

Negotiating Minority Identities in Democracies: Muslims in the European Union States

Bhaswati Sarkar*

Diversity is a fact of life which is reflected in all states and all societies. Diversity of European states is in a sense both foundational and recent or ongoing. The foundational differences especially in West European states were accommodated in the national imaginings through citizenship, a civic understanding of the nation and devolution of power. Other than that migration results in ongoing and fresh diversity, in terms of language, culture, religion and customs. In Eastern Europe the trajectory of nation state development has been different with its complex ethnic patchwork, ethnic understanding of the nation and the concomitant minority issues and potential conflicts. This paper focuses on how today as a consequence of migration the presence of new, especially non-white, ethnic and religious groups is a reality for most European states. It specifically looks at the lived experience of Muslims in European states and argues that their lived experience has been complex. In settling identity claims multiculturalism came up in a big way drawing attention to the fact how 'individual centric' liberalism failed to take note the role of community in individuals' life and also disadvantaged minority cultural communities. Following 9/11 and subsequent terror attacks while the need for dialogue between communities has gained greater urgency it has also reduced the space for dialogue, negotiations and meaningful accommodation of differences. Attacks and criticism against multiculturalism which created grounds for greater recognition of the rights of cultural communities has intensified. In state after state the mounting thrust is now on, rising above particularities and nurturing commonality and integration.

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*Dr. Bhaswati Sarkar is Assistant Professor in the Centre for European Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. In the Centre for European Studies she currently offers a course on *Identity Issues in Europe*. She did her doctoral and M.Phil research in the Centre for Russian, Central Asian and East European Studies, School of International Studies, JNU.

states were accommodated in the national imaginings through citizenship, a civic understanding of the nation and devolution of power. Other than that migration results in ongoing and fresh diversity, in terms of language, culture, religion and customs. In Eastern Europe the trajectory of nation state development has been different with its complex ethnic patchwork the ethnic understanding of the nation and the concomitant minority issues and potential conflicts. However, today at the level of nation-states both in the West and the East, and that of the supranational European Union the question is how different ethnic, religious, cultural groups are to be accommodated or made part of the national and European imagining. The presence of new, especially non-white, ethnic and religious groups as a consequence of migration is one of the constituent elements in contemporary plurality that poses a fundamental challenge to liberal democracies in terms of diverse identity accommodation.

It is said that one of the most important task which democracies as soon as they become a political reality face, is to temper their own rigour by a generous and considerate treatment of minorities. (1) In fact it would not be incorrect to argue that how a state treats its minorities goes a long way to determine how democratic it is. Ideally we should treat others as we would like them to treat us. Reality, however, could not be farther removed from this ideal. In real life we encounter numerous instances of individuals killing each other, groups being targeted specifically because they espouse a different identity. This paper focuses on how the Muslims are negotiating their identity in the liberal democratic states of Europe, what has been their experience and what complicates this negotiation. Islam is widely considered to be Europe's fastest growing religion, with immigration and above average birth rates leading to a rapid increase in the Muslim population. European states on their part are desperately trying to grapple with their increasing Muslim population, their culture, their demands, their alienation.

MUSLIMS IN EU STATES: NUMBER AND ORIGIN

An exact number of Muslims within the EU is difficult to come by as many countries do not include religious questions in the census. In UK for instance it was only the last census of 2001 that counted the religious affiliation of the population. However, many sources put the figure at around 15 million Muslims spread over EU.

The table below gives the estimated Muslim population in EU member states.

| Country | Muslim population |
|----------------|-------------------|
| United Kingdom | 1.5 million |
| France | 5-6 million |
| Germany | 3 million |
| Spain | 1 million |
| Italy | 1 million |
| Netherlands | 1million |
| Denmark | 270,000 |
| Belgium | 0.4 million |

Source: BBC Report www.news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4385768.stm

The Muslims came in like other immigrant groups especially after the post Second World War in these different states. Where they came from was largely determined by the historical legacy of the receiving states. France which within EU has the greatest concentration of the Muslims has 70 % of them coming from its north African colonies of Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco, UK has the majority of them from South Asia, in the Netherlands they came from the former colonies of Surinam and Indonesia and also from Somalia, Turkey and Morocco. Spain's Muslim population is also largely drawn from Morocco. In Germany majority of them are from Turkey. In that sense Muslims are far from a homogenous group. At the same time it can be argued that this plural Muslim world operates in the name of Islam and in that sense it is a Muslim world.

Early immigrants of the twentieth century and during the interwar period often came as refugees fleeing persecution and were grateful to the receiving society for giving them a new home a fresh lease of life. They were keen to assimilate having virtually abandoned their homelands and given the poorly developed modes of transport and communication. In contrast contemporary immigrants are often been recruited for their labour and skills. The relation with the receiving countries is largely contractual. Many

of them belong to the former colonies, arrive with mixed emotions and are keen to retain their ties with their homelands which modern technology only facilitates and the element of gratitude to the host countries is considerably tempered if not missing. Initially they were mostly single male members who had moved in but over the years they stayed on and were joined by their families. This in many ways was what made it critical for them to negotiate their identity within the liberal democratic state. Also the second and third generation immigrants born and brought up in these states already citizens or citizens in the waiting are much more confident of their identity and the right to maintain and assert them.(2)

The liberal prioritising of the individual in terms of rights, liberties and free choice was at odds to grapple with many of these communities and their understanding of the self. The multiculturalist position of the embedded self was an attempt to establish the worth of the community in the life of the individual and the need therefore to recognize the rights of communities in the public sphere. Differences, in other words, could not be pushed in the realm of the private. However in negotiating these differences while participation starts from these 'situated positions' the dialogue requires participants to be public spirited and open to the claims of others and not single mindedly self interested. This is what Young terms as public reasonableness. This virtue is defined as the ability to listen to others and formulate one's own position in a way that is sensitive to and respectful of the different experience and identities of fellow citizens. How has this worked in case of European states and their Muslim population?

IDENTITY CLAIMS AND RIGHTS

The Muslims have been over the years asking for recognition of rights related to dietary restrictions, dress code, education, protection of their religion against blasphemy. The experience of their success has been a mixed one largely determined by the national context in which they are situated. This section provides a bird's eye view of the development in various states of Europe.

Britain has an established tradition of multiculturalism embraced since the 1960s to deal with the growing diversity that immigration from outside of Europe had introduced. Muslim demands first come into prominence following the publication of the *Satanic Verses* in 1988-1989. This was a

watershed event in the history of British Muslims. Issues such as freedom of speech, blasphemy laws and the protection of non-Christian religions in Britain were hotly debated. Since 1997 when Labour came to power the need to comprehend and uphold the multicultural ethos of the country was forcefully reiterated. Thus the state has been relatively open to the demands of faith schools, wearing of head scarves, serving halal meat and since 2008 allowed the functioning of Sharia courts to deal with divorce, financial disputes and cases of domestic violence. However, notwithstanding this general atmosphere of greater acceptability a leaked British government report in 2004 acknowledged that compared with the population as a whole, Muslims in the UK had three times the unemployment rate, the lowest economic activity rates, a higher proportion of unqualified working those of Pakistani and Bangladeshi descent were the most disadvantaged sub-groups. Also, a disproportionate number of Muslims are imprisoned thus although only 3% of the general population, Muslims make up 8% of UK inmates. There is rising Islamophobia among the general public and this has been combined with the relook at multiculturalism by practitioners of state politics. UK is stressing on community cohesion. It has introduced citizenship courses in school curriculum. Cameron in 2011 at a security conference said multiculturalism had failed. He argued that UK needed a stronger national identity, ‘...we need a lot less of the passive tolerance of recent years and much more active, muscular liberalism.’(3)

The Muslim population of France which is estimated at about 5 million have had to negotiate their identity claims in a completely different context. France has been rocked by the head scarf debate, riots in 2005 and very recently in 2009 the Sarkozy government initiated the national identity debate. The French have approached their immigrants guided by the firm belief that the French Revolution ideals of “liberty, equality, fraternity” could be applied to everyone and all citizens are equal. The French state is based on the principle of *laïcité* i.e. a strict separation of religion and state so much so that France does not collect statistics on inhabitants’ racial, ethnic, or religious backgrounds, and forbids businesses, for example, to ask for such information from job applicants or employees. The government does not provide special consideration in public life for different religions or political groups. France thus rejects a quota system or any form of affirmative action for minorities in every aspect of public life holding that equality of rights theoretically brings equality of opportunity. The demand for the recognition

of the right of Muslim girls to wear headscarves in schools has therefore been an uphill task and in the end the state rejected their claim.

Public education, military service, and employment have played an important role in assimilation that has been the state's approach to management of religious practices. A 1905 law reaffirmed the French ideal of separation of church and state. The law designated Catholicism, Protestantism, and Judaism as recognized religions and laid out means for them to develop representative bodies that might discuss with the French government matters of importance, such as recognition of religious holidays and construction of places of worship. It was not until the 1980s that France gave a measure of official recognition to the Muslim faith. In 2002, Muslims followed other major religious groups in France by gaining the right to create an official institution to represent Islam before the French government. French Council for the Muslim Religion is a forum for discussion with government officials about construction of mosques, observance of religious holidays, and ensuring, for example, appropriate food for Muslims in the French prison system. (4)

In 2004 after an extended debate, the government presented a bill to Parliament to ban "conspicuous" religious symbols in public schools through the secondary-school level. The law prohibits the wearing of head scarves. It also bans religious symbols such as large crosses and the yarmulke. In the 2004-2005 school year, there were 597 instances reported in which girls wore a head scarf to school or objected to certain classes or practices in the school system. The government states that it resolved 550 such cases, meaning that the head scarves were removed or girls agreed to take required classes. In 47 cases that could not be resolved, schools excluded the students.

What stands out therefore is that by and large the state demands that some elements of Muslim traditional life and culture be abandoned in order for Muslims to enjoy full participation in French life.... "to accept a North African as completely French is to accept him without his religion." While many Muslims hold that being good Muslim and being good citizens do not necessarily come in conflict there are sections within the community who feel themselves not French but Muslims in the cultural sense. They do not see it as possible to consider oneself both "Muslim and French." They are not likely to vote, and are alienated from French culture and society. (5)

The French model of assimilation through equal citizenship today stands challenged. In late October 2005, riots broke out in the suburbs surrounding Paris, Lyons, Toulouse, Lille, and other cities. These are working class suburbs populated by North Africans, where unemployment levels are high and educational levels are low. In many ways, these suburbs are a society apart, their inhabitants cut off from most of the opportunities afforded French youth who are not Muslim. The government declared a state of emergency, and responded with curfews and with police, who cut off the neighborhoods from the nearby cities. Many studies' findings indicate widespread discrimination against North Africans and other Muslims who seek employment in France. Few Muslims are visible in the top levels of French politics, media, the judiciary, business, and the civil service. There are no Muslims in the French Parliament. The percentage of Muslims who fail to finish secondary school appears to be considerably higher than that of non-Muslims.

Radical imams promoting fundamentalism and violence prompted the French government to discourage foreign governments from sending imams to France if those individuals did not speak French or knew little about French society, or had extremist tendencies. The government also insisted that mosques appoint imams who had been born or at least educated in France. The French law allows the deportation without trial of anyone seen as a security threat and has been applied to a number of imams.

The largest influx of foreigners in Germany resulted from its policies in the 1950s and 1960s to address an acute labour shortage during a period of rapid economic development by inviting in "guest workers" from less developed countries to perform the jobs for which Germans were not available. Under agreements with foreign governments, these workers were expected to stay in the country for a fixed term and to leave the country once their services were no longer needed. Many of the original "guest workers" (Italians, Greeks, and other southern Europeans) did return to their native countries. However subsequent groups of "guest workers," mostly Muslim Yugoslavs, Turks, and North Africans stayed and eventually brought their families to join them. They and their children remained largely segregated from German society, living in their own communities and sometimes having little contact with the host society. (6)

The German Basic Law grants religious freedom to all and the German government respects the right in practice. Church and state are separate under German law but a strong partnership exists between Government and dominant religious groups that have official status as public corporations. These include the Roman Catholic Church, several Protestant denominations, and the Jewish faith. As part of its tax system, the government collects “church taxes” from which the construction and activities of churches and Jewish synagogues are subsidized. Thus far, Islamic organizations have not gained such public status or revenues. The government has been slow to fund the building of mosques or to subsidize mosque-centered Islamic social services for the Muslim community. (7)

Most public schools in Germany include religious teaching in their standard curriculum. The issue of Islamic education in public schools has become a major topic at the state level. Public schools are slowly incorporating Islamic education into their curriculum, but policies vary greatly among the states. In some states, teaching about Islam is included only in a comparative course on world religions. In other states the government now helps to fund private Islamic schools. The wearing of headscarves in schools has become an issue in some states. While there is no Federal Law against the wearing of headscarves in schools, the federal courts have upheld legislation passed in two states banning teachers from wearing headscarves in public schools. Germany is increasingly concerned about radical clerics who may be preaching in German Mosques. Under the anti-terrorism laws of 2001, authorities are no longer barred from monitoring what goes on inside mosques. (8)

Eligibility for German citizenship, prior to 2000, was based solely on German ancestry and not country of birth. Foreigners residing in Germany, even second and third generation residents born in Germany, had little prospect of naturalization. The government sought to compensate by granting foreigners extensive civil and social rights, as well as social benefits as non-citizens. Under the new citizenship law, passed in 2000, second generation foreigners born in Germany became eligible to apply for citizenship, assuming their parents had legal residency. However, even after the law went into effect, the old notions of who is “really” a German persisted among ethnic Germans. To this day, many Germans identify their nationality in ethnic and cultural terms and do not consider those without German ancestry as German. (9)

Since the introduction of the new citizenship law in 2000, some 160,000 Muslims have gained citizenship each year. In all, some 15 percent of Muslims in Germany are now German citizens. It has been estimated that within a decade there might be over 3 million Muslim German citizens. This in the coming years is likely to place the Muslims in a stronger negotiating position. As they become a more politically active voting bloc, Muslim voters are likely to be able to influence the major political parties on a range of significant issues. In recent elections, strong Muslim support for the Social Democrats (SPD) and Greens is believed to have affected election outcomes at the federal and state levels. It may be noteworthy that the SPD which receives most of the Turkish and Muslim vote has been strongly pro-Turkish EU accession, while the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) who receive little Muslim support have been the most vocal opponents. However, as the French example shows equality of rights does not necessarily translate into equality of opportunity. (10)

The Spanish government has worked with Spain's two major Islamic organizations in Spain to help integrate Muslims. In 1992, the Federation of Spanish Islamic Entities and the Union of Islamic Communities in Spain, united as the Islamic Commission of Spain, signed an agreement with the Spanish government that, among other provisions, recognized Muslim holidays and provides, at least in principle, for Islamic instruction in public schools. (11)

In Spain the number of mosques is relatively small when compared to the rapidly expanding Muslim population. Indeed, Muslims in Spain have complained about the difficulty of securing permits to build mosques. Many Muslims in Spain worship in informal, often unmarked, prayer rooms. Experts estimate that there are hundreds of such "garage mosques," headed by imams whose professional qualifications and political ideologies are unknown. Sarhane Ben Abdelmajid Farkhet a key figure in the March 11 attacks, led prayers at one of these informal prayer rooms. (12)

An important issue for the Muslim minority is religious education. Since the 1992 agreement with the Islamic Commission of Spain, Islamic education has at least in principle been available in Spanish public schools. About 74,000 students throughout Spain have requested classes in Islam. However, the government has been slow to pay for imams to teach such classes. Moderate Spanish Muslims are concerned that if more teachers are

not found, Muslim children will continue to receive most of their Islamic teachings from the informal, unregulated prayer rooms or mosques associated with foreign regimes that support an intolerant form of Islam. Under the previous Spanish government, a Muslim girl was briefly forbidden in 2002 to wear a headscarf to school, but the ban was soon retracted after a public outcry. The move was not surprising because Aznar did not favour adopting a multicultural approach. "I'm against the idea of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism divides our societies, debilitates our societies, multiculturalism does not produce tolerance, nor integration." He emphasized that laws must be administered equally toward everyone. "This is the best way to integrate societies and to promote integration. To accept different laws, depending on the origin ethnic or the religion is a very serious mistake in our society," he said. (13)

Like Germany and Spain, Italy too has until recently treated minorities as a temporary phenomenon, who would eventually leave and were therefore by and large ignored or left to themselves. But when they stayed on it is perceived by both the people and politicians as threats to the host country's security, cultural authenticity and affluence.

The Netherlands which until recently was touted as the most immigrant friendly country with an official policy of multiculturalism in place has suffered a setback following the assassination of Pim Fortuyn and Theo Van Gogh and has led to what scholars term as a 'seismic shift' in its approach (14). Anti-Muslim sentiments are on the rise. Dutch politician Geert Wilders in 2008 planned to release an anti-Islamic film 'Fitna'(Arabic for strife) against what he terms as the 'fascist Koran'. Islamists in Afghanistan and Pakistan promptly set fire to Dutch flags making Wilders' claims of the undemocratic and intolerant nature of Islam appear real. However, the Dutch Muslim Broadcasting Organization on its part offered to air Wilders film on its television network provided he was prepared to take part in a discussion afterwards. Wilders declined, on earlier occasions too he had tuned down invitations to meet Muslim organizations. (15)

The Danish cartoon controversy of 2005 clearly indicated that what was required of the Muslims was adherence to the majority's values in society. For months after the publication of the cartoons Muslim organizations lobbied unsuccessfully for government censorship. However, despite immense pressure from UN and EU the Danish government refused to

call the news paper to account. In this case again the imams subsequently announced that they no longer demand apologies from *Jyllands-Posten* for the publication. Instead they said they just want two things: a guarantee from the Danish authorities that Muslims can freely practice their religion without being “provoked and discriminated.” And a declaration from *Jyllands-Posten* that the cartoons were not published with the intention of mocking the Muslim faith. (16)

SHRINKING NEGOTIATING SPACE

The question that arises is what is it that makes dialogue between the majority and minority difficult? In both the liberal state and the multicultural framework the negotiating space seems to be shrinking. It is shrinking especially since the 2001 transatlantic terror strikes and subsequent ones in Madrid and London the Muslim population/community across Europe has gained heightened visibility. Islamophobia is on the rise. All eyes are trained on how the community has reacted to this act of violence, have they spoken loudly and clearly against them. Questions like ‘do you consider yourself European Muslim or a Muslim in Europe’ (17) have been repeatedly hurled at Muslim community leaders. Following the terror attacks in New York, Madrid, London Europeans’ fear of Muslims and Islam as a religion has become more palpable. These incidents were followed by a growing spirit of intolerance and a nationalist backlash in almost every European country. According to the Eurobarometer, January 2007 Report on Discrimination, 44 percent of Europeans feel that discrimination on grounds of religion or belief is currently widespread in Europe, and 64 percent perceive racial discrimination is a fairly common problem. (18) Earlier in 2000 the Runnymede Trust Report in UK already pointed out the pervasive negative image of Muslims in Britain. Using wide documentary evidence the report highlighted strong ant-Muslim tendency across board in Britain. Muslims suffered discrimination due to factors of ‘colour, class, culture and creed.’(19) In July 2001, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) published its report on Germany. This was the second report. The Commission expressed its deep concern about the extent of racist and xenophobic attacks in Germany, as well as the social climate that encourages such attacks. The report focused on the term “defining culture” (*Leitkultur*) and pointed out how this could disadvantage other cultures in Germany, “this concept

reflects a concept of German identity as a fairly homogenous one, and a fear about the effects diversity will have upon the culture and identity. It also reinforces negative stereotypes about other cultures, neglecting the value and important contribution of minority communities within Germany.”(20) In the 2007 EU report on racism in Europe, Germany again came in for criticism for discrimination against foreigners in job market and housing and for violent crimes against them.(21) Plans to build new mosques in major European cities like Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Munich, Cologne, Berlin, Strasbourg, Athens and Granada have been highly controversial and meet with strong local resistance. In Rotterdam where one of Europe’s largest mosque is being built, the deputy mayor Marcos Pastors described the Oriental-style domed mosques as an ‘ugly marble thing.’ (22) In Italy Prime Minister Berlusconi’s ruling coalition proposed a law to effectively block construction of mosques arguing that they spread hatred for the West. Dutch parliamentarian Geert Wilders took over where Fortuyn left, calling mosques “palaces of hatred”. Officials throughout Europe are also pushing hard to influence the appearance of mosques and discouraging them to be built in the traditional architecture of native lands. In Amsterdam the Turkish Islamic community to avoid protracted conflict with Dutch authorities calls its mosques Westermoske and has designed it to integrate the building with its environs.

The question is can Europe’s *sabiyya* i.e. civilisational identity whether revolving round *laicite* or Christianity accommodate the world view of Islam and its practitioners? For scholars like Maulana Abul Ala Maududi, Islam is understood as ‘obedience and dutifulness to God.’ To give oneself to God is Islam. To relinquish one’s freedom and independence in favour of God is Islam. To surrender oneself before the authority and sovereignty of God is Islam. One who entrusts all his affairs to God is a Muslim and one who keeps his affairs in his own hands or entrusts them to someone else than God is not a Muslim. To hand over one’s affairs to God means to accept the guidance sent by God through his books as well as his messenger and to refrain from raising the slightest objections to it. Further it is essential to follow only Quran and Prophet’s Sunnah in every problem of life. Again only that person is a Muslim who puts back, his own wisdom, worldly customs, and everybody’s advice except that of God, and consults in every matter God and God’s book and the sayings of the Holy Prophet to know what he should do and should not do and accepts without demur whatever

guidance he gets from there and rejects whatever he finds opposed to it because he has wholly entrusted himself to God and this very act of total entrustment to God amounts to being a “Muslim”.

When one accepts subservience to someone and acknowledges him as the ruler, it means one has accepted his Deen. He becomes your ruler, you accept his demands, carry out his orders and regulations promulgated by him, abstain from what he forbids, work within limits which he prescribes for you. Deen of Islam is that where Allah alone is the Owner of the land and Sovereign of all human beings. Thus he alone must be obeyed and served and all affairs of man's life must be conducted according to His Shariah. This principle of Allah being the supreme authority specified by Islam has only one and no other aim that only Allah's writ must run in the world. Judgment in the courts must be delivered according to His Shariah, the police must maintain order according to his commandments, monetary transactions must be carried on in conformity with the laws of the Shariah, taxes must be levied as directed by him and must be utilized on heads as specified by Him, the Civil services and the army must work according to His commands while all energies, labour and efforts of the people must be utilized in His path. His Deen cannot accept partnership with any other Deen. There exists no other Deen and if there were any other Deen the Deen of Islam will not be there. (23) Others like Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani who in his *Composite Nationalism and Islam* argued opposing Jinnah's two nation theory that despite cultural, linguistic and religious differences, the people of India are but one nation, at the same time drew attention to the bond that binds Muslims together. 'All Muslims under the sky constitute a single body and it is incumbent upon one and all to liberate a victimized Muslim living in the farthest end of the globe...' (24)

Muslim scholars like Tibbi have pointed out these are value related conflicts (25). For Tibbi the conflict between *laicite* and *sharia* can only be resolved through 'Euro-Islam.' Tibi cautions Europe to understand the meaning and aim of 'jihad.' He argues that in Islam migration is a religious duty. It is not simply geographical relocation but relocation with a specific purpose of proselytization and creating *amsar* as *hijra* settlements. He further cautions that the goal of the Islamists is to replace the existing order based on secular foundations. Political Islam tries peacefully to do what jihadi terror aims at establish an Islamic state, a new world order. It is not only against the West but more fundamentally against the idea of the

West, Western values and the rational worldview underlying them. Given the Islamists agenda of peaceful systemic transplantation Tibi vociferously argues against multiculturalism which he believes is used by the Islamists as a transitory step on the road to Islamization. The multiculturalists' view of two different worlds expected to live peacefully side by side Tibi observes, is a deception. Europe he argues needs a 'double track strategy', dialogue with pro democracy Muslims who do not subscribe to jihadism and shariatization and security approach for dealing with Islamism and its jihadist branch.

In incidents like Rushdie's publication of the Satanic Verses, wearing hijab and more recently the Danish cartoons which have rocked Europe we witness two mutually uncomprehending systems collide time and again. Many leaders like Helmut Schmidt in Germany, Roy Jenkins in Britain have come to hold it was a mistake to have admitted Muslims in large numbers. Islam they argued was inherently undemocratic, which was why no Muslim country had thrown up a stable democracy and all resisted internal and external pressures to set up one. European Muslims could not therefore be counted to respect democratic institutions, there's was at most an instrumental loyalty to the state. Muslims privileged the *umma* over the nation state they were therefore far more interested in global Muslim causes than in their fellow citizens. Islam in their view was also profoundly illiberal and collectivist. It opposed freedom of expression, secularism, critical thought, personal autonomy and individual choice so central to liberal thinking. Even those Europeans who were sympathetic to Muslims thought they were too demanding. When request for halal meat was met they asked for time off for prayers in workplaces, then they asked for banning of blasphemous books, faith schools, recognition of polygyny, interest free loans, Islamic banks and insurance companies. In other words they wanted to live in Europe in their own terms. All this gradually reinforced the view that they were the 'enemy within' an unassimilable cultural presence which had to be contained and neutralized.(26)

Huntington's (27) view that we know who we are when we know who we are against – may be an over simplification but that does not rule out the fact that identity, even a liberal one would need to be accompanied by distinction between us and them. The 'other' in other words is important in defining who we are. More recently Cerutti has argued along similar lines that in the 'absence of the other identity vanishes into diffusiveness.' (28)

It cannot then accomplish the task of defining a political group, give them internal cohesion or make interaction and coexistence possible. Dialogue and negotiations between the majority and Muslim minorities are problematic also because in Europe's definition of the self, Islam and its practitioners are increasingly understood as the other.

Bernard Lewis in *The Muslim Discovery of Europe* dates the birth of Europe in the year 732, the day Charles Martel faced the Muslim armies in Poitiers. On that occasion Lewis holds the very idea of Europe as an entity which could be threatened or saved appeared for the first time. In 1943 Federico Chabod wrote '... European consciousness means differentiation of Europe, as a political and moral entity, from other entities ...the concept of Europe must be first formed as an antithesis to that which is not Europe ... the sense of an Europe opposed to Asia – opposed in habits and culture but mainly in political organization: Europe represents the spirit of 'freedom' against Oriental despotism.'⁽²⁹⁾ Recently in his *Clash of Civilizations*, Huntington confidently argues that "Europe ends where Western Christianity ends and Islam and Orthodoxy begin."

Religious divisions and wars shaped the cultures, institutions and maps of European states. The Reformation, Counterreformation, the Inquisition, the Treaty of Westphalia and the Holocaust are all defining moments in the history of Europe. John R. Brown argues that the idea of Europe as a cultural region rests on notions of its Christian roots. Dialogue between Europe with its Christian ethos and legacy of confrontation with Islam and the Muslim inhabitants who are followers of Islam thus creates complexities. (30)

Ahmed observes that survey polls in the 1990s indicated that in the West 'Islam' is seen as the next enemy after communism. (31) The Muslims on their part perceive the West as attempting to dominate and subvert Muslim societies through cultural and economic power. They therefore fall back on and reinforce their own identity. Until today Europe has kept alive its memories of its encounters through culture, literature and folklore. Countries on the rim of the Mediterranean once partly or fully ruled by the Muslims, like Spain, Italy, Greece celebrate their victory over the Muslims in annual festivals. Mortimer argues that Europe defines itself 'not perhaps of Christian belief but certainly of Christian heritage, and to emphasize as sharply as possible the distinction and the frontier between itself and

the world of Islam.’ He goes on to argue that if Europe is to function as a political entity while it is desirable to talk in terms of a common heritage and decide where Europe begins and ends, the price of that Christian heritage would be too high for it would make every Muslim resident feel at best a tolerated alien, every neighbouring Muslim states its enemy. A more constructive and harmonious way to define Europe then needs to be found. (32)

CONCLUSION

This broad overview indicates that the lived experience of the Muslims in European states is complex. Following 9/11 and subsequent terror attacks the need for dialogue gains greater urgency but it also shrinks the space for dialogue and negotiations. Attacks and criticism against multiculturalism which created grounds for greater recognition of the rights of cultural communities has intensified. The mounting thrust is now on, rising above particularities and nurturing commonality and integration. But can assimilation and integration be sharply distinguished? Integration is always integrating in to something. When communities which are unequal in terms of status and power face each other such integration is likely to disadvantage the minority community.

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