant more of the 100 or so Islamic schools access to state funds—a move that would bring greater parity between Muslim and Christian schools, but also necessitate that Muslim schools adopt a state-approved curriculum.

Across the continent, European governments have become apprehensive about the potential dangers of Muslim populations congregating and exercising their faith in arenas outside the purview of the state. Whether it is transnational Islamic organizations (the Muslim Brotherhood, the Muslim World League, the World Assembly of Muslim Youth, Tableeghi Jamaat, Jammaati Islami), foreign governments (Algeria, Morocco, Turkey, Saudi Arabia), or informal Muslim networks controlling the functions of European mosques, numerous governments have begun to assert their prerogative to cultivate an acceptable religious-civic homogeneity among Muslims by filtering them through approved religious spaces.

WILL IT WORK? CONCLUSIONS ON CREATING AN ACCEPTABLE EUROPEAN ISLAM

The two general policies discussed above, institutionalizing representative Muslim bodies and facilitating the construction of Islamic spaces, represent only two of the more explicit examples of state intervention in internal Muslim affairs that have become standard features of the European response to its “Muslim problem” post-September 11. A supporting study would look at the emerging popularity of state-run imam training programs, increased police and intelligence powers specifically targeting Muslims, and the broader changes being made to national and EU immigration policies since September 11 aimed at weeding out “unacceptable” Muslims. These

108. Miranda Green, “Number of State-funded Muslim Schools Set to Increase,” Financial Times (London), 22 September 2005. According to Tariq Modood, “Muslims and the Politics of Difference,” Political Quarterly 74, no. 1 (August 2003): 100-15, in England and Wales, over one-third of the state-maintained primary and one-sixth of secondary schools are run by a religious group, and all have to deliver a centrally determined national curriculum; by 2003, there were four Muslim schools funded by the government.
policies directly compliment the more overt state manipulation of Islamic spaces and institutions by filtering the kind of Muslims that can enter them.

Europe’s agenda of religion-change need not seem so insidious or conspiratorial when placed in the context of state relations with Christian and Jewish organizations. An integral part of the “modernization” process in post-Enlightenment Europe was the reterritorialization of religious traditions, and the de-transnationalization of these faith communities to turn their adherents into loyal citizens. These largely successful experiments in religious-social engineering were, however, for the most part, the result of hundreds of years of gradual, mutually painful assimilation, often requiring violent shifts in public opinion by means of intellectual and political revolutions, wars, and finally, legislation. Currently, forcing diverse Islamic communities into secular European molds is occurring rapidly, and in the wake of what could be considered the most spectacular expressions of inter-religious dysfunction in history. Whereas “religion-change” for Christianity and Judaism was the rational outgrowth of centuries of European liberal progression, the overhauling of Islam is a visceral, reactionary response to unprecedented security concerns.

The attacks on September 11 and the subsequent Islamist violence in European capitals has suddenly wrenched the debate to the right. Deep concerns over national security and the dangers of incompatible cultural paradigms have become an absolute priority in parliaments and salons throughout the continent. Within this extremely tense political environment, European governments are contemplating decisions regarding the best way to ensure that Muslims integrate sufficiently into Western society. Proposed policies reflect an overriding impatience with traditional models of multiculturalism and enlightened secularism. The solution recommended by officials in London, Paris, Berlin, Amsterdam, Rome, Oslo, Madrid, and other capitals is to take a more direct role in defining the type of Muslim that various European nations produce and the tolerated interpretation of Islam. Two of the most common means of bringing about the re-definition of the role are the state’s recognition of representative Islamic institutions and its facilitation and construction of Islamic spaces.

Will these religion-change policies succeed in bringing about the right kind of Muslim? It is too early to tell what effect this interventionist agenda will have on European Muslims, or whether the current convergence of state agendas will lapse into more locally appropriate policies tailored to the demography and geography of different European Islams (plural). If the overwhelmingly negative response from European Muslims thus far indicates anything, such policies seem doomed to failure. Despite the limited engagement of certain prominent Muslim elites with these new hands-on policies—often deliberately over-hyped by governments to project an image of
earnest cooperation with Muslims—the vast majority of practicing and non-practicing Muslims remain unrepresented and un-consulted by their representative councils,\textsuperscript{109} and still attend unsanctioned schools and prayer spaces outside the purview of the state. Most Muslims have responded with, at best, suspicion, to the kind of attention being lavished on them by their governments.\textsuperscript{110}

Thus, it does not help that the fledgling Muslim councils have had little to show for their high profile state patronage in terms of concessions on religious and educational rights; most states have proven to be painfully slow at following through on promises to facilitate the construction of Islamic spaces. The French Council for the Islamic Faith (CFCM) was unable to overturn the national ban on hijabs; neither has the Muslim Council of Britain been able to push the British government to extend its blasphemy laws to protect Islam as it protects the doctrines of the Church of England.\textsuperscript{111} And no Islamic organization has yet gained “public corporation” status in Germany, allowing it to receive state funds comparable to those afforded to Jewish and Christian groups.\textsuperscript{112} European Muslims remain underserved by both their representative institutions and their national governments.

This lack of tangible progress has led to widespread feelings of alienation and frustration. Underlying the very public Muslim condemnations of state policy lies a perception that the state is trying to manipulate Muslims and destroy their Islamic identity by means of sowing dissent in the guise of “integration,” “moderation,” and “cooperation.” Nearly every poll conducted on the subject by the European press has indicated that Muslims’ already ingrained sense of marginalization is only deepened by state demands that Muslims “police themselves” by informing on the radicals within their midst and effectively “cozy up” to authorities.\textsuperscript{113} “It might look like police-style management,” said Dounia Bouzar, one of the only female members of the CFCM. “A lot of Muslims already think the government is trying to control them through the council, and this could revive the anxieties.”\textsuperscript{114}

Another obvious problem is that the Islamist militants directly

\textsuperscript{109} See ibid., “A Guardian/ICM poll of young British Muslims this fall found that only 36 percent felt that either the Muslim Council of Britain or Islamic leaders reflected their views.”

\textsuperscript{110} See, for example, ibid., and Alexandra Frean and Syal Rajeev, “Muslims in Britain—A Story of Mutual Fear and Suspicion,” \textit{The Times (London)}, 6 July 2006.

\textsuperscript{111} Fetzer and Soper, “Explaining the Accommodation,” 37.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 28.

\textsuperscript{113} Roger Blitz, “Regulation of Mosques and Imams Likely to be Toughest Task,” \textit{Financial Times}, 25 August 2005.

responsible for most of the state’s security concerns are unlikely to associate with “mainstream” Muslim representative bodies and to patronize state-sponsored mosques. The British subway bombers on 7/7, for example, stopped attending their local mosque long before actually carrying out the attacks. They instead formed their own cloistered cell centered on private homes and an Islamic bookshop. How could the Muslim Council of Britain or the Muslim community in general exert influence on those extremists already outside the fold of “acceptable Islam?” Besides, critics of state policy argue that “the main inspiration for British Muslim extremists is not their local mosques but television footage of Palestine and Iraq.”

Though outside the scope of this essay, strong evidence suggests that European Islamists are radicalized largely by what they see as abhorrent western foreign policy directed against fellow Muslims. It is doubtful whether governmental manipulation of “mainstream Islam” can rein in a population that rejects both government policy and “mainstream Islam” itself.

There is considerable opposition to European state religion-change policies from secular Muslims as well. Muslim-born writer Salman Rushdie has argued that the British government’s singling out the Muslim Council of Britain is “tragic” because it overlooks one crucial fact: the majority of British Muslims (like British Christians and Jews) are secular. The centralized Muslim councils and high-level Muslim-state dialogue committees springing up with new fervor around Europe are restricted to representing the Muslim community as a purely religious body, speaking only for their religious and ritual needs, despite the deep political, social, and cultural demands of the broader Muslim community.

European leaders know what they want Islam to look and sound like, and are undertaking a variety of measures to bring their vision to life. These measures include diverse direct and indirect, persuasive and coercive policies, some of which have long-established precedents in the nations’ histories while others represent a radical departure. The two key state policies laid out here—institutionalizing Islamic representatives and facilitating construction of Islamic spaces—serve to indicate the general trajectory of state-Muslim relations towards increased cultural homogenization and increasingly selective enforcements of the church-state divide.

Europe domesticated Judaism and Christianity to the point where these faith communities became integral to the civic fabric of the secular state. Their domestication, however, took place long ago, in a vastly different geopolitical and social context where individual freedoms were not as entrenched as they are today. Government officials seem convinced that a moderate Islam of Europe will be created with or without the total cooperation of the continent’s

Muslims. Thus far, no one model seems to have all the answers for how to achieve this goal.