

Introduction: Muslims in Europe

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The assassination of the Dutch film director Theo van Gogh and the attacks on London's public transport system, both of which were perpetrated by young Muslim immigrants to Western Europe, are extreme and atypical expressions of a longstanding and widespread problem that has been haunting European societies for the last few decades: the inability to weave Muslim immigrants into the fabric of European society. This failure to integrate Muslim populations into European societies is, in part, the outcome of stereotypes that both sides harbor of each other. It also stems from the tendency, found among Europeans and Muslims alike, to ignore the forces that brought them together: Many Europeans seem to have forgotten that it was their own interests and sometimes their own policies that brought about large-scale immigration into Europe. Thus, while they encouraged workers to come to Europe, the Europeans ignored the needs of the communities of immigrants that were established in their midst. Similarly, the Muslim workers, who came to Europe to escape oppressive regimes or bleak economic futures, remained aloof from or were threatened by the social and cultural norms that surrounded them. As a consequence, many of them made little or no effort to acquire the knowledge and skills that would enable them to participate in European societies. That being the case, the shared interests of European states and Muslim immigrants were wedded with mutual suspicion and animosity, generating a ghetto mentality, antagonistic legislation, racist incidents, and, ultimately, fatal terrorist attacks.

If we aim to further our understanding of the Western European failure to accommodate Muslims, it is essential to approach the topic in a dispassionate manner. The six essays in this volume are fine examples of the intellectual integrity that can probe this sensitive topic and reveal some of its recent developments. The studies touch on a wide variety of issues, such as the immigration and naturalization policies of a number of European states, the internal dynamics of several Muslim communities, perceptions and biases fostered by both the new immigrants and the native populations, and the latest experiments in fashioning European and Muslim identities. This short introduction will not touch upon all the themes that come up in the articles. Rather, it will concentrate on two main points: integration and the experiments that both the host states and the immigrant communities have undergone in recent years.

One of the main obstacles to integration has been European laws of naturalization. In Patrick Weil's essay about French nationality laws, "The history and memory of discrimination in the domain of French nationality: The case of Jews and Algerian Muslims", he illustrates how these laws left their mark on the collective identity of Algerian Muslims. The study surveys several formative moments in the construction of French nationality law and highlights four discriminated groups, one of them being Algerian Muslims. He then argues that Algerian Muslims perceived the debate that took place in the 1980s, in which the French right-wing political parties contested *jus soli* (attribution of nationality by birth in territory), as an effort to set them apart from the rest of French society, and brought back bitter memories of the era during which they were legally discriminated against. Weil's study links public debates and legislation to the Algerian Muslim's sense of alienation, which he labels "disidentification", illustrating how these policies and their echoes in public discourse have enlarged the chasm between Algerian Muslims and the rest of French society.

Whereas Weil's essay investigates how French policy blocked the Algerian Muslim's access to French society, Pnina Werbner's study, "Honor, shame and the politics of sexual embodiment among South Asian Muslims in Britain and beyond: An analysis of debates in the public sphere", examines how South Asian Muslims set themselves apart from their surrounding society. Through a focused examination of both the veil and arranged marriages, the study extends to such issues as honor and shame. Werbner depicts these values and social practices as part of an internal struggle within South Asian Muslim communities. In some cases, it is possible to identify two generations clashing over the marriages of second-generation immigrants; in others, it is a matter of traditionally minded individuals who opt to strengthen traditional values and generate a heightened level of social pressure on the rest of the community. In so doing, Werbner lays bare how mechanisms of communal self-supervision strengthen and spread patterns of behavior that hinder the ability of South Asian Muslims to become an integral part of British society.

The studies by Weil and Werbner make clear that both communities, Europeans and Muslim immigrants, harbor groups that regard integration as fraught with danger. Yet, alongside the analysis of the difficulties involved, the essays in this volume also examine attempts that have been made by both immigrant and Europeans to dismantle the fences that separate the two communities. The most encouraging feature that these studies point to is that there are leaders and thinkers among both Europeans and European Muslims who are taking responsibility for the present situation, looking critically at their own societies and seeking ways to change themselves.

One European country that is actively searching for its own "philosophy of integration" is Spain. In an article by Francisco Javier Moreno Fuentes, "Evolution of Spanish immigration policies and their impact on North African migration to Spain", we learn that Spain, which is a relative newcomer into the group of receiver countries, is in the midst of experimenting with its immigration policies. The two central forces

that shape Spain's policy are external pressures coming from the EU, which push for restrictions, and Spain's own internal needs, which encourage immigration. Another aspect of Spain's search for a policy of integration is the Spaniards' negative attitudes towards North African immigrants. Fuentes highlights the fact that some Spaniards have harsh opinions about North Africans and that in some regions such attitudes have lead to racist incidents (though, he points out, Spain does not have right-wing parties that thrive on prejudices towards North African Muslims). Fuentes argues that the only way to incorporate North Africans into Spanish society is to tackle such forms of discrimination head on.

Another essay that focuses on internal criticism, in this case Islamic, is Rainer Brunner's "Forms of Muslim self-perception in European Islam". Brunner points to a new and unprecedented area in Islamic thought, in which young Muslim thinkers reflect about their situation in Europe. The issue they address is how "to become European Muslims instead of remaining Muslims living in Europe". In other words, how should Muslims accommodate themselves to their European environment? The study focuses on two thinkers, Soheib Bencheikh and Tariq Ramadan. Bencheikh is a scholar who argues for separation between religion and politics, a concept that many Muslims find difficult to fathom. Ramadan has been arguing for modernizing Islam in its European context, although most of his ideas are within the confines of traditional reformist thought that concentrates on legal reforms. Yet, just as other authors in this collection have been mindful to expose internal disagreements within the European and Muslim communities, Brunner puts these reform-minded thinkers in perspective by mentioning much more conservative voices, such as Ahmad von Denffer, who argues that the ultimate goal of Muslims is to implement Islamic law. The essay presents to the readers the important debate that is taking place among European Muslims, whose main target is rethinking Islam and its essential features, and the creative ideas that are being introduced by some of its younger participants.

A different assessment of the fate of Muslims in Europe is presented by Ayhan Kaya in his article "Recoding Europeanness: A comparative study of German-Turks and French-Turks". In this study Kaya challenges the common belief that Turks have not been able to integrate into the countries in which they have settled. He argues, in contrast to this stereotype, that Turks have succeeded in becoming a part of German and French societies. Kaya's findings and conclusions expose the drawbacks of treating "Europe" or the "Muslims" as homogenous units, and underscore the need to take a close look at discrete European attitudes and policies, as well as the different ways that Muslim communities have come to terms with their predicaments.

Methodologically, the study by Armando Salvatore, "Secularity and public religion in Europe: Historical roots, theoretical debates and the case of public Islam", differs from the rest of the essays in this volume in that it deals with Europe as a whole. However, in terms of its contents it fits neatly with the underlying assumptions of the other essays in this volume: the need to rethink the most basic elements of European

and Islamic identities. By looking at “secularity” as a European construct, Salvatore taps into a debate taking place in Europe whose participants are questioning the place of religion in the public sphere. Within the framework of that debate, Islam constitutes an important challenge to the prevalent European notion that faith ought to be relegated solely to the private sphere. Muslim presence in Europe and Islamic ideas about the place of religion in the public sphere may serve as an important catalyst to bring about changes in this typically European outlook. Just as Brunner exposes the reader to some of the daring new ideas that are articulated by European Muslims, Salvatore brings to our attention some of the most innovative experiments that Europeans are making with the notions of religiosity and its place in a rapidly changing Europe.

In the last few decades, both Europeans and Muslims in Europe pose a challenge for each other. They must find a way to move out of the present state of suspicion and violence and establish modes of collaboration. The articles in this volume offer in-depth studies of some of the obstacles that stand in the way, and how both sides are attempting to overcome them.