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Islam as a challenge to the liberal democratic nation state : a comparison of France and Poland

Islam as a Challenge to the Liberal Democratic Nation State: A Comparison of France and Poland

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Introduction

Islam has had its role to play in the building of Europe. It arrived in the continent with Muslim rule in Spain and Italy in the eighth century, with Mongol armies and Ottoman expansion into the Balkans and central part of Europe. This period of invasion onto Spanish and Italian soil had a huge impact on European culture[1], with the invaders leaving permanent communities settled in central and Eastern Europe[2]. However, up until now, Islam has not been seen as an important academic theme within social sciences, but events in the Islamic world, such as political struggle in countries like Saudi Arabia, armed conflicts and terrorism, have increased global interest and a negative image of Muslims[3].

The main debate circulating around Islam is that it is seen as a challenge to the liberal democratic nation state and, as suggested by thematic literature, two factors determine the accommodation of Islam within the European framework. First, as Gerholm and Lithman argue, the Islamic system of values that creates identity differs significantly from the liberal, European way of life[4]. Their perspective meets the critics in more current academic debates that focus on politics, and mainly the politics of recognition. The second approach states that, in the case of Muslims, it is not the recognition of their cultural differences, which are also noticed in other minority groups such as Hindus or Sikhs, that is the priority, but the need to be recognized and included in the mainstream. The visibility of Muslim groups, caused by their large numbers and differences in clothing, customs and way of life, results in public controversies. Muslims are touched by prejudices that are the result of misunderstandings (lack of awareness of the Islamic religion) and fear (e.g. of something alien). It is increased by processes of integration at the European Union

1   Watt M. (1972) *The Influence of Islam on Medieval Europe,* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

2   Nonneman G., Niblock T. and Szajkowski B. (1996) (eds) *Muslim Communities in Europe*, London: Ithaca Press.

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(United Kingdom)

3   Zemni S. and Parker C. (2002) ,Islam, the European Union, and the Challenge of Multiculturalism', in Shireen T. and Hunter S. T. (eds) *Islam, Europe's Second Religion. The New Social, Cultural and Political Landscape*, Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, pp. 231-244.

4   Gerholm T. and Lithman Y. G. (1988) (eds) *The New Islamic Presence in Western Europe*, London and New York: Mansell.

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level, which puts in crisis the national identities of individual nation states, otherwise known as the 'internal identity problem' and increases the treatment of immigrants as 'second-class citizens'[5]. Additionally, there is the behaviour of Muslims, which sometimes exaggerates aspects of their religion in non-Muslim society, as seen in high-profile events like the Rushdie affair in Britain in 1989 followed by *L'affaire du foulard* in France in the same year.

This essay discusses the main aspects of Islam that pose a challenge to the liberal democratic nation state and considers the implications of it. It focuses on the political dimensions of Islam and confronts this with the politics of recognition. The essay rests on two arguments. First, it argues that Islam is a challenge to democratic states; however, the difficulties and its degree of appearance vary within European countries. Secondly, it asserts that the presence of Muslim minority groups causes public controversies because it challenges political traditions grounded in history and existing systems rather than universal democratic values.

The theoretical framework of this essay situates the question around the receiving societies. It investigates the topic on a macro-level, paying particular interest to the structural, political and legal conditions that shape the challenge of Islam to liberal nation states. The state is the unit of analysis which is supported by secondary data.

In the first section, the main approaches to Islam by liberal democracies are investigated. These include three main authors' positions regarding the politics of recognition, with interest in religion and liberal countries. Tariq Ramadan focuses on the importance of understanding religion, Tariq Modood's interest lies mainly in politics, while Charles Taylor approaches the topic from a philosophical angle. Thus, it may not seem a purely sociological essay. Nevertheless, Islam in Europe relates to broader issues and it is believed that the setting of such an important topic on multidisciplinary theories helps to build better understanding and interpretations and, perhaps, solutions to Islam being seen as a challenge to Europe.

A similar reason is the basis for the next part of the essay. The discussion undertaken refers to two examples from Europe in order to compare to what degree Islam is a challenge in different countries and how these countries cope with it. It is believed here that some broader comparison is required. Mostly, scholarly interest is dominated by comparison between western European countries[6], while there has been little research done on central and Eastern Europe. However, it is stated that comparing an 'old' European country with a state from the enlarged Europe would help with ascertaining new ways of understanding and approaching the topic. Following this reasoning, the countries chosen for investigation are France and Poland. They are very distinctive from each other in terms of accommodating Islam into

5   See: Balibar E. (2000) ‚Bestaat de Europese burger? Over Europese identiteit en burgerschap', *Samenleving en Politiek*, vol.7: 25-33; Buzan B. (1991) 'New Patterns of Global Security in the Twenty-First Century', *International Affairs*, vol. 67: 431-451; Delgado-Moreira J. M. (1997) 'Cultural Citizenship and the Creation of European Identity', in *Electronic Journal of Sociology*, available at http://www.sociology.org/content/vol002.003/delgado.html.

6   E.g. Koopmans R. et al. (2005) *Contested Citizenship. Immigration and Cultural Diversity in Europe*, Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.

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their mainstream and in establishing the place of minority groups' religions.

Academic Debates on Islam as a Challenge to Liberal Nation States

Scholarly thoughts about Muslims in Europe have their source of interest in broader controversies, in which Islam appears as everything that is non-European. The famous Clash of Civilization theory proposed by Huntington states that Islam is a changeless religion that clashes with Western liberalism and aims to universalize everything in its own pattern[7]. Huntington argues that cooperation or peace is less possible between Islamic and Western worlds and that their relationship is supposed to be of conflictual nature. Opposing this theory, an idea of dialogue among civilizations arose and was followed by a more expanded idea, constituting intercultural and interreligious dialogue and cooperation. These concepts are more helpful in accommodating Islam and its distinctiveness within a European framework. Both these initiatives based on dialogue came from politicians, but the most respected current social science academics seem to have similar views.

As mentioned earlier, in academic debate, thoughts about Islam in liberal nation states come from three significant scholars. The first position is represented by Taylor[8], who does not consider Islam in the politics of recognition within the European context. His argument for this exclusion is that Islam does not separate

politics and religion. Thus, if the politics and faith belief are one, it cannot have its own place within a major, non-Islamic political system. The same position is taken by Mouffe and Leveau[9]. However, Taylor's and his supporters' view that Islam has one, inseparable dimension that mixes religious beliefs and politics seems to be a weak point in their analysis. Leveau and Hunter cite problems occurring in the Islamic world and Islam's political revival, mainly fundamentalism, as evidence[10]. But they are wrongly taken as being part of religious faith. The same should be said about religious leaders expressing their ideologies. Such leaders are present in each religious faith and should not be presented as proof[11].

A more moderate approach is offered by Koopmans et al. in their investigation of Muslims' claim-making in Europe[12]. They say that Islam has civic and religious functions, expressed by its community life and activities taking place in mosques. Ramadan, a European Muslim scholar, strongly emphasises the meaning of religion and its dimensions. He says that Islam has two dimensions, religious and political, and this differentiation has its sources in Muslim philosophy from

7 Huntington S. P. (1996) *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York: Simon and Schuster.

8 Taylor C. (1994) *Multiculturalism*, New Yersey: Princeton University Press.

9 See Mouffe C. (1993) *The Return of the Political*, London: Verso and Leveau R. (1988) 'The Islamic Presence in France', in Gerholm T. and Lithman Y. G. (eds) *The New Islamic Presence in Western Europe*, London and New York: Mansell, pp. 107-122.

10 Leveau R. and Hunter S. T. (2002) 'Islam in France', in Shireen T. and Hunter S. T. (eds) *Islam, Europe's Second Religion. The New Social, Cultural and Political Landscape*, Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, pp. 3-28.

11 Modood T. (2000) *Multiculturalism. A Civic Idea*, Cambridge and Malden: Polity.

12 Koopmans R., Statham P., Giugni M., and Passy F. (2005) *Contested Citizenship. Immigration and Cultural Diversity in Europe*, Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, pp.174-175.

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the Middle Ages[13]. He points out that non-Muslims and some Muslims may think about politics and religion as being one and the same, but this is a matter of their interpretation of the Qur'an and the Sunna. Moreover, Ramadan argues that it is not Muslims' aim to negate the universal ideals of democratic Europe, but rather they intend to adopt good aspects of Western life. He supports his position by giving an example of the peaceful penetration of Africa and Asia in the past and applies it to the present situation. Although his argument may seem to be true of some countries, the same cannot be said about all of them. A good example is India, in Punjab particularly, where Muslim occupation has not been bloodless. And in Europe, the Spanish *Reconquista* confirms that the Muslim-European relationship has not run at peace as suggested by Ramadan, who applies the past to the current Western world.

If Ramadan's argument is applied to second- and third-generation Muslims, meaning those born in liberal Europe, it starts to make sense. In this case, even more should be said, namely that these young Muslims keep the universal rules given by their birth country and apply only some good things from their parents' faith system. As such, the essence of Ramadan's argument[14], that Islam should be included in the politics of

recognition on the basis that Europeans will understand Muslims' belief system and its distinctiveness and Muslims will apply their needs to Europe's social, cultural and political values, is understandable. It is supported by the history of Muslims in Poland. This group was a minority in terms of its small numbers, but their status was, and still is, seen as an integral part of the 'Polish nation'[15].

The last approach comes from one of the most famous multiculturalists, Modood[16]. He narrows his argument to the political aspect. In his view, people should not focus on religion but on people and their right to be different, both as individuals and as groups and, as such, Muslims have the right to be recognised and included in the politics of recognition on the same basis as other minority groups. It seems to be right, at least from the perspective of liberal democracy. As Miller says, public recognition and special representation should be guaranteed to minority groups, if the group is not included in full participation in public life[17]. If one follows Modood's reasoning, it comes down to the point of national identity. For Modood it is very important to have such identity. He says that Muslims should have a sense of belonging to their country of residence and only this can 'make a success of a multicultural society'[18]. As

13   Ramadan T. (2002) ,Europenization of Islam or Islamization of Europe?', in Shireen T. and Hunter S. T. (eds) *Islam, Europe's Second Religion. The New Social, Cultural and Political Landscape*, Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, pp. 207-218.

14   See Ramadan T. (2002) ,Islam and Muslims in Europe: A silent Revolution toward Rediscovery', in Haddad Y. Y. (eds) *Muslims in the West: From Sojourners to Citizens*, Oxford: Oxford University Press and Ramadan T. (2002) 'Europenization of Islam or Islamization of Europe?', in Shireen T. and Hunter S. T. (eds) *Islam, Europe's Second Religion. The New Social, Cultural and Political Landscape*, Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, pp. 207-218.

15   Hellyer H. A. (2009) *Muslims of Europe: The Other Europeans*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

16   Modood T. (2000) *Multiculturalism. A Civic Idea*, Cambridge and Malden: Polity and Modood T. (2000) 'Anti-Essentialism, Multiculturalism, and the 'Recognition' of Religious Groups', in Kymlicka W. and Norman W. (eds) *Citizenship in Diverse Societies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

17   Miller D. (1995) *On Nationality*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

18   Modood T. (2000) *Multiculturalism. A Civic Idea*, Cambridge and Malden: Polity, pp. 150.

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a survey carried out in Britain in 2006 showed, 82% of Muslims felt that the British identity is the one they feel closest to[19]. However, the growing transnational Muslim community exemplifies that this minority group feels strong roots also with their countries of origin[20]. A significant impact of the Islamic world is shaping the identity of European Muslims and appears to be one of disturbance in making a multicultural society that should be based on national identity. Some authors disagree with Modood[21]. Young argues that national identity is a basis for a successful democratic country but the politics of difference prevents formation of such identity. He says:

'National identity is the basis of trust among groups necessary for an orderly and human democratic government. Individuals can develop and express their ethnic or other group identities, such as their Jewish identity, but the national identity must be universal and neutral, as the commitment to a common political culture that transcends these specificities'[22].

Following such reasoning, social difference is not identity. The main thrust of it is that groups may make claims on the basis of national identity, which they should share with the major group.

The next part of the essay explores the cases of France and Poland as states being challenged by Islam. Comparison between them shows

that Taylor's position is implied in the French case, which would be improved by application of Modood's ideas. Ramadan's approach finds its applications in the case of Poland, while at the same time it is shown that institutional recognition of Islam may contribute to better understanding of national identity.

Comparative Case Studies: France and Poland

In this section, France is compared with Poland in order to investigate to what degree and in what ways Islam can be seen as a challenge to different democratic states. The first difference between these countries that should be noted is their own citizenship within the European Union framework. France is a well-established EU country, while Poland has been seen as a country sharing and accepting values of democracy, freedom and tolerance since the 1990s, and from that time has been treated as a natural extension of Europe[23]. Nevertheless, Muslims in Poland have been present since the 13th century, almost five centuries earlier than those in France. Their presence was a result of a Mongol invasion of Eastern Europe[24] and the permanent community of Tatars that remained is fully settled and integrated into Polish society. The Tatars' integration in such a different culture as rooted in Polish society can be explained by Ramadan's argument about Muslims who integrate into the main society and take from it what is good without negating their fundamental

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19   Survey on Muslims' national identity (Channel 4: 2006), available at http://www.channel4.com/news/microsites/D/dispatches2006/muslim_survey/index.html

20   Kastoryano R. (2002) *Negotiating Identities: States and Immigrants in France and Germany*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

21   E.g. Young I. M. (2000) *Inclusion and Democracy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

22   Ibid., pp. 85.

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23   Dunkerley D. et al. (2002) *Changing Europe. Identities, Nations and Citizens*, London and New York: Routledge.

24   Nielsen J. (1992) *Muslims in Western Europe*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

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principles. In contrast, Muslims arrived in France as a result of the period of the French empire. They were, and still are, mainly from Maghreb, West Africa, but also some are from Turkey or Tunisia. Firstly they came as male immigrants and became visible when family members, including wives, were allowed to join them.

In both countries, Muslims powered the ranks of the armies during periods of war. The French government rewarded the effort of nearly 200,000 Algerians fighting with France during World War I with a grant to build a mosque in Paris[25]. Tatars fought in the Polish army several times and were awarded a significant size of land in Poland by King Sobieski. The loyalty shown by the Tatars helped with the process of integration and is still remembered and appreciated by Polish society[26].

Religious regulations in France and Poland differ from each other. The 'universal system of regulation', which treats all religions equally (but with exception to Islam), is applied in France. Poland regulates religions by the 'system of recognition *lato sensu*', which 'subjects the granting of status to religions to prior procedures and/ or inspections, applying the regulations to some religions and excluding all others'[27]. The institutionalisation of Islam on an Eastern European level was achieved a long time ago. On this basis, Islam has its institutional representation. Polish Muslims established organisations with a system of hierarchies and with the leadership of the mufti. As Marechal writes:

'The governments of Eastern Europe and the systems of the recognition type appear often as the most advanced on the institutional level. The existence of recognition procedures appears to provide the most favourable environment for the institutionalisation of Islam'[28].

The same does not apply to western Europe, where recognition of Islam and its institutional representativeness are recent issues. The Islamic dress code, customs and way of life resulted in dissatisfaction and a challenge to secular French society[29]. It was reinforced by the headscarves affair in 1989, which determined the problem of Muslim integration. The situation of Islam in France is complicated because of the French concept of secularism (*laïcité*) and trend of assimilation. As mentioned earlier, Leveau points out that the interest in politics in Islamic countries and not France is a result of secularism[30]. He argues that due to not having recognition in French politics and not receiving support to maintain themselves as a group, such as financial aid to build mosques, Muslims seek help from Islamic countries. But as Ramadan says, this mainly

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25   Leveau R. (1988) ‚The Islamic Presence in France', in Gerholm T. and Lithman Y. G. (eds) *The New Islamic Presence in Western Europe*, London and New York: Mansell, pp. 107-122.

26   Szajkowski B. (1997), Muslim Minority in Poland', in Vertovec S. and Peach C. (eds) *Islam in Europe. The Politics of Religion and Community*, London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, pp. 91-100.

27   Marechal B. (2003) ‚Institutionalisation of Islam and Representative Organisations for dealing with European States', in Marechal B., Allievi S., Dassetto F., and Nielsen J. (eds) *Muslims in the Enlarged Europe. Religion and Society*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, pp. 151-182: 154.

28   Ibid., pp. 178.

29   See Andezian S. (1988) ‚Migrant Muslim Women in France', in Gerholm T. and Lithman Y. G. *The New Islamic Presence in Western Europe*, London and New York: Mansell, pp.196-204 and Hunter S. T. (2002) ‘Introduction', in Shireen T. and Hunter S. T. (eds) *Islam, Europe's Second Religion. The New Social, Cultural and Political Landscape*, Westport, Connecticu and London: Praeger.

30   Leveau R. (1988) ‚The Islamic Presence in France', in Gerholm T. and Lithman Y. G. (eds) *The New Islamic Presence in Western Europe*, London and New York: Mansell, pp. 107-122.

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relates to the first generation of immigrants[31]. The second generation's concern lies particularly in building a new, hyphenated identity, the identity of 'European Muslim'. This is seen to be a good sign of the Europeanisation of Islam but as Leveau and Hunter suggest, it will not succeed if it is done as it is now, namely by practical and comparative measures[32]. Legislation is required. Another issue is that such Europeanisation of Islam is seen in its secularisation. A survey conducted in France at the beginning of the 1980s confirmed a major decline in the practising of Islam across the intergenerational line[33]. Due to such change and some opposition to the existing national system, the French realised that the need to explore the meaning of pluralism is stronger than ever before. As Cesari writes:

'Pluralism can no longer mean equal opportunity in socioeconomic advancement for deprived groups. Instead, it must refer to political balance between the need for recognising ethnic and cultural differences at the institutional level and the need for maintaining political and cultural cohesion throughout the nation'[34].

The appearance of such arguments is a progressive change towards Islamic challenges in France, but the major problem for both sides is that neither is ready to cope with the implications of such understood pluralism and this is what is slowing down the development of it.

In France, there are mainly two types of Muslims, immigrants and their offspring, known as second generation. From this, development of Islamic identity is seen as having an inter-generational dimension[35]. 'Old' Muslims, the immigrants, are more radical and tend to alienate themselves from non-Muslims and to apply their home countries' politics to the European context. Those Muslims born in Europe co-exist with a broader community and are more interested in their country of birth, as they know less about the politics of their parents' homeland. The 'New Muslims', as Mandaville suggests, are believed to be a bridge between Islam and the French *laïcité*[36]. In Poland, in addition to the Tatars, there are two more Muslims groups: the Chechenyan, who are not considered here as they are refugees and have no influence on their situation. Moreover, they perceive Poland as a transitory country[37]. The other group consists of Muslims newcomers who typically come from Turkey, Arab countries and Pakistan. They are much less liberal than the integrated Tatars, who understand and accept the Polish identity. As Muslim minorities, the newcomers have the

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31 Ramadan T. (2002) ‚Europenization of Islam or Islamization of Europe?', in Shireen T. and Hunter S. T. (eds) *Islam, Europe's Second Religion. The New Social, Cultural and Political Landscape*, Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, pp. 207-218.

32 Leveau R. and Hunter S. T. (2002) ‚Islam in France', in Shireen T. and Hunter S. T. (eds) *Islam, Europe's Second Religion. The New Social, Cultural and Political Landscape*, Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, pp. 3-28: 25.

33 Nielsen J. (1992) *Muslims in Western Europe*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 20.

34 Cesari J. (2002) ‚Islam in France: The Shaping of a Religious Minority', in Yazbeck Haddad Y. (eds) *Muslims in the West. From Sojourness to Citizens*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 49.

35 Mandaville P. P. (2002) ‚Muslim Youth in Europe', in Shireen T. and Hunter S. T. (eds) *Islam, Europe's Second Religion. The New Social, Cultural and Political Landscape*, Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, pp. 219-229.

36 Ibid.

37 Weinar A. (2007) ‚Multiculturalism debates in Poland', in Emilie Report *A European Approach to Multicultural Citizenship. Legal, Political and Educational Challenges*, available at http://emilie.eliamep.gr/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/wp6_poland.pdf.

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same rights and recognition as Tatars. According to Ramadan, Muslims in Europe try to accommodate themselves as they did in the past, but the case of Muslim immigrants in Poland shows that it does not necessarily work in this way. These foreigners seek new organisational structures within Polish Muslim organisations by arguing that the old structures do not match the needs of present-day Islam and that the Polish Tatars are far too liberal. Currently, problems within the Muslim minority in Poland are serious, as the Tatars seem to contradict the newcomers' expectations. Other scholars, like Wiktor-Mach, see new Muslims in Poland as being moderate and also interested in integration with Polish society by promotion of Wasatiyya, or the 'middle way'[38]. The concept corresponds with the views of Ramadan and Chazbijewicz, a Polish Tatar leader, that Islam should emphasise its fundamental principles and be more liberal about secondary things and, by this, be more flexible about integrating with democratic nation states[39]. There are some signs of fear within the Polish mainstream that new Muslims in the country are fundamentalist. Currently, these fears are manifesting themselves in a protest against the building of a mosque in the centre of Warsaw. Uncertainty has been growing from the fact that plans for the new mosque have come from the initiatives of Muslim newcomers who are not from the same organisations as the Polish Tatars and

who are accused of having radical tendencies. The reasons for new, negative attitudes toward Islam are uncertain, but there are some suggestions, e.g. by Weinar, that they come from observation of the situation in western Europe, particularly France[40]. However, not enough investigation has been done to prove that Islam causes controversy in the mainstream and there is a lack of research on Tatar-Muslim newcomers' conflict.

According to Ramadan, accommodation of Muslims in Europe requires four strategies to be applied[41]. These cover Islamic dialogue, financial and political independence, which is now replaced by being dependent on external powers, more developed organisations allowing Muslims to contribute and the engagement of Muslims in European politics. Similarly, Haddad sees governments as being responsible for solving social problems, acts of discrimination and racism[42]. However, despite these authors providing constructive solutions, they are, in some sense, describing a kind of Utopia. This is because there is little space for dialogue between religions in European legacy. This is especially the case in France, where most focus is placed on the assimilationist trend. Instead of this, Pauly proposes a strategy that emphasises development of the definition of identity[43]. As identity is a narrow

38   Wiktor-Mach D. (2008) *Muslim Organizations in Poland,* available at https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/1887/17256/1/ISIM_22_Muslim_Organizations_in_Poland.pdf.

39   See Ramadan T. (2002), Europenization of Islam or Islamization of Europe?', in Shireen T. and Hunter S. T. (eds) *Islam, Europe's Second Religion. The New Social, Cultural and Political Landscape*, Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, pp. 207-218 and Chazbijewicz S. (2006) 'Turning a Face towards the East and West', in *The Polish Tatars Yearly*, 11: 20-33.

40   Weinar A. (2007) ,Multiculturalism debates in Poland', in Emilie Report *A European Approach to Multicultural Citizenship. Legal, Political and Educational Challenges*, available at http://emilie.eliamep.gr/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/wp6_poland.pdf.

41   Ramadan T. (1999) *To be a European Muslim. A study of Islamic Sources in the European Context*, Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, pp. 155-156.

42   Haddad Y. Y. (1999) ,The Globalization of Islam: The Return of Muslims to the West', in Esposito J. L. (eds) *Oxford History of Islam*, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 600-641.

43   Pauly R. J. (2004) *Islam in Europe. Integration or*

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and controversial term when used about religious groups of Muslims, it is proposed that focus shifts to development of the definition of citizenship on the basis provided by Smith of his Europe being a 'family of cultures'[44]. But, more importantly, as it was mentioned earlier, changes are required at an institutional level.

Conclusion

This essay has tried to explore the degree and ways in which Islam is a challenge to the liberal democratic nation state and why it causes public controversies across Europe. Firstly, it has argued that Islam is a challenge to liberal nation states but the degree and problems that can appear vary within European countries. Secondly, it states that Islam challenges political traditions grounded in history and existing systems, rather than universal democratic values. The background for the discussion consists of three main approaches within social sciences. Taylor's position is seen as being at fault because it does not include Islam in the politics of recognition and supports it only by suggesting that politics and religion in Islam cannot be separated. An opposing approach comes from Ramadan, who includes Islam in the politics of recognition and places emphasis on the understanding of religion. Modood also includes Islam but focuses on Islamic difference as being equal to other minorities. The theoretical discussion was followed by the comparative case studies of France and Poland as countries that view the 'Islamic challenge' in different ways.

Regarding the approaches employed in this essay, the comparative studies lead to the conclusion that Islam is a challenge to democratic nation states, but the degree of challenge is not the same for all countries. France, with its secular and universalistic tendencies, seems to have serious difficulties with accommodating Islam. Incorporation of Islam and its recognition is refused. There are some suggestions to change the way of thinking about pluralism but neither the French mainstream nor Muslims seem ready to adopt this. Poland, despite being a strongly Catholic country, seems to cope better with Islam. The religion is politically recognised and strongly rooted in the Polish tradition. Some difficulties have arisen following the arrival of new Muslim immigrants, who are perceived as being more radical than the very 'Polish' Tatars. Public controversies did not exist until the building of a new mosque in Warsaw started, but such controversies seem to be influenced by the media's portrayal of western Europe's problems with Islam.

This conclusion is important because it shows that Muslims are not working contrary to universal, democratic values, but rather are facing difficulties with integration because of existing political traditions and systems. This allows the conclusion that such a situation could change and bring progressive effects. A good adaptation of Muslims and their needs in the European context would be possible if steps were undertaken at an institutional level, focusing on national identity and common cultural content. The case of Poland, particularly regarding their Tatar Muslim community, could be a useful model for Western countries because it proves that Muslims can be

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Marginalization?, Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 150.

44   Smith A. D. (1992) ,National Identity and the Idea of European Unity', *International Affairs*, vol. 68: 55-76.

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part of the mainstream and form part of Europe, while simultaneously retaining their Islamic identity. It should be understood at an institutional level, where Islam meets legal barriers, and by Muslims' willingness to be naturalised. However, to date, this has proved to be a Utopian vision for most European countries and Islam is going to continue being a challenge and a cause of public controversies.

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**Islam as a Challenge to the Liberal Democratic Nation State:
A Comparison of France and Poland**

Abstract

This article attempts to examine Islam as a challenge to the liberal democratic nation states by comparing its representation and recognition in France and Poland. A comparison of incorporation of Islam in a well established French democracy to a country sharing European democratic values since 1990s, allows investigating the topic from a new perspective. This article argues that the degree of Islamic challenge to democratic nation states vary within European countries and that ''Muslim minority'' challenges political traditions in individual countries rather than universal democratic values.

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