

Women living under muslim laws
النساء في ظل قوانين المسلمين
Femmes sous lois musulmanes

**Women's Teach-In:
Antimilitarism,
Fundamentalisms/Secularism and Civil
Liberties & Anti-Terrorism Legislation after
September 11th 2001**

Organised by
Act Together,
Southall Black Sisters,
Women Against Fundamentalisms,
Women in Black (London),
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom,
and Women Living Under Muslim Laws
and held on 8 September 2002.

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Introduction

Cynthia Cockburn

At the moment when two amateur pilots flew their planes into the shining glass-clad walls of the twin towers in New York on 11 September 2001, many women of the antiwar movement in London were demonstrating outside an exhibition centre in Docklands, London. The focus of their attention was an arms trade 'fair' where the UK government was sponsoring weapons manufacturers to sell their products to the representatives of the world's states, militaries and paramilitaries. We were demonstrating, as women, against what we saw as a distinctively masculinist system, careless of human life, promoting and profiting by violence.

When we got home and watched that endlessly repeated clip of film on TV, the impact, the flames, the crumbling structures, the pilots' action too, as the news unfolded, it emerged as an extraordinarily violent act by a team of disciplined men. But what were we thinking when we felt, 'There is something masculine about that?'

I think that most of us did not mean 'women couldn't have done that.' We know they could, because elsewhere we have seen women suicide bombers targeting civilian lives. Rather what we did mean is that among the many different masculinities that might, in theory, be available to growing boys, the masculinity currently most highly valued in the world's power systems, energetically produced by cultural means, is one that embodies physical and psychological force and seeks to create by destroying. Such masculine cultures prevail in important segments of Western, Christian, Arab, Muslim and other domains, and among their products are the arms trade, as featured in Docklands; military structures, as symbolized in the Pentagon; global capitalism, as featured in the World Trade Centre; and politico-religious fundamentalisms, the driving force in the minds of the men who crashed aircraft into these structures.

It is this perception of the violence inherent in certain masculine cultures that has given rise to the women's antiwar and antiviolence movements in many countries. The feeling is that women, based on their gender-specific experiences, can sometimes bring a social change that men

cannot bring, but also that feminism as theory, can explain certain connections and clarify strategy, while feminism as practice can mobilize women and - very importantly – men, to model the transformations that might yet save us all.

In the weeks immediately following 11 September 2001 some of us, as members of several different women's organizations, began talking about how we should and could respond to the terrifying up-scaling of armed conflict and repression that September 11 seemed to threaten. The organizations, or branches of organizations, were: Women in Black against War (WiB), the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), London women of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC), Women against Fundamentalisms (WAF), Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML) and, finally, Act Together: Women's Action for Iraq (a group of Iraqi and other women in London, opposing Western aggression and UN sanctions against Iraq).

That combination of interests and expertise was significant. We quickly organized a meeting at Friends House in London. What, from our various perspectives, we foresaw unfolding from September 11 was several linked processes. First, there would be a strong impulse in the USA (and in the UK, the state most closely allied with it) towards vengeance, the recovery of national self-respect by means of a violent attack on some target as surrogate for the elusive Al-Qaeda. This would probably unfold, as in fact it did, into a prolonged and ever wider 'war on terrorism.' The new events would reinforce the use of military action as an acceptable vehicle, indeed a routine mechanism, of US-led foreign policy.

Secondly, we saw that the attack of September 11 was inescapably linked to the poverty and deprivation, injustice and exploitation, manipulation, force and neglect experienced by people in poorer countries because of domestic and foreign policies that they perceive to be hypocritical. All of this can fuel extreme and violent attitudes. What began to evolve then and there, and which formed the basis for our subsequent campaigns was the theme that only human rights, equality and inclusion can bring peace.

Third, in the media we already saw an increased tendency, that would certainly increase further, to label people by ethnicity or religion. The space in which one might define, express and live one's own subjective identity – be and be known as a complex 'I', a particular one of many kinds of woman or man, in relation to many possible versions of national belonging or ethnic name - would close down yet further. If we were

presumed 'Arab' we would be presumed 'Muslim', if we were presumed 'English' we would be presumed 'Christian'. The already tiny space for a secular identity would shrink to vanishing point. We would have to struggle to validate ourselves as secular – whether as non-believers, or as believers - for whom belief is a personal and private matter, not one of adherence to institutionalised religion.

Fourth, we foresaw an imminent racist reaction against any individual or community who might thus be identified as Muslim, Arab, or even merely 'foreign'. We feared the reaction would occur at an individual level, in racist slanders and violence against, not only new entrants to the UK, ('refugees', 'asylum seekers'), but towards British Muslims, Jews and various visible minorities. And we feared the government would act, as it did, to bring in legislation in the name of 'security,' curbing the asylum rights of people deemed 'other' in the context of September 11 - that is to say people appearing to be 'Arab' or 'Muslim' – which would also prejudice the rights of all people from many countries resident in the UK, and those diverse people who hold British citizenship. This "anti-terrorist" legislation has, in fact, crushed the civil liberties of all people in the UK.

That first meeting in September 2001 was important to many of us in guiding the steps we took in the following year. We saw that we would have to work in several modes simultaneously: in a feminist mode, an anti-racist mode, a secular mode and an anti-militarist mode. The 'coalition' was reactivated, on 8 September 2002, at a 'teach-in' we organized together at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. We called it *Women's Teach-In: Antimilitarism, Fundamentalisms/Secularism and Civil Liberties & Anti-Terrorism Legislation after September 11th 2001*.

The 'teach-in' was attended by some 300 participants. The papers gathered together here were given on that day and formed the basis for subsequent panel discussions. Sian Jones and I, in our different ways, addressed the relationship of gender, feminism and the opposition to militarism and war. Nira Yuval-Davis and Nadjé Al-Ali set out to clarify our thinking about fundamentalisms and secularisms. Liz Davies and Gita Sahgal discussed the assault on civil liberties in the pursuit of a 'war on terror'. Gita's paper, sadly, is missing because it was not written it down at the time and it has proved impossible to reconstruct it since.

Feminist Antimilitarism

Cynthia Cockburn

Quite often people ask Women in Black, "Why are you just women? Why not include men?" And quite often we ask *ourselves*, "What is specific about a women's movement against militarism? And, is it feminist?" And those are the questions I've tried to find answers to.

Because we don't always do a very thorough feminist analysis of the actual war crisis we're caught up in, we are sometimes in danger of explaining ourselves with a kind of 'essentialism'. The first thing that comes to mind, even if we don't really believe it is, women *naturally* do peace, women *naturally* empathize with women. This is politically dangerous – because it is not true. Women continually disappoint us by being not at all sympathetic, even being violent and militaristic.

But if it is not just born out of women's nature, *what is specific about feminist antimilitarism* – what is the logic of it, and how could that shape the message we might want to put across? I think there are two kinds of answer and they are both usable in their way, but they are different. The first says *women characteristically have different life experiences* from men. Most women spend more time and energy than most men on reproducing and sustaining domestic life. Fewer women than men learn the aggressive behaviours needed in competitive business, or controlling organizations or military service. Most women lack full equality and rights and this alienates some of them from the system. Women experience war differently – more women than men are "victims" of attacks, more men are doing the attacking. In general, more women experience violence from men, fewer men experience violence from women. And so on.

One thing women's experience shows, for instance, is that there is a connection between the violence women experience in everyday life and the violence of war. Women talk about a '*continuum of violence*'. The linking factor is gender. The cultures in which men are masculinized have violence running through them. So we have the analysis to challenge the 'masculine violence' quality in war.

The second kind of answer has to do with *feminist theory*. The women's movement has brought into being this ideology and theory: *feminism*. Or *feminisms*.

After the Women in Black vigil on Wednesday, Rina and Andrea said if I am going to talk about feminism I should say what I mean by it, because they were not sure. The difficulty is that there are so many feminisms. But for me it means not just seeing that women and women's interests are relatively disadvantaged but going two steps further and saying: (1) that this is *systemic*, there is a *system* of male dominance, it is about power, and it is structured into institutions and; (2) that women need to organize actively against it - and not just to get equality but to transform the system, because it is a system that is bad for men as well as women. So, opposing the practice and ideology of the system of male dominance (which gets called patriarchy, for short) is the *raison d'être* of feminism. It is what feminism is about.

Feminism is, however, as it happens, a very, very good ideology and practice, the very best there is, for challenging *militarism and war*. Why? Because of the close connection between patriarchy and the two ideologies most involved in perpetuating war which are: *nationalism* and *militarism*. In a way you could see these three as 'brother' ideologies that legitimate and shape 'brother' social systems.

The inequalities and distortions of gender in a patriarchal society – men and masculinity being ascribed higher value than women and feminine qualities – are part and parcel of the power relations of militarism and nationalism. The cultures in which the ideas of militarism and nationalism are dreamed up and made to seem the truth are very masculine cultures.

All three of these brother ideologies have similar scenarios for women – women and men are sharply differentiated, women are expected to be essentially supportive, domestic and childbearing. If women are given importance in cultures like this it's not for themselves, but as wives and mothers. They don't afford women respect as autonomous beings.

Nationalism is in love with patriarchy because patriarchy offers it women who'll breed true patriots. Militarism is in love with patriarchy because its women offer up their sons to be soldiers. Patriarchy is in love with nationalism and militarism because they produce unambiguously masculine men.

If these things are true, we have to see a particular form of gender relations as being part of the system that gives rise to wars and keeps them going. And feminism, in challenging patriarchy, challenges the other two "isms". Feminism's theory, our 'thinking tools' if you like, which are purpose-made for tackling patriarchy, are very useful tools for

unscrewing militarism and nationalism. So this is the second reason for women to be antimilitarist.

There are two things to note here, though. First, all the different experiences that women have, that I just talked about, do not necessarily lead women to feminism – to stepping outside their place in the ideologies of patriarchy, nationalism and militarism. Some women are cornered and afraid within them. Some women enjoy the status they can get from them, and contribute to them. There are even women's movements within nationalist societies. Some women organize in support of gender traditionalism and male power. That is why you have to distinguish women's activism from feminism – they are not necessarily the same thing.

Second, it's sometimes confusing that the wars the USA or Britain launch today do not seem, on the face of it, to be done in the name of these ideologies. The purpose of US war talk and war making remains the same as it ever was: political dominance for economic control. US business interests are acted out by the US state. The Bush/Blair 'special relationship' is about Britain's national ranking.

But Western countries have substituted for old-fashioned nationalism a currently more acceptable ideology of humanitarianism and security. The new discourse represents the old as backward. Patriarchy is what the medieval Taliban do to women, nationalism is what the murderous Serbs are up to, militarism is Saddam's dangerous ambitions.

And certain pressures in Western cultures today (some of them coming from women actually) have made politicians adopt superficial changes. Incorporation of women into the military – that doesn't seem very patriarchal. The United Nations is manipulated into the picture – so the war project can appear to be internationalist not nationalist. Public opinion doesn't want dead American soldiers – that doesn't seem like militarist valor.

But patriarchy, nationalism and militarism are still right there, as structures and as cultures. Pride in military service, national honour and manliness are deep in "modern" societies. That is what Sian is talking about. Think of the role of Christianity, and the gun culture, and ceremonies around the stars and stripes, in the USA. And it is only because they are still flourishing cultures that political actors like Bush and Cheney and Rumsfeld can bring populations along with war plans.

And just one final element of the logic of a specifically feminist movement against militarism and war, I think is: masculine cultures even shape the mixed movements we would otherwise be part of. Even at times they seem militaristic (all that chanting and shouting). They even get into uncomfortable alliances with fundamentalist or nationalist elements – as we found on the last Stop the War demonstration. So our analysis leads us to prefigurative ways of organizing feminist antimilitarism – doing things today in the way we would want for the future.

A Feminist Antimilitarism

Sian Jones

For me, the strength of Women in Black (WiB) is that we are not only feminist in our analysis, but also antimilitarist, and it is this powerful combination that has the potential to give WiB a distinct voice in international anti-war movements.

Antimilitarism, simply, is about opposition to militarism, and a belief that – ultimately – armed force will not be used to resolve conflicts of any nature between states or within states. But antimilitarism is not simply about rejection of the use of armed forces in organized or state sponsored violence, but about understanding, analysing and opposing militarism within any society that institutionally, culturally, ideologically – either actively or passively, explicitly or implicitly – supports the possession and use of arms to resolve conflict and where a military or militarised response is the default position when the politicians – or the people – get tired of talking.

Most people associate militarised societies with ranks of marching soldiers, or parades of weapons of mass destruction before the May Day crowds in Moscow, or the dictators of some other country in their military dress uniforms laden down with medals, yet militarism is alive and very well, and living in the UK. The Queen's Jubilee parade was a very revealing illustration of how ingrained militarism is in British society.

Not merely in the mish-mash of medieval and Victorian pageantry of the Queen's Hussars, 51-gun salutes followed by a cardboard model of a 21st century Trident nuclear weapons submarine, but in the massed ranks of the civilian organizations which also marched, in uniform, in serried ranks, along the Mall – boy scouts, girl guides, the Women's Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS), the ambulance crews, fire fighters and a whole host of other organisations, most of them founded in the days of late Victorian militarism.

In some ways, antimilitarism is a very simple position – but it also reveals the complexities and interrelationships and embeddedness of militarism and the multiplicity of ways in which it infects every aspect of life – from the media to the movies, the arms trade to the armchair in front of the TV, from games in the nursery playground to the universities funded by military-industrial research. Some aspects of militarism are easy to identify: the identity of interest between the arms manufacturers and

the UK government, for example, which extends to the effective subsidy of the arms export and development industry to the tune of £4 billion a year;¹ indeed, the UK 1998 Strategic Defence Review makes the military-economic links clear, explicitly stating that the UK military will be used to protect UK economic interests overseas. It is there in the allocation of defence and other contracts to a small number of companies; in the UK, Britain's nuclear weapons factory at Aldermaston is managed by a consortium that includes US arms giant, Lockheed Martin, BNFL and Serco – a facilities management company which receives more PFI funding than any other company in Britain and which, in addition to managing AWE Aldermaston, equips the UK with military communication satellites, runs private prisons and rail ticketing companies, hospitals and an increasing number of local education authorities. Militarisation and globalisation go hand in hand – whether it is in the use of military force to expand US markets, or regime change in Iraq to secure a new oil-rich client – and compliant – state for the west. But militarism reaches into, and transforms all aspects of our lives; post September 11, this has meant the reinforcement of racism, the suspension of human rights – the unlawful imprisonment of “terrorist” suspects around the world – the suspension of POW status for those in Guantanamo Bay – all of these support the current military project.

Antimilitarism provides us with the perspective that enables us to challenge normative views of war. It tells us that this war – which war – whichever war – is the same war. It is a war fought – for the most part – by men; in this war, soldiers will die, but the number of civilians who die will be far more; in this war male civilians will die, but more women and children will die; in this war, women will be raped and abused, and they will lose their husbands and sons and brothers, and they will lose their homes, and their means of living. In this war, men will be forcibly conscripted; they will be the vast majority of those who are detained (such as those as Guantanamo Bay); they will be the majority of the “disappeared” and missing. It's the same in all wars. Violence – in one form or another – will be perpetrated on every participant, and experienced by every victim, and every survivor. Antimilitarism speaks to the roots of war: addressing individual wars without addressing militarism is like treating the symptoms, without addressing the causes.

The good thing about antimilitarism is that war never takes us by surprise. It provides us with a different starting point – the majority of

¹ *The Subsidy Trap*, Oxford Research Group & Saferworld, July 2001.

anti-war movements are against a particular war, and specifically against the political dimension of that war as opposed to the concept of war itself. It is no surprise, therefore that the growing opposition to the coming war in Iraq is not only informed by the anti-war movement, but by competing political agendas of within and outside the US.

Antimilitarism counters the binary perceptions of war; good and bad, just and unjust, winner and loser. War is about loss, about losing, about having lost the ability or will to resolve conflicts without using violence. It enables us to see the violence and acknowledge the violations on all sides, without losing our political judgments. Bush has said that in the war on terror, you are either with us or against us. But unless we challenge the right of the state – any state – to use military power, then ideologically – even if not politically – we are with Bush. Support for any war, or for any one side in a particular war, immediately legitimises the violence used by the other side. Indeed, states, through the UN, have combined together to produce laws of war, which – although almost inevitably broken in every single war – construct war as a legal activity (unless you break the rules). It is no coincidence that the US, India and Israel – three of the most highly militarised societies in the world – have refused to accept the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Antimilitarism equally perceives armed opposition groups (or “terrorists” as governments tend to call them) as militarists – almost exclusively masculine – they employ violence as a tactic, killing or injury of civilians, or less frequently, attacking military targets. There is not good violence and bad violence – just violence.

Feminist antimilitarism enables us to see how power – male power – constructs one particular form of male violence – whether state sanctioned or community sanctioned male-violence – as a legitimate form of behaviour.

Most antimilitarist movements until recently, have focussed, for example, on specific aspects of militarism, particularly in supporting the rights of almost exclusively male, conscientious objectors. And many of them have failed to recognise the gendered dimension of militarism at all. At the same time, with a few notable exceptions, feminists have focussed primarily on women as victims of war – and have achieved massive transformations, such as the developing jurisprudence that has ensured that rape is now a specific crime in the Statute of the ICC,

an acknowledgement that rape will be used in all wars as a method of control and fear, as a crime against humanity.

But we have failed to identify and challenge the crucial role of women as participants in, and supporters of, militarism and war.

A feminist antimilitarism enables us to see how and where women are complicit with, collude with, and participated with the project of militarism, whether women are waving their husbands off to war, celebrating the death of their martyred son or buying the latest war toy for the next birthday present. Part of the militarist project is to ensure that women are on board, either as active participants or complicit observers.

Feminist antimilitarism also means opposing women's recruitment into the military, not because we believe all women are peace-loving mother goddesses, but because we want women to refuse to participate in a patriarchal construction of masculinity, whether it is in NATO forces where women have been dragged into do the peacekeeping, or in liberation armies where washing, cooking and sex are part of the deal.

What we can bring from feminist discourse is an analysis of power, and in particular, the continuum of violence against women. Rape is not particular to war or peace, neither is the trafficking of women, they are acts of violence by those with power over those they wish to disempower. Violence of this kind and the violence of war are part of the continuum of violence against women.

It also enables us to take a different perspective when we come to look at building peace: from a feminist perspective, peace is not merely the absence of war, but an absence of the violence – physical, psychological and structural – that women in post-conflict communities experience. But though armies may sign truces, and governments agree to peace deals, and armed groups may demilitarise, challenging violence against women is never on the agenda of peace constructed by militarist thinking.

Finally, feminist antimilitarism is most powerful when transformed from theory into action (and there's a large number of feminist antimilitarists who are quite happy to bypass the theory and go straight for the action). The Quakers have a phrase "speaking truth to power." Non-violent direct action by women against the military is, for me – and for some of WiB – about a direct confrontation between our version of the truth, and their use of power. Feminist antimilitarists can challenge that power.

In Serbia, WiB took to the streets, they not only took over public space, but took it over at a time when it was unsafe for men who opposed the war to demonstrate, at a time when men were being arrested on the streets. Women in Black also challenged militarism by organising networks of safe-houses, contacts and escape routes for men who refused to fight. They – along with men who, within WiB, work on the right to conscientious objection – are this weekend, outside two military barracks in Serbia where two young male conscientious objectors have just been called up.

When women stand – as they have done – on runways when B52s or B1s are about to take off to bomb Iraq as they did in 1991, or Serbia as they did in 1999, or remove boulders from roads in the Occupied Territories blocked by Israeli forces as WiB women did in 2002, we are as women, not only challenging acts of war – and the legitimacy, the power, the violence and the masculinity of militarism – but also the role that we, as women, are expected to take in a militarised society.

*Fundamentalisms & Secularisms*¹

Nira Yuval-Davis

Just this month, as Polly Toynbee reported in the Guardian, the requests of the Secular and Humanist Societies that also secular and not just religious personalities would be included in the list of people appearing in the 'Thought of the Day' BBC Radio Four morning programme have been rejected. It seems that moral thinking and values are the exclusive domain of religious people, however pluralistic and multiculturalist the programme pertains to be.

This regionalization of morality is part of a wider phenomenon in which multiculturalist policies have regionalized cultures. This has been always true, especially in the education sphere where other cultures were reduced to religions and they were often reduced to celebrations of various religious holidays. It was also expressed in multiculturalist funding policies in which funding non-Christian religious institutions became a common part of the British 'Race Relations Industry'.

Since the 1989 'Rushdie Affair' we have also seen the emergence of the regionalization of identities. People who used to be identified as 'Pakis', as Blacks, as Asians, became identified – often to themselves as well as to others, as 'Muslims'. After the fall of the Soviet Union and the gradual strengthening of what Samuel Huntington has called 'the clash of civilizations' the construction of especially the Muslims as the inassimilable and threatening 'Other' has been growing. This has reached a scale of racist public hysteria after September 11.

How do such constructions relate to the issue of secularism and morality? In our 1992 book Refusing Holy Orders on women and fundamentalism in Britain, Gita Sahgal and I differentiated between two types of secularism. One in which secularism is equated with atheism, with scientism, with rationalist enlightenment policies. These types of secularist ideologies represent themselves as the modern alternative to religious ideologies which they present as superstitions and 'opium of the masses' – to use a known Marxist expression. Although not transcendental, they have their own code of ethics and moral differentiation between good and bad.

¹ Some parts of this presentation are based on the introduction written by Gita Sahgal and myself of our edited book *Refusing Holy Orders: Women and Fundamentalism in Britain*, Virago, 1992, reprinted in 2001 by *Women Living Under Muslim Laws*.

The other kind of secularism has a much more limited project and does not necessarily include a competitive world-view to religious ones. It is focused on the relationship between state and society as well as between public and private social domains. It developed in pluralist societies, such as the USA and India in which one religious authority could not contain and/or submit others. Its main code of ethics is that of tolerance and recognition not only in the fact, but in the legitimacy of the fact, that different people and different collectivities follow different religions. At the same time, such secularist states and societies, like multiculturalist ones, impose boundaries to difference and usually do not allow public practice of anything that is considered to be against the code of ethics of the hegemonic majority. This is why in the USA polygamy was forbidden, even though the Mormons were polygamic, and why in India polygamy (at least Muslim polygamy) remained legal, but Sati, the burning of widows, became illegal.

While most, if not all, religious people, would object to secularism of the first kind, it is usually only fundamentalists who would oppose secularism of the second kind. The reason is that one of the major characteristics that differentiate fundamentalists from other religious people is that they do not just believe in only one truth for themselves but would feel threatened by anyone, especially those who come from the same religious background, who would interpret their religion differently. Only in a state and society with secular spaces, can religions be followed in more than one way.

What is fundamentalism and who are the fundamentalists? These days the word is often used as a term of racist abuse and/or as a legitimisation of the 'war against terrorism' when equated with Islam. However, the term fundamentalism was originally used only towards particular groupings of American Christians at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. Today it is one of the most important political movements of our time, having emerged in all main religions in the world.

The concise Oxford dictionary defines fundamentalism as 'strict maintenance of traditional, Orthodox, religious beliefs, such as the inerrancy of Scripture and literal acceptance of the creeds as fundamentals of protestant Christianity'. In 1919 American Protestant churches established the World Christian Fundamentalist Association after the publication of the 'Fundamentals' – based on a series of bible conferences which took place between 1865 and 1910. However, just as

we need to reject the use of the term fundamentalism being applied only to Islam we also need to reject it towards Christianity.

Of course we do not want to underestimate the specific historical and cultural constructions of different religions. However, we need to be aware, firstly, that heterogeneity exists not only among religions but also within them, and secondly, that there is no such thing as 'strict adherence to the text'. All great religious scriptures include internal contradictions and even the most 'fundamentalist' forms of religion have exercised selectivity.

Beyond all these differences, there are two features which are common to all fundamentalist religious movements: one, as mentioned above, that they claim their version of religion to be the only true one, and feel threatened by pluralist systems of thought. The second is that they use political means to impose their version of the truth on all members of their religion. Fundamentalist religious movements have to be differentiated, therefore, from liberation theology movements which, while deeply religious and political, co-operate with, rather than subjugate, non religious political struggles.

Fundamentalisms are not merely traditional forms of religious orthodoxy. It is significant, as well as typical, that the original fundamentalist movement arose in the USA as a response to the rise of liberalism in general and the 'Social Gospel' movement within the church in particular, which liberalised religion and had strong progressive elements.

Fundamentalist movements, all over the world, are basically political movements which have a religious [and or ethnic] imperative and seek in various ways, in widely differing circumstances, to harness modern state and media powers to the service of their gospel. This gospel is presented as the only valid form of religion and/or of being a member of a particular ethnic collectivity. It can rely heavily on sacred religious texts, but can also be more experiential and linked to specific charismatic leadership. Fundamentalism can align itself with different political trends in different countries and manifest itself in many forms. It can appear as a form of orthodoxy - a maintenance of 'traditional values', or as a revivalist radical phenomena, dismissing impure and corrupt forms of religion, to "return to original sources". Jewish fundamentalism in Israel, for example, has appeared in basically two forms, for which the state has very different meanings. On the one hand, as a form of right-wing Zionism, in which the establishment of the Israeli state is in itself a positive religious act, and, on the other hand, as a non if not anti-Zionist movement, which sees in the Israeli state, a convenient source

for gaining economic and political power to promote its own versions of Judaism. In Islam, fundamentalism has appeared as a return to the Qur'anic text (fundamentalism of the madrassa), and as a return to the religious law, the shari'a, (fundamentalism of the ulama). In the USA, the Protestant fundamentalist movements include both fundamentalists in the original sense - those who want to go back to the biblical texts, and those "born again Christians" who rely much more on emotional religious experiences.

Another important difference among fundamentalist movements is between movements of dominant majorities within states, which look for universal domination in society, (such as the evangelical New Right in the USA, the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Hindu Right in India) and fundamentalist movements of minorities, who aim to use state and media powers and resources to promote and impose their gospel primarily within their specific constituencies. These constituencies are usually defined in ethnic terms (such as the Jewish fundamentalists of the Lubavitch Hassids, the Hindu HSS and the Khalistan supporting International Sikh Student Federation). Identifying various heterogeneous forms of fundamentalist movements, however, does not invalidate the use of the term fundamentalism as identifying specific social phenomena. All major social movements - such as national, socialist, and feminist movements have been similarly heterogeneous.

The recent rise of fundamentalism is linked to the crisis of modernity - of social orders based on the belief in the principles of enlightenment, rationalism and progress. Both capitalism and communism have proved unable to deliver people's material, emotional and spiritual needs. A general sense of despair and disorientation has opened people to religion as a source of solace. It provides a compass and an anchor that gives people a sense of stability and meaning, as well as a coherent identity. In times of neo-liberal globalization people cannot be sure anymore that they have jobs or homes for life - or even marriages and families. This is the time in which primordial identities - constructed around ethnicity, religion and race - become especially seductive.

In the West, the most influential fundamentalist movement has been the neo-evangelical movement that is at the heart of the 'moral majority' in the USA and the political base of President Bush. In the Third World, and among Third World minorities in the West, the rise of fundamentalism is also intimately linked with the failure of nationalist and socialist movements to bring about successful liberation from oppression, exploitation and poverty that neo-liberal globalization has

only enhanced. Fundamentalist movements have grown and given new intensity to links between nationalism and religion in Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Sikhism and more.

One of the unchallenged 'truths' of the Left has been the assumption of the inherently progressive nature of anti-imperialism. For example, Khomeini's revolution in Iran, as well as other fundamentalist movements being clearly anti-western and anti-imperialist, were hailed, at least initially, by large sections of the Left as progressive. However, just because a political movement has the 'right enemy' does not automatically transform it into a 'goodie'. Moreover, fundamentalist movements in the Third World have not always developed against the interests of imperialism or neo-colonialism. Often they are found to be convenient models of accommodation, using traditional values and social relations as a bulwark against revolutionary social changes. (As, for example, is the case with Saudi Arabia's alliance with the USA).

Women have been particularly vulnerable to the effects of fundamentalisms. Women affect and are affected by ethnic and national processes in several major ways. Some of these are central to the project of fundamentalism, which attempts to impose its own unitary religious definition on the grouping and its symbolic order. The 'proper' behaviour of women is used to signify the difference between those who belong and those who do not belong. Women are also seen as the 'cultural carriers' of the collectivity, who transmit its cultural heritage to the future generation. Also, being properly controlled in terms of marriage and divorce ensures that children who are born to those women, are not only biologically, but also symbolically, within the boundaries of the collectivity.² It is not incidental, therefore, that the control of women and the patriarchal family are central to fundamentalism, and that often it is seen as the panacea of all social ills:

'A widespread evangelical conviction is that stability in the home, is the key to the resolution of other social problems. Once wanderers came 'home' and the poor acquired the sense of responsibility found in strong Christian familiarity, poverty would cease.'³

² For an elaboration of this theme please refer to my book *Gender and Nation*, Sage, 1997

³ Marsden G., *Fundamentalism in Our Time*, Oxford University Press, 1980:37

And women's desertion of their proper social role might mean a social disaster:

'Woman has such a degree of biological disability and such huge family responsibilities, as to preclude her leaving purdah in a well ordered society'.⁴

Paradoxically women collude, seek comfort and even gain at times a sense of empowerment within the spaces allocated to them by fundamentalist movements. Being active in a religious movement allows women a legitimate place in a public sphere which otherwise might be blocked to them, and which in certain circumstances they might be able to subvert for their purposes, as in, for example, the relationship between young girls and their parents. It can be also, at the same time, less threatening but still a challenge and a space for personal accomplishment to which unskilled working class women and frustrated middle class women might be attracted. For women of racial and ethnic minorities, it can also provide the means by which to defend themselves as well as to defy the hegemonic racist culture.

However, the overall effect of fundamentalist movements has been very detrimental to women, limiting and defining their roles and activities and actively oppressing them when they step out of the preordained limits of their designated roles. This is just one of reasons feminist activists, while fighting against neo-liberal militarist and racist globalization should not fall into the trap of 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend' and be at the forefront of the fight against fundamentalisms.

⁴ Pundah Mandrudi, quoted in A. Hyman, *Muslim Fundamentalism*, The Institute for the Study of Culture, 1985:24

Fundamentalisms and Secularisms in Muslim Societies

Nadje Al-Ali

After Nira's more general discussion of fundamentalisms and secularisms, I would like to focus on the significance of these terms in the context of the Muslim world. However, I would like to focus a bit more on secularism rather than Islamism,¹ or Muslim fundamentalism. Although diverse in ideology and expression, there is little doubt in my mind that Islamism – as any form of religious extremism – is antithetical to feminism (that is not to deny the fact that there are Islamist women struggling to improve women's rights and gender relations within strictly stipulated moral codes and restrictions). Despite the great diversity in Islamist movements, women are generally singled out as living proofs of either moral corruption (westernised or secular women) or religious obedience and virtuosity (conforming to dress and behaviour codes seen appropriate by proponents of Islamist thought). Nira describes the various ways in which all fundamentalisms use women as "cultural carriers" and try to control their dress, conduct, and even thinking. But the questions I would like to address here revolve around the meaning of secularism in the context of Muslim societies in general and in particular with respect to women activists.

Before I begin though, I would like to share one of my experiences related to September 11 which I spent in Egypt: I was sitting with a number of friends in one of Cairo's popular nightspots, and remember feeling deeply shocked by their reactions. "Finally they are tasting a bit of their own medicine!" "They deserve it!" These and similar comments came from my friends who are not militant Islamists. Nor are they conservative nationalists condemning the infiltration of western culture. Rather, my friends were mainly progressive educated middle class people, many of them well travelled and generally open-minded. Yet, their first reactions were characterized by contempt, a sense of vindication and lots of anger. Strong anti-western, more specifically anti-US imperialism sentiments account not only for the actions and reactions of Muslim fundamentalists but also many secular thinkers and activists in predominately Muslim societies. On the other hand, when returning back

¹ With Islamism I refer to the political movement, which aims at establishing an Islamic state, thereby often threatening the *status quo*. Islamists employ a whole range of strategies and only a minority actually uses violent means. Although religion is used to denote a framework, Islamism presents a very modern social and political movement.

to the UK I was not only outraged by the blatant racism in some of the debates about Muslims and terrorism, but also by the more subtle ways in which "Muslim" has been essentialized. Even many progressive people who refuse to engage in prejudicial and racist rhetoric did actually contribute this prevailing image of "a Muslim": devout, practising and if female veiled. In this way, secular Muslims became marginalized by both Islamist voices within predominantly Muslim societies as well as within western countries like the UK.

It has become obvious that more recent political developments, particularly the increased popularity of Islamist movements and their demands as well as terrorist attacks of Al-Qaeda, are frequently being explained in terms of their supposedly religious framework – Islam. The motivations and approaches might be altogether dissimilar, but, as Sami Zubaida shows, many authors evoke the notion of a "continuous historical essence of Islam" (1993: xiii). On the other hand, one finds that a widespread argument among Islamists, secular Christians and some scholars, is the notion that there is a natural and inherent link between Christianity and secularism, understood as the separation of religion and the state. This argument - which serves to stress the essential difference of Islam and its special relationship to secularism - ignores both the historical development of secularism and its political contexts as well as the multifarious and changing manifestations of secularism in predominantly Christian countries today. However, as several authors have shown, western countries display a great deal of diversity in their specific approaches to religion and its relation to the state (Keddie, 1997; Saghal, 1992; Yuval-Davis, 1992; Saghal and Yuval-Davis, 1992) and the strict separation between state and religion cannot be found in any western country.

Despite the unfortunate perception by some western thinkers that the only "authentic" and legitimate local resistance to western imperialism can be found amongst Islamists, secular thinkers and activists have a long history in Muslim societies. During the past decade, intellectuals, political figures, and religious authorities within many predominantly Muslim countries have engaged in often fierce debates about the origin, meaning and value of secularism. Surprisingly, many writers fail to define what they actually mean when they address the notion of secularism. This lack of definition is frequently paralleled by an undifferentiated and homogenized presentation of "the secular constituency". The increased interest in Islamist movements, their various manifestations and tendencies, does not generally take into account that, far from

presenting a singular category, secular tendencies display a range of positions, political affiliations and attitudes towards religion.

My own interest in secular women activists had been partly triggered by the realization that the current emphasis on Islamist constituencies often worked at the expense of differentiated and in-depth depictions of secular political actors and discourses in Muslim societies. My involvement in women's activism in Egypt had not only shown me that there exists great differences among groups and activists with regard to their political outlooks, their approaches to women's subordination and their activities, but I also realized that variations exist concerning the interpretation and manifestation of secularism in their politics and lifestyles.²

Initially, I described a "secular-oriented" tendency as the acceptance of the separation between religion and politics, and stressed that it does not necessarily denote anti-religious or anti-Islamic positions. Furthermore, I suggested that secular-oriented women do not support shari'a (Islamic law) as the main or sole source of legislation; rather, they also refer to civil law and the resolution of human rights conventions, as adopted by the United Nations, as frames of reference for their struggle. This definition has certainly found resonance among many of the women I interviewed. However, my research findings indicate that this definition glosses over the heterogeneity of understandings and manifestations of secularism among Egyptian women activists in particular and secular Muslims in general, and it also fails to analyse the continuum between religious and secular beliefs and practices in women's every day lives (Al-Ali, 2000).

Moreover it is important to stress one of the main implications of secularism for modern citizenship, namely that it defines varied groups of citizens as equal before the state and the laws. Ideally, that is. Secularism is intended to play a positive role in ruling over multi-ethnic and multi-religious polities, such as Egypt, for example (with Muslims and Copts). Unfortunately, many post-colonial secularisms have failed to grant equal citizenship to religious minorities, and often only strengthened the legitimacy of the majority religion albeit in disguise (Turkey under Ataturk comes to mind).

² This paper is partly based on *Secularism, Gender and the State in the Middle East: The Egyptian Women's Movement* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000).

In the context of disputes with Islamists, secular-oriented intellectuals appear to articulate a series of values, fears and concrete political demands. Yet, they might not necessarily share a common conception of the term secularism. One of the ongoing debates in Arab countries, for example, is related to the question of whether the Arabic term for secularism is derived from the word 'alam (world, earth) or from the word 'ilm (science, knowledge). The controversy of 'almaniyah vs 'ilmaniyah goes far beyond matters of pronunciation as it presents two very distinct approaches and worldviews. 'Ilmaniyah can be compared to positivism in which science and scientific thinking have gained absolute authority of "the truth". 'Almaniyah, on the other hand, represents a broader concept which takes its point of reference in worldly, earthly matters (Al-Ali, 2000).

Differences concerning the interpretation of secularism are related to the complex history of liberalism and modernism in Muslim societies, particularly in relation to colonial and post-colonial experiences. In the 1920's and 1930's, secularism was deeply rooted in the belief in progress and rationality. The prevailing discourse of modernism was perceived to be the language of reason and "objective science". Freedom from the fetters of tradition and history were seen as a precondition for development and progress. Religion (equated with "backwardness") and science (equated with "progress") were largely regarded as incompatible. Many radical seculars looked to fascist regimes for inspiration, viewing dictatorship as the only form of government that could ensure industrialization and radical change.

Whether nationalist, socialist or liberal, many secular thinkers and politicians up to the present have to be characterized as authoritarian, oppressive and intolerant.³ In other words, there is nothing inherently democratic or pluralistic about secular thinking. Furthermore, the elevation of science as "the authority" and the belief in the objectivity of the scientist is still a widespread assumption among many secular thinkers in the "Muslim world". However, the faith in science and modernization should not be equated with an uncritical espousal of the West and its values as many secular intellectuals have been extremely critical of western policies, particularly US foreign policies (ibid.).

³ I am tempted to call them "secular fundamentalists" but that might lead to much confusion and is definitely open to debate.

A relatively small, yet increasing number of women activists in Muslim countries not only struggle to improve their rights and change existing gender relations but they also try to change the prevailing political culture and attempt to find innovative and non-hierarchical ways of doing politics. It is these women who challenge authoritarian ways of doing politics who are most likely to refuse the categorical condemnation of "the West" and "western feminism". Although they might be fervently opposed to imperialism, particularly current US foreign policies, they refuse the rhetoric of "us v. them" that characterizes many Islamist and secular nationalist discourses.

Their specific views towards religion might vary, and it might be most suitable to think of secular and religious positions and attitudes in terms of a continuum. The very dichotomy of religious v. secular seems rather counterproductive as it only feeds into Islamist conceptualizations of seculars "being against religion". However, it needs to be stressed that people's degree of religious observance cannot be conflated with degrees of institutional religion. Nor is personal religiosity an indicator for political attitudes, and vice versa. Religious observance is a feature of every-day life, but it represents only one aspect of the backdrop to women's lives and values. Because of the increased politicization of Islam within Muslim societies and within the western media, elements of religious observance, most notably wearing the veil, have come to represent a whole range of meanings which might actually overstate the weight of religion in women's every day lives. The Egyptian women I talked to displayed a much greater range of positions and attitudes towards personal religiosity and observance than their political positions. They all support a secular state and are opposed to the implementation of the shari'a (Islamic law).

No doubt, huge differences exist between Islamists and secular women activists. However, there are similarities mainly revolving around the opposition to imperialism and the perceived threat of western cultural encroachment. Sometimes certain statements by western feminists make Muslim feminists feel defensive and put them in the awkward position to speak against their actual convictions. Some Egyptian women told me, for example, that although there were campaigning against the common practice of Female Genital Mutilation in Egypt, they would often feel compelled to defend the practice in international events and conferences. They also felt this way when confronted by some western feminists who would be outraged by the "barbarism of these Muslim countries." This generally left them feeling frustrated and

even schizophrenic. Without falling into a dangerous multi-culturalist discourse of relativism and “political correctness”, it might be wise for western feminists seeking alliances with women in Muslim societies to be sensitive to the kinds of political spaces available to them and the pressures and obstacles they are confronting.

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Civil Liberties and the War on Terror

Liz Davies

Before 11 September 2001, New Labour had already embarked on a number of incursions into our civil liberties. There had been several, unsuccessful, attempts to remove a defendant's right to choose jury trial. Asylum-seekers were subject to detention, dispersal, impoverishment and scapegoating. An agenda of tackling "anti-social behaviour" led to curfews on children and imprisoning parents for their children's failure to attend school. State interception of electronic communications was permitted under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act. The Terrorism Act 2000 proscribed a number of allegedly terrorist organisations – groups involved in international struggles often for self-determination who had bases or contacts in this country. Creating a definition of terrorism that included anyone conspiring to cause damage to property for political ends, and extending association with terrorism to anyone who happened to attend a meeting or share a platform with any of these groups, the Act would have made anti-apartheid campaigners, the suffragettes, the Greenham Common peace campaigners and their supporters all terrorists. The purpose of the Act was not to combat terrorism – there are plenty of existing laws such as murder and kidnapping that make terrorist acts unlawful – but rather to criminalise those communities in which the proscribed groups operate. Any Irish person living in Britain in the 1970s and 1980s can testify to the racism that thrives under such scapegoating, and how the terrorist groups themselves are able to recruit on the back of it. And New Labour had fought the 2001 general election on the promise of more restrictions on civil liberties: attacks on trial by jury and on asylum-seekers yet again. Its White Paper on criminal justice promised the abolition of the double jeopardy rule and informing juries of a defendant's previous convictions – all measures designed to increase the number of convictions and obfuscate consideration of the evidence.

Post-11 September 2001, New Labour stepped up its assault on civil liberties, pushing through an authoritarian and racist measure: the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001. Foreign nationals could be detained without trial if they were said by the Home Secretary to be a threat to national security. The process was to be secret: the detainees' names are not released, they are segregated from other prisoners and often kept in solitary confinement. They are not charged with any

criminal offences – which would provide them with a right to a trial and to due process. The evidence against them can be considered by a secret tribunal, but not shown even to their own lawyers. There is no presumption of innocence, let alone a requirement that the allegations of “threat to national security” be proved beyond reasonable doubt. The Home Secretary, and Parliament, accepted that this was a breach of Article 5 of the European Convention of Human Rights (the right to liberty), but decided that, in these times of terrorism, the ECHR should be ignored. Gareth Peirce, solicitor for several of the men detained, challenged their detention under the Human Rights Act 1998. The Judge hearing the case at first instance held that the men’s detention was an act of unlawful discrimination against foreign nationals and thus contrary to the European Convention on Human Rights. British citizens could not be detained. The Court of Appeal has since accepted that the men are discriminated against, but held that discrimination is justified in these circumstances.

In the United States, full-scale attacks on civil liberties have been much worse. Foreign nationals, particularly those from the Middle East or from South Asia, have been detained or deported without any due process. After the war in Afghanistan, the US created a whole new category of prisoners, unknown in international law: unlawful combatants. The prisoners in Guantanamo Bay, brought there in shackles, with hoods over their heads, some of them subject to sleep and other sensory deprivation, do not have the rights of prisoners of war; neither do they have rights accorded to defendants charged with criminal offences. They face indefinite detention, while at the same time they are not accused of committing any criminal offence.

The Indian BJP government immediately stepped up, after 11 September 2001, its own anti-terrorist legislation. It already had a long list of banned and proscribed organisations, but added to the list, and to the circumstances in which somebody could be accused (and thus arrested and detained) of association with terrorist groups. Journalists have been detained under these provisions. In Pakistan, General Musharraf’s military dictatorship was able to entrench its grip on civil society, setting up secret criminal courts. The alleged kidnappers of Daniel Pearle were tried in secret.

The implications of these assaults on our rights affect each and every one of us. Acts of terrorism – whether against one individual or the mass murder of hundreds or thousands of individuals – deserve to be punished through the ordinary criminal process. A defendant facing

criminal charges has the right to be tried on the evidence alone, scrutinised seriously and soberly by a jury. Blair's stated view is that the greatest miscarriage of justice is that a guilty defendant walks free, and therefore, he implies, all of a defendant's rights to due process, testing of the evidence, legal representation, public hearings should be swept aside in order to obtain a conviction. The truth is that convicting the innocent of crimes that they did not commit destroys their own lives, leaves the real perpetrators of crimes free and able to offend again, and undermines public faith in the criminal justice system. The Guildford Four, Birmingham Six, Judith Ward, Stefan Kiszko, the Bridgwater Three and many others can all testify to that.

As rules of criminal evidence and even habeas corpus and the right not to be detained without trial are flouted, we are all at risk. The finger of suspicion is pointed at anyone with the wrong acquaintances, the wrong surname, a particular skin colour, being in the wrong place at the wrong time. So-called "terrorist" offences are drawn widely enough to bring into the net plenty of people who have not committed any recognised criminal offence. Detention without trial means that however much someone protests his or her innocence, those protests fall on deaf ears. Whole communities become potential terrorist suspects in the eyes of the police. Not only criminal laws, but also immigration laws are used to terrorise and scapegoat communities.

There is an alternative, despite what our leaders tell us. There are plenty of domestic criminal laws to deal with serious criminal offences. A genuinely human rights and humanitarian agenda would recognise an international system of justice that investigates and punishes even-handedly war crimes and leaders' crimes against their own people. On that analysis, Saddam Hussein, Augusto Pinochet, George W Bush and Tony Blair would all face charges of the mass murder of innocent civilians. But, of course, the American government has refused any international system of justice, ignoring the United Nations and denouncing the International Criminal Court. The American and British governments' notion of international justice is the mass murder of innocent Iraqi and Afghan civilians and the trying of selected war criminals, whilst protecting their own war criminals and those of their allies.

Defending and extending civil liberties has to be a key plank of the peace movement's opposition to Bush and Blair's wars and for an international system of peace and justice. A meaningful international system of justice would provide the mechanism for holding Bush and

Blair to account for the murder that they have unleashed upon the world. Our broad alliance of all those millions opposed to the war must include, represent and speak out for all those affected, all those victimised and subject to racism. We must also be secular, meaning that persons with any religious belief, and persons with no religious belief, are equally welcome and play equally valid roles in our movement. And we must get away from the habit on the left of each of us believing that he or she has all the answers. We can learn from each other as we work together. Within the international peace movement, there has to be space for all of us: all religious groups including Muslims, Christians, Jews, the left, trade unions, civil liberties groups, feminists, anti-racists, pacifists. Practices that exclude any part of that alliance will make us weaker, not stronger.

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Nadje Al-Ali is a lecturer in social anthropology at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies at the University of Exeter. Her research interests revolve around gender issues in the Middle East as well as around migration and refugees. She is half-Iraqi, and half-German and has been involved in the Egyptian women's movement while living in Egypt. She is currently a member of Women in Black, Women Against Fundamentalisms and a founding member of Act Together: Women's Action for Iraq (formerly Women Against Sanctions on Iraq).

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Cynthia Cockburn is a feminist researcher and writer, based at City University where she is a Visiting Professor in the Department of Sociology. She is an active member in the London group of the international network Women in Black against Militarism and War. Her research focus is women and gender in a context of war making and peace-building in Northern Ireland, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Israel/Palestine and, more recently, Cyprus.

Liz Davies

Liz Davies is a barrister and socialist-feminist campaigner. She was a member of the Labour Party for over twenty years, serving as a Labour Councillor in Islington and as a constituency representative on the Party's National Executive Committee. She was chair of Islington Council Women's Committee. She has written on various topics, including feminism and civil liberties. Her publications include: *Women in Europe* (1983 Cambridge University Press, co-author), *Feminism After Post-Feminism* (pamphlet Spokesman publications 1996) and *Through the Looking Glass: A dissenter in New Labour* (2001, Verso). She is no longer a member of the Labour Party, but is an active member of the Stop the War Coalition, CND, and other peace and labour movement campaigns. In September 2002, when this talk was delivered, she was a member of the Stop the War Steering Committee.

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Sian Jones is involved with Women in Black, Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp and D10, a mixed anti-militarist group. She has taken part in women's non-violent direct action against war and militarism over too many years to count, and has a continuing connection with women and war in the Balkans. In her spare time, she has been an archaeologist and a historian, worked in museums and currently works for a human rights organization. Her paper in this publication owes much to the women, groups and organizations she has worked with and learned from, but does not attempt to express the collective views of any group or organization.

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