



IMMIGRATION PAPER SERIES **09**

RELIGION, MIGRATION, AND CONFUSION

WHY GERMANY AND THE UNITED STATES ARE SO DIFFERENT

MICHAEL WERZ, PH.D.

Senior Transatlantic Fellow

The German Marshall Fund of the United States

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STRENGTHENING TRANSATLANTIC COOPERATION

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The German Marshall Fund of the United States
1744 R Street, NW
Washington, DC 20009
T 1 202 683 2650
F 1 202 265 1662
E info@gmfus.org

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MARCH 2009

Michael Werz, Ph.D.*
Senior Transatlantic Fellow
The German Marshall Fund of the United States

*Michael Werz, Ph.D., is a senior transatlantic fellow with the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) and a research scholar at the Institute for the Study of International Migration in the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. He recently completed a project at GMF on how ethnic diversity positively impacts the U.S. Foreign Service and the development of American foreign policy. Mr. Werz has held appointments as a public policy scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, DC, and as a John F. Kennedy fellow at Harvard's Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies. He holds a Ph.D. in philosophy and a master's degree in philosophy, political science, and Latin American studies from Johann Wolfgang Goethe-University in Frankfurt am Main. While studying for his doctorate, he spent a year as a visiting scholar in the History Department at the University of California, Berkeley. Mr. Werz is widely published on the areas of race, ethnicity, and nationalism in Europe. His books include *Limits of Secularization* (in German, Frankfurt/M. 2000), *Changed Perceptions of the World* (co-editor, Frankfurt/M. 2005), *Philosophy and Empiricism* (co-editor, Frankfurt/M. 2001), *A Critique of Ethnic Nationalism* (co-editor, Frankfurt/M. 2000), *No Critical Theory Without America* (co-editor, Frankfurt/M. 1999), *Anti-Semitism and Society* (editor, Frankfurt/M. 1995), and *Bosnia and Europe* (co-editor, Frankfurt/M. 1994). Mr. Werz's current project, an intellectual history of race, ethnicity, and immigration in 20th century United States, will be published in late 2009.

Introduction

There are 12 million undocumented immigrants in the United States; some say the number is closer to 15 million. Periodically, academic and political debates grow testy and polarizing as they did in 2006. But even though the battle over comprehensive immigration reform in the United States (which included legal status and a path to citizenship for these millions) was fought tooth and nail, very few opponents of the reform proposal argued on grounds of cultural resentment. Rather, their counterarguments were mainly political and social in nature: Illegal immigrants break the law and should not be rewarded for their behavior, and they overburden emergency rooms and public schools.

Of course, there were some voices that framed the problem in terms of cultural incompatibility. Among them were well-known public figures such as Samuel Huntington, whose memorable essay in *Foreign Policy* began: “The persistent inflow of Hispanic immigrants threatens to divide the United States into two peoples, two cultures, and two languages. Unlike past immigrant groups, Mexicans and other Latinos have not assimilated into mainstream U.S. culture, forming instead their own political and linguistic enclaves—from Los Angeles to Miami—and rejecting the Anglo-Protestant values that built the American dream.” The essay proved how far removed from America’s reality the enclave of New England is, and it was so thoroughly criticized that it became a cipher for the old America and a bygone era of antipathy and fear.¹

¹ Samuel Huntington’s essay first appeared as “The Hispanic Challenge” in *Foreign Policy*, No. 141, March/April 2004, pp. 30–45. For a more realistic approach, see one of the best-argued essays, “Immigration Nation,” by Tamar Jacoby, in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 85, No. 6, November/December 2006, pp. 50–65.

During the late 1990s, an analogous debate gained traction on the European continent. In the Old World, one could witness the inception of a stunning dispute about European Muslims (mostly immigrants), one that revived a racializing arithmetic akin to the American Nativist movement of the 1920s. Newspapers, academic journals, and books were increasingly filled with assertions that the 11 or 12 million European Muslims, who constituted but 5 percent of the entire population, would, due to their high fertility rates, soon double in number. Major European cities were identified as particularly vulnerable places. Chief among them were Marseille and Rotterdam, each of which had a 25 percent Muslim population; Malmo, Brussels, and Copenhagen, with 15 to 20 percent; and London and Paris, with more than 10 percent. In addition, Europeans were reminded that Africa and the Middle East are home to 300 million Muslims under the age of 20. In an age of global terrorism, the perceived Muslim onslaught of the 21st century—like the yellow peril of the early 20th century—inspired an often heated and controversial debate as to how this minority could be dealt with.²

² For a systematic analysis of the heated debate about Muslims in Europe during the 1990s, see Nina Clara Tiesler, *Muslimen in Europa. Religion und Identitätspolitik unter veränderten gesellschaftlichen Verhältnissen*, Hamburg, Berlin, London 2006; for case studies in France and Great Britain, see Olivier Roy, *Vers un Islam européen*, Paris 1999.

Religion is often practiced as individual folklore in appreciation of the multi-polar character of American society and its indefeasible tolerance imperatives. This specific and distinct form of pluralistic faith is reflected in the relationship between religion and immigration.

Who are We?

It is interesting to observe that in the United States, the debate on immigration and minorities was mostly along the lines of political principles and the rule of law. By contrast, in Germany (and other European countries) the question was framed more often as one of Huntingtonian detachment: *They* do not belong, but in case they stay, how can we make sure *they* assimilate? It is obvious that the difference between the German and American ways of debating these issues has to do with history. However, the reasons reach beyond the widespread notion that one country is a nation of immigrants and the other is a very recent democracy. These matters do partly account for discrepancies highlighted in public and academic discussions, but some reasons originate further back into the fabric of society than is commonly assumed—they also have to do with notions of continuity and homogeneity, both real and imagined.

In the United States, religious pluralism and the genius of the First Amendment have not only converted religious affiliations into independent and competing entities, but also they have dissolved the tie between church and state—with the result that religion has been de-territorialized. In Europe, the legacy of the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 engraved the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* (“whose region, his religion”) into European societies. The notion of territory, power, and religion as critical components to the formation of nation-states held supreme. It is important not to underestimate this distinction, because European secularization and American freedom of religion established very different mechanisms for dealing with diversity and minorities, religious or otherwise.

The First Amendment not only deprived the U.S. Congress of the authority to promulgate laws pertaining to religion, but also, at the same time, transformed the latter into a private and

competitive enterprise. Historian Dan Diner described this process of religious secularization as coinciding with the “transformation of pre-modern and material, traditionally-composed religions into creeds that are too internalized as well as removed from all publicness and politics, i.e. a downright privatization of belief.”³ On this basis a secular peace and the American legal system could be founded. This mechanism has been an important *passé-partout* for minority integration, American-style, throughout the past two centuries. In addition, American immigrants brought a very peculiar religious denominationalism with them, establishing something entirely new in world history via widely distributed, voluntary congregational associations that have competed with one another ever since. Religion is often practiced as individual folklore in appreciation of the multi-polar character of American society and its indefeasible tolerance imperatives. This specific and distinct form of pluralistic faith is reflected in the relationship between religion and immigration. It has created opportunities for immigrants to step outside their respective affiliations. This system constitutes the emancipatory side of the American immigration story, for liberation from history is also an individual experience. Many who have come to the New World have had, for the first time, the opportunity to participate in society and free themselves from regional bonds. Americanism as an “act of choice” is not just an ideal, but a biographical experience as well. As particularities of origin and private religion have been neutralized, a secular society has emerged in which the pursuit of happiness also encompasses being able to live a life of difference without fear. In this sense,

³ For Dan Diner’s dialectical notion of religious secularization, see his essay “Neutralisierung und Tolerierung von Differenz,” in Herfried Münkler (ed.), *Der demokratische Nationalstaat in den Zeiten der Globalisierung*, Academia Verlag Berlin 2002, p. 43. The distinct form of pluralistic faith that exists in America is reflected by Peggy Levitt in *God Needs No Passport: Immigrants and the Changing American Religious Landscape*, New York: The New Press, 2007.

Americanization represents the antithesis of the principle of origin. This does not imply the absence of xenophobia, resentment, and conformist pressures. But in American society these tensions are being negotiated every single day, and lesions in its universalist principles are a constant reminder of what the Civil Rights Movement leader Martin Luther King so forcefully stated: that no man is free as long as even one man is not.

Precedents: The Politicization of Religious Beliefs

Europe's 20th-century experience was quite different. The politicization of religious beliefs in the realm of national and ethnic belonging contributed to the rise of ethno-national ideologies as means of collective organization, often in its most intolerant forms of exclusion and persecution. This development initially peaked during the 1912–13 Balkan Wars, which were fought between Christian nations and the Ottoman Empire. The struggle for control over Macedonia led to the first modern example of ethnic cleansing, which, in this case, meant the brutal expulsions of Muslim populations. It was a conflict that included demographic warfare, which obliterated the distinction between foreign and domestic enemies. The legacies of religious and ethnic struggle were not discredited even after the terrifying experiences of the Great War. During the 1919 Peace Conferences, when states were founded and reshaped, social questions were often discussed in national and religious terms.⁴

It is this large-scale conversion of social and political issues into ethno-national and religious essentialism that runs contrary to the United States' anticolonial and pluralistic institutions, the

content of its founding documents, as well as the anti-aristocratic traditions that continue to exist in North America today. The differences have been noted time and again throughout the last two centuries by many observers. "In America, the most free and enlightened people in the world zealously perform all the external duties of religion," Alexis de Tocqueville famously wrote in 1853. "The religious atmosphere of the country was the first thing that struck me on arrival in the United States. ... In France, I had seen the spirits of religion and of freedom almost always marching in opposite directions. In America, I found them intimately linked together in joint reign over the same land."⁵

European peace was achieved upon the neutralization of denominational differences—in other words, through social standardization, and in contrast to the interventionist partiality of the great nation America. While European history conveys ethno-religious ballast, American history does not defer utopia to the future, but rather views the present as a resource of unutilized possibilities for continued perfection. This political heritage is very much alive, and when Barack Obama delivered his iconic speech on race relations, referring to the Constitution's calling to "form a more perfect union," his universalist pledge did not pass unheard. The notion that "[Americans] may not look the same and we may not have come from the same place, but we all want to move in the same direction" touched upon contemporary experiences shared by many. Within two months, his speech was downloaded more than 4.5 million times on YouTube, and a Gallup poll revealed that more than 85 percent of all Americans had heard about his speech. These historically impregnated mechanisms are at the core of the different traditions in the United States and Europe with regard to minorities

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⁴ On the Balkan Wars in 1912–1913, as well as the modern practice of ethnic cleansing, see the second chapter of Dan Diner's book *Cataclysms: A History of the Twentieth Century from Europe's Edge*, Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2008.

⁵ Alexis de Tocqueville's insights into American faith and progress are documented in *Democracy in America*, Perennial, New York 2000, p. 295.

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and immigration, and they continue to impact policies as well as attitudes.

New Circles of Belonging

The current migration debate in Europe is complicated by an increased need for self-definition amid newly established circles of belonging brought about by the rapid enlargement and deepening of the European Union since 1990. During the previous 40 years, the European Union had been mostly an economic entity with little or no democratic legitimacy to threaten traditional national self-perceptions. Another factor is often underestimated: In recent decades, European immigrants and Islamic people were perceived as being almost synonymous. These coinciding developments contributed to a political situation in the early 1990s in which modern society's most basic questions, as reactions to the implosion of Eastern Europe, emerged with unexpected vigor: Who are we? Where do we come from? Who is guilty?

The first two questions were often answered in loaded terms of ethno-national self-assurance, the latter frequently with reference to Muslim immigrants who were perceived as growing more religious and thus increasingly incompatible with European society. This alteration of self-perception is independent of specific groups; Muslims just happened to be readily available, and therefore religion became a vehicle for establishing new mode of identification and aversion.⁶

This set of dynamics also builds upon Europe's belated discovery of immigrants in the early 1980s. After the oil crisis in 1973, most European governments stopped recruiting so-called guest workers, but allowed for family reunification.

⁶ The primordial questions "Who are we? Where do we come from? Who is guilty?" are taken from Detlev Claussen's paradigmatic essay "Jargon der Einheit," *Aspekte der Alltagsreligion*, Frankfurt/Main 2002, p. 181.

Many Turkish labor migrants then brought their relatives to settle in France, Sweden, and Germany. This meant that long traditions of temporary labor migration evolved into the establishment of permanent immigrant populations, and cultural institutionalization of these population groups in the new homelands finally took place. Nevertheless, many European host societies remained in denial for another decade, pretending that they were not countries of immigration. The question, if addressed at all, was broadly framed in terms of social and economic competition during the 1980s, but after the end of the Cold War, a sea change in public discourse occurred.⁷

The Sudden Appearance of European Islam

During the 1990s, two events altered the parameters of debate in Europe: Some children of first generation immigrants made their way into universities and acquired the intellectual and economic capabilities to produce, absorb, and promote ideas of European Islam; secondly, the end of the Cold War sent shock waves throughout the region, affecting Western societies as much as Eastern neighbors, albeit less visibly so. A surprisingly prominent discourse about the supposed Christian roots of European society was inspired at a time of reorientation when an ever-growing political union, lacking the systemic enemy of communism, overwhelmed the senses and familiar life experiences of many people on both sides of the former Iron Curtain. One must not forget that long-term national identifications have been crucial to the continent's social and political formation for more than two centuries. The fact that in the early 1990s, 12 to 15 million Muslims suddenly appeared in the public sphere is quite telling. Changed awareness and the reformulation of political matters within cultural and religious terms are more indicative of the majority

⁷ With regard to Germany's denial of becoming a country of immigrants, see Rita K. Chin's essay "Imagining a German Multiculturalism," *Radical History Review*, Issue 83, Spring 2002, pp. 44–72.

society's perception vis-à-vis minorities than of the reality that immigration and the minorities themselves represent. The debate about cultural incompatibility among long-standing immigrant communities, in addition to the conflict about Turkey's EU membership, served as useful tools for creating the impression that there was still homogeneity in Europe.

It is an irony of history that both majorities and minorities seemed to react in very similar ways to the political and cultural challenges of the post-Cold War era. Defining Western societies after the end of state socialism and grasping the meaning of an ever-expanding European Union were daunting, and anxiety about those challenges helped to solidify ethno-national escape routes and antipluralist views. The perceived dissolution of the homogenizing standards of modern nation-states, along with the weakening of normative assumptions about belonging, was especially damaging in debates on minorities and integration. The need for orientation demanded a new subjective grounding and individualism in modern mass society, a society that was disorienting for many and lacked the meaning and stability that had been provided by Cold War ideologies. The same tendencies could be observed among members of minority communities. Since they were by definition, and often in practice, excluded from majority society, their best option was to redefine belonging and meaning in "their own" cultural terms—often connecting to presumably old Islamic customs that in truth never existed. The root cause was the same for both: Newly invented ethnic, national, and religious traditions were used to provide answers to pressing contemporary questions: Who are we? Where do we come from? Who is guilty?

Journalists and scholars only rarely set a different tone. A vast amount of literature appeared, impregnated with culturalizing views that helped establish an academic discourse about the alleged

resurgence of Islam in Europe, despite the realities in towns and cities with assimilated minorities who were often as unexciting as their French, German, and Danish neighbors. The presence of Islam in the West became an issue mainly because of intensified attribution from the outside, since most migrants to Europe did not emigrate to settle as Muslims or religious refugees. Furthermore, labor migration itself is an indicator of increased secularization, documenting an emancipation from traditional mores and customs. Exclusively religious ascriptions of European Muslims and one-dimensional notions of Islamicization tend to produce a dual fallacy: continuity and homogeneity. Both are misleading.

Suggestions of Homogeneity

The silent homogenization of an extremely diverse community that can neither communicate within itself nor has common interests occurs constantly. But what are the connections among a Kurdish Swede, a Kosovar Italian, and a Moroccan in Spain? How can they be members of a single sociological group in any meaningful sense? Furthermore, each so-called Muslim community is internally diverse, and the migratory environment constantly creates new constellations. As has been argued recently: In London, Tamils meet Kashmiris; in Finland, Somalis meet Tartars; and in Lisbon, Bangladeshis from Saudi Arabia meet Indians from Mozambique or Mandinga from Guinea Bissau. In Berlin, followers of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad meet Alevi and secularized Iranians; and in Amsterdam, Ishmaelites from Surinam meet Sunni from Morocco.⁸ Not only does this reality undermine any notion of homogeneous cultural groups, but it also highlights the establishment of Muslim communities of an entirely new kind.

⁸ The argument for the diversity of European Muslims has been developed systematically by Nina Clara Tiesler, "Muslim Transnationalism and Diaspora in Europe," in Eliezer Ben-Rafael & Yitzhak Sternberg (eds.), *Transnationalism*, Leiden 2008.

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Other significant analytical distinctions are often ignored. It is vital to take into account whether immigrant groups stem from educated middle classes or whether such groups do not emanate from members with interpretative skills and access to higher education. Another essential question is the existence of a colonial past, or the relationship between or within the sending and receiving societies. For example, Germany is a different case from that of Portugal; and the British Commonwealth established a singular kind of empire, which is not to be compared with Belgian or French practices. Lastly, it makes a great difference whether immigrants come from Muslim-majority societies or were minorities in their countries of origin.

Then there is the suggestion of continuity, of immigrants transporting and preserving national and cultural traditions over land, sea, and generations. The case of Turkish migration to Germany is particularly instructive and further complicates the matter. Turkish labor migrants were contracted after the 1961 Labor Force Law was enacted. The first 93 Turks arrived in Germany and were followed by roughly 710,000 others until recruitment officially stopped in 1973. The workers who came were in their 30s and 40s, and many were peasants. They grew up in a fiercely secular Turkey, in the aftermath of one of the most radical and recent modernization processes, implemented by the new republic's constitution in 1924. It included the initiation of the Gregorian calendar, the abolition of religious courts and schools, and the introduction of a secular system of family law. Most notable was the substitution of the Arabic alphabet, basically outlawing the language and scriptures of religiosity. All these reforms were implemented at a time when many other parts of Europe were busy undermining their democratic traditions. Paris was the blueprint for modern Turkish cities at that time, further proof of how deeply connected the new state was to enlightened, cosmopolitan, and

Western traditions. Kemalism, with all its archaic and authoritarian downsides, was a form of secular nation building, a way of modernizing the former multi-religious empire in which differences in creed and culture had to be neutralized.⁹

The political pragmatism of today's ruling AK Party is a result of this history; it has been noted that on the European continent, Christian Democratic parties, which were initially opposed to liberal democracy, started participating in politics and were only then de-radicalized. As argued by Stathis Kalyvas, these parties played an integral role in establishing democratic regimes, which were "often expanded and consolidated by its enemies. This lesson should not be lost, especially among those studying the challenges facing democratic transition and consolidation in the contemporary world."¹⁰ After Turkey's military coup d'état in 1980 and with the growing number of asylum-seekers arriving in Germany, a diverse group of scholars, writers, journalists, and political activists joined the older migrants from a mostly agricultural working class. If there was any continuity, Turkish migrants in Germany considered themselves primarily a community based on nationality, not religion. How they were perceived by others was different, though. When the German government changed in 1983, a Return Promotion Law was passed quickly, promising DM 5,000 for each adult willing to return to his or her country of origin. Parliament was still not ready to accept the realities, and the measure proved utterly unsuccessful. But it sent the

⁹ With regard to the secularization of Turkey, see Jacob M. Landau (ed.), *Atatürk and the Modernization of Turkey*, Boulder and Leiden 2003; as well as Suna Kili, *Turkish Constitutional Developments and Assembly Debates on the Constitutions of 1924 and 1961*, Istanbul 1971, and *The Atatürk Revolution: A Paradigm of Modernization*, Istanbul 2003, by the same author.

¹⁰ The de-radicalization of Christian parties in postwar Europe is described in detail by Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 1996. Quote is taken from page 264.

clear message that labor migrants and their families were not meant to stay.

After 1990: The Need for Continuity

The difficulties only intensified when, after 1989, Turkish migrants found themselves in competition with so-called Russian Germans who emigrated from Eastern Europe and immediately received citizenship based upon German ancestry, although almost none spoke the language anymore. Their arrival helped to revive conservative ideologies about origin in German society at large. These developments hardened a mutual misperception, which drew borders between members of the same community, that migrants were temporary guests and not members of the body politic. The obstinacy of this sustained delusion can only be understood within the singular context of German pre- and postwar history as well as Turkish modernization. With regard to Germany, the main predicaments have to do with the same notions that commonly are ascribed to Turkish immigrants: continuity and homogeneity.

There had been numerous experiences with foreign workforces in 20th-century Germany, but none of the foreign workforces them was ever acknowledged as permanent. The Polish workers who migrated before World War I were not recognized and arrived in an era of imperial gains that sharpened German nationalistic self-perception during the war and then again in the 1920s. During the Nazi era, the so called alien workers from Eastern Europe were ruthlessly exploited and served as an integral part of an ideological project based upon notions of racial superiority. In the immediate postwar period, displaced refugees from the eastern part of former Germany came in great numbers and temporarily constituted enough labor to fill economic needs. This era was described by historian Ulrich Herbert as an “interposed chapter” wedged between the deployment of “alien workers

under National Socialism and the resumption of massive employment of foreign labor in the Federal Republic.” It would be too simplistic to draw a direct line between forced labor in the Nazi period and labor migration in the 1960s, but it is true that ideological remnants survived and contributed to the guest-worker programs of the newly founded Bundesrepublik.

Herbert points out the astonishing fact that the alien worker traditions of the Nazi era were never part of the broad public discourse on “mastering the past” that was initiated in Germany during the 1970s and 1980s and has since become an integral part of German political self-perception. However, the unmediated notion of a foreign labor force that is alien, can (and shall) not be integrated, and will return home (or disappear) was prevalent into the years after the failed return promotion program of the early 1980s, which accomplished little but to solidify the distorted picture of migration as a transitory phenomenon. Once it became clear that the migrants were in Germany to stay—less than a third even considered returning—and especially when naturalization numbers skyrocketed to 140,000 and then reached 180,000 after a new citizenship law was passed in 1999, perceptions did finally change.¹¹

Religion as Joker in Public Discourse

There were three triggers and an amplifier to the perceptual shift on the part of German majority society that transformed Turkish labor migrants into Muslims: The groundwork was laid by the historical context of forced labor, the impact of German unification and European enlargement challenging traditional orientations, and the long-denied fact that Germany indeed was a

¹¹ The history of foreign labor in Germany is documented in Ulrich Herbert's path-breaking book *A History of Foreign Labor in Germany, 1880–1990*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990. Quotes are taken from pages 120 and 201.

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country of immigration. The attacks of 9/11 and the ensuing securitization of immigration debates amplified the problem and provided a semblance of legitimacy for the claims that migrations pose risks. In an age of increasing discontinuity and diversity, the Muslimization of immigrants was an awkward attempt to establish the illusion of homogeneity and continuity for Germans. A vigorous public debate ensued in which it was often suggested that immigrants were not entitled to be seen as members of communities in their own right (as religious or sub-cultural groups), and the euphemistic notion of a parallel society became extremely popular, insinuating that there was an inside and an outside to German society.¹²

Complicating matters further is the fact that this surge in cultural and religious reformulation of political conflicts was neither unique nor limited to Germany or Europe. The mid-1980s indeed were a turning point, with the Iranian revolt of 1979 serving as an omen of what was to come. That event brought with it a swell of Islamic self-perception, a marker of global changes that were only barely visible on the horizon. The turning point was the iconic year of 1989, which brought the end of the Cold War, the Salman Rushdie affair, Khomeini's Fatwa, and the first veil conflicts in France—all exemplifying new

¹² The conversion of labor migrants into Muslims has been documented in a number of European countries. See, for example, Eva-Maria von Kemnitz, "Muslims as Seen by the Portuguese Press 1974–1999: Changes in the Perception of Islam," in W.A.R. Shadid & Van Koningsveld (eds.), *Religious Freedom and the Neutrality of the State. The Position of Islam in the European Union*, Leuven 2002, pp. 7–26. Other aspects of these developments are discussed in Bobby Salman Sayyid, *A Fundamental Fear. Eurocentrism and the Emergence of Islamism*, London 1997; by Steven Vertovec and Rogers Alisdair (eds.), *Muslim European Youth: Reproducing Ethnicity, Religion, Culture*, Aldershot, Ashgate 1998; and Nina Clara Tiesler, "No Bad News from the European Margin," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, Vol. 12, No. 1, January, 2001, pp. 71–91. For the invention of Muslim traditions see Olivier Roy, "Muslims in Europe: From Ethnic Identity to Religious Recasting?" in *ISIM Newsletter*, No. 5, Leiden, June 2000, pp. 1; 29.

cultural front lines in politics. The surge in ethnic and religious self-perception was global, from the Falun Gong in China, to Hindu nationalism, Protestant fundamentalism in the American Bible Belt, Le Pen's ethnic nationalism in France, and the activities of the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria, all the way to the racist Lega Nord or the movement Comunione Liberazione in Italy. However, it would be misleading to interpret these parallels and simultaneities as having one teleological prime cause that is rooted in the most ancient of all differences: religion. Quite to the contrary, the reformulation of political confrontations and conflicts in religious terms is not only closely related to the specific contexts of the respective societies, but also could not be a more modern and contemporary phenomenon. Still, the visible changes were easily misinterpreted.

Religion, Migration, and Confusion

The countercurrent to the attempted establishment of homogeneity and continuity in times of turmoil at the expense of immigrants did not take long to develop. Islamist organizations increasingly began serving as placeholders for empowerment and self-determination since most other venues were blocked. It looked as if Islam was expanding: Ali Kettani documents that, in 1962, approximately 32 mosques existed in Europe, and by 1992, the number had risen to several thousand—after a lengthy incubation period, the abrupt rise started in the mid-1980s.¹³ But contemporary research by younger scholars proves that local Muslim associations allow for individualized notions of religiousness and also for heterogeneity

¹³ The turning point in politicizing Islam is best described by Gilles Kepel in *The War for Muslim Minds: Islam and the West*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2004. On the increased visibility of Islam in Western Europe, see Ali M. Kettani, "Challenges to the Organization of Muslim Communities in Western Europe. The Political Dimension," in W.A.R. Shadid & P.S. van Koningsveld, (eds.), *Political Participation and Identities of Muslims in Non-Muslim States*, Kampen 1996, pp. 14–35.

within Western Islam: patterns of nontraditional religiousness are being established that deviate from previous forms of Muslim creed. These developments are often falsely pointed to as proof that immigrants have consciously chosen their own, culturally distinct paths and muster no interest in integrating into German society.¹⁴

It is this environment of religion, migration, and confusion that leads the German integration and minority debates into one dead end after another. The problem is more often than not framed in culturalizing terms, the German-Islam Conference recently installed by the federal government being a prime example. The conference is meant to develop solutions for the integration stalemate. Contrary to the recommendations of the International Crisis Group's task force on migration, religious representation competes with and takes the place of political representation. Since the vast majority of immigrants of Turkish background in Germany are secular, the government's Islam conference finds itself in danger of being overloaded with tasks for which the members have no democratic legitimacy. On the other hand it is a first step, adding an interesting layer to German politics by broadening the debate.¹⁵

This would allow to see more clearly, that these institutions and social networks of Western Islam show remarkable parallels with Protestant communities in early industrial England, as well as American cities in the 19th century. They are pivots of self-organization, which will ultimately

lead their members toward the center of society, much as Irish or Polish parochial associations did in the United States a century ago. The advantage for American immigrants was that they did not have to fight with the assumptions of primordial traditions and dominant cultures. America was a limitless society and in motion well into the 20th century, a "young country with old memories," as Horace Kallen once put it. He made another important point about immigrants when he wrote, "They fared abroad, perhaps, not only because the land and its promise lured them, but because *they would not live at home*. ... Even if America were all one prairie, swept by a universal tornado, it is not the prairie which compels uniformities, nor the tornado that fixes the grammar of assent in which is parsed the modern American mind."¹⁶

Germany and much of Europe still need to develop such a "grammar of assent" in public discourse. The region also needs immigrants, not only because of its dismal fertility rates and the foreseeable lack of skilled labor in the future; it needs immigration in an even more essential sense. Only when religious and ethnic diversity have been embraced will Germany and Europe be capable of fulfilling their pluralist promise. Hence, Western Islam might provide an opportunity for Europe to ultimately come to terms with its past and establish substantial religious pluralism for the first time.

An earlier version of this paper was published in the Bulletin of the International Sociological Association edited by Vineeta Sinha of the National University of Singapore, in July 2008.

¹⁴ For the assimilatory capacities of Islamist organizations, see Grit Klinkhammer, *Moderne Formen islamischer Lebensführung*, Marburg 2000; and for a review of the situation in Germany and France, see Nikola Tietze, *Islamische Identitäten. Formen muslimischer Religiosität junger Männer in Deutschland und Frankreich*, Hamburg 2001.

¹⁵ The recommendations of the *International Crisis Group's* task force on migration are published as *Islam and Identity in Germany*, Europe Report No. 181, Brussels, 14 March 2007.

¹⁶ Horace Kallen, "The Life of Reason," *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 18, No. 20, September 29, 1921, pages 538 and 540.

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