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Islamophobia in the West

Measuring and explaining individual attitudes

Edited by
Marc Helbling

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6 Islamophobia in Spain?

Political rhetoric rather than a social fact

Ricard Zapata-Barrero and Juan Díez-Nicolás

Introduction¹

In this chapter we challenge conventional views that the tensions and difficulties surrounding the integration of Muslims derive primarily from Islamophobia. As the Spanish case study shows, the reluctance to give visibility to Islam in the public space is much more a political issue than a social reality. In Spain, the political construction of the 'other' is not skin-color- and race-based, but rather religion-based. The purpose of this chapter is to argue that current policies limiting Muslims' public visibility may be based in tradition and have a structural basis of legitimacy in Spain (Zapata-Barrero 2010b: 383), but they are also directly part of the anti-Muslim rhetoric; even if socially, as we will see in section three, there is no way to justify these policies. We want to show that there is a contrast between the foundation of certain policies aimed at limiting the public expression of Muslims, and public opinion and attitudes.² Xenophobia is then considered as a political and media construction, rather than a social fact. Anti-immigrant policies respond much more to the rhetoric of electoral strategy than as a channel answering real needs and demands of citizens, as the recent *burka* debate promoted by several Spanish municipalities shows – see Spanish newspapers during June and July 2010 – as we will see later.

Here Spain is following some European trends. The recent Swiss referendum decision to ban minarets on Muslim worship centres, the current French online debate on national identity, and the French and Spanish discussion on whether *burka* should be banned in the public sphere have raised the unfinished question of the growing phobia against Islam in Europe. But is it a phobia against Islam or, as we want to discuss, a general stigmatization of foreigners and immigrants? (Bader 2008; Triandafyllidou 2010; Vertovec and Wessendorf 2010). It might even be argued that this phobia is not directed to Muslims in general, but to Islamic fundamentalist terrorism. The point is not that prejudice against Muslims does not exist – it certainly does. However, generalized fears and prejudices are always articulated within specific local contexts and inflected in the process. While Muslims might be a particularly vulnerable group, especially following September 11, 2001 (New York) and March 11, 2004 (Madrid), negative reactions to their presence are not uniform across the country. In fact, a national survey conducted immediately after the 11-M train bombings in Spain and Madrid showed no significant increase

of negative attitudes toward Muslims immigrants. Rather, such reactions must be understood within the broader assemblage of relations present in any given setting (Rasinski *et al.* 2005).

The approach we follow is a contextual conflict-driven approach, using empirical data and existing surveys. The chapter is divided into four main sections: in the *first* we present an overview, within the European framework, of the main characteristics distinguishing Spain both from a historical – the tradition against Moors – and social point of view – mapping the main social conflicts related to Muslims immigrants. We will then look, at the citizenship and political reactions to manage these conflicts. We will argue that these are at the core of the Islamophobia rhetoric, nourishing, instead of separating the perception that stigmatizes between visible and invisible immigrants, which in Spain is religious-based. In the third section, we will compare the attitudes of Spaniards toward Muslim immigrants with similar attitudes in other EU countries. Finally, we will compare the attitudes of Spaniards toward Muslim immigrants with similar attitudes toward other groups of immigrants and other socially excluded groups – Gypsies, people with AIDS, heavy drinkers, etc. A last concluding section will allow us to summarize our main findings and arguments: the fact that Islamophobia in Spain is much more a matter of political and media rhetoric than a social phenomenon.

Overview: Spanishness and Islam, tradition and society

In terms of the religious history of Europe, what sets Spain apart from northern European countries – such as France, Germany and England – is that it did not witness the clash of Protestant and Catholic, or even the massacre of Jews. Rather, in Spain, the conflict was between Catholicism and Islam, because much of Spain was occupied by an Islamic population during most of the Middle Ages up to the coming of modernity. However, a large number of history books have provided evidence that peaceful and often very fruitful coexistence of Christians, Muslims and Jews, in both the Christian- and Muslim-ruled territories in Spain was not the exception, but rather the rule during that long period of almost eight centuries. This is not to ignore the fact that there were violent conflicts and battles between Christians and Muslims, and also between Christian kingdoms, as well as between Muslim kingdoms. Every European country has its ‘dark historical side’ in religious political management and, in this sense, Spain also belongs to this European trend.

Religion (Catholicism) has often been presented by politicians and the media as one of the main pillars of Spanish identity or *Hispanidad* (*Spanishness*), but Spaniards do not mention this trait as one of the important ones to be a real Spaniard.³ This discourse of identity has created a strong narrative of similarity and difference: similarity regarding those who profess Christianity or simply have been born within this context; and difference regarding those who profess other religions, particularly those who today are most visible in number and in practices, such as Muslims. (There were very few Muslims in Spain, nationals or immigrants, until the recent immigration flows since 1990). This discourse of belonging to *Spanishness* has not only shaped the narratives of nationhood, but also determined the bases for access to membership. Let us go back to the roots of this tradition.

It is meaningful that Spanish identity was initially codified in the late fifteenth century – though many historians argue that the concept had existed since the Roman conquest, when the country was named Hispania, and that a sense of Spanishness persisted during the long period of Islamic presence in most of the peninsula – and particularly in the symbolic year of 1492, when Sephardic Jews, Muslims and Gypsies were expelled from the peninsula, and Spain officially started the conquest of America and what could be labeled as the global expansion of Spanish Catholicism and the practice of messianism. The politics of the so-called ‘Catholic Monarchs’ – a religious Catholic alliance between two kingdoms, Castilla and Aragon, that for the first time politically unified the whole territory of the Iberian peninsula – had many elements of what today we would refer to as *ethnic cleansing* (Zapata-Barrero 2006: 146). Since then Islam has historically been excluded from the formation of the Spanish identity in which a Christian ‘us’ has been particularly opposed to an Islamic ‘other’.

The term *Hispanidad* was developed at the beginning of the twentieth century to counterweigh the loss of the last colonies (Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines) by emphasizing cultural proximity and historical ties. In the mid-twentieth century it was re-used during the Franco dictatorship ‘precisely to comprise the whole Spanish area of influence, designating a linguistic (Spanish) and religious (Catholic) community, and creating a sense of belonging, excluding non-Spanish speakers, atheists and Muslims’ (Zapata-Barrero 2006: 148) as well as Protestants, Jews and practitioners of other religions. The political Francoist argument ‘*habla cristiano*’ (‘*speak christian*’) is a clear example of how the regime promoted the confusion between Spanish (language) and Christianity (religion) so as to build a culturally homogeneous society and exclude any sort of diversity (Zapata-Barrero 2010b: 387). The Spanish Constitution (1978), which resulted from the Transition period (1975–78) left aspects linked to religion unresolved. For instance, the Catholic Church still has certain control over the cultural hegemony in the educational system.

The construction of differences in interactions between Spanish majorities and Muslim minorities should then be understood within the context of the historical presence of Islam in the Iberian Peninsula for almost eight centuries. These interactions have not been free of contradictions, as shown by the fact that under Franco’s dictatorship the official foreign policy had three main axes: the Arab states in North Africa and the Middle East – though foreign Muslims were a very small minority and not socially visible in the public space – Latino America, and the Vatican. Interaction with Europe became a priority much later and more officially after the death of Franco in 1975 when democracy was restored. As we have seen, the religious component in the self-identification of Spanish majorities is reproduced today in the context of interactions with Muslim minorities in general – including Spanish Muslims – and Moroccan Muslims in particular – who mix foreignness and religion. Although the demands for mosque establishment and responses of local authorities have also been influenced by other structural factors, especially – the lack of – citizenship and the existing legal framework of religious freedom and equality, there is a large gap between legal and de facto recognition of religious rights of Muslims. While Hispanic identity over time has become more cultural

than religious – in addition to the importance of Spanish language – it has been built up against the category of the Moor, traditionally referring to Berbers from North Africa. The binary logic of Hispanic versus Moor is reproduced today in the context of an increasing presence and visibility of Moroccan migrants.

Let us now discuss current policies, and how they can have this tradition as a legitimating basis, but also how these policies can also be part of the anti-Muslims rhetoric, even if socially, as we will see in section three, there is no way to justify these policies. The main issues concerning Muslim communities are structural. They are related to religious infrastructures and education. The greatest problem has not only been the limited implementation of the 1992 Agreement,⁴ but also the difficulty the State has had in finding representatives to negotiate with.

In this respect, the process of incorporation of Islam into the system of cooperation between State and Church makes us question the capacity of the Islamic Commission and the federations of associations to represent the growing Muslim community – national, nationalized and foreign – and to fulfil the relative functions for implementing the 1992 Agreement, as well as the capacity and willingness of local administrations to develop it. Alvarez-Miranda (2009: 185) points out that comparisons with Britain, Germany and France show that although all states guarantee freedom of worship and permit plural religious teaching, the institutional adjustments and the levels of support given to the collective practice and teaching of Islam varies. The Spanish design appears to resemble the German one more closely, which is more liberal than the other two.

In addition, Spain cannot escape from the governance problems posed by the link between security, Islam and terrorism on a global level (see Zapata-Barrero and Qasem, 2008: 81), nor from the need to reposition its relations with the Catholic Church in order to ensure a secular state, which is considered to be one of the likely responses to Muslim demands.⁵ Therefore, the issue of the space and support that should be given to Islamic worship and teaching poses wider questions in relation to the effects religious recognition may have on the integration of immigrants (Díez-Nicolás 2005: 293). Spain has yet to resolve the dilemmas generated by the demands of people of Islamic faith. In this regard, Spanish policies of governance need to take steps in the practical field rather than in the theoretical field of the 1992 agreement, which has hardly been implemented.

There are still many questions to be resolved around the accommodation of the Muslim community. If wide recognition of religious difference is achieved, will there be a tendency toward an intercultural coexistence, isolating communities and prolonging inequalities in time? If this recognition is denied, will there be a reaction of dissatisfaction and badly channeled demands around the issues of Muslim identity? Which of these two cases promotes coexistence between religious communities and the numerous Europeans and immigrants from Muslim countries who do not practice any religion? Such questions still remain in the political and social arena today. The politics of governance is then a key point in the current debate (Zapata-Barrero 2009). The argument we will put forward is that these policies are really at the core of the anti-Muslim rhetoric, and these 'virtual fears' coming from tradition and still present in the current institutional structure, rather than from the existence of a social xenophobic attitude.⁶

Conflicts and policies related to Muslims

One should start by saying that, despite having a particular history related to Islam, there are no specifically Spanish conflicts that are different from those in other European countries. Maybe the distinction arises from the foundation of these conflicts and, in some case, as we will show, from specific policy answers. The most distinctive example is perhaps related to tradition and festivals.

Conflicts around Islam should first be understood in the context of the Spanish identity construction which is based, as explained above, on a traditional negative perception of the Muslim and more particularly the Moroccan, considered in pejorative terms as 'the Moor' (*el moro*) (Zapata-Barrero 2006: 143). These conflicts should also be explained in the context of a double and apparently contradictory process: the secularisation of the state but while the Catholic Church still maintains a predominant position – as in England, where Anglican Church is really dominant, in Central and Northern Europe, where Lutheran Protestantism is dominant, and in Morocco, where Islam is absolutely dominant. While the shift to a secular state has tended to relegate religious practices to the private sphere, the asymmetrical relation with the Catholic Church has implied in practice non-compliance with some of the agreements signed with minority religions. Finally, like in many other European countries, some cultural practices of Muslim communities have increasingly been perceived by public authorities, rather than by society, as we will show in section three, as opposed to liberal values such as human dignity, freedom or equality. Let us review the main Muslim-related conflicts in Spain.

Muslim places of worship

The conflicts around mosques, oratories and cemeteries consist of different elements:

- *Some opposition against the building of mosques and/or opening of religious centres or oratories from both citizens and government.* This shows that society experiences certain difficulties in the social recognition of Muslims in some public spaces.
- *Discussion about the access of women to mosques and oratories, particularly the fact that women either have been prohibited from entering the mosques or have been forced to use separate rooms.* This is often perceived as unacceptable in terms of principles of sex equality and religious freedom.
- *Opposition against foreign-funding of mosques.* The main concern is that poorly resourced mosques depend on funding from foreign sources, including extremist-oriented groups.
- *Critique on radical imams leading mosques.* As these religious leaders are either educated abroad or not educated at all, there are fears that they will advocate interpretations of Islam that are in conflict with the legal and social norms of Spanish society. In an attempt to prevent imams from spreading hateful and violent ideas, the government proposed the monitoring and censoring of mosque sermons in May 2004. Protests by Muslim and civil liberty groups made them retract the proposal. As an alternative, the main Moroccan

immigrant workers organisation (ATIME) proposed a system of self-control of mosques – including supervision of mosques and appointment of imams – led by local and national Muslim councils.

Religious education

Conflicts around religious education have been articulated around three main topics

- *Discussion on the predominance of Catholic education.* It is compulsory for public schools to offer Catholic education, although students may choose to opt out. While in primary schools no alternative needs to be provided, in secondary schools an alternative course – history of religions – must be offered, but students are free to choose neither of these options. There have also been debates about the presence of Catholic symbols in schools. Interestingly, when a few parents criticized the presence of crucifixes in the classroom, the council of education of the Autonomous Community of Castilla y León asked them to be ‘tolerant’, arguing the need for toleration in a sphere of *convivencia* (peaceful coexistence).
- *Discussion on the right of religious education in both public and private schools.* Although the agreements between the Spanish state and the Jewish, Evangelical and Muslim communities guarantee the right of religious education, in practice most schools do not provide this possibility. (In most cases this is because of lack of demand. Demand for such courses only becomes important in big cities.)
- *Discussion on the new compulsory course* – offered in the final year in primary schools and all years in secondary school – called ‘Education for Citizenship and Human Rights’ (*Educación para la ciudadanía y derechos humanos*). Following recommendations from both the Council of Europe and the European Union, in 2006, this new course was introduced with the aim of teaching individual and social ethics and democratic values, including topics such as climate change, human rights, immigration, multiculturalism, etc. Arguments *for* were the need to create democratic citizens and prevent inequalities between sexes, minorities, etc. Arguments *against* come from the Catholic Church and related parties who argue that it might lead to value indoctrination by the state and goes against the freedom of ideology and religion.

Conflicts around some festivities

The climate generated after the Cartoon Affair provoked a debate on the traditional Festivals of Moors and Christians (*Moros y Cristianos*) celebrated in almost 400 localities in Spain. The Festivals celebrate the Spanish *Reconquest* (Christian victory over Islam) of the peninsula after eight centuries of Muslim presence, by the re-enactment of local victories over invading Moorish armies. The celebration basically consists of a symbolic battle for the local territory, a dramatization of the struggle of Moorish and Christian military units, resulting in the victory of Christians. ‘In the Festivals, the Moors are defeated in combat and then converted to Christianity, or,

in the case of some villages [...], they are “symbolically” thrown into the sea’ (Flesler and Pérez Melgosa 2003: 153). Harris (2006: 45) highlights that the *fiestas* combine religious processions and secular parades. Dramatized battles between Muslims and Christians became occasional after the Conquest of Granada in 1492.⁷ Tourism has also increased the popularity of the festivals over time, as well as the showiness of the festivals (Flesler and Pérez Melgosa 2003: 151). Through time, however, the ‘battle’ part of these festivals has lost presence in favor of the ‘parade’ part, to the point that in most cities there is a great competition among Spaniards to be members of the parading Muslim army, and local citizens spend a lot of money to compete in providing luxurious costumes for members of both armies.

In contrast to making the places of worship of contemporary ‘Moors’ – Muslim immigrants – invisible, during the festivals the ‘imagined Moor of the past’ is made extremely visible, as both an exotic and a barbaric figure – however this picture is being reconsidered in recent years (Zapata-Barrero and de Witte 2010: 185). The self-censorship debate arising just after the Danish cartoon affair demonstrates the problematic interaction between representations of present and past Moors, as changing the representation of the ‘past Moors’ is justified by the presence – and fear – of the ‘real Moor’. In contrast to the time of the *reconquista*, the freedom of religion within the context of Spanish liberal democracy makes the idea of ‘Christians’ being the *only* legitimate heirs of the territory problematic. Interactions between Muslim minorities and the majority in Spain today, therefore, present not only a challenge of accommodating religious diversity, but also of reconstructing national identity. The question is therefore not *if*, but rather *when* Spanish society will be ready to accept their cultural and religious ‘Other’ as part of the ‘Self’ (Lindkilde *et al.* 2009).

Conflicts around dress code

Conflicts have arisen around the use of headscarves in schools, and *burkas* and *niqabs* in public spaces. The terms of the debates have been the following:

- *Headscarves in schools.* Until very recently the use of the Muslim headscarf in public schools has not been as controversial as in other European countries. Opinions, however, have been divided between those who defend religious symbols as part of religious liberty and those who would like to see the prohibition of religious signs in the public sphere in the name of liberal-republican values. When schools prohibited girls wearing the Islamic veil (*hijab*) based on their own internal rules that prohibit all elements of discrimination, the responses have also been diverse. For instance, Madrid’s right-wing government, in 2002, and the Catalan government, in 2007, intervened to reverse the school prohibition by arguing that the right to education had priority over the regulation of – religious – symbols (press releases in 2002 and in 2007). In spring 2010, Madrid’s right-wing regional government supported a school prohibition, while the Socialist national government opposed it arguing that the right to education came first. This latter case has generated a huge national debate that continued with the discussions around the draft of the

new Organic Law for the Freedom of Conscience and Religion. Nevertheless, it could be argued that the cleavage in Spain is not so much between leftist and rightist, but between dogmatic-intolerant, and pluralist-tolerant.

- *Burkas and niqabs in public spaces.* In May/June 2010 some municipalities – first in Catalonia and then in Andalusia, see main newspapers during this period – started to ban the wearing of the *burka* and *niqab* in public buildings. In June the Senate also approved – though only by a slight majority – a proposition made by the right-wing *Partido Popular* (People Party) to ban the wearing of the *burka* and *niqab* in *all* public spaces. Those who defend these measures argue that these practices violate women's dignity and the principle of equality, and that they pose a threat to public security, making a person invisible and posing an obvious problem of identification. Those against the ban argue that these measures have the effect of shutting women in their houses and polarizing positions around Islam. We can interpret this issue as a debate not only on the limits of diversity in our societies, but also on the use of legal means, rather than social and political means, to solve the fact that women wear a *burka* and thus pose an obvious problem of visibility and identification. It is not a quantitative problem, since it is estimated that not more than 20 people in Catalonia wear a *burka*, but an electoral strategy addressing public opinion and some new anti-immigrant political formations, such as *Plataforma per Catalunya* (Platform for Catalonia), which pressurizes most cities governed by socialist and centre-left political parties on the need to make a visible reaction against Islam. Here we have a clear example of how Islamophobia is not a social fact, but a product of these political measures, addressed to people that can have difficulties in differentiating common Muslims, especially from Morocco and Pakistan, from the *burka*, which is a real exception in the Muslim communities, and an extremist reading of Islam.

Attitudes of Spaniards toward Muslims

In order to evaluate the degree of 'Islamophobia' in Spanish society it seems necessary to compare it with other countries and, furthermore, to compare it with the degree of 'racism', 'xenophobia' or 'social exclusion' of other social groups.

In this particular case, the Values Surveys [European Values Study (EVS) and World Values Survey (WVS)]⁸ provide a huge volume of comparable data for almost 100 countries in five waves covering a period of more than 25 years. The analysis presented below is based on 355,298 face-to-face personal interviews in 97 countries collected by both projects around 1981, 1990, 1995, 2000 and 2005. The questionnaire in the five waves included a multiple-answer question that asked respondents to mention those social groups that they 'would not like to have as neighbors'. Respondents were presented a list of social groups that were likely to be socially excluded or rejected in greater or lesser degree in most countries. The social groups selected for this analysis were those most commonly found in all countries and waves: drug addicts, heavy drinkers, homosexuals, people with AIDS, Gypsies, people of different religion, Jews, Muslims, immigrants and foreign workers, and people of a different race.

ents mentioning they would not like each of the mentioned social groups as neighbors varies from 72 percent who mention drug addicts, to heavy drinkers (61 percent), homosexuals (48 percent), people with AIDS (42 percent), Gypsies (41 percent), people of different religion, and Jews (20 percent), Muslims and immigrants and foreign workers (19 percent), and people of a different race (16 percent). Variation of these percentages from 1981 to 2005 is in general very small, and the relative ranking of each of these groups is maintained with very few alterations which are not really meaningful. The only large variation is that Jews were excluded by only 15 percent in 1990 but by as much as 72 percent in 2005. Part of this change may be due to the growing number of Muslim countries included in the 2005 wave compared to previous waves. Probably that also explains why Muslims were rejected by 26 percent in 1990 and only by 16 percent in 2005. The limitations of this paper make it impossible to present a detailed analysis of the exclusion of each one of the 10 social groups over five waves and 97 countries.

The group 'Muslims', which is the third-least rejected social group by the total sample, has been analyzed in more detail because they are the main object of this paper. Their rejection as neighbors is higher in countries such as Turkey, Moldova, South Korea, Romania, Albania, India and Slovenia (54–30 percent) and is lowest in Chile, Canada, Switzerland, Argentina and Guatemala (less than 10 percent). Table 6.1 shows the proportion rejecting Muslims as neighbors for EU member countries – with the exception of Cyprus, for which there is no available data. Sweden and Spain are the two EU member countries that show the lowest rejection of Muslims as neighbors (less than 13 percent), while Romania, Lithuania and Slovenia show the highest rejection (more than 30 percent). Results are very similar when only the data for the 2000 wave are taken into account – the 2005 wave excluded the question on Muslims in almost all countries. Between 57 and 30 percent reject Muslims in South Korea, Moldova, Romania and Albania. And, considering only the EU, while rejection was around 30 percent in Lithuania and Malta, it was lower than 14 percent in Spain, Netherlands, Germany, Sweden and Portugal.

To summarize, worldwide Muslims are less rejected as neighbors than many other social groups. And, secondly, they are excluded more in some countries where they are either a majority or a large minority (Turkey, Albania), while they receive a very low rejection in countries with high Muslim minorities resulting from immigration (United States, Sweden, Spain, Netherlands, Germany or Switzerland). A regression model to explain the reference to Muslims as not-liked neighbors shows that, other things being equal, older and conservative – ideologically in the right – persons tend to mention Muslims as not-liked neighbors in greater proportions than younger and progressive persons, and that those who are oriented toward post-materialist – self-expression – values tend to mention them in lower proportions than those with a more materialist value orientation (Inglehart 1977, 1990, 1997; Díez-Nicolás 2007a).

Spain presents a very unique example of a country where two different research teams have conducted the values surveys. Thus, while one team⁹ conducted the EVS surveys in 1981, 1990 and 1999, another team¹⁰ conducted the WVS surveys in 1990, 1995, 2000 and 2005. Results in both groups of surveys are very consistent

Table 6.1 Percentage of people who would not like to have Muslims as neighbors, EU member countries, average 1981–2005

	No Muslim neighbors %		No Muslim neighbors %
Austria	14.7	Italy	15.8
Belgium	23.9	Latvia	19.9
Bulgaria	27.5	Lithuania	32.3
Czech Republic	24.3	Luxembourg	15.4
Denmark	15.9	Malta	23.5
Estonia	21.3	Netherlands	13.1
Finland	24.6	Poland	22.2
France	16.6	Portugal	13.9
Germany	19.9	Romania	32.9
Great Britain	15.5	Slovakia	29.4
Greece	20.9	Slovenia	30.5
Hungary	18.3	Spain	12.2
Ireland	13.9	Sweden	11.9

Source: Produced by J. Díez-Nicolás from Values Surveys (www.jdsurvey.net)

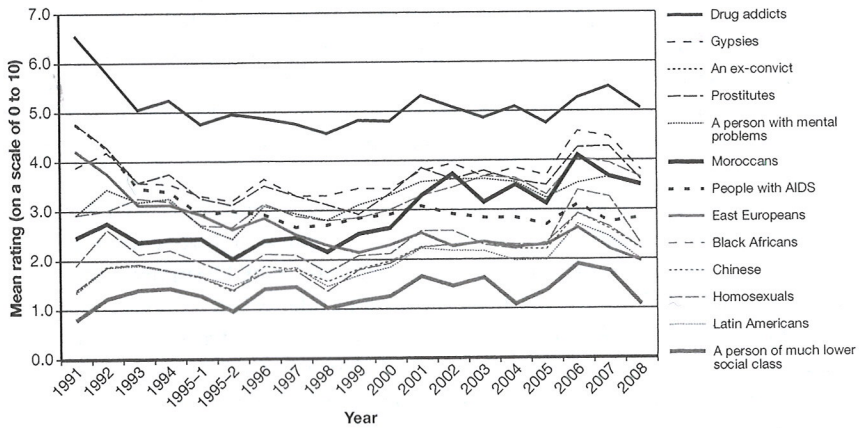
in time, as well as when EVS and WVS are compared for the same wave (1990 and 1999–2000). Heavy drinkers, people with AIDS, drug addicts, homosexuals, Gypsies, and Jews (only in WVS-2000) show consistently higher percentages of rejection as neighbors in the seven WVS and EVS surveys than Muslims. Actually, Muslims are rejected in Spain only between 10 percent (EVS-1990) and 16 percent (WVS-2000), and they are among the least rejected social groups – together with people of a different race, immigrants and foreign workers, and people of a different religion. The only inconsistent result is the one referring to Jews in WVS-2000, when they were mentioned as non-desirable neighbors by 34 percent of respondents, while in EVS-1999 their rejection was only 9 percent, and 8 percent and 13 percent in EVS and WVS 1990 respectively. A reliable explanation is still being searched for this rather surprising change. A very tentative hypothesis that cannot be pursued in this paper is that Spaniards tend to favour Palestine over Israel in their historical confrontation in the Middle East.¹¹ One should also underline the sharp decline in rejection of people with AIDS and homosexuals, from 30 percent and 31 percent respectively in 1990, to 16 percent and 7 percent also respectively in 2005.

Different regression models calculated for the WVS-EVS Spanish surveys, whether aggregated or separated by wave and/or study, show consistently that age and income have a significant and positive relationship with mentioning Muslims as not-liked neighbors, while education and post-materialist values show a significant and negative relationship with it. In fact, the same variables explain the higher or lower degree of racism or xenophobia among Spaniards (Díez-Nicolás 2007b: 124; 2009a: 247; 2009b: 21) based on ASEP's monthly surveys 1991–2009. Therefore, it seems appropriate to conclude that, other things being equal, the older and richer a person is, the greater the chances that he/she will mention Muslims as

oriented to new post-materialist values a person is, the greater the chances that he/she will not mention Muslims as non-desirable neighbors. And these relationships seem to be valid not only for all countries but also for the seven Spanish surveys within the values studies, regardless of whether EVS or WVS.

In any case, the evidence seems to reject the hypothesis that Muslims – and in a similar manner, Jews or other national groups – are particularly exposed to being socially excluded by Spaniards, at least when compared with several other minority groups. Gypsies, however, are three times more exposed to being socially rejected than Muslims or Jews. And these findings seem to hold over time and when comparing results from two different research teams. If there is ‘Islamophobia’ in the Spanish population, it seems to be very much hidden, though it must be asserted that even little social exclusion of any group must be considered as excessive.

A second set of data used for this analysis of presumed ‘Islamophobia’ in Spain is a series of 19 annual national surveys conducted by ASEP between 1991 and 2009 on attitudes of Spaniards toward immigrants.¹² The question used in these surveys was similar to the one used by the Values Surveys, and refers to the social groups that would not be liked as neighbors. However, while in the Values Surveys respondents only had to mention or not mention the groups they wouldn’t like as neighbors, in the ASEP–Spanish surveys a rating scale was used to evaluate each group from zero (‘I would not care at all having them as neighbors’) to 10 (‘I would be very much upset to have them as neighbors’). A total of 13 social groups were included in the question – although three of them began to be included between 1993 and 1995. Consistently, drug addicts, Gypsies, ex-convicts, prostitutes, and people with mental



Source: Produced by J. Díez-Nicolás from ASEP’s The Public Opinion of Spaniards (www.jdsurvey.net)

Figure 6.1 Mean rating (on a scale 0 to 10) of social groups that would not be liked as neighbours, Spain, 1991–2009

problems – except in 2006 and 2007 – were rejected as neighbors in higher degree than Moroccans.

Homosexuals were more rejected than Moroccans until 1998, and people with AIDS were more rejected than Moroccans until 2000. The change for those two groups was not due to an increase in the rejection of Moroccans but, on the contrary, to a steady and sharp decline in the social rejection of homosexuals and people with AIDS. It is true, however, that the rejection of Moroccans also increased a little since 2000, a fact that seems consistent with changes already mentioned both in the Spanish and the world data. It must be noticed that all immigrant groups – Moroccans, East Europeans, Black Africans, Chinese, Latin Americans – are less rejected than other social minorities – drug addicts, ex-convicts, prostitutes, people with mental problems – and, until not many years ago, also homosexuals and people with AIDS. The least rejected group, however, has always been ‘people of a much lower social class’.

A regression model to explain the rating of Moroccans as not-liked neighbors – based on the same explanatory variables as the model used for the total sample of countries in the values studies – shows that older, higher income and higher socio-economic status and more conservative persons are more likely to dislike Moroccans as neighbors, while persons with higher education and oriented toward more post-materialist and self-expression values are less likely to dislike Moroccans as neighbors.

To summarize, the relevant findings derived from the regression models are: 1) there seems to be no difference between Spain and the rest of the world with respect to the variables that explain rejection of Muslims as neighbors – age, right ideology and cultural values seem to be the most powerful predictors, even though in both cases the models explain a very small percentage of the variance; and 2) more important than that is that religiosity – regardless of a person’s religion – does not contribute to explaining rejection of Muslims as neighbors when some other variables such as those mentioned are present in the model. Besides, one should always remember that both in Spain and in the world rejection of Muslims, Arabs, Moroccans or the like is lower than rejection of other social minority groups, and this is particularly true of Anglo Saxon and West European countries, among them, Spain.

A final question frequently used to measure social exclusion of social groups refers to a person’s reaction toward a daughter falling in love with a person belonging to particular social groups. In the Spanish set of 19 surveys that question was included, asking for the reaction of respondents if a daughter were fall in love with a Gypsy, a North African, a Black African, or a Latin American. The majority of respondents in all surveys answered that they would let their daughter do whatever she wanted to do, and only between 25 percent and 30 percent would give one of the two more negative (exclusionist) answers: ‘would advise her to break the relationship’ or ‘would forbid her to continue with it’. Differences among the social groups mentioned were usually fewer than 10 percentage points, and certainly the lowest opposition was regarding Latin Americans, and the highest referred to Gypsies, with North and Black Africans being more or less equally rejected.

Empirical evidence from the Values Surveys (EVS and WVS) suggests that social exclusion of minority social groups – drug addicts, heavy drinkers, people with AIDS and homosexuals – is greater, in general, than social exclusion of national or ethnic minorities – people of a different race or religion, immigrants and foreign workers, Muslims, Jews. The only exception is Gypsies. Comparing regions and countries it has also been found that social exclusion in general, toward Muslims in particular, is more common in less developed countries than in more developed ones as those in the EU and Anglo Saxon countries, confirming previous analyses (Díez-Nicolás 2005: 347). Additionally, it has been found that older, more conservative persons, in the total sample of countries, and in the Spanish sub-sample within the Values Surveys, are more likely to mention Muslims as not-liked neighbors, while persons with more formal education and oriented toward post-materialist (self-expression) values are less likely to mention them in that respect.

On the basis of a question asked in 19 annual surveys conducted only in Spain by ASEP since 1991 till 2009 on the rejection of different social groups as neighbors, using questions similar to those used in the Values Surveys, it seems that Spaniards do not differ from other world citizens. Ethnic, racial or national groups – Moroccans, East Europeans, Black Africans, Chinese, and Latin Americans – have been less socially rejected as neighbors than other social groups – drug addicts, ex-convicts, prostitutes, people with mental problems, people with AIDS, and homosexuals – for most of the period 1991–2009. The only exception has always been Gypsies, the second least liked social group of all, only a little less rejected than drug addicts. Nevertheless, it must be underlined that social exclusion of any group, at least as measured by this question, does not seem to be very high, because the intensity of rejection as neighbors has been below five points – on a scale zero to 10 – for all social groups and across 19 surveys, with the exception of drug addicts, who have always been rated around or above five points. Moroccans, however, have always been mentioned as not-liked neighbors more than any of the other four national or ethnic groups – but less than Gypsies – but usually with ratings below 3.5 points. Statistical analysis has confirmed the same findings as the values surveys, in the sense that older, more conservative, less educated and more materialist persons tend to reject Moroccans as neighbors more than younger, more progressive, more educated and more post-materialist persons.

Many other findings that cannot be reported here seem to demonstrate two very important assertions. First, Spaniards are not more racist, xenophobic or social exclusionist than other West Europeans or Western citizens in general and, if anything, it can be argued that Spaniards are less exclusionist than most other nationals, very similar to the Swedish and the Swiss. Second, even when attitudes toward Moroccans, Muslims, Arabs or the like, are taken into consideration, Spaniards do not show any signs of 'Islamophobia', at least not more, but generally less, than most other Europeans, and certainly much less than the rest of world citizens. Those statements imply that social exclusion of Moroccans or other groups in Spain is relatively lower than in most other European countries, and in absolute

terms they are limited to generally older, low educated, extreme rightist, and more traditionally value oriented very small minorities.

Given these main findings, we can ask why there is such a media and political interplay between Muslims and social conflict, and wonder why there is such a contrast between the foundation of certain policies aimed at limiting the public expression of Muslims, and public opinion and attitudes that show that Spanish people are not so Islamophobic as it is thought. Maybe one additional finding when we contrast attitudes with the political management of Muslims affairs is that xenophobia has to be considered as a political construction, rather than a social fact, policy-independent. Anti-immigrant policies respond much more to rhetoric, an electoral strategy, rather as a channel answering the demands of society and real needs of citizens. The real question is then not why citizens are or are not Islamophobic, but rather why certain powers and political hegemonic groups have real difficulties in sharing their power or even accepting that they may lose their power within the political realm. The question to be answered is whether the alleged Islamophobia is a rhetorical construction of politicians and the media to distract from other problems that really concern society.

Notes

- 1 This introduction, the following two sections and the concluding remarks are related to R. Zapata-Barrero's findings in the Accept Pluralism research project which is co-funded by the European Commission (7th Framework Programme, Socio-Economic Sciences and Humanities). The project is coordinated by the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute, Florence, Italy, Prof. Anna Triandafyllidou. For more information: <http://www.accept-pluralism.eu>
- 2 On the link between policies and public opinion toward immigrants in Spain, see R. Zapata-Barrero (2008: 1101)
- 3 Together with language, see for instance, Zapata-Barrero (2006: 143, 2010a: 181, 2010b: 383). On the interface between national identity and attitudes toward immigrants, see the seminal work of Díez-Medrano (2005).
- 4 Spain has one of the most advanced agreements with the most important religions in Spain – Jews, Protestants and, of course, Islam (Jefatura del Estado, 1992). With the Islamic Commission Agreement it officially guaranteed the right of Islamic education to Muslim students in both public and private schools. But the main problem is the lack of application of this most liberal agreement in Europe (Morera 2003: 52).
- 5 On the governance of Islam in Europe, see the overview of Maussen (2007).
- 6 Research has demonstrated that most negative attitudes toward social groups are a product of the 'fear of the unknown'. Thus, Spaniards who have not had any personal direct contact with police stations and courts have a worse image of police and judges than those who have had such contacts. Similarly, Spaniards that have interacted with immigrants or Gypsies have a better image of those groups than those who have never interacted with them in any way (Díez-Nicolás 2005: 283).
- 7 The beginning and incorporation of the Festivals of *Moros y Cristianos* into the annual festive calendar is probably a combination of the *soldadescas* – the formation of local militias that guarded the coasts against the Turkish navy and Berber pirates in the late sixteenth century, who sometimes dressed as Moors or Turks – and the much older *fiesta del patron* – the annual procession of the town's patron saint (Harris 1994: 46).
- 8 www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu ; www.worldvaluessurveys.org ; www.jdsurvey.net
- 9 DATA and Deusto University, Bilbao.
- 10 ASEP and Complutense University, Madrid.

... seem to confirm this assertion (ASEP, 'La Opinión Pública de los Españoles', in www.jdsurvey.net). Thus, in the November 1991 survey, when asking for the reason of the conflict between Israel and Arab countries, 34 percent of Spaniards answered that Israel did not accept the territories given to them by the UN and recurred to the occupation of other Arab territories, while 25 percent answered that Arabs have never accepted the state of Israel. In April 2002, 8 percent justified Palestinian terrorist attacks in Israel and 74 percent did not justify them, but in October 2003 only 2 percent justified Israel's attacks on Syria and 79 percent did not justify them. In this same survey, when asked about which actions were worst and less justified, 13 percent mentioned Israel's attacks on Palestinian cities against 8 percent who mentioned Palestinian attacks on Israel (64 percent mentioned both and 7 percent none). Many other questions in ASEP's monthly surveys during the past 23 years suggest Spaniards show more sympathy toward Palestinians and Arabs than toward Israel.

- 12 Data files can be accessed in www.jdsurvey.net, Immigrants Collection. And there are many other questions about foreigners and immigrants in particular in the ASEP collection – 242 monthly surveys between 1986 and 2009 – on the same web site.