

Europe's Current Debate on Multiculturalism¹

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»Is the secular German Constitution the undisputable basis for you and your organisation?«

»Yes, as long as Muslims are a minority.«

Nadeem Elyas, Chairman of the Central Council of Muslims in Germany²

The emergence of an open debate

In the spring of 2004 Trevor Phillips, the chairman of the UK government's Commission for Racial Equality surprised everyone with a series of articles and interviews in which he declared the failure of the multicultural model of society. He called for more cultural integration of ethnic minorities and sparked a debate on just how much ethnic and religious diversity a cohesive society could sustain.³ This was a brave thing to do in a country where multiculturalism, i.e. the active preservation of distinct cultural group identities had been official policy of successive govern-

1 This article emerged from a paper presented to the »Europe Mission Forum« (Europe Desk officers of British and Irish churches and mission agencies) of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) on 20 April 2005, London. I shall use the term »pluri-cultural(ism)« in a descriptive sense, i.e. denoting the co-existence of ethnic and religious groups within European nation states. »Multiculturalism« by contrast is a prescriptive or normative term denoting a political programme which strives to organise the pluri-cultural reality in a way that ensures the continued long-term preservation of cultural distinctiveness and parallel existence of different ethnic and religious groups with distinct ethical value systems, at least some of which can be mutually exclusive. In its purest form of maximised non-integrated distinctiveness this »hard« multiculturalism is also known as »ethno-corporatism«. The paper was written before the terrorist attacks by British-born Muslims in London (July 2005), the French Arab riots (December 2005) and the violent protests triggered by immigrant Danish Islamists with the help of Mohammed cartoons in February 2006. Evidently all these can be seen to further illustrate the rising communalist tensions mentioned here.

2 In a public debate on the *Katholikentag* 2001. On another occasion *Elyas* explains: »The obligation to build an Islamic state is a consensus in the Islamic community in Germany.« (*Die Welt*, 28 February 2002).

3 The debate is documented on www.cre.gov.uk.

ments since the 1960s and had over the years acquired the status of unquestionable dogma (although it was never endorsed by a majority of the population). Occasional attempts to challenge the wisdom of dealing with ethnic diversity by denouncing ›assimilation‹ and ›integration‹ as some kind of ›cultural expropriation‹ or worse had routinely been met with accusations of ›racism‹. What saved Phillips from this and similarly vicious forms of attack in this debate was his prominent position in the British race relations industry, the fact that he is Black and his own liberal record on race issues. Ironically only a few months earlier he had himself led a campaign against a sociological article by David Goodhart which had raised very similar questions regarding the multicultural concept as he now did himself.⁴

At least for a while it seemed that even in the UK an open debate might ensue where previously it was virtually impossible. But after a short flurry of interest, the discussion was again aborted. At the same time on the European continent the signs of a changing climate had been on the wall for a while. Two events illustrate the change. While isolated incidents in themselves they have become symbolical of a bigger picture of the failure to form coherent pluri-cultural societies.

1 Symbolical moments

France

In July 1998 France was swept away by a wave of enthusiasm that some compared to the *libération* in May 1945. France had just won the football World Cup and the whole country seemed to be dancing and partying in the streets. *L'équipe tricolore* was quickly redefined as ›black-blanc-beur‹ (black, white, Arab) and the multiculturalist liberal left had a field day, especially as before the tournament Le Pen's *Front National* had predicted that such a multi-racial un-French team would not stand a chance. Football came to both theoretically symbolize and practically further the emergence of a unified multi-racial France.

6 October 2001, Stade de France in Paris. France play Algeria in a friendly, the first game since the Algerian war of independence, widely propagated as a symbol of reconciliation between the two countries. In front of the nation's TV cameras tens of thousands of French Arab spectators, youths of the *banlieues* drown out the Marseil-

4 Goodhart argued that solidarity and our willingness to support social security systems for the needy relied on minimum assumptions that they are ›like us‹ in some fundamental respects, a condition not fulfilled in extremely multi-culturalist societies. Phillips attacked Goodhart's article using the traditional arsenal of blame: ›racism‹ and ›xenophobia‹, comparing him to Enoch Powell (a conservative Member of Parliament and symbol for ›racist Britain‹ in the 1960s) and to the leader of the neo-Nazi British National Party.

laisé with whistles. The Prime Minister and two other state officials, about to give an address meet with obscene abuse and are hit by showers of rotten food. Football comes to unmask the disintegration of French society along ethnic and religious lines – a rude awakening for some, an expected confirmation of an unpleasant truth for others.⁵

Netherlands

On 2 November 2004 the film maker Theo van Gogh is murdered by a Dutch-Moroccan Muslim who even before had been in the eye of the secret police for suspected terrorist connections. Van Gogh had not long before published the short film ›Submission‹ together with the Muslim MP Ayaan Hirsi Ali. For her stance against Islamic intolerance the MP had lived with constant death threats even before this time. The film denounced intolerance in Islam in van Gogh's typically provocative way, featuring four Muslim women, some of them mutilated, all covered with misogynistic *Quran* verses calligraphed on their nude torsos under thin veils. Van Gogh already had a reputation as a maverick *provocateur*. He liked to challenge the mainstream all-to-cosy illusion of tolerant multicultural Holland where anything beyond minimalist legal expectations from illiberal and violent immigrant communities was regarded as intolerance.

The link to the last political murder in the Netherlands, two years earlier, was quickly made. But by comparison the murder of party leader Pim Fortuyn had been accepted in composed shock. At that time the two most common mechanisms of reaction still worked.

- a) The mechanism of the isolated deranged culprit, not indicative of any wider trend veiled the obvious: that a politician had lost his life for having spoken about the unspeakable, the illiberal and intolerant consequences of the multicultural reality.
- b) And the mechanism of vilification of the victim: Fortuyn had wanted to restrict the unchecked influx of Muslim immigrants and suggested imposing more demands for active support of the liberal Dutch traditions on resident Muslims. He claimed that the liberal open society was under threat from the intolerance of many of those it tolerated. His openly debating immigration, on which his views

5 One may claim that sport is too trivial to carry such weight in socio-political reasoning. In 2003 *Norman Tebbit* famously declared that ethnic minorities could only be regarded as fully integrated when third-generation West Indians and Asians started supporting the English rather than some other national cricket team. This ›cricket-test‹ was widely vilified as racist. But does not this criticism underestimate the importance of sport as a social catalyst? It seems to me that large sporting events can indeed be seen as prime examples for manifesting otherwise invisible ›latent social belongings‹ as defined by *R. Balls*, *T. Parsons* and *R. K. Merton*.

coincided with that of a majority of the population, was enough to brand him a right-wing extremist. After his death tagging him as a xenophobe still worked to silence most of the debate and the official propagation of tolerance equalling multiculturalism could regain centre-stage.

After van Gogh's death things did not go so smoothly. Street interviews conducted with Turkish and Moroccan youths in Cologne and in Amsterdam immediately indicated a minoritarian but substantial level of support for the attack. ›If you insult Islam, you have to pay‹ was the tenor, discrediting potential for the customary claims of a mentally disturbed isolated individual. Within a few weeks the Netherlands erupted into popular unrest. Occasionally even mosques and churches, cemeteries and faith schools were attacked. So quiet is Dutch life normally that soon some warned of ›civil war‹. Still, very few attacks on individual Muslims were reported and compared to British race-riots or the everyday violence in French *banlieues* it all seemed relatively small-scale.

These scenes symbolize a much wider development, viz the increase of communalist tensions in Europe's pluri-cultural societies. While relations with other ethnic minorities are often not uncomplicated either, it seems integration failed most dramatically with Muslims, i.e. those groups where the divide is religious as well as ethnic. Other countries hardly fare better in terms of their integration success. In 2002 Germany was shocked by the findings of a comparative international OECD study on the quality of schools – with Germany ranking far down the list. Quickly anecdotal evidence from teachers indicated one main root cause was pluri-cultural reality. It took however several months before official reports publicly acknowledged what anybody with the courage to open their eyes already knew. The poor average performance is to a considerable part due to pupils of immigrant background, who were massively under-performing due to their poor proficiency in German.⁶ By no stretch of the imagination could the widespread lack of language skills among second and third generation immigrants be reconciled with the notion of a successfully integrated society. The withdrawal of immigrant communities into voluntary ghettos has encouraged a rejection of the host society, its culture and language and hence a failure to succeed in it. Complemented by a victim-mentality (›it's all down to discrimination‹) it became clear that there was no quick fix to the problems.

6 One third of all primary school pupils have an immigrant background. There are now schools without a single native German speaker – reinforcing trends for the remaining pupils to further segregate along ethnic-linguistic lines. One basic remedy (imposed use of German) is obvious, but even where pupils and parents agree voluntarily to exclusively use German on school premises, such efforts meet with accusations of ›cultural imperialism‹ from leftwing parties and anti-racism activists.

2 A discussion stifled

Interestingly the Netherlands and France stand almost paradigmatically for two contradictory approaches to the pluri-cultural challenge, of which the Dutch model of almost pure multiculturalism much resembles the British. In Britain with our official celebrations of post-war immigration and ethnic diversity there is a widespread self-congratulatory mood regarding the entire subject. We usually pride ourselves on the most successful integration model and greatest degree of tolerance. In particular we tend to look down on the perceived failure of French ›assimilationist Jacobinism‹ (cf. for instance the smug British reactions to the French head scarf debate). Few outside observers agree.

»It is equally obvious as worrying that both republican-integrationist as well as cultural-assimilationist models of integration lost their effectiveness. Neither the individualistically inspired French Republican ideal of equality nor the politics of Germanization founded on the social security state, nor the American melting pot ideal, nor the furtherance of multi-cultural diversity in Britain were able to counteract an abrupt and militant nativist reaction. It seems that all the instruments which liberal democracies are willing to take against an ›ethnic stratification of social conflicts‹ or against the ethnocentric-political twist coming into cultural differences have gone blunt.«⁷

Indeed UK social indicators hardly support the claim of greater success. Large-scale race riots, near-monolingual ethnic ghettos, widespread economic and educational failure, disproportionate ethnic minority unemployment and delinquency rates etc. speak a clear language. A *real* difference to some continental countries seems to be a stronger official *laissez-faire* attitude, passed off as ›tolerance‹ which for decades led to a virtual absence of any meaningful debate of problematic developments, such as the self-ghettoisation of immigrants.

Ever since multiculturalism became official government policy in the 1960s most open debate on its success or lack thereof was stifled with the accusation of ›racism‹ or ›xenophobia‹, thrown at even the most cautious calls to actively encourage ethnic minorities to integrate and adapt. From the outside the approach always looked less impressive than we led ourselves to believe. The visible communalist fragmentation betrays a reality far removed from the picture in self-satisfied media and government statements. One price paid was that even before 11 September 2001 London was regarded as a safe haven for terrorists and as the West's capital of violent Islam.⁸

7 *Leggewie*, *Ethnische Spaltungen in demokratischen Gesellschaften*, zit. nach: *Heitmeyer*, *Konfliktdynamiken*, 41f.

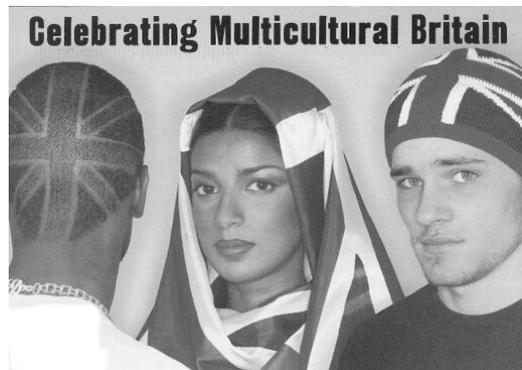
8 Cf. *Albrecht Metzger*, *London, ein Zentrum des weltweiten Heiligen Krieges?* in: *der überblick* 2/2001.

»The ghettoization of immigrant youth in France is the consequence of negligence. It has been as bad as the ghettoisation through political correctness of Muslims in Britain and the Netherlands, where many people who thought of themselves as enlightened said that assimilation efforts were acts of cultural aggression.«⁹

Van Gogh's death woke the Netherlands from her cosy self-satisfied slumber. No one could shut their eyes to the fact that the murder showed that freedom of opinion and expression were under threat. And from the Netherlands the avoided discussion spread through Western Europe. Could it be that what had been known as ›tolerance‹ was in fact only a euphemism for a mentality of looking-the-other-way? Did this patience with The Other prepare the ground on which the current sump of Muslim violence, disaffection and hatred flourished? Should a tolerant society really accept not just prostitution, euthanasia, abortion and gay marriage but also violent radical Islam which despises this very tolerance that allows it space to develop and is unable to oppose it?

To this day in the Netherlands nobody seems to have a vision of where to go now. Some measures are promised (limiting immigration, limiting the import of spouses, courses in cultural integration etc.) but nobody believes they will achieve much. A few days after the murder the Jewish mayor of Amsterdam, Job Cohen summed up his helplessness: »We'll have to try and somehow hold things together to keep the show going.«

Others were hardly more imaginative in dealing with the social fragmentation along religious, ethnic and cultural fault lines. The postcard ›Celebrating multicultural Britain‹ was published in 2002 but its beautiful design cannot hide the fact that it is based on a desired harmony rather than reality. In fact the very concept of Britishness seems increasingly in doubt, communalist tendencies replacing ›Britain‹ as a shared and cohesive national identity.¹⁰



9 *W. Pfaff*, *The French Riots: Will They Change Anything?*, *New York Review of Books*, 20/2005, 89.

10 It has become customary in the British debate to point out that Britain has always been multicultural and hence ›Britishness‹ is a void concept if used against multi-culturalism.

One finds similarly clumsy government campaigns in France – ›Touche pas à mon pote‹ and in Germany – ›My friend is a foreigner‹. Such government propaganda is highly unusual in democratic societies, and one does not need to have grown up in East Germany to know that propaganda usually means there is reason to worry. More likely than not something is going seriously wrong but we are encouraged to neither speak nor think about it.

Examples of the taboo are plenty. One of them is immigration, i.e. the cause of pluri-ethnic societies. Although immigration comes consistently high on the public's agenda of priorities, fundamentally shaping the future for decades or more, political parties generally agree to leave it out of electoral campaigns because they do not deem the public mature enough to deal with such a ›sensitive topic‹. This taboo is the more acutely felt when someone dares to break it.¹¹

Similarly demands for active efforts towards integration are another taboo. When in 2004 UK Home Secretary David Blunkett made rather basic and straightforward appeals to the Asian community re the acquisition of English language skills and pleaded against the practice of importing spouses from abroad his propositions were not even discussed. Instead he was inundated with accusations of furthering racism and prejudice.

The vehemence of the erupting public debate after the van Gogh murder was due precisely to this previous taboo.

›The future of integration of its Muslim populations, quite reasonably, is the subtext to just about everything Europe thinks and does these days. If the subject is Iraq or education or job training, the reaction of tens of millions of

But the comparison is unconvincing. It would be absurd to claim that even Scots and English (to take the most strongly antagonist poles) are remotely as culturally dissimilar to each other as both are to the Muslim minorities in their midst. And furthermore even where cultural similarity is as great as between English, Scots, Welsh and Irish, the growing rejection of a ›British‹ identity is indeed seen as a problematic indicator of a tendency to grow apart that could eventually lead to separation. It is quite common now to read sharp attacks on English immigration into rural Scotland and Wales, deploring the loss of the identity of the areas in question (although in these cases the second generation usually is very happy to integrate). The disintegrating effects such immigration has (e.g. on a Welsh-speaking village) is beyond doubt. But it would be unthinkable to read anything like as sharp against the immigration of non-English ethnic minorities – although it is hard to see why the effect should not be the same or stronger.

11 The Tory candidate Michael Howard's 2005 electoral campaign in Britain, focussing on asylum and immigration is a prime example of this mechanism. Whatever one thought of his stance, it is interesting that his opponents blankly refused to discuss the issue but with media support contented themselves with attacking the fact that he raised it.

Arabs, Turks or Pakistanis within Europe's borders stands as a largely unspoken but constant consideration.«¹²

The official agendas, with strong support from the churches tended to deny the scale or even the existence of the problem in the interest of public peace.¹³ There was no shortage of attempts to silence even the current debate. The political scientist Oya Susanne Abali, secretary for German-Turkish dialogue in the Körber-Foundation saw the main problem not with political murder but with ›Islamophobia leading to generalisations‹ and declared the current debate ›dangerous‹. Many people in this vein regularly announce that the main danger lies in the *debate* rather than in what is being debated, an announcement commonly linked to claims of ›Islamophobia‹, ›Xenophobia‹ or ›racism‹. This is a dangerous and intentional confusion. In a democracy it is not debates we need to be wary of, nor people who hold opposing views to our own. What we ought indeed to be wary of are people who want to silence debates. In a naïve reversal of priorities many of those dominating the public debate, not least among the churches' ›Racial Justice‹ activists side with Islamic interest-groups and regard the threat of allegedly widespread ›Islamophobia‹ as bigger than that of Islamic extremists.

Germany has had 45 murders reported as ›honour killings‹ of girls and women in its Muslim community in the last eight years. Nobody knows the true number nor the extent of non-fatal violence of this kind. Recently the veteran feminist Alice Schwarzer pointed out in an interview how the police chief in Cologne mentioned to her that 70–80 per cent of rapes in the city were committed in the Turkish community (7 per cent of the population). »Why aren't such findings published so that we can address the root causes?« she asked him. »But we are not allowed to, Ms Schwarzer, this would qualify as racism.«¹⁴ This confusion of tolerance with looking-the-other-way is part of the problem.

Schwarzer's example is typical in another respect. Such observations *can* sometimes be made public – when the feminist agenda excuses the ethnic aspect of the matter and thus dispels the ever-lurking suspicion of right-wing and racist leanings.

12 *Vinocur*, Where is the debate?

13 A good example of naïve official underestimation of the problems of pluri-cultural societies is the recent *UNDP Report on Development and Cultural Freedom*. Claiming to unmask the ›myths of diversity‹ (scil. ethnic diversity), the report does nothing but list the various factual problems of pluri-ethnic societies and then deny their existence with next to no arguments or evidence.

14 *Roger Köppel / Thorsten Stecher*, »Ich bin es leid, eine Frau zu sein.« Interview mit Alice Schwarzer, *Die Weltwoche* 49/2003 (Schweiz).

In the same vein the only safe bet when arguing against the headscarf in French or German schools is by arguing from the viewpoint of women's rights.¹⁵

3 Multiculturalism – the European lack of cultural self-confidence

For a long time Europe reacted only very hesitantly to the challenges. People generally pretended that events like the endorsement of the *Fatwah* against Rushdie by British Muslim leaders followed by public book burnings, hundreds of *ihadists* hailing from Western Europe active in various battlefields from Bosnia to Chechnya and Afghanistan and the Fortuyn murder were only the actions of misguided individuals and reflected no developments in the wider communities from which they sprang, nor did they hint at a more profound incompatibility of Islam's current self-understanding with European culture.

The churches widely shared in the creed that locates the root cause of non-integration not with those who fail to integrate but with the ›xenophobic host society‹, ultimately Western arrogance and dominance. This is unconvincing. Again and again the dogma of the majority of peaceful Muslims who are firmly rooted in their Western host society is invoked – against all evidence. While indeed only a minority resort to violence, only few can positively be called integrated. A recent survey of the *Islamarchiv* in Germany showed that over 20 per cent of Muslims in Germany think that the constitution and Islam do not go together, well under 50 percent tend to think they do, the rest are doubtful.¹⁶

One may try to combat this alienation by softening the legal requirements in order to accommodate Muslims, e.g. through the factual recognition of polygamy, an erosion of the general obligation to attend school by exempting Muslim girls, taking little action against forced marriages, by erosion of laws preventing cruelty to animals etc.¹⁷

Because of its lack of self-confidence the free open society even introduced self-censoring mechanisms curbing its own free speech in order to appease Islamic minorities. Western liberal culture and our tradition of open debate become almost an

15 Typically in Germany feminists were the only group consistently, as early as the late 1970s, to denounce the rise of Islamist extremism in Europe and beyond (cf. *Schwarzer*, *Gotteskrieger*). Their impact however was often hampered by their own ideological agenda and sensationalist style.

16 *W. Heitmeyer*, *Die halbierte Aufklärung*, in: *Schwarzer*, *Gotteskrieger*, 121–27, quot.125 (first publ. in *die tageszeitung* 24/10/2001).

17 *Halal* slaughter in Germany is now permitted although qualifying as cruelty to animals. Since the latter is derived from Art.1 of the Constitution (Dignity of Man) it is a considerable concession, not a sideshow.

embarrassment that is readily abandoned when met with objection from vocal speakers for the Muslim community.

- In November 2004 Van Gogh's film was scheduled to be shown on German TV. After his murder the programme makers decided to cancel the showing to avoid further infuriating Muslim sentiment, not because they doubted the accuracy of the film's statements.
- Two months earlier Swiss TV had cancelled a showing of a critical documentary on the influential and controversial Islamic preacher Tariq Ramadan for similar reasons.¹⁸
- In 1993 the Geneva state theatre cancelled a showing of Voltaire's play *Mahomet* after the same Tariq Ramadan led a public campaign, claiming the play was ›Islamophobic‹.
- In 2005 the Turkish ambassador to Germany complained to the Education Board of Brandenburg. In one of its history school books the chapter on genocide referred to the mass murder of Armenians as the first European ›genocide‹ in the 20th century. The German authorities removed the reference.¹⁹

The churches, anxious not to appear anti-Islamic for selfish motives were hardly helpful. Mostly considering immigration and ethnic minorities only from a humanitarian perspective they lost sight of the larger questions. Furthermore parts of the Protestant churches in particular are among the active perpetrators of a routinely anti-Western discourse born out of a post-colonial guilt complex. Looking at the references to ›The West‹ in official documents of the World Council of Churches for instance you could come to think Western culture was all about secular materialism, environmental destruction, colonialism, capitalist exploitation and oppression. This anti-Western rhetoric has a long tradition in all totalitarian ideologies of the 20th century, communism, fascism and lately Islamic fundamentalism.²⁰

Post-colonial Europe has now such a low self-esteem that any effort to promote its culture as valuable and essential for immigrants to integrate into is met by abuse

18 Ramadan is a school teacher and prolific author. His positions differ greatly between his books, written for a wide audience and when he is addressing live Muslim audiences. Hence his true convictions and ideas e.g. on religious conversion and wife beating etc. are rather unclear. His influence on French-speaking Muslim youths is acknowledged, but his alleged bridging function between European modernism and Islamic culture is increasingly thrown into question. In 2005 he was invited to a professorial chair in the United States but US authorities did not grant him a visa.

19 After an intervention by the Armenian ambassador the reference was re-inserted, hidden in a long list of other genocides.

20 Cf. *Buruma/Margalit*, *Occidentalism*. While not specifically mentioning the churches, the anti-Western arguments they compile from several centuries and cultures are all too familiar to anyone who has studied official ecumenical documents from the last 60 years.

in the public arena. When a few years ago a German politician argued for the need to identify the Open Society and Western culture as ›*Leitkultur*‹ (›leading culture‹, as in fact through the Constitution it inherently is), a term first coined by the Syrian-German Bassam Tibi, his suggestion predictably met with accusations of ›racism‹. It is hard to understand why, since obviously the statement does in no way imply the inherent superiority of one culture over another, no more than the establishment of English as the world's *lingua franca* implies that it is ›better‹ than other languages. But it simply is hard to see how culturally and religiously determined value systems which in large parts are mutually contradictory could simultaneously exist in the same sphere of one society.²¹

Unless we come to understand that a culture that we ourselves do not cherish, appreciate and promote is not appealing to outsiders and immigrants we won't be able to eradicate extremist Islam in Europe, nor will we encourage the emergence of a convincing Islamic theory of living as a minority in a secular order which so far is still lacking. Material success alone is not enough of an appeal. It may motivate greed but not integration, nor is it likely that spreading material wealth more evenly will achieve integration. Militant Islamist leaders in the West typically do *not* come from poor backgrounds.

Today we find a shift of reasoning on the part of those who reject a more positive and active promotion of European culture. In the UK in particular they ask whether common values and culture are actually necessary? It is an ironic twist that by doing so they come to side with their former favourite enemy. In the 1980s Margaret Thatcher famously declared that she knew of no such thing as ›society‹, only of individual people striving to better themselves in a free economy. She was severely chastised by the liberal left. But it is the same liberal left who today declares that ›there are no common values, and we do not need them in order to collaborate.‹²² This is an extreme last ditch stand, attempting to save the extreme multiculturalist *laissez-faire* that characterized the British approach. Writers like Heath, Harris, Alibhai-Brown and others now often sharpen this argument to say that all

21 Some countries try. Thus, India grants autonomy to the Muslim community e.g. in family and inheritance law. But even though in India unlike Europe it is possible to identify specific geographical areas with a Muslim majority this does not work well since dissatisfied Muslim women can still invoke secular state law which grants them equality. When a woman actually does do so this regularly leads to violent outbreaks.

22 Cf. *Harris*, Integration. The reasoning can partly be explained by British political culture which is rather different from the continent. In the UK the democratic process was traditionally moved by the balance of power or direct confrontation between different interest groups, rather than by some shared consensus as provided by French republicanism or German constitutionalism.

that is required for the successful co-existence even of ethnic groups with mutually contradictory value systems is law-abidance. No further motor of social cohesiveness is required.

This neglects the fact that the law itself is based on one set of values rather than another and therefore won't be able to satisfy all equally. Furthermore, closer analysis like for instance Goodhart's who asked which social attitudes actually make modern welfare states work, confirms the scepticism. Cohesion is based on far more than simple law-abidance. It is nonsense to claim that all the glue a society needs to hold together (not only to ›collaborate‹, which would be a strangely mechanistic view of society) is sticking to the law. This amounts to believing that family legislation produces successful marriages and good parenting. The law can only ever mark the utmost boundary of acceptable behaviour. Most aspects of human togetherness, be it in small groups or in large societies depend on far more than not breaking the law.

4 The situation of Islam now

After van Gogh's death many politicians from all political camps openly acknowledged the failure of the multicultural paradigm. Multiculturalism had been strongest in the Netherlands and the UK who not only tolerated but actively furthered immigrants' preservation of distinct group identities. This resulted in cementing their separation in mind and body and disadvantaged them upon entry to the labour market.²³ As a result we observe what some have described as an ethnic balkanisation of Western Europe. The concept of multiculturalism is unstable because it has an inherent tendency towards self-reinforcing segregation leading to a voluntary *apartheid*.²⁴

»The term multicultural itself implies distinct and durable cultural identities. However, these collectively constructed identities require tight borders to protect the values which they contain against the powerful influences of the hegemonic culture lurking outside. As the values of the community are embodied in the personal identities, every change of the normative boundaries of these individual identities is perceived as a personal threat to the identities of the other members of the community.«²⁵

23 In Germany 30–40 percent (official figures vary) of Turkish young men leave school without the most basic obtainable qualification and hence stand next to no chance in the already tight labour market. The figure is roughly the same for Muslim youths in the Netherlands and France.

24 For a clear exposition of this phenomenon cf. *Hondrich, Wir-Gefühle*.

25 *Escoffier, Limits*, 63.

In Europe Islam more than other immigrant communities developed a counter-culture that is to a large extent deeply suspicious and often contemptuous of the majority's liberalism surrounding it. In many places you can now live from cradle to coffin without requiring a word of the language of the land. Citizenship has virtually no bearing on these developments. Relatively few eligible Turks choose to take up German citizenship even though they now can hold dual citizenship after new legislation was specifically introduced for their benefit.²⁶ Preachers are still imported from abroad, the Turkish state intentionally sending Imams for short periods only to avoid them getting involved with local culture or learning the language (recently efforts have been made to stop this practice). This preservation of cultural identities does not decrease tension but leads to ghettos where contact with other cultures is kept to a minimum, in the long run breeding prejudice against the ›outside‹ world and economic failure, in turn leading to frustration, a victim mentality and the search for new, positive religious identities.

One reason for the blind spot that so long surrounded this entire subject may be the secularist misjudgement of European elites. For want of meaningful personal experiences they lacked a basic understanding of the tremendous motivating force of religious faiths and optimistically assumed because Christianity had become a private commodity, largely irrelevant in the public domain the same process would in due course happen to Islam. The assumption that Muslims would eventually become as secularised as the indigenous population and as their religion would be waning their integration would only be a matter of time was as widespread as it was wrong.

Religion does of course matter. Muslims are comparatively less integrated than other immigrants, and fault lines of communalist tensions mostly involve Islam more often than any other group.²⁷ This holds true despite the fact that Europe's Muslims are no homogeneous group and form sub-groups along ethnic lines with tense relations between them. There may well be a critical mass in immigration numbers beyond which the benefits of and the desire to integrate with or only to adjust to the host society are permanently undercut. The wish to integrate is then replaced by feelings of marginalisation leading to demands for ever more far-

26 Germany is the only country where one can acquire a *legal right* for citizenship by fulfilling certain criteria. Even so the introduction of a basic questionnaire procedure to check applicants' knowledge about and willingness to integrate to the country led to a vehement debate and the customary accusations of racism.

27 In fact in Europe only Britain has sizeable minorities of other religions. Here Hindus, Jews, Buddhists and Sikhs generally fare better in social indicators (economic status, education etc.) than Muslims. Ethnic tensions and riots often happen *between* different ethnic minorities, by no means always involving the indigenous white population.

reaching rights of cultural self-determination and enlarged spaces for parallel societies with differing cultural norms (demands for bilingualism, faith schools etc).

Reference points of identity are sought outside the host society. Radical Muslim leaders have now managed to monopolise the interpretation of the many conflicts anywhere in the world involving Muslims. Palestine, Iraq, Indonesia, the Philippines, Chechnya, Kashmir thus have become symbols of one world-wide struggle of Islam against the forces of Western evil. This shapes the identity of many Muslims in Western nations around issues which have nothing to do with their own lives or sometimes not even with their European country of residence.

The result of the isolation of large sections of the Muslim community is an unemployed underclass which seeks a religiously and ethnically based alternative identity. More than a few eventually join radical movements.²⁸ Even Muslim intellectuals who are regarded as ›moderate‹ often hold positions which would be seen as unacceptably extreme right if held by non-Muslims.

Equally worrying is the fact that condemnations of violence from *within* the mainline Muslim communities are usually slow to materialise, rather weak and often non-existent, betraying a widespread ethical uncertainty or even tacit endorsement. Even the most cursory look at websites of the various Muslim interest groups around Europe shows that invariably the discussion about real and alleged discrimination of Muslims is hugely larger than the discussion of the (not only terrorist) violence in the name of Islam. If the latter is mentioned at all, it is usually simply denounced as ›un-Islamic‹ and thus discarded as a matter of no importance for ›real Muslims‹. This easy disownment contrasts sharply with the unconditional solidarity invoked in relation to the universal *ummah* in its various struggles around the world, used as justification for righteous indignation against the West.

The lack of a meaningful internal debate on how to combat the rising violence is thus exacerbated by the victim mentality further encouraged by official race relations institutions. A typical public statement was published by the ›Muslim Council of Britain‹, regarded as the UK's moderate Muslim organisation, in February 2004 after the Madrid train bombings. After a few words of condolences and the claim that the crime had nothing to do with ›real Islam‹, the statement turned to deploring that the attacks had reinforced the victimisation of Muslims and the allegedly widespread ›Islamophobia‹ in the UK. The reaction of Dutch Muslims to the van Gogh murder was similar and exasperates even liberals like Paul Scheffer: »A radical Muslim activist has murdered a critic of Islam, and soon after Muslim interest groups begin to publicly complain primarily of their own victimization« rather than

28 In 2004 according to the Dutch Secret Service five percent of Dutch Muslims could be counted as the extremist radical wing. That sounds little enough, but amounts to 50,000 people. Numbers in the UK are similar.

discuss measures against the radicalisation of their youth.²⁹ When Muslims complain they have become a target Scheffer reminds them that in truth New York, Madrid and Amsterdam reacted with numb calm to terrorism. Nowhere did any large scale popular backlash against Muslims take place and even hostile reactions were mostly verbal rather than violent.

The continued silence of the Muslim communities betrays a life in denial more concerned with alleged and real discrimination than the extremist hydra in its midst. When Muslim speakers claim space in the public domain it is usually to denounce ›racism‹, not to discuss how violence can be overcome and how integration can be furthered and encouraged from their side. While we constantly remind ourselves of the inner theological and ethnic plurality of Islam it is virtually impossible from the outside to perceive it.³⁰ How can one distinguish liberal, conservative and fundamentalist Muslims if they are not seen holding open public debates on the issue, instead switching to terminological sideshows by complaining about the term ›Islamic violence‹? The widespread victim mentality leads to an inability to self-critical analysis and in itself furthers violence.

5 The Free Open Society needs to learn how to protect itself

Although the USA for a short time propagated the notion of the melting-pot, Anglo-Saxon thought today tends to be dominated by

›the thinking and vocabulary of communalist identities. One certainly is far from the idea of the public space shared by all citizens equally independently of their ethnic identities, a public space where you mobilise not around appearances but around social projects.«³¹

Multicultural communalism itself was counter-cultural to the West from the start. It sits badly with constitutions based upon the understanding that we are firstly individuals who *choose* most of our communal belongings, ethnicity and religion being irrelevant to citizenship. It is not the state's task to protect ethnic or religious groups' identities if they come under assimilatory pressure through living in a culturally alien surrounding.³² There is no such thing as a ›female vote‹, and even in England

29 *Scheffer*, Schweigen.

30 A few elitist inter-religious dialogues in arcane institutions between well-mannered moderate academics with no influence in their communities, as the churches like to organise, are irrelevant to this purpose.

31 Cf. *Jim Cohen*, *La gauche américaine*.

32 Cf. *Johannes Hellermann*, *Der Grundrechtsschutz der Religionsfreiheit ethnisch-kultureller Minderheiten*, in: *Dollase* (Hg.), a.a.O., 382–400.

class distinctions that made ›working class vote‹ a sensible concept are going out fast. And yet nobody currently seems to think it odd to talk of the ›Muslim vote‹. It is, however, obvious that democracy cannot work if people mainly vote on the basis of their faith or ethnicity. European democracy and the universalist concept of individual human rights including religious freedom gradually emerged from the Reformation onward precisely out of the experience of destruction that competing religious communities can inflict on each other. Our peace rests on principles agreed in 1648, including an increasing privatisation of religious adherence, an idea alien to Islam. The anti-Western bias of many even mainline Muslims is a rejection of these principles and ultimately jeopardizes this peace even when not propagated by violent means. By invoking the freedom of religion and tolerance for Muslim minorities we neglected to include the *caveat* that those who enjoy this freedom will be expected to promote it actively for others, too, including non-believers, converts and ›heretics‹. When mosques become places where one routinely hears hate sermons against all and sundry who are not Muslim, where a taken-for-granted anti-semitism is the norm rather than the exception, then religious freedom is abused. Religious freedom is a cornerstone of European culture, emerging as it does from centuries of bloody strife – its continued existence cannot be taken for granted and historical knowledge should remind us how high the stakes are. Like all fundamental rights in the constitution it requires protection and needs to be weighed when it infringes other fundamental rights.

After the van Gogh murder, Amsterdam mayor Job Cohen wanted to calm the waters: »There is hatred and fear on both sides.« This classical claim that tensions are due to fear and ultimately lack of mutual knowledge is wishful thinking and part of the problem. Publicly naming the intolerant aspects of Islam is *not* ›fear‹. Denouncing the fact that many among Europe's Islamic population are at odds with liberal values regarded as non-negotiable is *not* ›Islamophobia‹. Nor should an overly naïve faith be put in pedagogic re-education. It is by no means clear whether better mutual knowledge would decrease tensions. It might just increase them. Most founders of radical Islamism and most Muslim terrorists spent considerable amounts of time in the West. Knowing it all too well contributed to their radicalisation rather than prevented it.

The real problem has little to do with irrational fears and much with real threats to the liberal, open democracy, to freedom of speech, to the notion of equality of people regardless of their religion, opinion, sex and their sexual orientation. The question does not boil down to misunderstandings, unfamiliarity and fear but to very real conflicting interests. The conflict between positions and values that are mutually exclusive because they logically contradict each other cannot be solved by trying to reduce it to a ›lack of understanding and knowledge‹ or ›racism‹.

We need to cease behaving as if it was an article of faith that tolerance meant everybody retaining their complete cultural identity even to the point of complete isolation, economic segregation, and the questioning of the basics of our democratic and liberal community. Doing so is not tolerance but ignoring that values can be in conflict and that hard won liberties can be lost. In cases where simultaneous validity of contradictory values is logically impossible it must be clear which dominate. A sustainable policy for the future of Europe cannot afford to constantly re-negotiate the basics of Human Rights and to let ›integration‹ or even ›assimilation‹ sink to the status of four-letter words.

The history of pluri-cultural societies and states is remarkably thin on success stories. Pluri-cultural empires are notoriously unstable, most pluri-cultural societies past and present know regular violent outbreaks. Yugoslavia is far more typical than Switzerland (if one wants to call the latter's four language groups multicultural at all). Wherever multicultural societies existed more or less peacefully for a long time they did not grant equality – as in the much-quoted India, medieval Spain or Ottoman empire. Although possibly exemplary centuries ago they can hardly serve as models for today's Europe or for modern Islam, too blatantly did they only grant second class status to religious minorities. But possibly this factor was not marginal, but precisely a pre-condition for their long-term stability and survival?

The computer department of ›Churches Together in Britain and Ireland‹ used to put a signature under its e-mails concerning the staff's desires for quick fixes to computer problems: ›Fast, cheap, efficient – choose any two.‹ History seems to suggest that in regard to human societies one has to say: ›Multicultural, equal, stable – choose any two.‹

Zusammenfassung

Nach einem islamistisch motivierten Mord in den Niederlanden 2004 brach in Europa eine lange unterdrückte öffentliche Debatte über die Fehlentwicklungen bei der Integration ethnischer, insbesondere moslemischer Minderheiten auf. Dabei wurde erstmals offen bekannt, dass sowohl multi-kulturalistische (Großbritannien, Niederlande) als auch republikanisch-integrationistische (Frankreich) Modelle des Umgangs mit der Masseneinwanderung gescheitert sind. In allen europäischen Staaten mit moslemischen Minderheiten ist eine sich selbst verstärkende Selbstsegregation in religiöse, ethnische, sprachliche Ghettos zu verzeichnen, Parallelgesellschaften, die ökonomischen Misserfolg und Vorurteile gegen die Mehrheitsgesellschaft fördern. Lange Zeit scheiterte das offene Gespräch über diese Entwicklungen daran, dass die aktive und positive Förderung von Grundwerten einer Offenen Gesellschaft und die Proklamation klarer Integrationserwartungen an Minderheiten (aktive Beja-

hung europäischer Kultur gegebenenfalls bis hin zur Assimilation) als »Kulturimperialismus« oder »Xenophobie« diskreditiert wurden. Doch ein kulturrelativistisch begründeter Multikulturalismus verkennt, dass es logisch sich ausschließende religiös fundierte Werte gibt, die nicht zugleich gelten können, weil sie zu realen, nicht auf »Missverständnisse« oder »Rassismus« reduzierbaren Interessenkonflikten führen. Gerade die Offene Gesellschaft muss sich der Grenzen ihrer Toleranz klar sein und diese deutlich ziehen, auch um ihrer Attraktivität für Einwanderer willen. Es ist wichtig, dass die gegenwärtige Diskussion nicht mit dem Vorwurf der Islamophobie und Fremdenfeindlichkeit zugedeckt und das Thema erneut tabuisiert wird.

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