

## **Introduction**

### **‘Public Islam’ and the Nordic Welfare State: Changing Realities?**

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#### ***Abstract***

*This is not a stand-alone article but the introduction to the special issue ‘Public Islam and the Nordic Welfare State: Changing Realities?’ The introduction surveys the emergence of the Nordic welfare state model with the Reformation and its development to the present day, focusing on religion, welfare and institutional order, and how national identities correspond and change with the institutional orders, as they develop. Included in this survey is the academic debate about de-secularization, actualized in the European and Nordic contexts by immigration of Muslims. It is argued that the Nordic states are moving towards an increasingly secularized institutional order and national identity, which in itself explains why Muslims are publicly perceived as a potentially problematic group.*

This special issue studies public dimensions of Islam in the four Nordic countries (Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Norway), focusing on the dynamic relationship between public and Islamic institutions and values. In doing so, it contributes both to the study of Nordic Islam and to current debates within Religious Studies. The relevant debate within Religious Studies concerns whether the recent resurgence of religion in public political life reflects a broader process of de-secularization, i.e. the expansion of religion into social spheres from which it was previously excluded. In the Nordic context, any attempt to assess positions in the de-secularization debate must consider the structure of the Nordic welfare state and how it has changed over the last decades

due to the forces of globalized neoliberalism. One important aspect of globalization is immigration. Most Nordic Muslims are of immigrant origins. Islam and Muslims are an interesting case to explore with reference to the debates about de-secularization and the Nordic welfare state, because Islam has been given a problematic role in public debates and in some recent research as particularly resistant to secularization and inimical to the established Nordic Lutheran divisions of power between church and state. Against this background, this special issue investigates different aspects of the institutionalization of Islam in the Nordic context with reference to both the theses of de-secularization and studies of change within the Nordic welfare state. The following introduction surveys the development of the Nordic welfare state from the Reformation to the present, followed by a description of the de-secularization debate and an analysis of its implications for the study of Nordic Islam. The basic approach applied here is to study Nordic Islam in terms of the outcome of relationships between public and Islamic institutions and values.

### **The Nordic Welfare State: From Reformation to Globalization**

#### *Lutheranism and Nordic National Identities*

Since the collection studies developments within the Nordic welfare state primarily in order to address debates pertaining to Religious Studies, the significance of religion for changes within the Nordic welfare state will be highlighted here. The decision to begin the introductory survey with the evasive concept of ‘national identity’ is thus not arbitrary, nor is the choice of the main concept of national identity that is adopted here, namely that of Anthony Smith. In the current context one of the greatest challenges to the general public as well as to academics is the inclusion of Islam into the Nordic national identities, as one among several other religions pertaining to the Nordic peoples. Since Smith stands out in nationalism research for his emphasis on the significance of religion for national identities, his concept has been adopted here.

According to Smith, a nation is ‘a named human population occupying a historic territory and sharing common myths and memories, a public culture, and common laws and customs for all members’ (Smith 2003:24). The nation is defined by its *identity*, i.e.

‘the maintenance and continual reinterpretation of the pattern of values, symbols, memories, myths, and traditions that form the distinctive heritage of the nation, and the identification of individuals with that heritage and its pattern’ (Smith 2003:24–5). Smith has also defined religion as a source of national identity. This is particularly clear in medieval contexts. In modern nations the significance of religion is often overshadowed by nationalism. However, drawing on Émile Durkheim’s concept of religion as expressing society’s image of itself, and Elie Kedourie’s analysis of the connection between Christian millennialism and ethno-nationalism, Smith develops a model according to which religion is the source of both civic nationalism and ethno-nationalism. Like nationalism, Smith argues, religion contains within it both universalism and particularism, and inclusivity and exclusivity. Imperial forms of religion are usually universalistic in the sense that the law protects all imperial subjects, which is structurally similar to civic nationalism, whereas millennial religions are exclusive and inclined to reserve rights for the true believers, similarly to ethno-nationalist approaches to ‘other’ ethnic and religious groups. Moreover, nationalism itself consciously draws on traditional religion as it reorganizes the nation’s values, symbols, memories, myths, and traditions into a modern national identity (Smith 2003: 42–3). From this viewpoint, the Nordic national identities are connected with Lutheranism, both as a faith and as a way of structuring relationships between state, church and the people (Ingebritsen 2006:24), which motivates the choice of the Reformation as starting point for the survey of the Nordic welfare state.

When the Reformation officially began in 1517, the Nordic countries were represented by the Kalmar Union (1397–1523), consisting of the kingdoms of Denmark (with Greenland), Norway (with Iceland and the Faroe, Shetland and Orkney Islands) and Sweden (with Finland). The Union was ruled by the Danish king and aligned to the Holy Roman Empire and the Roman Catholic Church, with archbishoprics in Lund, Uppsala and Trondheim. As on the continent, the Nordic Reformation was preceded by the break-up of the agrarian feudal order and the increasing urbanization and commercialization of economies. While it was the monarchs who effected the

conversion to Protestantism, its popular support was with the new commercial class, the burghers (Grell 2000:257–8). The Reformation entailed the dissolution of the Kalmar Union. From 1523, Denmark (now with Norway) and Sweden (with Finland) constituted two separate, Lutheran kingdoms (Grell 1995:4–5).

The Reformation had a lasting impact on Nordic welfare administration. Charity and poor relief had been the responsibility of the Catholic church, funded by revenue from Church lands. The break with Rome subordinated the Church to the Danish and Swedish monarchs enabling them to expropriate the Church's lands and with them the ultimate responsibility for the poor and infirm, even though the Reformed church carried out the actual work (Pestoff 2004:68). This Lutheran state model, where the king wielded sovereign power over the land, people and religion of his realm, was given systemic form on the continent and in the Nordic countries with the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648.

The Westphalia state system was characterized by authoritarian monarchies and, ideally, religious uniformity within each of these monarchies. Eventually the uniformity would be broken up by the emergence of civil rights. According to Saskia Sassen, civil rights are connected with the burgher class and its commercial needs: citizens should be able to move and trade between countries and have their property and capital protected from the state (Sassen 2006: 76–82). This had implications for religion as well. While the Islamic empires had combined international trade with legally protected religious diversity since the seventh century, Europe embarked on this course only in the 1600s. At that point it had become obvious that religious pluralism was a commercial asset (Grell 1996:1–12; 1995:10), as illustrated in this quote from Voltaire:

Take a view of the Royal Exchange in London, a place more venerable than many courts of justice, where the representatives of all nations meet for the benefit of mankind. There the Jew, the Mahometan, and the Christian transact together as tho' they all profess'd the same religion, and give the name of Infidel to none but

bankrupts. There the Presbyterian confides in the Anabaptist, and the Churchman depends on the Quaker's word. And all are satisfied.<sup>1</sup>

In 1689 John Locke composed *Letter concerning Toleration* (1689), proposing 'reason' as a neutral ground on which people of various faiths could convene (Oberman 1996:14–17). Rational, 'natural' religion was the necessary foundation of morality, society and politics because, Locke claimed, every individual strives for salvation. The Dutch Jewish philosopher Baruch Spinoza (d. 1677), contrariwise, held that salvation was not the only thing individuals might strive for, and that morality and politics could just as well be based on rational philosophy as on religion. Spinoza's concept of tolerance focused on individual rights and freedoms against all kinds of institutional authorities, including religion; he was the first to claim the right to think freely and to publish things that might be offensive to the established powers (Grell and Porter 2000:8). Both Locke's and Spinoza's positions were carried further in the Enlightenment. While Locke's religious 'foundationalism' prevailed in political theory, Spinoza's focus on individual freedoms became the main concern of the Enlightenment philosophers (Grell and Porter 2000:8–9).

The Enlightenment vision of a progressive nation had different implications in different countries. Some countries understood it as implying civic nationalism, which meant that civil rights and individual freedoms had to be extended to all citizens on the state's territory, including non-Christians (Wokler 2000). The first country which granted Jews full civil rights was Austria in 1782, followed by the USA in 1786; France in 1791; and England in 1826 (Ben-Sasson 1976:759–60). Germany instead developed an ethnic concept of the nation, which complicated the issue of German citizenship until as recently as 2000. The Nordic states followed Locke's 'religious foundationalism', with full citizenship and access to political office limited to members of the Lutheran state church. According to Byron Nordstrom, in Sweden and Denmark the monarchs had

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<sup>1</sup> Grell and Porter 2000:4, quote from Voltaire, *Letters concerning the English Nation* (London, 1733), 44.

instituted measures associated with the French Revolution before 1789, and without a bourgeois revolution. After co-opting the aristocracy the kings were able to extend property rights to peasants, introduce elementary education for all through the Church, and grant limited civil rights to Catholics and Jews (Sweden 1782; Denmark 1798), although many social and political inequalities remained (Nordstrom 2000:113–14). Peasants' property rights and public education, and the 'memory' that the king protected the people's rights and interests against the aristocracy, became important items in the Nordic national identities and blended neatly with the positive Lutheran view of the state.

The period 1809–1945 marked the waning of the authoritarian monarchies and the emergence of new nation-states and constitutions (Ingebritsen 2006:8). In 1809 Finland was taken from Sweden by Russia as spoils of war when Sweden lost the last of its wars with Russia. Finland was then made into a grand duchy of Russia, and gained national independence in 1917. Norway was taken from Denmark and forced to enter into a union with Sweden in the Vienna peace treaty following the Napoleonic wars, where Denmark had sided with the losing French side and Sweden was among the victors. While subject to the Swedish king, Norway adopted its own new constitution in 1814. The union with Sweden lasted until 1905, when Norway gained full national independence.

There was intense social, political and religious discontent with the authoritarian states and the Lutheran religious monopoly, and the new constitutions reflected real change: '[P]opular sovereignty (the power of the people); separation of powers among several branches of government; and the protection of individual rights. (...) Freedom of expression and freedom of association and assembly are guaranteed, enabling broad participation in the political process.' (Ingebritsen 2006:28). The drive for more democratic constitutions was fuelled by popular movements and associations, starting with the 'free churches', i.e. new Protestant denominations connected with British and US Pentecostalism, Baptism, Mission covenants, and Methodism. The free churches were intimately connected with the somewhat later temperance movement, and to a

lesser degree with the labour unions which appeared at the same time, followed by the suffragette movements. The free churches played a decisive role for the development of civil rights and freedoms and the Lutheran model of church-state symbiosis. In Sweden conversion from the Lutheran state church was legalized in 1860, provided one entered another religious congregation (cf. Locke); not until 1951 could citizens enjoy freedom *from* religion without losing their citizenship, in accordance with the new European Convention on Human Rights (1950). In 1956 Sweden initiated the process of disestablishing the state church which was effectuated in 2000 (Andersen *et al.* 2006:12). In terms of causality, disestablishment of the Swedish Lutheran state church was thus related to increasing Christian religious diversity and human rights conventions but not to mass immigration from Africa and Asia and the arrival of Muslims, which began in the late 1970s.

The Norwegian constitution of 1814 did not grant religious freedom. In 1845 non-Lutheran churches were legalized and in 1851 Jews were allowed into the country; Catholic monks had to wait until 1897. Until May 2012 when the first step towards disestablishment of the church was taken, the Norwegian Constitution specified that at least half the members of parliament must belong to the church of Norway and that Norwegian children must be educated in church teachings.

Finland's Lutheran church was part of the Church of Sweden until 1809, when it became a Finnish state church with the Russian Orthodox Czar as its formal head. In 1869 the Church of Finland was institutionally separated from the state and received an autonomous legislative and doctrinal body, the General Synod. Finnish citizens were required to belong to either the Lutheran or the Orthodox churches until 1889, when other Christian churches were legalized. Full freedom of religion was granted in 1923 when the state redefined the Lutheran church from state church to national church; the latter term signifying 'the church for the Finnish people' rather than 'the church that is identified with the Finnish state'.

Denmark's constitution of 1849 defined the Lutheran state church as 'the people's church' ('folkekirke') and granted full religious freedom for citizens almost a century earlier than Sweden, Norway and Finland. Nevertheless, the Danish church is still a state institution since all legal decisions concerning the church must be taken by parliament and the state department of ecclesiastical affairs.

During the first half of the 1900s the churches lost their most important task which allowed them to teach Lutheran values to the people: basic education. By that time Lutheran monopoly on religious truth was no longer sustainable and the increasingly complex and industrialized economy required new forms of education. State departments of education were established; clergy were replaced by professional teachers and Lutheran dogma by new secular subjects; and religious tolerance became part of school teaching (Larsson 2006: 124). From that point onwards the Lutheran identity of the nations has been formally open to contestation.

*The Nordic Welfare State: Love between the State and the Individual*

While the democratic reforms of the 1800s laid the constitutional foundation of the modern Nordic states, it was the exponential growth in prosperity after 1945 that enabled the famous welfare state. Welfare states can be classified according to the relative responsibility allocated to the market, civil society, and the state in providing social services, as in Esping-Andersen's model of liberal, corporatist and universal welfare states, here described by Andersen and Molander (2003):

In the *liberal* welfare model [the USA, the UK] the state plays a limited and well-defined role in the sense of providing the ultimate floor in cases where the market and civil society do not suffice. State-provided benefits are often targeted, and concern about work incentives plays a dominant role. The *corporatist* or continental European model relies on the family and employers as the backbones of society and therefore also as providers of social services. In its modern form, private insurance schemes play a crucial role, and they are mostly tied to labour-market participation. The activities of the state tend to be directed towards



families rather than individuals. Finally, the *universal* or Scandinavian model has the state in a crucial role as supplier of social services. Benefits tend to be defined at the individual level, but with differences depending on the individual's labour market history. The main financial sources are taxes and fees. (Andersen and Molander 2003:10; italics added).

The Nordic universal welfare state has been combined with strong emphasis on solidarity, in terms of leveling income inequalities and sharing egalitarian values: 'The combination in Scandinavia of economic expansion with an interventionist state committed to use the public sector to reduce economic inequality has, since World War II, abolished the kind of abject poverty that continues to characterize life for significant minorities in other advanced industrial democracies, including Great Britain and the United States' (Einhorn and Logue 2003:16).

However, as Henrik Berggren and Lars Trägårdh have pointed out, solidarity is only one side of the Nordic model. The other is an extraordinarily strong commitment to the principle of individual autonomy and self-development which suffuses public institutions and national values and, in Trägårdh's and Berggren's analysis, explains the fact that the Nordic countries rank highest in the world in social trust (with Denmark as number one). Individual autonomy is connected to the idea that the state provides equal opportunities for all individuals to develop themselves without dependence on socially superiors, and this is what stimulates trust across social boundaries. This has led Berggren and Trägårdh to suggest the term 'Social Investment State' instead of 'welfare state', because the latter implies passive reception of welfare goods by the citizens, whereas the reality is that the state pushes individuals to develop themselves and thereby the social institutions (Berggren and Trägårdh 2011). In Trägårdh's words,

The 'Swedish Model', as it came to be known, was characterized by a particular form of statism built on a vision of a social contract between a strong and good state, on the one hand, and emancipated and autonomous individuals, on the other. Through the institutions of the state, the individual, so it was thought, was

liberated from those institutions of civil society—such as the traditional family, the churches and the charity organizations—that were associated with inequalities and relations of personal dependency. In this scheme, the ideals of social equality, national solidarity and individual autonomy were joined to the beneficial power of the state. This is a social contract that profoundly differs from those of most other Western countries outside of Scandinavia. (Trägårdh 2010:234).

This peculiar relationship between state and individual is reflected also in the Nordic civil society model. While health, school and higher education, and social work have traditionally been the state's responsibilities, sports and leisure, culture, housing cooperatives, consumer organizations, and adult education were organized by associations. Compared with associations in the USA and continental Europe which are funded by their members, the Nordic ones reflect a 'democratic corporatism' where citizens realize their political rights through state-funded, democratically governed associations (Trägårdh 2010:232–3). And whereas in the USA and the UK civil society is intended to check state power, the purpose of the Nordic associations has been to work *with* the state to protect 'ordinary people's interests' against 'bureaucrats, clerics, aristocrats and capitalists' (Pestoff 2004: 66); this being in line with the Lutheran love for the state and the Nordic Enlightenment legacy where the state protected the peasants' ownership rights against the aristocracy. The strong links that were forged between the associations and the Social Democratic and the Agrarian (small farmer) parties meant that these parties governed the Nordic countries from the 1930s and throughout most of the twentieth century, in agreement with industry and the private business sector.

Although class and family patterns of education and profession persist, social mobility did increase after World War II (Jonsson 1993). In particular gender equality has become a key national value and strongly connected with Nordic national identities. After World War II women's participation in the work force was required and public daycare for children was institutionalized (Leira 1992). It has been complemented by generous rights to parental leave: the Swedish norm is 18 months with full pay.

Women's economic independence has produced new concepts of mother- and fatherhood, i.e. both mothers and fathers are now in equal measure providers and nurturers. Sweden is spearheading a campaign for fathers to share parental leave with mothers, and paternity leave is increasingly supported by employers (SvD 2009; SVT 2009; NYT 2010).

Nordic sexual mores, as reflected in law and institutions, are more liberal and egalitarian than in many other countries. For example, the Nordic countries were among the first to legalize same-sex partnerships: Denmark in 1989, Norway in 1993, Sweden in 1994, and Finland on its way; same-sex marriage and the right to adopt children are now recognized in Norway, Sweden and Denmark (BBC 2002; Weekly Standard 2004; Ice News 2010). In World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2007 Sweden, Norway and Finland showed the least gender gaps, while the liberal welfare states rated much lower: the UK at number 11 and the USA at number 31 (World Economic Forum 2007). Currently, gender equality is perhaps the most publicly celebrated element in Nordic national identities.

#### *Changes in the Nordic Welfare State Model?*

Public spending increased in the Nordic countries throughout the 1950s, '60s and '70s, as in Europe at large. At the end of the 1980s the rise in public spending halted, and public spending decreased throughout the 1990s due to slower economic growth; ideological shifts to the right; longer life expectancy and fewer children; increased needs for childcare as more women join the work force on equal terms with men; longer periods of study and education in proportion to years of productive work; and changes due to the globalized economy (Stamsø 2009:20–1; 72–3).

The 1990s also saw a privatization of social service provision as Nordic administrations adopted 'new public management', the neoliberal policy of making public services more efficient by competing with private entrepreneurs and organizations for contracts to provide public services (Stamsø 2009). New public management is supported, as Lars Trägårdh shows, by Anglo-American political science theories that true liberal

democracy and market economy require that the state's urge to govern citizens' private lives through public service is checked by a powerful, state-independent civil society. This liberal civil society model is also associated with 'governance' of citizens through state-independent organizations rather than 'government' through state departments and public services (Trägårdh 2010). And new public management does appear to be related to some changes within the Nordic civil society model. New institutions – the Ombudsman – protect *individual* citizens' rights and interests but the *corporative* force of the Nordic associations has been weakened (Pestoff 2004). New public management has also meant that associations, employers and commercial entrepreneurs are providing some of the welfare services that were previously the state's responsibility (Hjelmtveit 2009:63; Øverbye 2009:344; Trägårdh 2010:237).

Yet the Nordic states still fund welfare provisions, even when these are private enterprises. This remains a major difference between the liberal and the Nordic universal welfare state models (Andersen and Molander 2002:1–22). Neoliberal new public management has thus introduced competition over welfare provisions and reduced public spending, but has not done away with either the universalism of welfare provisions or their tax funding. Civil society too continues to receive public funding (Berggren and Trägårdh 2011).

### **Immigration**

Since the 1970s (in Finland since the 1990s) the Nordic countries have received substantial numbers of immigrants from Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the former Soviet republics (Ingebritsen 2006: 90–1). In the same period, Denmark, Sweden and Finland joined the European Union, while Norway has remained outside but a signatory to the main EU treaties. By 2010, 14.1 per cent of the Swedish population were foreign born; in Norway 10 per cent; in Denmark 8.8 per cent; and in Finland 4.2 per cent (UNPD 2010).

Nordic immigration policies are strongly conditioned by labour market considerations (Brochmann 2003:5). The Nordic populations are ageing and immigration ensures a

vital work force, and is on the whole economically beneficial (Storesletten 2002; Moses 2006; HDR 2009; Leibig 2009). Yet public debates give the impression that immigration is an economic burden on the countries (Hagelund 2003; Migration Information 2004; Hultén 2006; Green-Pedersen 2009; Helsingin Sanomat 2010). Thus, one could say that the public's negative *impression* of immigration poses challenges for Nordic policies of solidarity and equal opportunities, rather than immigration as such.

The European Union's social policy emphasizes that immigrants and cultural minorities should be integrated through a process of mutual accommodation between minorities and majority institutions, and through intercultural dialogue (CBP 2003; DIDCP 2003; Klausen 2005:72–5). Among the Nordic countries, Sweden, Norway and Finland follow the EU's two-way approach to integration, albeit in their own different ways, while Denmark has opted for assimilation, i.e. minority cultural groups are obliged to adapt to the majority culture. Despite such different approaches to culture, all four countries are committed to securing immigrants' equal opportunities on the labour and housing markets and in the education system (IMDi 2008:10–11; Leibig 2009:16; SCB 2009). These commitments reflect the reality that many immigrants face difficulties in the labour market since their professional training is often not recognized in the Nordic countries (OECD 2007), and there is documented discrimination in hiring processes (Leibig 2009:65).

Regarding school education, OECD reports from the Nordic countries show that drop-out from upper secondary school and vocational training programs is significantly higher among immigrant children than among their peers. Concluding that school drop-out is the combined result of socio-economic inequality, segregation, culture barriers, xenophobia and discrimination, OECD evaluators have recommended comprehensive educational programmes for immigrant children, including extra second-language teaching; improving literacy in the first language; *not* separating immigrant children from the other school children in special schools and classes; teacher training in 'multicultural competence and sensitivity', and recruitment of teachers from different

cultural backgrounds; an encouraging school environment; and engaging parents in their children's school work (OECD 2005; OECD 2009a; OECD 2010).

Governments have responded to inequalities in labour markets and education by launching national action plans. Sweden, Finland and Norway have also appointed national Ombudsmen for ethnic discrimination (Hedetoft 2006:4–5; Leibig 2009; BLI 2010), and in 2009 Denmark introduced a Board of Equal Treatment (Safe Future 2009: 5). One example of a government action plan is the Norwegian Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, which has identified four target areas: work; upbringing, education and language; equality of opportunities; and participation. Concrete actions within these four areas involve ensuring the participation of immigrants' children in nursery schools from the age of four to stimulate learning the Norwegian language; free nursery school places for poor immigrant families; campaigns and education to prevent the early and sometimes forced marriages of young boys and girls; campaigns against female genital mutilation; more substantial 'introductory learning packages' about Norwegian language and society for new immigrants; initiatives in the public sector to actively recruit immigrants; specifically targeted networking activities; apprenticeships; and subsidized initial salaries and extended trial periods (Leibig 2009:26; BLI 2010).

However, not all political parties agree that immigrants should have equal opportunities. Electoral systems in the Nordic countries are proportional which enables anti-immigrant radical right populist parties (RRPs) to enter parliament.<sup>2</sup> Denmark, Norway and Finland have large RRP parties which emerged in the 1970s as protest parties calling for lower taxes and more welfare for 'the real workers'. In the 1990s they switched to ethno-nationalist rhetoric: immigrants are not of 'the people' and have no right to the nation's resources, a message which resonates well in times of economic recession and provides a lucrative electoral campaigning topic (Rydgren 2010; BBC 2011a; BBC 2011b).

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<sup>2</sup> Rydberg 2002:29: '[Radical right populist] RRP parties have ... strong ethnic nationalism and xenophobia in common with right-wing extremist and fascist parties, and ... populism in common with protest parties'.

Sweden has a smaller but even more explicitly racist anti-immigrant party with origins in neo-Nazi circles (SvD 2010). Since the late 1990s these parties have selected Muslims as their principal target, arguing that Islamic culture threatens the Nordic cultures which are identified as Christian and secular (since Christianity, unlike Islam, is considered to be compatible with a secular social order). In this they are imitating the European new right which over the last decades has replaced the concept of ‘race’ with ‘culture’ to explain why immigrants cannot be included in the nation (Stolcke 1995). Right-wing groups and parties thus identify the Nordic nations with ‘Christian culture’ in ethno-nationalist ways that exclude all immigrants and particularly Muslims.

While the radical right populist parties are democratic and represented by members of parliament, they have connections to anti-democratic extreme right-wing groups and often act as spokespersons for far-right views of immigrants, giving these views a semblance of normality (Pedahzur and Weinberg 2001). The following citation from 2007 is from a Norwegian far-right blogger, Jens Anfindsen, whose views appear identical with those of Anders Behring Breivik who killed 77 people on 22 July 2012 for their association with the governing Labor Party and its integration policy:

[W]e have the means of tackling the budding islamization of our nation at our disposal. First and foremost, we can simply restrict our immigration laws. An essential step in that regard would be to follow in the footsteps of Denmark and tighten the conditions for family reunifications. This is something my organization, **Human Rights Service**, actively works to promote. Secondly, we can stop government support of organizations that support Islamic terror. Thirdly, we can abandon the ridiculous idea that all religions are equal, and, consequently, the principle that all religions should be treated equal. We can face up to it that we are a country with a specific cultural heritage, that our values and the norms we want to uphold in our society are shaped by Christianity and by humanist enlightenment, and we can acknowledge that this is an heritage we want to preserve. We can, democratically, demand that those values and those norms, not those of Medina, be preserved as the foundations

for our society. It shouldn't really be that hard to do. So it will be my conclusion that, at present, **the greatest threats concerning the islamization of Norway do [not] stem from the Islamists themselves, but from relativism, multiculturalism and political correctness within our own ranks** (Anfindsen 2007; bold in the English original).

While the topic is Muslims, the quotation shows that the real target is those among the people who support Muslims' equal rights; an echo of traditional extreme right-wing views of the left. Yet the part about the irreconcilable difference between Christian-humanist Norway and Islam is commonplace in Norwegian radical right-wing populist rhetoric too (Akkerman and Hagelund 2007).

### **Nordic Muslims**

The majority of Nordic Muslims are of immigrant background, their presence in Nordic countries dating back no further than the late 1960s (Larsson 2009a). Danish and Swedish Muslims represent around 60 nationalities, the largest groups being Turks, Kurds, Moroccans, Iranians, Iraqis, Pakistanis, Bosnians, Kosovo Albanians, Somalis and Afghans (Larsson 2009b: 57; Schmidt 2009: 42). In Norway, Pakistanis from Punjab are the largest Muslim group. They were recruited as menial labourers in the 1970s and were followed by their families; but most of the other nationalities represented in Denmark and Sweden are also present (Jacobsen 2009:18). Finland boasts an indigenous Muslim population, the Tatars, who settled in the 1870s during the Russian duchy. After Finland's independence in 1925 Islam gained official recognition as a national religion. Following recent immigration, Finnish Muslims today also include the same nationalities as Danish, Swedish and Norwegian Muslims (Martikainen 2009:76–7, 79, 81).

Converts to Islam made up approximately 1.5 per cent of Swedish and Norwegian Muslims, and approximately 2.5 per cent of Danish Muslims (2004). Due to their familiarity with majority society, public institutions and norms, they often assume leading roles in Islamic organizations. This holds true also for women converts who



have been more ambitious to assume leadership roles than other Muslim women (Roald 2004:1).

In line with the publicly funded civil society model, in Sweden, Norway and Finland all religious organizations – including Islamic ones – receive public funding based on membership registers. In Denmark there is no public funding scheme for religious organizations other than the national church but private financial contributions are tax deductible.

Nordic Islamic organizations can be purely local as well as national, and their membership body can consist of one nationality or several, and they may also have transnational ties (Larsson 2009a). The most common transnational organizations with Nordic representation are the Muslim Brotherhood; Hizb al-Tahrir; Tablighi Jama‘at and Jama‘at-i Islami, which intersect with the Indo-Pakistani Deobandi and Barelwi schools; Minhaj ul-Qur’an; Sufi brotherhoods; the Turkish government organization Diyanet as well as the ‘non-governmental’ Fethullah Gülen, Milli Görüs, Süleymanli, and Nurcu; the ‘sectarian’ Ahmadiyya; Shiite organizations; and Salafism.<sup>3</sup> Local Nordic Islamic organizations are usually members of national ‘umbrella organizations’, except Salafis who tend to remain outside for doctrinal reasons. Some national organizations have European-level representation as well. For example, Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated organizations converge with the Brussels-based Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE) (Pew 2010; FIOE 2011) and its European Council of Fatwa and Research, which coordinates the production of *fatwas* that are in line with each European country’s national law.

In particular the Muslim Brotherhood-related organizations are ‘theorizing integration’ in a systematic way, because the Brotherhood in general is committed to a methodology (*minhaj*) of applying Islam to find solutions to all the issues that Muslims face in

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<sup>3</sup> See contributions in Larsson 2009. Concerning Salafism in Scandinavia, see Roald 2001:53–4; on Scandinavian Muslim converts and Salafism, see Roald 2004:154–61.

society. This ‘applied Islam’ is also, according to their methodology, the true and ‘authentic’ form of Islam (Lia 1998). Hence, in the Nordic context the Muslim Brotherhood promotes Muslims’ integration in majority society *through* applied Islam, arguing that it is cultural practices wrongly associated with Islam that prevent Muslims from integrating into society, not Islam ‘as it really is’ when applied in all spheres of individual and social life. The Salafis occupy a special place as opponents of the Brotherhood, because they too are committed to applying Islam to all spheres of life and society but in a different way. Where the Brotherhood develop their positions with only tangential reference to Islamic scriptures, the Salafis constantly engage with scripture, insisting that Muslims must follow the Prophet’s *sunna* as embodied in the traditions.<sup>4</sup> Even so, the non-violent among the Salafis are moving towards the same position as the Brotherhood regarding the need to interpret Sharia in accordance with national law.<sup>5</sup> Thus, even though integration is not a key concept in Salafi discourse as it is for the Brotherhood, and even though Salafis emphasize their difference from non-Muslims, they are still adapting Islam to the Nordic societies. Salafi insistence on following the Prophet’s *sunna* can thus be compatible with being a law-abiding Nordic citizen (see Mårtensson in this volume).

### **Islam as a Public Challenge**

As members of a European and international community, the Nordic countries are committed to freedom of religion and its public manifestation, and the right to non-discrimination on grounds of culture, religion and ethnicity. Yet the presence of Muslims and the notion that Islam is a part of Nordic national cultures and identities poses a variety of challenges to the general public.

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<sup>4</sup> On Salafism and relations with the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe, see e.g. Maréchal 2008:300–3; on general demarcation lines between the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafism, see Meijer 2009:1–32; and on Muslim Brothers and Salafis in Sweden, see Roald 2004:154–61.

<sup>5</sup> This was clearly expressed at two conferences with Salafi preachers in Norway (Oslo and Trondheim) during spring and early summer 2012, attended by the author.

First and foremost, Islam challenges Nordic commitments to rights. Mediatized public debates about the integration of Muslims are almost exclusively occupied with the duties of Muslims to become democratic, inclusive and gender equal, but ignore the question of Muslims' rights. The Open Society Report on Muslims in European cities (including Gothenburg and Copenhagen) found that Muslims were more supportive of religious freedom – even for other religions than Islam – and experienced more discrimination than non-Muslims. The report therefore recommended strengthening of commitments to human rights among the general populations (Open Society Report 2010: 101–6). A report by the Norwegian Directorate for Integration and Plurality (IMDi 2009) found that matters related to Islam and Muslims are given disproportionately large media attention given that Muslims constitute around 3 per cent of the population; that Muslims are overwhelmingly negatively represented; and that Muslims actually experience more discrimination than other minorities in the labour and housing markets. There is thus a connection between media discourses that are negative towards Muslims and actual discrimination against Muslims.

Even though there are obvious cases of Muslims' values clashing with such national values as gender equality and liberal sexual mores, the broader picture is not one of value clashes. The World Values Surveys data show that European and Nordic Muslims' values are evolving from the mainstream values of their countries of origins towards those of their European countries. Concerning democracy differences are insignificant. Significant differences concern gender equality and tolerance. But even here Muslims' values are moving towards the national averages and are comparable with those of conservative Christians (Inglehart and Norris 2009). However, this is not generally known. A Norwegian survey shows that non-Muslims think that Muslims are much more religious than they actually are, and that they do not share common Norwegian values, which Norwegian Muslims do to a much higher degree than the non-Muslims think. The discrepancies are thought to depend on media coverage of Islam and Muslims which is the only source of information about Muslims for many non-Muslim citizens (Antirasistisk Senter 2010; on Danish Muslims and democratic values,

see Gundelach 2012). Similar findings are brought out also in a study of Swedish non-Muslims' views of Muslims: the more non-Muslims know Muslims the less prejudice they have against them (Bevelander and Otterbeck 2012). Of course this lack of contacts and networks is part of the explanation for Muslims' unequal opportunities in the labour market, both for first- and second-generation immigrants (Leibig 2009:61–3; cf. Mustafa Hussain in this volume).

The traditional Nordic civil society model seems to be working quite well for Muslims, at least in Sweden, Norway and Finland, where public institutions engage with publicly funded Islamic organizations at national and local levels (Borell and Gerdner 2011; cf. Mårtensson and Vongraven Eriksen; Cato and Otterbeck; and Martikainen in this volume). In Denmark, which does not publicly fund religious organizations, the first national umbrella organization was established as late as 2006 and it is not serving as a contact point for public and state authorities as in the other Nordic countries (Kühle 2012).

Most Nordic Islamic organizations recruit their imams from abroad. The exception is the Finnish Tatars who traditionally recruited imams from their former Russian homelands and Turkey but are now educating imams from their own Finnish community (Martikainen 2009: 79). Foreign recruitment means that many imams are unfamiliar with the language, laws, public institutions and 'public affairs' of the countries in which they are supposed to guide their community. Swedish, Norwegian and non-Tatar Finnish Muslims have thus expressed a need for national training of imams (DN 2009; Utrop 2009; Helsinki Times 2010; YLE 2011). Deliberations over imams and education coincided in time with 9/11, when politicians came to see imams as key allies in counter-extremism and integration strategies. The security dimension turned education of imams into a polarizing issue, among academics and practitioners alike. Nevertheless concrete efforts towards establishing training programmes are being made. Norway has come furthest. After requests from immigrant leaders from a range of religions, a very successful two-year university course was set up in 2007 by Oslo University's Faculty of Theology. It includes Norwegian history and society; human

rights; spiritual counselling; and scripture and interpretation. Oslo University is also developing a programme for higher Islamic studies which, combined with theological studies at Islamic universities abroad, could provide formal qualifications for imams (Utrop 2009). Those engaged in these educational efforts in Norway are largely the same individuals who have been engaged in interfaith dialogue since the early 1990s, which partly explains the success in reaching common understanding of objectives and ways to proceed. In Sweden a government enquiry (SOU 2009; see Larsson in this volume) concluded there should be no special efforts by the state to establish higher Islamic studies, since that would imply state interference in Islamic internal affairs and singling out of Muslims among other religious communities. Yet the Swedish Christian Council (SKR) supported a state initiative:

[W]e find that the state can contribute to education of religious leaders of foreign background. Furthermore we suggest that certain stimulating measures, for example of an economic nature, are implemented immediately so that education can get under way and equality between communities be achieved in the long run. (SKR 2009).

It is interesting to note that the churches are now pioneering equal opportunities for Muslims. The Church of Sweden, formerly the guardian of Sweden's Lutheran national identity and creed, has gone ahead and employed an imam for an interreligious youth dialogue project (Svenska Kyrkan 2011); and in Norway the state church has encouraged the state Health Department to employ two 'hospital imams' in Oslo and Trondheim, inspired by hospital imams in Copenhagen (Mårtensson and Vongraven Eriksen in this volume; see also Baig 2012).

At the level of primary and secondary schools in Denmark, Sweden and Norway, Islam is taught as one of the world religions, although the Religious Studies curriculum is still dominated by Lutheran Christianity. Islamic schools – i.e. schools which follow national curricula and add Islamic subjects – were established in Denmark in the 1970s and in Sweden in the 1990s, as publicly funded but privately run 'independent schools'

(in line with new public management). In 1996 as many as 30 per cent of Muslim school children in some Danish cities attended Islamic schools (Pedersen 1996:208; Kuyucoglu 2009; Berglund 2010). In Norway the state funds around 70 per cent of the budget of private schools, including religious ones. One Islamic school started in 2001 and shut down in 2004 because of internal conflicts. However, three new primary and secondary schools have been granted permission to start in 2012 (NRK 2011a; NRK 2011b). Yet public debates are very negative towards Islamic schools, claiming that they obstruct integration by enforcing separate identities and authoritarian values. This is paradoxical since many Muslim parents choose Islamic schools because *they* experience that it is the *public* schools that cultivate exclusive identities and authoritarian values by refusing to accommodate their children's religious practices and by failing to encourage their school work (Pedersen 1996:208–10; Berglund and Hussain this volume); the parents' experiences are supported by OECD country surveys. In Finland – world-leading in the quality of school education – children are taught their own religion in public schools by teachers who have university degrees in a specific religion (mostly their own), which means that Muslim children are taught Islam by Muslim teachers with university degrees in the subject. Since 2001 Islamic teachers' training courses are provided by Finnish universities (Sakaranaho 2009). This system keeps Muslim children in public schools in the same time as it provides for high quality teaching of Islam.

Another challenging public issue is Sharia. Some academics argue that both national and international law, and precedents established by Jews and Catholics, implies that Sharia family law could be easily accommodated with current civil law (Sayed 2009; Christoffersen 2010; Modéer 2010). For example, Sayed (2009) in his Law dissertation from Uppsala University argues that international law and Swedish multiculturalism gives Swedish Muslims the right to follow Sharia family law, and that the specific Sharia ruling regarding different inheritance shares for sons and daughters can be accommodated within Swedish law through parents' right to give different shares to children. Yet Muslims are divided over the issue. The main Swedish Islamic umbrella

organization has declared that Swedish Muslims do not wish to institutionalize Sharia law, while the leader of another organization claims they do (Roald, this volume). Roald argues that support for Sharia law is mainly found among the first-generation immigrants while the second generation tends not to think that Islam requires it, not least because their values regarding gender equality are in line with general Nordic values. If so, debates about Sharia are likely to continue.

The most notorious public case related to Islam so far is the Cartoon Crisis, which erupted after the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-posten* in September 2005 published a series of twelve cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad, reprinted in February 2006 by the Norwegian right-wing Christian magazine *Magazinet*. Events unfolded quite differently in Denmark and Norway. The Danish prime minister initially rejected dialogue with Muslim representatives, the public debate focused on Muslims' failure to commit to freedom of expression, and Denmark's standing in the international community was quite damaged (Klausen 2009). In Norway the government engaged with the well-established dialogue between the Church of Norway and the Islamic Council of Norway. Consensus was reached that while freedom of expression is absolute, non-violent protests against perceived offences are protected by the same freedom (Leirvik 2011; cf. Leirvik, and Mårtensson and Vongraven Eriksen, in this volume). Sweden suffered a lesser cartoon crisis in 2007 which was managed in line with the Norwegian approach (Larsson and Lindekilde 2009). In Norway in particular, the interfaith dialogue and the government's support of Muslims' right to peaceful protests against offensive cartoons seriously challenged those who might have thought that Muslims are opposed to freedom of expression while 'Norwegians' identify with it.

A democratic challenge is the fact that Nordic Muslims are underrepresented in party politics and face difficulties participating in public debates. Johan Cato and Jonas Otterbeck's contribution to this collection illustrates how the Nordic association-model functions well so long as no public claims are made. As soon as Muslims publicly make

claims related to Islam they are liable to be accused of ‘Islamism’ which is depicted as a mixing of religion and politics that is incompatible with Nordic secularism.<sup>6</sup> The charge ‘Islamist’ has been directed against Muslim party politicians by their own party fellows as well as by rival parties and is highly discrediting. Muslim politicians who wish to deliberate ‘Muslim issues’ publicly thus put their careers at risk, which is a serious democratic problem.

As mentioned, media representations of Muslims often distort reality. In the Danish media the Nørrebro district of Copenhagen tends to be described as an internally segregated area with large numbers of ‘un-integrated’ Muslims. However, Mustafa Hussain shows that social cohesion between Muslims and non-Muslims in Nørrebro is considerably stronger than public debates suggest, and that the municipality is much more willing to consider Muslims’ concerns than one would expect from media reports about Danish officialdom’s fraught relationship with Islam. Muslims in Nørrebro also feel much greater trust in local politicians and inhabitants than in ‘Danish society’ as an abstract entity which they learn about mainly through media’s problem-oriented coverage. The main drawback identified by Nørrebro Muslims is the public schools: children are not sufficiently encouraged and there is little cultural understanding from school staff.

These challenges can be seen as having different layers. At the surface they reflect the obvious fact that Islam and Muslims differ from ‘Nordic standards’ and challenge the still highly uniform majority society to accept cultural diversity, to which there is considerable resistance. At a deeper level, however, these cases suggest not only differences but also similarities and contact points. It may well be that the Nordic publics are challenged not only to accept a new degree of cultural diversity, but also to see that different cultural practices and religious beliefs may conceal common concerns

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and values. It is tempting to suggest that Nordic pride in the uniqueness of our values can obstruct our ability to identify the same values in ‘others’. The following section will deal with this problem in more detail, with special reference to the relationship between Islam and secularization.

### **Public Islam and De-Secularization Debates**

A recurrent trope in media debates and academic research about Islam and Muslims is that secularism in the sense of ‘religion-free zones’ is something specifically Christian/European, and that Islam is interwoven with politics in a way that Christianity is not (Jung 2012; see for example Asad 1993; 2003). This topic will be explored below, with reference to academic debates about de-secularization.

The Nordic countries are the most secularized in the world and ‘secular’ is rapidly emerging as a significant attribute to Nordic national identities alongside ‘Lutheran’ (Zuckerman 2009). Phil Zuckerman explains this as a result of the longstanding Lutheran monopolies with their ‘secular’ division of power between state and church; secure welfare societies; and extraordinarily high participation by women in the work force which weakens the family’s role as religious socializer (Zuckerman 2009). In line with this, Trägårdh points out that the universal and individual-state oriented welfare mechanism has changed the family’s role from economic mainstay for individuals and enforcer of norms into a caretaker whose task is to support the individual’s autonomous life choices (Trägårdh 2010:235).

However, Finland shows stronger religious commitments in the population than the other three Nordic countries. Steve Bruce explains this in terms of a more recent and less stable welfare state and prosperity than in the other countries; but above all in terms of Finland’s more precarious national autonomy vis-à-vis Russia which has strengthened Finnish national identity and its religious (Lutheran and Orthodox) foundation (Bruce 2000). Tuomas Martikainen (in this volume) argues that Finland is undergoing de-secularization due to the effects of globalization, i.e. immigration; neo-liberal economics and new public management; and economic recession. All of which

gives more scope for religious actors in welfare services and, due to global concerns over Muslims and post-9/11 security, as dialogue partners with the government. Martikainen's research is part of the project 'Post-Secular Culture and a Changing Religious Landscape' (PCCR) based at Åbo Akademi University (2010–2014), which critically explores how religion takes new shapes and social roles in the context of modernity, globalization and neo-liberalism. Similarly, Yeung (2010) has found that while the Finnish churches always played a significant role in social work and services, this function declined during the economic growth during the 1970s and 1980s but has returned with the 1990s and the economic downturn.

In Sweden Uppsala University hosts a similar project framing research on religion, churches and welfare in Europe and the Nordic countries in terms of 'post-secular' society and new public roles for religion. Findings show that while churches in Germany, France and southern Europe often provide welfare services instead of the state, the Nordic churches provide substantial welfare services but of a kind that complements rather than substitutes for public provisions, such as extra assistance to specific groups. Yet the Nordic churches often 'take on a *vanguard* and *value-guardian* role in certain fields', especially community building efforts with such vulnerable groups as asylum seekers and new immigrants (Bäckström *et al.* 2011: 37; cf. Vongraven Eriksen and Mårtensson in this volume). The findings show that while the Nordic universal welfare state model remains intact the post-1990s recessions have made the churches' additional services more needed (especially in Finland), which gives them a new presence also in political deliberations over religion's public roles; this new public consciousness about religion signifies 'post-secular society' (Bäckström *et al.* 2011: chapters 1 and 2).

Concerning Muslims specifically and with reference to Sweden, Susanne Olsson argues that Swedish Islam is integration-oriented because its boundaries are negotiated in the public sphere and the Swedish general public says that Muslims must integrate. It is thus, according to Olsson, meaningful to say that even though Swedish Islam complies with Swedish secular norms, it represents what José Casanova (1994) has termed 'de-

privatized public religion', i.e. religious activists who break a pattern of privatization of religion by publicly negotiating established social boundaries for religion and norms for public debates (Olsson 2009:285–6).

Another study which includes Sweden compares Muslims' birth rates and religiosity with the European averages (Kaufmann, Goujon and Skirbekk 2011). The authors argue that population samples used in the European Values Surveys have included disproportionately low numbers of Muslims and therefore provide skewed data for assessments of the impact of Muslims on religion in European societies. On the basis of other data, the study finds that European (including Swedish) Muslims have significantly higher birth rates and higher religiosity than the population average, even among second-generation immigrants, and that de-secularization is likely to follow as the proportion of Muslims in the population increases (Kaufmann, Goujon and Skirbekk 2011).

This review of the empirical literature indicates that significant changes in religion's social roles are underway in the Nordic countries related to globalization, state welfare policies and Islam. In order to assess the implications of these changes a closer look at the broader debate about de-secularization and Islam is warranted.

The classic secularization thesis is associated with the founding fathers of sociology, Émile Durkheim (d. 1917) and Max Weber (d. 1920). They claimed that modernity entailed secularization in three senses: differentiation and separation between 'religious' and 'secular' functions in society (the state, the law, the economy, science, medicine, etc.); privatization, or the retreat of religion into the private sphere of personal faith and morality; and decline in the importance of religion both as worldview and as social institution (Casanova 1994: 19–20). Up to the 1980s the thesis appeared to be supported by surveys of declining church activities and watered-down beliefs within mainstream congregations (Dobbelaere 2002:17 *passim*). From the 1980s, however, new types of data showed significant differences in religious developments between countries; that religion continued to be important for individuals even in institutionally secularized

countries (Halman and Riis 2003); the rise of new politically active religions (Berger 1999); and the popularity of new religious movements. In Grace Davie's words, the social sciences now needed to 'embrace the fact that for most people in most parts of the world, to be religious is an integral *part of* their modernity, not a reaction to this' (Davie 2008:21).

José Casanova in his classic *Public Religions in the Modern World* (1994) conceptualized these new findings as 'de-privatized public religion':

Religion in the 1980s 'went public' in a dual sense. It entered the 'public sphere' and gained, thereby, 'publicity.' Various 'publics'—the mass media, social scientists, professional politicians, and the 'public at large'—suddenly began to pay attention to religion. The unexpected public interest derived from the fact that religion, leaving its assigned place in the private sphere, has thrust itself into the public arena of moral and political contestation. Above all, four seemingly unrelated yet almost simultaneously unfolding developments gave religion the kind of global publicity which forced a reassessment of its place and role in the modern world. These four developments were the Islamic revolution in Iran; the rise of the Solidarity movement in Poland; the role of Catholicism in the Sandinista revolution and in other political conflicts throughout Latin America; and the public reemergence of Protestant fundamentalism as a force in American politics (Casanova 1994: 3).

Casanova makes a point of keeping the three dimensions of the classical secularization thesis apart analytically. The differentiation dimension remains valid: societies around the world are increasingly functionally differentiated and religious institutions have not recaptured their pre-modern dominance over other functions and over individuals. It is the dimensions concerning privatization and decline of religion which need revising:

[T]he term ‘deprivatization’ is also meant to signify the emergence of new historical developments which, at least qualitatively, amount to a certain reversal of what appeared to be secular trends. Religions throughout the world are entering the public sphere and the arena of political contestation not only to defend their traditional turf, as they have done in the past, but also to participate in the very struggles to define and set the modern boundaries between the private and public spheres, between system and life-world, between legality and morality, between individual and society, between family, civil society, and state, between nations, states, civilizations, and the world system. (Casanova 1994:6).

One of Casanova’s interlocutors is Peter Berger. Responding to the cases of resurgent religious political activism documented in the five tomes of The University of Chicago’s *The Fundamentalism Project* (Appleby and Marty 1991–95), Berger revised his previous agreement with the classic secularization thesis:

[S]ecularization theory has ... been falsified by the results of adaptation strategies by religious institutions. If we really lived in a highly secularized world, then religious institutions could be expected to survive to the degree that they manage to adapt to secularity... What has in fact occurred is that, by and large, religious communities have survived and even flourished to the degree that they have *not* tried to adapt themselves to the alleged requirements of a secularized world. To put it simply, experiments with secularized religion have generally failed; religious movements with beliefs and practices dripping with reactionary supernaturalism ... have widely succeeded. (Berger 1999:4)

The fact that these movements are inspired by religion rather than by ‘secular’ factors such as human rights, economic equality, etc., implies that ‘counter-secularization is at least as important a phenomenon in the contemporary world as secularization’ (Berger 1999: 6).

In Berger's view Europe is the exception to this global pattern. Since the 1960s secularization has spread from the north-western to the southern and eastern parts of Europe, and it has transformed even strongly religious countries like Ireland. Berger suggests this is due to the combined effects of state power over the church and thereby crucially over school education; and high levels of individualism (Berger 2001: 446–48). Thus he disagrees with Grace Davie and Danièle Hervieu-Léger who claim that Europeans' religious beliefs are significant enough to claim that Europe is *not* becoming progressively more secular, in spite of falling church attendance (Berger 2001: 447).

Another important voice in the debate is Steve Bruce. Bruce claims that the classical secularization thesis holds true not only for Europe but for the USA as well, and he has criticized Berger's reasons for abandoning the paradigm (Bruce 2001: 89). According to Bruce, what matters is not what happens in the same short period across a range of countries—such as public appearances of religious activist movements—but 'what happens when the changes that purportedly cause secularization occur' (Bruce 2001: 89). For example, urbanization is connected with secularization in Europe and since it has occurred later in the USA than in Europe it has affected US religious life to a lesser degree than in Europe. But the trend is also turning in the USA. Statistics show no real growth in 'activist' evangelical churches if population growth and increased longevity are controlled for, and church-going in general is declining; hence even though US evangelicals have had a strong public presence the population is becoming less religiously active (Bruce 2001: 89; cf. Norris and Inglehart 2011: 89–95). Large numbers of religions in society can also be a misleading measure of de-secularization. Provided that states are neutral and allow religions to compete on equal terms, plurality furthers consciousness of alternatives and choice which is intrinsic to secular modernity (Bruce 2001: 88). In *God is Dead: Secularization in the West* (2002), Bruce concludes:

The combination of cultural diversity and egalitarianism prevent our children being raised in a common faith, stop our beliefs being constantly reaffirmed by religious celebrations of the turning of the seasons and the key events in the life cycle, and remove from everyday interaction the 'controversial' reaffirmation of a

shared faith... Nothing in the secularization paradigm requires that this be the fate of all societies. However, where diversity and egalitarianism have become deeply embedded in the public consciousness and embodied in liberal democracy, where states remain sufficiently prosperous and stable that the fact of diversity and the attitude of egalitarianism is not swept away by some currently unimaginable cataclysm, I see no grounds to expect secularization to be reversed (Bruce 2002: 240–41).

The decisive change which really impacts on secularization is thus capitalist economy and liberal democracy, which can sustain numerous publicly visible religions in the same time as religion's *overall* social significance decreases (Bruce 2002: 41). Hence, the establishment of the Islamic Republic in Iran in 1979–80, typically considered one of the major de-secularizing events, cannot be a sign of de-secularization because pre-revolution Iran was not a secularized society: the Shah was an autocrat; state modernization programmes had limited effects; urbanization was marginal; and the religious institution was powerful and socially significant. Similarly, the anti-religious communist regimes never achieved proper secularization because the mere fact that religion was considered harmful for the people gave it supreme social significance. The flourishing of religion in post-communist Europe may thus be a step on the way to secularization rather than a sign of de-secularization. Strong preoccupation with religion from the state, even if it is in a restrictive sense, thus signifies a strong social significance for religion, while neutrality implies that religion is insignificant even though there are many religions around. Even immigration of new and more religiously committed groups has no real impact on such a system, as evidenced by British Pakistanis. In spite of sizeable numbers in some cities and the strong social significance that they ascribe to Islam, they have not changed any structures in Britain; and their children and grandchildren display similar indifference to religion as their peer groups (Bruce 2002: 39–40). Bruce's findings thus contradict Kaufmann *et al.* (2011) who claim that second-generation Muslims have a stronger and different religiosity from other Europeans and that this could de-secularize Europe.

From Bruce's perspective the Nordic countries are actually becoming more secularized, not less, especially if we consider the disestablishment of state churches as religious neutralization of the state in order to accommodate religious diversity. The Swedish Lutheran church was disestablished in 2000 but the process was initiated in the 1950s in response to the 'free churches'; Norway took the first step towards disestablishment on 21 May 2012. From this viewpoint, the significance of religion can be predicted to *decrease* rather than increase due to globalization and its concomitant liberal democracy and neoliberal capitalism.

Regarding Muslims, we have seen how Steve Bruce claims that Europe secularizes Muslim immigrants. However, he also claims that majority Muslim countries are the last not to have become secularized. Yet experts on Muslim majority countries have identified the processes which Bruce sees as leading to secularization. Dale Eickelman's studies of political Islam show that modern mass education, media and politics have brought about 'objectification of Islam'. Instead of simply believing and practising Islam as everyone else does, modern individuals have made Islam an object of reflection, asking what Islam means *for them*. This implies recognizing that there are several competing interpretations of Islam, the prerequisite for the diversity-consciousness that Bruce associates with liberal democracy and secularization (Eickelman and Piscatori 1996:37–45). Eickelman has explored this topic further in a study of new media and 'Islamic public sphere', i.e. transnational debate forums where interpretations of Islam serve as the frame of reference:

As in earlier public spheres, challenges to authority revolve around rights to interpret. Consequently, Muslim politics is less an expression of a unitary voice ... than an engagement to argue over correct interpretations. What is new today is that these engagements spill out of a few specialized channels into many generalized ones. They do not necessarily become more public than in the past—mosque universities were public places and legal writings were public documents, although few had access to them; they instead become public in different ways. Their characteristic feature is more, and new, interpreters and, from them, the



engagement of a more diverse and wider public. (Eickelman and Anderson 1999/2003:6).

The use of new media also signifies political change, as Augustus Norton has pointed out: ‘The focus of new media overlaps with a heightened interest in civic pluralism in the Muslim world’ (Norton 2003:21). In 2011 and 2012 popular uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen brought down authoritarian regimes, and Islamists formed political parties and competed democratically in free and fair elections. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood has been a formidable civil society actor since the 1930s. In 2011 Muslim Brothers established the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) which is subject to the new national laws for political parties, not to the Muslim Brotherhood. The latter remains a religious organization whose principles inform the political party’s programme but which is administratively autonomous. While the FJP (and the Salafi al-Nour Party) represent a new type of religion-based party in Egypt, they do not represent de-secularization because Egypt has never been secularized in the sense proposed by Steve Bruce. Rather, these parties potentially comply with secularization in the sense of functional differentiation: as political parties they are subject to political not religious rules, much like European Christian Democrat parties. Provided that Egypt continues to develop in a democratic direction political participation by Islamist parties will only further secularization.

These examples show that even in Muslim majority countries and even with political Islam as the case in point, developments are too complex to warrant the conclusion that Islam is resilient to secularization.

### **‘Post-secular Society’: Religion as Democratic Challenge**

In this final section Jürgen Habermas’ concept of ‘post-secular society’ (Habermas 2008) will be addressed. The above-mentioned Åbo Akademi and Uppsala University projects on ‘post-secular society’ imply that we are already there, i.e. we live in a post-secular society. However, Habermas’ use of the same concept is as much normative as it

is descriptive which has implications for how it should be used with reference to the de-secularization issue.

Habermas' thought in general revolves around the problem of political legitimacy in liberal democracy. Recently he has focused on the problem that while there is a global resurgence of religious political activism involving Europe, religious European citizens are largely excluded from public political deliberations, sometimes because of the exclusive nature of their arguments but increasingly often because of the exclusive approach towards religion taken by members of the 'secular' public. Exclusion of religious citizens from public deliberative discourse constitutes a problem for democratic legitimacy:

[T]he content of political decisions that can be enforced by the state *must be formulated in a language that is equally accessible to all citizens and it must be possible to justify them* in this language. Therefore, majority rule turns into repression if the majority, in the course of democratic opinion and will formulation, refuses to offer those publicly accessible justifications which the losing minority, be it secular or of a different faith, must be able to follow and to value by its own standards (Habermas 2007:16; italics in the original).

The problem is not solved by abandoning political and legal secularism, because that is the prerequisite for plurality and liberal democracy itself. Instead religious citizens should 'translate' religious arguments and concepts into secular terminology, and non-religious citizens should consider the relevance of 'translated' religious concepts for the common good (Habermas 2007:16–18). The result would be 'post-metaphysical thought', i.e. the recognition that political concepts such as autonomy, individuality, emancipation, solidarity, and social contract have ancient genealogies within the Judeo-Christian religious traditions. While Habermas' examples are limited to these religions, the Islamic scripture and Prophetic legacy reflect a concept of social contract founded on the principle of individual legal responsibility and publicly known, written laws (Mårtensson 2008; 2010). Post-metaphysical thought, thus,

is prepared to learn from religion while remaining strictly agnostic. It insists on the difference between certainties of faith and validity claims that can be publicly redeemed or criticized; but it refrains from the rationalist temptation that it can itself decide which part of a religious doctrine is rational and which part is not. This ambivalent attitude to religion expresses an epistemic attitude which secular citizens must adopt, if they are to be able and willing to learn something from religious contributions to public debates—provided it turns out to be something that can also be spelled out in a generally accessible language. (Habermas 2007: 19).

Post-metaphysical thought would be an attribute of ‘post-secular society’, the next conceptual step in Habermas’ thought on religion (Habermas 2008). Post-secular society is functionally differentiated but includes religious individuals in all of its functions, including public political deliberation. Thus it implies a *change in consciousness and public discourse* rather than in social organization. This change is triggered by three circumstances. Firstly, the public is aware that religion plays an important role in globalized conflicts and that modernity will not bring about religion’s demise. Secondly, new religious actors appear in national public spheres acting as mediators between religious groups and majority society. Thirdly, both global and national public religious actors are identified with immigrants’ communities and the challenges European countries’ face as they try to accommodate the cultural plurality associated with immigration (Habermas 2008:19–20). While these three circumstances are quite present, the inclusion of religious citizens in public political deliberation is a norm that remains unfulfilled. This becomes particularly clear when ‘post-secular society’ is seen in relation to ‘post-metaphysical thought’: Muslim Nordic citizens cannot yet participate in public deliberations about the common good. Post-secular society thus signifies an objectification of secularization, i.e. instead of simply living it we are now able to take a critical distance from it and reflect over what it means and does, as it is going on. One of the things it does, according to Habermas, is to exclude religious citizens from deliberating on the common good.

However, this has not kept Muslims from trying. The Muslim Brotherhood, which in Europe represents an integration-oriented concept of Islam, is a case in point. Their network, the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE; Pew 2010), has developed a platform for European Muslim citizenship which frames key civic concepts such as active citizenship, rights, and tolerance as core Islamic values and shows awareness that they must convince a suspicious general public of the goodness of Islam:

The Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE) is a cultural organization, with hundreds of member organizations spread across 28 European States, all subscribing to a common belief in a methodology based on moderation and balance, which represents the tolerance of Islam. The Federation was founded in 1989 as a natural outcome of the development of Islamic work in Europe, to organize efforts, and prevent fragmentation. In a short time, it was able to secure many achievements, to mention a few; unifying the political discourse, and embracing the idea of establishing Islam as an intrinsic and positive element in European life. As a result of these endeavors, Muslims were transformed from mere powerless migrants into positively contributing citizens: enjoying the same rights, and shouldering the same responsibilities as the native population. Today, the Federation, in representing the principles embodying the humane dimension in Islam, is an asset to the European arena that cannot be underestimated, bringing exemplary added value to European civilization, which has long imbibed from the fountain of Islamic civilization—benefiting from its sciences to achieve European Enlightenment. In the context of organizing its work, the Federation formulated a constitution that is an expression of its methodology as a European Islamic institution seeking to serve European society, with the goal of achieving security and prosperity. Moreover, cooperating with the other constituents of society to consolidate the principles of social justice, protect citizens from all forms of discrimination, and combat all kinds of crime. The efforts of the Federation—as the largest Islamic organization on the European level—were ceaseless in seeking to remove the barrier built on fear of the Islamic presence in the West; a fear fed

by biased media, and some political forces that advocate hostile language and attitudes against the Muslim minorities. These Federation efforts were crowned with the announcement of the European Muslim Charter on the 10th of January 2008 in the capital of the European Union—Brussels, which reassured Europeans and emphasized that the Islamic presence represents exemplary added value, and cultural wealth to the advantage of Europe (FIOE 2011).

According to the FIOE, then, the European Enlightenment itself has Islamic roots, which makes Islam the *source* of modern *secular* European polities. The approach counters claims by Muslims and non-Muslims alike that European values associated with the Enlightenment are incompatible with Islam, and it puts FIOE forward as mediator and ‘translator’ between Muslim communities and the general public. Through FIOE’s sub-organization, the European Council of Fatwa and Research (ECFR), which assists imams and Muslim leaders to interpret Sharia in accordance with European national laws and policies, FIOE’s concept of Muslim citizenship is being activated at national levels (Caeiro 2004; see also Leirvik, and Vongraven Eriksen and Mårtensson in this volume concerning the Muslim Brotherhood in Norway). ECFR and its local users thus present interesting cases for the study of ‘translations’ between Islamic and secular concepts, or overlaps and similarities between seemingly different Islamic and public values and concerns.

To conclude, Habermas’ concept ‘post-secular society’ signifies the democratic legitimacy problems that ensue from two simultaneous conditions: that society contains a range of religions whose members must be included in public institutions and discourse on the same conditions as other citizens; and that the general public tends to reject religious citizens’ contributions to the common good because these are seen to clash with secular concepts and values. In this sense the concept ‘post-secular society’ addresses democracy deficits related to religious groups and their participation in public discourse, rather than processes of de-secularization. It is therefore well suited to the Nordic context where secularism is simultaneously either associated with Lutheran

Christianity as the foundation of national identities, or replacing it, depending on the proponent.

**Conclusion: Changing Realities?**

The universal and individual-oriented Nordic welfare state model has changed due to globalization and its neoliberal economic dimension. Welfare services are now provided both by the public sector and by private entrepreneurs and civil society organizations. However, these private welfare service provisions and civil society organizations remain largely publicly funded and subject to public regulations, which is the feature that continues to distinguish the Nordic welfare state and civil society from its liberal and corporative counterparts.

Another significant dimension of globalization for changes related to religion is international law, here human rights and in particular freedom of religion and rights to non-discrimination. The European Convention on Human Rights and Freedoms entered into force in 1953. At the very same time Sweden initiated a process to disestablish its Lutheran state church because the proliferation of ‘free’ Protestant churches required separation between citizenship and membership of the state church. Once that step was taken the route was set towards the religious neutralization of the state. Following Steve Bruce, who premises secularization on the kind of liberal democracy that is the political side of human rights, even though this development might be accompanied by more numerous and more active religions in civil society, it is nonetheless a process of increasing secularization, not de-secularization.

Bruce’s approach has paradoxical implications concerning political Islam, in Muslim majority countries as well as in Europe and the Nordic countries. It implies that Islamic political parties and civil society organizations which take part in democratic politics and submit to its political rules are furthering secularization, not de-secularization. The objectification of Islam in which they are currently engaged is done with reference to such secular concepts as citizenship, human rights and freedom of religion, and it is thus no surprise to find that in the European and Nordic contexts it is also these ‘Islamist’

organizations that most systematically engage in translating Islam to civic concepts. If we combine Bruce's approach with Habermas' 'post'-concepts, the implication is that since the Nordic public has not yet started to consider seriously Muslims' contributions to the common good, it is the former who are insufficiently secularized: they fail to identify the secular meanings of religion, and especially Islam. The fact that we find the Lutheran churches at the forefront of pioneering efforts to promote equal rights and employment opportunities in order to integrate Muslims into the welfare state system, with its secular rules and regulations, further underlines this curious possibility that religion is promoting secularization. However, given that Islam is as adaptable to this as Lutheranism, one cannot attribute this development to any secularism inherent in Nordic Lutheranism but rather to the secularizing forces of liberal democracy. The final twist would thus be to say that in so far as the churches are promoting Muslims' equal rights and opportunities to a higher extent than public authorities, the churches are the true proponents of liberal democracy and human rights. This development represents an enormous progressive change in the Church's view of the nation and of non-Lutheran religions' rights, due to the forces of international law.

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