THE SWISS MINARET BAN: ISLAM IN QUESTION

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SWITZERLAND WITHOUT MINARETS

Jean-François Mayer

On 29 November 2009 Swiss voters approved – by 57.5% – the proposal to introduce a ban on building minarets on Swiss territory into the Federal Constitution.

The result surprised large parts of the media and political class. The most recent opinion polls had predicted that the initiative would be rejected, noting a gradual increase in support as voting day approached.

This book was originally published in French and Arabic prior to the vote, in November 2009. Because of international interest in the Swiss debate and the vote on minarets, the book is now being published in a number of other languages. Except for the afterword, the book's contents are largely unchanged, with some minor adaptations; the information and analyses provided before the vote remain as valid now as then.

This foreword aims briefly to revisit the vote and its consequences: what happened on 29 November 2009 and why?

The initiative was chiefly supported by politicians from the Democratic Union of the Centre (SVP/UDC), a rightwing party that is currently the country's most powerful in terms of its number of deputies, and the Federal Democratic Union (EDU/UDF), a small evangelical conservative party. The other political parties, the government, the majority of parliament, as well as the Roman Catholic Church, the Reformed (Protestant) Churches and the main evangelical umbrella organisation, all recommended that the initiative be rejected. Very few intellectuals or public figures declared themselves in favour of the ban on minarets.

Yet the initiative passed with a clear majority – and with a participation rate of 53.4% of registered voters, a very respectable rate compared with the Swiss average (remembering that, in Switzerland, citizens are called on to vote several times a year).

We are therefore faced with a chasm between the country's ruling classes (political, cultural, economic and religious) and the majority of its people – which represents a real repudiation of the establishment. It also explains the misleading results of the opinion polls before the vote: many supporters of the minaret ban were hesitant to admit to their voting intentions, knowing they would be perceived as not being "politically correct". After the result had been announced, however, opinions were expressed far more openly.

In January 2010, an analysis of the vote, led by the researchers Hans Hirter and Adrian Vatter, was published in the *Vox* series of the Research Institute gfs.bern. It revealed that the rightwing/leftwing split had strongly shaped the vote – over 80% of leftwing voters had rejected the ban. But it was the political centre which made the difference: centrist voters had supported the initiative at a rate of two-to-one, enabling it to succeed. As one might have expected, the higher the level of education attained, the weaker the support for the initiative was.

Another important finding of the *Vox* analysis was that xenophobia alone (bearing in mind that over 80% of Muslims living in Switzerland have foreign nationality) cannot explain the result. Forty percent of those voters who considered themselves open to the rest of the world, and to the integration of foreigners, nonetheless voted against the minarets. Yet contrary to what one might have expected, few female leftwing voters approved of the initiative: only 16% voted "yes" – less than male leftwing voters. In other words, the impact of the feminist vote was probably over-estimated in some of the early post-result analyses.

The most frequently mentioned motive of supporters of the initiative was the wish to give a clear signal against the expansion of Islam and the type of society associated with this religion. As several articles in the first pre-vote editions of this book already demonstrated, the vote's real objective was not the minaret as such. Rather, the minaret was being turned into a symbol of the issues raised by Islam. The target of the ban was Islam itself, not Muslim immigrants. Interestingly, urban centres, where the majority of Muslims live, tended to reject the ban, whereas it was passed, sometimes with massive support, in rural zones with few or no Muslim inhabitants.

Islam has a real image problem in the West today. According to the *Vox* analysis, 87% of all voters (supporters *and* opponents of the initiative) agree with the following statement: "Islam oppresses women".

Across Europe, mosque-building projects frequently cause controversy. Their construction is perceived as a symbolic occupation of the public sphere. More widely, signs of Islam's visibility provoke reactions. Witness the debates on the Islamic headscarf in certain countries, and more recently about the burqa or *niqab* (a full-body or face-masking veil). Public opinion in other European countries clearly sympathised with the Swiss vote: it is likely that other countries would return similar results if the topic was put to the vote.

Among Swiss Muslims, reactions to the vote were moderate. Muslims had mostly opted for discretion during the campaign so as not to add fuel to the fire, a choice some of them now regret. In any case, the vote does not change Muslims' daily life or religious practices. There are only four minarets in Switzerland – none of them used for the call to prayer – and Muslims can continue to lead their religious lives in perfect freedom without minarets.

Reactions to the vote in Muslim countries were vigorous, both on the part of national governments and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Switzerland has been criticised for a vote seen as Islamophobic, and asked to cancel it, a request that clearly misunderstands the nature and workings of Swiss democracy. On the other hand, in spite of the odd minor incident, there has been no sustained campaign against Switzerland since the vote. While the vote might seem bizarre, it does not have the offensive nature of, say, the Danish cartoons' affair.

The Swiss political system has allowed the unusual introduction into the Federal Constitution of an article that seems, rather, to belong among building regulations, but the Swiss vote is less of an anomaly than it might appear. It represents the Swiss expression of the emergence of a "Muslim issue" in the West. The historian Urs Altermatt considers Switzerland to be a precursor in this area: for him, the vote has marked a definite step in the European debate (*NZZ am Sonntag*, 6 December 2009).

IN THE SHADOW OF THE MINARET: ORIGINS AND IMPLICATIONS OF A CITIZENS' INITIATIVE

Jean-François Mayer

Amidst the noise of today's great cities, the future of the call to prayer from minarets remains uncertain, according to the Islamic art historian Professor Jonathan Bloom of Boston College, a specialist in minarets. "And yet they will continue to be built to serve as silent but visible symbols of Islam the world over."

The symbolic nature of the minaret has acquired a central place in the political debate in Switzerland today: but larger anxieties and issues hide behind the minaret question. To understand these, one has to go back to the origins of the citizens' initiative aimed at prohibiting the construction of minarets, on which the Swiss voted on 29 November 2009.

Paradoxically, minarets are rare in Switzerland. When the controversy started in 2005, only two had been built. The Zurich minaret had been inaugurated in 1963. Eighteen metres tall, it stands above the little mosque of the Ahmadiyya movement, whose first missionaries arrived in Switzerland in 1946. (Ahmadis are strongly opposed by other Muslims: considered "non-Muslim" in Pakistan and elsewhere, they are denied access to Mecca.)

The second minaret is in Petit-Saconnex in Geneva. Twenty-two metres high, it has dominated the mosque and centre of the Islamic Cultural Foundation since 1978. The edifice was inaugurated in the presence of the Swiss president and the Saudi king.

In the nearly 30 years that followed, no other minarets were built in Switzerland. Yet throughout this period, Islam there developed rapidly, especially as a result of immigration from Turkey and the Balkans. During those three decades, the Muslim world was turbulent: controversies surrounding Islamism and jihadism made headlines in the Swiss media as much as anywhere else.

It was in this wholly different context that the minaret question was brought into the Swiss political debate. On 10 January 2005, the project of a Turkish association in Wangen (Canton of Solothurn) for a "symbolic minaret" with a height of five to six metres reached the public-notification stage of obtaining planning permission. The project encountered a wave of opposition, including a petition of 400 signatures, and was rejected by the town's building commission. In July 2006, this rejection was revoked by the canton authorities on the sole condition that the minaret must not be used for calls to prayer. A November 2006 decision by the Administrative Court further emphasised that the addition of a minaret would in no way alter the nature of the building, which was already being used as a place of prayer. The polemic was prolonged by a number of appeals, until a Federal Court judgment rejected them on 4 July 2007. The minaret was finally inaugurated at the end of June 2009.

The minaret crowning an Albanese Islamic centre in Winterthur was erected in May 2005 without arousing much controversy, but the fire was smouldering by then. The Wangen affair triggered the founding of a movement. For some politicians – but also some worried citizens – the minaret became the sign of a "rampant Islamisation" of Switzerland. This was felt all the more strongly when – like warning signs of an impending menace – other building projects were announced in the following months. In both Langenthal (Canton of Bern) and Wil (Sankt Gallen), Islamic communities submitted building plans for minarets, specifying in each case that these would have a merely symbolic function and not be used for calls to prayer. But the very idea of a symbol troubled some citizens as much as the hypothetical noise of a muezzin chanting.

In Langenthal, a petition gathered no less than 3,500 signatures, and 76 appeals were put to the town's building authorities. Langenthal is a particularly interesting case because it has a Sikh temple (*gurdwara*). Open since 2006, the temple is not a converted industrial building but an edifice specially constructed for use by Sikhs, painted a brilliant and very visible white, with a tower topped by a golden arrow. While building projects for places of worship (including Christian ones) have been known to meet with opposition from neighbours for a variety of reasons, the construction of a Sikh, Hindu or Buddhist temple has never provoked the same outcry as a Muslim centre. The reactions against minarets can therefore not be narrowly categorised as xenophobia. The motives of opponents may vary, but Islam is the target of quite specific anxieties.

The increasing hostility towards minarets seemed to result from a combination of scattered public comments and a willingness on the part of certain political forces to appropriate these preoccupations. On the political right, the very active Democratic Union of the Centre (SVP/UDC) took possession of the theme of Islam and its dangers, even in cantons where no minarets were being proposed. In September 2005, the cantonal SVP/UDC in the Valais proposed to the parliament there that the building of mosques be made subject to special permission: the proposal was swept aside by 96 votes against 5 (*Le Temps*, 15 September 2005). From November 2005 onwards, in the wake of the Wangen affair, the Solothurn SVP/UDC took the floor in the cantonal parliament in order to "halt the construction of obtrusive religious buildings", emphasising that every new building of a religious nature should be made subject to special approval by the local government. The government's response was that legislating to prevent the spread of certain religions under cover of building regulations would be discriminatory and arbitrary, and contradict the Constitution (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 1 March 2006). In September 2006, the SVP/UDC gathered just enough votes in Zurich to force the government there to examine a parliamentary initiative that was aimed at revising the law on town and country planning in such a way as to prohibit the construction of minarets in the canton – although no new project of the sort existed. As a deputy acknowledged, a ban on minarets would not solve the problem, but "the people expect their parliament and government to come up with measures against the Islamic peril". Other parties, by contrast, warned against the danger of "ideologising building regulations" (*Tages-Anzeiger*, 5 September 2006).

Faced with this increased criticism of Islam focused on the minaret, some Muslims were indignant; others tried to defuse the debate by reassuring their fellow citizens. Thus Nadia Karmous, president of the Association culturelle des femmes musulmanes de Suisse (Muslim Women's Cultural Association of Switzerland), tried to encourage good relations with the Swiss general public. For her, existing technology such as computer programmes, automated signals on portable phones, alarm clocks, etc, meant there was no need for a minaret for anyone to find out the time for prayer (*Le Matin*, 8 September 2006).

The Catholic bishop of Basel, Kurt Koch, supported as a matter of principle the right of Muslims to "have a minaret as a sign of identity" – a minaret being no more of a problem for him than a church spire, as long as building regulations were respected (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung am Sonntag*, 3 September 2006).

This analogy between a minaret and a church spire was rejected by those opposed to minarets. For them, the minaret was a sign of power and conquest, a "political and religious" symbol that endangered religious peace in the country, as was allegedly proved by the reactions that each new building project provoked.

In September 2006, opponents to minarets – who came from a variety of backgrounds and had in some cases already been active in the controversies in Wangen, Langenthal, Wil or Winterthur – believed they were riding high. They gathered in Egerkingen (Solothurn) to organise and discuss launching citizens' initiatives. The initiative against minarets originated with this "Egerkingen Committee". It had initially contemplated including other issues as well. But the visually striking symbol of the minaret seemed to be the most appropriate hook for attempting to curb what the authors of the initiative saw as the expansion of Islam and the incompatibility between Muslim law and Swiss law.

A quick reminder of the context is the July 2005 bomb attacks in London, the wave of anger provoked by the Danish cartoons at the beginning of 2006, etc. These events, amply commented upon in the media, had created a climate that encouraged a discourse critical of Islam. Additionally there had been many smaller incidents at the local or regional level over the years, to do with the Muslim headscarf, Islamic squares in cemeteries, or Muslim girls exempted from swimming or PE lessons. These contributed to an image of foreigners that was not always positive, and they increased suspicions that some foreigners refused to integrate. In 2007, the town of Buchs (Aargau) rejected the naturalisation request of a Turkish woman who had been living in Switzerland since 1981, because it considered her wearing of the headscarf as proof that she had insufficiently assimilated the key values of Swiss society and thought she had fundamentalist tendencies. This decision was annulled by the Federal Court in 2008. The minaret debate coalesced all of these frictions.

The citizens' initiative was launched in May 2007. With deliberate or unwitting irony, the official presentation took place in a function room of the Hotel Kreuz (meaning cross or crucifix)! How hard it is to escape symbolism… The committee was formed by members of the SVP/UDC and the Federal Democratic Union (EDU/UDF), a small evangelical Christian party. The text had the merit of simplicity: it wanted to add a paragraph 3 to Article 72 of the Federal Constitution which would declare that "the building of minarets is prohibited". The SVP/UDC's National Councillor Ulrich Schlüer, who described himself as

respectful of Islam, once again disputed that minarets were religious in nature and expressed surprise that Muslims living in Switzerland should suddenly feel the need for minarets, when they had been content with prayer rooms for decades. The EDU/UDF's National Councillor Christian Waber went much further, explaining that he did not consider Islam a religion "but a declaration of war on the Christian world and other faiths" (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 4 May 2007).

The initiative committee needed to collect at least 100,000 valid signatures in 18 months. As of that moment, the Swiss authorities began to worry about the possibility of international repercussions, in particular after a report had been broadcast on the satellite channel Al Jazeera. During a meeting of the UN Alliance of Civilisations in Madrid, the Swiss foreign minister, Micheline Calmy-Rey, explained to the Secretary-General of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) that she had "confidence in the good judgment of the Swiss" (*La Liberté*, 16 January 2008). This did not stop an OIC report two months later from being preoccupied with the development of "Islamophobia" in Switzerland.

Eventually 115,000 signatures were filed at the Federal Chancellery in Bern on 8 July 2008. During the press conference, a SVP/UDC's MP, Dominique Baettig, situated the initiative in a wider framework: "Islam today seems to provide a simple, virile and combative sense of identity for poor and prolific population groups, who have set out to conquer wealth and consumer goods with a view to avenging the humiliations they have suffered (…). The established values of our culture – tolerance, gender equality, respect, dialogue – are thus destabilised by massive immigration, which is secretly sustained by militants in the war against modernity, a modernity whose weakness towards them they despise." There was no question of letting "an intolerant imported practice (…) plant its flag of revengeful confrontation." In the name of Swiss values, one had to "demand discretion and restraint".

With unusual speed, the federal government took a stand against the initiative in a long message on 27 August 2008. However, it refused to nullify it. While the initiative violated certain fundamental rights, the government argued, it did so without infringing the imperatives of international law, since it did not prevent Muslims from "forming a religious conviction and living in accordance with that conviction." Nevertheless, the government's analysis was harsh: the initiative wanted to impose "an unnecessary and disproportionate prohibition", which would be a de facto restriction of religious freedom; the initiative clearly

missed its goal of "checking the growth of Islam in Switzerland and preventing our legal system from being supplanted by Sharia law" because a mosque might be frequented with good or evil intentions, whether it had a minaret or not; the initiative also introduced an inequality of treatment, since it only targeted the Muslim community. The government further considered that the initiative would damage the country's interests and would not help reduce the discrimination suffered by Christians in Muslim countries, but "rather the opposite".

The federal government furthermore recalled an historical fact: the 1848 and 1874 Constitutions had contained clauses that were discriminatory towards the Roman Catholic Church (the expulsion of Jesuits from Swiss territory, a ban on new convents and the creation of new bishoprics without the government's agreement). The clauses regarding Jesuits and convents were repealed in 1973, but the article limiting the creation of bishoprics did not disappear until 2001. Until that date, it featured in Paragraph 3 of Article 72 of the Federal Constitution – the very same passage into which the authors of the citizens' initiative wanted to introduce the ban on building minarets.

A majority in both chambers of Parliament declared the initiative legally valid, but recommended that citizens reject it: by 36 votes to 3 in the Council of State, 129 votes to 50 in the National Council. The debate was launched through press articles, conferences, websites, and radio and television broadcasts. To begin with, none showed great originality, with the arguments on both sides seeming to rework the same themes. The opponents of the initiative considered it discriminatory and an attack on religious freedom, and declared that it was more likely to prevent the integration of Muslims. Conversely, the initiative's advocates believed that it signalled a rejection of any "Islamic conquest" mentality, that it would help avoid tensions during future minaret-building projects and that it would encourage the Muslim community to adapt to Switzerland's rules and modus operandi. For anyone approaching the issue dispassionately and in the light of the results that other measures of a "symbolic" nature have had, such as the ban on "ostentatious religious signs" in French schools (principally the Islamic headscarf, although some Sikhs wearing turbans have also felt its effects), it would have been difficult to decide for one camp or the other based on their expectations.

In all cases, however, such an observer would have noticed that the debate always shifted away from the specific minaret question to Islam and its various manifestations. The shadow of the minaret covered a multitude of more or less

sensitive subjects. Thus the SVP/UDF announced, for example, that it wanted to emphasise arguments such as "reciprocity [for Christian places of worship in Muslim countries], respect for Switzerland's Christian history and culture, the indifference of moderate Muslims vis-a-vis the initiative and the determination shown by Islamic fundamentalists in trying to place Sharia above the constitutional state" (*Impulsion*, official UDF mouthpiece, May 2009).

In the spring of 2009, the Isopublic Institute conducted an opinion poll on a sample of 1,000 people. What is particularly interesting are the reasons people wre giving for supporting the initiative. Few mentioned the minaret as a "sign of power", or the noise that might be created in the unlikely event of a muezzin using it. The four main reasons for voting Yes appeared to be the conviction that minarets do not belong in Swiss landscape or culture; the belief that Islam is intolerant and hampers the building of churches in the country; fear of Islam's excessive influence and expansion; and the idea that Muslims should adapt and integrate.

There are other debates concerning religious buildings in Switzerland today. For instance, an association that is active in German-speaking Switzerland brings together people who are bothered by the noise of church bells (and therefore also cowbells). The association claims it would be equally committed to limiting the sound emissions from minarets if muezzins ever used them for calls to prayer. But the minaret debate differs from such worries about noise and traffic, although they might be grafted onto it in the case of heavily frequented places of worship. The minaret debate is a phase — and, for Switzerland, perhaps a turning point – in the wider debate on Islam and its place in the West. This wider debate would be taking place even if the unexpected citizens' initiative had never seen the light of day, and does not concern Switzerland alone. But it has forced both politicians and citizens to confront these issues head-on. That is why the initiative, and the discussions surrounding it, deserve our attention and represent much more than an anecdotal episode.

CITIZENS' INITIATIVES IN SWITZERLAND

Stéphane Lathion

The Principle

The right to "citizens' initiatives" is key to Swiss democracy. It allows individuals involved in politics or a group of citizens to force a vote on a proposed revision of the Constitution. This revision may consist of adding, removing or altering one of the Constitution's articles. The right exists at both the cantonal and federal levels. At the cantonal level, the initiative can in addition be used to propose draft legislation.

How It Works

An initiative committee, linked for example to a political party or a pressure group, files its proposal at the Federal Chancellery. It then has eighteen months to collect a minimum of 100,000 signatures.

If the number of signatures is obtained within the allotted timeframe, the government will examine the initiative and determine whether it is admissible. If its objective violates an international treaty, it is not admissible.

Where an initiative has been declared admissible, the Federal Council must submit it to the vote within a reasonable timeframe. Meanwhile, Parliament may formulate and propose a counter-proposal to the initiative. A counter-proposal usually recycles the spirit of the initiative but reduces its scope.

To be passed, an initiative must win a "double majority": this means not just a majority of votes but a majority of cantons, too (at least 14 of Switzerland's 26 cantons).

Purpose

Initiatives help groups on the margins of the political system (small parties, pressure groups) to put their demands directly in the political arena, rather than go through traditional representative bodies.

Initiatives rarely pass: fewer than 15 of the 160 initiatives submitted since 1891 have been successful. This does not mean they are ineffective: initiatives can work indirectly and in different ways:

• They influence the political debate. Initiatives are sometimes intended to make the political system aware of certain questions, rather than push through specific demands.

• They raise awareness within the political system of specific questions, sanctioned by public opinion and the people's vote, whose importance would otherwise have escaped decision-makers.

As a result, even when an initiative fails, its initiators are not necessarily the losers. An initiative has effects that can be measured not just by its ability to win the popular vote, but also by the impact of the vote in the political arena. The higher the initiative scores, the more likely the political system will integrate the general thrust of its demands.

So a citizens' initiative assumes its role in the Swiss Confederation through its wider impact rather than through the result itself (only 10% of initiatives pass). As one of the advocates of the anti-minarets initiative pointed out: "I've signed initiatives even where I didn't totally agree with the contents, just to force a debate."

THE MINARET IN THE HISTORY OF ISLAM

Rachid Benzine

Each time Islam, or the presence of Muslims in Europe, is seen as a "problem", religious texts or history books are combed for arguments that back up the positions of the various interested parties. This is happening now with the debate over what the minaret means. We need to recall some historical facts about this central element of mosque architecture, and then consider how pertinent such historical perspectives are.

The minaret is no more part of the origins of Islam than the cathedral is of Christianity's. Even so, this emblem of Muslim architecture has been part of Islam's history since at least the 8th century AD. From this time, the minaret became a constant feature of mosques in much of the Muslim world, and eventually spread to regions where it was previously uncommon.

Minarets – short, tall, thin, fat, square, round, octagonal, spiral, brick, stone – call the faithful to prayer and demonstrate the presence of Islam in a highly visible way. As of the 13th century, in particular, they became dazzling symbols of the triumph of Islam.

The Ottoman Empire in particular distinguished itself, with immense minarets that soar heavenwards; and each year millions of tourists gaze in rapture at the six minarets of Blue Mosque, built in Istanbul in the 17th century on the orders of Sultan Ahmet I. The minaret symbolises the raising of mankind towards God. Sometimes it is the only signal of the presence of a mosque, standing upright like a lifted finger pointing at "Allah, the One and Only", testifying to the central dogma of Islam, *tawhid* or oneness. So the importance of minarets to Muslims is obvious (even though not every mosque has to have a minaret).

We do not know which was the earliest minaret. Arab tradition has it that the first building to deserve this name was erected as early as 665 AD in Bosra (Syria), a city which was conquered in 634 by horsemen of the nascent Arab-Muslim Empire. Others claim that the first minarets were those of the Great Mosque of Damascus, built by the Umayyad Caliph Walid I in 705. We know for sure that the oldest *physical* trace of a minaret is at Bosra, 145

kilometres south of Damascus. Archaeologists found an Arabic inscription on a block of basalt: "In the name of God the Clement, the Merciful. The servant of God Yazid, prince of believers, ordered the construction of this mosque and the founding of the minaret. Al-Hârit led the construction. In the year 102. Written by al-Hârit" (quoted by Jean Sauvaget, "Les inscriptions arabes de la mosquée de Bosra", *Syria*, 1941). In other words, in the year 724 AD, the Umayyad Caliph Yazid II wanted a tower built that would adjoin the mosque and exceed it in height. Another minaret, almost as old, was reputed to have been built at Kairouan (in present-day Tunisia) from 724 to 727, on the orders of Caliph Hisham Ibn Abd al-Malik. However, archaeologists now believe the construction – mosque and minaret – dates from the 9th century and was founded by Caliph Ziyadat Allah I. Regardless, it is the oldest surviving minaret in North Africa.

The appearance of minarets seems associated with the Umayyad dynasty – the caliphs who moved Islam's political capital from Mecca to Damascus, and led the Muslim world from 661-750 – and later became widespread under the Abbasid caliphate. So could Syrian churches, several of which had towers, have exerted an architectural influence? Damascus was, after all, a great Christian metropolis, and the common people and elites who transferred their allegiance to the new masters influenced them profoundly in many fields. What has been called the "Umayyad civilisation" is the result of the encounter between the horsemen of the Arabian Peninsula and the Syriac world.

What were minarets for? Were they to testify to the triumph of Islam; act as a signpost for a place of prayer, visible from afar; encourage the eye to look skyward; launch the call to prayer five times daily; form a watchtower, or even a fortification in the event of a threat? Minarets quickly fulfilled all these functions. From the 4th century onwards, the Syriac church towers were intended to be used as preaching places for mendicant preachers (a sort of open-air pulpit) and as places from which to call the faithful to prayer. Then, they did not exceed eighteen metres. Gradually, they became a visible testament to the Christian faith in the city. It is not impossible that minarets built next to mosques may have had a similar purpose, asserting the continuing triumph of Islam. Much later, especially from the 12th century AD, we should also remember that all European villages and urban neighbourhoods had bell towers standing proudly next to their churches – being built in ever greater numbers – in order to inscribe the victory of Christianity on the "body" of Europe.

The two Arabic words used to refer to what in French and English is called a minaret attest to this dual meaning. The first term *ma'dhana* was found in the inscription at Bosra dating from 724. The word refers without any doubt to *adhan*, that is, the call to prayer. The *ma'dhana* is, above all, the place where the *mu'adhin* (muezzin or caller to prayer) initiates and officiates. The second term is *manâra*, which designates a lookout tower with or without a lit fire. The description of *ma'dhana* as *manâra* came second in the history of Islam. It tells us that the place of call to prayer has also become the place that visibly establishes the presence of Islam into the public sphere. The word "minaret" derives from the Arabic word *manâra*, via a Turkish derivative first used in the 17th century in the Ottoman Empire, *menâr*.

Ma'dhana or manâra are still used to refer to a fanâr (place of fire) – meaning a lighthouse. This description of the ma'dhana as manâra or fanâr leads to a parallel between minarets and the famous Pharos of Alexandria lighthouse, one of the Seven Wonders of the World, which lit the way for sailors for seventeen centuries: three centuries before Christ, fourteen centuries after. Some commentators have noted similarities between the very sophisticated architecture of the lighthouse (three successive levels, each corresponding to a floor: square, octagonal and circular) and the octagonal minarets on square bases that appeared in Aleppo (Syria) and then Cairo at the beginning of the 14th century. The southern minaret of the 10th-century al-Hakim mosque in Cairo, with its base in the shape of a pyramid's frustum, is said to have been inspired by the lighthouse of Alexandria.

The larger areas where Islam established itself: square had three types of minaret; cylindrical shaft; polygonal shaft. The square minaret is the oldest; it came from Syria, developed in the eastern Mediterranean and spread to Europe when the survivors of the Umayyad dynasty settled in Spain.

These square minarets consist of several storeys, each containing one room decorated with windows. The 12th century Koutoubia Mosque in Marrakesh is one of the finest examples of this type of minaret. The minaret with cylindrical shaft appeared in the 11th century with the Seljuk Turks. Originating in Iran and Turkestan, this type of minaret spread to India as early as the 12th century, before flourishing in Anatolia – witness the minarets of Istanbul's Blue Mosque. To these should be added the minarets of the great mosque of Mecca, currently nine, each 89 metres high. The minaret with polygonal shaft is a variant of that with cylindrical shaft. It appeared in Ghazna (Iran) and can

be found in Samarkand and Cairo. The best-known is the prestigious Qutb Minar in Delhi. Minarets with cylindrical or polygonal shafts are sometimes enhanced by small balconies and high pointed conical roofs.

We do not know what form Swiss minarets might take, but let us ask a question: even if historical texts had provided proof of the existence of minarets from the very beginning of Islam, would that have made their presence more acceptable to non-Muslim Swiss citizens? If they feel challenged or distressed by such structures, would their discomfort decrease if they learned that minarets had an unquestionable religious legitimacy? By addressing the issue in this way, we make two mistakes: we give too much normative power to the founding texts; and we set them up as sovereign texts. In doing so, we eliminate the human dimension of religious traditions. These traditions do not exclusively derive from a text; they are also social and historical.

So the question is not whether or not these edifices are legitimate from a religious point of view. Rather, the question is how a Muslim presence that is now well-rooted in a non-Muslim country will perpetuate itself, and whether this presence will become part of the country's cultural heritage. This process is inevitable. It attests to the fact that what was previously "foreign" or exogenous is now endogenous – albeit in ways that may be antagonistic at times – and has a profound influence on the architectural, historical and cultural landscape of the Old World.

ISLAM IN SWITZERLAND: FIGURES

GRIS and Religioscope Institute

Any discussion of Islam in Switzerland needs to distinguish between the growth of a community and organisation of its religion. The question of a Muslim population is important because the number of people identifying with Islam is so large and so recent.

There were few Muslims in Switzerland before 1970. Politicised Arab-speaking Muslims began to arrive from the 1950-1960s following political repression in the Arab world. They (and not the immigrant workers who also began to arrive at this time) were responsible for the first attempts at self-organisation even though they were then only few in number.

From the 1970s, their numbers quickly grew; now population growth has stabilised. The number of people who declared themselves Muslim in Swiss censuses in 1970 was 16,300; 56,000 in 1980; 152,000 in 1990; 310,000 in 2000. Estimates for 2010 put the number at some 400,000.

Several factors explain this strong, steady increase. A policy of family reunification initiated at the end of the 1970s helped stabilise a population that had been mainly composed of seasonal migrants, and gradually led to a relative balance between the genders: 169,000 men to 141,000 women. In the 1990s, the substantial influx of refugees from the Balkans supplemented the continued growth.

In terms of national origins, 56.4% of Muslims currently come from former Yugoslavia, 21% are Turkish and 12% Swiss (naturalised or converted). Only 6% of the Muslims living in Switzerland come from the Middle East or North Africa.

The recent growth of the community explains the various issues related to the organising of their religion and the planning problems that arise from it. It was in the 1990s that questions were first being asked – about the hijab, Muslim squares in cemeteries, girls being exempted from swimming lessons. Over the next decade these issues became less urgent, although isolated problems appeared from time to time. After long negotiations, separate squares were added to cemeteries and the polemic abated. Basel and Bern got their "Muslim squares" in 2000, Lugano in 2002, Zurich in 2004. Requests were filed in Fribourg and Neuchâtel.

The recent nature of Switzerland's Muslim population also means that social circles still tend to be strongly linked to nationality. There is not yet an acculturated Islam, similar to that of the second and third generations in other Western countries. In Switzerland, places of worship were mainly set up during the 1980s and function as an extension of family groups. There are currently about 200 Muslim centres which offer a place of prayer for all tendencies and origins. Four of these have a minaret.

A structural innovation of the past 15 years is the establishment of umbrella organisations. These have not, however, helped to homogenise the *representation* of Muslims in Switzerland: for Turkish Muslims alone there are five umbrella organisations.

Representational unity is also lacking among Albanian and Arab Muslims. There have been attempts to create structures at the national level, but none of these can be regarded as representing the vast majority of Muslims. The Federation of Islamic Organisations in Switzerland (FIDS/FOIS), founded in 2006, has brought together approximately 130 centres. The Coordination of Islamic Organisations in Switzerland (KIOS), founded in 2000 and chaired by a Shiite Muslim, represents a smaller number. There are other federations, too, such as Muslims and Muslim Women of Switzerland (MMS) or the League of Muslims in Switzerland (LMS). Probably the most successful attempts so far have been at the local level, in a town or canton, where different local Muslim communities attempt to establish at least a minimal coordinating structure in order to pursue a dialogue with the authorities and local society. Since 2002 umbrella structures have appeared in the cantons of Geneva, Vaud, Fribourg, Zurich and Lucerne.

CULTURAL CHALLENGE: ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE CROSSES INTO THE WEST

Stéphane Lathion

In Europe, dissociating religion from culture has liberated artistic creativity among Muslims. There is not so much a single "Islamic architecture" here, defined by a static religious canon, as relatively loose religious standards with very diverse architectural traditions. Islam's crossing into the West does not mean reproducing a cultural model so much as a space of architectural inventiveness.

This chapter will demonstrate that architectural inventiveness has long been a part of Islamic architecture through its impulse towards cultural exchange. It will also show the current extent, and limits, of the westernisation of Islam through the construction of new mosques in Europe.

Edinburgh Mosque.

Cultural exchange as a constant in Islamic architecture

Throughout their history, Muslims have adapted very well to whatever they have found in new lands – Asia in the East, or North Africa and then Europe in the West – and have progressively appropriated it. From its origins, Islam was immersed in a multicultural world, surrounded by two empires in decline (Persia and Byzantium) and influenced by Greek and Roman legacies, notably in the areas of town planning, astronomy, physics and medicine. The Prophet and his followers were also familiar with the various belief systems of the peoples with whom they coexisted (Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, etc). Successive Muslim civilisations were affected and nourished by all these cultural influences.

This cultural exchange is true of architecture as much as anything. Two architectural elements inherited from the Persian Empire illustrate the phenomenon: the *îwân*, a wide vaulted space that opens onto the outside of a courtyard, and *chehar tâq*, a structural unit that consists of a cupola resting on four arches and may be used on its own or combined with others, especially the *îwân*.

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Interior of Cordoba Mosque with its famous pillars and arches.

The cultural syncretism of Muslim architecture goes back a long way. Indeed, the fact that many territories were only superficially Islamised, through the establishment of garrisons, encouraged Islamic architecture to adapt to the cultural realities of newly Islamised populations. In order to meet the needs of Muslims while at the same time respecting local town planning, the construc-

tion techniques and materials used were those locally available. The gradual transformation of the city of Toledo demonstrates such successive influences over the centuries. Equally, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre built in Jerusalem under Constantine had a cupola identical to that of the Dome of the Rock, whose layout corresponded perfectly to the forms of Christian art then current in Syria and Palestine. Muslims knew how to appropriate a place and Islamise it to the point of turning it into one of the symbols of Islamic art. This occurred again with the Mosque-Cathedral of Cordoba, and even the Basilica-Mosque of Saint Sophia in Istanbul. The re-use of old Christian places of worship – sometimes imposed by force – shows Islam's ability to mould itself on earlier sacred traditions, albeit through conquest.

The basilica of Hagia Sophia, built for Emperor Justinian I in 532. After the conquest of Constantinople, four minarets were added to the building to give it the appearance of a mosque.

From the first century of Muslim expansion onwards, the mosque thus remained the symbolic and practical space in which diverse Muslim movements practised their faith. But it clothed itself in local culture, whether in North Africa, the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent, China, or Anatolia and the Iberian Peninsula under Muslim rule.

In the 19th century, European colonial expansion caused profound socio-political and economic changes in the Islamic world. A number of Europeans taught European architectural theories at universities or recently founded schools of fine arts (particularly in Egypt and Algeria), thus influencing their students' way of seeing the world. Simultaneously, more and more students were sent to study architecture at European universities (Rome, Paris, London, Berlin, etc), where they realised that these new theories, developed in Europe, could easily be applied to the construction methods of the Muslim world.

The desire to discover new horizons therefore enabled cultural exchange to develop in both directions. That is true as much of Le Corbusier or Gropius, who discovered attractions in the East that they integrated into their conception of modern architecture, as it is of the "Orientals": eastern architects who combined classicism and modernism include the Iranian Jahangir Mazlum (designer of Tehran's al-Ghadir Mosque) and the Pakistani Vedat Delakoy (Islamabad Mosque).

The globalisation characterising the early 21st century has accelerated this cross-fertilisation of architectural traditions. On the architectural level, Islam is anything but a monolith closed in on itself and is sensitive in regard to cultural exchange.

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Faisal Mosque in Islamabad. Pakistan's largest mosque, financed by Saudi Arabia, was begun in 1976 and completed in 1986. Traditionalists have criticised the excessively modern design and the absence of a traditional dome, here replaced by a triangular shape recalling Bedouin tents.

© 2009 Kogen Hansen - iStockPhoto.com

Hassan II Mosque in Casablanca. Africa's largest mosque with its minaret, architecturally symbolising the glory of the kingdom. It respects current norms so as to consolidate a national tradition.


© 2009 CW Lawrence – iStockPhoto.com

Malaysia: As Syakirin Mosque with the Petronas Twin Towers in the background.

Deculturation as a means of accelerating innovation in Islamic architecture

Islam's passage to the West expanded this tradition of exchange and accentuated it along three lines: acculturation, that is to say, sweeping away all tradition; inculturation or borrowing from the cultural models of the new environment; and deculturation or the redefinition of architecture according to aesthetic canons linked to the designers' personal creativity, separate from the cultural environment.

Islam's crossing into the West reinforced an acculturation of the architectural tradition. According to Tariq Oubrou, imam of the Bordeaux Mosque, in order for the mosque to adapt to the city, it had to get rid of traditional architectural constraints. This is consistent with a tendency towards a cultural *tabula rasa*, desired as much by modernists as Salafists. Both would like to shake off a tradition seen as backward and superstitious and return to an authentic form of Islam of a "purely religious" nature, liberated from the workings of history.

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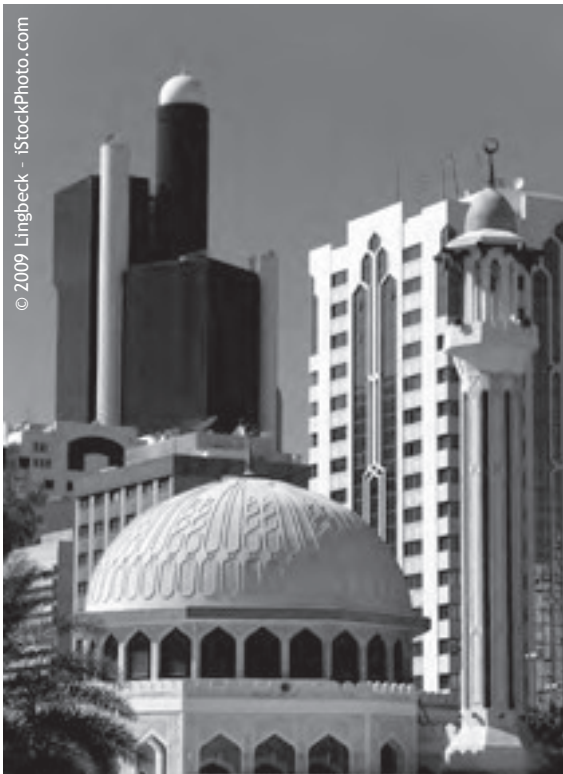
Abu Dhabi: a different architectural contrast, with a mosque in the centre of a hyper-modern part of town.

Inculturation involves adapting to the cultures and aesthetic forms of the host society. The white mosque of Visoko in Bosnia is a good illustration of this idea of a new European Islamic architecture.

Inculturation requires reconciling the imperatives of worship (*minbar*, *qibla*, inner courtyard, basin for ablutions, minaret, etc) with the incorporation of architectural novelties, in terms of both the materials used and the shapes, which have to be adapted to planning regulations in force in various European contexts.

© Salahudin - Dreamstime.com

Pocitelj Mosque, 15th century, Bosnia.

Deculturation means being receptive to DIY identities, and to the mixed references of architects who are often non-Muslims, as instanced by the vision of Paolo Portoghesi (builder of the Rome and Strasbourg mosques). In an interview with Lazari Abdeddaim, Portoghesi reminds us that his goal is to "keep the original structure, but this time by eliminating the pillars and the internal columns in a quest for better visibility. The dome will be suspended. I remember seeing some Tuaregs pray in the desert. Their mosque was just a space demarcated by a low wall. That's what I wanted to reproduce. I've also focused my attention on researching light. (…) For Rome I used typical materials, lead for the dome, bricks for the walls. For Strasbourg I'd like to use Vosges sandstone and copper, used in many buildings in Alsace. I'm also planning a conical roof for the minaret, in reference to the Cathedral" (*La Mosquée dans la cité*, La Médina, Paris, 2001).

The Oxford minaret.

Paris Mosque: under the tutelage of the Algerian state, a traditional style that emulates principles in effect in the former French colony.

Yet, alongside this tradition of exchange, there is also a traditionalist position in which the mosque is as much a place of prayer as a reminder of a cultural universe. This is the case with some Muslim associations managed by first generation migrants, who want "classical" mosques that conform to the dominant models of their countries of origin. The Paris Mosque, under Algerian influence, is the perfect illustration of this.

Europe is, then, a window of opportunity for Islamic architecture, with construction offering a choice between two possible ways of negotiating the

Mosque in the town of Escaudain (Northern France), built on former industrial wasteland.

relationship to the architectural tradition of one's country of origin. Either Islam is kept locked into a culture, or it shakes off its culture of origin so as to free itself from the weight of that local tradition.

As Muslims settle definitively in Europe, the second option is asserting itself. It underpins a new generation of much more original and innovative projects, in which architects strive to express the new reality of the European Muslim. They want their places of worship to reflect these plural identities and deliberately seek out hybridisation. In other words, over time, traditionalism may well become the minority position in Islamic architecture in Europe.

Exterior view of the Duisburg Mosque.

© 2009 Stéphane Lathion

Front view of the building of the Geneva Mosque with its Islamic architectural elements (minaret, colonnades, etc.).

At Roubaix, in the north of France, the initiators of the mosque-building project insisted on its "local" character. The project aimed both to transcend their cultures of origin and to arrive at a symbiosis between the building and the region's architectural identity: "Our project transcends the different backgrounds and different perceptions of what a mosque should be by integrating the building into the city's architectural history. This mosque is above all the mosque of Roubaix's citizens, a mosque that the faithful may be proud of and that all inhabitants may consider a part of the town's cultural heritage" (comments by the architect Oussama Bezzazi, *La Voix du Nord*, 28 September 2008).

Local reactions:
between resistance and cooperation

Above and beyond architecture, there are societies. The establishment of a mosque is also a process of negotiation and communication with its environment. This negotiation may produce very different scenarios, but the golden rule

is that good communication with local environments can defuse any increasing tension and brinkmanship, provided that the appropriate political circumstances exist (weak presence of the extreme right, a quiet security situation, etc).

Take Germany, for example. The Duisburg mosque, opened in the autumn of 2008, can probably be cited as an exemplary construction process of a European mosque. From the very beginning of the project, Muslim leaders sought to collaborate with local authorities. An advisory committee was set up that comprised different Muslim communities, representatives of churches, political parties and educational bodies, as well as local residents. It demonstrated how an atmosphere of confidence can be created, and how prejudices within various groups can be more easily reduced.

With its cupola of 23 metres and minaret of 34 metres, the Ottoman-inspired Duisburg mosque is the biggest in Germany, able to accommodate up to 1,200 worshippers. Located north of the city, the mosque is a rare example of successful cooperation. From the beginning to the end of the project, it attracted no controversy.

By contrast, the situation in Cologne is very different. After two years of tensions, the town has endorsed the construction of a city-centre mosque. Intended to be larger than that of Duisburg, with two minarets culminating in heights of over 55 metres, it troubles some inhabitants: "A building this flashy doesn't contribute to integration, and anyway there are enough Muslim prayer places in the city," says Markus Wiener, one of the project's opponents. However, for the city's mayor, Fritz Schramm, it is a means of getting Islam out of backyards and giving it a dignified place at the heart of German society so as to facilitate integration. The mayor of the district where the mosque is to be built agrees: "I am convinced that the new mosque will be a majestic architectural work, to the point of attracting busloads of tourists, who will come to admire the Cathedral, but also the new Islamic religious centre."

In Poitiers, France, the construction of a minaret is stirring up debate as much within Muslim communities as the non-Muslim population. According to Abderrazak Halloumi, an elected representative from the Socialist Party, although the minaret is not an essential element of a mosque, that is not really the point: "The mosque is a place of worship that must be open to the city and aesthetically beautiful." Work is underway (photo below from April 2009), and the controversy now seems to be somewhat running out of steam.

The construction of mosques is, then, a process of negotiating with the environment, a process that can have strongly contrasting characteristics. But in general, the better communication is, the more likely the process is to go off without major disagreements – unless there are participants (parties or individuals) who have become ideologically opposed to Islam.

Mosques with minarets:
Zurich, Geneva, Winterthur and Wangen

Switzerland's two historic mosques, in Zurich and Geneva, both have minarets and are thus important for understanding the current controversy about the building of new minarets in Switzerland. They show the significance this architectural attribute can have, but above all they reveal how this can fit into a district's cityscape. In Zurich, the mosque is an extension of 1970s modern residential architecture: a two-storey building of pale concrete with a white minaret reaching to a height of 22 meters

In Geneva, at Petit-Saconnex, a few kilometres from the city centre, there is the same residential context, and the same minaret overlooking an octagonal building with a glass cupola at its centre. The singularity of this mosque at the Islamic Cultural Centre of Geneva lies in the willingness of contractors and public authorities to combine the old building – which had a turret and restored walls typical of 17th century architecture – with the classical elements of Islamic architecture. The whole blends perfectly into its surroundings.

European mosques

What does the crossing into the West of so-called Islamic architecture show? It shows that Muslim cultures have been westernised without religious doctrine having necessarily been modernised as well. Muslim architecture (particularly where places of worship are concerned) is open to external influences because it is a cultural matter. In that sense, it resembles Islamic rap, Mecca Cola or the headscarves sold in the stylish boutiques of Cairo, London and Singapore. By contrast, the crossing into the West of Islam does not imply its modernisation and is in no way an obstacle to a fundamentalist quest for "purely religious phenomena".

Any answer to the question of whether a new Islamic architecture has emerged in Europe must necessarily be nuanced. Even though, as has been shown

above, mosques do not merely reproduce the architecture of the Muslim world, certain cultural influences persist. This is because we still find ourselves in a transitional period, which sees first-generation immigrants wanting to maintain cultural references linked to their countries of origin. However, architecture, just like urban planning, is not frozen or static; on the contrary, it is dynamic and reveals the social and cultural developments of society.

The sacred has always been a theme cherished by architects and builders

Muslims, like believers of other major religions, have always endeavoured to find the architectural solutions that were most capable of responding pragmatically to their needs and desires. And even if economic considerations (funding) or political considerations (interference by certain states) may still influence the architecture of places of worship, more and more Muslim organisations are choosing independence and transparency in religious management. It is therefore certain that the European context will change the way Muslims regard their practices, beliefs and places of worship, as has been the case with Christianity, Buddhism and Judaism. The process has been set in motion.

Islamic architecture in Europe: diversity rules

© 2009 Stéphane Lathion

Rear view of the Geneva Mosque showing, in the foreground, the typically Genevan building that became an integral part of the architectural ensemble after renovation.

Hamburg Mosque.

Glasgow Mosque.

Birmingham Mosque.

Stockholm Mosque.

Mosque in the town centre of Denain
(Northern France).

OSKAR FREYSINGER:
LET'S NOT BE THE VICTIMS OF MULTICULTURALISM

Patrick Haenni and Stéphane Lathion

Oskar Freysinger – parliamentarian, founder of the UDC party in the Canton of Valais, and writer – is above all known as a public speaker, and often accused of populism. His website says his vocation is to "ask the difficult questions". He is particularly motivated by the possible dangers arising from poorly controlled immigration.

It was during the case of the Wangen minaret project, "imposed on the population in spite of the strong resistance it has provoked", that Freysinger became aware of a problem specific to Islam. He remembers the "Muslim districts" that he visited in Antwerp as worse than lawless cities: spaces already ruled by Sharia law.

With this in mind, he joined the committee which launched the citizens' initiative for a ban on building minarets. Freysinger did not believe at the beginning that the initiative would pass. For him, the resistance of the "politically correct" system to any discussion of the issue was so powerful that he saw the need for the initiative above all "to open the debate". The debate would not be on the minaret in itself, but rather on Islam – this "explosive cocktail of doctrine and clan", as he calls it, which combines protest movements in search of "parallel societies and ghettos" with an expansionist ideology still awaiting its Enlightenment and with rampant population growth.

However, rather than attack a population, Oskar Freysinger wants to cross swords with a religious ideology "which still hasn't settled its problems with the constitutional state". And if that is so, he says it is because Islam is riven by a doctrinal struggle in which moderates lose out immediately because, "when competing, certain literal readings will always eliminate the others."

For Freysinger, the fact that radicals are in the minority is not a persuasive argument, for two reasons. First, because of a fundamental fear of the strength of minorities: he reminds us that minorities took power in Czechoslovakia and in Nazi Germany. Second, because this minority situation is only temporary: "In France, they double in number each year. Obviously they'll impose their wishes in the end."

The outcome of the confrontation will be "fundamentally totalitarian" since "the ultras always win because they are ruthless; faith moves mountains, which are often mountains of corpses."

And what of the faith of the evangelicals with whom he has joined forces in his battle to ban minarets? He concedes that they certainly are "ultra-religious people, for whom Switzerland is quite simply a Christian land". But that matters little because "Christians in Europe are eradicating themselves" and also "Democrats are almost exclusively present in countries with a Christian tradition, because Christianity has separated Church and State." Islam, in other words, is an ideological corpus that is incapable of accepting that politics can organise itself outside of the religious domain, a corpus dominated by radical readings. As such, it threatens our culture, "that thin layer which is so quickly dismantled and whose protection requires wariness."

In this ideological substrate, any minaret will necessarily lead to a muezzin and his calls to prayer. As proof of that, Freysinger puts forward the contradiction he sees in politically involved Muslims, who "say they do not want a muezzin and yet also consider that a minaret without muezzin makes no sense."

Freysinger is well aware that building a minaret does not entirely solve a problem which, according to him, is located elsewhere, part of the opaque world "inside the mosques". When existing legislation is unable to control radicalism in mosques, blaming the minaret is less a solution than an act of resistance to "a symbol that is not innocent and smells of sulphur".

It also affords him the opportunity to condemn the political system in general which is, he says, dominated by "a bunch of cowards". These "cowards" are paralysed by the dilemma of "the constitutional state confronted by those who are against its existence", and derive great satisfaction from their excessive tolerance and good intentions towards the firebrands who "in the end, will burn down the house".

THE CONQUEST OF THE WEST WILL NOT TAKE PLACE

Patrick Haenni and Samir Amghar

For its defenders, the initiative is an invitation to debate. Their central argument is the expansion of Islam. By this, they mean a project of political hegemony that is attributed either to the nature of "Islamic ideology" itself (intent on increasing the birth rate, proselytising and all-conquering) or to the strategies of those involved (the "Islamists" and their projects). There is scarcely any doubt that a Muslim orthodoxy does exist, proselytising and missionary, and that certain groups militate along these lines: Islam is a religion that claims to be the saviour of humanity and the definitive message that seals the history of prophecies. Early Islam, created in a golden age and as a model by Muslim orthodoxy, was an expansionist period of military conquest and missionary movements.

But beyond religious aspirations, the reality is more complex: clearly, in the West there are Islamists and "projects" aimed at influence if not conquest, as Sylvain Besson argues (*La Conquête de l'Occident: le projet secret des islamistes*, Paris, Seuil, 2005). However, such projects do not work where Islamists are in the minority. Deprived of their traditional objective (an Islamic state), these Islamists become dignitaries or turn to preaching, a territory that is already occupied by pietist and apolitical fundamentalists. Currently, these are being radicalised. But this is along sectarian lines, which puts them in an awkward position as regards a conquering faction, and also existing social dynamics, namely a decline in population growth and a real increase of religiosity, but on an individual basis.

Neither state nor ghetto: the dilemmas of Islamist strategies in the West

Islamist organisations – faced with what Olivier Roy calls their "crossing to the West" (Olivier Roy, *L'Islam mondialisé*, Paris, Seuil, 2002; translation: *Globalized Islam*, Columbia University Press, 2006), meaning their transposition into a situation where they are a minority religion – find themselves in very different circumstances. Paradoxically, the crossing to the West facilitates ideological radicalisation, but to the detriment of a practical project for political influence.

Dignitaries for lack of anything better:
from minority Islamism to post-Islamism

The two best-known Islamist movements – the Muslim Brotherhood and Milli Görüs – have worked hardest to try to politicise Muslim identity along an oppositional line to the West, offering a collective imagination that was not only universalist (Islam is a religion for all) but also conquering (the goal of "world guidance" proclaimed by Hassan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood).

However, the West has never really been a strategic objective for these movements. Faced with unrest in their home countries, they did not come to Europe to conquer but to seek "sanctuary". That was the case, for instance, of al-Banna's son-in-law Said Ramadan, father of Tariq Ramadan (Oxford Professor of Contemporary Islamic Studies) and Hani Ramadan, Director of Geneva's Islamic Centre. It was their settling here in the long term that led them to rethink their relationship with the West.

Nonetheless, the Muslim Brothers are faced with a dilemma. Their specific mission is the quest for an "Islamic state". But there is no possibility of building such a state in the West, because of Islam's minority status. That only leaves two choices: "minority Islamism", meaning preaching, as illustrated by Hani Ramadan in Switzerland; or becoming dignitaries, meaning a strategy of gratitude and clientelism. In fact, the Brothers are increasingly becoming managers of prayer services – and abandoning great causes and renouncing mobilisation, even on issues that generate great anger (the headscarf in France, Palestine); and are even getting criticised for being bourgeois or too willing to compromise by young Muslims who sometimes dissociate themselves from them. Even Tariq Ramadan has been repudiated by some of his former colleagues since being named adviser to Tony Blair's government in 2005.

Personal trajectories increasingly break with the (Islamist) idea of a close link between religion and politics. This is post-Islamism. Its three facets are the return to pure politics, the quest for pure religion and cultural normalisation.

The first facet – the "desire to return to pure politics", to use the expression coined by Yamin Makri, one of the main leaders of young Muslims in 1990s France – consists of seeking secularised political commitments. This can be accomplished by joining European parties, both left and rightwing, or by lobbying in Brussels (though the Christian lobby is incomparably stronger). At

times it can also result in the invention of non-religious identities that prolong the Islamic movement, such as the French movement Indigènes de la République (French Republic's Indigenous Peoples), which denounces the neo-colonial nature of community segregation. On this front, the "indigenous person" is a successor to the "pal" of the 1980s ["Lay off my pal" was the slogan of the anti-racism organisation SOS Racisme in the 1980s] and the "brother" of the 1990s.

The second facet is the quest for pure religion, embodied by Saudi Arabian Wahhabi Salafism, an ultra-rigorous and sectarian movement that calls for a complete break with western society. Many Islamists nowadays view political commitment as a corruption of pure religion, rather than a springboard for the rule of divine law on earth. Salafism – freed from the Islamist fascination with politics, with no desire to be implicated in society, and no explicit demands – advocates withdrawing from western society, without calling for Europe's Islamised communities to organise.

The third facet, cultural normalisation, is the search for a non-stigmatising Muslim identity. It is individualist in nature. Here, salvation is re-centred on the individual, on personal success and competitiveness. This is the era of the pious winner, successor to the Islamist militant. Cultural normalisation flourishes in a new "trivialised" Islamic culture, which is not a counter-culture but a variant of youth culture and thus a sign of integration (from trendy veils to Islamic streetwear, via the religious music that is developing in the image of American Christian rock and hallal fried chicken). Religiosity is undemonstrative and seeks to express itself through globalised mass culture.

The three facets of post-Islamism, in other words, do not advocate the notion of conquest. Pure politics lies outside of religion, and therefore of Islamisation. Pure religion is part of re-Islamisation, but lies outside of any practical project for political hegemony. Cultural normalisation belongs to religion but also to mimicry, and not to confrontation or expansionism.

Radical progressions:
from the ghetto to exodus

That the Muslim Brotherhood finds it difficult to position itself in the western context does not mean it is disappearing. On the contrary, it subjects it

to competition from fundamentalist movements. In the nebulous web of fundamentalism, the movement that is gaining ground is Wahhabi Salafism – meaning not jihadism, but sectarian rigour and dogmatic radicalism.

Salafism is attractive to many. It frequently captures those disappointed by Islamism or older fundamentalist movements in Europe, such as the *Tablighi Jamaat* organisation. In contrast with the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafism is present in the poorer areas of large cities (*banlieues* [or in Britain, the inner cities]) where, by advocating a break with western society, it rationalises exclusion and promotes it, turning an imposed situation into a religious choice.

However, Salafism is not the new lever for conquering the West, for several reasons. First, because it is sectarian rather than multicultural. Salafism advocates avoiding western society, fearing that its own values will be contaminated. It generates a return to religion that takes place less at family or community level than as a group of re-Islamised youth thought of as a "group of survivors" (*firqa nâjiyya*). Salafism rejects the real Muslim community: it offends families and challenges traditional imams. This is Islam for young people, particularly well suited to people who have broken with their environment. As a consequence, it has little success recruiting in communities where solidarity is strong, such as among Comorians or Turks.

Second, because Salafism bases itself in pure religion. It is interested neither in culture (and therefore community) nor in politics. Salafism – far from being the most recent expression of a project of political hegemony – is the bitter fruit of depoliticising Islam: the ideological rationalisation of a relationship with western societies that consists of withdrawal and avoidance. The crowning achievement is not conquering the West or establishing Islamised ghettos, but achieving exodus or *hijra*, and returning to the Muslim world (even though the dream of exodus is rarely realised for lack of financial means).

By positing departure as an ideal, the concept of *hijra* places the new generation back in the same demobilising wait-and-see policy as their parents' generation as far as any potential engagement with western societies is concerned. The older generation lived the myth of return to their homeland: the new generation is pre-occupied with the myth of departure from the country of their birth. Salafists are silent on the headscarf issue, do not organise any support for expelled Salafist imams and remain absent from demonstrations supporting Palestine.

Against the community and without a project:
the nihilism of the new jihadist

Jihadist militants (al-Qaida and the Kaplan movement) have a sectarian spirit in common with non-combatant Salafists. They disparage all the adversaries they intend to fight through *takfir*, denouncing them as non-believers: Jews, Christians, Muslims who are not Muslim enough, and the Muslim Brotherhood. The goal is not to create "communities that resist" in the West (following the example of Hezbollah or Hamas) or ghetto counter-cultures, but pious and militant cells that break with European society overall, as much as with Muslim communities perceived to be living in *jahiliyya*, or ignorance of God's law. Radicalisation always prolongs such breaks with the community and neighbourhood, as Olivier Roy shows in *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2006).

Having pushed anathema to its extremes, the new jihadists no longer have any societies to liberate and can no longer be involved in politics. They do not have a precise goal (a territory or state of their own, modifying the interplay of political forces, regime change), but aim to create confrontations and media shocks, and destroy the symbols of political imperialism (that is to say of American power).

Violence is envisioned as a sacrifice. The figure of the new armed militantism is no longer the *mujâhid* (holy warrior), but the *shahîd* (martyr). By contrast with former jihadists, who were active within national territories (Hezbollah in the Lebanon, Hamas in Palestine, Lashkar-e-Taiba in Kashmir), these new combatants in the West do not consider themselves "just" but "pure", living in a world contaminated by *jahiliyya*. Hence the disinterest of the Salafist jihadist in any strategy of creating communities, and in return, Islamist activists' unanimous disapproval of them.

As a result, radicalisation rarely happens through the network of mosques. On the contrary, there is a relationship of mistrust between mosques and radical followers of *jihad*. That is because mosques are spaces that are easily monitored by the security services, but also because they are spaces of negotiation with the despised West, so their leaders are compromised. As Jean-Pierre Filiu points out (*Les Frontières du jihâd*, Fayard, 2006), the Farid Benyettou network, one of the main jihadist channels to Iraq to have been dismantled in France, was radicalised after its leader was expelled from the Stalingrad Mosque, in Paris's *19th arrondissement*. The same process was at work for the cell responsible for the

Madrid bombings on 11 March 2004, which was radicalised outside the great mosque of Madrid after a public confrontation between the cell leader and the imam. This means that, for reasons of both security and ideology, jihadists are recruited in other places and by other means – places as dissimilar as cyber-cafés and sports clubs, martial arts gyms, the internet, prison. "Londonistan" is the exception – but there, as the Islamologist Olivier Roy comments, people get radicalised *before* joining a mosque precisely because it is radical (as was the case with Zacarias Moussaoui). Here, radicalism leads to the mosque, and not the other way round.

Islamist militancy hardly confirms conquest as a reality. On the one hand, this is because activists within political Islam are becoming dignitaries, losing their taste for conflict and being overtaken by a new fundamentalism, Salafism. On the other hand, Salafism – which rejects community-building and disputes that the real Muslim community is Islamic at all – leads either to exodus or to a form of political nihilism which consists of looking to martyrdom for salvation.

Social dynamics:
the predominance of westernisation

What remains are social dynamics that might transmit expansionist or conquering intentions: Muslim demographics, the renewal of religious practice (by re-Islamisation or conversion) and the ghetto as a display case for a religious sub-culture controlled by Islamism.

The quiet termination of the Islamic baby boom

One of the central arguments of the expansionist thesis is the idea of runaway Muslim population growth. This argument refers to a high fertility rate that is considered real and attributed to a mentality intent on increasing the birth rate, which in turn derives from the supposed fundamentally conquering nature of Islam.

There is indeed a pro-birth mentality in the religious texts. This is sometimes put forward on Islamic web forums when questions are asked about family-planning debates or the legitimacy of contraception. But two essential points must be noted:

- Muslim population growth is in free fall everywhere (except Pakistan and certain countries of sub-Saharan Africa). According to research by Emmanuel Todd, especially for his latest book written with Youssef Courbage, *Le Rendez-vous des civilisations* (Paris, Seuil, 2007), the average fertility rate of Muslim women dropped from 6.8 children in 1975 to 3.7 in 2005. In this same short time frame of 30 years, Morocco has gone from 7.3 to 2.4 children per woman; Algeria from 8.4 to 2.6; and Saudi Arabia from 8.5 to 3.6. Secular Turkey and Islamist Iran have dipped underneath the threshold of population renewal, falling from 7.3 to 2 children. Tribal societies have been no more resilient: Libya has gone from 7.6 to 2.8; Jordan from 8 to 3.5; and Oman from 8.6 to 3.6 children per woman. The modernisation of birth rates has, in other words, arrived late in the Arab and Muslim world. But it has come about in record time and, for the time being, its momentum continues.

- This decline is concomitant with re-Islamisation. Neither the processes of re-Islamisation nor Islamic states (such as Iran) have therefore had any influence on the alignment of Muslim populations with western demographic norms. First of all, the inversion of birth rate curves in the Muslim world is a progression that started in the Arab peninsula, which is incidentally also the great provider of fundamentalist Wahhabi Salafism. What is more, the inversion of birth rates has frequently taken place in the context of strong religious and political effervescence: in Iran, fertility rates stalled and dropped (from 6.8 children per woman in 1985 to 2.1. today) not during the modernising reign of the Shah, but at the peak of the Islamist momentum and export of the Revolution, in about 1985. As for the "society of resistance" mentality (*mujtam'a muqâwim*) that animates Shiite Lebanon and Palestine, which has encouraged some mothers to push their children towards jihad and martyrdom against the Israeli army, this has not set in motion any "war demographics", to use the expression coined by Philippe Fargues (*Générations arabes, l'alchimie du nombre*, Paris, Fayard, 2000). This is above all because the model of military resistance developed by Hezbollah is short on men and based on asymmetric and elitist combat. The second Intifada in Palestine did not cause an increase in birth rates, in contrast to the 1987 rising, which did.

Thus, de-Islamisation has not been necessary in the Muslim world – in contrast with the Christian world, where de-Christianisation was one of the variables (along with the elimination of illiteracy) that started the process of "demographic modernisation". One of the reasons for this lies in the fact that the religiousness which affirms itself in re-Islamisation is strongly carried by individualist values,

whereas any policy to increase the birth rate presupposes a community ideal (group growth). That does not mean that the Muslim presence in Switzerland is going to stabilise at its current level. It will continue to grow through immigration, and also through high fertility rates due to the young age of the population. What is incorrect is to attribute this increase to Islam.

Return to Islam and conversions:
consecration of the individual

The drop in Muslim population growth is the result of a generalised trend towards sociological normalisation among Muslim populations. In other words, these populations are aligning themselves with most of the canon of western modernity. Beyond demographic modernisation, this sociological normalisation can also be seen in rising literacy rates, urbanisation, a decline in arranged marriages and endogamy (marriage between cousins), increased age at marriage, a rise in divorce rates (including among Salafist women), the constant rise in mixed marriages among immigrant women, and the mass access of women to the labour market.

The "return of religiosity" – in Islam as in other religious traditions – starts with the individual and not with a collective project, even though this return is seen as a quest for community solidarity. The dominant social forms of this return to religiosity are voluntary groups, configured by a person's personal choices (the reverse of belonging to a community) and the autodidact. Moreover, routes to re-Islamisation are more and more often found outside its traditional structures. Islamisation thus increasingly bypasses Islamists. Instead, it takes place more and more on an individual, DIY or unorganised basis. Prayers are learned from books and occasional visits to a mosque, but at no moment does a re-Islamisation movement take charge of these religious aspirations. This is rule by individualised *fatwas*, anathemas and entrepreneurs without morality. Insofar as there is any supervision, it is through social trends, not through clerical structures. As a consequence, the number of imams has risen little: in France, there were 800 imams in 1995 and about 1,000 imams ten years later.

However, this individualisation is, paradoxically, the result of a group effect. The existence of Muslim environments (the suburbs of Bradford in the UK, Minguettes in the suburbs of Lyons, Kreuzberg in Berlin) creates social habits and norms, such as respecting the fast during Ramadan. The generalisation of

religious structures, meanwhile (Islamic libraries, internet sites, places of worship), makes DIY re-Islamisation possible not only for the young but also – and this is new – for the first generation of migrants.

More precisely, two main tendencies can be distinguished in this return to Islam. On one hand, there is a religiousness shaped by wanting to become normal in terms of culture and identity. This finds expression in Islamic streetwear, the trendy headscarf, hallal pop or [French drinks company] *Muslim Up*. On the other hand, there is a fundamentalism lived as a complete break with the western system. But neither pursues an ideal of conquest. Fundamentalism, as we have seen, considers exodus its crowning achievement, while cultural normalisation renounces any idea of alternatives and thinks of itself as a spiritual supplement to a western culture that has become globally accepted.

As for conversions, they exist, though they are not particularly spectacular. In France, sources from the Ministry of Interior estimate that there are 12 conversions to Islam a day, and a total of 50,000 converts. On the other hand, conversions in the opposite direction are increasing. It is estimated (again in France) that around 800 Muslims a year convert to Christianity, mainly to evangelism (against 4,000 conversions to Islam). There are no reliable estimates for conversions in Switzerland.

Besides, though militant organisations promote conversion, they do not promote the influence of converts within their midst: converts who carve out militant careers in political Islam are rare. Only Salafism, whether pietist or jihadist, makes room for them (23% of converts in France go through Salafism, according to a report by the secret intelligence branch of the French police cited in *Le Monde*, 12 July 2005). In fact, Salafism is the only truly de-territorialised and acculturated movement. It has clearly uncoupled western militancy from the challenges in the Middle East, done away with the ethnic component of religious belonging and facilitated the incorporation of those who are western by birth, or from non-Arabic ethnic minorities.

In the ghetto:
exclusion without community-building

What about the ghetto? The Muslim enclave is real. But it is neither a springboard for conquest nor a Trojan horse by which Islam will infiltrate the West.

The image of a Muslim population under the tutelage of Islamist militants who nourish a project of collectively breaking with the West is exaggerated – although elements of social control do exist.

The ghetto is not structured along the lines of a political strategy of community building. It is the result of complex social, economic and political processes. It is also the outcome of the government's attitude, not only in countries with a community building ideology (Holland, Great Britain), but also in France, however secular the country might be in other respects: practices that create a community include claiming an interest in religious leaders as part of electoral strategies, the sometimes ethnically-based distribution of social housing, and attempts to find "community building" intermediaries to manage the *banlieues*.

As for the relationship between Islam (and Islamists) and the issue of Muslims enclaves, several points are worth noting.

First of all, political Islam, centred on the middle classes and based on an elitist model, has no hold on the *banlieues*. This was shown only too clearly during the 2005 French riots by the total ineffectiveness of the *fatwa* calling for calm that was issued by the Union des Organisations Islamiques de France (Union of French Islamic Organisations), a Muslim-Brotherhood related organisation. Islamic movements (both political and missionary) do exist, but without being in a controlling position. They are one element among several involved in the social organisation of the French *banlieues* – which are not so very much "under the influence" after all.

As for Salafists, they do effectively have a community-building discourse. They promote the solidarity of the pious, develop strategies for avoiding the surrounding society, and are well-established in the *banlieues*. But they do not control them. First, because they lack the numbers to wield influence. Second, because Salafism does not have a tradition of organisation that might enable it to fulfil this role. Finally, because the Salafists' aim, as we have seen, is not to create Islamised and/or rebellious urban spaces, but exodus, the return to Islamic soil, *hijra*.

Above all, the dominant values in predominantly Muslim districts are the individualist values of consumerism and the market. In *Le destin des immigrés* (Paris, Seuil, 1994), Emmanuel Todd announced that North African structures of solidarity were being dismantled. Indeed, this is now the predominant trend: witness the rise of male and female exogamy (according to Todd, the

rate of mixed marriages among Algerian women rose from 6.2% to 27.5% between 1970 and 1990, that of Moroccan women from 4% to 13%); the enormous difficulty of becoming organised; the weak authority of families; the weakness so far of Muslim schools. Besides, the few projects underway are, above all, a riposte to the 2004 law on religious symbols and not an expression of a tendency towards self-organisation among Muslims in France. Ironically, Muslims are, at this level, far less community-minded than Christians or Jews. In fact, while there are 30,000 Jewish children in 256 faith schools in France, and Christian secondary schools are in excellent health (with 20,000 refused entry due to lack of space in 2005), only a hundred or so pupils are enrolled in the two Muslim schools currently open. As for the Muslim vote, it simply is not effective as far as the (rare) community candidates are concerned: they always end in total failure, even those supported by mosques.

What predominates in the ghetto are atomisation and exclusion – even though mobilising religious factors may appear to be a response to this atomisation, and even though some social control based on Islamic values does exist.

And where is the mosque in all this?

The idea of Islam as expansionist confuses four factors: demographics, religiosity, the ghetto and political intentions. Allegedly, Islam's political intentions target the ghetto and are the result of a religiosity that is incapable of conceiving politics and religion as autonomous entities – and thus founds an "Islamic ideology" that is irremediably in favour of increasing the birth rate. But, as has been shown, the different factors are largely independent: Muslim population growth is in freefall, disappointing some Islamists, such as Iran's President Ahmadinejad, who interprets this as an alignment with western culture (in fact, he confuses modernisation with westernisation). And the ghetto, though a fact, is imposed rather than chosen: internally, it is dominated by atomisation. On the other hand religiosity, which is relatively on the increase, happens through the individual him/herself and escapes the Islamists.

As for the mosque, it is opposed to both the ghetto and radicalisation, although it does generate conservatives. Firstly, it is opposed to the logic of the ghetto because a mosque is above all a process of negotiation: to obtain a licence, manage potential opposition, etc. Such a project presupposes, or ends up necessitating, making contact with the social and political environment: the

town hall, neighbours, administrative authorities. It is very tempting to try to capitalise on the large electoral reserves that mosques represent, by promising the mayor votes or withdrawing them if she/he has been hostile, or by negotiating with various candidates in order to obtain advantages for the Muslim community. Step by step, the managers of mosques thus become dignitaries. According to Bernard Godard, a consultant to France's Bureau central des cultes (Central Bureau of Religious Affairs), the French interior ministry has little faith in the regulatory ability of mosques, finding them too far removed from the real issues, such as radicalism or despair. Besides, mosques are actually more of an agent for confining violence, since radicalisation is triggered not by attending a mosque but rather by breaking with it, as seen by the routes towards radicalisation taken by the Benyettou network and those who were behind the Madrid bombings.

The mosque produces social control and dignitaries. Mosques are still largely run by old immigrants who, until the end of the 1990s, favoured discretion and thereafter, attempts at establishing contacts with their environment. And it is precisely because mosques mean negotiation, contact with their surroundings and becoming dignitaries that Salafism is scarcely interested in monitoring and managing them, and, at most, favours addressing the faithful within them.

The initiative to ban minarets raised good questions about the future of Islam in Europe, the mobilisations that are occurring in its name, and its relationship with the West. However, by concentrating on it, the initiative turned the minaret issue into one of worship and ideology. In so doing, it was keeping sociology and politics in the dark. Yet that is precisely where the real problems are, and will continue to be, with or without minarets.

ANTONIO HODGERS: FUNDAMENTALIST CRITICISM OF ISLAM IS ALSO DANGEROUS

Stéphane Lathion

Antonio Hodgers, a Swiss citizen of Argentine origin, has been a member of parliament since 2007. President of the Geneva Green Party and engaged in politics since his youth, he is active on behalf of many causes, particularly integration issues. He is also committed to promoting the political rights of foreigners at the municipal level.

His political orientation could hardly fail to bring him into conflict with the SVP/UDC on issues of immigration and diversity. As early as 2008, when the SVP/UDC proposed a motion to expel foreigners who refuse to integrate, he criticised the "fundamentalists of integration". Then he started to fight for diversity on a new front: the initiative to ban the construction of further minarets. In an op-ed piece in Geneva's *Le Temps* newspaper, he called the initiative "fundamentalist" since it has the same worldview as Islamic fundamentalists, based on the belief that civilisations are irrepressibly different and therefore condemned to war.

For Hodgers, the initiative merely used the minaret as a hook. The real issue was Islam – which he considers a trumped-up problem. He emphasises that there is a difference between Islam and Muslims, and Islam is often mainly transmitted by cultures that are "not necessarily all that religious". His example is the Islam of the Balkans, which, according to him, is above all cultural, secular and patriarchal – witness the first anniversary celebrations of Kosovo's existence as a state, to which he was invited and which were replete with wine and pork. "That too is an aspect of the reality of Islam," he reminds us.

For him, the issue lies not in religious practice, but in visibility and the image problems facing Muslim youths. It also lies in integration and access to the labour and housing markets. As evidence, he cites the fact that the ultra-traditionalism of the sheikhs and Saudi emirs is not seen as problematic – because they have money and "in Switzerland, as soon as you have money, there's no problem".

But is it really true that Muslim immigration is entirely like any other immigration, and that, like other *secondos* (second-generation immigrants), Muslims will succeed in their social ascent?

Hodgers does not want to overlook things: there is a risk of radicalisation. But then, he wonders, what exactly is the role of the initiative? In his view it has chosen the wrong target because radicalism is no longer in the mosques. Second, he believes that, by humiliating a community, the initiative provides grist to the mill of extremists and so plays into their hands. The solution is, rather, to respond to any radicalism – the result of "identity drifts" – by encouraging integration, not by stigmatisation. And this is just where the danger of the initiative lies: with its success, he fears that Muslims may withdraw into themselves.

A MINARET BAN
IN THE FEDERAL CONSTITUTION?

Erwin Tanner

History, content and purpose of the initiative

On 10 April 2007 a committee of 16 people belonging to the Democratic Union of the Centre (SVP/UDC) and the Federal Democratic Union (EDU/UDF) presented the Federal Chancellery with a list of signatures in support of a federal citizens' initiative (in the form of a detailed project) to revise Article 72 of the Federal Constitution. The committee wanted to round off Article 72 by adding a paragraph 3: "The construction of minarets is prohibited." The initiative committee justified this proposal on its website (www.minarette.ch) as follows:

a) A minaret would symbolise a political-religious demand by Muslims to change the existing legal order in a democratic State, as well as the reigning conditions in that society;

a) The construction of minarets would threaten religious peace in Switzerland.

On 17 April 2007 the Federal Chancellery decided that the list of signatures met the legal requirements and published it on 1 May 2007 in the Federal Journal (FF 2007 3045 ss). The initiative committee had until 1 November 2008 to collect the required 100,000 signatures.

On 8 July 2008 the committee presented the collected signatures – divided by canton – to the Federal Chancellery. On 28 July 2008 this body found the initiative to have been successful, the required number of signatures having been collected. This decision was published on 19 August in the Federal Journal (FF 2008 6259 sec). Of the 114,137 signatures submitted, 113,540 were valid. The Federal Council therefore had to submit a message and a federal decree project to the Federal Assembly within a year from 8 July 2008. As early as 27 August 2008 the Federal Council conveyed its message concerning the citizens' initiative "against the construction of minarets" (FF 2008 6923 ss). It was then the turn of the Federal Assembly to rule on the validity of the initia-

tive, determining in particular whether unity of content and unity of form had been respected, but also whether the initiative conformed to the imperatives of international law and whether its application would be feasible using the means available to the State.

The Federal Assembly was asked to pass judgment within two-and-a-half years from 8 July 2008 (at the very latest on 8 January 2011) on whether to recommend that the initiative be put to the vote, assuming it was declared valid. On 12 June 2009, after discussions and votes in both chambers of parliament – on 4 March and 12 June 2009 in the National Council, on 5 and 12 June 2009 in the Council of State – the Federal Assembly declared that the initiative was valid and therefore had to be put to the vote of both citizens and Cantons; however, it recommended that it be rejected (FF 2009 3903). Next, the Federal Council had to vote on the valid initiative within ten months of the final decision of the two chambers, and in any case no later than ten months after the deadline granted by law to the Federal Assembly for considering the subject (so at the latest on 8 November 2011). This vote took place on 29 November 2009.

Introduction of an atypical rule

The initiative introduced into the Swiss legal code a prohibition against Muslims building minarets. It is an atypical rule, very specific in nature, in the context of general and fundamental constitutional standards. This rule affects only a circumscribed and as yet small part of the population and concern only a particular type of building that departs from the common architectural framework. It represents a new exceptional provision in religious matters within the Federal Constitution and contradicts Article 75, paragraph 1, under which the Swiss Confederation, in its relations with the Cantons, is only competent to establish the *principles* of rural and urban planning.

The problem of insertion into Article 72 of the Constitution

The minaret ban is inserted as paragraph 3 of Article 72 of the Federal Constitution, in other words within the rules that prescribe the powers of the Confederation and the Cantons relating to the institutional relations between State and religious communities.

Art. 72 Church and State

1. Regulating the relationship between Church and State is the responsibility of the Cantons.

2. Within the limits of their respective competencies, the Confederation and the Cantons may take appropriate measures to maintain the peace between the members of different religious communities.

3. *The construction of minarets is prohibited. (new)*

Although Article 72 Cst is called "Church and State", it in fact concerns not only the relations of the State with all that has regard to a "Church", but with religious communities in general, whatever their nature. Article 72 Cst does not, however, refer to everything that concerns "religion". It is only interested in the institutional aspect of "religion", in the forms of organisation and action that are connected to it, and in the difficulties that may arise for society as far as the coexistence of the faithful of different established beliefs is concerned.

Article 72 Cst applies on the one hand to religious communities, ie, to groups of men and women forming organisations (which may or may not be recognised by the State) in order to implement in both theory and practice a shared vision of the world that has transcendental reference points. This legal standard on the other hand applies to men and women or groups of men and women specifically as members of religious communities, i.e. to men and women or groups of men and women whose character, thought and conduct express their membership of a religious community as well as expressing the accompanying interiorisation of the values and rules of their religious community (which have effects that may bind them more or less closely in their individual and collective life).

Article 72, paragraph 1 Cst reaffirms the general rule for allocating competencies between the Confederation and the Cantons, enshrined in Articles 3 and 42, paragraph 1 Cst, by applying them to the legal framework of the institutional relations between State and Church.

Article 72, paragraph 2 Cst does not constitute a basis for legally settling the institutional relations between the State and religious communities that disrupt the peace or threaten to disrupt it. Rather, it allows the State legally to regulate relations between religious communities whose mutual conduct

tends to make safe coexistence in public difficult or impossible. Seen in this light, Article 72, paragraph 2 Cst is a special legal rule in relation to Article 57 Cst on domestic security. Insofar as it constitutes the basis and limits of State action to restrict freedom of belief and conscience, it is assigned no independent normative scope. It simply concretises, as a declaratory legal standard, the general conditions for the restriction of fundamental rights laid down in Article 36, paragraph 2 Cst.

The introduction of the minaret ban in Article 72, paragraph 3 Cst misses its goal from the perspective of the systematics of the law. A special construction ban is placed at the Federal Constitution level as part of the distribution of competencies between the Confederation and Cantons concerning State regulation of the relations between Church and State and State regulation of the maintenance of public order by members of religious communities amongst themselves. An individual obligation thus finds itself technically located in the context of the duties incumbent on the State.

The initiative from the point of view of fundamental rights and human rights

Can a minaret ban be harmonised with constitutional law and existing international law? Or does it violate human rights and fundamental rights guaranteed by treaties that are binding on Switzerland (including the European Convention of Human Rights and international covenants) as well as by the Constitution: for example, religious freedom (15 Cst), the right to own property (26 Cst) and the right to equality of treatment (2 and 8 paragraph 1 Cst)?

It is not possible to justify the ban on the basis that provisions have been made for restricting these rights and for making distinctions in the guarantees that they grant. The ban precludes members of a group, because of a visible difference, from making full use of their right to enjoy religious freedom and to own property in a precisely defined set of circumstances. It prevents the architectural expression of those rights in public, and blocks the process which, corresponding to these persons' importance in society, makes them visible in the country's villages and cities. The ban puts them at a disadvantage vis-a-vis members of other groups by prejudicing the organisation of their lives and of their religious and cultural identities.

From the perspective of the public-interest defence – that is, maintaining public order and preserving a certain appearance of sites and the landscape – the prohibition is neither appropriate, nor necessary, nor reasonable for those affected (principle of proportionality).

- In its rigour, the prohibition expresses an intolerance that frustrates Muslims in Switzerland and irritates the population. Overseas, it provokes protests on behalf of Muslims. Thus, it has exactly the opposite effect of that which it aims to achieve, because it creates a disturbance.

- In its rigour, the prohibition expresses radicalism. It does not admit limitations or exceptions, and presents Muslims with an absolute State requirement. This simply does not accord with the maxim of State conduct being the endeavour to harmonise competing interests that are legally protected, and that are decisive for both the legislative process and the implementation of law in a democratic State where the legal order is the outcome of institutionalised processes of compromise. The State can only present Muslims with a demand for improvement, because by its very nature, a liberal democratic body must be able to resist to some extent the tensions and conflicts in society. In its concern to ensure the coexistence on good terms of human beings and groups of human beings, it must consider any threats or disorder that might result from the use in conformity with the law of the freedoms and rights that it guarantees. The intended results can also be achieved by moderate measures: for example, by means of a case-by-case approach that adds additional stipulations to building permits, meaning that it links building permits to conditions, obligations or guarantees – which can be entered as limitations of public law in the land register – insofar as this is permitted by applicable law. For example, a building permit for a minaret could be granted with stipulations as to its shape and volume that conform to the rules currently in force for contemporary architectural works and stipulate a style that is acceptable to professional architectural critics; the obligation to use materials and colours that are in harmony with the site; the condition that access to the minaret be exclusively for maintenance; the prescription of reasonable and sober lighting.

- In its rigour, it expresses rigidity, since it does not leave Muslims the slightest opportunity of envisaging such an edifice as part of construction projects, such as the installation or planning of an Islamic centre, even if they felt the

need for it. From the outset, it defeats any minaret project and thus precludes an honest assessment of its advantages and disadvantages.

- However, it does not affect the essence of religious freedom or the right to own property or the principle of equality:

  – It does not constitute an infringement of the free orientation and profession of personal religious faith by Muslims – two imperative conditions for religious development in a society that the State intends to be pluralist in terms of faiths (see Article 2, paragraph 2).
  – It does not affect Muslims in those elements of property (within the meaning of the Federal Constitution) that are indispensable for the autonomous organisation of one's life within a society that the State wishes to be liberal and made up of responsible members (Article 2, paragraph 1 and Article 6). As the real-estate asset of a Muslim community (regardless of how the community is organised), a minaret is not absolutely necessary in order to preserve and develop the collective and individual personalities of the Muslims belonging to that community.
  – It does not affect a Muslim's right to be considered, like every other human being, a subject of the legal order that is in force in the State and to be respected in his or her identity – which is the essential aspect of his or her human existence and cannot be abandoned, or only with great difficulty.
  – A minaret is not a constituent part of the innate or acquired specifics of Muslims, but a means of signalling and making visible the progress of Islam's – and of Muslims' – settling in this society, with their religious and cultural identity.

Justification by reciprocity

The issue of the relationship between, on the one hand, the principle of reciprocity established in international law and, on the other, fundamental rights as well as human rights enshrined in national and international law also needs to be examined. Can a fundamental right guaranteed by national law (or by international law, as a human right) – such as the right to religious freedom or the right to own property – be restricted by invoking the application of a principle of international law such as the principle of reciprocity? To clarify: can a Muslim or a group of Muslims living in Switzerland be denied a right such as the construction of places of Islamic worship (mosques, minarets, etc),

or in any event be limited in this right, because of practices contrary to international law (or simply because of a lack of social approval) in their country of origin, such as a ban on building non-Islamic places of worship (synagogues, churches, Hindu or Buddhist temples, etc)? Can a ban on building minarets in the Swiss Federal Constitution be justified on the basis of reciprocity in international law?

The principle of reciprocity is a means for States to implement the rules of international law that are in force between them, as well as the rights and duties arising from that. Whosoever respects the law may rightly expect that it also be respected where it concerns him; whosoever does not respect it must expect the same to be true in regard to him.

The consensus and mutual cooperation of nations are required in order for the international legal order to function: they confer legitimacy, stability and effectiveness. The principle of reciprocity (I treat you as you treat me) urges nations to stick to the consensus and maintain cooperation, in order not to suffer negative consequences, whether judicial or not. As a fundamental working principle of the international legal order, reciprocity appeals to nations' sense of responsibility. However, fundamental rights and human rights are rights that a human being may assert against a State for himself, for his group or for any organisation that has been constituted in a form recognised by the State. Insofar as the fundamental rights of a country overlap with the guarantees of international law, the protection of international law adds to these guarantees. These guarantees, recognised by a global or regional community of nations with different political and legal systems and different worldviews, assume the importance of minimal guarantees for the benefit of an individual, a collective or an organisation formed by them within society and the State.

According to prevailing legal practice and doctrine, the principle of reciprocity established in international law cannot be applied in the field of fundamental rights and human rights enshrined in national and international law. The principle of reciprocity has its rightful place in the relations between nations, and not in those between States and private individuals. Therefore, individuals do not "pay" for their country of origin's violations of international law or socially problematic conduct. According to a document by the UN International Law Commission on the "Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts" (integrated as an appendix into the UN resolution on the responsibility of Nations of 12 December 2001, A/RES/56/83), nations must not infringe

fundamental human rights in any application of international law against nations that violate international law (Article 50, paragraph 1 subparagraph b). Freedom of religion and the right to own property seem to come under these rights because they are indispensable prerequisites for the fulfilment of human beings – whether as individuals or members of groups – and for the fulfilment of organisations created by humans for the pursuit of objectives.

A problem for the needs of human beings and for the State's existing regulatory possibilities?

For members of a religious community, the ability to confess and celebrate their faith together is essential. Without them regularly gathering in the same place, their shared faith would dry up and the community gradually disintegrate. These meetings are also used to transmit beliefs which must be able to exercise an attraction – both inwards (for those who are already members) and outwards (for potential new members). Places of worship which are clearly recognisable as such, as well as typical of a religious community, help to draw attention to these venues and perhaps lead non-members to visit the place, or even to participate in a meeting. This is especially true where the place of worship is beautiful.

It is in the interest of any religious community to have places of worship that are clearly identifiable in public. Such buildings must signpost their presence and their strength in society, serve to anchor communities there and allow their faith to shine. The number and layout of places of worship can be measures of a religious community's status and the influence it has on society. If Muslim men and women now want to build mosques and minarets, that too corresponds to a need to be taken seriously as a stable part of society.

There are currently four minarets in Switzerland, and only one is physically accessible: (1) Mahmud Mosque of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat Switzerland, Forchstrasse 323, 8008 Zurich; (2) Mosque of the Islamic Cultural Foundation, chemin de Colladon 34, 1209 Geneva (accessible); (3) Mosque of the Islamic-Albanian Association, Kronaustrasse 6, 8404 Winterthur (structure added on top of the roof); (4) Mosque of the Turkish Cultural Association Olten, Industriestrasse 2, 4612 Wangen bei Olten (structure added on top of the roof).

The Swiss Confederation has committed itself to respecting religious freedom in the Constitution of 18 April 1999 (Article 15) and in international treaties concerning human rights that the Constitution has ratified, such as the European Convention on Human Rights (Article 9, paragraph 1) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 18, paragraphs 1, 2 and 4, Article 27). Members of religious communities thus benefit from a fundamental right to build and manage places of worship that are used for exercising their religion. Up to now, little attention has been paid to the fact that nations such as Turkey also make use of this fundamental right (actually conceived as a right of private individuals vis-a-vis the State) through associations or Muslim foundations created in Switzerland – for example the Türkisch-Islamische Stiftung für die Schweiz (Turkish Islamic Foundation for Switzerland) – that are placed under their supervision and for which they provide ministers of religion. This might be considered an indirect influence on Swiss domestic affairs and religious affairs, a situation that requires political and judicial clarification.

However, no right is unlimited. The exercise of religious freedom also has limits; these are provided by the Federal Constitution (Article 36), the European Convention on Human Rights (Article 9, paragraph 2) and the UN's International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 18, paragraph 3). When they build and maintain places of worship, Muslims are obliged to respect the legally protected interests of third parties and of society in general. During the construction of mosques and minarets, it is thus advisable to comply with planning, building and environmental regulations. In particular, any disproportionate and unpleasant impact on the residents, and any distressing types of building, should be avoided. Mosques and minarets should fit in with the existing environment and not interfere with existing buildings. Moreover, to keep the peace in a multi-faith society, shows of strength and other religious provocations are not appropriate. The architects and leaders of Islamic centres or mosques (with or without minarets) should take seriously any fears and worries of non-Muslim residents and take account of their concerns.

Supporting the rights of others to build and manage mosques and minarets is not incompatible with the right to criticise a construction project or the management of such a place. Third parties who are affected have a right freely to express their views within the limits established by law, as confirmed by the Federal Constitution (Article 16, paragraph 1), the European Convention on Human Rights (Article 10, paragraph 1) and the UN's International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 19, paragraph 1). This includes the right

to review and the right to lodge an appeal, claim or complaint. A debate on the construction of mosques and minarets must be able to take place in a pluralistic and democratic society; it must also, however, be properly conducted.

DANIEL ZINGG:
DEFENDING SWITZERLAND'S CHRISTIAN ROOTS

Jean-François Mayer

This evening Daniel Zingg is speaking in the Bernese village of Meikirch at the invitation of an evangelical group. The subject is "Israel between the promise of the Bible and Islam's desire for power". On the wall is an Israeli flag; there are brochures on the table, one with publicity for the next trip to Israel that Zingg will accompany. He is a frequent visitor. His interest in Israel goes beyond the framework of the conflict: like some other Christians, he is convinced that the founding of Israel in 1948 was a fulfilment of divine prophecies; and he is equally convinced that Islamic ideology engenders hatred for Israel.

"Islamic ideology": the expression crops up frequently in discussions with Daniel Zingg. He approaches Islam as an ideology of conquest, not a religion. Nothing beyond his commitment to Israel predisposed him to look into the minaret question in detail or to become the spokesperson for the action committee Stopp Minarett. He runs a Christian charity, Aseba, which specialises in multimedia evangelisation projects and has a presence in 14 countries. A member of the Reformed Church in the Canton of Bern, he is active within a free evangelical community. He is politically active in the Federal Democratic Union (EDU/UDF), with which he became familiar after being often invited to give lectures there.

The label "Islamophobe" does not bother him, as long as people specify that he is hostile towards "Islamic ideology" and not Muslims: "I don't hate other human beings, that's not possible for a Christian." The majority of Muslims in Switzerland are secularised and want to live peacefully. Daniel Zingg has nothing against multiculturalism, which he says can be an "enrichment" – but this does not apply to Islam. He claims to be certain that his fight helps moderate Muslims. He has met Muslims in exile who encouraged him in his fight against the minarets: "An Iraqi told me: continue your fight, I want peace and freedom." For him, limiting the "militant symbols" will promote integration in the long term.

The Wangen minaret project was the spark, as Zingg tells it, but the real turning point was the Langenthal project: more and more people became aware of how far Islam had penetrated into Switzerland where, as he reminds us, the number of its followers doubles every ten years. From that moment on, the protest was no longer simply by isolated individuals, but

became organised, with a regional committee, later to become the core group launching the national initiative.

Daniel Zingg stresses that there is no requirement for a mosque to have a minaret: there is a variety of Islamic architectural forms. The minaret, he says, has nothing to do with religious freedom – it is a sign of conquest and Islamisation.

But how would a minaret ban limit Islamisation? For Zingg, the victory of the initiative is sending a strong signal that would be respected by Muslims and stake out some limits. If the initiative had been rejected, minarets would have multiplied, and it would not be long – despite the assurances given today – before the muezzin's call to prayer resonated in our cities…

Daniel Zingg knows that the initiative's supporters have a variety of motives. Not all act out of religious conviction. But the initiative committee – of which he was a member – was a successful collaboration: several participating UDC members also intend to defend the Christian roots of Switzerland.

By contrast, not all Christians are aware of the problem. For the sake of inter-faith dialogue, he feels, the biblical message risks being left behind. To call the Qur'an sacred, as Barack Obama did in his speech in Cairo, is equivalent to denying the Bible. The two are incompatible, the Qur'an presenting the Bible as a falsehood, the God of the Qur'an not being the God of the Bible. Any dialogue only has meaning insofar as it finds a solution, and there is "never a solution with Islam".

Unfortunately, he says, even large evangelical organisations preferred to reject the initiative without ever seeking to engage a dialogue with its authors; the same is true for the Evangelical Party. Zingg does not hide his disappointment; but it is offset by the signals he has received from the movement's rank and file who, he says, have pretty much everywhere welcomed the initiative with a grateful "Finally!"

BUILDING CHURCHES IN ISLAMIC LANDS TODAY

Laure Guirguis

The majority of Middle Eastern states are governed by authoritarian regimes, which use a number of methods to exercise varying degrees of close control over all forms of religious, political and cultural expression. The regimes distinguish between religions which enjoy official recognition and those which, like the Baha'i faith, are consigned to illegality (in Iraq and Iran) or legal non-existence (Egypt and Jordan).

The main Christian Churches generally benefit from legal recognition on some basis or other, and deal with various state bodies to organise their religious, cultural, educational and social activities. The constitutions of Middle Eastern countries (with the exception of Saudi Arabia, Iran and Yemen) formulate the principles of freedom of belief and exercise of worship within the limits determined both by Islamic Sharia law (whose rules have very often been included in the laws on the personal status of Muslims) and by "public order", meaning the ways and customs of a society whose population is largely Muslim. Proselytising and conversion from Islam therefore remain two red lines not to be crossed.

The construction and renovation of churches and the exercise of worship are governed by a set of formal and informal rules. More often than not, churches recognised by the authorities have to obtain a licence for the construction, or maintenance, of places of worship. These procedures are more or less straightforward depending on the country. In other words, churches meet several kinds of obstacle put up by the variety of bodies involved. States may refuse to recognise them; grant them a legal status which does not allow them to carry out their activities; or only issue building permits for churches after long delays and a lot of red tape. Other participants – even state officials, with or without their superiors' consent – have been known to hamper the exercise of worship or invade religious buildings, particularly where religious offices take place on private premises.

As far as the official recognition of Christian Churches is concerned, several formulas exist, ranging from Jordan, where no group is prohibited, to Saudi Arabia, where any religious practice is prohibited that does not conform to the

officially adopted and promoted version of Islam. The Saudi government, led by the King, has adopted a public policy under which non-Muslims can practise their religion on private premises and own religious artefacts. A government decree issued in 2006 and partly ratified in 2007 by the Interior Minister states that the religious police shall not detain those suspected of practicing a religion other than Islam nor violate the privacy of their homes. The Interior Minister nevertheless reaffirmed the need for the religious police to stop all suspects and hand them over to the regular police. As it stands, the *mutawwa'in* can make arrests only if accompanied by a regular police officer. Moreover, any invasion of privacy by the religious police should now, according to the government's own policy, be punished by the government. Yet transgressions still occur. However, the government has undertaken to curb – and investigate – cases of harassment on the part of the religious police, whose actions have been increasingly reported and criticised in the media. It has also undertaken to leave human rights institutions a greater margin of action. A high representative of the Pope in the Middle East has stated that the Vatican would be holding talks with the Saudi government on the subject of building churches in the Kingdom.

In the other Gulf countries, such as Saudi Arabia, where Christians are foreign residents, governments have shown greater flexibility. In Kuwait, seven churches have received some form of official recognition and can operate openly. The Kuwait municipal authorities issue them with building permits. The procedures for registering a religious group are similar to those for registering a non-governmental organisation. Although recently no new religious group has been able to obtain official recognition, and religious offices are therefore held in private or on the premises of existing churches, the government does not intervene to prevent such meetings. In Qatar the government grants legal status to religious groups that have at least 1,500 members on its territory and leaves unrecognised churches to organise their own worship. The Qatari government bans Christian institutions from using visible religious symbols, such as crosses, in public. According to the government, this is to protect these institutions from attacks by radical Muslim groups. However, the Deputy Prime Minister did attend the public inauguration of the new Roman Catholic Church in March 2008. In the United Arab Emirates non-Muslim religious groups may have places of worship and freely practice their religion once they have been granted land and a building permit by the Emirate's Governor. Groups that have not (yet) obtained land or a permit may meet on private premises or in venues of already recognised communities without the authorities objecting.

In the Maghreb countries, Christians are mostly foreign residents, or recently converted, and make up less than 1% of the countries' total population. The situation has deteriorated in Algeria, where the government now more strictly applies the clauses of ordinance 06-03, which sets out the conditions under which non-Muslims can organise religious ceremonies and restricts the exercise of worship to premises officially designated for such a use. In Morocco several Christian communities openly practice their religion. The Catholic, Russian and Greek Orthodox, English and French Protestant, and Anglican Churches are recognised and may by virtue of this recognition conduct financial transactions to sustain their activities (running schools, hospitals and orphanages). The government grants the main religious groups – Muslims, Jews and Christians – tax benefits, land and building permits.

In Turkey certain restrictions are imposed on the Christian communities' exercise of worship in the name of a secular state, just as they are on the followers of those Islamic doctrines that are considered non-standard (eg Alevism). Christians in Turkey and Egypt face bureaucratic delays and complications when applying for building permits for churches, and also violence from radicalised individuals when holding religious meetings on private premises. The Turkish Government follows a narrow interpretation of the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, granting only three communities the status of special minority religions: Jews, Orthodox Greeks and Orthodox Armenians. However, this status does not recognise the Orthodox Patriarchate as such, merely as a religious foundation, and therefore does not allow these two churches to train their clergy in the country. Each religious group can register as an association or as a foundation. Procedures for obtaining foundation status are longer and more complex, but only this status gives groups the right to own real estate. Moreover a foundation may be closed only by court order whereas an association can be shut down on the simple decision of the provincial governor's office. It is to this office that applications for association status must be made; and the association may already start to operate during the three-month waiting period for the office to deliver its agreement. Several Protestant churches have reported difficulties in obtaining association status and, therefore, in obtaining an officially recognised place of worship. Religious groups which have no property recognised by the Directorate General of Foundations (the government agency that oversees the activities of all religious groups) organise worship in diplomatic buildings or in private residences. However, the police have been known to prevent such religious offices, and several trials are currently in progress against Christians who held religious offices in spaces not intended for this use.

In Egypt the *Khatt Himâyûnî*, which was decreed in 1856 within the framework of the [Ottoman] *Tanzimat*, still determines (with only a few changes) the procedures for building non-Muslim places of worship. According to the *Khatt Himâyûnî*, the sovereign's permission is required for the erection and restoration of such places. The standardisation of building regulations for Christian and Muslim places of worship is one of the oldest demands of the Coptic faith, expressed as long ago as the 1911 Conference of Asyut. In 2005, President Hosni Mubarak delegated the authority to grant licences for restoring churches to provincial governors. Construction and restoration of churches continue to this day to be the cause or pretext of much of the violence between Christians and Muslims in Egypt. There are several pieces of draft legislation aimed at standardising the building regulations for places of worship. The first is the al-Guwaylî bill, which dates from 2005. A second was proposed by the National Council for Human Rights chaired by Boutros Boutros-Ghali. Several obstacles to its completion remain. There is disagreement between the bill's authors on its clauses. And, most importantly, it is well-known that the dossier on Christian places of worship is in the hands of the state security services – and has been for a long time. Nothing indicates that the political will to reclaim it from them exists.

In Syria, which has the highest proportion of Christians (10%) after Lebanon and before Egypt (7%), the government grants free venues and exemptions from property taxes to recognised Muslim, Jewish and Christian religious groups. All religious groups must be registered with the government's services. The registration procedure is often long, but in general the government does not obstruct the activities of groups who are awaiting authorisation. All religious and non-religious groups are subject to close monitoring by security services, and the government requires a permit for any meeting or assembly, except for worship. The government intervenes little in strictly religious matters.

In Jordan, churches and other religious institutions may receive official recognition by making a request to the Prime Minister's office. The office will then discuss the matter with the Council of Church Leaders – a non-official body composed of Bishops of the Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Roman Catholic and Orthodox Armenian Churches – which is responsible for cases involving the Christian communities. Religious institutions receive no government subsidies, are financially and administratively independent of government and exempt from taxes. Several Protestant groups are not registered as churches but as "companies".

The official position of Middle Eastern countries vis-a-vis the building of Christian churches depends, then, on a number of factors whose importance varies from country to country: how authoritarian the regime is; whether or not it has adopted an official Islamic discourse; whether there is a radical Islamist opposition and what the government's policy towards it is; how economically and socially stable the country is; and the number and nature of the Christian communities on its territory.

ENDER DEMIRTAS:
THE INITIATIVE IS JUST
THE BEGINNING OF A SLIPPERY SLOPE

Patrick Haenni and Stéphane Lathion

Ender Demirtas is Turkish and a committed Muslim. As an efficient young entrepreneur and manager, he is critical of the way in which Muslims in Switzerland collectively organise themselves and blames their disorganisation, which leads to a lack of transparency, for leaving Muslims open to charges of wilful deception. Demirtas is against rigorous Islamic movements such as Salafism; he wants a dialogue with the Swiss authorities who, he feels, do not initiate it often enough themselves.

Asked about the initiative, his first reaction was to call it a non-event, a predictable gesture by the SVP/UDC – not its first blow against immigrants in general and Muslims in particular. But he does fear that the initiative might act as a catalyst, considering that "the problem isn't the initiative, but what comes after".

Demirtas sees the minaret as a decoy, and certainly more than a simple architectural issue, believing that its initiators were "using the initiative and the minarets to make Islamophobic comments, attack Islam and accuse it of being incompatible with western societies." Beyond that, he was worried that the initiative could be "one step in a very long-term strategy": in other words, "they won't stop there".

Above all, Demirtas regrets that, in the final analysis, mayors and local authorities do not show any real interest in Muslims, and that results in a lack of true dialogue. Whose fault is it? For Demirtas, it is the Swiss authorities who are to blame because "it is the state that is the mother, and therefore has to educate its citizens." But also because "after September 11, it is their duty to make contact." This lack of contact, which feeds people's fears, is reflected in an absence of organisations capable of defending Muslims. And for Demirtas, a lack of knowledge, as well as knee-jerk reactions against issues like the *hijab*, persist, even though Switzerland is spared more extreme problems such as anti-Muslim racism.

What to do, then, in the face of the initiative? Definitely not leap to the defence of Islam. Demirtas deplores the trend among media-savvy Muslims who adopt this approach and sees himself more in line with those who

argue for a "low profile, to avoid adding fuel to the fire. The best thing we can do is to shut up and vote."

Ultimately, he recognises that regardless of the result of the vote, "The UDC has won because it will find out where it has strong support and where it needs to do more work." On the other hand, he also sees the initiative as a means of "training citizens. For the first time, Muslims are asking me about voting deadlines." His interpretation is nuanced: he sees the initiative as "an evil out of which good may come."

FROM MINARETS TO THE "MUSLIM QUESTION": THE NEW CRITIQUE OF ISLAM

Olivier Moos

The citizens' initiative that set out to ban the building of minarets in Switzerland is not only the result of a particular political context: the critical discourse of its initiators is part of a broader perspective. It draws its language, lexicon and reasoning from a critique of Islam that developed in the wake of the decline of Communism and consolidated after the attacks of 11 September 2001. The initiative showcases the ability of this transnational critique to take root in Switzerland and seize the opportunities that its political system offers.

From the Sickle to the Crescent

Since the end of the Cold War, we have seen the emergence of an intellectual current that hinges on a critique of Islam(ism) as successor to critiques of Communism. The demise of the USSR and the subsequent obfuscation of the West's Number One Enemy have made it necessary to devise a new symmetry. This new symmetry provides the reference points for a definition of the West, and the main threat to it.

A quantifiable Soviet East – intimately known in Europe through the presence of Communist parties and yet ideologically other – has been replaced by an immeasurable and fundamentally different East, a mixture of Islamic dangers, low-intensity conflicts, migration flows and transnational crime. Numerous events have contributed to this transition, from the Iranian Revolution (1979), Gaddafi's Islamic campaign (1980–mid 1990s), the Salman Rushdie affair (1989), the Algerian crisis (from 1992), the worsening of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the slow death of the Oslo process (1993–1999) right up to the attacks of 9/11. These solidified the threats by channelling them into the umbrella term of Islamism, a term which has multiple definitions but is used in reality to indicate both various forms of Islamic militancy and the increasing visibility of the Muslim presence in Europe.

The new critique of Islam:
a neo-Orientalist narrative

This redefinition of the threat to the West has largely been given a theoretical basis and validation by the same intellectual camp which provided the protagonists of the anti-minaret initiative with their lexicon and method. This camp is neither a school of thought nor a clearly defined popularised ideology. It is a narrative of the confrontation between Islam and the West. By narrative, I mean a way of relating the facts attributed to Islam to those attributed to the West – a way which is supposed to explain or reveal this entity of "Islam", but uses a pre-written plot. The narrative is based on a general posture of defending democracy, and uses Cold War grammar and a series of assumptions inherited from classic Orientalism, which were demolished at the end of the 1970s by Edward Said (1935–2003). Viewed through this culturalist lens, Islam is the only criterion which explains the motivations and social or political practices of Muslims. And it is allegedly not xenophobia that underpins this critique, but an approach which thinks of "Islam" as an ideology, and "the Muslim" as a specimen, independent of any context or division into historical periods. This perspective can easily be moulded to fit a variety of political or ideological agendas at the national and international level.

In the United States as in Europe, the chief proponents of this narrative propose a solution to the various issues where "Islam" plays a primary role, based on an East v West symmetry. Many scenarios can be explained in this way: the French debate on the headscarf (1989, 2003), the Dutch ex-parliamentarian Ayaan Hirsi Ali, the motives for invading Afghanistan put forward by the Bush administration (2001–2009), etc. This explanation relies on three main lines of analysis, which are interlinked: a) we are faced with a "Muslim world" where social, religious and political identities are fixed and compartmentalised, without any possibility for evolution or hybridisation; b) Islam is an exception that is culturally unsuited to modernity; c) any displays of violence – from the "forced" wearing of the headscarf to suicide bombings – are caused by an Islamic "mentality".

These ideas are seductive because they offer a universal analytical model that can be used in French housing projects just as easily as in Pakistan's Tribal Areas. They freeze complex issues by creating certainty and predictability, erasing the contingent in favour of cultural, religious or anthropological continuity. These concepts of exceptionalism and determinism are useful. On one hand, they reinforce the professional positioning of providers of expertise (experts, public

intellectuals, politicians, journalists) who have the responsibility of expressing and explaining the origins of a threat, whether it is "objective" or felt: "Islam" or the Muslims "do" this or that on account of Text X or Charter Y. On the other hand, the concepts respond to the vacuum created by the disappearance of the Soviet adversary and to the fears generated by certain processes of globalisation by designating a new Other, namely the coherent cultural bloc of the "Muslim world", based – consciously or not – on the schema devised by Samuel Huntington (1927–2008).

The neo-Orientalist narrative is flexible enough to embrace the requirements and forms of national debates – witness the case of the citizens' initiative – and yet rigid enough to provide a versatile interpretative model that may be applied to the countless events associated with Islam. Without being necessarily "false" from a factual or quantitative standpoint, this narrative is, however, ineffective from a qualitative point of view. On both the small and large scale, it would be futile to try and understand the practices and strategies of Muslim individuals or collectives by relying on a model of religious causality; it would be impossible to account for the decision-making processes in Iran by reducing them to an ideological question; and the fact that women in the streets of Paris or Ankara wear designer headscarves with western brand names would be incomprehensible if we reduced it to "female submission". In spite of its ambitions, this narrative is not an explanatory grid, but a story that literally "tells" us what we are and what the Other is.

The minaret:
the detail that distracts from the bigger picture

The anti-minaret initiative belongs to this critique of Islam both in its arguments and in the way that they are put together. Indeed the proposed amendment to the Constitution both constructs and formulates its problem on the premises of the neo-Orientalist narrative, since it bases itself on a "neutral" reading of the Muslim problem in a democracy – the idea that in Islam politics and religion are indivisible, added to its expansionist "nature" incompatible with our rule of law. Sources of inspiration for this reading are abundant and come from very diverse backgrounds.

Different participants and networks have rallied around this narrative for varying (and at times contradictory) motives, ranging from citizen engagement to

media opportunism, and including political agendas and professional positioning. A multitude of distribution networks, interest groups and more or less coordinated participants sustain a narrative whose lexicon and arguments are sufficiently fixed for us to able to speak of an intellectual camp. This camp extends from influential or intellectually sophisticated circles and authors (Professor of Journalism Paul Berman and his *Terror and Liberalism*, 2003, or the Oratoire Circle in Paris coordinated by journalist Michel Taubmann); to think tanks where political causes and criticism of Islam(ism) often work hand-in-hand (Benador Associates in New York, the Atlantis Institute in Brussels); to the ever-increasing nebulous mass of self-taught militants who are active in blogs and other internet showcases (in Switzerland www.ajm.ch and in France LibertyVox.com). In the US the main commentators include Daniel Pipes, director of the think tank Middle East Forum, activist Robert Spencer and his site Jihadwatch.org, and *FrontPage Magazine* where David Horowitz and his many guests are becoming well known. Among French speakers, the geopolitician Alexandre del Valle, the historian Bat Ye'Or and the Islam expert Anne Delcambre are the key figures offering a neo-Orientalist view.

This approach to the Muslim presence is not limited to some more or less ideologically radicalised margins, but transcends the traditional political and ideological divisions. It is hardening and gradually becoming the doxa in a blogosphere that is free from the constraints of the print media; it is the ongoing concern of the nationalist right. However, it is also emerging in a much more nuanced form in the French "anti-totalitarian left". Here, it is located at the crossroads of an anti-clericalism that has been re-orientated towards a critique of Islam, the defence of secular identity politics, certain militant feminisms and the support for humanitarian intervention.

Through a trickle-down effect, this narrative has an increasingly significant impact on the media and intellectual and political circles of Europe (and, of course, Switzerland), where it serves certain political agendas and defuses certain discourses by relieving them of their ideological weight. Thus, it is the neo-Orientalist narrative which strips the concept of "the Arab" of any racial connotations by conflating it with "the Muslim". This made it easier for a number of European intellectuals posing as defenders of democratic values to accept with relative complacency a xenophobic book by the Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci (1929–2006) (*The Rage and the Pride*, Rizzoli, New York, 2002). It also allowed the same people to hero-worship the French philosopher Robert Redeker ("Face aux intimidations islamistes, que doit faire le monde libre ?

[Faced with Islamist intimidation, what should the free world do?]", *Le Figaro*, 19 September 2006).

The minaret as "mirror of identities"

Islam is objectified using two multi-facetted registers, manifest and latent, which the arguments of the initiative's supporters reflect in many respects. National Councillor Walter Wobmann (SVP/UDC) explains in his article "Les raisons du lancement de l'initiative contre les minarets [The reasons for launching the initiative against minarets]" (www.minarets.ch, 3 June 2007) that it is "clearly established that Islam is only a guest in Switzerland, meaning in a Christian and profoundly democratic country", and that Muslims are expected to "fit in quickly" in accordance with the laws but also with the "unwritten rules", ie "the position of women in society, the teaching of swimming at school, etc".

National Councillor Jasmin Hutter (SVP/UDC) agrees that those rules are flouted by the daily Islamisation of our society: "Schools refrain from having Christmas parties at the request of Muslim parents; pork is banned from prison menus; Muslim girls are exempt from swimming lessons or winter-sport camps. (…) In the interests of Swiss democracy and gender equality, it is absolutely essential to stop Islamic attempts to grab power. Minarets are the symbols of this imperialism." ("La Sharia et le minaret du point de vue de la femme [Sharia law and the minaret from the point of view of women]", minarets.ch, 8 July 2008).

The implicit markers that define Swiss identity are more or less consciously jostling in the background. The minaret here serves as a symbol of a new form of Islamic consciousness and, above all, as a visible symbol of a reality that is normally hidden, if not repressed. Described as the standard-bearer of the Islamisation of society, the minaret summons up an imagery of Islamic otherness (Muslim immigration, the headscarf, forced marriages, "Islamic" terrorism, etc), doing violence to the country and its Christian and democratic values. This is the first dimension of this discourse.

Second, Swissness is also identified by means of a non-exhaustive set of more diffuse sentiments made up of day-to-day behaviour, relationship protocols between genders, tastes, habits and auditory reference points. Thus the initiators of the initiative prophesy that "the same arguments used to justify

the building of minarets today will next be used to allow muezzins" (see the brochure "Le minaret et sa signification [The minaret and its meaning]" on minarets.ch). The initiative is represented by a strongly symbolic image featuring a pointed minaret piercing a representation of Switzerland and the heart of a Swiss cross. This is the hymen of citizenship being torn by the violence of an Islamic invasion, which is compelling not because of its numbers but because of the projections, rejections and fantasies that accompany its increasing visibility. The brochure also strategically combines various levels of expression: a photo and quotation of the Turkish prime minister, R Tayyip Erdogan, a flyer on the problem of ritual slaughter and an image of an "invasive" crowd of Muslims praying before the Federal Palace [*government and parliament complex in Bern*] to protest against the Danish cartoons of Muhammad (2005–2006).

The figure of Erdogan, leader of a political group (AKP) that has emerged from Turkish political Islam, echoes the threat of "Islamic" Turkey on the doorstep of Europe, a parallel often drawn in neo-Orientalist literature. The minarets are presented as Trojan horses introduced into our cities as the first step of a cultural conquest (which is condemned by the radicalised fringes of Islam in terms that are very similar to the those of the initiative). Ritual slaughter associates Islam with cruel and bloody practices, thus merging the refusal of minarets with a rejection of "Islamic violence". Finally, the photo of Muslims at prayer suggests a symbolic siege of our government by some foreign regiment. Using the imagery and arguments chosen by the initiators as a yardstick, the minaret question irrefutably expresses a wider rejection of "Islam" – although this is denied by the main players. The initiative's arguments weigh down the minaret with political and ideological meanings that distend the debate beyond the reasonable.

During the launch of the initiative, National Councillor Oscar Freysinger (UDC) was questioned by a *Washington Times* reporter on the place given to Israel in the party's thinking about the "Islamist threat". He gave a revealing reply: "Our party has always defended Israel because we are well aware that if Israel disappears, we lose a vanguard. (…) As long as the Muslims are concentrated on Israel, it is not so hard for us. But as soon as Israel has disappeared, well, they will come to get the other part [of the West]. (…) The rightwing parties should join their forces to fight Islamisation" (Diana West, "A Swiss 'Extremist' Against Islamic Law", *Townhall.com*, 17 July 2008).

The minaret is less the standard-bearer of an alleged Islamisation of Switzerland than the flag flown by those who turn people's concerns about Islamic identity – manufactured or legitimate – into a political instrument. Beyond opposition to minarets, the real problem is the visibility of Islam and how that is interpreted.

THE MINARETS:
NO MUSLIM RAGE

Husam Tammam

After the referendum on the minaret ban, one might well have expected a Danish-cartoon type scenario: mass boycotts, demonstrations, even attacks on embassies. One year on from the vote, none of that – or almost none – has happened.

The Muslim world's silence, far from being due to habituation in the face of intensifying displays of hostility to Islam, can be explained above all by the theological status of the object to which the Swiss ban relates – the minaret – which is not a dogmatic priority and whose sacral dimension cannot be compared with the figure of the Prophet, for instance. It can also be explained by the balance of power within the religious and political camps in the region, where reactions to hostility to Islam have been rationalised, moving from the street to diplomatic campaigns in international institutions led by Muslims states (Gadafy's reaction was an exception).

The minaret:
a theologically underdetermined target

The theological status of the minaret – and therefore the emotional weight it is likely to carry, on the back of which it is possible to mobilise people – is incomparably less than the image of the Prophet (for the Danish cartoons) or the veil, which has been established as a religious imperative by the dominant Islamic doxa. The ban on minarets does not affect the exercise of worship.

Furthermore, many Muslims effectively consider the minaret to be an accessory. The Salafist movement, which is theologically the most rigorous, is disinclined to see mobilisation against minarets as an attack on Islam (even though it does constitute a hostile act against Muslim beliefs) precisely because of its literalist rigour, and because the minaret is a problem for Salafism as well, from a doctrinal point of view. But while the anti-minaret movement sees the minaret as a symbol of conquest, Salafists are suspicious of it as an architectural appendage to places of worship on which dogma makes no pronouncements. Since the

minaret did not exist at the time of the original Islam that they take as their model, they tend to consider it a "blameworthy innovation" (*bida`a*). So it is one of the religious practices subsequent to the golden age of the first period of Islam, which are suspected or accused of being a travesty of the original message. For Salafists, the minaret is an architectural artifice which distances the mosque from its fundamental function, which is prayer, the essence of devoutness.

Here the Salafists follow the same reasoning as the initiators of the referendum – though based on different ideological premises, of course – by considering, like them, that minarets are not an architectural necessity for a mosque.

The initiators' demands, motivated by concerns relating to identity (protecting a certain image of Switzerland), echo the religious vision of those ideological factions that would most likely mobilise in "defence of Islam", namely Salafists. It was Salafists who brought in the larger part of the troops who burnt down the Danish embassy in Beirut, for example.

In fact, one of the Salafist leaders in northern Lebanon declared that, at heart, "This ban only concerns an architectural ornament that we consider a blame-worthy innovation." In Egypt, where the Salafist movement is very active against displays of hostility to Islam, no Salafist leader has voiced a strong opinion on the Swiss vote beyond formally, but routinely, condemning it.

The Muslim Brotherhood:
an image problem

In the Arab world, organisations that lay claim to the legacy of the Muslim Brothers have not been mobilised either. There have been some interventions in parliament, and condemnations, but no campaigns (the Brothers were much more involved, for instance, in the reaction to Pastor Terry Jones's project of burning the Qur'an): neither from the Egyptian confraternity, nor its branches or other closely-linked organisations in the Arab world, nor even from Islamist executives in their spheres of influence, such as professional bodies.

It was the prominent Muslim scholar and broadcaster Sheikh al-Qaradawi who went the furthest, calling, on the Al Jazeera channel, for a boycott of Swiss products. But his call was not followed up with practical measures that might have translated into action.

In general, organisations in the Arab world that identify with the Brotherhood's thinking remembered the lesson from the Danish cartoons: they wanted at all costs to avoid exposing themselves to virulent western criticism by reacting virulently themselves.

More particularly, the Muslim Brothers have become aware that while reactions to criticism of Islam continue to mobilise people, the sheer number of people involved no longer allows them to assert themselves as Islam's chief protectors.

Defending Islam:
the Islamists lose their monopoly

What is most striking is that challenges to Islam are less and less exclusively challenges to Islamists. Such challenges are now a source of mobilisation at the disposal of all political forces – starting with Arab governments, and on several levels. In Egypt, the government quickly became involved by creating a group which, under the leadership of the head of the parliamentary external relations committee, Moustafa al-Fiqi, travelled to Switzerland. This pro-active policy, accompanied by reactions from religious officials, closed the door to any sizeable mobilisation in the street.

Reactions to the Swiss referendum show clearly that in the global Arab context of an Islamicised public sphere, Islamism is faced with strong competition. This leads it to dispense with extreme attitudes, which it leaves to others, state representatives included.

In fact – and this is not at all paradoxical – the leaders seen as "moderates" in the West have been the most virulent in their reactions. The Grand Mufti of Egypt, Ali Gomaa, thought that the Swiss vote "was not only an attack on religious freedom, but also an insult to the feelings of the Muslim community in Switzerland and elsewhere." He also feared that this kind of measure would feed radicalism in the Muslim world.

Criticism of Switzerland in the media has also not been merely "Islamist". All points on the ideological and media spectrum have been involved: Islamist intellectuals, but also conservative journalists, nationalists or quite simply liberals, not forgetting the government press which did not want to be outdone and wondered about the sense of submitting anti-liberal measures to popular approval.

At the diplomatic level, Egypt increasingly tends to pass itself off as the Arab world's leader when it comes to managing affairs that involve Islam or Islamic standards at the international level. It puts itself forward as Arab champion of the defence of Islam, a position implicitly recognised even by more conservative countries such as Saudi Arabia. In UN circles, Egyptian and many other diplomats can be seen to be very engaged in the defence of Islam's distinctiveness in human rights, religious freedom, respect of religions, etc.

The strong and constant criticism voiced by representatives of the Organisation of Islamic Conference in forums such as the Alliance of Civilisations shows only too well that a new frontline is being opened up. This calls into question liberalism (the dominant paradigm within international authorities) from a conservative or religious standpoint.

The Arab street:
a quiet force

The Arab street has been silent, its anger partly pre-empted by the minaret's weak sacred resonance, partly dispersed in the increasingly competitive arena of political and religious reactions to hostility to Islam, where diplomatic activity serves as an alternative to the populist manipulation of the masses.

However, campaigns have started on the internet. The most important, the "Islamic campaign for boycotting Swiss products", rallies around the slogan "They don't want our minarets, we don't want their products". The campaign, transmitted in some mosques (particularly in Egypt), is far from reaching the scale of the campaign that has struck at the Danish economy since 2006, which has been relayed by boycott committees and different political and social activists, Islamist and other parties, professional bodies, etc.

The Arab street has remained silent, in other words, because reactions never moved from the level of appeals and condemnation to organised demonstrations…

The only exception to this picture of a relatively peaceful overall response to the Swiss referendum were some demonstrations that took place in some sub-Saharan countries and Pakistan, but by poorly motivated crowds encouraged by the World Islamic Call Society, a charitable organisation led by Muammar Gadafy.

The Society distinguished itself by calling for jihad against Switzerland and for a boycott of this "apostate race of infidels, which assaults the houses of Allah".

Although there is now an intense conflict line around religious symbols, they don't mobilise in the same way. The minaret is not considered sacred to any great degree and therefore did not mobilise the Arab street. The very rare protests, backed by the Libyan leader, were less linked to the minaret itself than to the Swiss authorities and their ongoing conflict with Gadafy as a result of the arrest of his son in Geneva in 2008.

Conclusion
FROM THE TOP OF THE MINARET:
SYMBOLS AND SOCIAL OBLIVIOUSNESS

Olivier Moos and Patrick Haenni

The Swiss minaret affair is not a political UFO, nor some eccentricity that can only be explained by Swiss exceptionalism (*Sonderfall Schweiz*).

The minaret affair has been compared to that of the burqa in France (the debate on whether to ban the burqa, and the setting up of a parliamentary enquiry into its significance on 23 June 2009); to the affair of the Muhammad caricatures in Denmark (which ran from autumn 2005-spring 2006); and the controversy surrounding the film *Fitna*, directed by the Dutch parliamentarian, Geert Wilders, in 2008.

But it differs in kind from the other polemics involving Islam in Switzerland. Those all unfolded in the reality of local communities and their internal specificities – whether it was the issue of girls being exempted from swimming classes; different disputes caused by the hijab; hallal meat; Islamic squares in cemeteries; or even the presence of outlawed Algerian Islamist party FIS networks in Switzerland at the beginning of the 1990s. The minaret question is part of a new frontline of tensions surrounding Islam in the West, where what is at stake are signs and symbols, not the material development of Islamic standards. What characterises this new frontline above all is that it is disconnected from everyday life. The number of minarets in Switzerland is currently four, and applications for planning permission are rare. As for the burqa, it is worn by a tiny minority in France and is deeply controversial even within the Muslim community. By contrast, there is a strong consensus in favour of the hijab in Islamised segments of society. The Danish cartoons might have gone unnoticed if some sheikhs had not been offended and given them hefty publicity. The same is true of the film *Fitna*.

In other words, these affairs did not directly concern Muslims, but Islam. Several initiators of the minaret referendum accept being called Islamophobic, but not xenophobic. Their target, they argue, is not a certain population or customs, but Islam as an "ideology". The same logic also holds true the other way,

since it is sometimes the Muslims who light the fuse and spread indignation, as in the Danish case. The two opposing stances move together to the rhythm of the same anthem, that of the symbol: they confront each other beyond society and are unaware of the social reality of the issues, fighting either for the visible defence of Islam, or else to curb it. Embassies in Lebanon were torched, not because of discrimination in the job market or police brutality in the *banlieues*, but because of cartoons.

If this anthem of the symbol is being sung at all, it is because Islam is now well and truly European. It is no longer a religion for immigrants, but a component of the religious, social and urban landscape. That is why all these issues have to do with the visibility of Islam: the Islamic presence questions the identity of western societies that are already in crisis, Switzerland included, for reasons which have nothing to do with Islam (economic crisis, globalisation, the opening up of borders, the single market, etc). The old equation of territories with religions is largely outmoded – the polemic about the entry of "Muslim" Turkey into a European Union that is seen as simultaneously "Judeo-Christian" *and* secular shows the extent to which political issues can intersect with national or continental debates on identity.

The debate that the initiators wanted has now been opened. It is unclear whether this was the right opening. For the symbol soars far above the ground. It is doubtful that lofty debates about the ontological nature of Islam (conquering or not, fit for secularity or not) help us to understand all the details of an architectural quarrel relating to the building of minarets; or of wearing the burqa, which seems to be a symbolic denial of all that female emancipation has accomplished; or else of requests for exemption from gym classes in this school or that.

Seeing practices which are far removed from our own customs and habits – manifestations of "Islam" that upset our everyday life and cloud the reassuring vision of national unity – can result in feelings of rejection or scandal. That is normal. Faced as we are with media coverage of an "Islam" that seems to show itself in the suicide bombers of Baghdad, in Taliban ambushes, riots in the *banlieues* or the provocations of a despot in Tripoli, everything that relates to Islam appears fraught with an irreconcilable strangeness, made up of intolerance and violence. We cannot ignore that many who are suspicious of Islam are not inspired by prejudice or an anti-Islamic ideology, but by their own experience and by current affairs. Both of these give them legitimate reasons for concern, even though those reasons cannot be reduced to Islam alone.

However, the anthem of the symbol does not work when it comes to finding practical solutions. So why call on it at all? Because this anthem, soaring so high, appends the local realities of Islam in Switzerland to the anxiety-provoking themes of globalised media: for the initiators of the referendum, the situation of Christians in the Muslim world, terrorism and immigration validate their discourse. Behind the fear of the minaret, which prefigures the fear of the muezzin, it's the same old cyclical tune of self-perpetuating fears.

And yet the minaret has the merit of having opened a debate on the way in which we examine and respond to the social, legal, political and identity-related challenges that are brought about by our interaction with Switzerland's Muslim communities. Symbols have real power, but the minaret should also be an appeal to come back down to earth and pay attention to real-life situations.

Afterword
ISLAM IN EUROPE:
AN ORDINARY RELIGION LIKE ANY OTHER

Olivier Roy

In the 1980s, the xenophobic far right in Europe, and even the political right, maintained an anti-immigration discourse on the theme "immigrants go home". In France, posters of Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front proclaimed that "one million unemployed is a million immigrants too many." Attacks focused primarily on the foreign culture of immigrants; witness the statement of the then mayor of Paris, Jacques Chirac, about the smell of *merguez* (a spicy North African sausage) in the communal areas of apartment buildings.

Today the debate is no longer about the culture of immigrants, but about the religion of their descendants, who have in the meantime acquired the nationality of their host nation in many countries (France, UK). It is therefore a debate about Islam, not immigration, that now fills newspaper columns and television broadcasts, and inspires speeches of politicians from the populist right and beyond.

Yet in real terms this debate about Islam focuses on the external signs of religious practice, on the visibility of Islam as a religion in the public sphere: the headscarf, the burqa, mosques and minarets, and even, in France, hallal menus in fast-food restaurants. It is no longer the physical presence of immigrants which is considered problematic, but the visibility of Islam as a religion. Paradoxically, it shows that Muslims have put down roots in Europe and that the visibility of their religious practice is above all a consequence of these roots. This paradox is implicitly recognised by those who take a critical and/or hostile position towards Islam, acknowledging the presence of Muslims in Europe, but wanting to keep them invisible. The point is no longer to expel immigrants, but to prevent their children from showing themselves as practising Muslims, or turning themselves into domestic foreigners.

There is a deep ambivalence in Islam's new visibility. On one hand, it is a sign of integration. On the other, it is perceived as aggressive because it is thought to challenges an often fragile balance established during a turbulent history – a

history which, throughout Europe, has brought religions into conflict first with each other and then with the secularisation of society, and even with republican states. The substantive question for non-Muslim Europeans, above and beyond Islam's entry into the public sphere, is whether Islam as a religion is compatible with the West as a culture.

Delusions of the compatibility debate

This debate has reached a stalemate, because we do not really know what to discuss. If we juxtapose western values with Islamic values, then how do we define common western values, given that the Catholic Church strongly opposes the current reign of liberal secularism, particularly on the issues of family, women and sexuality? If, conversely, we want to define the values of Islam, we are faced with a very broad spectrum of different opinions, without any uncontested authority who might produce the "true Islam". The debate gives the impression that there are two monoliths, the West and Islam. However, both sides are riven by internal conflicts; at the same time, new coalitions are emerging that consist of people of Christian and Muslim backgrounds (who may oppose others of Christian and Muslim backgrounds). For example, many women of Algerian origin are among those most violently opposed to the headscarf in France, while many Catholics are more tolerant of the headscarf, which is often accepted in Catholic private schools.

If there is such a focus on the outward signs of Islam, it is because public opinion does not quite know what to make of Islam. Because of this uncertainty, many Europeans seek to define a "good Islam" as moderate, discreet, almost invisible. The debate on religious symbols (headscarf, minaret, burqa) aims to define a "minimal Islam", compatible by default with Europe, not through common values but on the contrary through its invisibility and retreat into the private sphere. For rejecting the headscarf, burqa and minaret means rejected what is perceived as a "fundamentalist", even extremist, Islam – the symbols in question are those of Islam's radical theology and intent to conquer Europe.

We can only understand the debate on religious signs or symbols if we see it as a reflection of the real question, the nature of Islam. But this question is shaped by a "theological bias", which perceives Islam as a theology opposed in its very essence to secularism, democracy and pluralism. From this perspective, to be compatible with European values, Islam must first reform itself and

become not only a moderate but even a liberal Islam, along the lines of America's reformed Jews in the 19th century: an Islam-lite, feminist and gay friendly.

But all this theological debate on Islam is quite unnecessary since Muslims themselves are not pondering the nature of Islam, but simply asking to practise their religion in a European context. They respond to questioning and pressures by adapting their practices to the new context, without embarking on a theological debate whose foundations and prejudices have been set either by Europeans or by conservative ulema from traditional Muslim societies, or even by governments of Muslim countries keen to use Muslims in Europe as a lever for their foreign policy. Yet most European Muslims reject all these types of interference.

The failed quest for an Islam to Europe's taste

The separation of Church and State is an established principle in European political systems, even though it exists in extremely varied forms. There is an official Church in Denmark and Great Britain, recognised churches in Germany, Italy, Greece and Switzerland. Conversely, France practises a very assertive political – and even ideological – secularism. But fundamentally the separation is recorded either in texts or in political practice. The consequence is that States cannot afford to intervene in internal religious organisation nor in the definition of religious dogmas. However, they do all stress the need to encourage a "good" Islam and promote "good" religious leaders – meaning leaders who defend a version of Islam that seems moderate and liberal to Europeans. The French government has attempted to establish a French Muslim Worship Council to manage mosques and the training of imams. In Spain and Italy, groups of converts are trying to impose themselves as "good" Muslims. In Germany, the only group to have obtained official recognition as a Muslim religious community is paradoxically a very secular group (moreover, one often considered non-orthodox by Sunnis): the Alevites.

In other words, all attempts to produce an Islam to European tastes have either failed or encouraged marginal groups. As a result, Islam burst into the public sphere without any state control. This makes it worrying to some – even though it expresses no rejection of western society, but rather the desire to find a place in it. And in any case, the visibility of Islam is almost never due to large Islamic organisations, but rather to individuals (veiled women) and local congregations (mosques).

The individualism and diversity of European Muslims are two basic elements that Europeans should view positively since they promote integration on an individual and local basis. Yet public opinion looks for some hidden cohesion – even a political project – behind this diversity. That is precisely the sort of project that the Swiss right associates with minarets – even though very few Muslim communities in Switzerland ever actually wanted to build mosques with minarets, and communities which have recently acquired a minaret are founded on ethnic solidarity (Albanian and Turkish) and not some political project derived from a universalist vision of Islam.

Visibility:
a promise of integration

European Muslims have little interest in this theological debate for a number of reasons. There are few reformist theologians: reformist thinkers in Europe or the Muslim world are often not theologians and lack credibility. Anyway, Muslims in Europe are above all concerned with religious practice, not theological debate. They want to live their faith on a daily basis in a European context.

For Muslims, visibility – far from being a sign of hostility or refusal to integrate – is a means for Islam to register its demand for a legitimate place in the public sphere and in a political system that they do not dispute (apart from a minority of Salafists). Muslims are building mosques modelled on the Christian parish: often associated with social and cultural activities, and gathering together the Muslims of a city or district. And they no longer hold back from building their mosques in modern style, instead of reproducing the old Turkish or Moroccan styles

The imam of the local mosque is also emerging as a new type of religious leader, neither *qadi* (judge, since there are no religious courts) nor *ulema* (not part of the European Muslim scene). This new imam tends to be the manager of a mosque and the spiritual director of a local community, rather than just a preacher and conductor of prayers. He has a social function, which makes him an interlocutor for Christian pastors and priests, as well as local authorities.

Armies, such as the French one, have set up their own bodies of Muslim chaplains, directly appointed by the military authorities. This helps to give Islam greater visibility (there are officers with a crescent on their epaulettes) and also to organise religious life within the same framework as Christianity and

Judaism. Visibility is necessary for integration. It is interesting that armies, not known for their progressive stance, have understood this better than politicians from either right or left.

The integration of Islam into Europe's religious landscape is taking place without real theological debate, which is probably a good thing. European Muslim communities may well produce *ulema* who are original thinkers, but this is not a prerequisite for adapting Islam to Europe.

From political assertion to ethical combat

In this sense, Islam in Europe is neither "European" nor "foreign": it is the believer who adapts, not the religion itself. This is especially true since the forms of Muslim religious sensitivity are very close to those of revivalist movements in Christianity, or even in Judaism. The determination to focus on religious practice and the desire to make one's faith visible in the public sphere in no way make Islam exceptional. It is not a case of European values on one side and those of Islam on the other, because Europe is more than ever torn between "liberals" (not all of whom are on the left) and "conservatives" (not all of whom are on the right): European religions in their revivalist forms (evangelism, Orthodox Judaism, Catholicism) are attacking contemporary European culture – characterised by the Pope as a "culture of death" – head-on.

These religious movements, Christian as well as Muslim, are no longer fighting along political lines, but to defend standards and values. This is why abortion, gay marriage and creationism are the new battlefields, not secularism in itself; these religious movements are no longer interested in politics as such. And it is precisely this front line, based on values, that devout Muslims, whether conservatives or Salafists, are joining. Paradoxically, the visibility of Islam is aligning it with other religions.

Muslims are asking for equal treatment, not for the recognition of any sort of Islamic exception. The headscarf, minaret and hallal foods that Europe's populist politicians are fighting are a part of the integration of Muslims in Europe's religious landscape, albeit on a basis that is, at present, somewhat conservative and little interested in theological debate.

The issue is to recognise Islam as a European religion like all others. Freedom of religion means that nobody will have a religious affiliation imposed on him or her

that he or she objects to – meaning that the right to apostasy must be respected. It also means that nobody will be refused the right freely to exercise a religion that he or she has freely chosen, on the condition that this is done within the existing legal framework, which applies in equal measure to all religions.

Europe is no longer Christian and will not become Muslim either. It must remain a secular and democratic space where one can be both citizen and believer.

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