

Report 114
PROJECT ON BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE
MUSLIM WORLD

Weekly Presentation: April 14, 2010

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Period: From April 4-10, 2010

This week report is purposely directed to looking at Muslim related issues and various burning matters in North America/Canada, Western Europe, Latin America/Southern Europe, Southeast Europe and Oceania.

US/Canada

- CAIR Welcomes Arrest of American Al-Qaeda Spokesman
- CAIR to Support D.C. Panel on Muslims and the Census

Western Europe

- Charlemagne: Europe's worrying gerontocracy

What happens when older voters dominate European electorates

Apr 8th 2010 | From *The Economist* print edition

- Tax and the election: Politics and theology

The first big campaign battle takes up a familiar theme

Apr 9th 2010 | From *The Economist* online

- Britain's banking market: A breath of fresh air

A shake-up is possible—but only if customers shop around more

Apr 8th 2010 | From *The Economist* online

- International Muslim Conference on Climate Change Pressures OIC to Act

Islamtoday.com

- Wilders Goes for Hijab Ban in The Hague
- Niqab ban breaches privacy: EU rights chief
- Halal becomes big business
- France's young Muslims fuel boom in halal food

A fatwa against terrorism that might work

Oceania

- Latest Roy Morgan findings: 1) Only 10% of Australians want a Population of 35 Million+ by 2040; 2) Longer-term New Car Buying Intention at Five Month High; 3) Henry Thornton - Population, Productivity & Participation

Report Detail

US/Canada

WASHINGTON, D.C., -- A Prominent national Muslim civil rights and advocacy group today welcomed reports from Pakistan that American Al-Qaeda spokesman Adam Gadahn has been arrested. The Washington-based Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) also repudiated Gadahn's latest call to violence contained in an Al-Qaeda video released Sunday. In a statement, CAIR said: "We welcome the reported arrest of Adam Gadahn and repeat the American Muslim community's repudiation of all those who would promote or condone terrorism anywhere in the world." Along with innumerable condemnations of terror, CAIR has in the past launched an online anti-terror petition drive called "Not in the Name of Islam," initiated a television public service announcement (PSA) campaign against religious extremism and coordinated a "fatwa," or Islamic religious ruling, against terrorism and extremism.

SEE: CAIR's Anti-Terrorism Campaigns CAIR is America's largest Muslim civil liberties and advocacy organization. Its mission is to enhance the understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims, and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding.

WASHINGTON, D.C., On Monday, March 8, the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) will join in supporting an event at Georgetown University hosted by the American Muslim Interactive Network (AMIN) to encourage participation in the 2010 U.S. Census.

WHAT: Census 2010: Muslim Voices Matter

WHEN: Monday, March 8. 6-7 p.m. dinner reception, 7-8:30 p.m. panel discussion with Q&A

WHERE: Lohrfink Auditorium, Rafik B Hariri Building, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. RSVP: <http://muslimcensus2010.eventbrite.com>

Speakers will include Congressman Andre Carson (D-IN), Imam Johari Abdul-Malik of Dar al-Hijra mosque and a representative of the U.S. Census Bureau.

In an effort to promote and encourage public and civic engagement among the American Muslim community, the event is designed to educate the public about the census and its importance and relevance to the Muslim community, dispel stereotypes and myths about Census information sharing, inspire interest in the process and encourage participation. Although the census does not ask about faith and religion (rather it asks about ethnicity/heritage), Muslims make up an ethnically and culturally diverse subset of the American population.

Why the Census should matter to Muslims: Every year, the federal government distributes more than \$400 billion to state, local and tribal governments based on the Census. Faith-based organizations and institutions use census data to apply for grants and determine locations for new facilities. Census data guide funding decisions for community facilities, such as schools, hospitals, child-care centers, senior centers and more. Census data affects your voice in Congress, as well as redistricting of state legislations, county and city councils, and voting districts. The event is free. For

additional information, details and to RSVP, go to <http://muslimcensus2010.eventbrite.com>

Western Europe

SEEN from afar, Europe looks like a “gerontocracy”, an American newspaper reported in 1963. Europeans were young in years and outlook (their median age was just 32). But their leaders included the 87-year-old Konrad Adenauer in Germany; septuagenarian despots in Spain and Portugal; Charles de Gaulle in France (then 72, and destined to hang on to the presidency for six more years); and the baby of the bunch, Britain’s 68-year-old Harold Macmillan, who was soon to quit as prime minister.

Today Europe again faces rule by the elderly. Not because its leaders are all ancient: modern politicians tend to flaunt pregnant wives and school-age children, and disport themselves in cycling shorts and running kit. Now it is the voters who have aged. By 2050, more than a third of potential European Union voters will be over 65. And because older voters turn out more reliably than the young, they could wield crushing power.

That alarms those worried about Europe’s pension and welfare systems. David Willetts, a British Tory, has caused a stir with “The Pinch”, a book accusing baby-boomers (a huge cohort born between 1945 and 1965) of stealing their children’s future. Boomers own more than half of Britain’s £6 trillion (\$9 trillion) of personal wealth, he claims. The causes include a house-price boom and generous company pension schemes that are closed to younger workers. Mr Willetts (born in 1956) fears that an army of retired boomers may vote for whopping sums to be spent on health care and pensions, against the wishes of younger taxpayers who might prefer spending on things like education.

Such fears are inspiring bold thinking. Arji Lans Bovenberg at Tilburg University in the Netherlands (born in 1958) wonders if parents should be given an extra vote at elections for each young child in their charge. An economist at Vienna University, Dennis Mueller (born in 1940) notes that the old have to take driving tests to keep their licences. What about citizenship tests before they are allowed to vote, similar to the civic quizzes faced by many immigrants? Some political parties, including Labour in Britain, have suggested that the legal voting age should fall to 16.

Such solutions tend to have drawbacks. They discriminate against those who cannot have children. Or they insult older voters who have served their countries for decades. In 2008 Austria became the first European country to allow 16-year-olds to vote in national elections. A lot of them promptly voted for far-right parties, which got more support from the young than from the old.

It is easy to be gloomy about the idea of a gerontocracy seizing power in the European Union, a place already struggling to stay competitive. Eurobarometer opinion polls, which survey 1,000 citizens in each of the 27 EU members, offer rich seams of evidence that political and economic preferences vary with age. For instance, older voters are less satisfied with their lives and more pessimistic about the economic future. Older Europeans are more likely to say that the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 made life in their country “more insecure”, a pattern that holds true in both eastern and western Europe.

Overall, Europeans are less entrepreneurial and less mobile than Americans. The averages conceal age differences. A 2007 Eurobarometer found 61% of Americans would

rather be self-employed. Europeans under 24 came close to American levels of enthusiasm for the risky freedom of the entrepreneur. But older Europeans preferred having a regular salary, thank you. And yet a fixation on age risks missing a more serious problem facing Europe. It is true that Eurobarometer surveys show opinions varying with age. But such differences are trumped by those based on nationality. Take enthusiasm for self-employment. Older Europeans are less keen than the young on going it alone, but not by much. Yet at Europe's extremes the gaps are huge: 57% of Portuguese fancy being self-employed, but only 30% of Belgians. (The survey found Belgians especially keen on fixed working hours, a finding that rings true for anyone needing a Brussels plumber at the weekend.)

Golden oldies

A recent Eurobarometer asked if governments should make it easier for older people to keep working after their retirement age, if they wished. It found small differences by age, but astonishing gulfs by nationality. Almost nine out of ten respondents in Britain, Denmark, Finland and the Netherlands said oldies should be helped to work if they wanted. At the other extreme, 55% of Greeks were opposed. That may be because Greeks lead the EU in believing the lump-of-labour fallacy: a huge majority agree that, as older people work longer, "fewer jobs will be available for younger people". The fallacy that working oldies would automatically steal jobs from the young is also popular in Cyprus, Hungary, Portugal and Italy, even though those countries face very different rates of ageing. In other words, national political cultures matter more than age.

Spain's government appears scared even to debate a higher pension age. Others are braver. In Nordic countries legal retirement ages are increasingly pegged to life expectancy. Earlier this month a Dutch trade union boss, Peter Gortzak, suggested that workers should be promised a fixed length of retirement, say 20 years, with their retirement dates calculated backwards from average life expectancy in their sector (ie, those in tougher trades could retire younger).

Gerontocratic rule certainly poses long-term dangers. But Europe must above all avoid being pulled apart, as some countries tackle ageing better than others. Old age is not the enemy of reform: ignorance, selfishness and timidity are. The old have no monopoly on these vices and may have picked up some wisdom. In the coming decades, Europe will need much of that.

BRITISH, In the fine tradition of modern British general elections, a row over tax and spend has dominated the opening days of the campaign. The dispute between the Conservatives and Labour over payroll tax and public spending has eclipsed worries about a Greek-sized budget deficit. In another familiar touch, the wrangle about "efficiency savings" has swiftly become a theological tangle so impenetrable that television viewers must be switching channels if not votes. The Tories had descended from their lofty ground of deficit-cutting austerity to low politics on March 29th when George Osborne, the shadow chancellor, set out a plan to stave off an increase in national-insurance contributions (despite the name, a tax levied on both workers and employers) planned by Labour to start in April 2011. Mr Osborne said that, were the Tories elected, he would pay for this through spending cuts worth £6 billion (\$9.1

billion), beginning this year. That would cut the deficit in 2010-11, though not by much, from the vertiginous £163 billion projected by the Treasury. But thereafter the Tories would have to find extra savings to make up for the contribution the lost tax revenues would have made to cutting the deficit.

Despite the apparent weakening of the Tories' deficit-slaying resolve, Mr Osborne's demarche paid political dividends as business leaders flocked to support his move against a "tax on jobs". Labour, once famed for its highly tuned rebuttal machine, claimed that company chiefs had been "deceived". When they insisted that they had not, the party was left flustered. The rallying of bosses to the Tory cause was particularly painful since Labour had rebuilt its economic credibility in the 1990s in large measure by getting the support of business.

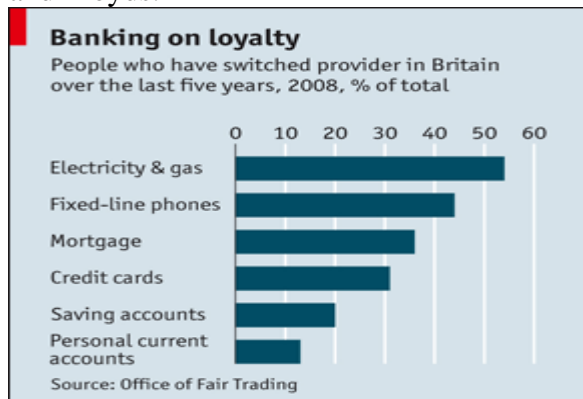
Despite finding itself on the wrong side of the argument, Labour returned to the counter-attack this week. Mr Osborne had said that he would make the spending cuts by tackling waste. Indeed there were so many "efficiency savings" to be wrung out of government that he could find not just £6 billion but £12 billion, half of which would be recycled within existing budgets in health, defence and overseas aid.

Not so, said Labour on April 8th. The government was already planning to find extra efficiency savings worth £15 billion this year, and it was incredible to think that another £12 billion on top of that could be found. Mr Osborne's plan was a wheeze based on "fantasy" savings. This is where the argument becomes theological. Claims and counter-claims about efficiency gains have been made ever since 2004, when Mr Brown, then the chancellor, launched a drive to make annual savings building up to £21.5 billion by 2007-08. The plan was drawn up for the Treasury by Peter Gershon, a high-flying civil servant. But the figures were misleading: that impressive-sounding sum of money was measured against a scenario in which the government would make no efficiency gains at all, which made it rather less impressive. Moreover, there is a lot of doubt about whether the efficiency drive worked, even though Labour announced an even bigger one for the three years to 2010-11. The National Audit Office said in early 2007 that it could vouch fully for only a quarter of the economies then trumpeted by Mr Brown.

On April 9th Sir Peter, who has since jumped ship to advise the Conservatives, spelt out some of the ways that a further £12 billion could be saved this year. He told the *Financial Times* that controls on recruitment could save between £1 billion and £2 billion; reductions in IT spending at least £2 billion; renegotiation of contracts with suppliers about £3 billion; and cuts to "discretionary" savings such as consultants a further £2.5 billion. None of these seems that fantastic. But with so much doubt and cynicism about supposed efficiency savings the only thing that is real in this debate is the £6 billion of actual cuts the Tories have set out for this year. That may be a lot by most standards, but it will amount to less than 1% of planned spending this year.

CONSUMER groups have long worried about a lack of competition in Britain's personal-banking market. Waves of consolidation over the years have left it more concentrated than, for example, that of the United States. Consumers have remained highly reluctant to switch their current accounts (checking accounts, as Americans call them) because it can be so cumbersome, even though they have become quite used to shopping around for other utilities (see chart below). Forced mergers and takeovers during the financial crisis made things worse: the governor of the Bank of England,

Mervyn King, has expressed worries that the resulting megabanks are too big to fail, and thus should be broken up. Now, with some of the rescued banks' branches being put up for sale, and several ambitious new entrants seeking to grab a significant share of the market, there is the chance of a better choice for bank customers. On April 6th bidding closed for 318 branches of the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS)—in which the taxpayer now has an 84% stake—that are being sold on the orders of the European Commission, as a quid pro quo for its state rescue. Depending on who wins, the sale could be a first step on the road to ending the oligopoly enjoyed by Britain's big four—RBS, HSBC, Barclays and Lloyds.



If Santander, a big Spanish bank, wins, not much may change. It has already mopped up several medium-sized British banks—Abbey and Alliance & Leicester, and the branch network of the state-rescued Bradford & Bingley—and is amalgamating their combined 1,300-odd branches into a single outfit. Another potential consolidator is National Australia Bank, which already owns the mid-sized Yorkshire and Clydesdale banks. But Santander's main domestic rival, BBVA, which so far has little presence in Britain, has also bid for the RBS branches. And so has JC Flowers, an American private-equity investor and serial buyer of banks in the Netherlands, Germany and Japan. Potentially the most significant bidder is Sir Richard Branson's Virgin Money, which recently bought a tiny regional bank, Church House Trust, to use its licence to launch a big push into personal banking. If it fails to win the RBS branches it may go after other banking operations that are coming on to the market: the still-active part of the rescued Northern Rock is to be sold, as are at least 600 branches of Lloyds, which took over the ailing HBOS during the crisis. This week it was confirmed that Wilbur Ross, an American investor, was ready to put up to £500m into the Virgin venture.

Among other new entrants to come is Metro Bank, backed by Vernon Hill, an American bank founder. It got its licence from the Financial Services Authority in March and plans to open up to 200 "customer- and dog-friendly" branches around Greater London. Walton & Co, backed by Panmure Gordon, an investment bank, is a more modest venture into family banking in selected market towns, still waiting for its licence. Sweden's Handelsbanken is also planning to increase its small branch network in Britain, and the huge Bank of China is also seeking a share of the British mortgage market. The new competitors may struggle to loosen the existing big four's grip on the market. Given the cost and complexity of creating branch networks from scratch, and the even greater challenges involved in absorbing and integrating existing branches, with their often outdated information-technology systems, the new competitors may struggle to

loosen the existing big four's grip on the market. However, there are two other, far stronger, potential contenders with better chances of taking a decent share.

One is the Post Office. It does not have a banking licence of its own but provides an outlet for some of Bank of Ireland's banking services, and allows customers of 12 other banks to use the 11,500 post-office counters across Britain. The Post Bank Coalition, combining trade unions, think-tanks and the Federation of Small Businesses, is pressing for the Post Office to abandon its joint ventures and become a fully-fledged, publicly owned bank for individuals and small firms, something like the mighty Japan Post.

Tesco wants a 10% share of the banking market

Another, whose plans to become big in banking are already well advanced, is Tesco, Britain's biggest retailer with almost 2,300 stores across the country. This week the firm said it was aiming eventually for a 10% share of the market for current accounts, which it will enter next year. It already offers credit cards and insurances at its stores, and plans to add mortgages too. Like the other new entrants, Tesco is finding that it is a struggle to build the information systems needed to run a full-scale bank. But it already has a strong branch network and a customer relationship with millions of consumers.

Since the failure of Northern Rock demonstrated the dangers of banks relying on the wholesale markets for their funding, they have taken a renewed interest in taking deposits from the public—though savers grumble that the rates on offer are still miserly. Several of the potential rivals to the existing big four—Virgin, Tesco and the Post Office, are trusted household names, so there is a fair chance consumers will consider them. But to get a significant slice of the banking market they will need to persuade the public to move their current accounts, not just savings accounts and credit cards. Many people remain reluctant to do this, not least because the biggest banks benefit from a stronger implicit government guarantee. The main challenge for the new contenders, then, may be to persuade them shop around, just as they have learned in recent years to switch regularly between different providers of electricity, gas and telephone lines, to chase the best deals.

The International Muslim Conference on Climate Change concluded with a declaration directed at the OIC. 250 participants from 250 countries attended the conference, which was held on 9 and 10 2010 in Bogor, West Java, Indonesia. The event is a continuation of the agenda of the Muslim Seven Year Action Plan for Climate Change (M7YAP) declared in Istanbul, Turkey, early in June 2009. The conference issued the "Bogor Declaration" which urges the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) to set up a special council to offer leadership on climate change issues. It said that the OIC needed to promote climate change policies, including recommendations on lifestyle changes which would suit Islamic values. It recommended that Muslim communities should initiate action to deal with climate change through establishment of eco-Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) and use mosques to disseminate sustainability messages to congregations. The conference will formally submit the Bogor Declaration to the OIC, which consists of 57 Muslim countries and countries with large Muslim communities.

"It is time for the OIC to talk about climate change to help pressure the international community to deal with global warming", the head of the steering committee Ismid

The two-day conference however, failed to set up a hoped-for "Muslim Association on Climate Change Action" as an umbrella group to help implement the

Bogor Declaration. The conference also failed to discuss a suggested "Green Hajj" concept for the pilgrimage to Mecca as planned. "With or without the proposed umbrella group, we will take action on climate change," Hadad said. Mohammad Azmi from the Malaysia-based Consumer Association of Penang said that Muslim countries should strengthen their position on international talks on climate change issues.

The UN Framework on Climate Change (UNFCCC) hosts annual conference on climate change to discuss such issues as emission cuts. "The OIC should come up with a strong position on climate change to back up the UNFCCC," he said. "All Muslim countries should come onto the [UNFCCC] board to prevent rich nations from 'killing' the Kyoto Protocol," he said.

Azmi said that the Muslim countries should also push rich nations to provide financial and technical assistance in support of the transfer of green technology to help the developing countries in dealing with climate change. "Muslim countries need to set up a block negotiation to strengthen the voice of Muslims in climate change talks," he said.

Sources:

"Muslim Conference Urges on Climate Care" *Viva News* April 12, 2010
Adianto P. Simamora, "Muslim countries to lead on green issues " *The Jakarta Post* April 12, 2010
"Int'l muslim conference on climate change issues Bogor Declaration" *Antara* April 11, 2010

The Netherlands, A ban on headscarves for city council workers and in all institutions and clubs which get local authority money will be the most important point in the PVV's negotiations to join governing coalitions in Almere and the Hague, says party leader Geert Wilders. Speaking to RTL news, Wilders said the ban would be central to talks to form new local authority executives in the only two cities where the party is contesting the March 3 local elections. The ban will apply to 'all council offices and all other institutions and clubs which get even one cent of council money,' he said.

The PVV is tipped to emerge as the biggest party in Almere and second biggest in the Hague. Speech Wilders brought up the ban again in a speech to supporters in Almere, where he entered the room to the Rocky theme tune Eye of the Tiger.

The ban will not apply to other religious items such as Christian crosses and Jewish skull caps because these are symbols of our own Dutch culture, Wilders said in his speech, receiving a standing ovation from the crowd. (More)

STRASBOURG — A ban on face-veil would violate individual privacy rights and alienate Muslim women, the European rights chief has warned, urging politicians to promote understanding of different cultures. "A general ban on such attires would constitute an ill-advised invasion of individual privacy," Thomas Hammarberg, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, said in a statement.

Last January, a French parliamentary panel recommended slapping a partial ban on face-veils in public institutions. Similar debates are also heating up in Italy, Denmark, Netherlands and Germany. Hammarberg said a ban might breach the European Convention on Human Rights, which allows limitations on human rights only on the grounds of public health, safety or morals. "Those who have argued for a general ban of

the burqa and the niqab have not managed to show that these garments in any way undermine democracy, public safety, order or morals," he insisted.

"The fact that a very small number of women wears such clothing has made proposals in such a direction even less convincing." The Council of Europe was founded in 1949 to protect human rights and democracy in the continent.

It has 47 members who have signed the European Convention on Human Rights.

- **Counterproductive**

The European rights chief said a ban would be counterproductive rather than helpful for Muslim women.

"Prohibition of the burqa and the niqab would not liberate oppressed women, but might instead lead to their further alienation in European societies," he warned.

"The suggestion to ban the presence of women dressed in the burqa/niqab in public institutions like hospitals or government offices may only result in these women avoiding such places entirely."

Hammarberg said media interviews have shown that the majority of the niqab-clad women have taken the decision by their own volition and would not welcome a ban.

"There may of course be cases where they are under undue pressure - but it is not shown that a ban would be welcomed by these women."

While hijab is an obligatory code of dress for Muslim women, the majority of Muslim scholars agree that a woman is not obliged to wear the face-veil.

Scholars believe it is up to women to decide whether to take on the veil or burqa.

Hammarberg cautioned that subjecting Islam and Muslim-related issues to public debates in many European countries risks playing into the hands of extremists.

"Some of the arguments have been clearly Islamophobic and that has certainly not built bridges or encouraged dialogue."

He insisted that instead of imposing new dress codes on their citizens, European states would be better advised to launch debates on understanding of different cultures.

"Attempts should be made to broaden the discourse to cover essential matters, including how to promote understanding of different religions, cultures and customs."

PARIS, FRANCE. When my local delicatessen in France closed, it was replaced by a fast-food outlet selling halal fried chicken. When my local kosher butcher closed, it was replaced by a halal butcher. In my local supermarket, there is now a well-stocked halal section. Last week, I received a leaflet proposing Islamic banking services. Suddenly it seems halal has not only become fashionable but big business.

Halal fast food certainly sells. For a start, in many parts of Europe the late night staple is the kebab. That it is halal hardly matters to non-Muslim partygoers who stumble out of nightclubs hungry for a meaty sandwich in the early hours. It's a noteworthy trend that extends beyond the humble kebab: Halal food is popular with both Muslims and non-Muslims. But the main market is clearly Muslims eager to eat in line with their religious precepts. And a big market it is. There are 1.6 billion Muslims worldwide. In Europe alone, there are 18 million Muslim consumers with an estimated market value of \$2.63 billion per annum according to Halal Journal.

That's an attractive and growing market that the big multinationals have been quick to cash on. Nestle was among the first to identify the potential. It started selling halal versions of their most popular products such as kit-kat chocolate in the 1980s. Halal

products now account for five percent of Nestle's annual sales, or 5.3 billion Swiss francs. Eighty-five of their factories have halal— certified production lines and of these 20 are in Europe. More important, it is a fast-growing and highly profitable sector. Nestle reports that its latest marketing campaign for halal products led to 50 percent annual growth and double-digit profitability.

Several fast-food chains have been quietly incorporating halal food onto their menus or sourcing halal meat and chicken. KFC, for instance, uses halal chicken. Others have done so not so quietly. There was uproar last year when Dominoes Pizza turned one of its outlets in Birmingham halal. Similarly in France last month, even politicians joined the outcry when Quick — a Belgo-French hamburger chain similar to McDonald's — turned eight of its outlets into halal restaurants. It was discrimination, they argued. It is one thing to sell halal food, it is another to deprive non-Muslims of pork products. The argument is not without merit. Surely locals who want to have bacon on their burgers should be able to do so, just as Muslims who would like their burgers made of halal beef and served with turkey bacon instead of pork should also be able to get what they want. Except that it doesn't quite work that way. Adding a couple of halal items on the menu is not as successful as going halal. The first may attract one or two customers who fancy turkey bacon on their burgers. The second attracts a whole segment of society once they know all the food being served conforms to their religious requirements, not only because it is pork-free but because the restaurant has gone all out and installed procedures to ensure that Muslim hygiene standards have been maintained in the entire production line. And it works. It is rumored that Quick saw a 30 percent increase in sales in the eight stores that went halal.

The key is segmentation. To increase sales, targeting a particular sector of the market is textbook stuff. When Muslim consumers make up such a dynamic, increasingly wealthy and culturally visible segment of the consumer market, it makes sense to market products just for them. Whereas it used to be just small independent butchers selling halal meat and chicken, it has now become much more developed and highly profitable. What surprises me most about the halal business is how it has expanded beyond the obvious sectors of halal meat and food. There are now halal cosmetics, halal vitamin pills, halal financial products, halal hotels and resorts. It is fast becoming a brand. Rather than call a hotel Muslim-friendly because it does not serve alcohol, it is branded as halal, a word I would once only have used that way about meat or food.

The halal business has become highly sophisticated. In Malaysia, there are Halal Parks, described by the Malaysian Halal Industry Development Corporation as “communities of halal-oriented businesses built on common property where they are provided infrastructure and service support.” Malaysia is building 20 such parks. And in June this year Malaysia will also host the 5th World Halal Forum in Kuala Lumpur. Last year, more than 900 participants attended the event, from more than 47 countries. One of the key questions that will be addressed is the issue of creating an international halal standard. Going halal is the next big thing and it's clearly an encouraging trend. However, as it stands a hefty 90 percent of the global halal market is controlled by multinationals such as the food giants Nestle, fast food outlets like KFC, or supermarket chains such as Carrefour. The halal bandwagon is out there and going fast, but Muslims aren't running it

PARIS, FRANCE. French Muslims of North African descent have spending power worth an estimated of 5.5bn euros a year. The young ones want high-end halal luxuries and a range of halal cuisines, rather than the foods that their parents grew up with, *the Guardian* reports. In response to the growing demand for halal products, which is increasing by 15 per cent a year, supermarket group Caisno has started stocking an increasing variety of halal meats. The fast-food chain Quick has a number of halal-only burger bars and Muslim corner shops selling exclusively halal foods and drinks are also flourishing. Wealthy young Muslims are behind the new trend, according to Yanis Bouarbi, 33, an IT specialist who started the website paris-hallal.com, which lists restaurants in France serving halal food. "When our parents and grandparents came to France they did mostly manual work and the priority was having enough to feed the family," he told *the Guardian*.

"But second or third-generation people like me have studied, have good jobs and money and want to go out and profit from French culture without compromising our religious beliefs. We don't just want cheap kebabs, we want Japanese, Thai, French food; we want to be like the rest of you." Yanis Bouarbi's website now lists more than 400 restaurants in Paris and its suburbs, and he plans to expand it to other French cities.

NEWARK, DELAWARE - Dr. Tahir ul-Qadri, a Pakistani Islamic scholar visiting the United Kingdom, recently released a 600-page fatwa, or non-binding opinion in Islamic law, against terrorism. This fatwa might actually have an impact. It is comprehensive, direct and does not dodge any of the issues. It has come at a time when there is very strong abhorrence for terrorism, especially in Pakistan, and it will strip terrorists of what little legitimacy they might be still enjoying in the eyes of Muslims who fear that Islam is under attack by Western powers. Qadri is a prominent imam who founded Minhaj ul Qur'an International, an organisation with the stated aim of creating understanding between communities, and who enjoys a large popular following. He also happens to be well ensconced in the traditional Islamic heritage. But those who are engaged in extremist violence and those who sympathise with them belong to a more recent trend within Salafism, an ideology that aims for the emulation of the practice of Islam in its early days and a rejection of centuries' worth of Islamic thought and doctrine in favour of literal interpretation. Salafism is a recent transplant in South Asia and fortunately does not have deep roots in the region. Qadri and his large following constitute mainstream Muslims in Pakistan and in the Pakistani diaspora. In principle, they should be able to prevail easily over the extremist voices now causing such turmoil in that land. Qadri's 600-page fatwa is essentially an encyclopedic compilation of Islamic jurisprudence on the use of force. It gathers the various jurisprudential positions advanced by Muslim scholars and jurists of different schools of thought and provides a comprehensive overview of the various normative and ethical limitations that derivations from Islamic sources – ethical and legal pronouncements that Muslims have accumulated over centuries – have placed on the legitimate use of force.

There is nothing new in Qadri's tome and that is a good thing. He is not advancing new interpretations of Islamic sources, nor is he trying to reinvent the wheel. His contribution is in showing that not only does Islam prohibit terrorism, it condemns the terrorist to hell. He also shows how Muslims have long considered suicide a forbidden act and that Islam has held this stance from the beginning. The collection of the various opinions of

classical scholars too demonstrates the extent and depth of Islam's prohibition of the use of force against civilians, against women and against children.

The extremists and their sympathetic scholars will not be able to produce a document that could trump Qadri's fatwa. The extremists in the Muslim world have relied basically on two elements to advance their radical agenda: one, they have exploited the widespread theological illiteracy of Muslims to advance out-of-context and unprecedented new interpretations and justifications for the principle of jihad (a spiritual and religious effort) to legitimise their crusade against the West and its allies. Two, they have benefitted from the anger that Muslims have been feeling against the various military attacks and occupations by Western armies of Muslim lands in the past two centuries. Add to this the suffering of the Palestinians, Iraqis, Afghan and Pakistani civilians at the hands of Western forces and you begin to comprehend why some Muslim youth embrace the un-Islamic interpretations of Islamic sources by extremist clerics.

Is Qadri's fatwa a magic bullet that will erode all anger, frustration and resentment? Certainly not. Will it engender a widespread loathing for the use of terrorism as a tactics? Most certainly, yes, if it is given sustained attention by the media. Unfortunately, other fatwas against suicide bombing, such as those issued by Shi'ite cleric Ayatollah al-Udhma Yousof al-Sanei and Saudi scholar Al Habib Ali Al-Jifri, have gone comparatively unnoticed by mainstream media. In Pakistan, Qadri's reputation and the growing anger against terrorists for their indiscriminate violence against mosques and against Muslims will combine to give the fatwa a chance to marginalise extremists. Hopefully supporters of extremist groups will either rethink their politics or at least abstain from openly and actively supporting a culture of violence. Qadri and his institution also hope that the perception held by some in the West that Islam is the cause of terrorism will be corrected. I am, however, less sanguine about this. Those in the West who argue that mainstream Muslims are not opposing terrorism or those who insist that terrorism is a consequence of Islamic values are motivated by political interests and are clearly "Islamophobic". They will not change their mind. However, those who are still unaware that most Muslims condemn terrorists and that there is nothing in Islam that supports terrorism may perhaps be enlightened as a result of this fatwa.

Oceania

Latest Roy Morgan findings: 1) Only 10% of Australians want a Population of 35 Million+ by 2040; 2) Longer-term New Car Buying Intention at Five Month High; 3) Henry Thornton - Population, Productivity & Participation

Only 10% of Australians want a Population of 35 Million+ by 2040 While 64% of Australians want Asylum seekers arriving by boat To be returned and told to apply through normal refugee channels

Only 10% of Australians want a population of 35 million+ by 2040 according to a special Roy Morgan telephone survey conducted during March 2010. Despite ABS projections of an Australian population likely to exceed 35 million by 2049, just 10% of Australians want a population more than 35 million – 6% (35-40 million); 2% (40-50 million) and 2% (50 million or more).

A clear majority (81%) of Australians do not want Australia's population to exceed 35 million by 2040 – 35% want a population between 25-30 million, 21% want

between 30-35 million, 19% want between 22-25 million and 6% want a population under 22 million. Only 9% of Australians can't say.

Immigration Levels

Australians are more divided on the question of immigration – when asked “Over the last year (2008/09) about 170,000 immigrants came to Australia. Do you think the number of people coming here to live permanently should be increased, or reduced, or remain about the same” – 46% say immigration should ‘remain about the same,’ while 39% say immigration should ‘be reduced’ while just 11% say immigrations should ‘be increased.’

Send ‘Boat People’ back home

A large majority of Australians (64%) say that asylum seekers arriving by boat should ‘be returned and apply through normal refugee channels’ compared to 26% that are happy with the current system and believe these asylum seekers should be ‘allowed to apply for immigration as now’ while just 5% say there should be another system and a further 5% can't say.

Gary Morgan says:

“Despite ABS projections that Australia’s population is set to top 35 million in the 2040s — the latest Roy Morgan telephone survey shows that a clear majority (81%) of Australians do not want a population of over 35 million by 2040. In fact — only 10% of Australians want a population in excess of 35 million. Far more Australians want a population of either 25-30 million (35%) or 30-35 million (21%).

“Although Australians don’t want a ‘huge’ population increase, Australian views on immigrants are generally positive with 39% of Australians saying immigrants change Australia ‘for the better’ compared to 32% that say immigrants change Australia ‘for the worse.’ This is not that surprising when one considers that approximately 30% of all Australian residents were born overseas.

“Looking at different types of immigrant shows that majorities of Australians are in favour of skilled migrants (87%); Family reunion migrants (78%); Muslim migrants (55%) and Asylum seeker migrants (50%) — although in the case of ‘Boat people,’ 64% of Australians say that they should be returned and made to apply through normal refugee channels while just 26% of Australians are happy with the current system.”

These are the main insights from the special Roy Morgan telephone survey conducted on the evenings of March 16/17, 2010, with an Australia-wide cross-section of 670 men and women aged 14 or over.