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European Muslims: Caught between Local Integration Challenges and Global Terrorism Discourses

by Anna Triandafyllidou



ABSTRACT

After the positive vibrations that the Arab Spring sent around Europe in 2011, today we are witnessing a reversal of that positive trend. The escalation of violence and insecurity in the region is sending shock waves across Europe and North America. Negative vibrations have been acutely felt in Europe, not only with the *Charlie Hebdo* events in Paris, but also in relation to the so-called foreign fighters question. Several thousand young people –mostly men but also women–, a tiny, albeit dramatically visible, part of the European Muslim community –some of whom are second-generation migrant youth of Muslim origin, while others are young converts– have joined ISIS forces in Syria to fight a jihadist war. My aim in this paper is to argue that, while the weaknesses and tensions of integration policies exist and may have intensified since the start of the new century, the seeds of minority Muslim youth recruitment in Europe has more to do with today's global-local connections rather than with failed integration.

Europe | Islam | Youth | Terrorism

keywords

European Muslims: Caught between Local Integration Challenges and Global Terrorism Discourses

by Anna Triandafyllidou*

Introduction

After the positive vibrations that the Arab Spring sent around Europe in 2011 with the peaceful but intense grassroots activity in Egypt, Tunisia, but also Syria, and the rebellion against Gheddafi in Libya, today we are witnessing a near complete reversal of that positive trend. In Egypt the democratic revolution has failed, Libya and Syria are on the verge of collapsing, and the whole Middle East is imploding. The only Arab spring country that seems to be surviving the test of democratic reform is Tunisia. Jihadist terrorism as professed by ISIS and its followers has recently attacked both the military-ruled Egypt through the execution of 21 Egyptian Christian workers in Libya and the democratic and moderately Islamist Tunisia with the attack on the Badhou Museum in Tunis in March 2015. This escalation of violence and insecurity in the region is sending shock waves across Europe and North America, leading to various coalitions to help Syria, Iraq, the Gulf States and Saudi Arabia to combat terrorism and ISIS.

Negative vibrations have been acutely felt in Europe, not only in the killing of the entire editorial team of the *Charlie Hebdo* left-wing satirical magazine by three Islamic extremists in early January 2015 in Paris, but also in the so-called foreign fighters question. Several thousand young people (mostly men but also women), a tiny, albeit dramatically visible, part of the European Muslim community (some of whom are second-generation migrant youth of Muslim origin, while others are young converts) have joined ISIS forces in Syria to fight a jihadist war. In September 2014 it was estimated that there were 2,000 foreign fighters from Western states, but recent reports estimate 3,500 within a total of approximately 19,000 foreign fighters from all over the world (see also Figure 1 below).¹

¹ Kukil Bora, "ISIS Continues Steady Recruitment As 20,000 Foreign Fighters Join Extremist Groups In Syria, Iraq", in *International Business Times*, 11 February 2015, <http://www.ibtimes.com/node/1812440>.

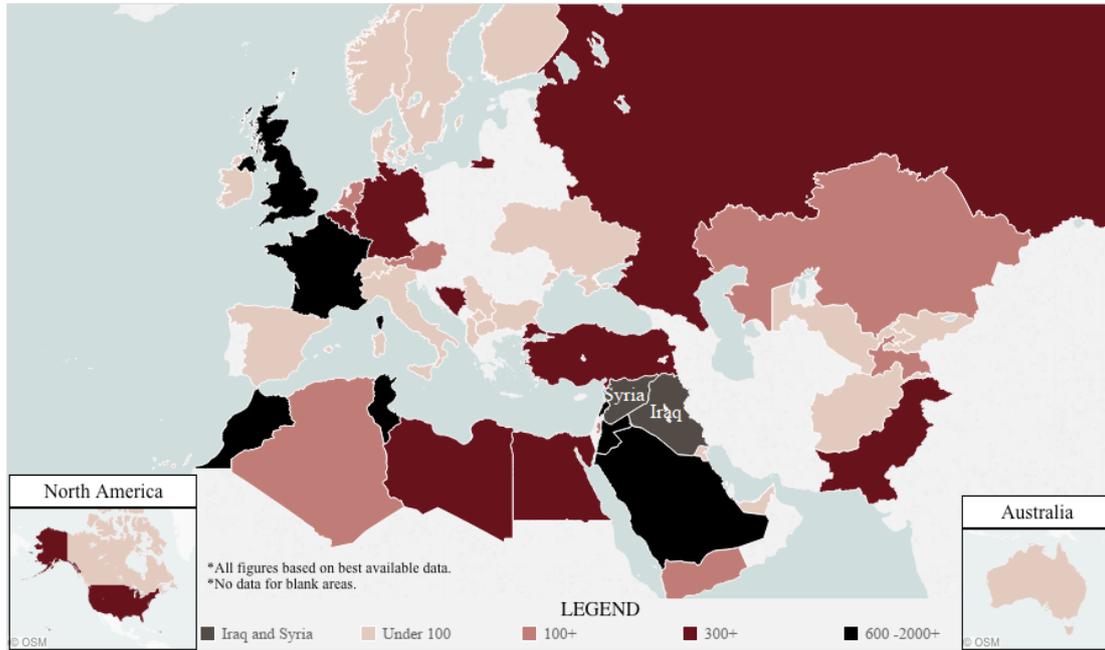
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· Paper produced within the framework of the New-Med Research Network, May 2015.

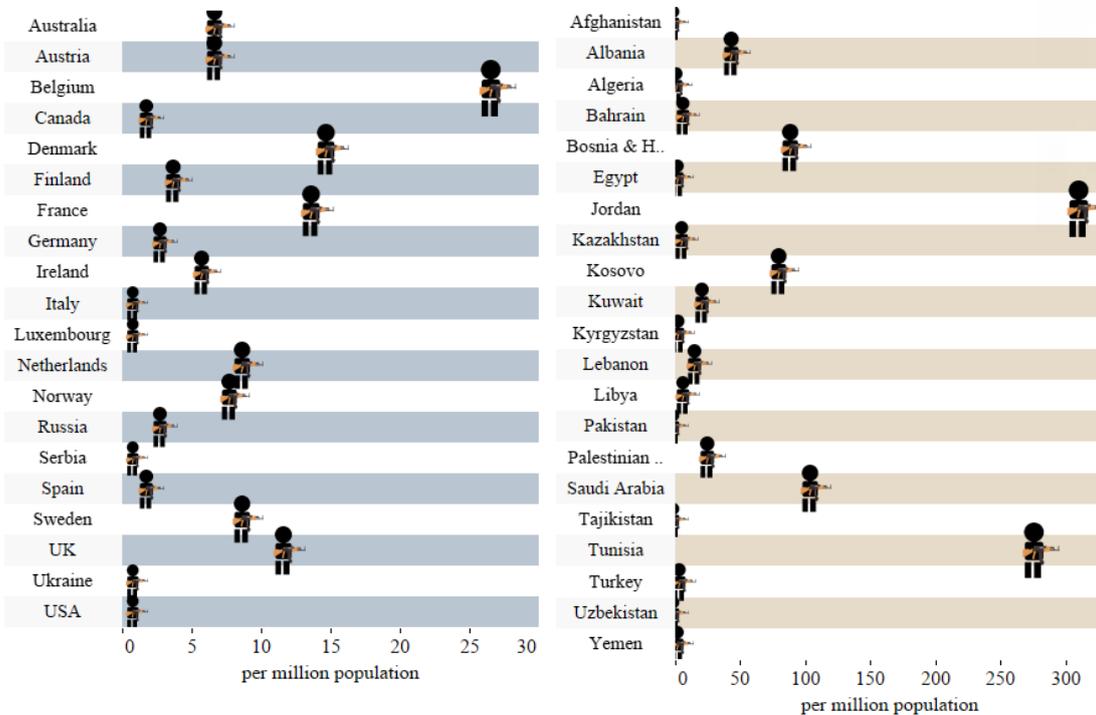
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Foreign Fighters In Iraq and Syria: Where Do They Come From?

Mouse over each country for details.



Proportion Of Foreign Fighters By Country (Adjusted for population size)



Data: French Interior Ministry, British Government, Belgian Government, Austrian Interior Ministry, US government, Australian government, The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, Reuters, France24, Deutsche Welle, The Local Sweden, Sveriges Radio.
Source: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, <http://public.tableau.com/shared/7KY76J2DZ>.

Much has been said since the summer of 2014 about how the recruitment of these young people by extremist imams or directly through the internet testifies to the failure of the different models of migrant integration in Europe. Furthermore, several media reports and popular wisdom have suggested that the behaviour of these youngsters reveals a failed integration process, leaving a second generation that feels foreign in its country of birth and quintessentially Muslim, extremist and illiberal despite all the so-called good efforts of the institutions of the receiving countries to incorporate them into society and in the labour market.

Second-generation Turkish youth in Germany and the Netherlands, Maghrebins in France and Bangladeshis and Pakistanis in Britain do less well than native and other migrant youth in terms of educational attainment and labour market integration. They often abandon school or professional training before completion and have higher than average rates of unemployment. While this does not necessarily indicate an inability to integrate – but, rather, points to important aspects of discrimination, what Heath and Cheung have aptly called the “ethnic penalty”² – this trend is often portrayed in the media as a “proof” of the failure of Muslims to adapt to Western liberal free market democracies.

My aim in this paper is to argue that, while the weaknesses and tensions of integration policies exist and may have intensified since the start of the new century, the seeds of minority Muslim youth recruitment in Europe has more to do with today’s global-local connections rather than with failed integration.

It goes beyond the scope of this paper to discuss how these fighters are recruited as foreign fighters and, in particular, as terrorists. I start with a critical survey of the integration policies of different European countries with large Muslim populations and discuss their tensions and weak spots. I then point to the increasing connectivity that characterises today’s world and the ways in which such connectivity projects local tensions to global conflicts, preventing local actors from seeing their local or national solutions and also creating an overall negative climate fed by global terrorism which prevents a local focus that would be more beneficial to local problems.

1. European Muslims

Muslims are the largest immigrant (non-indigenous) group in Europe, a fact that has raised important challenges for ethnic, cultural and religious diversity. European Muslims cannot of course be considered as a uniform group in any respect, as they come from different countries, live in different countries, speak different languages, adhere to different versions of Islam, are more or less moderate in their beliefs and

² Anthony F. Heath and Sin Yi Cheung (eds.), *Unequal Chances. Ethnic Minorities in Western Labour Markets*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007.

claims.³ Despite these multi-level differences within the Muslim communities of Europe, Muslims are often portrayed in the media and policy discourses as a single community, as a population that shares common traits and that can be dealt with by the same type of policies – or indeed that cannot be integrated into or assimilated by for the same type of reasons.⁴

Since the 1990s there has been a tendency across Europe to label immigrants in religious terms rather than in the light of their ethno-cultural background or social roles in society. This tendency, whereby Muslims in particular are seldom categorised as Turks, Moroccans or Pakistanis (or as students or workers), holds in several European countries, where debates over integration and toleration of differences invariably centre on Muslims, and where religion is often associated with potential conflict. Public discussions tend to take place in an “us-them” framework: Islam is increasingly constructed in opposition to Western (British, Dutch, Swedish, Spanish, French, Italian and so on) values of democracy and equality.

The countries with the largest Muslim populations in Europe are Germany (3.8-4.3 million), France (estimated at 5 million), the UK (1.6 million), the Netherlands (1.1 million), Italy (1 million), Bulgaria (1 million), Spain (0.7 million), Greece (0.5 million) and Sweden (0.35 million).⁵ These numbers are estimates based on data from the countries of origin and include both first- and second-generation migrants; there are no European official religious statistics. In Bulgaria Muslims are a native historical minority. The first Muslim communities settled in Bulgaria in the 14th century. Apart from Turks and Tatars, who are almost exclusively Muslim, numerous ethnic Bulgarians and Roma also belong to the Bulgarian Muslim community. Similarly, the estimated 85,000 Muslims who live in north-eastern Greece, in the region of western Thrace, are mainly of Turkish and Roma ethnicity. Most other Muslim populations in Europe are of immigrant origin. In the UK and France they are linked to pre-existing colonial ties and the decolonisation process in North Africa and Southeast Asia. In Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Greece and Sweden, on the other hand, Muslims came as economic migrants without any previous special relationship between the country of origin and the country of destination.

In terms of nationality the vast majority of Germany’s Muslims are Turks (or of Turkish origin). French Muslims are mainly of Moroccan, Algerian and Tunisian origin. British Muslims are South-East Asians for the most part, in particular Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. In the Netherlands the largest Muslim populations are Turkish and Moroccan. In Italy and Spain the vast majority of Muslim residents are of North African origin (Moroccans predominantly). In Greece, and also to some extent in Italy (in addition to the Moroccans), Muslims are mainly South-East

³ Anna Triandafyllidou (ed.), *Muslims in 21st Century Europe. Structural and Cultural Perspectives*, London and New York, Routledge, 2010.

⁴ For a more detailed discussion of Muslims in Europe see *Ibid.*, p. 1-27.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

Asians (Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Afghans and Somalis). In Sweden, Muslims are mainly asylum seekers from Somalia, Iran, Iraq and Bosnia.

In Britain, France, the Netherlands and Germany Muslim immigrants began to arrive in the 1960s. After the 1970s and the 1973 oil crisis these countries put a stop to primary economic immigration; however, secondary (family reunification and family formation) migratory inflows have continued to this day. In Italy, Spain and Greece Muslim immigrants first arrived after 1989, when as these countries emerged as poles of attraction for economic migrants. Contrary to the cases of Britain, France, the Netherlands and Germany, where primary immigration took place largely legally and sometimes as part of bilateral agreements (for instance between Turkey and Germany), the newly arrived Muslims in southern Europe mostly came illegally. They managed, however, to regularise their status (like all other immigrants in these countries) and to settle down.

2. Tensions over Islam in different European countries

In France, where religion is seen as a private matter and where public space is thought of as secular, Muslims are constructed as “different” from other native French because of their religion and ethnicity, including even their physical features (darker skin). However, in a situation where religious belonging is seldom used as a basis for political mobilisation, it is more common to hear members of minorities who trace their ancestry to North Africa described as “*maghrebins*” rather than as “French Muslims.” Islam in France is thus constructed as an ethnic marker that encompasses a religious dimension.⁶ Muslims in France can be considered a “visible” minority and are discriminated against in employment, housing and social service, much as coloured people are. However, since ethnic statistics are a contentious issue in France, there are no official statistics that can appropriately document these phenomena.⁷

Muslims in France pose a specific challenge to the dominant concept of *laïcité*. Concretely, *laïcité* is the complete separation of church and state and represents an institutional arrangement that sets the conditions for the exercise of religion and the limits of religious forms of expression. This is a specific feature of the French case, although in most other European countries Muslims, and their claims, challenge the limits of the moderately secular democratic national and European institutions.

⁶ Valérie Amiraux, “From Empire to Republic: the French Muslim Dilemma”, in Anna Triandafyllidou (ed.), *Muslims in 21st Century Europe*, cit., p. 137-159, <http://valerieamiraux.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/from-empire-to-republic-the-french-muslim-dilemma.pdf>.

⁷ Patrick Simon, “The Choice of Ignorance. The Debate on Ethnic and Racial Statistics in France”, in *French Politics, Culture and Society*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Spring 2008), p. 7-31.

In Germany Muslims were previously generally referred to as Turks, that is, according to their nationality or ethnicity. It was only in the 1990s, and increasingly in the 2000s, that Turks became “Muslims” and that the public debate on immigrant integration centred on the notion of a common German “leading culture” (*Leitkultur*). Proposed by a conservative politician, Friedrich Merz, the idea of the German *Leitkultur* demanded that immigrants adapt to this leading culture if they want to stay in Germany for good. Thus, the socio-economic dimension of the problems of Turkish/Muslim migrant integration in German society was set aside, and integration challenges were increasingly seen as issues of culture and religion – especially after 9/11.

This culturalising of social problems (which attributed all contested issues such as arranged/forced marriages or homophobia to the religious beliefs and identity of the group) contributed to the stigmatisation of all Muslims in Germany, regardless of their personal beliefs, and to the politicisation of these issues.⁸ Especially since the relaxation of the naturalisation provisions in Germany in 2000, there has been a simultaneous reactionary turn towards scrutinising whether Turkish citizens, even those established in Germany for decades, espouse the principal German values or constitute some kind of suspect and dangerous “other” in the midst of the German nation.⁹ In this context, the term “tolerance” became particularly relevant, as Muslims were seen as asking for tolerance of their difference, while they were themselves supposedly intolerant of the German national majority and/or their own members who held dissenting views. In Germany there was a clear shift – from the 1990s when it was mainly right-wing extremists who were considered intolerant in society, to the post-2001 years when it is the Muslims who are the “intolerant” ones.

The public discourse in Germany, which also rages widely in Denmark and the Netherlands, ignores the fact that in Germany, for instance, Turks and people with a Turkish background are not the only Muslim groups – and many of them are not practising Muslims or not Muslims at all. The Muslim populations of European countries are ethnically diverse although the level of such ethnic diversity varies among countries. Thus in France, Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy and Spain there are some ethnic groups that numerically predominate (Moroccans, Algerians and Tunisians in France, Pakistani and Bangladeshi in Britain, Turks in Germany, Turks and Moroccans in the Netherlands, Moroccans and Tunisians in Italy and Spain). Other European countries have Muslim communities that are highly diverse in terms of ethnic origin. For instance, Sweden has one of the most heterogeneous Muslim populations of all Western European countries. They have

⁸ Ruth Mandel, *Cosmopolitan Anxieties. Turkish Challenges to Citizenship and Belonging in Germany*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2008; Gökçe Yurdakul, *From Guest Workers into Muslims. The Transformation of Turkish Immigrant Associations in Germany*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009.

⁹ Werner Schiffauer, “Enemies Within the Gates: The Debate about the Citizenship of Muslims in Germany”, in Tariq Modood, Anna Triandafyllidou, Ricard Zapata-Barrero (eds.), *Multiculturalism, Muslims and Citizenship. A European Approach*, London and New York, Routledge, 2005, p. 94-116.

different ethnic, political, linguistic and/or educational backgrounds and come from over forty different countries in north and sub-Saharan Africa; from Arabic, Turkish or Persian parts of Asia, and from Europe. They come from secularised states such as Turkey, religious states such as Iran, and from former socialist states such as Bosnia-Herzegovina and several of the new states that formerly belonged to the Soviet Union. The same is true for Ireland, where Muslims come from Malaysia, Somalia, South Africa, Nigeria, Algeria, Libya, Bosnia and Pakistan. Greece has a moderately diverse Muslim population: while native Muslims are of Turkish, Roma and Pomak ethnicity, immigrant Muslims are of Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Afghan and Somali origin.

The definition of the “Muslim problem” as essentially one of a radical (fundamentalist) religion and a culture incompatible with Western values also obscures in Germany (but also in Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, the UK and France) the socio-economic dimension of Muslim marginalisation. The poor educational attainment of Turkish and Moroccan children in France, the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark, or of Bangladeshi and Pakistani children in Britain (documented in numerous studies) has a lot to do with their socio-economic background (profession and schooling of parents, socio-economic level, area of residence) but also with the discrimination that they face at schools and later in the labour market. Indeed, ambitious studies such as the well-known book by Anthony Heath and Sin Yi Cheung,¹⁰ find it hard to explain why inequalities persist and which are the factors that matter most: socio-economic background, discrimination, unequal opportunities, religion, specific ethnic background, structure of the educational system, or indeed a variable combination of all these factors.

In Denmark, Germany, Britain, the Netherlands, Sweden and France, Muslims have been treated with increasing suspicion after the events of 9/11. Indeed, the rise of a fundamentalist international terrorism – in which only a handful of European Muslims were directly involved – has contributed to the stigmatisation of both Islam and Muslims. Social scientists have coined the terms “Islamophobia” and “Muslimophobia” to analyse these phenomena.¹¹ Islamophobia is the irrational fear of and prejudice against Islam as a faith and a culture without any discrimination between different Islamic religious currents. Muslimophobia is the irrational fear of and prejudice against Muslims as individuals, assuming that all people who are nominally Muslims experience their identity and faith in the same fanatical way that involves, among other things, the fusion of religious and political power, the subjugation of women to men, and certain other customs that are incompatible with dominant Western values such as forced and under-age marriages, homophobia and anti-semitism. This post-2001 discourse overlooks the fact that some of the

¹⁰ Anthony F. Heath and Sin Yi Cheung (eds.), *Unequal Chances*, cit.

¹¹ Burak Erdenir, “Islamophobia qua racial discrimination: Muslimophobia”, in Anna Triandafyllidou (ed.), *Muslims in 21st Century Europe*, cit., p. 27-44, http://www.abgs.gov.tr/files/di%C4%9Fer%20faydal%C4%B1%20dok%C3%BCmanlar/islamophobia_qua_racial_discrimination.pdf.

issues seen as emblematic of Muslim incompatibility with European secular and liberal democracies, notably homophobia or anti-semitism, are persisting issues of tension among Christian and secular majorities in these countries.

Muslimophobia and Islamophobia were initially phenomena noted in countries with large Muslim immigrant populations, that is, former host countries. However, such prejudice and irrational fear also exists in the new host countries. The case of Greece's irregular migrant population that has arrived in the country since the late 2000s is an interesting case in point, which shows how a fundamentally socio-economic or humanitarian problem can be framed as a question of culture and religion.¹² Greece has an increasing Muslim immigrant population, which was, however, largely invisible until 2009. The vast majority of Muslim immigrants in Greece were in fact of Albanian origin and hence not practising Muslims, raising no claims for mosques, the wearing of headscarves or religious education. For Albanian Muslims, faith is largely a personal and private matter and has had little to do with their integration into Greek, predominantly Christian Orthodox, society.¹³ The South-East Asian immigrants who arrived in Greece from the mid-1990s were also mainly male workers who had left their families back home in Pakistan or Bangladesh. Hence there were no challenges of integration of Muslim children in schools, nor any women wearing the veil in public places (Lazarescu and Broersma 2010). Islam has, however, been instrumentalised, and with detrimental consequences, particularly by the far Right but also by conservative parties, as part of the irregular migration crisis.¹⁴

3. Distinguishing between problems of integration and jihadist terrorism

As argued above, Muslim populations in Europe face important socio-economic and cultural integration challenges. However, these should not be conceived as a generalised malaise that translates into widespread radicalisation. First, radicalisation has specific features that do not concern all migrant youths who face identity or employment challenges. Second, linking global geopolitical and largely symbolic issues with real-life problems of social acceptance, respect and discrimination in the labour market, is counterproductive for understanding and addressing these issues.

¹² Anna Triandafyllidou and Hara Kouki, "Muslim Immigrants and the Greek Nation: The Emergence of Nationalist Intolerance", in *Ethnicities*, Vol. 13, No. 6 (December 2013), p. 709-728.

¹³ Ifigenia Kokkali, "Being Albanian in Greece or Elsewhere. Negotiating the (National) Self in a Migration Context", in Fotini Tsibiridou & Nikitas Poulantzas (eds.), *Myths of the Other in the Balkans. Representations, Social Practices and Performances*, Thessaloniki, Via Egnatia Foundation, 2013, p. 197-209, <http://www.viaegnatiafoundation.eu/index.php/publications/myths-of-the-other>.

¹⁴ Anna Triandafyllidou and Hara Kouki, "Naturalizing Racism in the Center of Athens in May 2011: Lessons from Greece", in *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (2014), p. 418-436.

The problem with the fight against radicalisation and jihadist terrorism is twofold. On the one hand, we risk throwing out the baby with the bathwater: by concentrating on the handful of those who find an existential escape through espousing a particular understanding of Islam proposed by ISIS and its followers we risk suspecting, excluding, securitising the integration challenges that a vast number of Muslim youth faces in different European countries, challenges that have little to do with the religion itself and certainly even less to do with these youngsters' and their parents' countries of origin. On the other hand, of course we need to better understand the process of radicalisation that leads to extremist violence.

Emerson has distinguished between three forms of radicalisation emerging in Europe in the post 9/11 context:¹⁵ the first is of political-religious inspiration; its jihadist views are based on varied interpretations of Islamic texts that are presumed to call for a global violent jihad aiming to overthrow secular or at least non-Islamic regimes. A second type of radicalisation is predominantly religious but not political, inspired by theology and often acting as the breeding ground for the more radicalised violent trends outlined in the first type. This form of religious radicalisation may also involve more intimate forms of violence that relate to the family sphere, such as honour killings or the practice of female genital mutilation. A third type of radicalisation of both attitudes and behaviour is more closely linked to urban problems and socio-economic grievances faced by second-generation youth. Islam provides for a uniting umbrella for different ethnic groups. While grievances may concern poor housing, widespread unemployment and school failure, they may break out to take the form of violent unrest and political radicalisation verging towards the first or second types outlined above.

An important challenge in the fight against radicalisation is that we risk confusing global geopolitical challenges with local integration tensions. One of the lessons that have been learnt after 9/11 is that sometimes political discourses and policy measures overlap with one another, even if there is hardly any relationship between the two. Thus in the early 2000s the post 9/11 shock led to harsher controls over irregular migration and an overall securitisation of labour migration management while the perpetrators of international terrorist acts were not to be found among the poor and relatively low-skilled irregular migrant workers trying to enter Europe or North America. Indeed, the terrorists involved in the 9/11 events and in the Al Qaeda networks in Germany, Britain, Italy and other European countries were to be found among the well-educated and highly skilled migrants (and second-generation populations) that in both Europe and North America were competing to attract recruits at the time.¹⁶

¹⁵ Michael Emerson (ed.), *Ethno-religious Conflict in Europe. Typologies of Radicalisation in Europe's Muslim Communities*, Brussels, Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), 2009, p. 3-4, <http://www.ceps.eu/node/1622>.

¹⁶ See also Bill Jordan, Bo Stråth and Anna Triandafyllidou, "Contextualising Immigration Policy Implementation in Europe", in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (March 2003), p. 195-224.

Just like the 9/11 the terrorists were not to be found among the irregular migrants fleeing their countries in search of a better future, today's foreign fighters and extremists are not to be found among the vast majority of practising young Muslims who face school failure or unemployment or overall discrimination and prejudice in their European homelands. The motivations and social mechanisms through which these young people become foreign fighters in Syria or get involved in international terrorism conspiracies have more to do with a post-modern youth malaise that finds its expression through religious terrorism.

Olivier Roy has been theorising on the potential of Islamic terrorism for over a decade¹⁷ but he has also written extensively in response to the *Charlie Hebdo* events:

the radicalized young people are in no way the vanguard or the spokesmen of the Muslim population, and in particular, that there is no "Muslim community" in France. Radicalized young people, who rely heavily on an imagined Muslim politics (the *Ummah* of earlier times) are deliberately at odds with the Islam of their parents, as well as Muslim culture overall. They invent an Islam which opposes itself to the West. They come from the periphery of the Muslim world. They are moved to action by the displays of violence in the media of Western culture. They embody a generational rupture (parents now call the police when their children leave for Syria), and they are not involved with the local religious community and the neighborhood mosques. These young people practice self-radicalization on the Internet, searching for a global jihad. They are not interested in the tangible concerns of the Muslim world, such as Palestine. In short, they are not seeking the Islamization of the society in which they live but the realization of their sick fantasy of heroism ("We have avenged the Prophet Muhammad," claimed some of the killers at *Charlie Hebdo*).¹⁸

Roy points to a very interesting and relatively new phenomenon: the intertwining of local challenges of socio-economic integration with global geopolitical issues, which actually appears to be an offspring of the urban violent radicalisation that Emerson and co-authors observed in 2009.¹⁹ This new tendency, however, is now exacerbated and taken to new heights. There seems to be a tension between an increasingly interconnected world (through information technologies and cheap transport) and locally/nationally rooted integration processes. Local socio-economic grievances and the marginalisation of second-generation migrant youth thus are projected as localised expressions of global discourses of the "clash of civilisations" type. Marginalised youth is drawn into jihadist terrorism or far right-wing extremism and racism as local tensions or inequalities are interpreted with a

¹⁷ Olivier Roy, "EuroIslam. The Jihad within?", in *The National Interest*, No. 71 (Spring 2003), p. 63-73.

¹⁸ Olivier Roy, "There Are More French Muslims Working for French Security Than for Al Qaeda", in *The World Post*, 1 September 2015, <http://huff.to/1xNyl7b>.

¹⁹ See Michael Emerson (ed.), *Ethno-religious Conflict in Europe*, cit.

global inequality lens. The role of information and communication technology is also important here, as it allows for a global “performance” of young people’s unease, disillusionment and radical, indeed terrorist, choices.²⁰ Facebook announcements of becoming a jihadist fighter (or fighter’s wife), a level of public performativity and a new type of “the whole world is watching” (to paraphrase Todd Gitlin²¹) is at play here and becomes a catalyst for our way of thinking of local tensions and national policies.

Historical analysis would be of great use here too: to what extent are such lone idealist fighters similar to the Philhellenes of the Lord Byron and Garibaldi type national independence fighters of the 19th century? Is their readiness to die for an ideal, spiritual cause radically different from the Western left-wing terrorists of the 1970s such as the *Baader Meinhof* in Germany or the *Brigate Rosse* in Italy? We are in dire need of more detailed analysis of their recruitment processes and pathways for converting a disenchanting unemployed young person into a jihadist fighter. Donatella Della Porta’s work on the Red Brigades²² is illuminating with regard to left-wing terrorism: can it help us also to understand today’s resurgence of this time international political terrorism?

Today, geopolitics have taken up stronger religious and cultural connotations (such as those of the “War on Terror” or the overall Islamophobia discourses erupting in different places in Europe) than ever before. Indeed, in the mid-1980s the Rushdie affair in Britain caused both internal and international upheaval and led to Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa against the writer because of his blasphemous novel, *Satanic Verses*. However the connection at that time between global geopolitics and domestic politics around Muslim integration was much more tenuous, and therefore seen as exceptional, than the level it has achieved in the post 9/11 period where it has been seen as dominant in the overall debate about Muslim integration. Addressing these challenges today requires acknowledging this reciprocal projection of the local and the global which appear to feed on one another, usually with detrimental results for tolerance and respect.

Conclusions

European public opinion and political leaders, squeezed by a chain of problems – notably a fragile recovery from a six-year financial and economic crisis, an imploding Middle East and political unrest and instability across several Arab

²⁰ Olivier Roy, “Al-Qaeda in the West as a Youth Movement: The Power of a Narrative”, in Michael Emerson (ed.), *Ethno-religious Conflict in Europe*, cit., p. 11-26; Olivier Roy, “There Are More French Muslims Working for French Security Than for Al Qaeda”, cit.

²¹ Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching. Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left*, 2nd edn, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2003.

²² Donatella Della Porta, “Recruitment Processes in Clandestine Political Organizations: Italian Left-Wing Terrorism”, in *International Social Movement Research*, Vol. 1 (1988), p. 155-189, http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic1458086.files/Porta_recruitment.pdf.

countries, important pressures of labour migration from Asia and Africa, and the persistent challenge of the socio-cultural integration of migrants and minorities – are tempted to put all eggs into one basket and fit the different challenges into a one-size-fits-all explanation based on a presumed “clash of civilisations” (to use Huntington’s (in)famous term). Yet the threat takes on different forms: it is a cultural invasion from within, a terrorist network creeping into society, a geopolitical invasion from outside as announced by ISIS with its terrorist attacks in Tunisia or Egypt. In short, the different types of migrant communities or population flows are conflated to create one common perception and profile of threat and danger.

A local and informed focus on local and national problems and tensions of integration would be far more beneficial for addressing the poor educational attainment or labour market insertion of Muslim or other immigrant youth in many European countries, while security and terrorism challenges should remain within the realm of international affairs, rather than being conflated and projected into some sort of “evil” Muslim or “enemy within.” Already 15 years after 9/11 we should not conflate current issues with entirely different problems.

Several stakeholders can play a positive role in helping to disentangle jihadist terrorism and security issues from socio-economic integration and cultural acceptance challenges:

- The media have an important role to play in leading a debate that is informed by serious analysis of the jihadist terrorism phenomenon as one of recruitment of marginalised youth to terrorism rather than as one linked to Muslim communities’ (failed) integration into European societies.
- Likewise the media need to discuss the root causes of Muslim socio-economic inclusion by giving voice to all parties involved – recent research (see the MEDIVA project²³) has shown that migrants’ and ethnic minorities’ voices are often unheard, not even on issues of their direct concern.
- Policy makers, particularly at the local level, need to listen carefully to the challenges that marginalised youth face in local communities: research has shown that policy makers tend to underestimate the challenges faced by Muslim populations, particularly after 9/11, in terms of being treated as the “enemy within.”²⁴
- Educators, social workers and employment officers need to work more closely with migrant and minority youth to prevent radicalisation and terrorism becoming the only seemingly successful way out of a personal socio-economic and identity impasse.

Updated 18 May 2015

²³ For more information see: <http://www.eui.eu/Projects/MEDIVA>.

²⁴ Jocelyne Cesari, “The Securitisation of Islam in Europe”, in *CEPS Challenge Papers*, No. 15 (April 2009), <http://aei.pitt.edu/10763>.

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