

THE SEARCH FOR EUROPE

Contrasting Approaches



BBVA



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Some 25 million Muslims live in the 28 Member States of the EU. The vast majority of them came seeking work and were needed for sectors referred to as “difficult, dirty and dangerous”. In the 80’s, they started to be perceived not as immigrants, but as “Muslims”, eventually threatening the social fabric of European societies. The terrorist attacks by tiny groups of Islamist fanatics and the radicalisation of thousands of native Muslim Europeans added fuel to the surging anti-Muslim sentiment in Europe. Unless there is a simultaneous effort by immigrants to better integrate in European societies and by the latter to show openness, tensions may become worrisome.

MUSLIMS IN EUROPE: THE CONSTRUCTION OF A “PROBLEM”

The presence of some 25 million Muslims in the 28 countries of the European Union is currently sparking debate, controversy, fear and even hatred. Never before have we witnessed such a climate of mutual suspicion between Muslims and mainstream European societies. Public opinion surveys in Europe show increasing fear and opposition to European Muslims, who are perceived as a threat to national identity, domestic security and the social fabric. Muslims, on the other hand, are convinced that the majority of Europeans reject their presence and vilify and caricaturise their religion.

SURVEYS SHOW INCREASING FEAR TOWARDS EUROPEAN MUSLIMS, WHO BELIEVE THAT EUROPEANS CARICATURISE THEIR RELIGION

Such a misunderstanding is worrisome as it fuels dangerous Islamophobia, on the one hand, and radicalisation, on the other. European states are alarmed by these developments since they place harmonious cohabitation in jeopardy. Consequently, they have taken measures and enacted laws to combat extremist forces, curb radicalisation and improve Muslims' integration into the receiving countries.

However the situation is not simple. How could Europe encourage Muslim integration into secular states? Are radicalisation and extremism linked to economic marginalisation? Are they a product of a narrative that divides the world into two camps: us and them? Is extremism is only faith-based? If so, why did an extremist Norwegian kill, in 2011, dozens of his compatriots who were not Muslims? European states continue to grapple with these thorny questions without being able to devise a coherent response.

My arguments are that Muslims are settling permanently in Europe, that the vast majority want to live in peace, that European integration

policies have been erratic and inconsistent and that only a tiny minority of Muslims are engaged in radical activities. I also argue that in addition to faith-based radicalisation (religiously-motivated groups or individuals), there is an identity-based extremism (far-right parties), which is no less dangerous, and Europe should confront both problems by drying up the ideological sources of extremism. Finally, I make the point that Islamist radicalism in Europe remains marginal. This radicalism is not the result of failed integration, but rather local-global connections, which are linked to identity rupture and the exposure of young European Muslims to the unbearable images of destruction and violence in many Muslim countries, mainly those in the Middle East. Whether this violence is the result of Western intervention, such as the invasion of Iraq and the Israeli offensives in Gaza, or the result of the assault of Muslim regimes on their own populations, such as in Iraq or Syria, is irrelevant.

The Muslim population in the EU is mainly linked to migration dynamics

The presence of Muslims in Europe is not a new phenomenon. Starting in 711, Muslims conquered large swathes of Northern Mediterranean shores and set up Caliphates and Emirates mainly in the Iberian Peninsula for more than seven centuries. The fall of the last Emirate of Granada, in 1492, marked the end of Muslim political rule in Spain. Later, the Inquisition led to the very expulsion of Muslims, Sefardi Jews and converted Spaniards.

Almost concomitantly, in the Eastern Mediterranean, Islamised Ottomans defeated the Greeks, ejected them from Anatolia, took Constantinople (1453), which later became Istanbul, and conquered the Balkan region. Balkan States achieved their independence in the 19th century, before the dismantlement of the Ottoman Empire in the aftermath of the First World War. Muslim Bosnians, Albanians and Kosovars have not been expelled, and nowadays, they constitute Europe's indigenous Muslim population.

This article specifically tackles the issue of Muslims who immigrated to Europe after the Second World War and who now represent the bulk of the European Union's Muslims. Indeed, as European states started their reconstruction at the end of the war, they resorted to their ex-colonies to offset labour shortages. Hundreds of thousands of North Africans, most of them Berbers from traditionally rural areas of the

Rif Mountains, immigrated to France. Indonesians and Surinamese went to Holland, and Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis entered the United Kingdom. The case of Germany is more specific since it has been the main destination of Turkish and Kurdish labour immigrants, although Turkey was not a German colony, but simply an ally in the First World War.

Obviously, not all labour migrants in the 1950s were Muslims, but given that the immediate belt surrounding Europe consists of Northern African and Middle Eastern Muslim countries, most of which have been colonised by European countries, it is no wonder that the majority of foreign labour migrants in Europe are Muslims. Those migrants left their countries in the 1950s and 1960s in search of work, social advantages and higher wages. The vast majority of these first generation migrants were young. They did not intend to settle permanently but hoped to accumulate sufficient savings, which would allow them to build a house, open a shop, buy a taxi, etc. and prepare a winning return to their home country. Since their stay was seen as temporary, these migrants, whether single or married, sent home almost 80% of their salaries to their families as remittances.

On the whole, these migrants contributed to the economic boom of many European states as they built roads and railroads, worked in the coal mines, cleaned streets and offices and, on the whole, did the jobs that Europeans were reluctant to do. Until 1970, there was neither a migration “problem” nor, a fortiori, a Muslim “problem” in Western Europe. Migrants were largely invisible in public places. They had no specific demands related to their religion as they did not intend to settle permanently, and they did not suffer from discrimination or prejudice as they were contributing to the well-being of European societies. There was no Islamophobia, although class racism did exist. In summary, migration was seen as a gift, not as a burden and even less as a threat.

In the early 1970s, the European economic boom came to a halt. The oil crisis of 1973 was the “straw that broke the camel’s back”, as the Arabs say. From that year on, European states enacted laws restricting regular migration but, at the same time, relaxing restrictions of family reunification. Immigrants hurried to bring over their families. These measures produced significant quantitative and qualitative effects. Statistically, the sheer size of the migrant population increased considerably in the 1970s and the 1980s. Economically, the number of workers among migrants dwindled drastically. Sociologically, there has been a

process of feminisation of the migration stocks while the presence of children inaugurated the second-generation phase.

All of these transformations produced unforeseen effects. First, the arrival of families from rural areas changed the immigrants’ attitudes towards religious and cultural values. While temporary workers accepted “basement mosques” (*les mosquées des caves*) as a temporary solution to their prayer needs, the sedentarised immigrants asked for mosques and minarets. Secondly, the visibility of migrants in public space increased (veiled women, children going to school, etc.) Thirdly, immigrant families congregated in certain areas where they could find informal support structures and social networks. Families could thus keep in constant contact with their home countries by phone, internet or travel.

**THE EU FACES A DAUNTING CHALLENGE,
SINCE DEFENSIVE AND PROTECTIVE POLICIES IN THE
MEDITERRANEAN DID NOT SUCCEED IN DETERRING ASYLUM
SEEKERS, REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS**

Finally, in the last three decades, marriage immigration peaked as the first and second-generation youth entered the marriage market. To take just two examples from Holland, between 1995 and 2003, Turkish marriage immigration peaked at 4.000 per year while Moroccan marriage immigration hit a record of 3.000 per year. Marriage immigration ensured continued, high fertility among the immigrant population as many second-generation immigrants prefer to marry spouses from their parents’ home countries, who are young, traditional and virgin, rather than marrying a fellow second-generation immigrant like themselves. Obviously, marriage immigration has maintained the migration dynamic intact.

This significantly differentiates Muslim immigration to Europe with the Muslim expatriation in the USA on two grounds. First, Muslim migrants in Europe are, at most, a two to four hour flight from their home countries, while the distance between the USA and their home countries gives little choice but to integrate into the American “melting pot”. Secondly, as Robert Leiken argues, “unlike the American Muslims who are geographically diffuse, ethnically fragmented and generally well-off, Europe’s Muslims gather in bleak enclaves with their compatriots”. Finally, the rate of mixed marriages in the USA is higher than in Europe.

This differentiation explains, to a certain extent, why Islam and Muslims in the United States are not a major concern while in Europe, at least since the 1980s, migration has become an issue, mainly because two-thirds of the migrants are Muslims. Indeed, everything related to Islam in Europe became a cause of anxiety: the mushrooming of mosques, women's veils and new religious fervour. It is in this context that far-right parties emerged and started to garner support in presenting migration as a threat. In reaction, Western European states began erecting new defences against the much mediatised threat of mass immigration by strengthening direct immigration control through severe visa regimes, internal surveillance and outsourcing border control on the external borders of the EU.

But all *cordons sanitaires* put in place could not stop or even slow the flow of irregular migration from southern countries. The long land border and coastlines of many European states hindered the effective policing of frontiers. In many cases, land and maritime controls only served to displace the routes of migration, making the travel longer and riskier and making traffickers richer as they showed their ability to adapt to the new regulations. Southern European countries were particularly exposed to irregular migration. At the beginning, Spain, Italy, Greece and Malta were transit countries and “stepping stones” for other destinations. But later, in the 1990s, they became countries of final destination for waves of irregular migrants.

Thousands of these irregular migrants lost their lives in an attempt to reach the perceived “European Eldorado”. But hundred of thousands made it. They lived in precarious situations, as illegals, irregulars or *indocumentados*, but over the years, they have been legalised, in what Spain has called *regularizacion*, and Italy, *sanatoria*. In this respect, the case of Spain is emblematic as the number of *asentados* Moroccans, to take just one example, jumped from 50.000 in 1992 to 750.000 in 2015, which is a multiplication by 15. The same happened in Italy. The so-called “fortress of Europe” proved to be an exercise in fantasy. Undoubtedly, restrictive visa regimes affected legal migration but triggered irregular migration. Externalised control of migration and detention camps have not discouraged migrants. It is, therefore, not surprising that today, there are more than one million Muslims in Spain and a similar figure in Italy.

The problem has become more acute recently with the substantial increase of asylum seekers from impoverished or devastated countries

in the South, like Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Eritrea and even the Gaza Strip. While the Mediterranean is being transformed into a cemetery of drowned dreams, European countries are bickering about the cost-sharing of land borders and coastline policing and about distributing asylum seekers among European states.

Let us recognise that the challenge is daunting since defensive and protective policies in the Mediterranean did not succeed in deterring asylum seekers, refugees and migrants. European leaders found themselves caught between alarmed rejectionists, who invoke financial costs, security risks and social challenges and who ask for more muscular policies to stem the flow of mass immigration, and vocal refugee advocates, who posit the problem in terms of human dignity and the necessity to protect, recalling the example of Jordan and Lebanon, which are hosts to more than a million Syrian refugees each.

There is no doubt that the situation is difficult to manage. On the one hand, in face of the magnitude of the human tragedy, Europe cannot remain blind, deaf and with its arms crossed. On the other, it cannot leave its doors wide open to the misery of the world. This historical review clearly shows that through natural increase and new migration flows, in all their forms, the Muslim population is increasing rapidly in the European Union to the bewilderment of European states, caught off guard by the sheer numbers of refugees and asylum seekers. One can easily bet that the anxieties which surround the migration issue will not vanish as long as neighbouring Muslim countries remain feverish and destabilised and as long as European Islam is constructed as a problem.

Who are the Muslims in Europe?

Muslims in Europe fall into six categories:

- 1) Indigenous Muslims who have lived in Europe for many centuries, mainly in Bosnia, Albania and Kosovo, where Islam is a foundational element of their history, but also in Romania and Bulgaria, where they are a native minority, and Poland and Crimea, which is home to an old Tatar Muslim population.
- 2) Students and businessmen who come from Muslim countries. In France alone, there are some 70.000 North African students, and London is the capital of Arab and Muslim businessmen.

- 3) Muslims who entered initially without restriction, such as the Commonwealth citizens in Great Britain, Algerians in France or Surinamese and Indonesians in Holland.
- 4) Muslims who came to Western Europe, in the 1950s and the 1960s, as labour migrants.
- 5) European Muslims who are born in Europe to migrant parents.
- 6) And, finally, asylum seekers and refugees, whose numbers have substantially increased in the last three years. From January to August 2015, 235.000 refugees poured into Europe, the majority of them from neighbouring Muslim countries.

We don't include in these categories the 30 million Muslims of the Russian Federation, which includes many Muslim countries. In this ar-

**EUROPEANS GREATLY OVERESTIMATE
THE SHARE OF MUSLIMS IN THE TOTAL POPULATION:
THE FRENCH ESTIMATED IT AT 31% IN FRANCE , WHILE
IT DOES NOT EXCEED 6%**

ticle, we shall deal only with Muslims of migrant origin in the European Union. They fall into three categories: a) those who are registered as foreigners; (b) those who acquired the nationality of the country where they live and work; and, finally, (c) those who are native European,

On the whole, I estimate that there are some 23 million Muslims living in the 28 European states, three-quarters of whom are already European citizens by naturalisation or birth. To these numbers, we may add some 2 million Muslims who migrated illegally and have not yet been officially legalised. This makes a total of 25 million Muslims, some 5% of the total European population.

These numbers are not threatening. And yet there is a widespread sentiment that Europe is being invaded by a growing Muslim population that cannot or will not be assimilated and that dreams, as blogger Agnon de Albatros argues, of “implementing Shari’a law in Europe and making this infidel continent part of the domain of Islam” (www.albatros.org). Thus, the Muslim demographic is becoming a central theme of many books, in which Muslims are perceived as posing “the most acute problems on account of their religion and their numbers” (Christopher Galdwell). Right wing parties are not saying anything else. “Against the Islamisation of Europe” was the slogan chanted by the Pegida German protesters in Dresden, in 2015.

Is there a reason for concern? For many Europeans, the answer is yes, not only because of the increasing number of Muslims in Europe, but also because Europeans greatly overestimate the share of Muslims in the total population. A 2014 poll from the Social Research Institute found that French respondents estimated the percentage of Muslims in France at 31%, while the real percentage does not exceed 6%. Germans gave the percentage at 19% in spite of the actual 4%.

Some demographers are not less anxious. They recognise that the total Muslim population is projected to jump from 25 to 35 million between 2015 and 2035. They invoke both internal and external factors. Among the internal factors, they pinpoint the higher fertility rates among Muslim Women and the fact that Muslim population is younger: people under the age of 30 represent 50% of the Muslim population in 2015, compared with about 33% in the non-Muslim European population. They also argue that Muslim women marry in larger numbers and at younger age and divorce less than their non-Muslim counterparts.

To these internal factors, one must add net migration influx. In spite of its economic crisis, the EU remains a migration magnet for Arabs, Sub-Saharan Africans, Asians, etc. Recent events in the Mediterranean, in 2015, clearly indicate that both “push” and “pull” factors are still at play. As a matter of fact, current migration pressures are not caused exclusively by external push factors, such as poverty, conflict and repression. The current focus on push factors diverts attention away from significant pull factors, such as the very fact that the European countries are already hosts to significant immigrant or immigrant-origin populations, opening new channels for migration. As Esther Ben David puts it, “the more people emigrate from a certain town or village, the more likely it becomes that their neighbours [...] will follow in their path”.

To this reality, one has to add travel accessibility, expanding international networks and the fact that there is still demand at the upper end of the labour market for highly qualified professionals, and at the lower end, there is demand for workers in unregulated sectors of the economy, which depend on a cheap and exploitable workforce to remain competitive. Clearly, migration pressures from Muslim and non Muslim countries will not diminish any time soon. Yet, in spite of the projected increase in Muslim demographics in the EU, in no European country will the Muslim population exceed 10% of the total population by 2035, with the exception of France and Belgium.

European integration policies and the segregation realities

From the very beginning of labour migration, in the 1950s and 1960s, European states have adopted different policies with respect to managing their immigrants and integrating them. Some countries, like Germany, did little in the first decade to facilitate the integration of its migrants. It viewed them as temporary “guest workers” (*geist arbeit-er*). The United Kingdom and the Netherlands embraced the notion of multiculturalism, by which the governments sought to maintain distinct cultural identities and customs. France, by contrast, professed a policy of assimilation by imposing its model of secularism.

THE SOCIAL UNREST WAS ALMOST CONCOMITANT WITH THE TERRORIST ATTACKS IN MADRID AND IN LONDON, SERVING AS EYE-OPENERS AND QUESTIONING OLD INTEGRATION MODELS

Whatever the model, the immigrants, as I said earlier, gathered in ethnic neighbourhoods, called *banlieues*, in France, and suburbs, in England. After the economic downturn of the 1970s, and the closure of mines and factories, immigrants became the first to bear the brunt of the crisis. Unemployment skyrocketed, leading to widespread riots in the United Kingdom and in France (*la révolte des banlieues*, in 2005 and 2007). Although a large number of the rioters appeared to be Muslims, most observers agree that urban segregation and the lack of opportunity and upward social mobility were key factors behind the unrest. The social unrest was almost concomitant with the deadly terrorist attacks in Madrid, in 2004, and in London, in 2005. France had already suffered similar terrorist attacks in 1997. Holland and Denmark were not spared, with the assassination of filmmakers and cartoonists.

These tragic events served as eye-openers. Old integration models came under attack. Multiculturalism in the UK and in Holland has been questioned, and gradually, the policy has been abandoned, and governments have stepped up their efforts to better integrate their Muslim communities. Germany relaxed its naturalisation policy and allowed Turks and Kurds to acquire German nationality. Only France stuck to its secular model.

Undoubtedly, in the last 15 years, the issue of migration and integration policies has dominated the political and intellectual debate, with

two questions gaining particular momentum: Are European Muslims discriminated and segregated? And, if so, should the European states be held responsible? The answer obviously varies according to ideological affiliations and political stands, but let's stick to the facts. As the bulk of Muslims are labour immigrants or native-born of immigrant origin, they are poorer than the national average, and they often live in segregated neighbourhoods. However, it is also true that poverty is often linked to poor parental control, dropping out of school and the lack of opportunities. In addition, there was an alarming development in the 1980s. The migrants, whose problems were seen as a consequence of their socio-economic status during the preceding decades, started to be perceived as culturally different.

The apparent failure to integrate has been viewed in cultural terms, that is, as failure to adapt to European culture and to adopt European norms, values and styles. In other words, Muslims do not integrate because they are Muslims, and Islam is perceived as incompatible with Western culture and values. Thus, it is no surprise that Islam has been constructed as a problem. This shift in perception is synchronic with the advent, since 1979, of the so-called Islamic revival. Indeed, in the 1960s and 1970s, the "other" was a labour migrant from Turkey, Morocco, Algeria or Pakistan, etc.; however, in the 1980s, these migrants became trapped in one communitarian cage: Islam.

However, there is no one Muslim community in Europe; this is a fantasy. Muslims come from different countries, live in different countries and speak different languages. They are immensely divided in their faith, in their ethnicity and also in their relation to religious practice and to the role religion plays in their lives. It is therefore erroneous to remove the migrant from his own condition. A migrant born to Algerian migrant parents with French nationality is first of all French. So why should we encage him in a Muslim community supposedly closed and fixed forever? Speaking constantly of Muslim community means that Islam eclipses the individual Muslim as the presumed actor of social and political change. In other words, as Sami Zemni, from the University of Gent, argues very aptly, "It is not Muslims who produce history, but Islam that conditions the behaviour and identity of Muslims. [...] In the end a Muslim is an automaton, endlessly perpetuating the religious prescriptions of Islam". Such a postulate is both erroneous and dangerous, not only because Islam assumes the role of an internal enemy in a societal cold war between European societies and their Muslims, but also



Two young Muslim women in Berlin.

because the integration issue is disconnected from the socio-economic context and becomes the sole responsibility of Muslims.

Happily enough, many Muslims are fighting their way into European societies and gradually integrating their norms. Many success stories of Muslims in all sectors, from economy to culture, provide ample proof that there is no Muslim fatality. Muslims with higher education and higher wages—like the 300.000 Arabs of the Middle East residing in London or the Lebanese expatriates in Paris—do not live in segregated communities and are well integrated in society. Unfortunately, the bulk of Muslims in Europe are labour migrants or sons of labour migrants who are badly equipped to better integrate into European societies, not because of Islam, but because of their socio-economic condition.

Should we, therefore, incriminate official policies for the lack of integration? I believe so, to a certain extent. There have been shortcomings and even failures in France and elsewhere. Urban policies have been inadequate. Employment incentives have been limited and job discrimination insufficiently addressed. All of these shortcomings are now under review, and measures are being taken, unfortunately, up until now, with scarce results.

Muslim youth of Europe, radicalisation and violence

European states recognise that the vast majority of Muslims in Europe do not engage in violence or terrorist activities, but, at the same time, they admit the existence of small cells or “lone wolves”, which are considered to be radical Islamists, prone to violence and with links to Al-Qaeda or ISIS (the Islamic State). Personally, I don’t share the theory of the lone wolves because behind each terrorist, there are groups which provide logistics, ammunition and training. But thorny questions have to be raised: How does a native European Muslim become radicalised? Why?

THE ASSERTION THAT ISLAM IS THE RELIGION OF THE SWORD, AND THAT OTHER RELIGIONS, SUCH AS CHRISTIANITY, JUDAISM OR EVEN BUDDISM, ARE RELIGIONS OF PEACE IS GROSSLY MISLEADING

The radicalisation of some home-grown Muslim youth can take place in radical mosques, in prison, during long stays in Muslim countries or through the internet. The 2004 Madrid bombing, which killed 192 people, was carried out by North Africans, mostly Moroccans, who were residents in Spain, but some, reportedly, had links with a Moroccan terrorist group affiliated with Al-Qaeda. Three of the four perpetrators of the 2005 London attacks were home-grown, second-generation British Muslims trained in Pakistan. Merah, the French terrorist who killed three soldiers and three Jewish youth in Toulouse, and those who assassinated Charlie Hebdo’s cartoonists and Jewish shoppers were second-generation French Muslims of Algerian descent. Moreover, some young Muslim jihadists who join ISIS in Syria and Iraq are born and educated in European countries, and many of them are even European Muslim converts.

Why, then, does a tiny minority of Muslim European youth engage in violence? Answers tend to differ significantly. One school of thought adopts a culturalist view, which links terrorism, jihadism and extremism to the Islamic religion itself. For its proponents, violence is consubstantial to Islam since most of the modern conflicts are taking place in Muslim countries and since the majority of terrorist groups are Muslims, such as al-Qaeda, ISIS, Boko Haram, Somali Al-Shabab, etc.

A second school of thought, considered to be realist, asserts that the failure of European governments to fully integrate Muslim communities

leaves some European Muslims more vulnerable to jihadist ideologies. Some young people feel so left behind and alienated that they turn to Islam as a badge of cultural identity. In a recent interview, Salman Rushdie explained the following: “Give a Kalachnikov and a black uniform to an unemployed youth, who is vulnerable and disadvantaged, and you confer to him a power” (Le Vif Express, 14-20, August 2015).

Clearly, these arguments are not convincing. The assertion that Islam is the religion of the sword (*religion de l'épée*), and, by contrast, that other religions, such as Christianity, Judaism or even Buddhism, are religions of peace (*religions de la paix*) is grossly misleading and historically erroneous. For centuries, religious wars split European countries apart. Nowadays, Buddhist monks organise mass killings and deportations of Muslims in Myanmar, and Jewish extremists colonise Palestine and abuse secular Jews in the name of God.

But neither is the other argument totally credible. First, there are millions of immigrants who suffer from segregation, discrimination and lack of opportunities but who do not engage in terrorist activities. Secondly, some terrorist attacks, like those carried out in the US in 2001, were perpetrated by well-educated and economically comfortable individuals. And thirdly, among those who join ISIS in Syria and Iraq, one can find entire families or even converts.

In my humble opinion, four factors might help fully grasp the gradual process of radicalisation. The first is identity-based radicalisation. For many young Muslims of migrant origin, whether left behind or fully integrated, there is a widespread feeling that they are not fully accepted as fellow citizens. After three generations, a French citizen of Algerian descent is still perceived as an Algerian and a Muslim. He may never have visited Algeria, and he may be a non-believer, but he is still perceived as an alien. Clearly, some Muslim youth feel torn apart between a country of origin they don't know and their home countries (France, Belgium or Germany) that turn their back on them. It is no small wonder that some youth curse the country in which they are born and raised.

The second factor is socio-economic based radicalisation. This form of radicalisation is related to the socio-economic grievances harboured by second and third-generation Muslims. Undoubtedly, the lack of opportunities is linked to objective failures like poor education and training. Others are linked to job discrimination. For example, a friend of mine, a young Algerian Muslim and an excellent engineer, sent an application for a job vacancy and signed the letter with his true name. He received

an answer that the job was no longer vacant. He sent the same letter with some slight modifications, including his westernised name, and he was summoned for an interview. This happens frequently and feeds the sentiment that university studies are not necessarily a ladder of social mobility in the case of many Muslims. In the long run, this may sow the seeds of hatred.

**THE MINORITY MUSLIM YOUTH
RADICALISATION IN EUROPE HAS MORE TO DO
WITH TODAY’S GLOBAL-LOCAL CONNECTIONS RATHER
THAN WITH FAILED INTEGRATION**

The third factor is the search for a mission. In many cases, we saw terrorists who became suddenly, fervently self-radicalised and fanatically religious, breaking off from their families and friends and embodying what Oliver Roy called a “generation rupture”. These self-radicalised youth pursue a fantasy of heroism, which I called the passage from “zero to hero”, or, the passage from anonymity to celebrity. “We have avenged the Prophet Muhammad”, shouted the killers of the Charlie-Hebdo cartoonists, in January 2015.

This self-radicalisation is partly due to persistent, socio-economic challenges, but also to the exposure to social media and to satellite television, some of which is generously financed. It is no secret that some petrodollar-financed satellite channels propagate a literalist reading of the Koranic texts, indirectly contributing to the forging of a radical mindset that is prone to see the world with binary logic: Islam versus the Other, Good versus Evil. Such logic leads to fanaticism and the rejection of negotiation, dialogue or compromise. Here lies the difference between a religious radical terrorist who doesn’t negotiate and a nationalist terrorist who does.

The fourth factor is geopolitical based radicalisation. This relates to the constant exposure that young European Muslims have of the sufferings inflicted by the West and its regional allies on fellow Muslims in many parts of the Arab and Muslim worlds. It is not fortuitous that Al-Qaeda and later ISIS increased their activities in Iraq after the American invasion in 2003. The three Israeli offensives in Gaza (2007, 2012 and 2014) produced dramatic resentment among Muslims against Israel and its western allies, mainly the Americans, who were accused of having double-standards for standing by Israel, in spite of

its continuous breaches of international law and violations of human rights. But the belief that those terrorists who orchestrated the horrific attacks in Madrid, London and elsewhere were avenging the suffering of the Palestinians is wrong and misleading. Palestine has been more of a justification than a source of radicalisation for some young European, radical Muslims.

All of these forms of radicalisation may converge or not. We have seen cases of native European converts engaging in terrorist activities. The September 11th terrorists were highly skilled and affluent. Many terrorists are not religious but suddenly become fanatically religious in a sort of informal religious radicalisation. We have also seen cases of radicalisation in countries, such as Holland, which have done much to accommodate Muslim immigrants (affirmative action hiring policy, free language courses, etc.) As a matter of fact, Mohamed Bouyeri, who murdered the filmmaker Theo Van Gogh, was born in Holland and was collecting unemployment benefits.

These facts do not totally invalidate the relationship between failed integration and radicalisation. But what seems unquestionable is that the minority Muslim youth radicalisation in Europe has more to do, as Anna Triandafyllidou argues, “with today’s global-local connections rather than with failed integration or ethnic penalty”.

The Islamophobic construction of the Muslim “problem”

Let us reiterate an undeniable fact: since 711, Islam and Muslims have obsessed and captured the European imagination, first as conquerors, then as a competing religion and finally as the internal “Other” with the new waves of migration. Thus, Islamophobia as a fear or a prejudiced opinion of Islam and Muslims is not a new phenomenon; it would suffice to read the thousands of books on “Islam and Europe” since the Islamic conquest of the Iberian Peninsula until now. During the last centuries, we have had polemicists and historians who described Islam as the “mirror of Europe”—it is what Europe is not (or no longer): fanatic, violent, intolerant and misogynous. In such an essentialised image, Islam has been perceived as a homogeneous mass, static and unresponsive to change. Edward Said, in his book *Covering Islam*, has shown the intellectual fallacy of such a postulate, as it falls in the trap of regarding Islam monolithically and does not grasp the complex heterogeneity of a historical phenomenon.



Demonstrations of support to the workers of the *Charlie Hebdo* magazine.

What is really intriguing and somehow disturbing is that Islamophobia is not fading in the 21st century. On the contrary, it is gaining salience. Why? There is no consensus among intellectuals about the factors that trigger this modern Islamophobia. Many intellectuals, both Muslims and non-Muslims, are convinced that Islamophobia is the natural outcome of extreme violence in Muslim countries, anti-Western terrorist attacks, reprehensible behaviour of certain groups of migrants and the radicalisation of some young native European Muslims.

Other intellectuals claim that the West's disdain of Islam and Muslims has historic roots and is ingrained in Europe's culture of superiority. Others go even further by arguing that there is a well-structured and well-financed Islamophobia industry that has managed to capture public opinion without serious contestation. In this regard, some media, including electronic media, are pinpointed as major contributors to the surge of Islamophobia. This argument has been brandished by John Richardson's book, *(Mis)representing Islam: racism and British broadsheet newspapers* (2004), and by Jack Shaheen's article, "How the media created the Muslim Monster Myth" (*Nation*, July 2012).

All of these claims are debatable as they oversimplify a complex issue. First, there is plenty of cruelty in the world, and religiously-motivated violence has erupted in many places, not only in Islamic countries. But

one has to admit that Islamist violence has surpassed all other forms of faith-based violence, not necessarily in terms of magnitude, but in terms of the “theatricalisation” of jihadi violence through social media and the spill-over of terrorist attacks in Europe itself (see the book published by the Transatlantic Academy: *Faith, freedom and foreign policy*, NY, 2015).

The argument that Western vilification of Islam is inherent to Western culture is also a gross exaggeration, as it considers the West as a monolith incapable of empathy and trapped in its closed views of Islam and Muslims. This is historically erroneous since many European intellectuals have come to the defence of Muslims in the past and in present times (see Edwy Plenel’s book: *Pour les Musulmans*, 2014) and have even highlighted the magnificent contribution of Islam to world civilisation.

While speaking about an Islamophobic industry may suppose that there is a sort of intellectual and political conspiracy against Islam and Muslims, this is something I am not fond of. What is sure is that Islamophobia is related to identity politics since it allows its adherents to construct their identity in opposition to a negative image of Muslims, their culture and religion. The permanent settlement of Muslim migrants, or Muslims of migrant origin, in Europe has brought the “outside inside” and has transformed Islam and Muslims into a domestic issue and an internal threat. This change has been exacerbated by the Iranian Fatwa attacks against the novelist Salman Rushdie, the riots in the suburbs of France, the terrorist attacks, the cartoon controversy, the assassination of Dutch filmmaker Theo Van Gogh and the latest attacks against Charlie Hebdo’s cartoonists.

In a context in which European states are facing an identity crisis, an economic slump and high rates of unemployment, all of these events could only rekindle anti-Islamic sentiment. Europe’s Islam has become a scapegoat and a scarecrow. It is not surprising, therefore, that Islam’s critics among European intellectuals are becoming best sellers: Oriana Fallaci, in Italy (*La rabbia e l’orgoglio*, 2001), Thilo Sarrazin, in Germany (*Deutschland schafft sich ab*, 2010), Houellebecq, in France (*Soumission*, 2015), Christopher Caldwell (*Reflections on the revolution in Europe: immigration, Islam and the West*, 2009) and Bruce Bawer (*While Europe slept: how radical Islam is destroying the West from within*, 2006) in England and many others.

At the popular level, anti-Islam sentiment is also dramatically increasing, as revealed by a special study on Islam by Bertelsmann Foundation (2015). Taking Germany as a case study, the 2014 public opinion survey

shows the following alarming percentages: 57% of Germans believe that Islam poses a threat; 61% are convinced that Islam is incompatible with the West; 40% say that “because of Islam I feel as a stranger in my country”; and 24% think that Muslims should not be allowed to immigrate to Germany. An October 2012 YOU GOV survey in England also revealed that 49% agreed that there would be a clash of civilisations between Muslims and native white Britons.

These percentages are quite telling. Muslim countries would be ill-advised to ignore them because they are also responsible for the degradation of the image of Islam and Muslims. They cannot simply shun their responsibility by sidestepping the issue and suggesting that Islamophobia is a sort of incurable Western illness or that Islamist terrorists and jihadists, such as the European-native jihadists, Al-Qaeda, ISIS, BOKO HARAM, etc., do not represent real Islam and even tarnish the image of Islam, which is a religion of peace. This argument is politically correct, but it is self-serving and not credible. After all, radical Islam is the religious form through which a particular kind of violent political rage expresses itself. It is somehow the “voice of protest” against the states that failed to live up to their pledges, against the prevailing acquiescence and anomie of Muslim societies and against the ruling elites who harnessed religion in the service of political power.

Thus, instead of blaming the West for its hatred of Muslims, Muslim countries should ask themselves this difficult question: What went wrong in terms of political participation, economic efficiency and religious education? Why does such a destructive, nihilistic rage come from within the Muslim community? Why do some rich Arab countries finance and export fundamentalist movements while keeping a tight grip on protest and dissent at home? Unless these questions are correctly addressed, it will be arduous to uproot radical ideologies, to stifle religious violence in the name of God and, consequently, to dampen the appeal of the Islamophobic discourse.

Counter-radicalization and de-radicalization in European policies

Since the first terrorist attacks in Europe, strategies have been devised, specialised study centres have been set-up and policies have been adopted to counter violent extremism. The array of policies includes, among other things, the promotion of Muslim integration in European

countries by establishing structures for dialogue between representatives of Islam and the governments. In 2003, for example, France established the French Council of Muslim faith (*Le Conseil Français du Culte Musulman*), Muslim ministers were appointed to government cabinet positions and a new policy for the suburbs (*Une nouvelle politique pour les banlieues*) was adopted, among other actions.

**ANTI-ISLAM SENTIMENT IS
DRAMATICALLY INCREASING, AS REVEALED
BY A SPECIAL STUDY ON ISLAM**

For decades, Germany perceived its migrants as temporary guest workers and showed no hurry in facilitating their integration. Naturalisation was restricted until the 1990s. But a law passed in 1999 allowed second-generation foreigners to apply for citizenship. A 2005 Immigration law provided funding for mandatory integration courses. In 2006, the German government inaugurated the National Conference on Islam, and in 2007, the Federal Government adopted the First National Integration Plan, focusing on the promotion of German values of equality and civil engagement. In July 2010, the German Interior ministry announced the launch of an exit program to provide assistance to violent radicals seeking to turn their backs on extremism. Although Germany escaped large-scale terrorist attacks like those of Madrid, it has not been totally immune to terrorism. On March 2, 2011, a Muslim Kosovar opened fire on a bus carrying US soldiers and killed two of them.

Holland took a series of measures to promote the integration of its migrants. Already, in 1998, the government enacted the Newcomers Integration law. Contrary to France, veils have not been prohibited, but the use of the full veil (burka) by educators and government employees has been banned. A Muslim-oriented broadcasting organisation was set up in 1986. A Muslim and government contact group has been put in place to foster dialogue. In June 2009, the government passed a law on municipal non-discrimination services. In the same year, there were seven Muslim members of the House of Representatives, one in the Senate, one in the Cabinet, and the Mayor of Rotterdam was also a Muslim. Like Germany, Holland has not been the theater of large-scale terrorist acts, but in May 2002, Pim Fortuyn, an anti-Islamic critic, was gunned down, and in 2004, the filmmaker Theo Van Gogh was stabbed to death.

Spain has been a transit country for illegal migration and, after 1990, became a country of final destination. Most Muslims in Spain are Moroccan Arabs and Berbers who gained a living in various booming sectors. Given the vicinity to Morocco, its southern neighbour and economic and fishing partner, Spain generously gave legal status to the vast majority of illegal Moroccan immigrants. Yet, in March 2004, Spain suffered the worst terrorist attack in Europe.

Spain's reaction could have been harsh, but, on the contrary, the media and government officials showed restraint, avoiding the stigmatisation of all Muslim immigrants. In 2006, a forum for the social integration of migrants (*Foro para la integracion social de los inmigrantes*) was launched, and over the period of 2007 to 2010, a Strategic Plan for Citizenship and Integration was adopted and was allocated \$2 billion Euros for programs in education, employment, housing, social services, women and youth. The government liaises with the Spanish Islamic Commission (CIE), which officially represents Spain's Muslims and which coordinates two major Muslim Associations: the Spanish Federation of Islamic Religious Groups (FEERI) and the Union of Islamic Communities. A split in the CIE led to the formation of the Spanish Islamic Council.

Although the policies related to immigration, integration and counter-terrorism are primarily the responsibility of European states, the EU has not remained on the side lines. In May 2004, it published a Handbook on Integration. In September 2005, it adopted a Common Agenda for Integration. A Special Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals was launched in 2007, and in 2009, a European Integration forum was established. These are only a few examples of European states' integration policies and the EU's measures. Whether these policies and measures have been successful or not goes beyond the scope of this article. What is alarming, however, is that all integration policies did not prevent some young Muslim radicals from perpetrating horrific violent attacks in European countries and thousands from joining the fighting groups such as ISIS or Al-Qaeda.

Thus, the focus of states' policies is now shifting towards de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation. In 2005, the EU set the tone by adopting a wide counter-terrorism strategy based on four types of action: Prevent, Protect, Pursue and Respond. In the recent years, this counter-terrorism strategy became the pillar of all European states' policies. Grosso modo, all European states have adopted a wide array of measures in response to terrorism and to radicalisation. These include

stricter security and surveillance; greater efforts to prevent radicalisation in prison, in Mosques or through Internet; the promotion of diversity training in schools; the re-assertion of the secular character of the State; the training of local imams; and the re-insertion of returnees from combat zones. All of these measures move in the right direction. But they may prove insufficient if European states persist in ignoring some disturbing facts.

The first fact is that the power of ideas has to be taken into account. Islamist radicalisation is the natural offshoot of the fundamentalist ideology that is infiltrating the social media, invading conservative mosques, and mushrooming through generously-financed TV channels. As long as European countries tolerate, in their midst, radical imams who preach intolerance and hatred, accept that foreign Muslim countries continue to finance the construction of Mosques, exert structural influence by reinforcing close religious ties with their migrants and look to the other side when conservative Muslim regimes crackdown on their reformists, the fight against radicalisation may prove an uphill endeavour.

The second disturbing fact is that it is grossly misleading to assert that only a tiny minority of Muslims back the actions of extremists and jihadists or that groups, such as ISIS, are completely unrepresentative. The reality speaks to the contrary. Radicals enjoy sufficient support not only because they are perceived as an Islamist vanguard that refuses Western dictates, but also because many Muslims still dream of returning Islam to its past glory. It suffices to read some religious school textbooks in Muslim countries to see the glorification of the Muslim past and how the West is portrayed as a crusader, infidel or *kafer* (unbeliever). The European Union can use its current policies, such as the European Neighbourhood Policy, the Union for the Mediterranean or EU-Gulf dialogue, to tackle these delicate matters.

The third disturbing fact relates to EU policies themselves. In its dealings with Mediterranean, Arab and Muslim countries, European policies have not been coherent. Very often, commercial or strategic interests eclipsed European values. After the democratic Palestinian elections of 2006, the EU did not recognise the legitimacy of the Hamas victory. After the eviction, by General Sissi of Egypt, of President Morsi, the first democratically-elected Egyptian president, the EU reaction was shy, at best. For decades, the EU turned a blind eye on the occupation and colonisation of Palestine by Israel, often described in European media as the sole democracy in the region. France and Britain took a leading

role in the military operations in Libya without any serious analysis, ex ante, of the possible dramatic consequences of the regime's implosion. For too long, the Iraqi Shiite-dominated government has been allowed to impose its sectarian policies without being reprimanded or punished. The Syrian regime has been allowed to destroy its country and slaughter its people, forcing millions to flee the country.

These few examples are only reminders that the fight against radicalisation at home and abroad starts by asserting the power of values and ideals in domestic and foreign policies. Communism was not defeated by the power of arms, but by the power of ideals. By the same token, fighting domestic radicalisation by security means only, or bombing ISIS into surrender and submission, is a sure path of failure.

Conclusion

The vast majority of Muslims in Europe are immigrants or sons of immigrants, and almost half of Muslims in Denmark and Scandinavian countries are political refugees. The bulk of the 235.000 immigrants who have crossed the Mediterranean since January 2015 are refugees and asylum-seekers. The number of Syrians, Iraqis, Afghans and Eritreans among them is ample proof that human tragedies are today the main drivers of forced migration. The European states are caught by surprise by the magnitude of the phenomenon and somehow concerned by the truth that the vast majority of the newcomers are Muslims who are perceived to be inflating and swelling the European Muslim population of 25 million, a number which already sparks fears in European societies.

The article examined the various stages of migration flows, from temporary labour migration to permanent settlements, and showed the gradual construction of the Muslim problem in Europe and the emergence of far-right anti-Muslim parties. It tackled the issue of radicalisation of some young European Muslims and discussed the de-radicalisation policies adopted by European states. The message which the article tried to convey is simple: Muslims are settling in Europe, and their numbers will increase in the years to come. Given this reality, European states should do their utmost to further their integration, and Muslims should contribute by showing their attachment and loyalty to their new home countries.

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