
0:00:00.0

Interviewer: You noted in *The War for Muslim Minds* that after the Madrid train bombing in the spring of 2004, “Europe emerged as the primary battlefield on which the future of global Islam will be decided.” I think you can help clarify a couple things for our listeners. One, who is this war in between? And secondly, who is currently winning?

Gilles Kepel: Well, *The War for Muslim Minds* was the English translation of a title of the book in French, which was actually an Arabic word, *Fitna*. And fitna means internal strife within the community of believers or of Muslims, and this strife was, in my view, something that was taking place between Muslims and people from Muslim decent in order to control the hearts and minds of the community. The radicals and the Islamists on the one had and the moderates and the secularists on the other hand.

Within Europe there is a debate that is raging between different models of settlement, of integration on the one hand or of multiculturalism or of segmentation on the other, and this debate is taking place differently. According to the countries of residence of Muslims in Europe, whether it be in Britain, in the Netherlands where you will have a more multiculturalist on the one hand. Or France, on the other hand, where there is a more integration-sort-of-looking path, and also it has to do with history of the countries where the Muslim population came from.

For instance, in the Indian subcontinents out of which most Muslim immigrants to Britain originated, you already had a very strong tradition of segregation and separate development between Hindus and between Muslims themselves. So, the present outcome in Europe is a mix of national traditions of the countries of origin and, also, the national traditions of the countries of reception, to a large extent.

0:02:34.4

Interviewer: In this war it seems different European governments have employed different strategies. Can you compare the French model of integration versus the British example of multiculturalism?

Gilles Kepel: Well, Britain, as the name indicates, UK, is a kingdom that is united. That is to say there are different entities under that kingdom. You have Wales. You have England. You have Scotland, and then when people from the Muslim world started to arrive after World War II to the UK they could become British, but

they could by no way become English or Welsh or Scot. And then there was some sort of a spot that was created for them so they would be – originally they were called "black British" and then "Asians" and then some community leaders would struggle so that within the statistics of the national census they would be called Muslims.

So, in Britain you are in a country where nationality and citizenship do not mean exactly the same. There is a spot for nationality to be built under the general umbrella of citizenship. Whereas in France, citizenship and nationality are one in the same, and you can be born French, but you can definitely become French. This is part of the mystique or the national ideology of the French that they believe the best thing that can happen to someone is to become French. That is when he lives in France, of course. That has to do with culture, education and so on, irrespective of anyone's faith or beliefs.

0:04:29.5

Interviewer: What is the threat or concern that we are actually talking about...is it the creation of a Eurabia? (Muslim's demographic potency and resistance to Euro culture) or is it more fringe movement that is highly radicalized and dangerous?

Gilles Kepel: Contrarily to what many people read or heard, particularly in some of the U.S. or British media which painted the riots of the fall of 2005 as a sort of spread of jihad and the building of Islamisten in French banlieues or outskirts of the big cities, actually, Islamist movements were not very present in those riots. It was mainly something that had to do with the desire to be better integrated, to have better access to French society, to fight against job discrimination, for instance, to have better lodgings and it was not something that translated into a refusal of being first, but rather something that had to say we would like to be more into the system instead of remaining at its margins.

0:05:48.2

Interviewer: How did different European countries react once it became clear that these Muslim immigrants were going to stay?

Gilles Kepel: Well, depending how you define Muslims. If you think that anyone whose name is Ahmad or Jasmina is belongs to a group which is totally homogenous, which is the group of Muslims, that they will not mingle with others and that they will create big

ghettos that will expand, then you may have some sort of concern.

But if you believe that people from Muslim decent are bound to blend with the native population of Europe, then you have a totally different picture, and the children of people educated in France, for instance, parents coming from North Africa or parents who usually are mixed couple are considered as French first and foremost, and their religion belonging then becomes secondary.

A county like France, for instance, was created out of successive waves of immigrants, to some extent, just like America, except that there was always a strong element, of course, of the indigenous population. If you look at the French telephone book today you see a number of people with foreign names, just like mine, actually, who have been totally integrated into the French system and who think of themselves as French, whatever their origin, their religion, their nationality or the color of their skin.

0:07:54.1

Interviewer: Can you briefly provide a history of the circumstances under which Muslims began coming to Europe in large numbers?

Gilles Kepel: Well, the reasons why we had those immigrant populations coming to Europe after World War II was that Europe was destroyed and it needed to be rebuilt and there was a shortage of manpower, and so European corporations, the construction industry and the like, were looking for massive, unskilled labor, and they went to search it into Southern Europe because Eastern Europe was under communist yoke. People came from Portugal, from Spain, from Italy and also came from the former colonial empires. So, originally those people were not Muslim in majority, but they were from southern Europe. Then when southern European countries developed, the number of people from the southern or eastern shores of the Mediterranean, most of them happen to be Muslims, came to Europe.

But they were not perceived as Muslims, per se, until the mid-1970s because at the time before those days they were called migrant workers or *Gastarbeiter* in German or *travailleurs immigré* in French, and they came as singles. They were males. They were occupied, and they would spend a few years in Europe, making as much money as possible, sending remittances back to their country of origin and usually coming back one day and being replaced by a cousin or a relative.

All these things stopped in the 1970s after the first oil shock

because the economic crisis was such that there was no significance, unskilled labor force that was needed, and all those people went unemployed or many of them were unemployed. Instead of going back to their country of origin, they thought they could stay because they had no memories of unemployment, and not only they could stay, but they would bring their families. This is what really started the settlement process.

And that came at a time when there was a major identity crisis because those people were unemployed. They didn't have a working-class identity anymore. They didn't unionize anymore, and they were not really feeling Algerian or Moroccan or Pakistani or Indian anymore, but they were not yet feeling French or German or British. It's in the sort of vacuum between those previous identities that this Islamic dimension developed to some extent, and it was an Islamic dimension that had to be rebuilt and adapted to the European context because the challenges those people met were very different from the ones they would meet at home, and you had a great competition between a number of people who would say, "Well, you have to do this and that because you are a Muslim." And other would say, "No, this is not Islam." Gradually, you had a number of competitors to control the hearts and minds of those populations.

Interviewer:

And what about the government? The government of France or Britain, when did they realize they had a new community to work on integrating or to somehow deal with?

Gilles Kepel:

Well, by the end of the 1970s I think the measure was taken, but things were different on both sides of the channel. In Britain there was a very strong accent that was put on the fact that you had to deal with people according to their religious identity. You dealt with Muslims. You dealt with Hindus. You dealt with Sheiks, and these were categories that had already been used by the British colonial empire in India, in the Raj. And those categories were just duplicated or reproduced on British soil.

Whereas, in the French system the vast majority of colonial French, North Africa, was Muslim, so you don't really have to differentiate between people in terms of religious identity, and therefore, the role of the traditional French integration machines like the unions or the youth associations was much greater. And at the time, young people from the Muslim world or from the Arab world in France liked to call themselves "burr," which is a back slang word in French coming from *Arabe* that you put the other way around, then *rebut* and then burr because they wanted to bear testimony that they were sort of a mixed group. They were both

Arab and French or neither/nor and they were the bearers for a new set of values and or ideas. Then, afterwards, this movement came in competition with Islamic groups who were altogether carried rather different identification.

Interviewer: One, as I was looking back at this history, one particular data point that struck me was the Rushdie affair, and you commented on that a little bit. Was this perhaps a turning point or at least a wake-up call to many in Europe about this situation?

0:06:01.1

Gilles Kepel: Well, the Rushdie affair in 1989 was very important because it was the first time when someone who had become European citizen, Salman Rushdie, was threatened by – in the name of Islam, threatened to death by the name of someone talking out of Iran. It was a need to say for Ayatollah Khomeini and his ilk the traditional borders of the land of Islam were not significant anymore for him, that nowadays anyone in the world was to be under the yoke or Islam if he were a Muslim.

And so, the Rushdie Affair was a very important watershed period, and it became the same year as the veil affair in French schools in 1989. Both were very telling about each country's history. In Britain, students were wearing veils and it was no problem because there was a sort of enhanced multiculturalism where everybody was pushed to develop his own peculiarities and things that were common values such as Britishness were considered irrelevant.

Whereas in the French case, when you had those Muslim female pupils who started to wear veils in the classroom at the bequest of Islamist movements who wanted to test the resistance of the French school system, then reaction in France in many quarters was adamant because they thought that it was something that would destroy, that would tear the national fabric, that whatever their differences, kids in their classroom have to put what they have in common before their differences. Then after they're out of school they're free to do what they want, but the school system has an ambition to sort of be a general mold or nothing, if you wish, for all the French students wherever they come from.

So, in a way, it epitomized the opposition between the multicultural model on the one hand and the integration model on the other. That went through the last decades and would not extend the riots in France in 2005 or the outcome of an integration model that has not worked well where people are supposed to be integrated, would like to be but do not feel they are. And the

bombings in the London transport system in July 2005 were, to a large extent, the outcome of the communist system of fragmentation of communities because the young guys from Leeds and other places who planted the bombs in the Tube and buses, or on the bus, actually lived in the shelter of their community. Where traditional community leaders would not tip the British police anymore about those guys, something they had done in the past, because since Tony Blair had gone into Iraq then he was not considered a friend of the Muslim world anymore. Local Islamic organizations did not want to exercise restraint.

Interviewer: That's interesting. I want to follow up on that London bombings a little bit. So, there was for some time anyway a modus vivendi, a deal between the community and Britain and the leadership in Britain, and you think that broke down somehow?

0:10:45.4

Gilles Kepel: Yes, to a large extent. I mean the – Tony Blair thought the multicultural system in Britain, the fact that there was so many hijabs, the Brits loved everything Islam. In a lot of sense you had all the major radical ideologues of Islamist persuasion who lived in Iran in London, and they could say whatever they wanted. They could broadcast whatever they wanted, and this was something that Blair thought would be his insurance policy vis-à-vis his Iraqi adventure, but it went the other way around.

Not only didn't it protect him against the Iraqi adventure, but his chicken came home to roost, and then he lost his grip over the institutions of those communities in Britain, and the occasion of the Iraq War is one of the reasons why the Labor Party ask him to step down. Nowadays they are grappling with that issue. He doesn't look too good for them electorally because there is widespread thinking in Britain the reasons for the bombings and the like was the weakness of the Blair system and the imperfections of the multiculturalist model.

Interviewer: And has there been efforts to improve that or to shift to a more integrative model do you think?

0:12:28.2

Gilles Kepel: I guess that the British model is by now far less assertive, and three years ago the British foreign office had a problem that was called Engaging the Islamic World where they tried to bring with them a number of people, such as Tariq Ramadan and Yusuf al-Qaradawi and all that, and this was under the aegis of the former mayor of

greater London, Ken Livingstone. But then they sort of became suspicious that this system would not work, that actually the moderates, quote/unquote, they had with them were actually having their own agenda, so they parted company, which led to a lot of acrimony on both sides. Nowadays, engaging the Islamic World Program has been replaced by a program that is Preventing Extremism or De-radicalization, which is not exactly approached in the same manner.

Interviewer: We talk a lot about the effects of 9/11 on the United States, but I'd like to at least quickly touch on the effects in Europe because a lot of those ideas and the people originated in Europe. Overwhelm did Europe respond to 9/11?

Gilles Kepel: Well –

Interviewer: Was this –

Gilles Kepel: Sorry, 9/11 did not take place in Europe, so there was a lot of solidarity with Americans, and one can remember a famous editorial piece in *Le Monde*, which is not known for necessarily it's pro-American stance, which read, "We are all Americans." *Nous sommes tous Américains*. And this was something that with which a number of people identified, they could be bombed and could be victims of such a phenomenon.

So, there was this first reaction, so it struck the U.S., and we have expressed solidarity with the U.S., but it didn't strike us. Then the real stakes would take place in a little while after when you had the bombings in Madrid on the 11th of March, 2004 and then, first and foremost, the London bombing of July 2005.

Interviewer: And so, I mean, these could be just one dramatic and devastating incident after another. Kind of when we take a step back, more importantly, what did it reveal to Europeans, or what did they try to take away from those incidents like Atocha and like the London bombings?

0:15:49.0

Gilles Kepel: Well, the London bombings and the stabbing of Theo van Gogh –

Interviewer: Yes. I wanted to get to that too.

Gilles Kepel: And the Madrid bombings were perceived as something that questioned the political model that had made that possible, and one of the reasons the multi-culti system, which was very strong in both the UK and the Netherlands is now in deep crisis because

many people to turn a blind eye on those issues now consider that multiculturalism was smashed open by terrorist practice and that terrorism could develop because multiculturalism provided for shelter, to a large extent, gave opacity to groups that would not integrate into the fold.

And that does not mean, of course, that most people from Muslim decent in Europe are sympathizers of the radicals. That's not the case, definitely. But multiculturalism was actually perceived in the very countries where it had flourished that it ended of death rather than idea.

Interviewer: And it kind of gave rise to a new sort of European politician to, which is more xenophobic, and I'm talking about individuals like Geert Wilders or LaPen. How did this European system respond, or how did a lot of the European public feel?

0:17:42.7

Gilles Kepel: LaPen is not really in great shape anymore in France. He's sort of old hat more than anything else. Geert Wilders in the Netherlands is more marginal, I would say, and he's a mainstream figure. So, you have xenophobic movements and groups. You have very significant rise of young elites from Muslim generation who are extremely interesting to the youth.

Interviewer: I want to kind of push you on this European reaction a little bit. How has it been – the threat of Arabia, how important is that if I walk along the street and talk to the common French person or someone in Holland? Are they so concerned about this? Are they less tolerant of any kind of multicultural idea anymore?

Gilles Kepel: No. I don't think so. If you go to Europe nowadays you'll see a number of people from Muslim decent who have made their way up. And there is an emerging middle class from Muslim origin, people who have now gone to university or got a college education or a university education who really feel they are part and parcel of the fold.

Interviewer: So, is this kind of just an economic and a function of time? As Muslims get richer they're going to get better integrated into Europe?

Gilles Kepel: I guess so. I mean, it's not only a question of wealth. It's also a question of education and job opportunities.

Interviewer: And just quickly, the idea of the French Laïcité I think is very different from the American conception of freedom of religion –

freedom for religion versus freedom of religion. And can you talk a little bit about that and how that's played into the headscarf debate and those sort of things?

0:20:00.0

Gilles Kepel: Well, the Laïcité system in France, which translates more or less by secularism, is one of the cornerstones of the French Republic that considers the state is not religious. It shouldn't have an established religion, as opposed to Britain where you have Anglican, for instance, nor should it prohibit the practice of religion as long as this practice of religion takes place within the confines of public order. And Laïcité had to deal with groups that were slightly radical and considered there was no such thing as Laïcité, but you had to sort of fight against it, and that was some of the incidents taken place during the Rushdie Affair and other countries at the same moments.

Interviewer: And I want two incidences that you said you talked about in your new book, the pope's speech about Islam and rationality and the cartoons over the prophet Muhammad, can you kind of contrast the reaction in the Muslim world to the reactions of Muslims in Europe? Why do you think Muslims in Europe responded differently?

Gilles Kepel: Well, because to a large extent, they knew what was at stake. They knew it had to do with their existence in Europe, and they were concerned in case there was a major and badly perceived by the other Europeans reaction to Muslims in Europe, then they would have to suffer in the future of the identity they were creating.

Whereas, as far as the Rushdie Affair is concerned, it's had more to do with the competition between Muslim powers that the organizations and so on, and that was definitely one of the reasons why we had so much fire and smoke, if you wish, on the Muslim world side of the reactions to the affair.

Interviewer: Do you think it indicates that Muslims in Europe are becoming To a large extent, you have an option for renewed European secularism, which is something in which Islam can find its place on the condition that Muslim leaders and thinkers in Europe take seriously the intellectual, political and cultural dimension of Europe. They have to be European first. Otherwise then we'll have a problem.

On the other hand, you have a number of people who consider that Europe is, by their standards, just like it was by Donald Rumsfeld

standards, old Europe. It's a sort of passive thing that has to be conquered by jihad, and I believe this is still a minority feeling, but then the debate is raging between those two conceptions. This is where you have the war of the Muslim minds, which I refer to in my title. And this war still has not been won by any other protagonists better integrated in Europe that the protests were less violent than they were in other areas?

0:22:46.5

Gilles Kepel: To some extent, yes. As the population is growing you have people who just came and people who are engaged into delinquent activities. As is the case in many human gatherings, what is definitely significant over the last decade is the upward social mobility if not the majority of segment of that population, and this is going to change the issues completely.

Interviewer: A lot of this you said has been taking place within the Muslim community in Europe, and we're having two of those figures on our program: Ayaan Hirsi Ali and, of course, Tariq Ramadan. What do those different figures represent in Europe or to the Muslim population, and which figure is going to kind of help Muslims in Europe be able to get along?

Gilles Kepel: To a large extent, you have an option for renewed European secularism, which is something in which Islam can find its place on the condition that Muslim leaders and thinkers in Europe take seriously the intellectual, political and cultural dimension of Europe. They have to be European first. Otherwise then we'll have a problem.

On the other hand, you have a number of people who consider that Europe is, by their standards, just like it was by Donald Rumsfeld standards, old Europe. It's a sort of passive thing that has to be conquered by jihad, and I believe this is still a minority feeling, but then the debate is raging between those two conceptions. This is where you have the war of the Muslim minds, which I refer to in my title. And this war still has not been won by any other protagonists.

Interviewer: And how can European governments help a more secular and moderate Muslim Europe overcome that more radical and dangerous group?

0:25:23.3

Gilles Kepel: Well, I believe that one thing that has to be done is public policies that encourage education access to jobs, and in my own institution,

Sciences Po, which is a sort of training leaders for tomorrow. We have special programs targeting kids from deprived areas, whether they are Muslims or not, but many of them are, who are hyper-achieving but who would not have made it through the regular selection process. So, as to educate the leaders of tomorrow in all branches of activity, out of those young people who come from within the outskirts of society, and this is one issue that is extremely important, and hopefully it might be successful.

This transcript has been edited for clarity