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Fatos Tarifa

Monica Di Monte

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# Article

## **Failure of Multiculturalism? Immigration, Radical Islamism, and Identity Politics in Europe**

Fatos Tarifa and Monica Di Monte<sup>\*</sup>

*This paper addresses the issue of how Europe's ethnic and cultural mix is changing drastically by the large numbers of culturally diverse, especially Muslim immigrants, as well as problems that Western European governments face today as they try to deal with unintended consequences of their liberal policies of multiculturalism. In light of this discussion, radical Islamism and identity politics are seen as long-term challenges for all liberal democracies. We argue that extremist voices among the right-wing populist parties in many Western European countries opposed to immigration and increasingly mobilized around the issue of Muslim minorities, may spur resentment and political activism among Muslim immigrant communities, which can turn very violent. We conclude that for the time being, the best realistic scenario is that Islamic radicalism in Europe will continue on a lower level of intensity, but it will not disappear and it may aggravate existing tensions in the future.*

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**Fatos Tarifa** is professor of sociology and international relations, the rector of the University of New York Tirana, and president of the Albanian Academy of Arts of Sciences. He holds a double doctorate, with a Ph.D. in sociology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and a doctoral degree in political science from the University of Tirana. Tarifa is the author of numerous books and over one hundred peer-reviewed articles and book chapters. He has served as ambassador of Albania to the Netherlands and the United States.

**Monica Di Monte** received her doctoral degree in international and European law from the University "Aldo Moro" of Bari, Italy. She is adjunct lecturer and law practitioner in the areas of European and international law, immigration law, and human rights.

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Even before the outbreak of the current refugee crises in Europe, one-third of Germans believed their country—home to more than four million Muslim immigrants—is “overrun by foreigners” (*The Guardian*, 17 October 2010). In May 2005, Frits Bolkestein, a former European Commissioner for Internal Market and Services, summed up his view on the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty by the French and his Dutch nationals by declaring the much quoted phrase: “Europe has been oversold” (Bolkestein 2005). Others have blatantly stated that “Europe is full.” Words like these have become endemic in the consciousness of many Europeans, who see the growing number of—particularly Muslim—immigrants in their societies as a ruinous trend—an “invasion by the Muslims.” In her 2004 controversial book, *La Forza della Ragione (The Force of Reason)*, Oriana Fallaci, the late renowned Italian journalist and novelist, claimed that Europe, like Troy, is “in flames” and, under a Muslim siege, is becoming “more and more a province of Islam, a colony of Islam.” The historian Bat Ye’or (2002) dubbed this colony “Eurabia,” claiming that “the goal of Eurabia is to bring together the two shores of the Mediterranean with the interests of European society mirroring the interests of the Arab world” (Ye’or 2005). The metaphor of a “Muslim internal colony” in Europe is now ordinarily used in literature. American political scientist and historian Robert Leiken points out the following:

In a fit of absentmindedness, during which its academics discoursed on the obsolescence of the nation-state, Western Europe acquired not a colonial empire but something of an internal colony, whose numbers are roughly equivalent to the population of Syria. (2005: 123; see also Leiken 2012: 261)

Two main factors have contributed to this world-shaking development. First, the hollowing out of Christianity, since Europe is becoming increasingly a post-Christian society, one with a weakening connection to its historical tradition and values. In the past two generations the numbers of believing, observant Christians has drastically decreased. Birmingham reportedly has now more mosques than churches—the churches are bigger but much emptier (Laqueur 2005: 70)—and analysts estimate that Britain’s mosques host more worshippers each week than does the Church of England (Pipes 2004). Second, the rapid decline of birth rates among native Europeans has gotten to a point that if current population trends continue and immigration cease (the latter being unlikely), Europe’s population could decline to 275 million by 2075. Indeed, as political columnist and

cultural critic, Mark Steyn, has noted in his book *America Alone: The End of the World as We Know It*, the indigenous peoples of countries like Germany, Austria, Italy, and Spain are at the start of a population death spiral—well below or about half the replacement rate (Steyn 2006: 10). Austrian demographer, Wolfgang Lutz, argues that “negative momentum has not been experienced on so large a scale in world history” (quoted in Radford 2003).

A study for the European Parliament has concluded that to sustain its current workers-to-retirees ratio, Europe will need more than 10 million immigrants a year (quoted in Walker 2006). Unless indigenous birth rates rise beyond pattern and probability, only immigration—and the industry and energy that immigrants and their children bring—can provide the spark to keep European societies vital and growing. If this is so, then one may agree with Joel Kotkin that “the fate of the West in the 21st century may depend on how well its nations integrate ambitious people from the rest of the world into its fold” (Kotkin 2006: 94).

Having said that, fears that an incessantly increasing number of immigrants to Europe will make its prospects even bleaker are spreading fast. By virtue of geographic proximity, demographic overdrive, and a crisis-prone environment, “Islam is now the principal supplier of new Europeans” (Steyn 2006: 15). If one child out of four born in Germany today is of foreign origin, mostly a Muslim, it will be one in three ten years from now. About 30%–40% of young people under the age of eighteen in German cities like Cologne or Duisburg, as well as in large sections of Hamburg and Frankfurt are of foreign origin. The same is true for Rotterdam and Amsterdam in the Netherlands, for Brussels and Anderlecht in Belgium, and for Paris and Marseilles in France. In many European cities the “natives” may become a minority within the lifetime of the generation which now attends school and university.

This prediction is hardly new. In 1968, the British politician and classical scholar, Enoch Powell, in his controversially famed “rivers of blood” speech, warned that in allowing excessive immigration, the United Kingdom was “heaping up its own funeral pyre” (quoted in Reeves 1983: 108). Is it a speculation, or is it already happening?

### **HAS MULTICULTURALISM FAILED?**

Europe’s ethnic and cultural mix is changing drastically by the presence of millions of first, second and third generation of Muslim immigrants whose numbers are certainly

going to increase significantly in the coming years. Encouraged by the liberal policies toward integration (loosely called “multiculturalism”) that countries like the United Kingdom, Germany, France, the Netherlands or the Scandinavian countries have promoted for decades, many of them have so far refused to adopt local values and it is dubious whether this trend will change any time soon. This situation has urged many European leaders to harshly criticize multiculturalism, the policy espoused by their governments since the 1960s. Multiculturalism was based on the principle of the right of all groups to live by their traditional values, but it has largely failed to promote a sense of common identity centered on values of human rights, democracy, social integration and equality before the law. On the contrary, it has encouraged “segregated communities” where extremist ideology and home-grown Islamic terrorism can thrive and, in recent years, multiculturalism has become “a proxy for other social and political issues: immigration, identity, political disenchantment, working-class decline” (Malik 2015).

In a much debated speech at a Munich security conference in February 2011, which sparked fury from numerous critics among immigrant communities and his political opponents, British prime minister, David Cameron, declared that “multiculturalism in Britain has failed to provide a vision of society in which members of all ethnic groups feel they want to belong” (*The Independent*, 5 February 2011). He said:

We have failed to provide a vision of society [to young Muslims] to which they feel they want to belong.... We have even tolerated segregated communities behaving in ways that run counter to our values. All this leaves some young Muslims feeling rootless. And the search for something to belong to and believe in can lead them to extremist ideology. (ibid.)

According to Cameron and others, the failure of multiculturalism is multilayered: first, multiculturalism has encouraged exclusion rather than inclusion, by siphoning minority communities away from the mainstream, and condemning them to live parallel lives; second, by living parallel lives minorities preserve their ethnic behaviors and values that run counter to broader society; third, these dispersed communities provide fertile soil for radicalization. Cameron warned Europe “to wake up to what is happening” and “to get to the root of the problem” (*The New York Times*, 5 February 2011).

Similar warnings about the failure of multiculturalism have been stated by German chancellor Angela Merkel and by former president Nicolas Sarkozy of France. In

October 2010, Merkel admitted that the idea of people from different cultural backgrounds living happily “side by side” did not work and that Germany’s “attempts to create a multicultural society have utterly failed” (*The Guardian*, 17 October 2010). Sarkozy, as well, joined the European leaders who have condemned multiculturalism as a failed policy. In February 2011 he explained his view on “failure” by stating that “we have been too concerned about the identity of the person who was arriving, and not enough about the identity of the country that was receiving him” (*The Telegraph*, 11 February 2011). In line with them, former Spanish prime minister, Jose Maria Aznar, and Australia’s former prime minister, John Howard, have also said that multicultural policies have not successfully integrated immigrants in their respective countries (*ibid.*).

Not everyone agrees with them. Referring to Britain, for instance, Anthony Heath (2012) implies that “not all ethnic communities behave in ways that run counter to broader society’s values.” Most prominently, Anthony Giddens, in his book *Turbulent and Mighty Continent: What Future for Europe* strongly opposes the idea that multiculturalism has been a disaster. He argues that “the world has moved on from the early days in which the notion of multiculturalism was originally framed” to what he calls “interculturalism” (Giddens 2014: 15). This later concept, in his view, is a better one for grasping “the context of the age of ‘super-diversity’ in which, as a result of the internet, we now live” (*ibid.*).

### **A TALE OF TWO CONTINENTS**

There are authors who believe that the immigration problems in Europe are no different from those faced by the United States, and that the U.S. experience could serve Europe well (Walker 2006). This in our view is wishful thinking. The immigration problems of the past half a century in Europe—as well as those likely to emerge with the current surge of immigrants from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, North and Sub-Saharan Africa—are very *different*, more *formidable* and more *acute* than those faced by United States. Michael Burleigh singles out three reasons that place America in an advantageous position *vis-à-vis* Europe. First, “the advantage of distance,” which allows people who come to the United States to mentally divorce themselves from their “unloved past” in a way that is not true of an Algerian or Moroccan in Madrid, Manchester, or Marseilles, or for a Pakistani in London or Oslo. In his view, “the United States’ enormous spaces enable people to re-create themselves” (Burleigh 2006: 162).

Second, “the absence of a welfare state” in the United States where immigrants are much more likely to enter the workforce and are better paid than are immigrants in Europe. In the U.S. Muslim immigrants are largely middle-class professionals whereas in Europe (arguably except for Great Britain, where Muslim immigrants have, in general, done rather well economically), most Muslim immigrants remain immovably stuck in the working class, *sub-proletariat* or unemployed underclass. This means that Americans don’t have nasty squabbles about who is getting more than their fair share, an especially contentious issue among the Europeans who by and large believe that migrants have made no contribution to their systems. In Denmark, for instance, while immigrants from developing countries—most of them Muslims from Turkey, Somalia, Pakistan, Lebanon and Iraq—constituted only 5% of the population in 2002, they received over 40% of all welfare payments (Pipes and Hedegaard 2002). A German Marshall Fund survey of immigration attitudes compellingly has found that whereas 23% of Britons believe immigration is the country’s largest problems, across the Atlantic, in Canada and the United States, where the number of foreign-born people is considerably higher, the figure is less than 10% (*The Independent*, 5 February 2011).

Third, the fact that Americans seem admirably skillful at turning masses of immigrants into “American patriots” whereas all European countries have failed to turn their immigrant communities into communities of their own citizens. Immigrants to America have generally been welcomed and encouraged to become full members of society—fellow Americans—and they are rewarded for doing so. In Western Europe most immigrants remain essentially estranged and marginalized. Unlike the United States, in Europe many immigrants do not try, or even want to fit into their adopted country through active participation in its economic, social and cultural life beyond the possession of its passport. They do not identify with their new homeland and will not think of themselves as Dutch, or British, or German, or Swedish. If asked, they will tell you they do not want to become British, French, German, or Dutch, but instead they are—and have every intention to remain—Muslims (or Turks, Nigerians, or whatever) living in Britain, in France, in Germany or in the Netherlands (see Laqueur 2005). Their acculturation virtually never takes place. Neither “Britishness,” nor “Frenchness,” nor “Dutch values” become part of their value system. Muslim immigrants in Europe retain powerful attachments to their native cultures. Most of them get their news on politics, religion and culture from Turkish and Arab-language satellite TV channels, especially from Al-Jazeera.

William McNeill (2007: 9) points out that as far as immigration is concerned “the main difference between Europe and the United States is that the American melting pot still functions almost as well as it did when Europeans were being turned into Americans in the 19th century.” Unlike their U.S. counterparts, who entered an enormous country built on immigration, most Muslim immigrants in Western Europe started arriving only after World War II, by crowding into small, culturally homogenous nations. Also, immigration from Muslim countries in Europe “has not been the result of any considered policy, still less of popular consent, but of a spontaneous market-driven process, characterized by client politics and chain migration” (Leiken 2012: 261). Yet the problem in Europe is not just numbers. Unlike the United States and virtually all of its immigrants who considered—and still consider—their move to the host country as a permanent displacement, in Europe, neither the hosts, nor the arrivals envisioned immigrants integrating into the social ensemble; on the contrary, both groups nursed “illusions of transience,” and “myths of return” (ibid.).

Furthermore, unlike the United States, where Muslim immigrants are geographically diffused, ethnically fragmented, and generally well off, in Europe, many of its immigrants live in societies wholly separate from those of the host countries. Europe’s Muslims gather in bleak enclaves with their compatriots—Algerians in France, Moroccans in Spain, Turks in Germany or the Netherlands, and Pakistanis in the United Kingdom or Norway. This is yet another characteristically European difference from the United States. Whereas in the U.S. the affluent and the middle class have virtually abandoned the city for the suburbs (in order to have more space), in France and most of Europe, the well-off have stayed in the city (wanting to travel less). This has relegated immigrants and other poor to tedious “suburbs”—such as the *banlieues* of Paris—which the French call the “suburbs of Islam,” in the periphery of the cities (see Pipes 1995). Many of them, especially since the Paris massacre on 13 November 2015, and the latest bombings in Brussels on 22 March 2016, primarily due to the assailants’ many connections to Molenbeek, a heavily Muslim district of Brussels, are called ZUS (French: *Zones Urbanines Sensibles*, or Sensitive Urban Zones). Pipes (2015) calls them “semi-autonomous sectors,” a term which, in his view, emphasizes their “indistinct and non-geographic nature, thus permitting a more accurate discussion of what is, arguably, West Europe’s most acute problem.”

Over time, as Muslim immigrants in Europe increase in numbers, they wish less to mix with the indigenous population in their country of adoption. They have no French



or Spanish or German or Dutch or British or Norwegian friends and very often they do not speak their language. Intermarriages are extremely rare. A 2002 survey in Denmark found that only 5% of young Muslim immigrants would readily marry a Dane (Pipes and Hedegaard 2002). Girls are usually taken out of school at age fourteen and married off, and young men are often sent to their home villages of Anatolia or Marrakesh or Pakistan to find a bride. Once they arrive in Europe, the women are often kept at home, with virtually no contacts with native Europeans and no opportunities to integrate into the social fabric of their new country of residence.

### **WHO'S TO BE BLAMED?**

Western European governments may justly be criticized for not having done more to integrate these new citizens. One wonders, for example, that some Western European countries have enacted laws that are different for natives than for immigrants. For native Swedes, for example, the minimum age for marriage is eighteen whereas for immigrants living in Sweden there is no minimum age requirement (Bawer 2006: 57). In Germany, an ethnic German who marries someone from outside the European Union and wants to bring her or him to Germany must answer a long list of questions about the spouse's birth date, daily routine, and so forth in order to prove that the marriage is legitimate and not just *pro forma*. Such interviews are not required for German residents with Turkish or Pakistani backgrounds, for instance, since it is normally assumed that their marriages have been arranged and that the spouses will therefore know little or nothing about each other (*ibid.*).

Yet, one can almost certainly say that even if West European governments had done much more to integrate their Muslims immigrants into their societies, integration would still have largely failed, because it is not wanted and it is resisted by large numbers of immigrants. Unlike African Americans, or even the blend of nationalities that make up the American Latino community—the largest ethnic group in the United States undergoing assimilation—Europe's Muslim immigrants are to a large degree self-isolated and self-excluded from European mainstream. Whereas in a relatively accommodating American society the assimilation process often extends into and beyond the third generation of immigrant families, as Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan (1970) have shown in their classic study *Beyond the Melting Pot*, it should come as no surprise that the adjustment of Muslim immigrants in Europe, in its context of deep cultural—really, civilizational—division, reaches into post-migrant generations (see Leiken 2012: 261).

Walter Laqueur (2005) has persuasively argued that despite the failed policies of most European governments to accommodate and integrate the Muslim immigrants into their societies, the social and cultural ghettoization of immigrants in Europe is mostly voluntary. Immigrant families characteristically carry traditional attachments—tribal customs, values, and creeds—and in the case of Europe’s Muslim immigration, these have been robust. It is, therefore, inappropriate to say, as William McNeill’s (2007: 9) does, that the disaffection and anger of segregated young Muslims in Europe is similar to the gang culture of defiance among some young blacks in America’s inner cities. Despite the fact—unmistakably reconfirmed in the past couple of years—that skin color in the United States still divides, and moral residues from slavery and segregation remain, even as efforts to bridge the gap continue, African Americans are not hostile to their country or to white Americans as are many Muslim immigrants to their host societies in Western Europe. There is no question that African Americans share the same patriotism and love for America as white Americans. Moreover, racial segregation in the United States has never been a socioeconomic and political condition chosen by the African Americans themselves. Historically it has been a condition viciously imposed upon them. In contrast to this reality, large numbers of Muslim immigrants in Western Europe deliberately chose isolation and exclusion from the mainstream society they have adopted as their country of residence, and few reveal close attachment or emotions of French, Dutch, British, or German patriotism.

### **IS EUROPE BECOMING “EURABIA”?**

There are authors who suggest that the footprint of Muslim immigrants in Europe is already more visible than that of the Hispanic population in the United States (Leiken 2005; Laqueur 2005) and that the picture will become even bleaker in the next few decades. A visit to certain quarters of Europe’s major cities offers a glimpse of the shape of things to come. In East London—which some refer to as “Londonistan,” the title of a book (2006) by Melanie Phillips—in parts of Birmingham, Rotterdam, Berlin, or Marseilles, foreign born citizens already constitute the majority. In these areas one finds

the sounds of Cairo (minus the architecture) and the sight and smells of Karachi and Dacca...Many of the placards and inscriptions are in languages and alphabets [the visitor] cannot read and the newspaper corner shops sell predominantly Arab, Turkish, Bengali, and Urdu

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language newspapers. The visitor will pass by many mosques...as well as Near Eastern and Asian cultural and social centers.... All this is a far cry from what these quarters used to be like in the 1950s and 1960s. These were British (or French or German) working-class neighborhoods, but the locals have moved out. (Laqueur 2005: 70)

It is possible that in one or two generations from now Europe will be much less similar to the Europe we know today. We would much prefer to be wrong about this. Unfortunately, we don't think we are. Even the EU president in the first half of 2005, Jean Claude Juncker of Luxemburg, had to acknowledge that "Europe no longer makes people dream" (quoted in Gilbert 2005). We have yet no idea what current and future trends and events will herald, but it is possible and reasonable to imagine a very undesirable and unattractive outcome, especially as governments of EU countries seem to have no clear and common strategy on how to handle the current refugee crisis.

Whereas the hostility toward Muslim immigrants, their segregation and the challenges they present to *social cohesion* are not new to most European societies, the hazards these newcomers could pose to *national security* did not materialized fully until the second generation (Leiken 2012). The national security threat emerged in the form of restive post-migrant groups, like the Hamburg Cell, or the Mullah Boys, a group of second-generation Pakistanis in the ghettos of Beeston Hill, in Leeds.<sup>1</sup>

Although the foundations of European societies are being shaken, for the time being voluntary seclusion in the European big city ghettos is maintained without great difficulty. However, they are getting so large that soon they will not be just ghettos and the law of the land may no longer hold. This evident form of ethnic, religious, and cultural segregation has already created not only pockets with a Muslim majority in various big cities, but also "cities, villages, or provinces where Islam is dominant" (Ali 2005) and where bits and pieces of the Sharia have become part and parcel of everyday life among Muslim communities. In these districts "alcohol and pork are effectively banned, polygamy and burqas commonplace, police enter only warily and in force, and Muslims get away with offenses illegal for the rest of population" (Pipes 2015). An example of this is the town of Evry, south of Paris, where Muslim immigrants constitute two thirds of the population.

Here, informal islamification has already taken place. Supermarkets stopped selling pork and alcoholic beverages, and ritual sheep slaughter

has become an official activity. Social control is extremely high among Muslims....Although not formally institutionalized...it is the Sharia, rather than the secular constitution, that enjoys primacy. (Ali 2005: 62)

Today, Muslims (estimated to be no more than 20 million) still make up a minority in Europe—a little more than 6% of its total population—but that will change dramatically. And soon. Relying on the latest rate of migration of Muslims to Europe and assuming their fertility rate will remain unchanged, the Pew Forum has projected that by 2030, Muslims will form about 8% of the European population (Pew Forum 2011). The majority of them will live in France and Germany, but their number will substantially increase in other rich EU countries. Guy Millière, a professor of cultural history and legal philosophy at the Sorbonne, who began to address the issue of the growth and self-segregation of France's Muslim population, provides a very grim picture. Economically speaking,

France is decaying full speed.... The greater part of young people are Muslim, not integrated with French society, and almost illiterate.... The only things that are growing in France right now are crime and Islamism. (quoted in Bawer 2006: 173)

Millière predicts that Muslims might in a near future account for more than 20%. In his view, "France will become a Muslim country" and "French leaders know it," but they "will never take a decision that could make young radical Muslims angry," which is "one of the reasons why they could not support the United States during the war in Iraq" (ibid., 174). France is not the only country in Western Europe facing such a discouraging future. Other European countries fear a similar upshot, which a Danish Muslim leader in 2000 depicted in the following words: "Muslims have a dream of living in an Islamic society. This dream will surely be fulfilled in Denmark. We will eventually be a majority" (quoted in Bawer 2006: 33). Indeed, Muslim leaders in Denmark have openly declared their goal of introducing Islamic law once Muslim population in that country grows large enough—a not-that-remote prospect. It has been estimated that, if current trends persist, every third inhabitant of Denmark will be Muslim by 2040 (see Pipes and Hedegaard 2002).

The National Intelligence Council projects that Europe's Muslim population will double by 2025 and others believe that by the end of the century Muslims will count for up to 40% of Europe's population. Those who are more pessimistic believe that by this

century's end, traditionally Christian Europeans will become a minority in Europe, which, as Princeton scholar, Bernard Lewis, suggested in 2004, will be transformed into a "part of the Arabic west, the Maghreb" (*The Economist*, 14–20th October 2006, 29).

A few years ago, Dominique Moïsi of the Institute Française des Relations Internationales summarized these general trends in Europe today as fears of the Europeans themselves.

In the case of Europe, there are layers of fear. There is the fear for being invaded by the poor, primarily from the South—a fear driven by demography and geography....Europeans also fear being blown up by radical Islamists or being demographically conquered by them as their continent becomes a "Eurabia." After the bombings in Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005...Europeans have started to face the hard reality that their homelands are not only targets for terrorists but also bases for them. Then there is the fear of being left behind economically....They are haunted by the fear that Europe will become a museum...a place for tourists and retirees, no longer a center of creativity and influence....What unites all these fears is a sense of loss of control over one's territory, security, and identity—in short, one's destiny. (Moïsi 2007: 8–9)

These fears are currently taking alarming proportions in many European countries as hundreds of thousands of refugees and immigrants from Syria and the broader Middle East, as well as from Afghanistan and from North and Sub-Saharan Africa, are rushing towards the richest member states of the European Union—Germany, Austria, France, Italy, United Kingdom and the Nordic countries in particular. Europe was caught entirely off-guard by the great number of refugees and immigrants showing up in her borders, seeking a place where they can live in safety as well as country where that can live a more dissent life. Moreover, Europe seems to be unprepared—and arguably unwilling—to resolve some really sensitive political issues regarding migration and identity, and the future of the European Union itself.

Although for those living Syria and the coast of North Africa the journey to Europe is costly, uncertain and often tragically fatal—more than six thousand people have lost their lives in the Mediterranean Sea in the past two years, trying to reach Europe (Fleming 2015)—many in Europe are scare-mongered by the extreme right and the tabloid

press about the supposed threats from refugees and immigrants. Although racism, chauvinism and xenophobia are to be found almost everywhere in Europe, what we see today in many European political circles is a fear, rarely articulated, of changing demographics and civic identity. We have seen countries like Hungary and Croatia, the main gateways to EU from the Western Balkans, tightening their borders with other European countries to keep refugees from crossing their territory, even en route to other countries, like Austria or Germany. Their intention is to discourage thousands of refugees from entering the European Union at all, believing, as in the case of Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orban's, that they are a threat to Europe's "Christian identity." In Orban own words, by closing Hungary's border he is "defending European Christianity against a Muslim influx" (see Noack 2015). Considered as the worst refugee crisis since the Great Lakes exodus in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide, more than twenty years ago, and also a crisis whose scale and severity are unmatched since World War II (Fisher and Taub 2015), the proportions and consequences of the current crises are yet to be seen.

We believe that the current refugee crisis is not a regional one; it is a global crisis. Although the media coverage has focused intensely on the refugees arriving in Europe—especially the Syrian refugees—millions of others are fleeing countries as diverse as those raged by war (Somalia, Afghanistan, and Libya), countries with a lower-level violence (Colombia, Honduras, El Salvador, Nigeria and Pakistan), as well as countries where people suffer sectarian violence and persecution (Eritrea, Myanmar and Bangladesh). Large numbers of them are seeking permanent settlement in wealthy countries, including the United States, Canada, and Australia. This trend is likely to endure in the foreseeable future and will probably become one of the main features of the twenty-first century.

### **RADICAL ISLAMISM AND IDENTITY POLITICS**

Francis Fukuyama has persuasively argued that the most serious long-term challenge facing liberal democracies today is not "an external one, such as defending themselves from international terrorism" (2005: 10), but "the internal problem of integrating culturally diverse populations" and "immigrant minorities, particularly those from Muslim countries" into "a single cohesive national community...as citizens of pluralistic democracies" (2006: 6). Culturally diverse immigrants create problems for all countries, yet according to Fukuyama, "Europe has become—and will continue to be—a critical breeding ground and battlefield in the struggle between radical Islamism and liberal

democracy” (ibid.). In his view, this is because radical Islamism—or Islamic fundamentalism—does not come out of traditional Muslim culture and societies, but it is rather “a manifestation of modern identity politics, a byproduct of the modernization process itself.” As such, radical Islamism is something “quintessentially modern.” Shmuel Eisenstadt and Peter Berger couldn’t agree more. In his book *Fundamentalism, Sectarianism, and Revolution: The Jacobin Dimension of Modernity* (1999) and in other works, Eisenstadt consistently has argued that fundamentalism is not a traditional but a modern phenomenon. Berger also points out that fundamentalism, understood as “the attempt to restore or recreate anew a taken-for-granted body of beliefs and values,” is “intrinsically a modern phenomenon; it is *not* tradition” (Berger 2006: 12).

The claim that contemporary radical Islamism is a form of identity politics has been made most persuasively by Olivier Roy in his book *Globalized Islam* (2004). According to Roy, the roots of radical Islamism are not cultural, since it is not a byproduct of something inherent in—or deeply essential to—Islam or the cultural system that this religion has produced over the past fourteen centuries. He argues that radical Islamism has emerged because Islam has become *deterritorialized* in such a way as to throw open the whole question of Muslim identity (Roy 2004: 2–38).

Roy further argues that the question of identity does not come up at all in traditional Muslim societies, as it did not in traditional Christian societies. In a traditional Muslim society, an individual’s identity is not a matter of personal choice; it is determined by that person’s parents and social environment. Everything—from one’s tribe and kin to the local imam to the political structure of the state—anchors one’s identity in a particular branch of Islamic faith. According to Roy, identity becomes problematic when Muslims leave their traditional Muslim societies—their “natural” community: family, ethnic group and nation—by, for example, immigrating to Western Europe. Once in a new country, their identity as Muslims is no longer supported by the outside society, which, on the contrary, compels Muslim immigrants to conform to the prevailing Western cultural norms. And because migratory and population flows have greatly increased in recent decades, more and more Muslims—a third of the World’s Muslims—now live in societies that are not Muslim, as members of a minority. Under such circumstances, the question of authenticity arises in a way that it never did in traditional Muslim societies, since there is now a gap between one’s inner identity as a member of a Muslim cultural community and one’s behavior *vis-à-vis* the surrounding Western secularist society. Hence, Islamic neo-

fundamentalism should be understood as “an agent of acculturation and not a return to a lost authenticity” (Roy 2004: 19–20). As such, it is “a contemporary phenomenon that expresses the globalization and westernization of the Muslim world” (ibid., 15).

Farhad Khosrokhavat, an Iranian French sociologist at the *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales*, in a 2006 collection of interviews with suspect members of al Qaeda in French prisons, reports the following interview with an Algerian-born Islamist:

I understood that I was different, that I was not French, that I would never become French and that I had no business trying to become French either. I took it well. I was proud of my new Muslim identity. Not to be French, to be Muslim, just that: Algerian too, but, above all, Muslim. That was my reconquest of myself, my burst of lucidity, my awakening. I was rid of the malaise from which I had suffered and all of a sudden I felt good about myself: no more impossible dreams, no more desire to become part of this France that did not want me. (Khosrokhavat 2006: 136–37)

Another interview with yet another Islamist Algerian-born inmate in French prison:

Earlier, France was my model—even if I also resisted this. But my ideal was to be French, to act like the French: to have my wife, my kids, my car, my apartment, my house in the country, to become an average Frenchman and live in peace....But at the same time I had the feeling that this was more or less impossible: they didn’t want me, even if I had [French] citizenship and all the rest. They looked down on me, they treated me like I was nothing and they despised me. This contempt was killing me...I was tortured by it....Islam was my salvation. I understood what I was: a Muslim. Someone with dignity, whom the French despised because they didn’t fear me enough. Thanks to Islam, the West respects me in a certain way. One is scared of us. We’re treated as fanatics, as holy madmen, as violent people who do not hesitate to die or to kill. But one doesn’t despise us anymore. That is the achievement of Islamism. Now, we are respected. Hated, but respected. (Khosrokhavat 2006: 135–36)



An article published in the British magazine *Prospect* a few years ago, provides a similar account on a Pakistani immigrant who, having lived in Britain all his life within a strongly Pakistani household, felt neither British nor Pakistani. In his words:

When I went to Pakistan, I was rejected. And when I came back to Britain, I never felt like I fitted in to the wider white British community. And you've got to remember that a lot of our parents didn't want us to fit into the British community. (Malik 2007)

And since religion—in this case a politically radicalized version of Islam, far from the traditional “folk” religion of the first generation of Muslim immigrants to Europe—serves as a natural way of transcending this cultural dislocation, the character in the story maintains:

Here come the Islamists and they give you an identity....you don't need Pakistan or Britain. You can be anywhere in the world and this identity will stick with you and give you a sense of belonging. (ibid.)<sup>2</sup>

Understanding radical Islamism as a form of identity, or in terms of “identity protest” (see Burgat 2003) also explains why second- and third-generation European Muslims have turned to it. Their radicalization may be considered as “part of a process of deculturation,” that is, of a crisis of traditional Muslim cultures giving way to westernization and reconstructed identities. “It is a way of appropriating this process, of experiencing it in terms of self-affirmation, but also of instrumentalizing it to ‘purify’ Islam” (Roy 2004: 22, 23). In this process,

a second and third generation born of Muslim migrants may recast their feeling of being excluded by importing a psychological frontier to their spaces of social exclusion in suburbs or inner cities. Islam is cast as the ‘otherness’ of Europe and this may be recast as an alternative identity of youngsters in search of a reactive identity. (Roy 2004: 45)

This quest for authenticity or a new identity is usually expressed both against the culture of origin and the Western culture, yet by referring constantly to traditional or Western (anti-imperialist) categories. Stuck between two cultures with which they cannot identify and with this sense of “otherness,” many “rootless” young European Muslims find a strong appeal in the universalist ideology offered by contemporary jihadism (see Fukuyama 2007: 28). As Stéphanie Giry (2006) argues, disenfranchised groups among Muslim immigrants might start seeing themselves as marginalized minorities, hence

breaking away from mainstream European values and endorsing a supranational Muslim community (*umma*) as an alternative society, which no longer has anything to do with a territorial entity. The reality in Europe today is that young Muslims are increasingly becoming politically mobilized to support causes that have less to do with faith and more to do with group solidarity—which Khosrokhavat (2006) describes as “an identity based on vicarious humiliation”—and Robert Leiken, a specialist on immigration and national security issues, concludes that “in Western countries jihad has grown mainly via Muslim immigration” (2004: 9).

Fukuyama may be right in his observation that Oliver Roy may have overstated the case of viewing radical Islamism as a primarily European phenomenon since there are plenty of other sources for radical ideologies coming out of the Middle East (Fukuyama 2006: 11). Yet, he admits that Roy’s analysis remains valid and important even in Muslim societies. Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan have all exported radical Islamist ideology and Iraq may do so in the future (*ibid.*). It is estimated, that over the last two decades, Saudi Arabia has set aside US\$2–3 billion a year to promote Wahhabism in other countries (Malik 2007). However, it is precisely these societies’ confrontation with modernity that produces a crisis of identity as well as religious and political radicalization. Globalization, driven by the Internet and tremendous mobility, has blurred the boundaries between the developed world and traditional Muslim societies. It is not an accident that so many of the perpetrators of recent terrorist plots either were European Muslims radicalized in Europe or came from relatively more privileged sectors of Muslim societies with opportunities for contact with the West—they were usually well-versed, well-traveled, and multilingual (Roy 2004; Rosenthal 2006).

If contemporary radical Islamism is understood as a product of identity politics and hence a modern phenomenon, then two implications follow, which Fukuyama (2006) has put forward forcefully. First, we have seen this problem before in the extremist politics of the twentieth century among the young people who became anarchists, Bolsheviks, fascists, or members of the Bader-Meinhof gang (*ibid.*, 11). As Frits Stern (1974) and Ernest Gellner (1983) have lucidly demonstrated, modernization and the transition from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft* (Ferdinand Tönnies) represent an intensely alienating process that has been confronted by countless individuals in different societies. “It is now the turn of young Muslims to experience this. Whether or not there is anything specific to

the Muslim religion that encourages this radicalization remains an open question” (Fukuyama 2006: 11).

Second, “the problem of jihadist terrorism will not be solved by bringing modernization and democracy to the Middle East” (ibid., 12). The view that terrorism is driven primarily by poverty and a lack of democracy neglects the fact that many terrorists are radicalized in some of the most affluent and stable democratic societies in Europe. As Fukuyama points out:

It is highly naive to think that radical Islamists hate the West out of ignorance of what the West is. Modernization and democracy are good things in their own rights, but in the Muslim world they are likely to increase rather than dampen the terrorist problem in the short run. (ibid., 12)

Extremist voices in Europe invoke alienation and segregation, deprivation and humiliation, not to mention Islamophobia, everything in brief except the real sources of terrorist violence. Most Western European countries have right-wing populist parties opposed to immigration and increasingly mobilized around the issue of Muslim minorities. These include the National Front in France, the anti-immigration British National Party (a thuggish group with neo-Nazi links), the hard-right Lijst Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands, the Vlaams Belag (formerly the Vlaams Blok) in Belgium, the People’s parties in Denmark and Switzerland, and the Freedom Party in Austria. They are gaining strength across Western Europe and have often spurred resentment and political activism among Muslim immigrant communities, which is sometimes very violent. Claire Berlinski asserts that “if immigration rises to ten times the current levels, Europe will explode. If it doesn’t, Europe will implode” (2006: 134).

Calling for a ban on immigration and an aggressive policy of assimilating Muslim minorities into Holland’s libertine culture, for example, have resulted in two political assassinations in that country in the past fifteen years. These were Holland’s first political assassinations in 400 years. The murder of Theo van Gogh<sup>3</sup> by a 26 year-old, dual Moroccan-Dutch citizen born and raised in Holland, in particular, rocked the Netherlands and Europe as a whole. As Daniel Pipes (2004b) has noted, one gruesome killing did as much to arouse the Netherlands as September 11, 2001, did for Americans.

This tragic event was perceived in the Dutch media and the populace as the “arrival of Jihad in the Netherlands” (Deutsch 2004). It set off a rash of attacks on Muslim

schools and mosques throughout that country. In response, Muslim radical arsonists attempted to burn down churches in Rotterdam, Utrecht, and Amersfoort (Carle 2006). In a country known for legalized hashish and prostitution, where the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court have their homes, and where a generous welfare system and housing benefits make possible a work-free life, these attacks seem to have subverted the traditional Dutch culture of tolerance. From one of Europe's most tolerant people, who always thought Muslims would constitute another socio-confessional "pillar" like Protestants, Catholics, or organized Labor, the Dutch went to taking highly radical steps to curb the spread of militant Islam by demanding that Holland's lenient criminal justice system quickly ratifies legislation analogous to the Patriot Act.

Similar events might gravitate toward more extreme forms of nationalism, xenophobia or "Islamophobia," racism, and anti-modernism in Europe and across the world. A volatile mix of European nativism and immigrant dissidence challenges today what the Danish sociologist Ole Wæver calls "societal security," or the national cohesion in many European countries.

On the other side of the spectrum, there are people who believe that contemporary Islamic radicalism is merely a consequence of Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Israeli-Arab conflict, and that once these conflicts are resolved, or at least defused, this danger is bound to pass. Proponents of a European Islam—represented most outspokenly by the Swiss Muslim philosopher Tariq Ramadan, who teaches at Oxford—believe that this religious-cultural trend promises to act as a bridge between the Western and Muslim cultures, provided that the taps of fanaticism in Pakistan or Saudi Arabia, from where the know-nothing imams and the money to pay them comes, will be shut off. In his book *To Be a European Muslim* (1999), Ramadan claims that an independent and liberal Islam is emerging in Europe among young, educated Muslims who, having been profoundly and positively influenced by modern liberal democracy—with its free press and separation of church and state—now consider Europe as a "space of responsibility for Muslims." He maintains that

the European environment is a space of responsibility for Muslims. This is exactly the meaning of the notion of "space of testimony" [*dar al-shahada*] that we propose here, a notion that totally reverses perspectives: whereas Muslims have, for years, been wondering whether and how they would be accepted, the in-depth study and evaluation of

the Western environment entrusts them, in light of their Islamic frame of reference, with a most important mission....Muslims now attain, in the space of testimony, the meaning of an essential duty and of an exacting responsibility: to contribute, wherever they are, to promoting good and equity within and through human brotherhood. Muslims' outlook must now change from the reality of 'protection' alone to that of an authentic "contribution." (Ramadan 1999: 150)

However, most scholars agree that it is unlikely that salvation might come from a new multicultural synthesis—Sayed Qutb and Mawana Mawduli, the spiritual mentors of radical Islam on one hand, and the European enlightenment (Kant, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot) on the other; the sharia, Wahhabism, and the orthodox Muslim way of life on one hand, and the legacy of the European left, European feminism, and European culture on the other. Unfortunately, such simplistic hopes are unlikely to come true. As long as many Muslims believe that their religion should define their politics (i.e., it is not the majority that decides but the will of God), then the chances for a consensus on democracy are remote. For the Europeans, the main task for the years and decades to come is not to find a synthesis, which may be forever elusive, but to preserve social peace through government policies that can functionally integrate increasingly large Muslim communities in their societies. Here, Amitai Etzioni's "Message to Europe" is particularly relevant. He writes:

In seeking to integrate the massive waves of immigrants arriving in Europe from Syria and elsewhere, Europeans tend to favor assimilation, which entails making immigrants basically like the societies they join. Integration would be more successful if Europeans would instead follow the Diversity within Unity approach, which combines assimilation with tolerance for differences. (Etzioni 2015)

Therefore, for the time being, the best realistic case scenario is that Islamic radicalism and terrorism in Europe will not disappear, but continue on a lower level of intensity and may aggravate existing tensions.

#### **NOTES**

1. Both were groups of radical Islamists; members of the first one became key operatives in the 9/11 attacks in 2011, whereas Beeston and the Mullah Boys will always be associated with the 7/7 bombing in 2005.

2. An even more insightful, persuasive, and gripping account is provided by Ed Husain, a man who “joined radical Islam in Britain, saw inside, and left,” in his acclaimed book *The Islamist* (2007).
3. A well-known radical libertarian, a filmmaker, television producer, talk show host, newspaper columnist who enjoyed the distinction of being a relative of one of Holland’s most renowned artists, Vincent van Gogh. He was murdered at 8:40 a.m. on 2 November 2004, in his hometown of Amsterdam while bicycling down a busy street to work. In the course of being shot repeatedly, Van Gogh beseeched his killer, “Don’t do it. Don’t do it. Have mercy. Have mercy!” Then the killer stabbed his chest with one knife and slit his throat with another, nearly decapitating van Gogh (Pipes 2004b). The murderer left a five-page note in both Arabic and Dutch attached to Van Gogh’s body with a knife. In it he threatened jihad against the West in general, (“I surely know that you, Oh Europe, will be destroyed”), and specifically against five prominent Dutch political figures.

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