



**PANEL: "Religious Pluralism in a
Securitized Environment: Enhancing
Inclusion & Public Safety"**

Presentation by Dr Sara Silvestri on

The case of Islam in Europe

Areas of work

- **Interdisciplinary, qualitative research:**
 - » Muslim political mobilisation in Europe
 - » Public policies towards Muslim communities
 - » Migration
 - » Radicalisation & counter-terrorism
- **Teach:**
 - » Political Islam
 - » Religion in International Relations,
 - » EU & ME politics
- **Public policy:** advisory roles (intercultural dialogue, counter-terrorism) with EuroMed, EU, UN Alliance of Civilisations
- **Where:** UK, Italy, Belgium, across EU
- <http://www.city.ac.uk/intpol/Staff/Silvestri.html>

Focus on interconnected issues

- **Transformation of contemporary Islam** in Europe and globally
- Articulation and perception of **ethno-religious identities** (> new “Suspect Communities” project)
- **Reconfiguration** of European politics & social structures in relation to rapidly increased ethnic diversity & newly discovered religious pluralism
- **Trust relations** between different groups, especially after 9/11

Challenges to & of Islam

- Multiple Islams
- Migration experience
- Globalisation & network society
- Islam & violence: terrorism & Islamism
- Meaning religion & secularism
- Juridical and political framework
- The global ummah
- EU enlargement (Turkey issue)
- ME/Iraq spill over effects
- Women status/ Sharia/ values

Relevant findings of research projects conducted in Europe during 2006-08

- Main geographical focus: UK, Italy, Be, Fr
- Type: interviews & focus groups
- Individual & collaborative research:
 1. PhD thesis – *Muslim political Mobilisation & institutionalisation of Islam in Europe*
 2. British Council – *Muslim youth perceptions of Britain and Europe*
 3. Ethnobarometer – *Muslims and community relations in Europe post 9/11*
 4. King Baudouin Foundation – *Europe's Muslim women: potential, problems and aspirations*

Research Findings:

CONFLICT & FEAR

- **Shared spaces & resources:** both sense of safety and conflict
- **Source perceptions & stereotypes:** individuals' ignorance and media coverage
- Persistence of **Racism & Discrimination**
- Clash of **universalisms:** religious vs secular
- **Islamophobia** discourse based on holocaust awareness

Research Findings:

THE COMMUNITY

- **Shared spaces & experiences:** sense of safety
- **Fragmentation** ummah & community: vulnerability
- **Community** both source of solidarity & oppression (via family ties, traditions)
- **Leaders'** distrust (political & religious)

Research Findings:

TERRORISM EXPERIENCE

- **Apology of religion + anger** towards individual Muslim “**troublemakers**” who jeopardise reputation of all
- **Violence:** from terrorism but also from curtailment of freedoms
- **Anti-terror legislation** and work of police per se are accepted & appreciated, the problem is implementation

Research Findings:

CONCLUSIONS: contradictory feelings

- **Resilience** expressed in 3 ways:
engagement, inward tendencies,
disengagement
- **Citizenship - Democracy:** awareness,
appreciation, delusion

Policy Recommendations

- See and treat Muslims as **human beings** first, not as an abnormal religious-political category
- Do not be afraid to touch **religion**. Comparative religion should be taught in schools
- Stimulate participation around **shared concerns, spaces & need for security** rather than by singling out diversity
- **Positive action** useful only in limited way as short term solution. Otherwise risk of **further isolation** of specific communities
- Muslim consultative councils: important for their **experimental nature** and as first step to recognise needs and claims of Muslims but **not ideal solution**
- Develop **citizenship** idea based on “common good”