

Wiener Beiträge zur Islamforschung

Ednan Aslan · Ranja Ebrahim  
Marcia Hermansen *Editors*

# Islam, Religions, and Pluralism in Europe



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# Wiener Beiträge zur Islamforschung

**Herausgegeben von**

E. Aslan, Wien, Austria

Die Buchreihe „Wiener Beiträge zur Islamforschung“ beschäftigt sich mit interdisziplinären Studien aus den Fachbereich der Islamischen Theologie und Religionspädagogik sowie der Religionswissenschaft und Philosophie. Die Forschungsschwerpunkte des Herausgebers, Professor Ednan Aslan, liegen auf Themen wie Islam in Europa, der Theorie der islamischen Erziehung in Europa sowie Fragen zu Muslimen an öffentlichen Schulen und Islamischer Theologie mit europäischer Prägung.

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## Foreword

Religious pluralism has become a central challenge of our time. According to the latest statistical data, religious diversity in Europe is on the rise due to growing globalization including flows of migrants and of information at an unprecedented level. As a result, religion has become a topic of public discussion both in Europe and elsewhere worldwide. Any serious discussion of pluralism today must take religion into account. This process has resulted in a debate regarding to what extent a particular society can tolerate religious diversity and how much religious pluralism each society is willing to allow and accommodate. Thus, religious issues seem to be particularly crucial in discussing the means for fostering social pluralism and the coexistence of diverse communities.

It is obvious that religious plurality needs to be taken into consideration in all areas of society today. The issues and challenges that societies face with regard to pluralism go far beyond phenomena related to migration, since pluralism can no longer be understood only as a result of migration. In light of the complexity of the problem and the significant regional differences, and even more so in light of what is at stake with regard to society, its individual citizens, and their religious understandings, it is not surprising that in the current situation no unilinear, straightforward, and generally consensual solutions exist in Europe.

Therefore, it is all the more important in this process to create plausible patterns of interpretation and stable forms of order that can allow the diverse tensions which are emerging, on the one hand, between religions and, on the other hand, in the relationship between religion, politics, and culture, to be resolved.

This volume is the result of a conference on Religion and Pluralism in Europe, which took place in October 2014 in Montenegro. It attempts to address the challenge of determining how diverse models and strategies can deal with religious pluralism in Europe. The theme of the conference recognizes that the challenges currently facing religions under the new circumstances in Europe were previously virtually unknown in its history. These challenges encompass not only the need to scrutinize theological stances toward other religions, but also for religious and political leadership to redefine patterns and forms of religiosity in relation to new social realities.

Without restricting the treatment of religious pluralism to a theological task in the process, the Abrahamic religions, which largely shape the religious landscape in Europe, bear a special responsibility for dealing with religious pluralism in relation to their theologies in such a way that they can succeed in living together in peace without giving up the unique religious identities of their respective adherents.

The central question for religions is therefore: What is the relationship between the plurality of religions and the truth claims of particular religions? The answer to this question can potentially lead religions to recognize the diversity of truth, but might also lead to division and conflict in the name of God. In this regard, the main task ahead for the religions is to discover a way to highlight their common understandings and promote social solidarity regardless of any theological debates.

The Bible describes God's message as a light: "And that is the message that we heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and that in Him is no darkness" (1 John: 1: 5). Even Jesus is presented as the light of the world: "Jesus spoke to them, saying, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8: 12).

Likewise, in the Qur'an, God describes himself as the light which leads people from darkness to liberation and enlightenment, as follows:

God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The parable of His light is, as it were, that of a niche containing a lamp; the lamp is [enclosed] in glass, the glass [shining] like a radiant star: [a lamp] lit from a blessed tree – an olive tree that is neither of the east nor of the west – the oil whereof [is so bright that it] would well-nigh give light [of itself] even though fire had not touched it: light upon light! (Qur'an 24:35).

Similar images can be found in almost all religions, i. e., that God wants to lead people out of chaos, oppression, and deficiency. Out of their awareness of this divine mandate, people further have the task of leading one another from the darkness to light.

The ways of structuring this process may differ and even repeatedly lead to the emergence of contradictions, dissimilar attributions, and divergent interpretations. Despite this potential for differentiation, it is always possible to find in this godly devotion a peaceful and common path that can lead people to light. The qur'anic response would be to find a potential compromise in spite of possible contradictions.

Through the diverse contributions of its scholarly authors, this volume attempts to investigate the challenges that religious pluralism presents and to highlight the opportunities that it offers, in order to ultimately underscore the importance of peace among religions as an essential element of world peace.

Ednan Aslan  
Vienna June 2015

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# Introduction

## Islam, Religions, and Pluralism in Europe

Marcia K. Hermansen

The papers collected in this volume were presented at a conference convened in Podgorica, Montenegro, in October 2014. Scholars from a range of academic institutions and disciplines gathered to discuss the topic “Islam, Religions and Pluralism in Europe” and its broad implications and challenges from a range of perspectives, participating in what one participant termed “interdisciplinary and intercultural discourses”.<sup>1</sup> This theme allowed participants from diverse nations and societies in Europe and even from outside of Europe to discuss contemporary social and political situations as well as current debates and legislation surrounding pluralism, whether religious, social, or legal.

Participants from various fields including educationists, sociologists, political scientists, theologians, philosophers, and scholars of religious studies, including specialists in Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, discussed a range of topics germane to the conference theme.

In the course of deliberations over three days, a number of the presenters drew attention to the distinction between plurality as a condition of social, ethnic, and religious diversity and pluralism as the embrace or advocacy of that condition. Increased immigration into Europe in recent decades, in particular from traditionally Muslim countries, has brought to the fore discussions surrounding the appropriate role of the state in fostering coexistence among diverse populations. At the same time the responsibilities of immigrants from diverse backgrounds, especially Muslims, to engage with the social and normative contexts in which

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1 Andres Telser in this volume.

they now find themselves were also considered. A number of scholars observed that currently “the Muslim question” dominates public discourse about religion and its regulation by the state.

The geographical range and diversity of the conference participants, many of whom came from the Balkans, remind us that plurality of ethnic and religious elements among European populations is long-standing. The case of the protracted violent struggles of the 1990s in that region of Europe also serves as a caution regarding the cost of not fostering interreligious and intercultural dialogue. While in Western Europe religious and ethnic minorities and, in particular, Muslim minorities live in contexts primarily shaped by post-World War II immigration patterns, in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, Muslim populations may have been present for many centuries, yet their incorporation into full and equal citizenship may still be questioned or contested. It is clear that the Balkan region represents an appropriate location for considering issues of plurality, especially religious and ethnic plurality. The location of the meeting in Podgorica, Montenegro, served as an important reminder that Muslims have long constituted a part of many European societies.

A further task of many papers presented at this conference was to represent some of the current models, resources, and theories of religious plurality. On the theological front, the schema proposed by Christian theologians Alan Race and Paul Hedges—who offer the categories of religious exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism<sup>2</sup>—was favored as providing a clear tool for assessing both classical and contemporary theological positions within a given religious tradition.

In an era of globalization, flows of ideas and populations, as well as information, challenge traditional theological positions on the religious “other”. As a consequence, pre-modern exclusivist understandings of religious plurality are increasingly coming under discussion and in many cases being adapted toward more inclusive models. Schweitzer, for example, provides in his chapter background on the Roman Catholic experience of Vatican II and subsequent pronouncements, in which the Church revised its classical exclusivist positions on other faith traditions and attempted to find theological common ground, especially with the other Abrahamic faiths, Judaism and Islam.

At the same time, Muslims who now live as minorities in Europe and the Americas, as well as a range of liberal Muslim intellectuals, have responded to contemporary challenges of plurality by reinvestigating potential resources for pluralism within the Islamic revealed sources Qur’an and sunna, as well as Muslim legal traditions and precedents of coexisting with religious others (see Hermansen, Aslan,

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2 Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983).

Ebrahim in this volume). Along the model of Vatican Two, strategies for Muslim *aggiornamentos*—reforms/updates of tradition—are invoked today by Muslim pluralists. Such proposals are often based on mystical, philosophically liberal, or social justice-motivated persuasions. This trend is sometimes framed as a renewed *ijtihad*. Traditional Islamic legal plurality and concepts such as the “jurisprudence of minorities” allow more conservative scholars /ulema to permit Muslims greater participation in diverse societies and to live under non-Muslim sovereignty in the West, a situation condemned in previous eras (Ebrahim).

Further attempts were made by some conference participants to classify Muslim theologies of religious pluralism according to the broad categories established by Christian thinkers, including those of exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism (Hermansen, Karci). At the same time, comparison to the Jewish tradition suggests that both modernity and the Enlightenment led to a theologically diverse but orthopraxic tradition to become more diverse based on degrees of compliance with ritual practices in addition to theological beliefs (Alexander). The importance and significance of both intra- and inter-religious dialogue and open discussion was also observed, both within and among faith communities, to be an important, while neglected, issue within the discussion of pluralism. The need for open and respectful dialogue across sectarian and interpretive differences within Islam was also noted as a neglected area, both in traditional Muslim societies and the West. Unfortunately, modern Islamic and Islamicizing states may promote a sort of doctrinal hegemony that leads to increased tensions and even sectarian violence.

Historical contexts also need to be taken into account when considering social and religious plurality in Europe, including the presence of minorities, their size, and historical relations with majority populations. In the case of Europe, trends such as modernization, globalization, nationalism, and the post-Enlightenment context have influenced state positions and social attitudes towards pluralism. British style “multi-culturalism”, French *laïcité*, and American secularism are various examples of state attitudes that shape public positions and official regulations regarding minority populations and religions. A number of the contributions here analyze and advocate for nations to formulate indigenous paths towards coexistence and secularism, rather than importing them from foreign models that may not do justice to local contexts (Atasanova).

The diversity of European state policies towards religion range from hard secularism (France/Akgönül) to softer forms (Scandinavia/Vinding & Saggau and Ireland/Anderson). In some cases specific states were criticized (Pazajiti) for favoring one church or faith over another, and it seems that previously more neutral or accommodating government positions are becoming more vigorous in regulat-

ing religion, especially Islam, under the current perceived threat of radicalization, especially among youth.

In other cases state policies towards social issues such as same-sex marriage in the case of Denmark highlight the tensions raised by state-enforced social policies that may infringe on the freedom of religious communities to pursue distinctive or competing theological positions (Vinding). As a further example, aggressive state policies ostensibly formulated as a response to threats of radicalization among Muslims may also come to be applied in non-pluralistic or authoritarian ways (Salkic Joldo, Almazova, Atasanova).

Educational policies of European countries towards the teaching of religion may include providing information about a range of religions as a means of encouraging tolerance or coexistence. Here a debate exists as to whether neutral and “objective” studying about religion, or teaching ethics in a broad non-denominational sense are the most effective model for promoting pluralism—or whether perspectives that may be explicitly theologically-engaged or even confessional may ultimately be more effective and realistic in fostering genuine dialogue across differences, as long as direct proselytization is avoided (Schweitzer). It was also made explicit in a number of contributions that a secular, non-religious component in many European societies exists as an important factor in understanding social and existential plurality (Schluss). An important question for educationists is whether the inculcation of what are considered to be “local” values and ethical norms is the most effective means to ensure common ground among citizens. However, in this scenario, how are the values and traditions of a range of citizens and immigrants going to be honored and protected (Salkic Joldo)?

The “minority” religious status of Muslims in Western Europe has led to a range of responses from both within and without the Muslim community (Akgönül). In the meantime, some Balkan participants observed that the status of Muslim minorities since the violent conflicts in the aftermath of the fall of communist dictatorships that were generally hostile to religion, have led to various forms of religious nationalism on the part of governments who favor majority religions, in this case Orthodox Christianity, or on the part of majority religious leadership that is less favorable to engaging in pluralistic dialogue or religious education on neutral footings (Pajaziti, Kosumi).

In the specific case of Muslims in Europe, the promotion of interfaith dialogue was put forth as an important factor in combatting Islamophobia. This term may include various attitudes, and shared aspects of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia were noted.

In a globalized world, alarming developments in the Middle East such as the rise of the ISIS movement inevitably impact the situation of Muslims everywhere.

In many nations of Europe, in fact in all broad regions surveyed in this volume, concern about foreign influences on Muslim populations has been met with government surveillance and legislation aimed at controlling an influx of foreign funding (Ebrahim), foreign-trained religious leaders (imams) who do not represent “moderate” or local traditions (Almazova), and more diffuse currents carried through the Internet or by migrants themselves in an age of globalization (Karci). Questions were raised or implicit as to whether official responses such as controls over publications, rejecting foreign trained imams, and so on, are appropriate or ultimately damaging to democratic processes.

Recent decades have seen many political and historical developments that have brought the question of the Muslim presence and integration in a range of societies to prominence. The wars and conflicts in the aftermath of the disintegration of Yugoslavia remind us both of the historical roots of religious and ethnic conflicts that persist in some European societies and the urgent need for dialogue as a basis for peaceful coexistence. Practically and symbolically, the engagement and integration of Muslims in diverse societies assumes increasing importance as a challenge and opportunity for democratic values that protect religious and social pluralism.

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## **Structure and Major Themes of the Volume and its Chapters**

The chapters of this volume are grouped according to broad overarching themes.

The first set treats religious theologies of plurality, the second set deals with elements of plurality in Western European countries, and the last group addresses these issues in the Balkans and Eastern Europe.

### **Section 1: Theological and Conceptual Reflections on Pluralism**

This volume’s special attention to Islam is reflected in the fact that its initial chapters treat Islamic theologies of pluralism. Contributions on Christianity and Judaism round out our overview of theological resources existing within Abrahamic traditions that can be drawn on for supporting more inclusive views of religious others.

In the first chapter, “Plurality as the Will of God: An Islamic Theological Perspective”, Ednan Aslan provides resources for an Islamic theology of plurality and peaceful coexistence that are heavily based on citations from the Qur’an. This reading challenges contemporary Muslims to critically reflect on the more

exclusivist interpretations of scholars from the past derived from pre-modern rigidity and on the fact that Muslims cannot expect to find in past legal codes the ready-made solutions to solve contemporary challenges of plurality. Rather in the spirit of Muslim liberals such as Farid Esack and Mahmut Aydin, Aslan mines the Qur'an itself for concepts that can move Islamic attitudes to religious others from toleration to pluralism. Central to his analysis is the word "din"—religion in the broadest sense. The Qur'an itself provides ultimate evidence that it is the good works of individuals and communities and the effectiveness of their positive actions that respond to the divine call, rather than more formal and exclusivistic standards of worship as an index of belonging.

Marcia Hermansen's chapter, "Classical and Contemporary Islamic Perspectives on Religious Plurality", takes a more contemporary focus, although its initial component addresses resources in Islamic revealed texts and subsequent theologizing. Using categories derived from current theologies of religious pluralism (A. Race 1983) across religious traditions of "exclusivists, inclusivists, and pluralists", Hermansen situates a range of contemporary Muslim scholars and public intellectuals who are speaking to these issues in a global context. The paper concludes with a brief comparison of the roles and perspectives of Muslim commentators on religious, legal, and societal pluralism in Europe as contrasted to the United States.

Ranja Ebrahim in "Islamic Radicalism: the Result of Frozen Theologies?" also lays out a schema or range of contemporary Muslim responses to plurality—both globally and as relevant to the specific context of Austria. Liberal Muslim Modernists such as Mohammad Arkoun and Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd have suggested revisionist approaches to understanding the Qur'an as an historical text whose meaning and interpretation remain flexible and open-ended. From another angle, the "middle way" or "moderate" Islamists such as al-Qardawi and Tahir al-Alwani elaborated a classical concept of the jurisprudence of Muslim minorities (fiqh al-aqalliyat) that would permit Muslims living in Western societies to develop practices and interpretations appropriate to their contexts. The "frozen" or "outmoded" theologies critiqued by Ebrahim in her contribution are both legal and theological. Drawing on Fatwas (legal opinions) issued in response to questions of coexistence and plurality relevant to Muslims living in the West by the Saudi "Standing Committee for Legal Issues", Ebrahim demonstrates the harsh and rigid exclusivism according to which Muslims in the West would need to live as isolationist rejectionists within the European societies where they now find themselves. These fatwas explicitly reject democracy, citizenship, and ultimately even accepting to live in Western societies.

The chapter contributed by Andreas Telser, "Roman Catholic Perspectives on Religions and Pluralism in Europe", first introduces the concept of pluralism vs.

plurality and then provides an overview of Catholic theological perspectives on religious plurality, especially more recent developments. Despite its historical legacy of theological and political competition with Jews and Muslims, the Catholic Church has increasingly adopted a position of dialogue with these other Abrahamic traditions over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Among Catholics themselves positions may vary and present-day internal plurality is rooted in the shift that occurred at the Second Vatican Council (1962-5) and that found its most explicit expression in the 1965 declaration on relations of the Church with non-Christian religions, *Nostra aetate* (1965). As a declaration of the Roman Catholic Church, *Nostra aetate* addresses first of all its own members, hoping to awaken in them an appreciative attitude towards other religions. The document's main concern is indeed to instill a dialogical attitude into Catholics and to make them understand it as one of the Church's (reclaimed) central principles.

While the Roman Catholic conception is that salvation is indispensably bound up with a particular, historically contingent religion that understands itself both theologically and sociologically as a church, the view of the role of salvation for non-Catholics has become more inclusive and less rigid and dogmatic. In fact, today's Roman Catholics are mandated to actively support other religious people in the preservation of their religious identity.

Finally, in this section Hanan A. Alexander's contribution, "Conflicting Conceptions of Religious Pluralism: Liberalism and Multiculturalism in Diverse Liberal Democracies" undertakes a comparative philosophical critique of the foundations of two major liberal approaches to pluralism. On the one hand from the Enlightenment perspective pluralism is defined in terms of a preference for the liberal right of an individual to exercise rational choice concerning how to live in any particular life choices he or she may make. On the other hand from the Counter-Enlightenment point of view pluralism is a by-product of the multicultural agenda according to which liberation from the hegemony of one particular cultural is possible only if power is distributed equally among all cultures.

Alexander holds that both of these standards for pluralism are problematic because each imposes a universal conception of reason as a standard for adjudicating the legitimacy of any particular religious perspective, the first inductive and deductive the second dialectical or conflictual. He concludes by suggesting a third approach to pluralism according to which human societies are comprised of numerous incommensurable cultures and the task of political theory to devise a *modus vivendi* according to which people can live together in peace despite deep differences.

## **Section 2: Western Europe – Issues of Plurality in Pedagogy and Society**

Chapters with a specific focus on the Western European context comprise the second section of the volume. Friedrich Schweitzer in “Pluralism of Religions or Pluralism based on Neutrality?: Competing Understandings in Europe” describes two different models of pluralism that have been influential in Europe. The Pluralism of Religions model is based on the understanding that the religions themselves should be able—and are in fact able—to develop relationships to others that can serve as a basis for mutual understanding, respect, tolerance, and peace. The competing Pluralism based on Neutrality model which is often tied to the idea of laïcism, follows the premise that religions tend to become mutually exclusive and that peace and tolerance can only be achieved by establishing a religiously neutral basis for living together in a particular society or within Europe. These models are compared and evaluated critically. It is also shown that the two models serve as the basis for different understandings of religious education, either based on the religious traditions themselves, or intentionally not based on such traditions but on religious studies “studying about religion”. In this case, the idea of dialogue should be used for evaluating the different models for religious education. Schweitzer concludes by asking which model will be able to support truly dialogical relationships between different religions.

Henning Schluß and Christine Salmen in “Teaching and Learning about Religion between Religious Plurality and Secularism” focus on the situation in contemporary Germany, in particular Eastern Germany and Berlin. Twenty-five years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the religious cultures of Western and Eastern Germany still vary significantly and religious education curricula and materials in Germany can be developed by individual states. Thus in Eastern Germany disengagement and lack of interest in religion on the part of students is a primary challenge while in Berlin and Western Germany increased plurality of students, ethnically and religiously, is more characteristic. The chapter reviews local solutions as to how and in which sections of the curriculum religion should be taught. The authors of this chapter are interested in the methods for development of competency tests for religious knowledge. In some cases tests that required too high a level of language competency might disadvantage pupils from immigrant backgrounds—could video presentations be one solution? In addition, some issues appear to be both cultural and religious, for example, headscarf debates, thus impacting the design of tests for students’ recognizing which issues are religious.

In the light of recent issues that challenge Muslims’ integration in Switzerland, such as the resolution to ban the construction of minarets on new mosques

and the rejection of measures than might expedite the process of foreigners' obtaining Swiss citizenship, Matteo Gianni questions whether the Swiss political system—which has been historically considered as a paradigmatic case of successful accommodation of territorialized ethno-linguistic minorities—has taken an assimilative and undemocratic stance toward the Muslim population. While there exists anxiety concerning the shift of immigrants, in particular Muslims, from guest workers to permanent citizens, as is the case with the rest of Western Europe, Gianni points out the special features of the Swiss democratic system and national ethos that both problematize and offer potentials for the accommodation of Muslims within Swiss cultural, as well as political, belonging. On the basis of empirical and theoretical insights, he demonstrates the existence of a conception of citizenship and integration as adjustment to common norms or “normalization”. This, however, may preclude the opportunity to figure out a conception of citizenship and integration seen as an inter-subjective process of negotiation of principles and values of common belonging. The participatory nature of the Swiss democratic system, in fact, offers just such a system of public input and collective negotiation. Muslims are challenged to develop more participatory attitudes and become involved in this system, while the majority of Swiss society needs to be aware that some specificities of Muslim practice and ethos could enrich, rather than threaten, the stability of the Swiss multi-cultural democratic system and society.

Samim Akgönül's chapter on “Muslim as Minorities: New Identity Challenges for Europe” heuristically looks at some aspects of pluralism as reflected in contemporary European discussions and concerns with religion and religious identity. Taking the approach of political sociology, Akgönül considers the structural implications of being a minority and being constructed as a minority by the majority. This chapter analyzes European Muslim communities as “minorities” who are no longer alien groups living on European soil. These groups have now attained a certain consciousness and thus are claiming specific social and political rights related to their belonging. While some Western societies are used to managing minority rights especially at the ethnic and linguistic levels, certain others, such as France, have a universal individualistic position and refuse to apply specific legal and social frameworks to Muslims, thereby creating tensions.

Minela Salkic Joldo in “Muslims and Austro-European Values” considers the compatibility of Muslim and Austrian social and religious values and what is the role of the state and educational system in promoting pluralism through values education. She notes that the European Union, including Austria, characterizes itself as a union of values. In the process of integration, Austria bases its socio-political attitudes on the common values of its diverse citizens. This chapter therefore briefly outlines some of the sources of Islamic values and ethical reasoning, illustrating

some of the commonalities with Christian and European traditions. It also explains how the Austrian state has attempted to provide values education to immigrants through German language courses for adults or through religious education curricula for children of diverse backgrounds attending Austrian public schools.

Bradford A. Anderson, Gareth Byrne, and Sandra Cullen provide a case study of changing aspects of religious plurality in “Religious Pluralism, Education, and Citizenship in Ireland”. The Republic of Ireland has experienced rapid change over the past several decades, change which has dramatically altered the economy, the demographics, and the religious landscape of this small country. The rise of the Celtic Tiger, coupled with the scandals that have hit the majority Catholic Church, have led to a waning influence of the established religious traditions in Ireland. However, a rise in immigration has brought increasing religious diversity to what had been traditionally a mono-cultural society. The confluence of these developments has led to new and unprecedented challenges in social, political, and religious contexts in Ireland. This chapter explores the changing dynamics of contemporary Ireland by unpacking some of the circumstances that have contributed to the emergence of the “new Ireland”, and highlights challenges and opportunities that can be found in the areas of religious diversity, education, and citizenship, areas which are inextricably linked in contemporary Ireland.

Further dimensions of the new religious plurality in Western Europe are taken up by Niels Valdemar Vinding and Emil Bjørn Hilton Saggau in their chapter entitled, “Institutional Challenges of Marriage for Religious Pluralism in Denmark”. In this case same-sex marriage and the legal and theological debates occasioned by its legal institution in Denmark enable a study of the challenges to increased religious and ethnic pluralism in the light of the state’s relationship with an “established” religion—the Danish (Lutheran) People’s Church.

Vinding and Saggau therefore illustrate the contemporary challenges of fostering and sustaining religious pluralism in law, civil society, and social institutions during a time of rapid and unprecedented transition. Special emphasis is put on the dynamics between the Danish religious communities and the state, as these are expressed in the governance of religion and marriage, in particular the implementation of same-sex marriage performed by religious communities and recognized by the state. The chapter’s discussion of these laws, their effects and the case of same-sex marriage illustrates how religious communities interact in a pluralistic way and challenge the current political order that still is characterized by a lack of support for state policies that honor and protect true religious pluralism.

### **Section 3: Balkans and Eastern Europe – Islam, Dialogue, and Plurality**

Ali Pajaziti in “Interreligious Dialogue in the Macedonian Context: From Natural Diversity to Secular Theocracy” observes that the cultural identity of Macedonia is of a multicultural society, where different ethnic (Macedonians, Albanians, Turks, Roma, Vlahos) and religious groups (Orthodox Christians, Muslims, Catholics) have lived in harmony throughout centuries. However, in recent decades the ethnicization of the state has created a gap between two dominant cultural elements: Macedonian and Albanian, respectively Orthodox and Muslim.

There is a need for the creation of an applicable and sustainable policy of cultural diversity or cultural pluralism. In Macedonia, it is very evident that there is an institutional tendency to “Orthodoxize” or Slavicize society. Visible symbols of state support for Christianity and evidence of uneven promotion and patronage have sown seeds of distrust and resentment.

After the conflict of 2001, Macedonia has made efforts to appear as an emerging multicultural society. One of the steps towards harmony consists of a series of conferences on civilizational and interreligious dialogue (2007, 2010, and 2013). Yet Muslim groups did not participate in more recent gatherings of this sort. Such platforms could be important in cultivating a culture of tolerance. However, can there be real dialogue between religions where the state is discriminating against non-Orthodox religious communities, especially the Islamic Religious Community? Pajaziti lists a range of grievances against the state: a higher official of the Macedonian Orthodox Church declares that they are building churches and crosses to prevent the expansionist tendencies of Muslims (2014), the state invests only in Christian buildings (such as the church of Saints Elena and Constantine), thus violating the secular character of the state. An additional concern is represented by the failure to denationalize Muslim endowment waqf property. The author concludes by advocating greater transparency on the part of the state authorities to promote genuine neutrality and fruitful interreligious engagement and dialogue in the future.

“Youth and Religious Dialogue in Macedonia” by Muhamed Jashari discusses Macedonia as a country whose demographic structure is composed of a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic mosaic. Therefore coexistence among diverse ethnic and religious communities is a necessary condition for the continued existence of the country. After providing an overview of changing religiosity since the fall of Communism and of attitudes of Macedonian youth towards religion, Jashari presents information about NGOs working with youth to promote dialogue and peaceful coexistence, concluding that a stable future for Macedonia is in the hands of youth, and hence dialogue and mutual respect must be a priority.

Jeton Mehmeti in “From Religious Nationalism to Religious Pluralism: the Kosovo Case” discusses the former Yugoslavia as the most notorious example of modern religious nationalism in Europe. Religion has been used as a constitutive element of nationalism and an effective political mobilizing force to the extent that the nationalist movement adopts religious language and modes of religious communication built on the religious identity of one community and relies on the assistance of religious leaders and institutions to promote its cause. This chapter briefly exposes the influence of religious actors in the Kosovo war, and then indicates the place of religion in the process of building a multi-ethnic and a profoundly secular state in post-war Kosovo. With regard to the theme of religious plurality, Mehmeti concludes by indicating potential contributions of religious communities in Kosovo in promoting religious pluralism through interfaith dialogue initiatives.

“The Contribution of Education to Interreligious Dialogue in Kosovo” by Muzaqete Kosumi reports on the results of her research on the opinions of diverse religious leaders and stakeholders concerning the teaching of religion in public schools. The Islamic Community of Kosovo and the Party of Justice have repeatedly advocated for religious education in public schools as the best method for promoting intercultural dialogue between pupils of different religions. Kosumi describes how Kosovar society has always been tolerant and argues that effective religious education can play an important role in helping to keep the country an inclusive place to live. Religious studies education not only promotes acceptance of diversity, but allows people to see the similarities among one another, rather than the differences.

The survey of 65 participants of various ages included primary school pupils, high school students, university students, parents, and grandparents from different regions of Kosovo. At this point Christian leadership and institutions seem to respond negatively to the suggestion of religious education of a pluralistic nature being implemented in public schools despite the fact that most citizens, whether Christian or Muslim, approve of the proposal.

Bayram Karci’s essay on “Religious Pluralism: A Historical and Philosophical Analysis of Diversity in Albania” begins by observing that despite its diverse religious population, Albania has long been known as one of the most peaceful countries in the world in terms of co-existence and tolerance. Although there have been serious religious and ethnic conflicts in the region, Muslims, Catholics and Orthodox Christians in Albania have historically lived in harmony. Karci initially discusses the historical roots of religious diversity in Albania and analyzes the historical evolution of exclusivist, inclusivist and pluralist approaches in reference to the schema proposed by Alan Race. Finally, the chapter outlines the challenges of globalization to Albanian faith communities, in particular, some Salafi influences

among imams trained in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf and the spread of Evangelical Christianity. The author concludes, however, that the inclusivist and strong nature of Albanian nationalism is unlikely to be impacted in a significant way by these more recently imported exclusivist tendencies.

Laurentiu D. Tănase of Romania attempts to develop the groundwork for an Orthodox Christian theology of religious pluralism in the light of the need for European countries with diverse histories and ethnic compositions to come to grips with the reality of increasingly pluralistic cultural and religious diversity. Despite the multi-ethnic and multi-religious populations of the countries of Southeast Europe and the Balkans, Orthodox theologians have yet to systematically explore the resources of their religious tradition for positive approaches to contemporary plurality. Tanase finds hope in some of the work being done by Catholic Christian counterparts in this area, specifically those drawing on the doctrine of the Trinity and its persons as a model for the divine operating in the world in multiple ways.

Rositsa Atasanova in “Headscarves in the Classroom: Secularism and Religious Difference in Bulgaria” explores some of the complexities of secularity in contemporary Bulgaria. The legacy of communist control over religious institutions remains in the form of politicized approaches to religion that still linger. During the communist period Muslim women’s headscarves were banned. While centuries of coexistence should have rendered the sight of a hijab customary, after democracy was instituted in 1989 a conflict emerged surrounding girls’ wearing headscarves to schools. Unlike France, where all religious symbols were banned in public schools in response to these cases, the Bulgarian responses were more asymmetrical and permitted Orthodox symbols such as crucifixes in classrooms to remain, indicating a conflation of these Christian elements with nationalist sentiments, while the Muslim scarves were viewed as foreign or extreme. Atasanova concludes that an autonomous and indigenous form of secularism needs to be developed in Bulgaria that can provide for the civic integration of diverse citizens rather than the state enforcing its religious preferences or trying to import foreign models and measures to prop up its view of the secular.

Denis Brylov in “Transformed Perceptions of Islam and Muslims in Ukraine in the Wake of the Social and Political Changes caused by Euromaidan” provides a very recent analysis of currents in the Ukrainian perceptions of Muslims as it has been evolving in the context of the conflict with Russia over Crimea (2013-). Although Muslims are a small minority in the entirety of the Ukrainian population their backgrounds vary widely—from Chechen jihadists, to Salafis, to converts. Drawing on participant observation, ephemeral pamphlets, and social media postings, Brylov is able to illustrate the subtle distinctions among various Muslim groups and figures as well as to trace evolving reactions to them within the

Ukrainian majority context. Many specific examples of how the “Muslim question” is represented by individuals and groups, as well as changes in the attitude of the majority Ukrainian society to the Muslims of Ukraine from negative, to neutral, and even quasi-friendly are demonstrated.

As a conclusion some possible scenarios for future developments in this regard are proposed, as well as potential problems that Ukrainian Muslims may face. In particular, it is shown that with the consolidation of society against a common foe, the role of interreligious dialogue as a factor contributing to Ukrainian national solidarity has been strengthened. At the same time the migration of Muslims from Crimea to the Western regions of Ukraine carries the risk of increased inter-confessional tension. A new interest in the Muslim elements in the Ukrainian conflict on the part of jihadist organizations of the Middle East is noted, which may ultimately lead to an intensification of conflicts inside the Ukrainian Muslim community.

Finally, in “Muslim Leaders and the State in Contemporary Tatarstan: A Case-Study”, Leyla Almazova draws on interviews with two representative Muslim leaders in the Tatarstan region of Russia to elucidate how, despite overall similarity of doctrine and practice, Russian Federation authorities favor individuals considered to be closer to “local tradition” as representing moderate trends. Certain Muslim issues and practices have come to be taken as litmus tests in signifying forms of self-distinction—both intra-Muslim and in the context of the the potential for Muslims to integrate in the society of the Russian Federation. Among these contentious issues of religious discourse are theological doctrines (the problem of the location of Allah), issues concerning the performance of certain rituals (reciting the Qur’an for the benefit of deceased relatives), and issues of female religious dress.

Under the threat of Islamic extremist activities state authorities have adopted policies of containment and surveillance impacting Muslims and their religious leadership. Almazova documents the similarities in the theological and social views of two Tatar Imams. Despite the lack of significant difference, one leader, Idris Galyautdin, who was educated in Saudi Arabia, was deprived of the post of head imam of the Tauba Mosque in Naberezhnye Chelny in late 2014. Conversely, Khalim Shamsutdinov, who had received a local religious education, was appointed the head imam of the Dzhamig Mosque in Yelabuga in 2013. The chapter concludes that a range of factors, including the success of the state’s struggle against corruption and the effectiveness of social and economic reforms in the society as a whole, will ultimately determine whether a state policy of unifying Islamic ideologies among Muslim community leaders will result in peace and neighbourly relations or conversely lead to an increase in unsanctioned imams and the radicalization of the Muslim community.

It is hoped that the reflections and studies contributed at the Podgorica conference and edited and collected in this volume will provide a useful contribution to studies of plurality in European societies, particularly at this time when studies and policies impacting immigration, religion, citizenship, and education are so prominently debated and interrogated.

Our contributors' shared interest in the role and future of Islam and Muslims in Europe and the diversity of their disciplinary approaches and national and regional situations should provide readers with new insights into the diversity of challenges and proposed solutions to them.

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## **Section 1**

# **Theological and Conceptual Reflections on Pluralism**

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# Plurality as the Will of God

## An Islamic Theological Perspective

Ednan Aslan

Muslims, throughout their history, have developed diverse conceptions of how they should live together with representatives of other religions as well as concerning the position that minority religions should have in predominantly Muslim countries. The rights and obligations of Jews and Christians have been discussed in great detail in the most diverse theological works. In all of these books, attention is exclusively given to how the religious minorities should be handled, without a single thought being articulated concerning their participation in the wielding of power in an Islamic society. Apart from discussions in some Sufi literature, the special status of religious minorities and the status of their conceptions in comparison to institutionalized Islam were dealt with only from a theological perspective with regard to those aspects (Aydın 2005).

The conceptions of the status of religious minorities developed by Muslim scholars can no longer meet the challenges of people living in globalized, pluralistic societies. This is because the objective is no longer to determine how religions can tolerate one another, but rather to discover how we can increase the pluralizing capacity of religions in such a way that we can succeed in living together in peace without any particular religion or worldview claiming absolutism.

Just as Christians are questioning their theological history in the face of these more recent developments, Muslims living under these new global conditions are challenged to question their positions towards other religions and, in the spirit of the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition, to expand their thinking.

In this process, the expectation of Muslims that they can recover solid, ready-made conceptions from their history can only lead to disappointment or isolation,

because the current situation of Muslims cannot be understood through the lens of their history, just as their history cannot be held responsible for the current situation.

We do not see our faith as something that is continually changing. We are constantly looking for solid conceptions such as the conception of Medina and that of Mecca. However both are overly simplistic: before the hijra and after the hijra. In the conception of Mecca we were the victims; in the conception of Medina we won and were the rulers. But neither is suitable for an open and pluralistic society, because there the attention is always on a give and take (Esack 2014).<sup>1</sup>

If we observe the current research in Muslim countries, we discover that, unfortunately, very few Muslim scholars deal with the issue of the pluralizing capacity of Islam. Instead, scholars are still actively engaged in assessing the position of religious minorities from the viewpoint of an institutionalized Islam. This only results in more contradictions and conflicts, because that position does not presuppose the equivalence of the religions, but rather the devaluation of other religions. No pluralizing theological conceptions can arise from that attitude (Karaman, 2014).

Muslims living in Europe, who are constantly confronted with religious and cultural diversity, are faced with the task of rethinking their own theology from within the pluralistic conditions in Europe much more so than Muslims in Muslim majority countries, because the future of Islam in Europe depends decisively on the success of such a plural society. In this process, Muslims cannot allow themselves to be simply dependent on the performance of other religions, but instead they should reshape their own theology in active dialogue with other religions in the European context. In that way, Islam could serve as the basis for explaining the contradictions between Islam and a pluralistic society from the perspective of its own philosophical tradition and then such impulses could be transmitted to Muslim majority countries, as a kind of proof that a pluralistic society can be substantiated through a qur'anic approach.

In order to substantiate such an approach, an attempt will first be made to interpret and define the religious understanding of Muslims from the perspective of their new circumstances. Secondly, the consequences for Muslims of that interpretation and definition will be elucidated. Out of these two elements a conception of the pluralizing capacity of Islam will be constructed so that Muslims can substantiate and further develop their lived reality.

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1 Farid Esack, (2014). "Deutsche Muslime sind nur Mitreisende" at <http://de.qantara.de/inhalt/interview-mit-dem-islamischen-theologen-farid-esack-deutsche-muslime-sind-nur-mitreisende>. (Retrieved: Oct. 4, 2015).

## What is *Dīn* (Religion)?

*Dīn*<sup>2</sup> as a concept is described in the Qur'an more than 90 times and in four dimensions. In the first dimension *dīn* is described in relation to the lived context, such that *dīn* in this case defines the traditions and customs of a culture and society (Qur'an 7:51 *ittakhadhū dīnahum lahwān wa-la'ban*). "They have made play and passing delight their religion (*dīn*)". Apart from this contextual reference, the term is understood to comprise the sustainability of a society, because it encompasses the orientation, not only of a society, but also of a person (Qur'an 6:1 *al-dīn al-ḥanīf, ṣīrāṭin mustaqīmīn dīnan, shara'a lakumu 'l-dīna*). *Dīn* also embraces a human's reference to God, in that, through that term, the human can give expression to his relationship to and trust in God (Qur'an 30:30 *al-dīn al-qayyim*). Within society, in addition to the meanings elucidated above, the term can describe social and legal relationships (Qur'an 10:105 *yawm al-dīn, aḥlu'l-dīn*).

From these portrayals it is possible to infer that the term *dīn* cannot be claimed to signify Islam as it was institutionalized and proclaimed by Prophet Muhammad as a religion, since the verse from the Qur'an "Unto you, your moral law, and unto me, mine" is to be understood such that the Qur'an also refers to the way of life and moral attitudes of non-Muslims in Mecca as "*dīn*".<sup>3</sup>

In the teachings of the Qur'an, all religions that invoke God are characterized in their essential core as *dīn*. The divergences that do not concern this essential core of religion are referred to, beyond the core essence, not as *dīn*, but rather as theological wishful thinking.

2 For more details see Farid Esack, *Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective on Interreligious Solidarity against Oppression*. (Oxford: Oneworld, 1997), 128 and M. Asad, *The Message of The Quran*. Translated and explained by Muhammad Asad. (Gibraltar: Dar Al-Andalus, 1980), footnote 249.

3 As impetus for the revelation of this *surah* al-Tabari reported the following from Ibn Abbas: "The Quraysh offered the Prophet Muhammad as much money and women as he desired, so that he would no longer be committed to the spread of Islam. After the Prophet rejected this offer, they came within another offer, that the Prophet worship the gods of Meccans, al-Lat and al-Uzza, but in return for this the Meccans wanted to worship the God of the Prophet Muhammad. This was the impetus for the revelation of the *surah*, that God set the limits of the various religions." (See Abū Ja'far Muhammad b. Jarīr al-Tabarī, *The commentary on the Qur'an: being an abridged translation of 'Jāmi' al-bayān 'an ta'wīl āy al-Qur'an'*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), Sura 109.

And they claim, “None shall ever enter Paradise unless he be ‘a Jew’ – or, ‘a Christian’”. Such are their wishful beliefs! Say: “Produce an evidence for what you are claiming, if what you say is true!” (Qur’an 2:111)

Furthermore, the Jews assert, “The Christians have no valid ground for their beliefs”, while the Christians assert, “The Jews have no valid ground for their beliefs” and both quote the divine writ! Even thus, like unto what they say, have [always] spoken those who were devoid of knowledge; but it is God who will judge between them on Resurrection Day with regard to all on which they were wont to differ. (Qur’an 2:113)

In this regard, the Qur’an attempts to refute this claim using the very sources that Christians and Jews use so as to direct their attention to what is essential in a religion:

Yea, indeed: everyone who surrenders his whole being unto God, and is a doer of good withal, shall have his reward with his Sustainer; and all such need have no fear, and neither shall they grieve”. (Qur’an 2:112)

This verse makes it possible to avoid the generalization of religions and to point to the personal action and responsibility of the individual, since it is not the tribal or group affiliation of a person that is necessarily a sign of his or her goodness as a human being.<sup>4</sup> Key are the individual works of a human being, which are inde-

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4 The Qur’an avoids stressing the generalizing aspects of religious groups and points out the achievements of individuals in the various religions, regardless of their social rank and status. This applies to Muslims to the same extent as members of other religions. “[But] they are not all alike: among the followers of earlier revelation there are upright people, who recite God’s messages throughout the night, and prostrate themselves [before Him]. They believe in God and the Last Day, and enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong, and vie with one another in doing good works: and these are among the righteous. And whatever good they do, they shall never be denied the reward thereof: for, God has full knowledge of those who are conscious of Him.” (Qur’an 3:113-115).

Noteworthy is the impetus for the revelation of the verse 3:113, that God forbids emphasis on other religions: “Ibn Mas’ud, who said, “The Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, delayed the time of the nightfall prayer. When he came out to lead the prayer, he found people waiting for the prayer. He said: ‘There is no one among the adherents of other religions who is remembering Allah, exalted is He, at this hour except you’. And Allah, exalted is He, revealed these verses (They are not all alike. Of the People of the Scripture there is a staunch community who recite the revelations of Allah in the night season...) up to His saying.” al-Wāhidī, ‘Alī ibn Ah-

pendent of his or her religious affiliation. To understand Islam as a religion (dīn) only through its institutionalized structures does not correspond to the essence of Islam.

Behold, the only [true] religion in the sight of God is [man's] self-surrender unto Him; and those who were vouchsafed revelation aforetime took, out of mutual jealousy, to divergent views [on this point] only after knowledge [thereof] had come unto them. But as for him who denies the truth of God's messages – behold, God is swift in reckoning! (Qur'an 3:19)

In this verse, when the Qur'an speaks of the true religion, it is not necessarily referring to Islam as an institutionalized religion, but rather as the origin of all religions, which the Qur'an labels as Islam. What is being criticized here again is that the people diverge not from an institutionalized religion, but rather, as described in verse 2: 112, from the good deeds and works that are expected of them. Here again, Islam is to be understood not so much as a religion, but rather as a general designation for the good works of good people. However, the people who ignore their individual responsibility to God and to other people are abandoning not only a particular religion, but also their own natural predispositions (fiṭrah).

And so, set thy face steadfastly towards the [one ever -true] faith (hanif), turning away from all that is false, in accordance with the natural disposition (fiṭrah) which God has instilled into man: [for,] not to allow any change to corrupt what God has thus created this is the [purpose of the one] ever-true faith; but most people know it not. (Qur'an 30:30)

And they say, "Be Jews" – or "Christians" – "and you shall be on the right path." Say: "Nay, but [ours is] the creed of Abraham, who turned away from all that is false, and was not of those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God. (Qur'an 2:135)

In matters of faith, He has ordained for you that which He had enjoined upon Noah and into which We gave thee [O Muhammad] insight through revelation-as well as that which We had enjoined upon Abraham, and Moses, and Jesus: Steadfastly uphold the [true] faith, and do not break up your unity therein. (Qur'an 42:13)

Essentially, what the Qur'an designates as "*dīn*" is a spiritual state of consciousness, which corresponds to the natural predisposition of the human being. This natural predisposition, which is represented in the Qur'an as *dīn*, has remained unchanged since the beginning of the history of humankind, even if the people in the different cultures have received different revelations under different circumstances in different languages. The revelation's plurality is found in its form, but not in the core message of the revelations.

"And unto thee [O Prophet] have We vouchsafed this divine writ, setting forth the truth, confirming the truth of whatever there still remains of earlier revelations and determining what is true therein. Judge, then, between the followers of earlier revelation in accordance with what God has bestowed from on high, and do not follow their errant views, forsaking the truth that has come unto thee. Unto every one of you have We appointed a [different] law and way of life. And if God had so willed, He could surely have made you all one single community: but [He willed it otherwise] in order to test you by means of what He has vouchsafed unto you. Vie, then, with one another in doing good works! Unto God you all must return; and then He will make you truly understand all that on which you were wont to differ". (Qur'an 5:48)

The various social rules that God prescribed in various cultures and languages are not necessarily to be regarded as a part of *dīn*, because humans' needs and expectations are understood to be in the process of transformation. However, the core of *dīn*, which is based on such values and principles as solidarity and justice, has always remained unchanged.

In the Prophetic Tradition, it was narrated that Muhammad considered his perspective that all religions in Medina should bear equal moral responsibility for the society to be the core of his message, and he appointed himself as judge of the observance of the moral rules. The Qur'an reports that the Prophet guided the Jews and Christians, not in accordance with the rules of Islam, but rather in accordance with their own moral and theological rules, and that he attached great importance to the idea that the Christians and Jews act according to their own morality (law).<sup>5</sup>

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5 See the impetus for the revelation of verse 5:49: "Hence, judge between the followers of earlier revelation in accordance with what God has bestowed from on high, and do not follow their errant views; and beware of them, lest they tempt thee away from aught that God has bestowed from on high upon thee. And if they turn away [from His commandments], then know that it is but God's will [thus] to afflict them for some of their sins: for, behold, a great many people are iniquitous indeed. (5:50) Do they, perchance, desire [to be ruled by] the law of pagan ignorance? But for people who have inner certainty, who could be a better law-giver than God?"

The important theologian al-Matūrīdī did not view shari‘a as a prerequisite for *dīn*. Instead, he regarded *dīn* and shari‘a as separate from one another. According to him, *dīn* is immutable, while shari‘a is subject to a dynamic societal process (Özcan, 2013). Muslim Modernist scholar, Muhammad Asad, considered *dīn* to be the moral imprint of a society, which is shaped by the ethical actions of the people.

The term *dīn* denotes both the contents of and the compliance with a morally binding law; consequently, it signifies “religion” in the widest sense of this term, extending over all that pertains to its doctrinal contents and their practical implications, as well as to man’s attitude towards the object of his worship, thus comprising also the concept of “faith”. The rendering of *dīn* as “religion”, “faith”, “religious law”, or “moral law” depends on the context in which this term is used. On the strength of the above categorical prohibition of coercion (ikrāh) in anything that pertains to faith or religion, all Islamic jurists (fuqahā’), without any exception, hold that forcible conversion is under all circumstances null and void, and that any attempt at coercing a non-believer to accept the faith of Islam is a grievous sin: a verdict which disposes of the widespread fallacy that Islam places before the unbelievers the alternative of “conversion or the sword”.<sup>6</sup>

Against the backdrop of this albeit brief presentation of the term *dīn*, we will now investigate the term “Islam.”

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## What is Islam?

The fact that the term “Islam” is attributed to a particular religion and the term “Muslim” to its adherents is apparent not from the Qur’an, but instead from the theological history of Islam. The Qur’an defines these terms as “godly devotion” and as “those people who are conscious of God”, respectively. According to the Qur’an, godly devotion is not to be understood as blind obedience, but rather as a responsible God-human relationship. Evidence can be found in the example of Abraham who does not view responsible religious affiliation or meticulous obedience as godly devotion.

Abraham was neither a “Jew” nor a “Christian”, but was one who turned away from all that is false, having surrendered himself unto God; and he was not of those who ascribe divinity to aught beside Him. (Qur’an 3:67)

This term “Muslim” is used in the Qur’an for, along with Ibrahim (Abraham), the sons of Yaqub (Jacob) (Qur’an 2:133) and the apostles of Jesus. The Qur’an even

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6 M. Asad. *Message*, footnote 249.

relates that Pharaoh, when he was close to drowning, described himself as being among those who are “Muslims” (Qur’an 10:90...*Wa-anā min al-muslimīn*).<sup>7</sup>

From this, it is apparent that the theological definitions of “Islam” and “Muslim” do not match the Qur’anic descriptions of these two concepts. In the first attempt, the institutionalization of religion is of immediate importance, whereas in the Qur’an the promotion of religious God-consciousness as a universal identifying characteristic of godly devotion is the primary focus of attention.<sup>8</sup> In this regard, the two terms “Islam” and “Muslim” acquire new meaning. They are understood not only in terms of a specific institutionalized religion (*sharī‘ah* Islam) and its adherents, but also in relation to the foundation of faith for all people who believe in God.<sup>9</sup>

In this regard, Okuyan and Öztürk (2001) criticize reducing being a Muslim to the implementation of certain religious rituals and they resist defining the terms “Islam” and “Muslim” only in terms of the religion that was proclaimed by Muhammad and its adherents:

...such *ayahs* from the Qur’an as “Islam is the only religion before God” or “God has ordained Islam for you as a religion” were based only on institutionalized Islam, while people who were outside of this institution were classified as “kafir”. From this generally exclusionary position the contents of the Qur’an that the heterodox praise were interpreted differently or reduced to the Jews and Christians from the time of the Prophet or such *ayahs* were declared abrogated. (ibid. 174-175)

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- 7 Qur’an 10:90. “I have come to believe that there is no deity save Him in whom the children of Israel believe, and I am of those who surrender themselves unto Him!”
- 8 Muhammad Asad comments on the verse, “For, behold, it is the God-conscious [alone] whom gardens of bliss await with their Sustainer: or should We, perchance, treat those who surrender themselves unto Us as [We would treat] those who remain lost in sin?” (Qur’an 68:34-35), in which the term “Muslim” is used for the first time in the history of the Qur’an, as follows: “This is the earliest occurrence of the term *muslimūn* (sing. *muslim*) in the history of Qur’anic revelation. Throughout this work, I have translated the terms *muslim* and *islam* in accordance with their original connotations, namely, “one who surrenders [or “has surrendered”] himself to God”, and “man’s self-surrender to God”; the same holds good of all forms of the verb *aslama* occurring in the Qur’an. It should be borne in mind that the “institutionalized” use of these terms – that is, their exclusive application to the followers of the Prophet Muhammad – represents a definitely post-Qur’anic development and, hence, must be avoided in a translation of the Qur’an.”
- 9 Qur’an 3:19: “Behold, the only [true] religion in the sight of God is [man’s] self-surrender unto Him;” or Qur’an 3:85: “For, if one goes in search of a religion other than self-surrender unto God, it will never be accepted from him, and in the life to come he shall be among the lost.”

In the Qur'an, representing people in a generalized way without individual character traits is expressly avoided, because Islam replaced group and clan affiliation with individuality.

The pre-Islamic Arabs identified themselves by their tribal affiliation, the collective, to which they belonged. In Islam, a believer is indeed a member of the Islamic community, but through his or her responsible commitment to Islam he or she is also perceived as an individual whose identification extends beyond tribal belonging, which had previously allocated to him or her a permanent place. This new person is able, through his or her autonomy, to take the initiative to make decisions on topics about which he or she had never previously been asked, nor did he or she expect to be, unless he or she was the undisputed group leader.

By autonomy one must understand that special something of a person, the existence of his or her singularity. To declare that people are autonomous is to assert that there is no human prototype, no model, according to which all persons should be styled. Each has his or her own frame of reference, inexhaustible source of spontaneity and initiative. (Lahbabi 2011, 61)

In this way, Islamic education was faced with the task of qualifying people through education to assume this responsibility so that they could rid themselves of blind social subordination and be able to develop a critical loyalty in relation to their communities.

On the other hand, this universal attitude of Islam not only included Muslims, but rather it also calls on the heterodox to work with hope for the good of society. Qur'an 2:62 gives expression to this universal responsibility of all people in a remarkable way.

Verily, those who have attained to faith [in this divine writ], as well as those who follow the Jewish faith, and the Christians, and the Sabians—all who believe in God and the Last Day and do righteous deeds—shall have their reward with their Sustainer; and no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve.”<sup>10</sup>

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10 Tabātabā'ī comments on this verse as follows: “The verse says that Allah gives no importance to names like believers, the Jews, the Christian or the Sabaeans. One cannot get a reward from Allah, nor can he be saved from punishment, merely by giving oneself good titles, for example, the claim: no one will enter the Garden except he who was a Jew or Christian (2:111)” Muḥammad-Ḥosain Ṭabātabā'ī, *Al-Mizān*. V. 1. (Tehran: Wofis, 1983), 62.

A Companion of the Prophet Muhammad, who is known as Salman the Persian, reported about his Christian friends, with whom he lived together, prayed together, and had positive experiences for a long time. Some of them, according to the Prophetic Tradition, supposedly even advised him to visit the Prophet Muhammad.

After hearing his positive and friendly reports on these Christians, the Prophet said: “They are all in hell!” (Wahidi 2008, 22). This answer brought Salman to a serious crisis of conscience, as he could not imagine these people with their good deeds and sincere faith in hell. When the verse cited above, which even implicitly rebuked the Prophet Muhammad was revealed, it took Salman out of his sorrow and explained in a remarkably tolerant way that God made people’s salvation dependent on three conditions: belief in one God, belief in the Day of Judgment and righteous actions in life.<sup>11</sup>

According to this verse, being a Muslim should be understood, beyond religious affiliation, as an expression of a just life, which forms a foundation of faith and righteous acts for all people. These righteous acts can manifest themselves in rituals, which are performed differently in diverse religions. Crucial, however, is what emerges from the rituals, or how the rituals elicit an effect. Linking faith to prescribed rituals enables its identification with a particular religious affiliation, but not with the desired impact on society that God requires of its adherents, as the following Qur’an chapter articulates:

Hast thou ever considered [the kind of man] who gives the lie to all moral law? Behold, it is this [kind of man] that thrusts the orphan away, and feels no urge to feed the needy. Woe, then, unto those praying ones whose hearts from their prayer are remote—those who want only to be seen and praised, and, withal, deny all assistance [to their fellowmen]! (Qur’an 107:1-7)

Muhammad Asad underscores this point in his comment on the first verse of this chapter:

who denies that there is any objective validity in religion as such and, thus, in the concept of moral law, which is one of the primary connotations of the term *dīn*. Some commentators are of the opinion that in the above context *dīn* signifies “judgment”, i.e., the Day of Judgment, and interpret this phrase as meaning “who calls the Day of Judgment a lie. (Asad 1980, 1297)

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11 On this see also Asad 1980, 41.

Muslims are the ones who, beginning with the Prophet Adam, perform with godly devotion good works and champion justice. It is through this righteousness that the consequences of rituals can have an impact on society and can be visible. Without this righteousness, and its resulting impact and visibility, the universal foundation of faith cannot be attained.

The Bedouin say, "We have attained to faith." Say [unto them, O Muhammad]: "You have not [yet] attained to faith; you should [rather] say, 'We have [outwardly] surrendered' – for [true] faith has not yet entered your hearts. But if you [truly] pay heed unto God and His Apostle, He will not let the least of your deeds go to waste: for, behold, God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace. (Qur'an 49:14)

Mahmut Aydın supplements this verse with the comment that Muslims should rethink their own position in relation to the heterodox and to the believers.

In addition to this general meaning, this verse gives expression to a current problem of Muslim communities in dealing with diversity and unity. In this regard, the question arises as to whether a school of law, theological explanation or an ideology can declare a Muslim an unbeliever? If we look for the answer to this question in the Qur'an, we find an impressive answer: "Do not say unto anyone who offers you the greeting of peace, Thou art not a believer." (4:94) Regardless of the commitment to religious pluralism on the basis of faith, Muslims are unfortunately not even able to admit the existence of diversity in their own society. (Aydın 2005, 119)

**The Roots of Religious Pluralism in the Islamic Tradition and its Current Importance**

In this section I would like to examine plurality from the Qur'anic and Prophetic traditions as a concept for society in Islam. This examination will not ignore opposing concepts, but instead it will point out the need for a new imprint of Islam under new social conditions, so that Muslims will thus be able to clarify the contradictions between lived religiosity and rigid theology.

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## **Plurality as an Islamic Conception of Society**

In the early days of Islam, through the encounter with other cultures and religions, Muslims were challenged by their religious understanding to determine how the position of people who believe and think differently should be defined in theological terms.

Apart from the Qur'an, the first references to the status of Jews, Christians and the heterodox are furnished by the Constitution of Medina, which included the heterodox as a part of the Muslim community "ummah" and ensured them the same rights as Muslims.

"They are one community (ummah) to the exclusion of all men." (Guillaume 1955, 231-233)

This inclusion did not bind the heterodox to obedience to the Islamic way of life, but instead assured them of their right to a way of life in keeping with their own morality (moral laws). The Prophet Muhammed saw himself as the guardian not only of Islamic morality (law), but also of Jewish and Christian morality.<sup>12</sup>

Let, then, the followers of the Gospel judge in accordance with what God has revealed therein: for they who do not judge in the light of what God has bestowed from on high – it is they, they who are truly iniquitous! (Qur'an 5:47)

Furthermore, another verse from the Quran, which formed the foundation for the actions of the Prophet, confirms the social responsibility of Muslims to show their commitment to the public presence of religions, so that this religious diversity, which was seen as God's will, remained visible:

If God had not enabled people to defend themselves against one another, [all] monasteries and churches and synagogues and mosques – in [all of] which God's name is abundantly extolled – would surely have been destroyed [ere now]. (Qur'an 22:40)

That, in the history of Islamic theology, the heterodox were treated as belonging to an inferior religion with special laws is to be seen as a departure from the Qur'anic tradition. In order to justify this discriminatory and polarizing theology, a large number of theologians removed a portion of the Qur'an, which they considered abrogated, from the lives of Muslims, so that they could divide the world into "good and evil."<sup>13</sup> In this way, they actually took a civilizational step backwards, which

12 For more details see Alī ibn Ahmad al-Wāhidī, *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*. Translated by Mokrane Guezzou. (Amman, Jordan: Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2008), 69.

13 As-Suyuti justified the abrogation of the verse (60:8) as follows: "As for such [of the unbelievers] as do not fight against you on account of [your] faith, and neither drive you forth from your homelands, God does not forbid you to show them kindness and to behave towards them with full equity: for, verily, God loves those who act equitably"

was quite contrary to the revolutionary liberation of humankind from its obligation to group, clan, and race or nation.

To regard the religious and cultural diversity intentionally created by God as the theological foundation for the division of the world leads to a misunderstanding of Islam. The Qur'an perceives this diversity as the foundation for living together and under no circumstances as a reason for societal division:

And [thus it is:] had thy Sustainer so willed, all those who live on earth would surely have attained to faith, all of them: dost thou, then, think that thou couldst compel people to believe, notwithstanding that no human being can ever attain to faith otherwise than by God's leave. (Qur'an 10:99)

This diversity, in spite of the outward differences, is a necessary human reality. The different societal imprints of humans through time depend on the linguistic and cultural context. What is crucial in this process of transformation is also the way humans fashioned their context with their spiritual maturity. This sociological reality is presented in a very understandable way in the Qur'an.

All mankind were once one single community; [then they began to differ -] whereupon God raised up the prophets as heralds of glad tidings and as warners, and through them bestowed revelation [wa anzala ma'ahumul-kitaba] from on high, setting forth the truth, so that it might decide between people with regard to all on which they had come to hold divergent views. Yet none other than the selfsame people who had been granted this [revelation] began, out of mutual jealousy, to disagree about its meaning

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in the revelation of the so-called "sword verse" (9:5), "And so, when the sacred months are over, slay those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God wherever you may come upon them, and take them captive, and besiege them, and lie in wait for them at every conceivable place! Yet if they repent, and take to prayer, and render the purifying dues, let them go their way: for, behold, God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace", as follows: "God does not forbid you in regard to those who did not wage war against you, from among the disbelievers, on account of religion and did not expel you from your homes, that you should treat them kindly ("an tabarrūhum" is an inclusive substitution for "alladhīna", "those who") and deal with them justly: this was [revealed] before the command to struggle against them. Assuredly God loves the just." J. al-Suyuti, *Tafsir al-Jalalayn*. (Amman: Royal Aal-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2007), 662.

Noteworthy in all these classic works is that under theological coercion interpreters exploited the Qur'an for justifying hostile actions without taking into account the contexts of revelations. In this process, they unconsciously undertook a fight against the Qur'an itself, in that they selected portions of the Qur'an and simply declared them to be invalid. (See also Remzi Kaya, "Kur'an-i Kerim'de neshi iddia edilen Ayetler" in *Uludağ Üniversitesi, İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* VII (7, 1998), 353-371.

after all evidence of the truth had come unto them. But God guided the believers unto the truth about which, by His leave, they had disagreed: for God guides onto a straight way him that wills [to be guided]. (Qur'an 2:213)

Based on this verse, Aydin points to a common origin of all holy books according to the Qur'an:

As we see here, regarding the diversity of the sacred books, the Qur'an speaks not of multiple 'books,' but instead of one heavenly 'book' as the origin of all holy books. Accordingly, all the sacred books are the earthly manifestations of a single source. (Aydin 2005, 104)

According to Nasr, truth is indeed absolute and irrefutable, however, the forms and languages in which it is revealed may differ and even exhibit inconsistencies. The words with which the truth is to be brought closer to human beings must build on their respective system of cultural norms – for that very reason, however, not unification, but instead pluralization, is a matter of course, corresponding even to the nature of creation, which is also developing in increasingly complex diversity (Nasr 1989, 250-254).

For Nasr, there is only one God who has revealed himself in different cultures on the occasion of different historical events in various ways. Furthermore, this unity cannot be destroyed by any external differences whatsoever (Aslan 2000, 17-30).

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## Plurality as an Ethical Principle

In the Qur'an, humankind's good works are referred to as '*ibādah*'. By means of '*ibādah*' a human being gives expression to his good deeds performed with a responsible conviction before God.

...the Sustainer of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them! Worship, then, Him alone, and remain steadfast in His worship! Dost thou know any whose name is worthy to be mentioned side by side with His? (Qur'an 19:65)

In this sense, the term "worship" must not be confused with the different ritual acts. Rituals are referred to in the Qur'an as *nusuk*.

Say: "Behold, my prayer, and [all] my acts of worship (wa-nusukī), and my living and my dying are for God [alone], the Sustainer of all the worlds". (Qur'an 6:162)

Unto every community have We appointed [different] ways of worship (a way of worship, *mansak*, which sometimes denotes also “an act of worship”) which they ought to observe. (Qur’an 22:67)

According to Islamic teaching, different peoples in different cultures have worshiped God in different ways. Actually, according to qur’anic doctrine, what is important is not how people worship God, but which good deeds arise for humankind from these *nusuk*. The results of *nusuk* (act of worship) are called ‘*ibādah*’.

For this reason, prayer, fasting, etc., are, as it were, acts of worship, which give birth to ‘*ibādah*’. It is even better to say that they are *manāsik* from which ‘*ibādah*’ arise. In the Arabic language *nusuk* /*manāsik* are used as follows: to fertilize the earth to get more crops (*nasaka*’l-ard), for a new rain, which the green-colored Earth (*al-ardu*’n-nāsik) ... (Eliacik 2014, 28).<sup>14</sup>

The ‘*ibādāt*’ form the ethical core of an ideal society. When the real purpose of religious rituals is not internalized, acts of worship are relegated to the status of unnecessary actions according to the Qur’an.

The word “*sāliḥāt*” or “good works” is often mentioned in the Qur’an in connection with *īmān* (faith). It explains one of the most important forms of ethical expression of ‘*ibādah*’ (worship). An act of worship without “good works” cannot be considered true ‘*ibādah*’.

Whereas those who attain to faith and do righteous deeds—they are destined for paradise, therein to abide. (Qur’an 2:82)<sup>15</sup>

Say [O Prophet]: “I am but a mortal man like all of you. It has been revealed unto me that your God is the One and Only God. Hence, whoever looks forward [with hope and awe] to meeting his Sustainer [on Judgment Day], let him do righteous deeds (*ṣāliḥ*), and let him not ascribe unto anyone or anything a share in the worship due to his Sustainer! (Qur’an 18:110)

14 This topic is dealt with further below.

15 Qur’an 2:82. Regarding this Izutsu writes: “The word *ṣāliḥ* is most commonly translated in English ‘righteous’; one may as well translate by ‘good’. Whether the translation is right or not is a matter of only secondary importance. What is really important is to isolate the concrete descriptive content of this word in the qur’anic context”. Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur’an*. (Montreal: McGill University Press, 2002), 204.

Similar to “*ṣāliḥ*” is the word “*birr*” (piety), another qur’anic “moral term” that points out that religiousness depends not on the form of worship, but on its consequences for others.

[But as for you, O believers,] never shall you attain to true piety (*birr*) unless you spend on others out of what you cherish yourselves; and whatever you spend – verily, God has full knowledge thereof. (Qur’an 2:92)

Do you bid other people to be pious (*birr*), the while you forget your own selves -and yet you recite the divine writ? Will you not, then, use your reason? (Qur’an 2:44)

On the basis of these explanations it should have become clear that Muslims cannot be defined by the form of their worship, but rather by their “good works.” In these good works God makes no distinction among humans. Muslims cannot be proud of praying five times a day or making the pilgrimage to Mecca often, but instead of what arises from their prayers, pilgrimages and fasting for the good of society.

According to the ethical conception of the Qur’an, the ones who deserve God’s pleasure are those who are committed to the welfare of the people.

Verily, those who have attained to faith [in this divine writ], as well as those who follow the Jewish faith, and the Christians, and the Sabians – all who believe in God and the Last Day and do righteous deeds – shall have their reward with their Sustainer; and no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve. (Qur’an 2:62)<sup>16</sup>

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16 Qur’an 2:62. “The above passage – which recurs in the Qur’an several times – lays down a fundamental doctrine of Islam. With a breadth of vision unparalleled in any other religious faith, the idea of “salvation” is here made conditional upon three elements only: belief in God, belief in the Day of Judgment, and righteous action in life. The statement of this doctrine at this juncture – that is, in the midst of an appeal to the children of Israel – is warranted by the false Jewish belief that their descent from Abraham entitles them to be regarded as “God’s chosen people.” M. Asad, *Message*. Surah 2: 62, footnote 50.

Al-Qushayrī wrote the following regarding this verse, “The diversity of [religious] paths in spite of the unity of the source does not prevent a goodly acceptance [for all]. For anyone who affirms the Real in His signs and believes in what He has told concerning His Truth and Attributes, the dissimilarity of [religious] laws and diversity occurring in name[s] is not a problem in considering who merits [God’s] good pleasure. Because of that He said, ‘Surely those who believe and those of Jewry.’ Then He said, ‘whoever believes’, meaning if they fear [God] in the different ways of knowing [Him], all of them will have a beautiful place of return and an ample reward. The believer (mu’min) is anyone who is in the protection (amān) of the Real. For anyone who is in His protection it is fitting that no fear shall befall them, neither shall they grieve.” Abū

...for, verily, those who have attained to faith [in this divine writ], as well as those who follow the Jewish faith, and the Sabians, and the Christians – all who believe in God and the Last Day and do righteous deeds – no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve. (Qur'an 5:69)

With this understanding, the Qur'an calls on people who appreciate the effect and importance of "good works" for society to show solidarity with one another.

Say: "O followers of earlier revelation! Come unto that tenet which we and you hold in common: that we shall worship none but God, and that we shall not ascribe divinity to aught beside Him, and that we shall not take human beings for our lords beside God." And if they turn away, then say: "Bear witness that it is we who have surrendered ourselves unto Him." (Qur'an 3:64)

If Christians and Jews are also addressed here, we can further expand that call, in accordance with the Qur'an, and invite other religions and philosophies, which were unknown in the context in which the Qur'an originated, to show commitment in solidarity to "good works" in society.

For, every community faces a direction of its own, of which He is the focal point. Vie, therefore, with one another in doing good works. Wherever you may be, God will gather you all unto Himself: for, verily, God has the power to will anything. (Qur'an 2:148)

The ethical principle of the Qur'an presupposes that plurality is, for the well-being of a society, a matter of course for humans, which is willed by God while pointing out the special responsibility of religions for social plurality.

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## Conclusion

An all-encompassing Muslim understanding of religion (*dīn*) and of the Qur'an, emerges from the above discussion which judges people not on the basis of their religious and ideological rituals, but rather on their effective actions which form the ethical foundation of society. The outward differences among religions are not only to be tolerated, but also to be protected as a sign of God. In order to legitimize

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1-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *at-Tafsīr al-kabīr laṭā'if al-ishārāt bi-tafsīr al-Qur'ān (Laṭā'if al-ishārāt)*, vol. I. Amman: Royal Ahl al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 76.

violence in the name of God, the content of the Qur'an, which promotes plurality, was unfortunately repeatedly ignored by the various theological schools of thought, or even more regrettably overridden by fictional theories. Now, Muslims living in the West are faced with the challenge of reforming their understanding of the Qur'an and other Islamic sources, in keeping with the Qur'an's message, and of employing the contributions of these texts so as to facilitate the successful development of an all-inclusive and thriving plurality.

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# Classical and Contemporary Islamic Perspectives on Religious Plurality

Marcia K. Hermansen

This chapter takes a conceptual approach to the topic, providing an overview of Islamic resources for theologies of religious diversity while surveying some major and representative Muslim approaches to the existence of religious diversity, both classical and contemporary.<sup>1</sup>

I will first introduce some basic Islamic theological concepts that could support approaches to religious diversity. These may be summarized under the fundamental Islamic doctrines of *tawhid* (the unity and uniqueness of Allah), *nubuwwa* (prophetology), and *ma'd* (soteriology)

The next section of the paper aims to situate contemporary Muslim positions on religious diversity using the categories proposed by Christian theologian, Alan Race, who classifies theologians as being religious exclusivists, inclusivists, or pluralists (Race, 1983). In dealing with specifically “pluralistic” approaches, the paper builds on the further typology of pluralisms proposed by Christian theologian Paul Knitter. Knitter distinguishes between various sources or forms of pluralism based on what he terms “mutuality,”<sup>2</sup> suggesting that various approaches to mutuality are

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- 1 An earlier version of this chapter is forthcoming in “The Blackwell Companion to Religious Diversity” ed. Kevin Schilbrack, Wiley Blackwell, 2015.
  - 2 Besides “mutuality” Knitter discusses a category of “acceptance” of plurality that allows that diverse religions may hold incompatible views since this is part of the nature of reality/truth and should be accepted, or even embraced. Views verging in this direction might be espoused by the most liberal of Muslims but will not be expanded on here.

based upon three conceptual “bridges,” namely, philosophy, mysticism, and ethics (Knitter 2002, 112-3).

The topic is potentially huge, given the global reach and sectarian and regional diversity within the tradition. For this reason, Muslim thinkers known to a Western audience will figure more prominently in the current discussion of contemporary positions.

In summary, this chapter will first consider the concept of religion within Islam and then examine basic Islamic theological concepts that underlie approaches to religious diversity. Finally, a consideration of both classical and contemporary Muslim theologies of other religions will allow us to outline a typology of Muslim responses to religious diversity, concluding with a preliminary attempt to compare developing Muslim theologies of religious pluralism in the North American and European contexts.

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## Islam and Religion

The idea of religion as a separate and largely personal component of human experience has been characterized as a uniquely “modern” and even “Western” notion. Like most traditional religious systems, Islam has an integrated and holistic sense of the presence and relevance of the sacred in human life. Islam is the most recent of the major world religions to emerge, with the Islamic calendar taking the 622 CE *hijra* or emigration of the Prophet and his Companions to Medina where they established the new religious community as its initial point. Even at its inception, Islam interacted with diverse Near Eastern traditions as well as with established religions in the region such as Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and pre-Islamic Arabic practices.

The Qur’an, as well as the exemplary biography of the Prophet Muhammad, established in the hadith corpus and the biographical literature (*sīra*) provide extensive resources that may serve as the basis of an Islamic theology of religious diversity. It could be said that Islam has a built-in interreligious theology since engagement with individuals, teachings, and practices of other faiths has been part of the experience of Muslims from the beginning. After the eleventh century, Muslim scholars produced works of heresiology that catalogued sectarian views among Muslim groups, but also described the beliefs of other religions such as Judaism and Christianity, as well as religions of Iran, India, and Greece (Friedman, 2003, 13).<sup>3</sup>

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3 This genre was known in Arabic as *al-milāl wa-l-nihāl* (sects and creeds).

The authoritative sources for determining what would be considered Islamic consist of the “revealed” texts, the Qur’an and the hadith (sayings of the Prophet), along with their interpretations by qualified scholars. The interpretive tradition encompasses a legal tradition of practical rulings as well as a broad theological corpus of interpretations and reflections by classical and contemporary Muslims that may serve as resources for ideas about religious diversity but may not find universal acceptance among all Muslims.

The Arabic term “*islam*” means submission to and acceptance of God. The idea of “Islam” as a proper noun for the religion—indicating a specific historical system of precepts and behaviors revealed to the Prophet Muhammad—co-exists in the Qur’an with its use as a generic term for universal and eternal divine guidance followed by all of the Prophets including Abraham (3:67) and Joseph (12:101), each of whom is referred to in the Qur’an as “muslim” (the Arabic active participle that denotes a person who performs the act of “islam”). This ambiguity of universal and particular reference between “*islam*” vs. “Islam” is foundational for Muslim understandings of religion and religious diversity.<sup>4</sup>

Terms for “religion” used in Arabic and other languages spoken by Muslims such as Persian and Urdu are “din” and “madhhab.” As Carl Ernst notes, “the Arabic word most often used as equivalent for religion is “din”, which has no plural in the Qur’an. The root meaning of “din” carries the sense of judgment, debt, obligation, custom and guidance that is accepted with submission” (Ernst, 2003, 65). The term *madhhab* conveys the sense of a point of view or a way that is followed. The Islamic schools of law, such as Hanafi or Hanbali, are also called “madhhabs,” while in the Urdu language *madhhab* is used more broadly in the sense of “religion.”

Islamic theological anthropology holds that human beings are formed by God “in the best stature” (Qur’an 105:1) and instinctively recognize and acknowledge the divine being either through his evident signs “on the horizons and in yourselves” (Qur’an 41:53), or through the remembrance of a pre-eternal bond or covenant between humanity and God. According to the Primordial Covenant motif featured in Qur’an 7:172, in a time before time (*azal*), Allah asked all the souls, implicit in the seed of Adam, “Am I not your Lord?” to which they unanimously responded, “Yes, indeed You are.”

The flaw of humanity is forgetfulness and arrogance rather than original sin, hence the emphasis in Islam on the need for remembrance (*dhikr*), active God-con-

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4 The importance of distinguishing the semantic register of these two terms, despite the fact that Arabic script does not distinguish this, is made by Lumbard (2005), drawing on initial work by Toshihiko Izutsu (1987, 199).

sciousness (*taqwa*), and diligence in reading and reflecting on the signs (*ayat*) of God presented to all humans both in scripture, the recorded book (*kitab tadwini*), and in the world, the book of creation (*kitab takwini*). Response to the divine is thus considered an innate and essential component of human nature according to Muslim theological anthropology. This idea of sound original nature is often associated with the term “*fitra*” based on the terminology of the Qur’an and a hadith that declares, “Every child is created according to a *fitra*.” The commentators’ gloss on this report is that the *fitra* is specifically “Islam” as the natural religion such that “every child is born Muslim.”<sup>5</sup>

The Qur’an contains verses that can be read as recognizing validity in other religions as well as verses that appear to support exclusivist perspectives. For example, in interfaith contexts the following verses are often invoked to support inclusivist perspectives on other religions:

To each of you Allah (God) has prescribed a law (*shir’a*) and a way (*minhaj*). If Allah (God) had willed he would have made you a single people. But God’s purpose is to test you in what he has given each of you. So compete with one another in doing good works (Qur’an 5:48).

O humankind Allah (God) has created you male and female and made you into diverse nations and tribes so that you may come to know each other. Indeed the most honored among you is the person who is the most God-conscious (*taqwa*) (Qur’an 49:13).

There is no compulsion in religion (Qur’an 2.256, 10.99, 18.29).

However, exclusivism is also a plausible theological position based on another set of qur’anic verses as well as numerous hadith reports. In fact, exclusivism was the majority position among pre-modern Muslim exegetes and theologians. Such verses include:

If anyone has a religion other than Islam it will not be accepted from him (Qur’an 3:85).

Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam for you as a religion (Qur’an 5:3).

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5 Most versions of this hadith add the further clause, “... and then the parents make the child a Jew, Christian, or Magian” (*Sahih Muslim* Book of Destiny, Hadith # 6423).

In these cases, the exclusivism is contingent on reading “Islam” as a proper noun applying only to the religion revealed to Muhammad.

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## Islamic Theological Doctrines and Religious Diversity

Muslim scholars largely concur that there are three primary elements of Islamic theology: the unity and uniqueness of God (*tawhid*); prophethood (*nubuwwa*), including the concept of revelation; and the promised return (*ma'd*) to God that encompasses both eschatology and soteriology.<sup>6</sup> Within each of these three aspects are elements that bear directly on Muslim understandings of religious diversity, both descriptively and prescriptively.

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### *Tawhid*: The Unity and Uniqueness of God

The first phrase of the *shahāda*, the Muslim profession of faith, is: “There is no God other than God (Allah).” Belief in God is essential and in fact the two unforgivable sins in Islam are denying God (*kufir*) and holding that some other deity, person, or entity shares (*shirk*) in the qualities or powers of the divinity. Islamic thought contains both monistic and dualistic perspectives on the God/world relationship. While some philosophers and mystics emphasize the immanence of divinity, many theologians and scholars have stressed divine distinctiveness and transcendence.

Early political upheavals in the Muslim community stirred up intra-Muslim tensions such that arose a practice of *takfir* -- declaring that opponents had strayed so far in practice or doctrine that they had left the fold of Islam and espoused disbelief. In response, the majority position became one of suspending judgments on other Muslims with whom one disagreed and ultimately leaving the matter up to God to decide on Judgment Day. While debates took place within the community as to which Muslims were on the correct path, in practice distinctions were tolerated and heresy was rarely prosecuted.

Scholar of Islam Toshihiko Izutsu suggests a model of internal or intra-Muslim diversity as one of concentric circles in which each Muslim sect or interpretive community saw its perspective as holding the authentic center -- others could be further from that point, yet still remain within the broader scope of “Islam” (Izutsu, 126). A hadith report states that of 72 or 73 sects, only one would ultimately

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6 These three aspects are presented in an accessible way in Murata and Chittick, 1994.

attain salvation,<sup>7</sup> but this was not generally taken as an impetus to eliminate or persecute other Muslims. There were, however, a few Muslim groups historically characterized as doctrinally “extreme” (*ghulāt*), and thereby perhaps so fringe as to have left the circle of Islam entirely.

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## **Nubuwwa: Prophetology**

Understandings of revelation and prophetology shape Muslim theologies of religious diversity. The fact that Prophets have been sent to all peoples suggests at least an inclusive and possibly even a pluralistic attitude. According to one hadith report, 124,000 prophets have been sent to the world (Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, 5, 169). Twenty-five prophets are mentioned by name in the Qur’an. Adam is considered to have been the first prophet in the sense that he received words of guidance from God (Qur’an 2:37). Revelation continued throughout history, both through the activities of Prophets who were ethical warners and through those divine messengers who brought revelations in a series of holy books. Adherents of certain religious systems, generally the Abrahamic faiths, are further characterized in the Qur’an as “People of the Book.” As the religion expanded, some Muslim scholars were willing to extend this designation to followers of other traditions such as Hinduism or Buddhism. In considering the status of the non-Abrahamic religions of India, China, or native African or American traditions, Muslims may invoke the Qur’anic verses, “To every community there has been sent a warner to convey God’s messages in its own language” (4:47, 10:47, and cited with this interpretation in Ayoub, 2005, 275).

Muslims are to acknowledge and respect all divine messengers according to Qur’anic injunctions such as the following:

The Prophet (Muhammad) believes in what had been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the believers. Each one of them believes in Allah (God), His angels, His books and His Apostles. We make no distinction between any of the prophets (Qur’an 2:285)

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7 “The Apostle of Allah stood among us and said, ‘Beware! The People of the Book before (you) were split up into 72 sects, and this community will be split up into 73, seventy-two of them will go to Hell and one of them will go to Paradise, and it is the majority group.’” Abu Dawud, *Sunan*, Book 35, Hadith #4580.

Say, “We believe in Allah (God) and that which has been sent down to us And that which was send down to Ibrahim (Abraham), Isma’il (Ishmael), Ishāq (Isaac), Yaqūb (Jacob) and his progeny. And that which was given to the Prophets from their Lord. And we make no distinction between any of them” (Qur’an 2:136).

As previously indicated, Muslim understandings of sacred history navigate a tension between particularism and universalism, inclusion and supersession. In one qur’anic verse, Muhammad is termed the “seal of the Prophets” (33:40), which interpreters generally view as indicating that Islam is the final and complete message. As a consequence, Muslims have considered heretical any post-Muhammadan claimants to prophecy, for example, Baha’ism in Iran and the Ahmadiyya movement that originated in India.

The concept of revelation balances the specific historical presence of the Qur’an with its being an articulation of a universal and eternal template referred to by expressions such as “Mother of the Book” (Qur’an 13:39, 43:3-4), or conceived of as an archetypal scripture on an eternal “Preserved Tablet” (Qur’an 85:21-22), the specific instantiations of which have been sent down to humanity throughout history. Muslim thinkers therefore needed to come to terms with the divine rationale for progressive revelations culminating in one final and complete message. One strategy was to consider the previous religious traditions to have been superseded, since their scriptures and practices had become willfully or negligently distorted over time. Thus the Qur’an, when speaking of Judaism and Christianity and of Jews and Christians, oscillates between affirming Abrahamic commonalities and denouncing particular errors and deviations in theology and practice.

Islamic law in the post-prophetic period developed specific provisions guiding relations with non-Muslim communities and individuals living under Muslim rule. In such codes, known as the *dhimma*, religious minorities are protected but at the same time are discouraged from actively proselytizing. This constituted social and political toleration that at the same time limited the ability of others to expand or proselytize at the expense of Muslims.

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### **Ma’d: The Path of Return to Allah (Eschatology/Soteriology)**

The final major theological theme of the return to God includes descriptions of the Last Days, heaven and hell, and salvation.<sup>8</sup> Some verses of the Qur’an seem to suggest salvific elements of other religions. For example: “Surely those who believe

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<sup>8</sup> On Islamic eschatology, see Hermansen 2008; on the salvation of non-Muslims see Khalil 2012 and Hermansen 2013.

and those who are Jews, and Sabeans, and Christians, whoever believes in God and the last day and does righteous deeds, they shall have their recompense from God. They shall not fear, nor shall they sorrow” (2:62, 5:69).

The Qur’an unequivocally states that there is salvation and damnation. Hell is clearly the destiny of some individual figures such as Pharaoh and Satan, as well as the Prophet’s opponent, Abu Lahab, and his wife (111:1-5). Sinning Muslims who do not repent such as those categorized as rebellious (72:23), evil-doers (37:63), and oppressors (78:22) are also consigned to the Fire according to the Qur’an (Khalil, 2012, 6).

In a recent study of salvation doctrines in Islam, Mohammad Khalil notes that Qur’anic eschatology suggests the existence of an “in between” status (35:32) for those identified as “neither of the right nor the left hand but rather as the people of the heights” (*ahl al-a’raf*) (Qur’an 7:46-49) (Khalil, 2012, 6). This concept could be used in developing a theology incorporating at least some degree of inclusivism when considering the potential for salvation of certain Muslim or non-Muslim groups.

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## Classical Muslim Positions on Religious Diversity

In early Islamic history, classical Muslim thinkers in the Arab lands primarily encountered religious Others as Jews or Christians, and in Iran as Zoroastrians. Their attitude was essentially theological negation, the position that there was no truth and no salvific power in these other faiths.

A more lenient classical understanding held that God might forgive people who had never heard about Islam or who had not been adequately informed about the religion. People of the Book who lived before Muhammad’s message could therefore attain Paradise. Further opinions that emphasized the divine mercy (*rahma*) allowed that eventually all of humanity might ultimately exit Hell, and that no one, even the most pious Muslim, could remain assured of divine grace. In other words, a Muslim should not think of herself as saved, or of any other individual, whether Muslim or not, as being necessarily damned. Here, the question of ultimate salvation was distinguished from that of the truth-value of particular religious traditions. The classical Muslim position in this case was that only Islam offered complete and final truth.

Some have suggested that certain Sufis, such as Ibn ‘Arabi (d. 1240), who held immanentist positions and felt that the divine could manifest in multiple ways, would be closer to allowing the true/real to be expressed in other religious traditions. Muhammad Legenhausen carefully clarifies this point by reminding us that

the great Sufi theoretician Ibn 'Arabi taught that the fact that God's truth can find expression in different, even apparently conflicting, religions, does not mean that people are free to choose whatever religion suits their fancy. Ibn 'Arabi himself asserts that it is incumbent upon people in the present age to follow the *shari'a* brought by Muhammad, and it is in this sense that all previously revealed religions became invalid (*batil*) with the revelation of the Qur'an. This does not mean that they become false, but that it becomes obligatory to follow the shari'a of specific Islam rather than that of a previously revealed religion (Legenhausen, 2005, 68).

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## Classifying Contemporary Muslim Positions on Religious Diversity

In this section of the discussion of Muslim approaches to other religions, I will categorize contemporary positions on religious diversity among Muslims. Initially, I will use the typology proposed by Alan Race (1983) who classifies theologians as religious exclusivists, inclusivists, or pluralists. While Race's typology has been critiqued by subsequent commentators as being either too Christian-centered or insufficiently nuanced, for the purpose of offering a heuristic starting place to consider Muslim positions, its categories are quite adequate.<sup>9</sup>

Like Christians today, Muslims increasingly find themselves living in religiously diverse contexts. Especially in countries where Muslims have immigrated and find themselves a minority, they are in religiously diverse situations participating in formal and informal interfaith conversations. While Islam has always been a confessional religion that makes universal claims to truth, as does Christianity, Muslims did not undertake formal missionizing until fairly recently. Current proselytizing on the part of some Muslim groups and individuals and heightened apologetic and polemic engagement on the Internet and elsewhere has also involved further cohorts of Muslims in thinking and writing about relations with those of other faiths and formulating positions on the ultimate status of those other religions. Let us now briefly discuss some Muslim theological positions.

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9 I found Dutch 2009 to be a useful summary of more recent critiques, especially from Evangelical perspectives.

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## Exclusivism/Total Replacement

Adherents of this position maintain a soteriology in which only their religion or interpretation is salvific and adherents of other beliefs will be punished. From an Islamic theological perspective, the strongest exclusionary position that is taken would be that there is no value in any other tradition once Islam had been revealed through the mission of Muhammad. Clearly, the lineage of prophets indicates that some previous traditions, minimally those mentioned in the Qur'an, must have been valid at one point.

A famous classical exponent of this trend would be Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328). Some of his exclusivist arguments are summarized, along with a reaffirmation of classical exclusionist or "particularist" Muslim positions, by Yasir Qadhi, a contemporary US-based Muslim scholar trained in Saudi Arabia and at Yale. Qadhi marshals numerous verses in the Qur'an and hadith that propound exclusivist views and condemn those who do not accept Islam, demonstrating that this has been the majority position among Muslim scholars. Qadhi further provides a critique of some contemporary Muslim inclusivist and pluralist positions, suggesting that their selective reading of a few selected verses in the Qur'an is a deviation from tradition (Qadhi, 2012).

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## Inclusivism/Partial Replacement

This position has been espoused in various forms. The concept of Islam's supersession or abrogation of previous traditions allows that there is yet some value in them theologically. In terms of allowing salvation for non-Muslims, categories were developed by classical theologians such as al-Ghazzali (d. 1111) such as that of sincere outsiders to Islam who could not have encountered or recognized the truth due to their historical or geographical location (Khalil 2012).

The Qur'anic concept of the People of the Book and the fact that according to Islamic law male Muslims can marry Jewish or Christian women suggest a degree of acceptance of at least followers of these religions and quite possibly others. The fact that Abraham, Moses, and Jesus are termed "muslim" by the Qur'an further suggests an inclusive theological continuity.

Some contemporary Muslim theological perspectives explicitly distinguish questions of the "truth" of other religions from the issue of their salvific potential. This could be understood as a version of limited inclusiveness. Such positions are espoused by those scholars influenced by Sufism who can draw on classical formulations of scholars such as al-Ghazzali and Ibn 'Arabi. Central to this move would be emphasizing the universality of human nature.

British Muslim scholar Tim Winter (‘Abd al-Hakim Murad) has expounded this position in an article, “The Last Trump Card,” that cautions against excessively pluralistic readings of Islamic theology along the lines of those made by progressive liberal Muslims such as Farid Esack (Winter, 1999; cf. Legenhausen, 2005). According to Winter, such “fellow travellers” of John Hick are too free with both the Qur’an and the classical tradition of Islamic theology. While a Muslim thinker can bracket issues of salvation, leaving ultimate judgment as an exclusively divine prerogative, holding that more than one religious system can be equally true is both theologically and logically untenable. A plurality of truth, according to such Muslim theologians, is logically untenable, but some degree of inclusivism for members of other faiths is possible with regard to the salvation question.

Muhammad Legenhausen, an American Muslim theologian long settled in Iran, who has written extensively on questions of inter-religious relations, develops a position that he terms “non-reductive pluralism.” As stated by Legenhausen:

An Islamic non-reductive pluralism may be contrasted with Hick’s pluralism and Rahner’s inclusivism in terms of the place of ignorance in the three views. In Hick’s view, every major creed, no matter how different, expresses an ultimately single faith. That ultimate faith may not be expressible in human language, so there is a sense in which believers are ignorant of what they really believe. In Rahner’s view, Christians know that they are Christians and it is only others who may be ignorant of their latent Christian belief. According to the non-reductive [Islamic] view, no attempt is made to reinterpret apparently conflicting beliefs to reveal some hidden agreement. Instead of positing ignorance about what we believe, we are to admit our ignorance of how God may guide the sincere, and what beliefs are the result of a sincere quest for the truth (Legenhausen, 2005, 71).

Furthermore, Legenhausen observes that since 124,000 prophets have been sent to the world, forms of the teachings of these prophets may survive in any number of the world’s religions and cultural legacies. Admitting our lack of knowledge may therefore provide a basis for an Islamic form of a non-reductive religious pluralism in which a Muslim cannot say who will be rewarded or punished by God. Thus we may consider Legenhausen’s “non-reductive pluralism” to be a form of inclusivism that is similar to Winter’s position with regard to the possible salvation of non-Muslims.

Yet other Muslim “inclusivists” may hold that the category of the unreached non-Muslim still exists. For example, contemporary political circumstances or Islamophobia may impede even educated, cosmopolitan non-Muslims from receiving the message of Islam in its true form. Therefore they could be forgiven for not embracing the final revelation. Other, more liberal Muslim inclusivists may posit

a category of sincere non-Muslims who may attain salvation (Khalil, 2012, 11). In addition, inclusivism may be possible in salvific terms, since there could ultimately be a “greatest Intercession” on the part of the Prophet Muhammad on the Day of Judgment that would allow him to plead for salvation extending beyond the boundaries of the Muslim community (Winter, 1999, 151).

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## Varieties of Pluralisms/Mutuality Models

Going even further than the inclusivists are Muslims who hold theological positions about other faiths that would be characterized by Knitter or Race as “pluralism.” The strongest form of pluralism holds that there are several or more religious traditions that are either equally true theologically or equally effective salvifically. Paul Knitter further typologizes various sources or forms of pluralism based on modes of either mutuality or acceptance (Knitter, 2002). Knitter theorizes that pluralistic positions based on mutuality are predominantly built upon three conceptual “bridges.” These bridges are philosophy, mysticism, and ethics and they seem to work well in sorting distinctions among and across contemporary Muslim writers on pluralism.

Examples of the bridge of philosophy among contemporary Muslims could be Fazlur Rahman and Abdel Aziz Sachedina. Fazlur Rahman was an important Muslim modernist thinker and scholar of Islam, who spent the latter part of his career at the University of Chicago. As an expert across many areas of Islamic thought, especially the medieval philosophers such as Ibn Sina (d. 1037), he also offered influential treatments of Islam including a pioneering treatment of the major themes of the Qur’an that are based on critical-historical and contextual interpretations of religious tradition (Rahman, 1980, 162-70). Rahman’s primary contribution to interreligious theology would lie in isolating Qur’anic verses that speak of Muslim relations with followers of other faiths in a world where difference and diversity is part of the divine plan. Muslim religious exclusivists such as Yassar Qadhi contend that Rahman has broken with the classical interpretive (*tafsir*) tradition and comes to the text selectively, choosing verses that are amenable to pluralism and ignoring the preponderance of exclusivist pronouncements (Qadhi, 2012).

Another contemporary pluralist is Abdulaziz Sachedina, a Twelver Shi’a scholar whose career has largely been spent in North American academia. Sachedina is an advocate of both democratic and religious pluralism and cites examples from Islamic texts and history to support pluralism. It appears that the bridge to pluralism in his case could be either philosophical or ethical, and in any case these elements are often found in combination.

Turning to the “mystical” bridge, Islamic mystics appear to be among the most pluralistically inclined in the classical Muslim tradition, although not all Sufis embrace interreligious pluralism or even inclusivism. Among contemporary Muslim thinkers, there are a range of Sufi positions on other religions. I will mention two pluralistic approaches among Sufis. One important trend in contemporary Islamic thought is that of “traditionalism” or “perennialism” deriving from the Shadhili Sufi lineage of the Algerian Shaykh al-‘Alawi (d. 1934) and further developed by 20th century European converts to Islam such as René Guénon (d. 1951) and Frithjof Schuon (d. 1997). Among current exponents of this position are a number of Muslim Sufi scholars trained or working in American academia including Seyyed Hossein Nasr and his students and colleagues, including Joseph Lumbard, Waleed el-Ansary, and others. Also influenced by this trend are a further group of Muslim academics grounded in the Akbarian (Ibn ‘Arabi) tradition, such as William Chittick and Vincent Cornell.

In the perennialism or traditionalism of the Guénonian/Schuonian/Nasrian lineage, there is a concept of a “transcendent unity” of all authentic religious traditions, Abrahamic, Eastern, or native. This would clearly undergird a pluralist understanding. If an individual follower of any “authentic” tradition maintains its practice and doctrine, then he or she is participating in and guided by this one universal truth. The really problematic position for traditionalists is secular modernity, a sort of existential Fall in which “man” rather than the divine revelation becomes the arbiter of truth.

In contrast, Chittick and Cornell draw their expositions of pluralism more explicitly from Ibn ‘Arabi, although his thought is profoundly influential on perennialists as well. For example, Chittick argues for pluralism on the basis that since interpretive disagreement among Muslim scholars (*ulema*) can be viewed as “providential”: “we may be able to find reasonable grounds for concluding that the enormous diversity of religions in the past and the present has also been providential” (Chittick, 2012, 66).<sup>10</sup> The source of never ending diversity is in fact God Himself, who is the ultimate source of multiplicity and difference. Chittick makes a further argument that in pre-modern times the well-informed discussions of religious differences prevalent today were impossible. However today we have access to “peers in other traditions and a wealth of books and information” and therefore the dismissive attitudes of some classical theologians are now untenable (Chittick, 2012, 78).

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10 A well-known maxim affirms that juristic disagreement is a “mercy” for the community. Some Muslim scholars consider this to be a hadith, some a juristic principle, and other scholars (especially exclusivists) deem it to be a fabrication.

It is difficult to strictly demarcate pluralism from inclusivism among Muslim perennialists. Muslim traditionalists may hold that Islam is the most complete articulation of truth in practice and doctrine, while a few such as Frithjof Schuon will be more pluralistic in doctrine and even practice, participating in “multi-religious” belonging or omni-religious experience. Pluralistic attitudes may also be found among New Age or universalistic Sufi movements in the West such as the teachings of Inayat Khan (d. 1927) in which all religions are deemed to emerge from one universal “spirit of guidance.”

In terms of the ethical bridge to pluralism, the impetus to interfaith relations and cooperation is most urgently expressed by Muslim liberals and progressives, those who live and work in contexts of religious diversity and who cannot reconcile hierarchical perspectives on race or gender with their experience of collective activism alongside those of different faiths. There is a degree of overlap between the ethical category and the ideals of philosophical liberalism. In her article on “American Muslims and Religious Pluralism,” Jane Smith mentions a number of contemporary American Muslim scholars and academics who might exemplify this position including Abdullahi Ahmed an-Na’im, Abdal Aziz Sachedina, Sulayman Nyang, and Omid Safi (Smith, 2011, 193). Sachedina and an-Na’im, in particular, are concerned with injustices inherent in the *shari’a* such as privileging of the Muslim male as a category and the need for legal reforms in the interests of universal human rights. Democracy and ethics take priority for them over the literal pronouncements of classical Islamic law.

Also notable within this category are exponents of social justice and Islamic feminism. For example, the South African scholar Farid Esack is a Muslim pluralist who first came to reject exclusivism and literalism due to his negative experiences in a traditional madrasa environment in Pakistan, while he was inspired by working alongside local Christians for social justice causes. He further came to prioritize pluralism based on the collaboration across races and religions that he encountered during the South African anti-apartheid struggle. Esack’s experience of solidarity with non-Muslims led him to advance the theological idea that *iman* (faith) and *islam* (submission to God) are not confined to Muslims.

As a further example of socially engaged pluralism, the American Muslim scholar, Jerusha Lamptey, in an article on “Muslima Theology and Interreligious Dialogue”, employs insights from emergent feminist and womanist Christian theologies to suggest more open approaches to interreligious dialogue among Muslims. Her theologizing on this issue draws on alternative conceptions of difference in the work of Muslim women interpreters of the Qur’an, in particular, Amina Wadud, Asma Barlas, and Riffat Hassan, who have themselves been influenced by biblical feminist approaches to scriptural interpretation. Invoking contemporary

feminist theory, Lamptey notes that female Muslim theologians are an essential resource for theologies of difference and diversity for two central reasons:

First, women -- whether silent, silenced or unheard -- have generally suffered from interpretative "voicelessness" within Islamic history; the Islamic interpretative tradition has historically been dominated and controlled by men. Thus, the mere inclusion of a largely excluded voice has the potential to proffer new insights. Second, the central interpretative task of these scholars is the elucidation of a qur'anic conception of human difference, specifically sexual/biological difference. Elements of this specific conception of difference can be generalized and utilized as a guide in articulating other conceptions of human difference (Lamptey, 2013).

Therefore, one plank of the ethical bridge to plurality is the one crossed by feminists and womanists from various religious traditions facing the 'terror' of classical religious texts and seeking collaborative strategies to combat essentialist and patriarchal interpretations. This example further suggests that a section of the ethical bridge to pluralism, shared by figures such as Wadud, Esack, and Lamptey, is built on the experience of Muslims oppressed by socio-cultural traditions who bond across faith, gender, and racial lines due to their common exclusion or marginalization.

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## Conclusions

As in other religious traditions, Muslim positions on religious plurality are far from uniform. The revealed sources of the tradition as well as its emergence in a multi-religious environment that had to take the existence of these other faiths into account provides for an awareness of religious "others" while in some cases it has occasioned a more explicit critique of their theological positions. Muslim jurists in the classical period developed frameworks for legal or pragmatic pluralism and employed revealed texts from the Qur'an and the hadith to support elements of coexistence.

The theme and context of the Podgorica conference from which this chapter emerged lead me to offer some preliminary reflections on understanding the different orientations among contemporary European Muslim scholars and theologians writing on issues of pluralism, as distinct from the United States. In general, European discussions of Muslims and plurality emphasize themes such as "legal" pluralism and the distinction between legal vs. socio-cultural citizenship, while secularism is the ideal in most forms of European nationalism.

Naturally, reasons for these distinct foci and concerns emerge from the contrast with American constitutional models of church/state separation such that there is no privileged “state” religion. In many European nations, histories of state churches and constitutionally “recognized” (by the state) religions that receive special funding or government legitimacy and resources provide a contrast according to which the legal status of Islam vis-à-vis the state must be negotiated as an initial step to any status of security for a Muslim minority.

In the Francophone world, for example in France, but to some extent also in Quebec,<sup>11</sup> the historical role of muscular secularism/laïcité in which religion should be excluded from the public sphere altogether makes the situation of more recent Muslim immigrants and the extent to which the “visibility” of their religious identities disturb this paradigm distinctively troublesome. Muslim pluralists in such contexts are less likely to argue for inter-faith pluralism in the theological sphere and more likely to address whether Islam can accommodate to coexistence and adapt to life in a totally secular system.

The much more prominent role of émigré and convert Muslim intellectuals in the United States merits attention. Since the US is considered a “religious” nation in the sense that espousing a faith is not, per se, cause for intellectual marginalization or even job discrimination in the academy, this greater presence is understandable. In the United States speaking religiously is encouraged, therefore there is a greater demand for and expectation of Muslim comments on pluralism. The spheres for interfaith encounters and ensuing discourses and publications are arguably greater in the US because of this national “religiosity” and are academically more “respectable” and even elicited. After all, many American universities emerged from and may still continue to have religious, usually Christian, backgrounds.

The “integration” of Muslims into broader frameworks of inclusion, at least up to this point, is the policy and position of the American government. All of this impacts the greater scope of writings and developments of theologies of religious plurality in the Muslim American sphere.

At the same time we note the policies of some European governments that support the integration of Muslims through education and are proactively creating positions for Muslim theologians in university faculties that will undoubtedly lead to a richer discourse and academic literature on Muslim positions on religious plurality.

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11 See for example, M. Sharify-Funk, (2010). “Muslims and the Politics of ‘Reasonable Accommodation’: analyzing the Bouchard-Taylor Report and its Impact on the Canadian Province of Québec”. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 30 (4), 535-553.

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# Islamic Radicalism

## A Result of Frozen Theologies?

Ranja Ebrahim

The atrocities of the so-called *Islamic State* and the reactions of *Western* media and governments work like a moral bulldozer that seems to crush ordinary Muslims who are caught between political and media forces. The resulting distorted perceptions and fears held by members of Western societies towards Islam are being increasingly projected onto their Muslim fellow citizens, who are gradually reduced to a homogenous mass and stereotyped as being antagonistic to democratic and European values. The question of the actual peacefulness of Islam, also involving the question of Islam's potential for pluralism has increasingly moved to the center of Austrian discourses on Islam, whether in political, social affairs or in the media.

The phenomenon of the so called “Austro-Jihadists”, the current term for young ISIS recruits who were socialized or even born in Austria, has become prominent in the field of empirical social research on the part of both universities and the government in the last few years.

The theological mechanisms of this machinery of violence have in my view not yet received adequate attention. On this account one risks merely scratching the surface by looking only at the sociological aspects, instead of probing into the profound roots of the problem.

This chapter attempts to discuss four different contemporary Muslim positions with regard to interpreting the Qur'an and comprehending the inherent teachings of Islam that have implications for pluralism and the integration of Muslims in Europe. The aim of discussing these differing positions is not only to provide insights into diverse Muslim perspectives on the topic of religious pluralism, whether on

inter- or intra-religious levels, but also to try to clarify certain Muslim positions towards the West. These differing perspectives represent varying opinions concerning the suitability of Islam to modernity. In the following chapter I will therefore discuss the historic-literary approaches of Muhammad Arkoun and Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, followed by the centrist (*waṣaṭiyya*) approach in *fiqh* (jurisprudence) exemplified by the “Jurisprudence of Minorities” espoused by Yusuf al-Qaradawi. In contrast to these three perspectives, I will then offer a brief outline of literalist Salafi positions towards pluralism, supported by legal examples from the General Presidency of Scholarly Research and Ifta of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

As already pointed out, Muslim attitudes toward pluralism are directly linked to interpretations of the Qur’an. The Qur’an is consensually considered the word of God (*kalām Allah*) by both common Muslims and elite scholars of Islam (Abu Zayd, 2008). As the central and only undisputed legitimate source for its followers, “everything that is Islamic has its origin in or takes inspiration from the Qur’an, whether it is a question of norms of daily life, tenets of faith, law or spirituality” (Guezzou, 2008, ii).

It is not solely Muslims who raise this claim of centrality and authority with regard to the Qur’an and its positioning in the believer’s life. It is the divine source itself which attributes this status to itself in very particular self-reflective ways, for example, in al-Baqara, Verse 2: “This is the Book about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those conscious of Allah” (2:2). This emphasized *guidance* reflects itself very clearly through the Qur’an’s self-designations, for instance, al-Furqān (8:29), in terms of “guidance for the people and clear proofs of guidance and criterion” (Quran 2:185). In other words, “The Qur’an is a document that is squarely aimed at man” (Rahman 1994, 1), with no distinctions regarding social status or origin.

In this discussion, there is a crucial distinction to be made which is related to something that may be considered a blind spot in research on the Qur’an, namely, the distinction between the closed compilation by humans of the divine revelation between “two book covers” (Arkoun, 1999, 33), including the resultant scholarly interpretative corpus on the one hand, and the discursive nature of the revelation that arises in the course of interaction between God, his messenger, and the surrounding environment.

The creation of an official compilation of the Qur’an was ordered by the third Islamic caliph, Uthmān ibn Affān, in order to protect the divine revelation from distortion and loss. This process not only produced a change concerning its functions, as originally indicated in the self-reflective verses; it also altered its meaning and therefore its concrete presence in the lives of common believers. With the development of the first dynastic caliphate and the rapid expansion of the Islamic

empire under the leadership of the Umayyads (661-750 C.E.), the necessity for a sophisticated jurisprudence, administration, and competent economic management arose. These requirements led to the first systematic approaches to law and ethics through the Qur'an and the Sunna (Black, 2011). These studies, which were primarily developed due to pragmatic reasons, created the stepping-stone for the establishment of wide-ranging intellectual disciplines, starting with jurisprudence and followed by theologies (Rahman, 1982). The advancement and precision of these disciplines resulted in a complex Qur'anic studies corpus and a sophisticated tradition of commentary, which gradually subjected the primary text to its associated religious sciences.

Due to the consequences of the codification process, it can be assumed that, very loosely speaking, today there are two opposing hermeneutical approaches to the Qur'an, which locate the *mushaf* (Qur'anic text) in different interpretative frames that determine whether the revelation is to be considered in a flexible and process-related way or as a static text.

One of the most well-known contemporary approaches, led by the late Franco-Algerian Islamic thinker, Mohammed Arkoun (d. 2010), claims that the Qur'an should be considered an ongoing process with special regard to its historicity. He further asserts that Islam failed to gain access to Modernity, due to fossilized theologies and ways of thinking which have not yet overcome dependence on their roots in the Islamic golden age. According to Arkoun, this orientation seems to deadlock any attempts to make Qur'anic teachings fruitful in addressing the challenges which emerge in accordance with our times and further harden the fronts of contrasting "logospheres" (Arkoun, 2002, 12).

Arkoun (2002) describes the theological frame that is rooted in the so-called "interpretative corpus" (Arkoun, 1999, 80) of the Islamic medieval period, as the "thinkable" (Arkoun, 1999, 12) in Islam. It is limited by a determined scholastic scope that has remained inviolable up to the present. Arkoun criticizes this "backwards-looking mentality" (Campanini, 2008, 50) as a crucial factor in relegating the "unthought" (Arkoun, 1999, 12) to the margins of the "unthinkable". These unthought aspects are topic ranges which fell through the grid of the "thinkable" and are therefore automatically rejected by Muslim traditionalists. However, what seems to be neglected by many traditionalists in this context is that certain issues were not considered or discussed by classical scholars, not because these issues were not of interest, but rather because they were not significant in their time. Hence, according to Arkoun, the theological angle needs to be changed from the past to the present, in order to permit dealing with contemporary issues and time-related challenges, especially with regards to Muslims living in non-Muslim societies who encounter people with other beliefs and lifestyles.

The difficulties connected with the “unthinkable” become very obvious with regard to the new environments in which Muslims live. In comparison to the social structures of the Islamic empires of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, where the Muslim population constituted the majority of society, along with the many diverse religious minorities, today two-thirds of the world’s Muslims live outside of Muslim-dominated countries (Pew, 2009). Accordingly, the questions and requirements of Islamic theology and Islamic jurisprudence need to be differentiated and discussed in a new framework. According to Arkoun (2002), this new frame can only be set up by regarding the qur’anic revelation as an ongoing dynamic process. This perspective does not reject classical Islamic thought, but it demands the resumption of particular points of contact that were abandoned at the gates of Modernity. Thereby, the blind spots can be recognized and history can be demythologized. Attempts in this direction by reformists have triggered “the struggle ... between the defenders of the living sacred and sacralizing traditions and the supporters of reformist or revolutionary change” (Arkoun 2002, 12).

Other very crucial problematic areas that Arkoun (1999) considered in connection to the Qur’an as a static text are the impacts of political power which shaped the history of ideas within the “closed corpus” (Arkoun, 1999, 80). The working field of the received text was from the beginning a fertile arena for polemical but also political disputes. These disputes yielded qur’anic hermeneutic methods that remain relevant until today, but they also fortified Caliphal orthodoxy in order to refute heterodoxy. Moreover, the sophisticated analysis of the Arabic language that emerged in tandem with the elaboration of the qur’anic sciences created thereby a functional solidarity between the state, the scripture and scholarship. The qur’anic text turned into the epitome of power and influence, and its interpretations were used in order to legitimize and disseminate Caliphal ideologies (Black, 2011). This interpretive solidarity created a wedge between the government, which aimed to subjugate the opposition under the guise of truth claims, and the rest of society. (Arkoun, 1999).

Considering these historical facts, certain classical Islamic works that are still taught today as unquestioned classics whose authors were actively engaged in state affairs ought to be critically interrogated concerning ideologies that might be transferred through their embedded attitudes and contextual *weltanschauung* that do not fit our times, thereby causing alienation or confusion.

The Egyptian literary scholar and Islamic thinker, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd (d. 2010), argued in a similar manner by differentiating between vertical discourse between God and the Prophet Muhammad, and the qur’anic Text which fails to retain the liveliness and the associated functions which are attributed to the nature of unscripted revelation. Abu Zayd (2008), in contrast to Arkoun, criticizes the uselessness of recontextualizing, historicizing, or declaring certain qur’anic

passages to be invalid in order to make them fit a particular situation or purpose. He points out that approaches like these remove the Qur'an from the realities of Muslims by drawing it into theological polemics which are on the one hand not accessible to the common believer and on the other hand not beneficial with regard to real solutions to Muslim problems, especially in plural societies (Abu Zayd, 2008).

Moreover, Abu Zayd (2008) takes up Arkoun's thesis concerning the manipulation of the received text and calls for "democratic and humanist hermeneutics" by encouraging a "*New Thinking* of tradition" (Abu Zayd, 2008, 164) which emerges from the midst of a community, instead of through a monopolization by political forces.

Thus he wants to raise awareness of changes in perspectives by taking a differentiated look at the Qur'anic terms *kitāb* (Book) and *waḥī* (revelation). Abu Zayd (2008) defines the term *waḥī* as a particular communication method in the form of inspiration or intuition, which is used by God in order to contact his messengers. The *kitāb*, on the other hand, defines a closed and unalterable text that "can only be a cultural and historical product" (Abu Zayd, 2008, 27). Abu Zayd, however, stresses the point that the *mushaf* is the first coherent sacred text in human history, which nevertheless lacks constructive benefits in comparison to the inspirational and more accessible character of *waḥī* which can be derived from multiple layers with regard to developing a humanistic and democratic approach to the Qur'an (Campanini, 2008). This very special type of revelation can be reconstructed, to a certain extent, through the polyphony of the Qur'an and the historical-exegetical occasions for delivery, the so-called reasons of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) (Tillschneider, 2011).

The importance of developing Islamic theologies sensitive to time and place was also recognized in the field of Islamic law. The leading voice in this debate is the Egyptian Islamic cleric, Yusuf al-Qaradawi. He is the co-founder of the International Union of Muslim scholars and the initiator of the school of thought of the *wāṣiṭiyya* or the "Middle way". This school of thought defines itself as a fusion of the Salafiyya (forefathers) and *tajdīd* (renewal). Responding to developments in Europe and North America, he led an international working group which was exclusively devoted to the question of the so-called *fiqh al-aqalliyāt* (the jurisprudence of minorities) in 1990. Qaradawi and his colleague, Shaykh Taha Jabir al-'Alwani, argue that Muslims "deserve to have a new legal course of action outlined for them, capable of addressing their religious needs, which are unique and differ from those of Muslims residing in Muslim countries" (Polka, 2013, 33). Their aim is to develop theological endorsements which aim to facilitate the daily lives of the Muslims within non-Muslim environments, as well as to encourage such Muslims to enter into meaningful and peace-promoting dialogues with other

religions and cultures around them within the framework of *maqāṣid ash-sharī'a* (the higher purposes of Islamic legislation). These endorsements are published in the form of *fatawā* (Islamic legal opinions), derived from the Islamic law by designated authorities. Al-Qaradawī (et alii) argue that these *fatawā* should be formulated in a language that can be easily understood by the average person, instead of the usual elite and technical language which is laden with terms and expressions that can only be comprehended by a particular target group. In 1997 the Council for Fatwa and Research was founded, which provided an online platform for a public discourse and the publication of related legal opinions. The Council bases its fundamental principles on the theological weltanschauung<sup>1</sup> of the *waṣaṭiyya*, which has its roots deeply set in the posture of “harmonization of the immutable components” (thawābit) (Polka, 2013, 32) of the divine law on the one hand and flexibility of methods on the other.

This step was determinative for the official recognition of the Muslim minorities in Europe and North America by Islamic authorities, which resulted in a wave of debates and theological disputes dealing with issues. It is of concern to note that the centrists are not the founders of this field of jurisprudence, but their perspective certainly was innovative.

Renewal means reviving *ijtihād* (independent scholarly efforts to arrive at the correct solution) by the learned '*ulamā*. We actually call for *ijtihād*. We must not think with the heads of our predecessors, because our problems, needs and time are different from theirs. We cannot let people who died centuries ago think on our behalf. The imams changed their personal opinions even within their lifetime ... We must change our discourse to conform to our age, environment and the requirements of our life. (Helfont, 2009, 43)

Another very crucial consideration was the recognition of Muslims, not as an isolated group of people within a society, but rather as individuals with rights and obligations with regard to the country in which they live. According to *fiqh al-aqalliyāt* (the jurisprudence of minorities) there is no ambiguity between *walā'* (loyalty to religion) and *muwāṭana* (citizenship).

The jurisprudence of minorities is based on following three principles (see Al-brecht 2010).

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1 I use this expression to refer to outlook of the *waṣaṭiyya* in order to distinguish it from the classical schools of Islamic law. The idea of *waṣaṭiyya* (a middle way) and its derivative *fiqh al-aqalliyāt* usually qualifies itself as a method (*manhaj*). However, to use the term *manhaj* here might be misleading due its current association with the Salafis who are described later in this chapter.

### 1. The Principle of time, place, and circumstances

This principle is to be taken into account when those three factors of time, place and circumstances have changed, in contrast to the time in which a certain law was approved. In this case the renewal of a law is to be adapted in order to suit modern needs and situations. Al-Qaradawi is convinced that the shari'a is endowed with a God given flexibility which permits the adaption of Islamic jurisprudence according to the aforementioned factors and dimensions.

### 2. The principle of *taysir* or facilitation

This principle has become al-Qaradawi's trademark. He assumes that God created shari'a in order to ease people's lives. This principle is supported by following verses:

2.1. Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship (2:185)

2.2. Allah does not charge a soul except [according to] what He has given it. Allah will bring about, after hardship, ease. (65:7)

2.3. And Allah wants to lighten for you [your difficulties]; and mankind was created weak (4:28)

Qaradawi attached great importance to this principle due to the fact that Muslims in the West do not get as much support in taking shari'a into account in their daily lives as Muslims living inside an Islamic community. This fact should facilitate exceptions and leniency, while preventing disappointments or alienation.

### 3. The principle of gradualism or *tadarruj*

This principle calls for gradual, slow, and individual religious development in order to attain a stable religious identity. According to the *wasatiyya*, radical or rapid developments lead to the opposite and should be therefore avoided and unaided.

During the last decades the Centrists contributed to overcoming distrust and disappointments produced by several paradoxical statements, which clearly contradict their purported liberal attitudes. One of those drawbacks relates to the previously discussed facilitations and considerations as being transitional solutions. It was made very clear that the shari'a's harsh obligations had been merely put on hold until circumstances were more accommodating. This attitude, however, does not correspond with the reality of Muslims who decided to live permanently or were even born and raised in non-Muslim societies and who therefore were expecting a permanent and sustainable approach.

Moreover, al-Qaradawi points out frequently that Muslims in the West have a crucial mission in regard to the work of propagating the faith. This might suggest

that these facilitations merely serve the purpose of missionary work instead of actually supporting Muslims in their daily lives in coping with all the challenges related to the balancing act of being both European and Muslim.

The rather flexible handling of the Centrists regarding a process-driven divine law and methodology, which aim to forward integration and communication, is a view that is not necessarily shared by all scholars of Islamic law that deal with the issue of pluralism, Islam and the West. Especially within intra-religious spheres, concepts that tend to adapt Islam to given situations and circumstances instead of restoring and implementing traditional Islamic values and traditions in the lives of Muslims, independent of time and location, have been strongly criticized by *purists*. A classical Arab-Andalusian thinker and theologian named Ibn Hazm (d. 1064) formulated his opinion towards a life outside an “Islamic community”. This view is still shared by certain ideological groups today:

Living outside the Islamic community causes loneliness and inferiority. Due to this inferiority, one tends to look for the company of non-Muslims, even though Islam demands living a life in dignity and pride, which does not accept any other authority than God. This is the reason why it is not permitted (for a Muslim) to live outside the Islamic community. Muslims, who are free to choose whether to remain living outside and choose to stay, no longer belong to Islam, as the Prophet once acknowledged. (Ibn Hazm, n.d.)

In contrast to the Centrists and proponents of the other two approaches, who consider the Qur’an and shari’a to be flexible, a countermovement following “as-salaf as-ṣāliḥ” (the pious forefathers) emerged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This movement aims to free and protect “genuine” Islam from the *bida’* (heretical innovations) of modernity. To begin with, it is important to clarify that the “Salafiyya” is not one homogenous group as is usually presented in the media, but rather a vague umbrella term for diverse elements. Nevertheless, all Salafi groups support and strive for a “puritanical approach” (Wiktorowicz 2006, 207) in order to purify Islam from all kinds of modern influences. This school of thought is not among the classical ones, but is rather a method (*manhaj*) which approaches particular issues on the basis of certain principles. These principles consolidate around the fundament of Islamic doctrine, *tawḥīd*, the Oneness of God, and the rejection of human subjectivity and rationality as a source of egocentrism, which hinders people from deriving God’s will from the divine source. Hence, theologians function merely as archeologists who dig for the literal truth that is only to be found within the Qur’an and the Sunna (Wiktorowicz, 2006). Thus there is no space for religious pluralism, as there is only one valid understanding of the Quran.

“The split is not in thought; it is in strategy” (Wiktorowicz, 2006, 208).

This quote from a “jihādī” shows very clearly, that despite this very narrow frame, the results can be very different. Wiktorowicz (2006) broadly categorizes three different *types* of approaches, namely those of the “purists”, the politically active Salafis, and the Jihadists.

The purists operate exclusively in intellectual spheres, while political engagements are categorically rejected as they are perceived as being detrimental. Their usual pathway of reaching people and spreading their ideas is via education and *da’wa* (religious propagation). The activist Salafis, on the other hand, believe that the only effective way of getting heard is via the political which allows access to the lever of power and provides direct contact with people and their concerns. The Jihadists, on the other hand, pursue destructive and violent politics, viewing this as the only adequate language when encountering the West (Wiktorowicz, 2006). Thus, while the roughly outlined categories share a common motive, their performances, on the contrary, developed in diverse directions.

At this point, it should be mentioned that their intellectual forerunners of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century did see the importance of a constructive arrangement between Islam and Modernity, which was then being encountered primarily through European colonialism in Muslim countries. Quite contrary to the contemporary Salafi creed, especially in contrast to today’s dominant creed of the Wahhabi movement with its roots in Saudi Arabia, their Salafi precursors, for instance Muhammad Abduh, Jamal ad-Dīn al-Afghānī or Rashīd Riḍā are now considered Islamic Modernists. They aimed at a renaissance of classical Islamic thought in the light of Asharite rationalism. The crucial motivation behind their movements was reclaiming an Islamic identity that seemed to them to be in danger of diminishing through the cultural incursions of the colonial powers. Especially Muhammad Abduh and his predecessor, al-Afghani, postulated that the absence of an authentic Islamic identity and the lack of religious knowledge were the crucial weak points that had enabled the successful colonizations of Muslim countries in every aspect whether intellectually or territorially. Consequently, the question arose regarding the compatibility of Islam and Islamic law with the dominant modern legal systems and politics of modern states at that time.

Due to the growing resentment resulting from the aforementioned cultural alienation and the non-fulfillment of anticipated political progress, especially in so far as economic and socio-political improvements were concerned, the ways for the establishment of religious-political movements were paved, most prominently by the formation of the Ikhwān al-Muslimūn, founded in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna in Egypt (Abu Zayd, 2006).

Contrary to the cases Egypt, Syria, or the Maghreb, in which the religious political trends were literally forced to emerge due to their experiences linked to colonialism, Saudi Arabia remained unaffected. This fact enabled the country to focus its religious discourses around local issues and less around political topics, in contrast to the case of Egypt's Hassan al-Banna, whose aim was to unite Egypt's (predominantly educated) Muslims around a collective identity against the British occupiers (Mitchell, 1969).

Politics were left to the ruler in the Saudi case including "core political issues, such as royal succession, foreign policy, and the armed forces" (Baer, 2013), whereby religious questions were invariably assigned to the ulama of the state religious establishment of Saudi Arabia and the Council for Senior Ulama (at least until the joining of the well-educated Egyptian Muslim Brothers, who fled from the regime of 'Abd an-Nasser to Saudi Arabia, introducing their creed) (Wiktorowicz, 2006). Haykel (2009) points out that the ulama did not intend any political interventions at all, as their program aimed at a social and religious reformation project for the purpose of implementing a genuine form of Islam in the lives of the kingdom's citizens. This program nevertheless brought long-term political changes, due to its influences on multiple levels of everyday life and due to its symbiotic relationship to the political faction of the kingdom. This symbiotic character and the concomitant, deliberately or otherwise, political influence on religious issues is particularly evident in the royal decree, of 1971 by King Faisal, regarding the *Standing Committee for Legal Issues*. Its fourth paragraph covers legal areas regarding the tenets of faith, Islamic jurisprudence, and human interactions:<sup>2</sup> "The Standing Committee is commissioned to select the members of its council in accordance with the royal decree".<sup>3</sup>

However, this committee operates beyond Saudi national borders and participates internationally via fatwa webpages that are available in several languages. In this way, not only are the citizens of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia addressed by it, but also Muslims outside of the Middle East. These webpages provide a comprehensive collection of legal opinions, based on the Wahhabi outlook. The juristic field of transactions (*mu'amalat*) offers a broad discussion of the topic of Muslims in non-Muslim countries, which gives very clear insights into the positions of Saudi scholars' positions towards the West. Their aversion is perceptible, especially on the lexical level (Haykel, 2009).

2 <http://www.islamfatwa.de/biografien/89-das-staendige-komitee-fuer-rechtsfragen> (last access 15/04/21)

3 <http://islamfatwa.de/soziale-angelegenheiten/150-muslime-in-nicht-muslimischen-laendern> (last access 15/04/21)

The following examples present a few of the questions posed to the ulema of the Committee on one of its international fatwa webpages, and their legal opinions based on the Salafi *manhaj*, in this case the Wahhabiyya:

**Q: What are the conditions which allow me to live among the *mushrikūn* (polytheists)?<sup>4</sup>**

A: "If a person (Muslim) is able to live his religion freely, and protect his children and family, then there is no harm done. But I do believe that no one is able to protect his/her children, as long as they have to go to Christian schools... This is why living in those (non-Muslim) countries is prohibited.

*Dalīl* (textual evidence): "Lo! as for those whom the angels take (in death) while they wrong themselves, (the angels) will ask: 'In what were ye engaged?' They will say: 'We were oppressed in the land.' (The angels) will say: 'Was not Allah's earth spacious that ye could have migrated therein?' As for such, their habitation will be hell, an evil journey's end". (4:97)

**Q: Am I allowed to obtain a Western passport?**

A: It is not allowed to accept citizenship from the *kuffār* (infidels), even if one is allowed to keep one's religion, because it has negative effects on the believer, their religion and their faith.

*Dalīl*: "Thou wilt not find folk who believe in Allah and the Last Day loving those who oppose Allah and His messenger, even though they be their fathers or their sons or their brethren or their clan." (58:22)

Particularly on the level of language and argument, the exclusivist attitude of the scholar issuing the fatwa is apparent. According to the Wahhabi legal opinion, Muslims in Western contexts do not receive any support or approval for their situation or residence in non-Muslim countries. Their stay is considered a sin that is only to be avoided by leaving. This attitude seems to stand in complete opposition to the other approaches discussed above, recalling the basic attitudes of the jurisprudence of minorities or the call for a rethinking of the tradition by Abu Zayd, which both promote a self-confident Muslim-European identity. Thus the question of participation or even encountering and appreciating otherness as an enrichment for one's own religiosity seems to be irrelevant according to the cited legal opinions above.

It is very interesting, however, that especially among Muslims who search for a sense of affiliation, this Wahhabi community may seem very attractive, apparently due to the fact that the roots of this movement lie in the country of the two holy sanctuaries, the *Haramayn*. Their only common denominator is their faith instead of their ethnic origin, which allows converts to Islam, in particular, to very

4 The following fatāwa have been translated from German into English by the author.

quickly feel embraced by something in Islam that overcomes borders and nationality (Wiktorowicz, 2006). On the other hand the exclusivist Saudi Wahhabi attitude which seems to have become increasingly popular in Europe, aims to protect their purist values, even against other Muslims who do not follow the Salafī *manhaj*. This further causes isolation and the establishment of separate communities, which might foster social alienation instead of working towards integration and a feeling of togetherness that overcomes differences.

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## Conclusion

This short outline of these different approaches shows that Muslim concepts and positions in regard to pluralism or respective opinions towards Western societies along with theological opinions on the roles and positions of Muslims within plural contexts are themselves diverse.

It can be concluded that these positions depend on the way the Islamic revelation is interpreted. If it is seen as a process related revelation, which allows the Qur'anic teachings to be adapted according to place, time, and circumstances in order to foster the resolution of culturally and religiously related issues, this approach facilitates the process of integration, for example, in the case of Austria. However, if revelation is seen as unalterable, which means that situational and contextual factors are not to be taken into account, then Muslims in the West will be discouraged from social participation and holding pluralistic attitudes. Hence theological orientation plays a considerable role in how pluralism is perceived and articulated by Muslims.

Indeed, the encounter of Islamic countries with the West, especially in connection with the European colonial forces, brought forth a sequence of religio-political movements which responded and reacted in different, if not contradictory, ways to the new situations with which they were confronted. Some movements or at least the precursors of particular movements based their creed on openness and communication, while others closed down channels of communication and followed an introverted discourse of “frozen” theologies.

In the case of Austria, regarding the increasing tendencies towards radicalism among a certain group of young Muslims, males and females, it seems no longer sufficient to charge the families alone with the task of supporting their children to find their personal way to religion and moreover to a self-conscious religiosity, as even within their homes two different worlds seem to clash.

According to the integration report of the Ministry of Integration and Foreign Affairs (BMEIA), every fifth person in Austria has a migrant background.

According to the last census in 2001, 338,988 persons identified themselves as Muslim. About 9,600 of these are Austrian citizens, with the numbers rising (see Kommission für Migrations- und Integrationsforschung, 2014). Austrian society is therefore in a period of rapid transition, particularly over the last decade. This process not only causes cultural diversity but also the emergence of identity crises among the generations born to the guest workers of the 1970s and 1980s. We find young Muslims, in particular, impacted by this crisis, since they are trying to make their way through a cultural vacuum, caused by the dichotomy in which they are socialized.

According to empirical research on “Muslim Youth of the Second Generation”<sup>5</sup> by Muhammad Khorchide (2007), a clear majority of those surveyed have “a rather weak relationship to Islam”. Of these the majority was not practicing Islam at all, and feels fully affiliated to the Austrian society. (Khorchide, 2007, 60). According to a quantitative study made by the Austrian Ministry of Integration and Foreign Affairs in 2010 only 65% of the persons surveyed felt affiliated to Austria, while by 2014, 70% asserted feelings of belonging to their new homes (see Kommission für Migrations und Integrationsforschung, 2014). One can argue that the cultural vacuum is not only the result of clashing cultures and traditions, but also arises due to the fading identification of young Muslims with the traditional patterns of behavior and thinking of their parents or even grandparents.

In this respect we may observe the slow but steady development among younger Muslims of a shift in Islamic identity and personal religiosity towards a European-Islamic religiosity and a more individualistic spirituality that needs to be fostered, not only by the concerned families alone but also by the government. The Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Integration recognized the requirement of a change in perspectives, introducing the renewed *Bill of Islam*<sup>6</sup> under the banner of “Islam with a European imprint” (Presse, 2015). He demanded a halt to

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5 The title has been translated from German into English by the author. The original German title is to be found in the bibliography.

6 The so-called Bill of Islam (*Islamgesetz*) is a law that was first adopted in 1912 under Habsburg rule. The adoption of this rule went hand in hand with the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Habsburg Monarchy and it aimed to integrate the new Islamic territory and population. This law has lasted until the present as a unique case in Europe and it paved the way for many rights for Muslims, as compared to Austria’s neighbors, for instance, Germany, which has not yet officially recognized its approximately 4 million Muslim population. One prominent example of those privileges is the integration of Islamic religious education in public schools since 1982/83 (Potz, 2013). This historic law was renewed and revised in 2015, which created discontent among many Austrian Muslims, especially among the young Muslim generation who felt that they were being put under general suspicion due to political undertones of the legal

foreign influences on Islamic developments in Austria, particularly with regard to the educational sector. Muslim students should no longer be taught by individuals from a totally different cultural background who neither speak the local language nor understand the cultural context of their students, since this risks emphasizing dichotomies instead of reducing them. Thus Islamic religious education in Austrian public schools can play a significant role in replacing or at least reducing the educational gap caused by the new bill on Islam. This recent Austrian government legislation will lead to the termination by March 2016 of a considerable number of private Qur'an courses and Islamic religious lectures funded from abroad that had been well attended by young Austrian Muslims on weekends and during the summer breaks. The Islamic education offered at Austrian schools is intended to provide a liberal and contextual platform of communication, which not only considers the students' life worlds but uses these as starting points for their lessons. Dichotomous identities and the feeling of having to choose between two worlds ought to be reduced and new Muslim-European identities should be fostered in order to allow Muslims to move from the margins to the center of Austrian society.

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text itself and due to the prohibition of foreign funding in the educational sector, as this ban only concerns Islamic institutions while others still can raise money abroad.

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# Roman Catholic Perspectives<sup>1</sup> on Religions and Pluralism in Europe

Andreas Telsler

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## Preliminary Remarks

The interdisciplinary and intercultural discourses featured at the Montenegro conference on pluralism introduce a host of intricacies that, if left unattended, could quickly impede the desired benefit of putting such discourses into conversation. Everyone would then simply be addressing his/her imagined (disciplinary) community without it being present among listeners or readers. Thus, in order to facilitate some initial understanding across disciplinary and cultural borders, I will provide both terminological groundwork as well as a clarification of my discipline's particular perspective on the issue at stake.

The perspective I was asked to address is that of a Roman Catholic theologian – not withholding that I am a male European (Austrian), non-ordained theologian. What is theology? First, it is a confessional and thus “tradition-specific” venture (D’Costa, 2009, 3) – i.e., it is bound to the contingent history of (interpreting) a specific religious tradition, while at the same time having to respond to religious diversity (either positively or negatively, i.e., as some kind of apologetics). Second, acknowledging theology as being *confessional* implies the discipline’s awareness

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1 Keeping in mind that at least since the Second Vatican Council (1962–65) the Roman Catholic Church has become a “world church” (as Karl Rahner once put it) whose *imagined* unity (adapting Benedict Anderson’s concept of “imagined communities”) is challenged by a plurality of Roman Catholic perspectives engendered by the diverse cultures in which this world church attempts to inculcate itself.

of there being a *plurality* of theologies. Third, theologies – broadly speaking – need not “necessarily imply a belief in ‘God’” but rather indicate an “intellectual reflection” on whatever is thought or construed to be Ultimate Reality (Tracy, 1987b, 447). Fourth, theologies as intellectual reflection attempt to justify religious beliefs by giving reasons for such beliefs being neither absurd nor mere wishful thinking; instead they “rationally reflect on questions arising in pre-theological religious experience and the discourse of faith” (Dalferth, 1988, vii). Nevertheless, theologies would be misread if they were conceived as attempts to bluntly ‘prove’ God’s or Ultimate Reality’s existence. Granted there is a long-standing philosophical and theological tradition associated with such attempts, it is also granted that these attempts need not be seen as *totally* spent but they at least might be understood as being in dire need of contemporary reinterpretation. Such a claim (of proof) would not only be difficult to render meaningful against the backdrop of many Europeans calling themselves secular, but would also go against the traditional (theistic) understanding of God or Ultimate Reality as being *transcendent* and thus beyond the possibility of what is known as scientific proof.

After this all too brief and surely disputable definition of theology as the reflective side of religion that can be differentiated but not separated from it, a second terminological clarification is in order regarding the meaning of pluralism (not to be confused with the so-called pluralist position in the context of the *theology of religions*). There are, of course, several forms of pluralism, of which the *religious* one is frequently associated with being *the* troublemaker in Western societies. Now if theologies are understood as intellectual reflection on the “varieties of religious experience” (James, 2012), they need to critically address this diversity as *plurality*. Consequently a distinction needs to be made between the empirical factuality of plurality (in all facets of life) and a spectrum of *possible* interpretations of that factuality. As Catholic theologian David Tracy once put it succinctly: “Plurality is a fact. Pluralism is one of many possible evaluations of that fact” (Tracy, 1987a, 8). Pluralism is a position which in order to be held responsibly requires criteria as well as sound argumentation—something that cannot be elaborated here. It is no secret that pluralism can easily deteriorate into a fig leaf for eclecticism, indifferentism or even relativism. Yet all pluralism that deserves the name is an intellectually *demanding* position whose starting point is “a positive attitude to the fact of plurality” and that is geared towards opening up new “possibilities” of being-in-the-world as well as of understanding it (Tracy, 1987a, 13). Pluralism thus understood takes difference and otherness seriously but fosters at the same time respect for one’s own faith as the (seemingly) well known.

When it comes to *religious* plurality and how religious pluralism can be justified (on theological grounds), the urgent question arises as to whether a particular tradi-

tion will have to “radically change or transform its traditional self-understanding as the result of pluralism” (Tracy, 1987b, 447). This, now, sets the stage for dealing theologically with religious pluralism. However, before this can be done a final remark about theology’s social context seems to be in order.

Although many (international) attempts of diverse theologies have been made to *go public*<sup>2</sup> (e.g. Hainsworth/Paeth, 2010), the academic reputation of theology is tarnished: its scientific nature is called into question more than ever (cf. Pannenberg, 1976) and its confessional binding is often perceived in public as an impediment to dialogue and mutual understanding (despite most theologies’ ecumenical and interreligious orientation). This is not to bemoan theology’s declining social status but rather to underline its indispensability in dealing *critically* with religion in the public realm while not downplaying the enormous challenges involved. If, for example, Jürgen Habermas’ demands of religious communities living in democratic societies and enjoying freedom of religion granted by secular states that they “come to terms with the cognitive dissonance of encountering other denominations and religions” (Habermas, 2005, 329) are taken seriously, then theologies should be stepping in and generating arguments that would facilitate their reception by confessionally committed people. This implies that the issue at stake – religions and pluralism in Europe – is something to be dealt with *publically* while being assisted by the scientific endeavors of such diverse disciplines as sociology, political science, philosophy (of religion), religious studies, and last but not least, theology.

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## Roman Catholic Contributions

The Roman Catholic Church has, of course, long-standing historical experiences with religious plurality, struggling from its outset with gaining an identity over against its Jewish roots, resulting in the well-known and equally long-standing fatal and too often lethal consequences for Jews; then struggling against its own extinction through several waves of persecution in the Roman Empire and, not to forget, battles with emerging Islam over religious and political dominance in the Near East. Overall the Roman Catholic Church’s relations with Jews, Muslims, and subsequently with various other religions and cultures, have been for the most part, to say the least, burdened. While the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) had taken first steps in coming to terms with the Church’s past (cf. the Document on Ecumenism *Unitatis redintegratio*), it was only Pope John Paul II who explicitly extended “a request for forgiveness to a multitude of historical events in which the Church,

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2 This attempt is paralleled, for example, in sociology, cf. Clawson, 2007.

or individual groups of Christians, were implicated in different respects” (International Theological Commission, 1999). The seriousness of this attempt was clearly underlined when in 2000 that very Pope visited and prayed at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem and again, one year later, when he visited the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus.<sup>3</sup> Thus the Roman Catholic Church had to take a clear stand against its own negative, repeatedly depreciative attitude towards religious plurality, in order even to be recognizable as authentic in its post-Vatican II nascent pluralistic endeavors both on an ecumenical and interreligious or intercultural level.

It would go beyond the scope of this article to trace the theological reasoning that over centuries paralleled – too often in a supportive manner – the Roman Catholic Church’s problematic history with non-Christians (cf. e.g. Becker/Morali, 2010). At this point it must suffice to mention a significant shift that occurred on the eve of the Second Vatican Council and that was later described by Catholic theologian Paul Knitter as the shift “from holding ‘*outside* the church [there is] no salvation<sup>4</sup> to ‘*without* the church no salvation’ ..., i.e. from an exclusive to [an] inclusive ecclesiocentrism” (Tann, 2014, 291). There are two assumptions in this quote that need to be unpacked, especially against the backdrop of an interdisciplinary and interreligious readership: first, invoking the word *salvation* infers that there is something (e.g. a condition, a state) from which one *hopes* to be *saved* – and that salvation is a universally applicable (i.e. meaningful) category; second, this Roman Catholic conception of (universally sought) salvation is indispensably bound up with a particular, historically contingent religion which understands itself both theologically and sociologically as church (for a ‘classical’ account see Dulles, 1974). Now for the outsider the above-mentioned shift from “*outside* the church” to “*without* the church” cannot but appear as an empty play on words. Yet the shift is truly to be called significant insofar as the Roman Catholic Church – put in motion by Pope John XXIII’s announcement of the Second Vatican Council in 1959 – realized that it had to address its own self-understanding as *church* in a modern world. Given the centrality of church in Roman Catholicism<sup>5</sup> as well as the issues that were already dealt with at the First Vatican Council (1869-70), the major

3 This, however, is not to say that the Church’s scandalous transgressions of the past (and present) are resolved. As Pope John Paul II made clear in making reference to 1 Kings 8:46, forgiveness is granted only by God while it is being implored by people (cf. Klenicki, 2006, 6).

4 Traditionally known in its Latin wording: *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*.

5 Well-known Roman Catholic theologian Richard McBrien sees the spirit of Catholicism captured in “sacramentality, mediation, and communion”. Sacramentality means concrete *mediations* between our empirical reality and what cannot be ‘seen’ and what in monotheistic traditions is called “God”. In Catholicism the church, while being an

theme of the Second Vatican Council almost naturally had to be the church as it understands itself both internally (in Latin terminology: *ad intra*) and externally (*ad extra*), i.e., in its relation *and* service to the modern world: while the first (from a perspective of organizational sociology) is to be expected, the second is quite revolutionary. The Second Vatican Council was breaking ground for the Roman Catholic Church to allow others (i.e. Christian denominations, religions, the day-to-day joys and sorrows of *all* people, etc.) to “have a say” in its dynamic identity; the shift induced by several documents of the Council as well as the event itself was succinctly summarized by Catholic theologian Hans-Joachim Sander: “[T]he Church [now] understands itself *from outside*” (Sander, 2006, 186).<sup>6</sup> It might be this simultaneously critical *and* favorable engagement with both the challenges as well as the threats of the modern world<sup>7</sup> (known by the Italian word *aggiornamento*), combined with reclaiming some of the early church’s theologies (known by the French word *ressourcement*), that could make this Council a possible model for the ineluctable confrontation with modernity that all religions sooner or later have to face (Casanova, 2010, 13). German sociologist Heinz Bude even goes as far as to say that the Council was the “take-off” for the subsequent *secular* breakthroughs of the 1960s (Bude, 2014, 66).

After having tried to briefly outline the major shift that occurred with the Second Vatican Council,<sup>8</sup> I will now narrow the focus to certain central aspects of the *Magna Carta* of the Roman Catholic turn to pluralism (understood in the sense of affirming plurality as set out above): “The Declaration on the Relation<sup>9</sup> of the Church to Non-Christian Religions”, also named in Latin after the document’s first two words *Nostra aetate* (cf. for the document’s long and contested textual history, Siebenrock, 2006).

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earthly reality, is also imbued with God’s Spirit (the Holy Spirit) and thus functions as a sacrament of an encounter with God *through* Jesus Christ (McBrien, 1994, 10f).

- 6 Commenting on Roman Catholic relations with the Jews (in reference to the Document *Nostra aetate* 4), Catholic theologian Julie Kirchberg wrote: “Christians learn nothing *about* Jews, if they are not willing to learn *from* them and listen to *their* witness.” (Kirchberg, 1991, 27)
- 7 Keep in mind that the Council was held at the height of the Cold War: Pope Paul VI’s appeal for global peace in his first-time address to the United Nations General Assembly on October 4, 1965, mirrors the contemporary fearful state of mind impressively.
- 8 The meaning of this shift and even the question of whether such a shift had occurred at Vatican II at all is hotly debated within Catholic theology (cf. Faggioli, 2012).
- 9 The Latin term for relation is more nuanced: “*habitus*” meaning an attitude or habitude. The attitude described in the document must be understood as a norm the church set for itself.

## The Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions – *Nostra aetate*

As a declaration of the Roman Catholic Church, *Nostra aetate*<sup>10</sup> addresses first of all its own members, hoping to awaken in them an appreciative attitude towards other religions, while laying theological foundations for this. *Nostra aetate* does not preempt a possible outcome of hoped-for dialogues after the Council; this can only be negotiated together with concrete dialogue partners over time. The document's main concern is indeed to instill a *dialogical attitude* into Catholics and to make them understand it as one of the Church's (reclaimed) central principles.<sup>11</sup>

While—similar to the 1960's—"political, social, economic, racial and ideological disputes ... continue bitterly" (quoted from the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, No. 4), we also see our world with its different cultures, religions and ethnicities growing together. Given these findings fraught with tension, the Council consciously determined its starting point with what people in their diversity "have in common and what draws them to fellowship" (NA, No. 1). This choice to focus on commonality, even unity (but not uniformity!), of people has a two-fold foundation: (1) *theologically* speaking, human beings have their origin as well as their final goal in God whose "saving design extend[s] to *all* men [and women]" (NA, No. 1); (2) *anthropologically* speaking (and independent of one's stance toward religion!), life is contingent which implies the begging of hard questions regarding people's experience of suffering, loss, and finitude (to mention only a few): "whence do we come, and where are we going?" (NA, No. 1) The history of religion is but a long story of mirroring diverse religious attempts (always embedded in various cultures) to address these permanent, all too large, human questions.

The "answers" of the so-called world religions are wide-ranging, of course: the declaration explicitly mentions Hinduism and Buddhism and outlines their characteristics succinctly. Yet as Roman Siebenrock put it: "Comprehensiveness is neither intended nor required by what the whole document is aimed at" (Siebenrock, 2006, 655). "[O]ther religions found everywhere" (NA, No. 2) address the same "restlessness of the human heart" (an allusion to St. Augustine's famous quote) in their own fashion. The Fathers of the Council now declare boldly:

<sup>10</sup> As of now abbreviated as: NA.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Pope Paul VI's focus on dialogue in his Encyclical *Ecclesiam suam* (1964).

The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She [the Church] regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men [and women]. (NA, No. 2)

While the first part is phrased negatively (“rejects nothing”), the second is explicitly affirmative and appreciative: the Roman Catholic Church approaches the various religions “with sincere reverence” while not passing over the differences. By then alluding to the Gospel of John (1:9), the Council recognizes in these other traditions “a ray of that Truth ... that enlightens” all. However, the text does not say that there is *only* a ray of truth in the other religions. Instead it reminds the Church of her own mission, i.e., to “proclaim Christ ‘the way, the truth, and the life’ (John 14:6), in whom men [and women] may find the fullness of religious life, in whom God has reconciled all things to Himself” (NA, No. 2). This, of course, denotes the explicit Catholic (even Christian) standpoint in any dialogical encounter which in turn also has (for all churches again) a moment critical of religion: the Christian identity brought to any encounter does not hinge upon the church(es) but upon Christ. Thus, the Roman Catholic Church commits itself to both dialogue *and* mission; while these two aspects seem to mutually condition one another, they were also played off against each other in the reception of the diverse documents of the Second Vatican Council.

The seriousness of the Church’s reverence for the other religions is framed pragmatically by exhorting the church’s sons and daughters

... that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life, they *recognize, preserve and promote* the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men [and women] (NA No. 2).

This wording leaves no doubt: Roman Catholics are mandated to *actively* support other religious people in the preservation of *their* religious identity. This, then, presented and still presents a huge challenge to an identity that historically has not been overly sensitive to others at all (as mentioned above). As a consequence, Roman Catholic theology, by rediscovering the tradition of Christ’s kenosis (self-emptying) (cf. Richard, 1997), is currently developing models of understanding the church analogically in kenotic terms (cf. Kreuzer, 2009).

The Roman Catholic Church’s historically burdened relations with both Jews and Muslims have already been mentioned above. Without Pope John XXIII’s

personal encounters with both Muslims and Jews (some of the latter having been rescued during World War II through the future Pope's personal intervention (cf. Recker, 2007, 132) after he had been named *Apostolic Delegate* in Istanbul (1935-1944) (cf. Renz, 2014, 63f.), the document *Nostra aetate* would not exist. True, the Pope's original intention was to formulate a declaration on the Jews only (cf. Siebenrock, 2006, 597). Yet with this intention the Council blundered right into the Middle East conflict (cf. Siebenrock, 2007, 75). This, then, might function as a paradigmatic example for how religion and politics always end up interfering with each other, even if it is not intended. Sociologist Robert N. Bellah called this the unresolvable "religio-political problem" (Bellah, 1989, 147).

Reacting to such possibly negative reverberations by both actual politics and the oriental churches in the field, the declaration starts its statement of the monotheistic traditions with a brief section on Islam: "The Church regards with esteem also the Muslims" (NA No. 3)—this is an absolute first in the history of the councils. Then the Fathers of the Council point out the *theocentric* character that unites Christianity and Islam (the properties attributed to God are mercy, omnipotence, and creatorship: "...the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth"). Already in the "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" (*Lumen Gentium*)<sup>12</sup> (promulgated on November 21, 1964), the Roman Catholic Church announced the *universality* of God's saving will particularly for those

... who acknowledge the Creator. In the first place amongst these there are the Muslims, who, professing to hold the faith of Abraham, along with us adore the one and merciful God, who on the last day will judge [hu]mankind. (LG No. 16)

Neither the Qur'an nor Muhammad is explicitly mentioned in the declaration. While this has been criticized by some Muslim and Christian theologians as a deficit, others interpret it – given the mindset of the time – as the 'opening of a door' (cf. Renz, 2014, 143). While differing interpretations of a shared appreciation for both Jesus and Mary are not withheld, the opportunity to introduce more subtleties in these interpretations has yet to be developed. This, then, passes into yet another set of similar but not identical theological concepts: *judgment* and *resurrection*. This eschatological perspective stimulates a form of life before God that rests upon "prayer, almsgiving, and fasting" (NA No. 3) alluding here to three of the *Five Pillars of Islam*. Post-Vatican II reception has shown quite plainly that the declaration does not so much talk about the *religion* of Islam as of Muslims' faith

12 As of now abbreviated as: LG.

in an incomplete manner and from the limited perspective of the Roman Catholic Church's striving to shift its own long-standing attitude of rejection to that of "sincere reverence" and "esteem".

When it comes to addressing the long and troubled history with Islam, the Fathers of the Council

... urge all to forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all [hu]mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom" (NA No. 3).

The Fathers of the Council see enough common ground to invite Muslims to cooperate in structuring a shared world that is more than ever endangered by humanity itself. Yet Catholic theologian Roman Siebenrock correctly raises the question if it can be that easy to work together when the "quarrels and hostilities" of the past are only mentioned (Siebenrock, 2006, 660). Nevertheless, *Nostra aetate* sets the Roman Catholic Church in motion towards ever more deeply appreciating Muslims and their faith. To call this a "truly Copernican Revolution" (Renz, 2014, 146) is not stretching things too much despite the obvious shortcomings and pitfalls of the declaration.

While Article No. 4 (on the Jews) actually represents the centerpiece of the declaration—particularly regarding its genesis—it cannot be developed here due to both lack of space and the conference's different setting and focus (which, of course, includes the Jewish perspective, too, cf. the text by Hanan Alexander in this volume).

The declaration comes to a close by the Church committing itself to resecting human rights: no more "discrimination between man and [wo]man or people and people, so far as their human dignity and the rights flowing from it are concerned" (NA No. 5). This commitment is based on the theologically conceived unity of love of neighbor and love of God (cf. Rahner, 1974). "The Church reproves, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against men [and women] or harassment of them because of their race, color, condition of life, or religion" (NA No. 5).

Having said all this, it will come as no surprise that *Nostra aetate* continues to challenge Roman Catholic identity until this very day. It was this declaration that received—despite the Fathers' struggle to reach as much consensus as possible—the second lowest approval by the Council (2221 votes in favor, 88 votes against) (Siebenrock, 2006, 596). And it was *Nostra aetate* among other documents (on ecumenism [*Unitatis redintegratio*] and on religious freedom [*Dignitatis humanae*]) that triggered the post-conciliar schism with Archbishop Marcel Lebevre and The Society of St. Pius X. While there are fierce inner-theological (Roman Catho-

lic) debates on a possible reunion with the Society of St. Pius X and how this step might undermine the authority of the Second Vatican Council in general (cf. Dennemarck, 2011), the example is generalizable for any situation in which a right balance is sought between an appreciative attitude towards plurality (pluralism) and a loyalty to one's own historically conditioned identity which, of course, must not be understood as ever being totally immovable.

Now while *Nostra aetate* (in accordance with Pope Paul VI's Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* from 1964) embodies what could be called an *ethics of dialogue* with other religions, it did not work out a full-blown theology of religious pluralism. This default can nevertheless be seen as a value: "The crucial quality of the text lies in what it has *initiated*" (Siebenrock, 2006, 644). After the Second Vatican Council had laid the foundation for a fundamentally *reverential attitude* towards other religions, Roman Catholic theology struggled to develop what are now called *theologies of religion* (for the genesis of this term in Roman Catholic theology, cf. Seckler, 1988, 214). These are, of course, plural in themselves and wrestle with both unfolding and grounding theologically what *Nostra aetate* had left open while staying attuned to "the normative value of Jesus Christ and the Church for salvation" (Schineller, 1976, 549). While three typological models known as *exclusivism*, *inclusivism*, and *pluralism* (cf. D'Costa, 2009, 9-33) have dominated the recent theological discourses in (many) Protestant and Catholic theologies, they have also been criticized for making assertions that are too far-reaching given the complexities of all religions with their almost impenetrable histories and strands of tradition.<sup>13</sup> Given the structural specificity of Roman Catholicism (with its "multiple sources of authority": Holy Scripture, Tradition, sense of the faithful, Magisterium, and theology; cf. Rush, 2009), critical debates were and continue to be held between the Magisterium (i.e., the teaching office of the Roman Catholic Church) and theologians, sometimes with negative consequences for those who hold positions that are considered to possibly irritate the faith of Roman Catholics "in the pews".

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13 So-called *Comparative Theology* associated, for example, with Jesuit Catholic theologian, Francis X. Clooney, or, in Germany, Klaus v. Stosch and others attempts to take this deficit more seriously (cf. von Stosch, 2007).

## Conclusion

There is not *one* Roman Catholic perspective on religions and pluralism in Europe, there are many. This present-day internal plurality is well rooted in the shift that occurred at the Second Vatican Council and that found its most explicit expression in the declaration *Nostra aetate*. This document, as I have tried to argue, represents the reliable and ineluctable position of the Roman Catholic *attitude* towards other religions. This is not to say that all Catholics, be they lay people or in positions of authority, follow through on that. With *Nostra aetate* and the plural theologies that spring from it, Roman Catholics have received a *norm* that continues to challenge them in every public encounter with others: as religious, ethnic, cultural, and economic others. While Roman Catholics might be lax when it comes to liturgical duties, they are not off the hook when it comes to their responsibility toward the other: as neighbor or as (often imagined) enemy (cf. Matt. 5:44).

As a “world church” the Roman Catholic perspectives on religions and pluralism matter: there are currently 1.2 billion Catholics in the world (cf. BBC News World, 2013). While the relevance of religious education in the spirit of *Nostra aetate* is self-evident, it is up to the experts in the discipline to extrapolate from this on some other occasion.<sup>14</sup> Suspending for a moment the question of whether the theological reasons alleged for pluralism are sound and can be understood beyond its ideological boundary, they have to be *in service* of mutual acceptance and peace. While these are, of course, very broad criteria on which people from different faith traditions (including those whose ‘faith’ may not be subsumed under any *religious* tradition) could agree, they have to be argued theologically, too, in order to satisfy believers’ search to understand their own faith. This, I hope, has been somewhat accomplished with regard to Roman Catholicism as it exists in its plural forms around the globe.

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14 This is to admit that I am a systematic theologian by profession who is not competent in the field of religious education.

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# Conflicting Conceptions of Religious Pluralism

## Liberalism and Multiculturalism in Diverse Liberal Democracies

Hanan A. Alexander

Although nascent concepts of religious pluralism can be found in pre-modern texts, for example in certain interpretations of Aristotle, the idea came into its own primarily in modern times under the influence of both Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment thought. From the Enlightenment perspective, pluralism is defined in the political writings of John Locke (2003), Immanuel Kant (1997, 2002), John Stuart Mill (1977), and John Rawls (1971, 1993) as a by-product of rational autonomy. In this view, the liberal right of people to exercise rational choice concerning how to live takes precedence over any particular life choices they may make. From a Counter-Enlightenment point of view, in the writings of the critical theorists such as Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (2007), for example, pluralism is a by-product of the multicultural agenda. Liberation from the hegemony of one particular cultural outlook is possible, following this thinking, only if power is distributed equally among all cultures. In this paper I will argue that both of these accounts of pluralism are problematic because each imposes a universal conception of reason as a standard for adjudicating the legitimacy of any particular religious perspective, the one inductive and deductive, the other dialectical or conflictual. I conclude by suggesting a third approach to religious pluralism following the Diversity Liberalism of Thomas Hobbes (2002), Isaiah Berlin (1969), William Galston (1991: 2002), and John Gray (1996; 2002) and the communitarian critique of liberalism associated with Michael Sandel (1984, 1998), Michael Walzer (1985), and Charles Taylor (1989, 1991). According to this alternative, human societies are comprised of numerous incommensurable traditions and cultures and the task of political theory is to discover a *modus vivendi* through dialogue that enables people of deep difference to live together in peace.

This chapter will be divided into five parts. In the first part I discuss some of the pre-modern roots of religious pluralism and their emergence in the modern period in the tension between Enlightenment and counter-Enlightenment thought. In the second part I consider some strengths and weaknesses of the classical formulation of religious pluralism in the classical liberalism of Locke, Kant, and Mill, which set the stage for the more contemporary writings of Rawls. In the third part I review some of the tensions inherent in the counter-Enlightenment reaction to this comprehensive liberal model of pluralism found in left-leaning Hegelian thought known today as critical social theory, especially neo-Marxism. I will argue that each of these models is problematic because it embraces one or another account of universal reason, one hypothetico–deductive, the other dialectical-conflictual. In part four, I will consider a third alternative sometimes known as diversity or post-liberalism associated with value pluralism and the communitarian critique of liberalism. The chapter will conclude by considering some of the consequences of this third alternative for religious and political education in liberal democratic societies.

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## **The Pre-Modern Roots of Pluralism and the Dialectic of Modernity**

A limited idea of pluralism has early roots in Greek pagan philosophy that dovetails in a variety of ways with the three major monotheistic religious faiths, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In contrast to Plato (2008), who viewed the state as an agent of a single and unchanging truth, Aristotle (1981) understood politics as a branch of practical wisdom associated with ethics. If the latter is concerned with inquiring as to the good or excellent life that is worthwhile for human beings to live, the former asks what sort of political community can facilitate such a life. Aristotle answers the first line of inquiry by claiming that the end of a worthwhile life is human flourishing and so responds to the second question by asserting that a good society enables its citizens to flourish. At first glance, this approach would appear to offer an admirable expression of pluralism. Indeed, in contrast to Plato who offered a uniform and rigid account of the life that should be allowed in his Republic, Aristotle admitted that a variety of approaches to human flourishing might inform life in different political communities grounded in distinct local cultures.

To appreciate the limitations of this account, however, we must consider this view from the perspective of Aristotle's metaphysical theology. Aristotle referred to the sort of practical wisdom associated with politics and ethics as *phronesis*,

which he juxtaposed to theoretical knowledge, or *sophia*. Whereas the former is grounded in a dialectical sort of reasoning according to which the excellent or virtuous path that leads to a flourishing life is to be found by seeking the so-called “golden mean” between extremes, the latter is based on two additional sorts of reasoning: *techne*, an expression he also reserved for craft or the technical process of bringing an object into being, and *episteme*. The one is concerned with ‘efficient causes’ or mechanical relations between events, in which one pushes the other into existence, the other addresses ‘final causes’ or purposive relations between them, in which ends pull events forward into existence (Alexander, 2015, 46).

Aristotle thought *episteme* more essential than *techne* because efficient causes can only be fully understood in light of the final causes that they ultimately pursue. The universe is governed by a divine intelligence, in his view, such that the first cause and the final end of existence are identical. Hence, both the dialectical reasoning associated with *phronesis* and the causal reasoning tied to *techne* are dependent upon more fundamental teleological assessment which he called *episteme*. These are in turn dependent on a Godhead who is both the initiator and ultimate purpose of everything and whose existence is proven by means of a classical deductive syllogism – major premise, minor premise, therefore, conclusion—often called the “cosmological argument”. “Nothing comes from nothing, i.e. without a cause” (major premise) “There is something, i.e., something exists” (minor premise), therefore; “There must be a ‘Prime Mover’ or ‘First Cause, i.e. God” (conclusion) (Aristotle, 1994)

A plurality of goods can therefore exemplify human flourishing, according to Aristotle, only in so far as they conform to the hierarchy of reasoning which leads to the highest good, the Prime Mover or First Cause. The practical wisdom that seeks a virtuous life by way of the “golden mean” among extremes, like its theoretical counterpart that strives to explain the existence of dependent variables by way of independent variables that push them into being, is but an expression of the human ability to discern the ultimate purpose of existence itself, which is no less singular and unchanging than Plato’s rational forms. What may vary are the cultural or religious trappings by which these fundamental goods are given expression, not the goods themselves.

This Aristotelian view became the foundation for a proto-pluralism within medieval religious philosophy that sought to reconcile reason with revelation in each of the three major monotheistic faiths, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, drawing on a common faith in one god, similar though not identical to Aristotle’s philosophical godhead, and emphasizing sometimes controversial ideas in each tradition that can be tied to pluralism, such as Islam’s limited tolerance for non-Muslim monotheistic believers, i.e. Jews and Christians, as peoples of the book (Karabell,

2007), Jewish belief in free choice and individual responsibility (Twersky, 1972, 77-78), and a Christian separation of the City of God (religion) from the City of Man (state) (Augustine, 2004). At the heart of this medieval religious philosophy, among Muslims, Jews, and Christians alike, was a common commitment to the universality of Aristotelian reason, which created a shared intellectual language, although philosophers from each tradition very often used that language to prove the truth of their own faith over the other two competitors. But at the end of the day, as with Aristotle's original view, rigid reason as understood within the Aristotelean tradition provided the final criterion for what was to count as legitimate to be tolerated within a decent society, however conceived. Even if this may have allowed a limited toleration among rational interpretations of the monotheistic faiths, each grounded in its own revealed texts, it left ample room for intolerance, both within and among faith communities, of non-rational or mystical interpretations of those very texts (Alexander, 2015, 185-190).

All of this changed when Aristotle's philosophical theology was demolished by a critical form of rationality associated with the rise of modern science. Whereas the pre-modern concept of truth and goodness was transcendent, to be found beyond the confines of space and time, this new scientific rationality placed a premium on a human subject's capacity to verify beliefs through systematic examination of empirical data drawn from objective reality, within space and time. According to this view, the conclusion that there must be a Prime Mover or First Cause deduced from the major premise that "Nothing comes from nothing," and the minor premise that "Something exists," cannot withstand criticism against a form of reasoning that requires the existence of such a First Cause to be induced or verified by objective empirical evidence grounded in concrete human experience. Intellectual authority, both moral and cognitive, move in this view from transcendent hierarchies, rational and religious, embedded in the universe itself, to the individual's autonomous assessment of relevant evidence, deductive, inductive, and practical. As we will see presently, the sort of pluralism associated with this view draws its inspiration from classical liberal theory that prioritizes the individual's right to choose a way of life, grounded in the capacity to exercise rational autonomy, over any particular life she may choose.

However, this new rationalism embedded in the cognitive structure of individual consciousness was not the only expression of the modern spirit. If the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in European thought were characterized by what has become known as "Enlightenment", associated with the likes of Locke and Kant, the nineteenth century brought with it a co-called romantic reaction that Berlin (1976, 1977) called "Counter-Enlightenment", of which Hegel and his followers on both the right and left were probably the leading proponents, that offered

an alternative concept of pluralism. If the former saw *a priori* reason as independent of history and society, the latter placed a premium on *a posteriori* history and society, to either reconceive reason or abandon it altogether. The Enlightenment model of pluralism is most clearly exemplified by Christian Protestantism and liberal secularism, the one advocating freedom *of* religion by moving authority from church hierarchies to individuals, the other freedom *from* religion, by providing intellectual legitimacy to unbelief. The Counter-Enlightenment model of pluralism, on the other hand, is grounded more in culture and collective memory than individual autonomy, seeking to promote liberation by granting all cultures and memories equal access to economic and other resources. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (2007) came close to capturing this tension in their classic phrase *dialectic of enlightenment*, though by this term they had in mind the failure of Marxist critical theory to capture the socio-economic contradictions within Enlightenment capitalism. I prefer to call this tension the *dialectic of modernity*, therefore, not merely of Enlightenment (Alexander 2001, 21-2, 2016). In what follows I will assess each side of this dialectic.

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## Classical Liberalism and Religious Pluralism

It was perhaps Locke's *Letter Concerning Toleration* and *Two Treatises of Government* that set the stage for the Enlightenment account of religious pluralism in his argument for separation of government from religion. Following Augustine's Christian precedent, Locke (2007) held that salvation was the business of the Church not the State, although his position extended primarily to Catholics and Protestant denominations, especially Anglicans, less to Jews, Muslims, or adherents of other faiths. The spiritual authority of the Church, if not also the synagogue and the Mosque, hails from God, whereas the political authority of the state derives from an individual's capacity to act rationally in his or her own interest, codified in what is usually understood as an implied social contract. In the nature of the case such a contract would not grant to the state the power to impose a view of salvation on one group embraced by another. No one would reasonably agree to have the faith of another foisted upon them and any sensible agreement would protect the rights of minority populations from tyranny of the majority, since no party to such an agreement could possibly know in which situations they might be in the majority and which in the minority. In addition to the fact that such an implied contract might exclude marginal or exotic groups, such as Jews and Muslims in eighteenth century England, the difficulty with this view concerns the moral legitimacy of a contract implied by, say, benefiting from the fruits of living in a

society so governed, rather than an actual agreement to which one has assented. On grounds such as these, assent could be implied to a variety of propositions and obligations to which one might not otherwise agree.

A more expansive view of religious pluralism was later developed in this Lockean spirit by the likes of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison (2013), grounded in an historic contract, the Constitution of the United States of America, that endorses the Hebrew Bible's commitment to free choice through what Robert Bellah and his colleagues have called American biblical republicanism (Bellah et alii, 2007), though similar problems concerning implied assent can be raised about generations that succeed those who actually signed the initial document. This constitutional view is also closely tied to Mill's argument in *On Liberty*, that free expression, taste, and assembly—all necessary for freedom of and from religion—are essential to human happiness, guaranteed as an unalienable right in Jefferson's *Declaration of Independence* and understood from a utilitarian perspective as the maximum aggregate of individual or collective satisfactions. These rights should be limited, then, only to the extent that they would infringe on the liberty of others. In Mill's words: "The only freedom which deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs or impede their effort to obtain it" (Mill 1997, 226).

Unfortunately, as Sandel (1984) points out, the utilitarian defense of liberal toleration is caught on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, the only criterion upon which to make moral judgments, in this view, is an aggregate of goods – the greatest good for the greatest number. What counts as a good to be included in this calculation, however, can only be determined according to individual preferences. Yet, if each person is to judge what is good for himself or herself according to his or her own unabated preference, on what grounds can we prefer such values as religious pluralism, or indeed the utility principle itself, to goods that emanate from less tolerant orientations that would impose the beliefs of one group on another? On the other hand, if we take that aggregate seriously, a social contract alone may not be sufficient to prevent a consensus or large majority from imposing its will on a small minority. "If enough cheering Romans pack the Coliseum to watch the lion devour the Christian," continues Sandel, "the collective pleasure of the Romans will surely outweigh the pain of the Christian, intense though it may be" (2).

Kant's solution to this dilemma was to distinguish between the Right and the Good, between a framework of basic rights and liberties, on the one hand, that are not premised on any particular vision of the good and that protect an individual's right to choose a good life from being sacrificed for the sake of the general good, and the comprehensive conceptions of the good, on the other, that people may choose to pursue within that framework, including religious faiths. The right to

autonomous choice is justified, according to Kant, on the grounds that each person is endowed with a capacity to consider his or her alternatives rationally and within the framework of liberties, because protecting autonomy guarantees social adherence to the Categorical Imperative, to treat each person as an end, not a means (Kant, 1997, 2002). The difficulty with this view is twofold: firstly, it presupposes that a political framework which prioritizes the Right over the Good does not itself entail a comprehensive vision of the Good, thus presuming to impose such a vision on those who might not otherwise autonomously choose it for themselves. Secondly, it legitimates only those autonomous life choices that can withstand the scrutiny of Kantian *a priori* reason, which precludes a host of religious alternatives among many others, and which cannot be justified without falling prey to the fallacy of assuming the consequent by presupposing the epistemic authority of the very *a priori* reason it seeks to demonstrate (Alexander, 2015, 163, 124-8).

To address these difficulties, Rawls (1971) initially sought to justify two principles of what he called “justice as fairness” by means of a hypothetical social contract. Procedural justice requires simply that all formal social rules and processes apply equally to everyone and distributive justice that, unless there is a strong reason to do otherwise, resources be distributed in such a way as to benefit the least advantaged. In the hypothetical situation that people were placed behind what he calls a “veil of ignorance”, such that nothing was known about their social position once the contract were to be enacted, they would choose these two principles over other available alternatives such as utilitarianism or Marxism. When he became aware that these two principles come uncomfortably close to defining a comprehensive concept of the good, which embraces an especially disconnected vision of the self, unencumbered by the obligations and commitments of life in real human communities, Rawls (1993) offered a more limited “political”, as opposed to “comprehensive”, form of liberalism. Political liberalism is governed by what he called the “burdens of judgment” that enable citizens to deliberate a framework for common life across difference grounded in “public reason,” which requires all warrants to be offered in a form that can be accepted by all without reference to any particular comprehensive concept of the good. But this position limits pluralism as well, because it requires that all comprehensive goods be left at the door of the public square, such that disagreements about fundamental matters of public policy, such as, say, the legitimacy of abortion or same sex marriage, which for some involve commitments of deep religious faith, have no place in negotiating the common life to be shared in a diverse society across difference (Levinson, 1999; Alexander, 2015, 130-5).

## Multiculturalism and Religious Pluralism

The leading counter-Enlightenment account of religious pluralism is rooted in a conception of multiculturalism based on neo-Marxist critical theory that in turn draws on Hegel's critique of Kant. G. W. F. Hegel (1953) challenged Kant's contention that reason can be separated from history, culture, and language, a contention grounded in the distinction between *a priori* and *a posteriori* reason upon which the liberal conception of neutral secularism rests. Once it is supposed that knowledge involves the meeting of a structure that lies within consciousness with a reality that exists outside of it—of mind with matter, so to say, or subjectivity with objectivity—it is difficult to sustain the position that this internal structure can be hermetically sealed against the influence of life in the outside world, even if we can say nothing with certainty about that external reality. Indeed, the very idea that *a priori* reason, deductive or inductive, should be granted epistemological priority over other grounds of truth, various dialectical or historical accounts of rationality, for example, can only be sustained if one presupposed the *a priori* rational assumptions one seeks to defend, which as mentioned above, violates those very assumptions.

Hegel argued, therefore, that all reason is necessarily *a posteriori*, grounded in the dialectical progress of historical experience, and expressed in particular national languages and cultures. These national cultures correct themselves across time through a process of inter-generational criticism, in which the thesis of one generation is opposed to an anti-thesis in the next generation, the synthesis of which in the third generation becomes a new thesis, to be opposed by yet another anti-thesis in the fourth, and so on until liberation from error, or absolute freedom, is achieved by one nation state, at the very least, to be then imitated by or imposed upon the rest (Hegel, 1953). Left-leaning Hegelians followed Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (Marx and Engels, 1998) in reconceiving dialectal reason in terms of socio-economic conflicts over power.

Marxists and Neo-Marxists agree that the fundamental problem of society is an unequal distribution of resources, which can be used by those who have more to oppress those who have less. Liberation of the oppressed is to be achieved, therefore, by means of a total equalization of resources so that no one can hold undue sway over anyone else. In this respect both differ from liberals such as Rawls in that they have no particular use for procedural justice, since rules and processes can always be manipulated to the benefit of those who possess more resources. The only principle of justice worthy of the name must be concerned with the completely equal distribution of resources.

Neo-Marxists parted ways with classical Marxism, however, over the relative influence of material versus cultural resources, expressed in the Marxian distinction between basic versus super structure. In contrast to Hegel's dialectical idealism which held that absolute freedom—liberation from error—would be achieved by the slow process of ideas being corrected in the course of history, Marx was a dialectal materialist, who measured power and progress in terms of economic resources. The ability of the working class to govern its own destiny, in this view, is dependent solely on its ability to exercise control over the means that produce material wealth. The basic structure of a society is to be found in the way it distributes the capacity to produce wealth, and the ideational component—Marx called it ideology—is only a super-structure used by the ruling classes to rationalize their undue control over the means of production.

According to the neo-Marxist position, on the other hand, cultural resources associated with the arts, architecture, cinema, education, scientific research, academically generated ideas, and also religious faith can have an influence on the means of production as significant as financial management. They distinguished between hegemonic cultures that seek dominance over others and hence control of production and wealth through the manipulation of ideas, symbols, rituals, and the like, and those cultures that are dominated by means of those very same ideas, symbols, and rituals. The task of liberation, through what Paulo Freire (2000) called critical pedagogy or Ilan Gur-Ze'ev (1999) counter education, for example, is to equalize power relations between these two sorts of cultures by debunking what Marx called the false consciousness or ideological super-structure that sustains inequality, in order to create a multicultural society that distributes cultural as well as material resources equitably. Religious pluralism could well be seen to be a direct consequence of this multicultural ideal, by suggesting that religions, like other cultural resources, should not be used to dominate others; rather the power, influence, and prestige of faith should be shared equally among different traditions so that no person is oppressed because of faith.

The difficulties with this view can be seen in the postmodern critique of both Marxist and neo-Marxist theory, which are often called modern critical theories, since they adhere to the possibility of an objective truth or absolute good, namely total equality, which is attainable as a source of liberation from oppression. The postmodern complaint, put simply, is that it is naïve to think that we can unravel the inescapable grip of power. Power relations are embedded in all human activities (Foucault 2001) and at the very heart of human language (Derrida, 1998). There is no meta-narrative to which we can escape once the difficulties with this or another false consciousness have been unmasked, because every narrative itself imposes an interpretation on events by means of its own access to power (Lyotard

1979). The idea of religious pluralism is itself embedded in a narrative with its own unavoidable power interests and so should be subjected to the same critique as any other ideology. The postmodern critique of Marxism and neo-Marxism reveals the weakness of social criticism, therefore, by arguing that liberation is essentially impossible. Every critical perspective entails its own forms of oppression of which we should also be skeptical. The difficulty with this view is that it yields the paradoxical result that even this very postmodern critique involves unequal power relations that should be challenged. This leaves one in a quandary as to whether it is ever legitimate to commit to anything at all, even postmodern skepticism itself.

One troubling consequence of this quandary can be seen in the rising influence of a postmodernism offshoot known as postcolonialism. This position contends that resistance to hegemonic practices associated with European and other forms of colonialism can be a cathartic experience that restores self-respect to subjugated peoples, especially those indigenous to colonized lands, even if their eventual extrication from the bounds of hegemony may not equalize the distribution of resources (Said, 1979; Fanon, 2005). Surely religious proselyzation has historically been an essential ingredient of colonialization. Whereas both modern and postmodern critical theories are progressive, looking forward toward an improved, if perhaps less than perfect, future, postcolonialism is nostalgic, supporting an ongoing, perhaps never ending, struggle to replace an uncertain and paradoxical, some would even say spiritually and morally vacuous, present with a glorified and romanticized past. This has all too often led to an uneasy but growing partnership between postcolonial and fundamentalist nostalgia, both of which seek to overturn the shackles of one form or another of modernity and to be replaced by what are thought to be more authentic pre-modern forms of life that are anything but tolerant of difference. One does not need to reject legitimate critique of excesses and injustices associated with colonialism in its various forms to recognize the dangers to peaceful coexistence inherent in such a partnership (Alexander, 2015, 19-38).

Of course, there are some such as Jürgen Habermas (2008) who seek a more moderate multiculturalism. A student of the Frankfurt School, Habermas's own intellectual proclivities lie in a more measured branch of neo-Marxism. His multiculturalism seeks equality between subjective life worlds by reconceiving rationality as communication oriented to achieving, sustaining, and reviewing intersubjective consensus based on claims that can be criticized (Habermas, 1985). This revives the possibility of Kantian style liberalism grounded in a conception of reason with roots in social solidarity rather than individual consciousness with a shared life far more robust than the thin public domain allowed by Rawls. But the commons of this liberal multiculturalism are no less restricted than those of the more radical variety, on the one hand, or Rawlsian liberalism, on the other (Alexander, 2016).

## Diversity, Liberalism, and Religious Pluralism

To address concerns such as these with both Enlightenment and counter-Enlightenment politics, Berlin followed an obscure fragment from the ancient Greek poet Archilochus to distinguish between hedgehogs and foxes. Whereas the former know one big thing and assign social privilege to those who follow a singular path, the latter know many things and encourage citizens to choose among competing paths (Berlin 1953, 3). Hedgehogs are attracted to Berlin's positive concept of liberty, the idea of self-mastery, or self-definition, or control of one's destiny; foxes are drawn to negative freedom, the absence of constraints on, or interference with, a person's actions (Berlin, 1969, 122-135). Although on the whole he favored a particular account of negative liberty, Berlin recognized that on its own negative liberty can be extraordinarily vacuous without some positive content concerning the ends that culminate in human flourishing.

But Berlin had deep reservations about positive accounts of liberty untempered by interaction with their negative counterparts. Those who advance these extreme approaches often distinguish between a person's actual self and some occult entity referred to as a "true", "real", or "higher" self, of which a person might not be fully aware. Although one's empirical self may indeed feel free, it is argued, one's true self may actually be enslaved. Once I take this view, according to Berlin, I can ignore peoples' actual wishes, to bully, oppress, or torture them in the name of their "real" selves, in the secure knowledge that the true goal of existence—happiness, duty, wisdom, justice, or self-fulfillment—is identical with the free choice of their "true", albeit submerged and inarticulate, selves (Berlin, 1969, 133).

Without insisting on a rigid classification, Berlin (1997, 1-24) counted many counter-Enlightenment romantics as hedgehogs, especially those associated with Hegel's (1967) dialectical reasoning, on both the right and the left. Berlin criticized the authoritarianism inherent in these views for a tendency toward positive liberty. It may be surprising to learn, however, that he understood Enlightenment liberals to be hedgehogs as well, headstrong about the capacity of hypothetical-deductive reason, grounded in Kant's rational structure of mind, to negotiate competing ways of life. Hence, Berlin's reservations about the excesses of positive liberty extended no less to the monist moral and political theories of Locke and Kant than to the Hegelians. Prioritizing the right to choose a comprehensive good over any particular good one may choose assumes that one can pick freely based on relevant reasons and engage in reasonable deliberation to adjudicate disagreements. But choices are not always as free, nor deliberations as reasonable, as they might appear, since the very idea of rational evaluation is historically situated. Although Berlin preferred negative freedom, he recognized that it too was an historical achievement which

tends towards its positive counterpart when transformed into a comprehensive doctrine.

To negotiate the dialectic of modernity in relation to Enlightenment and counter-Enlightenment political theories in a way that adequately addresses tensions, Berlin offered an alternative, more cacophonous, liberalism. In contrast to the classical liberal tradition grounded in one or another account of universal toleration and rational autonomy, William Galston (1991, 2002) calls this autonomy liberalism. Berlin begins with the fundamental fact of intractable value pluralism or the idea that human society is comprised of numerous diverse and often incommensurable cultures. The task of political theory, in this circumstance, is not to impose a comprehensive account of toleration on everyone, but following Thomas Hobbes, to create a *modus vivendi* that enables people to live together across deep difference.

Although this has sometimes been referred to as post-liberalism (see Gray, 1996), I prefer Galston's designation, diversity liberalism, because this position emphasizes the need for a political framework that insures the rights of people to choose a concept of the good life, but recognizes that any such framework will be contingent, not necessary, situated historically in an ongoing dialogue among alternative, often competing, perspectives. By focusing on the cultivation of meaning and purpose as defined by the individual, within the context of and in dialogue with, but not determined by, community, and on living together with others who may find meaning and purpose in alternative comprehensive goods, this alternative remains squarely within the liberal camp. Following John Gray (2002), I have called this position the "other face of liberalism" (Alexander, 2105, 87-138). It entails a liberal interpretation of several communitarian ideas that I will discuss in the next section. Here are the grounds for a robust religious pluralism that recognizes the importance of diverse religious views to a vibrant democratic citizenry, who can turn to faith traditions in order to assess important matters of public policy and who are prepared to engage alternative views in respectful dialogue, in which each participant has something to contribute from his or her own heritage and to learn from the inheritances of others.

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## **Education in Religious Pluralism**

Education has a key role to play in cultivating the skills and dispositions for such a religiously diverse society. To effectively respond to the demands of such a robust pluralism an education would need to meet at least two requirements. First, it must enable individuals to define themselves within the context of particular

comprehensive goods that are sufficiently robust and meaningful as to guide and govern their lives. Second, it needs to prepare people to live together in peaceful coexistence across the deep differences that may divide their distinct ways of life.

At least three communitarian ideas are particularly germane to the task number one: First, Sandel (1998) argues that people do not define themselves in isolation from one another as portrayed by the autonomy liberals, but in the midst of communities in which they are born, raised, and nurtured, whether they embrace, reconceive, or reject the traditions through which those communities define themselves. Second, Walzer (1985) contends that these communities entail local moral inheritances embedded in thick webs of language, history, and culture, not merely thin universal values. Finally, Taylor (1985, 15-44) suggests that these inheritances contain strong values on the basis of which we make crucial choices about the people we choose to be, not only weak preferences relating to how we feel at any given moment. These self-defining people are not the subjective life worlds Habermas describes in his search for intersubjective consensus. Like the unencumbered selves of autonomy liberalism, Habermas's subjective life worlds tend to be too disconnected from their local contexts to nourish identity. Rather, the self-defining people that emerge from the communitarian critique are richly textured selves, rooted in dynamic dialogue with the heritages to which they are heir, which can be embraced, refined, or abandoned to meet their own felt needs. I have called the search for a vision of the good life that meets the demands articulated here "intelligent spirituality", the education that initiates one into such a life, "pedagogy of the sacred".

"Intelligent spirituality" involves the quest to define oneself in the context of a learning community with a vision of a higher good, "learning" in the sense that a community is prepared to adjust beliefs and customs according to engagement with alternative views and changing circumstances, and "higher," not highest, because transcendent ideals are subject to revision on the basis of that which is learned from experience. Hence, although higher goods are holistic in that they offer comprehensive visions of how one should live, they are also dynamic and evolving, not dogmatic and resistant to change. These are ethical visions, in the classical sense that envisages goods associated with life's purposes and meanings, rather than in the modern sense that focuses primarily on the analysis and justification of individual rights and duties (Williams, 1985, 6-7). They consequently meet three standards that make it possible to engage in normative discourse altogether: that people have the freedom to choose a life path within reasonable limits, the intelligence to tell the difference between right and wrong according to such a path, and the capacity to err in the choices that they make according to the life they have chosen. These visions are also pragmatic in that they address concrete examples of

how to live in the context of particular communities, not merely abstract principles and rules. And they are synthetic in that they are open to dialogue with other visions that also meet the conditions of ethical discourse, and willing to adapt based on what they learn from such a dialogue (Alexander, 2001, 139-70; 2015, 139-96).

“Pedagogy of the sacred” is concerned with the values and capabilities to engage in a dialogue between identities of primary association and alternative viewpoints, in such a way that strengthens, rather than weakens, each orientation through a process that includes both criticizing one from the perspective of the other as well as mutual learning from one another. This entails initiation into a comprehensive concept of the good that forms the basis of primary association, its languages and history; stories, songs, and dances; customs and ceremonies; beliefs, values, and practices. It is from this perspective that a person can learn to participate in deliberation and debate in the public square. Ethics, in this view, is tied to teleological and theological concepts that give voice to our most cherished ideals in which lesser purposes serve greater ones (Alexander and Ben-Peretz, 2001) .

However, if people so encumbered in community or tradition are to live with others whose commitments may be in conflict with their own, they need to remain open to dialogue with people who follow alternative life paths and to create a common life across difference with those who adhere to divergent orientations. This leads to task number two, living together in peace across difference; but how is this possible? One answer involves learning to view one orientation from the perspective of another by means of what I have called “pedagogy of difference”. In contrast to other critical pedagogies grounded in a false dichotomy between victims and victimizers that places responsibility for belief and behavior in power relations rather than individual members of either group (Freire, 2000), this alternative approach presupposes that an education worthy of the name must not only initiate into a concept of the sacred according to one tradition of practice or another but also to offer exposure to alternative perspectives. Attitudes and actions can then be considered according to standards of a tradition of primary identity as well as those of alternative viewpoints. One learns to critique not only according to the internal standards of a tradition to which one is heir or with which one has chosen to affiliate, but also according to the criteria of at least one alternative, if not more. Dialogue across difference is integral to pedagogy of this kind, which generates the possibility of education in a critical viewpoint consistent with a robust religious pluralism (Alexander, 2015, 87-138).

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## **Section 2**

### **Western Europe – Issues of Plurality in Pedagogy and Society**

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# Pluralism of Religions or Pluralism based on Neutrality?

Competing Understandings in Europe<sup>1</sup>

Friedrich Schweitzer

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## Pluralism of Religions or Pluralism based on Neutrality as a Basis for Tolerance, Peace and Justice: Two Competing Models

From my point of view, two different understandings for how to achieve tolerance, peace and justice in society and beyond have been operative in Europe (cf. Schweitzer, 1999, 2005). In an abbreviated manner, I refer to them respectively as models of “pluralism of religions” on the one hand and “pluralism based on neutrality” on the other.

The first model draws on the idea of dialogue and shared deliberation (for a more detailed account cf. Schweitzer, 2011). It expects the different religions, for example, Christianity and Islam, to find enough common ground for living together peacefully by entering into dialogical exchange (for contemporary theological accounts from a Protestant perspective see Herms, 1995, Schwöbel, 2003). It is not expected, however, that the different religions give up their distinct religious convictions. Yet such convictions should not exclude common goals that can be based on something like an “overlapping consensus” as, for example, John Rawls calls it (Rawls, 1993). In order for this to become possible, the state must provide the

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1 The lecture style of the Montenegro conference on which this chapter is based has been maintained for publication. Accordingly, references in the following chapter are limited. For additional references see my other articles as well as my book *Religion-spädagogik*. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2006.

religions with sufficient possibilities for taking part in public discourse and deliberation, among representatives of the religions as well as with the state. Moreover, according to the German philosopher, Jürgen Habermas, and the German sociologist, Hans Joas, it must be acknowledged that religious traditions can be sources and carriers of important values that neither the democratic state nor secular philosophies or worldviews can produce or maintain by themselves (Habermas, 2002, Joas, 2011). Important examples of such values relate to issues of human dignity, peace and justice. Consequently, in line with this model of a pluralism of religions, dialogue between the religions is in the public interest. It is a common good and should be supported by the state.

The second model which has exerted a strong influence, especially in the politics of the European Union (cf. Schreiner, 2012), the model of pluralism based on neutrality, makes the conflictual nature of religious differences its starting point, together with the idea of religious freedom and the separation between state and church or, more recently, between the state and religions. According to this view, religions are divisive by their very nature because the differences between them cannot be resolved. The human right to freedom of religion requires the state not to get involved with religious conflicts unless they impinge upon other human rights.

The separation between state and religions that is tantamount to state neutrality in this field is the legal and institutional consequence of this kind of thinking. One of the most spectacular cases in which this understanding was put into practice in the field of education involved the wearing of headscarves by a number of female Muslim pupils in the French town of Creil in the 1990s (Soëtard, 1998). These girls were not allowed to wear their headscarves in class and, since they refused to follow such orders, were excluded from school. It is interesting to remember in the present context which arguments were used in support of this ruling. These arguments invoked the unity of the French nation that religions should not be allowed to call into question. It was also said that religious convictions should not infringe upon the rules of democracy. Consequently, the headscarves as well as other religious symbols should remain within the private sphere. Ultimately, a new law stated that “ostentatious religious symbols” may not be displayed in French schools.

How can these two competing models of pluralism be evaluated? Naturally, any evaluation will have to consider a number of different aspects. For the present context, I will limit myself to two critical questions that are of special importance for education. The first is about feasibility, the second is about motivation.

The main critical question concerning the first model of dialogical pluralism refers to the problem of showing that peaceful relationships among religions are really possible. Many analysts object to the assumption of such a possibility, pointing to the many conflicts around the world in which religious aspects play a role. These

days, sadly enough, it appears indeed quite difficult to name any serious political conflict that has absolutely no religious background, be it, for example, in Ukraine or in Israel, in Syria, Iraq or Iran. Yet I am convinced that at least certain religious traditions like Christianity, Islam and Judaism do indeed have the potential, not only for peaceful coexistence, but also for mutual respect and for true tolerance.

The most important objection to the second model based on neutrality is based on the question of motivation. How can we reach the goal of people being willing to follow the principles of tolerance, peace and justice if they are not allowed to publicly base them on their deepest convictions? Can people really be expected to base their actions on certain rules just because they follow from secular laws? It is of course possible for the state to enforce obedience to its laws and no doubt, such enforcement is often needed. Yet more far-reaching and stable peaceful relationships can hardly be the result of law enforcement. Instead, they must be rooted in the personal attitudes and values of the individual citizens. In other words, a purely state-based approach falls short of the possibility of creating enough motivation on the part of the population. Moreover, the strategy of limiting religious differences to the private sphere actually comes at a high price, especially for education. Tensions and conflicts related to religious difference can then no longer be addressed in public, and this limitation of course includes public education and the state schools. In other words, as long as we follow the model of neutrality in designing our educational systems and institutions, we have to give up the possibility of addressing conflicting religious convictions. Under such presuppositions, these convictions may be addressed from a legal, and possibly also from an ethical point of view, but not in a religious manner.

Since this is hardly desirable or effective, it is my claim that the first model of dialogical pluralism is clearly preferable for education. Saying this, I do not want to overlook that this claim also comes at a price. We will have to show that we are actually able to develop such peaceful relationships. Today I can say that this is exactly the reason why I am here in Montenegro. It is my deep hope that the work of our conference will be another contribution to peace, tolerance, and justice.

Since my expertise is in the field of religious education I will now turn to this field, by showing how the two models described relate to religious education.

## **Different Models for Religious Education in Europe and their Contributions to Tolerance, Peace and Justice**

In the following discussion, the term “models” refers to the institutional ways in which religious education is organized within the context of state schools in relationship to denominations or other religious bodies. Given the different situations in European countries and their diverse histories, it is no surprise that many models can be found in Europe today. These models have been described in detail in the pertinent literature, and there is no need to repeat these descriptions here (see the series *Religious Education at Schools in Europe*, 2012ff.; these publications also contain the background references that I presuppose in the following). In the present analysis we must instead ask how these models of religious education are related to either pluralism of religions or to pluralism based on neutrality in order to provide a basis for tolerance, peace and justice. Moreover, I will also consider how they are related to civil society and how they allow for theology to come into play as a possible resource for dialogue.

In a number of European countries including, for example, Germany, we can observe developments in religious education that have similar starting points yet lead in very different directions. Given the increasingly multicultural and multi-religious character of European societies, the traditional denominational or confessional approach to religious education is considered insufficient. Organizing religious education in religiously homogenous groups taught by teachers with the same religious affiliation can hardly be seen as the best preparation for dialogue, even if other religions and worldviews are treated as part of the subject matter and even if the teacher tries to inspire openness and tolerance. To varying degrees, such observations have been articulated in many countries. Yet there is less agreement about the conclusions that should be drawn from this concerning the future shape of religious education. Two different ideas are especially salient in the contemporary situation: the religious studies approach on the one hand and cooperative or dialogical approaches on the other. I will first try to describe these two models in an ideal type manner in order to evaluate them in a second step:

The first option, a religious studies approach based on religious neutrality and possibly combined with some values education or ethics, is clearly becoming more and more prominent in many places. It has also received some support within European politics. In this case, religious education is considered as teaching “about” religion. From this point of view, students should learn about different religions, in the sense of acquiring knowledge about different convictions, traditions, and orientations, and in the sense of considering them critically from the perspective of the scientific study of religion or the philosophy of religion. Theology, however,

is not considered a legitimate perspective because theology is not neutral. The aim of this approach is tolerance through distance and scientific objectivity in relationship to the different religious traditions. All religions are treated in the same distancing manner as an expression of objectivity. The state takes full responsibility for this subject. There is no influence from civil society, neither from the religious communities nor from other non-government organizations. At best, some representative from a particular church, denomination, or religion may be invited to a school for a special presentation and discussion but always under the supervision of the state-certified teacher who is responsible for what goes on in his or her classroom.

This model is often confused with the multi-faith model of religious education developed in England and Wales. Yet at least in certain respects, the British model clearly allows for an influence from the religious communities and from other members of civil society, most of all through the so-called SACREs—the local Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education—which are responsible for the syllabi for religious education. These committees represent civil society but they have no equivalent in the religious studies approach practiced in other countries. This is why religious studies approaches should not be confused with the British multi-faith approach. Yet even in the UK, some religious educators are critical of what they perceive to be an all too tenuous relationship between religious education in school and the religious groups or denominations to which the students belong. According to them, there should be more cooperation between the school and these groups in order to spread and support dialogical attitudes, not only in the classroom but also beyond the school.

Some representatives of the religious studies model hold an understanding of dialogue that is clearly different from the understanding developed in the present chapter. They consider it impossible to arrive at mutual understandings as long as the participants remain within the perspectives of their particular traditions or religious convictions. According to them, this kind of dialogue can only lead to conflict and misunderstandings. Only if the participants leave their particular perspectives behind in order to take a neutral scientific perspective by using the concepts and theories provided by religious studies will they be able to reach agreement. The idea is not to engage in dialogue between different positions but to learn to assume a point of view above all differences.

Finally, peace and justice can play a role in this approach but not in the form of religiously motivated ideas or values. Instead they should be based on secular ethics. Often human rights are quoted as a neutral source for moral instruction that is not dependent on any religious basis because the universal character of such rights itself gives them an independent (“self-evident”) basis—a view which, of course,

does not take account of the religious traditions behind today's understanding of human rights.

Alternatively, we can observe that the traditional model of denominational religious education is giving way to cooperative and more open-minded models of religious education that try to combine denominational and dialogical elements. Let me again use Germany as an example. It is easy to see that religious education in Germany has remained confessional or, to use a more adequate term "denominational" but that it is also becoming more plural and dialogical. In addition to the traditional forms of Protestant and Roman Catholic religious education, new forms of Orthodox, Jewish, and Muslim religious education have been established or are in the process of being established in many places. Some religious educators have supported this development because it is in line with the idea of strengthening the influence of civil society and of giving it more influence within the state school rather than having the state take over the field of religious education and values by establishing a religious studies approach instead of religious education. Others are more skeptical because they work from the assumption that combining the characteristics associated with the adjectives, "denominational" and "educational" can only lead to contradictions.

Moreover, especially in international contexts, there is a language problem that often creates far-reaching misunderstandings. In the UK, "confessional" in the context of religious education is often understood as "indoctrination". In Germany, designations like "denominational" or "confessional" refer to a sponsorship for religious education that is shared between the state and religious bodies. These terms do not refer to the expected outcome. Even from the point of view of the churches, German denominational religious education does not have the task of turning children or adolescents into followers of a certain denomination or church. Religious education should give them a chance to encounter a clear religious outlook but not in order for them to be indoctrinated. The aim is arriving at a considered choice—a choice in the sense of what I like to call "principled pluralism" because it is based on transforming plurality into pluralism by applying clear criteria or principles. In my understanding, this implies that denominational religious education must go beyond the limits of the respective denomination. Any kind of responsible religious education in the contemporary world must include other denominations and religions as part of the curriculum as well as personal encounters with other denominations and religions.

Following this line of thinking, a new model for religious education has been developed that is called cooperative or dialogical religious education. This model tries to combine clear religious or theological positions in a denominational sense with the cooperation of several different groups. The model has been developed

in the context of Protestant and Catholic religious education. In this case it means that religious education now comprises longer or shorter phases during which the students are divided in separate groups based on denominational affiliation but also includes other phases when they work together with others of different faiths. The guiding idea is to allow for identification with one particular tradition as well as for dialogue – in other words, for identifying what they have in common but also what remains different.

The model is not limited to Protestant-Catholic cooperation. It may also be applied to cooperation between Christian and Muslim or Jewish religious education or between religious education and ethics. In any case, however, the relationship to the denominations or religious traditions existing in civil society must be maintained and the students must be brought into dialogue with each other.

In this case, the aim is education for tolerance, not through religious neutrality but through learning how to encounter differences dialogically. Moreover, the differing grounds for tolerance within the respective traditions are of special interest in such dialogical encounters. They are not of interest because there should be no differences with respect to such grounds, but rather, their value lies precisely in these differences.

This implies that the model also allows for an encounter between the different understandings of peace and justice maintained within the various religious traditions. At its best, it introduces the understanding that cooperation and dialogue are important because they can lead to a shared commitment to peace and justice—an idea that has acquired at least some reality in the joint efforts of churches and sometimes of non-Christian religions, for example, *vis-à-vis* social issues in a particular country.

As mentioned above, there is no agreement concerning the different approaches within the contemporary European discussions of religious education. This is why, in the following, I consider it important to offer a number of observations regarding possible criteria that may be of help for the future development of religious education in Europe.

First, the idea of limiting religious education to teaching “about” religion clearly is not helpful for the future. A number of countries including England and Wales have moved away from this approach, simply because it does not achieve its educational purposes. The assumption that there are only two choices—either to teach religion or to teach about religion—has turned out to be overly simplistic. We need more complex and sophisticated models—models that include learning “from” religion(s) like in the UK or that are based on dialogical learning and cooperation like in Germany. The respective experiences indicate that we should leave behind the traditional oppositions between a religious studies faction and a church or the-

ology faction in order to work towards more flexible and open models that will include both the perspective of the academic observer as well as the perspective of the faithful believer. The aim of a principled pluralism will not be achieved unless religious education comes to balance different views—religious views and convictions, self-interpretations of individuals and of religious groups, as well as views from a non-religious perspective and from the scientific study of religion.

Second, concerning the relationship between religious education and civil society or democracy, we must also include, as one of the basic criteria, the need for future models of religious education to contribute to a strong civil society. Civil society is dependent on education for tolerance, peace and justice. Solidarity is a basic prerequisite for civil society. In multi-religious societies, education must also include dialogical aims in the sense of a principled pluralism. No future model for religious education should be allowed to exclusively aim at intra-school purposes and to neglect its necessary relationship to the civil society surrounding the schools. As can be seen from different countries in Europe, there are many ways of supporting the relationship between religious education and civil society. The local SACRE committees in England and Wales are one example, the German model of shared responsibility or sponsorship between the state and the religious bodies is another. I do not think that we will ever find one European model that fits all. We should not even strive for such a unitary model because it would contradict the necessary pluralism in religious education in different countries. Yet it is important that the different models will be in line with the overarching criteria of a democracy based on a strong civil society, and this includes criteria like tolerance, peace and justice.

Third, the organizational model for religious education should have an explicit focus on the dialogical tasks related to the contemporary shape of civil society as well as to society at large. Dialogical openness is not a natural given that can just be presupposed. It is one of the main tasks of education in multicultural and multi-religious societies to support its development. Moreover, dialogue requires certain skills that should be fostered, and it depends on a certain familiarity with traditions and identities different from one's own. Any model of religious education that wants to be acceptable in a European context must live up to the tasks of dialogue in general and the specific tasks of dialogues involving religious differences.

It is easy to see that theology has a clear and probably indispensable function in all three respects. Theology must inform religious education with insights and understandings related to different beliefs. It has to provide perspectives on religion that connect religious education to civil society as well as promote a language and set of concepts that allow for dialogue. The specific interplay between inside

and outside perspectives that is distinctive of theology can pave the way towards the forms of religious identities on which living together in peace and tolerance is premised. Moreover, theology can provide access to a religious ethics that can serve as the basis for justice and solidarity beyond the limits of Christianity.

To put it into a nutshell: In the understanding developed in the present paper, theology itself is a model for the religious reflexivity needed for tolerance, peace and justice among different cultures and religions.

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# Teaching and Learning about Religion between Religious Plurality and Secularism

Henning Schluß and Christine Salmen

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## **The German situation: Answers from pedagogy in teaching religion based on practice and research**

The German situation is unique within the Central European context with regard to religion. Europe includes both areas of strong secularity such as the Czech Republic, as well as the multi-religious plurality that is typical of the UK, for example. These exist side by side, yet with strong regional differences. Even today, 25 years after the Berlin wall fell, we may observe distinct religious cultures in Western and Eastern Germany. While Germany has a strong federal structure in matters of education, the individual states have the opportunity to develop their own pedagogical models in religion as an answer to their individual situations. This chapter characterizes these situations and the resulting concepts of pedagogy in teaching about religion. Hence, we shall also discuss perspectives on researching (inter-) religious and worldview competencies that are currently being developed.

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## **The traditional concept of religious education in Western Germany**

In the German Constitution, there is only a single school subject mentioned and that is religion. Article 7, paragraph 3 of the German Constitution holds that “Religion instruction is a proper subject in public schools with the exception of non-de-

nominal schools. Notwithstanding state supervision, religion instruction shall be taught in accordance with the principles of the religious community. No teacher shall be obligated to instruct a religion class against their will.”

The implication is the following: Religious instruction in Germany is recognized as a subject that the state, however, may not design. Rather, the respective religious communities are responsible for its content. The state only guarantees that students are provided instruction that is free, for instance, of homophobic or unconstitutional contents. Religious instruction is, hence, conceptualized as being specific to one religion as well as being confessional. Traditionally, this concept shaped Catholic, Protestant and Jewish religion instruction. Especially for Catholic instructions, this has always implied a triad of Catholic content, Catholic teacher, and Catholic students.

The German Constitution provided for exceptions, regulated in a separate article and referred to the individual states that already had provisions about religious instruction in place before the Constitution took effect. Since this applied mostly to the city-state of Bremen, article 141 was developed as the “Bremen provision”. When the conflict between Lutherans and Reformists needed settlement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a compromise was reached: biblical instruction was introduced as a subject that was obliged to be taught in “a general Christian sense”. Catholics, however, had not been considered under this provision and when they settled in Bremen, the subject was challenged. Other states also refer to the “Bremen provision”.

Berlin, for example, was officially under the control of the Allied Forces from 1949 to 1990 and had already regulated that religious instruction be taught in school classrooms but as the responsibility of the churches. This system, of course, ended in the case of the eastern part of separated Berlin with the foundation of Eastern Germany. However, since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the “Bremen provision” has applied to all of Berlin.

A similar conflict arose in the neighboring state, Brandenburg, and its separate regulation that had been in place since 1949. Still, the other states of Eastern Germany submitted to the regulation of the Constitution with the exception of Brandenburg which insisted on its own state version of the subject, “conduct – ethics – religious instruction” that is accompanied by the option for students to attend religious instruction as an alternative.

## **Secularism and no confession – locating Eastern Germany's situation**

The vast majority of Eastern Germans are not part of any religious community. This fact may be traced back to the anti-religious anti-religion policies of their previous communist leadership. Members of the church were disadvantaged by the Eastern German government. Access to higher education became limited for them, options for higher education were scarce and leadership positions in the economic or the government sector were impossible. This, however, does not explain why so many individuals left the church. Why did they make that choice while we see the opposite today: for example, ISIS-occupied communities, whether Yazidis, Shiites, or Christians, hold true to their faith despite mortal danger. Eastern Germany, in contrast, only offers a few martyr figures like the Pastor Oskar Brüsewitz who burned himself to protest against communist rule. Generally, people came to terms with the regime one way or the other and decided against belonging to a religious community.

Yet even more surprising is the fact that after state communism fell and repressions were over, people did not flock back to the churches but remained without religious affiliation. This is again contrary to the example of the end of restrictions after the fall of Nazi Germany that had also maintained a comparably repressive policy toward religious communities. When the Nazi regime ended, people who had initially left the churches returned and membership in 1945 rose to almost the level of 1933 (Pollack 1996 and 1994). The absence of this phenomenon with regard to Eastern Germany is only understandable if one assumes that there were also personal reasons for leaving the church in the first place.

Sociologist Monika Wohlrab-Sahr (2011) has presented research supporting this assumption. Individuals do not cite state societal pressures as the reason for leaving the church but rather an internal distancing from faith. Meanwhile, the generation that actively left the church is less in evidence today. Neither their children nor their grandchildren rejoined the church but have largely remained without religious affiliation. This is still a far cry away from conscious and active atheism, yet God is no longer part of life. He is not only forgotten but has been forgotten for generations and has become increasingly irrelevant, as Wolf Krötke (2014) indicates.

Not being religiously affiliated in Eastern Germany does not represent an antipathy to religion but rather, indicates a-religiousness: The divine dimension is just as unbelievable there as a dimension of the holy or the numinous. It is not replaced by spiritual practices or New Age rites, cults, and sects, but rather the human condition is viewed without reference to a transcendent or higher reality; the focus is

solely on the here and now. The other side of that coin is the newly-found curiosity about this strange, a-normal lifestyle that does reference God. In response, the state of Brandenburg introduced “conduct – ethics – religious instruction” as an attempt to allow for encounters with a religion that is presumed dead. The creators of this subject intended to open up a space for those who had distanced themselves to learn about religion rather than to be instructed in it (Teece, 2009; Schweitzer/Hull, 2002).

Also in Eastern Germany, the masses did not convert in response to the introduction of constitutional, proper, religion instruction. Quite the contrary: 25 years after the Peaceful Revolution, classes dedicated to the study of religion generally enroll fewer students than other subjects (Schluß, 2010b).

Living without religious affiliation is, however, no longer only an Eastern German phenomenon, even though it is often treated as such. Migration from East to West as well as secular trends, especially in urban areas, has made life without religious affiliation a widely observable fact in Western German cities as well (Käbisch, 2014). Yet, this development is generally not part of the discussions within and around religious plurality.

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## **Religious plurality – the Western German (urban) situation**

The Peace of Augsburg in 1555 spoke to the confessional divide by implementing the Solomonian formula “*Cuius regio, eius religio*” (the religion of the ruler dictates the religion of the ruled) in Germany to show that German regions were mostly homogenous and stable into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Mixed marriages between Catholics and Protestants were scandalous until the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Many couples could only save themselves from pressure by breaking ties with both their families and fleeing into the city.

Judaism, as the third religious entity in Germany, had been displaced or annihilated after 200 years of assimilationist efforts. The remaining small Jewish communities were granted the same rights as the churches but under continuous, yet hidden, virulent anti-Semitism.

The economic miracle of the 1950s brought religious movement into the paralyzed situation of the Adenauer era. So-called guest workers migrated to Germany who were neither Catholic nor Protestant but rather Muslim or Orthodox. Generally this was ignored, as was the fact that guest workers were not just there for a visit, but rather were human beings who had started a new life, a family, had entered a culture, and had brought with them a religion. To this day, parts of German society struggle to accept Germany as a country that receives immigrants, so much so

that a former President could not say, “Islam is part of Germany” without being viciously criticized for it. The current President was quick to put this statement into perspective. Walking through any Western German city clearly reveals that cultural and religious plurality have become self-evident constituents of German life. Reflecting these facts in the teaching of religion continues to be a challenge that needs to be taken up (EKD, 2014, Schweitzer, 2014).

A primary issue lies within constitutional church law while ignoring the present multi-religious situation and especially the presence of Islam in Germany. The law was conceptualized on the basis of already existing religious communities. Churches within this framework had a fixed, long-term structure and regular financial contributions that were collected by the state. For religious instruction, there would be a church representative to consult. Meeting these criteria was easy for the Orthodox churches. However, it posed a challenge for the relatively loosely structured Islamic community, consisting of a variety of mosque congregations. Since formal membership in a mosque is not necessary, the individual unions and associations do not represent Muslims, *per se*, but only respective members. To choose one single group as the official representative for everyone to consult on curricular questions led to opposition arising from individual communities. As a result, efforts were made to establish an umbrella organization that would, aside from those many individual orientations, represent all Muslims publically. This goal could not be achieved up to this point because the question of which groups or actors would be the most appropriate and qualified remains a matter of debate.

Nonetheless, recurring efforts have been made to introduce Islamic religious instruction following the pattern of that accorded to Christian denominations. Interestingly, the churches have been strong supporters of the Islamic groups for a simple reason: their own claims have a stronger basis if other groups’ claims are not denied the same right. The Protestant churches, in particular, have been for this same reason a reliable partner in negotiations aimed at introducing Islamic religious instruction.

The state also had its own reasons for supporting Islamic religious education, but couldn’t put those interests forward due to its obligation to neutrality as an entity that cannot act as an agent of religious instruction. Individual states solved this dilemma by offering “first-language instruction”, meaning thereby in most cases Turkish language, but the Muslim population’s diversity had not been taken into account. At the same time there was a concern that Turkey would interfere in German state schools. As a result, more and more German states opted to introduce provisions to allow Islamic religion class as a confessional subject. The intent is clearly to educate the teachers of Islam in state schools at German universities and thereby establish a form of Islamic religion class that would follow the gen-

eral principles of instruction in religion. States have meanwhile moved to develop materials and curricula themselves or to use ones available from other states (Mahnke, 2013; Aslan, 2011).

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## **Religious Pedagogy's Answer to the Double Challenge of Religious Plurality and Living Without Religious Affiliation**

Berlin's special status that was discussed above allowed it to become a role model in matters of Islamic religious instruction. Aside from being multi-religious, it is also the largest city in Germany located in the middle of East Germany and characterized by strong secular tendencies. The majority of the population is without religious affiliation. Therefore, it's the prime example of having both challenges – plurality and secularity – together with a legal situation that allows for solutions outside of the usually binding legal parameters. Because any community of faith or worldview can offer religion or ethics classes following the Berlin regulation, it was especially easy for the Islamic community to establish their own forms of religious instruction.

Some mosque communities joined forces to form the “Islamic Federation” and presented their claim to Islamic religious instruction. After concerns and suspicions were brought up, i.e. corrosion by Islamic or Turkish state institutions and communities, the discussion has settled down around Islamic instruction in Berlin as it became a fixed offering in many schools of the city. It is there to stay and functions well as a partner to Protestant and, wherever present, Catholic religion instruction. In schools with a majority of Muslim students it is often the class with the most participants. At the same time, not all Muslim children attend classes under the auspices of the Islamic Federation. Alevi<sup>1</sup> and other options continue to emerge as well.

A peculiar instance is the life skills class offered, not by religious communities, but by the Humanistic Union as a world-view community which has a legal status equal to that of religious communities. Officially, they are agnostics with some famous atheists among them. Life skills class is not to be confused with a state run neutral offering but is only validated through the non-religious confession of its provider. The denomination itself then, is also agnostic.

Time and time again, children of official denominations attend classes of other providers. That way it is possible and, in fact, a reality that Muslim children may attend Christian religion classes. They are not being evangelized but rather

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1 The Turkish Alevi community is a sect of Islam based on Bektashi Sufism and devotion to Ali.

sharpen their own religious opinions. The same applies in the reverse: The Islamic religion class is open to members of other faiths or students without any religious affiliation. Agnostic life skills classes, too, share this openness.

Since 2007, the Berlin Senate has offered mandatory ethics classes that are neutral with regard to worldviews and that foster values education. The aim to transform this class into an alternative choice collapsed in 2009 after a popular referendum (Gräb/Thieme, 2010; Schluß, 2010a).

Future challenges for any form of religious education will lie in developing forms that respond to religious plurality as well as to the lack of religious affiliation among many pupils. In a pluralistic democratic society it is vital for members to approach each other with mutual appreciation and understanding. This also means understanding oneself because religious affiliation is not inherited as eye color is. In a free society it is a choice, analogous to choosing a profession that is one among many possible choices (Lessing, 1779/2013).

The public has a vested interest in countering fundamentalism in all religions. This form of enlightenment about one's own religion can potentially counter fundamentalist abuse. The conscious effort to understand the basis of one's own religion may very well be the most effective defense against fanaticism.

Understanding means also being able to communicate and to know what is important and holy to other individuals. It needs an understanding of what it means to hold certain values as being sacred. That is a challenge for those without religious affiliation as much as for those who belong to a religious community or who are libertarians.

Also people without religious affiliation or who hold secular values cannot escape the task of living together with religious members of society, in order to understand each other's concerns and motivations, to celebrate together and work out issues. Learning how to switch perspective in questions of religion appears to be at the core of what religious education ought to be. Putting oneself in another's position will be more and more at the heart of religious education in plural societies.

Another specific challenge of religious education will be to help develop a sense of religion as a possibility of being for those who have lived without such beliefs for the past generations. To discover this mode of being and experience it as a benefit is yet another way of approaching the world – and realizing it can't be completely replaced by other options such as philosophy or science – is a necessary task of religious education (Dressler, 2010). Learning how to speak this peculiar language as a human possibility of being in this world should never mean introducing a new form of coercion. Rather, the religious, just like the political, or sports, or the arts, or music, should be presented as one way of being in the world (Schleiermacher, 1799/1983).

None of these approaches is able to substitute for another or even to be fully translated into another. By the same token, nobody can perform all of them as a virtuoso. A school is tasked with teaching the variety of these approaches so that students are enabled to develop their own perspectives for discovering the world. Religious education is especially necessary where other societal systems like the family or religious communities are no longer fulfilling this responsibility. In a secular society, religion remains more than ever an important approach to the world and possibility for living in the world.

If the purpose of religious education is not to teach a specific religious perspective, (inter)-religious competencies may become a new goal of religious education at schools. Competency means ability, whether or how it is achieved is not part of the school's responsibility but rather that of each individual.

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## **Empirical Educational Research on Religion Instruction**

Such (inter-)religious competencies can indeed be the subject of empirical research in that students can be tested and assessed as to whether they have a certain ability or not. It is also possible to find out what sets of beliefs students have but that is not the school's business. Over the past years, we investigated methods for assessing religious competency in various research projects in the sense of a teachable competency. In two states, we were able to launch a full enquiry in Protestant religion classes (8<sup>th</sup> year) and found interesting results (Benner et al, 2011).

Our method of choice was paper and pencil tests to assess religious competency in our work. A core challenge of this type of test is that results are highly dependent on the level of language comprehension. Researching religious competency by means of specific case vignettes is only possible if one can read and understand the cases. To verify this we tested literacy at the same time to see if both competencies were identical or were discrete parameters. The test was successful but the question remains whether paper and pencil tests alone are able to assess the independent variable because case vignettes always have to be read and comprehended.

Our pretesting phase supports a hope that we will be able to minimize that problem by presenting at least a portion of the case vignettes not as text but rather as video. Then, (inter-) religious overlapping situations (Willems, 2015) can be represented realistically and prompt responses made to them. Elaborated language codes would not be requisite nor would developed literacy/reading competency. Video analysis suggests that youngsters who have only basic language skills can still differentiate precisely between religious approaches to the world and, for ex-

ample, apolitical ones. They know and are able to categorize what is the responsibility of the legal system, state policy, and religion (Schluss, 2015).

The ability to differentiate between matters of a religious character and non-religious matters seems undisputed, even though individual cases might pose some material for debate. Single actions may be debated regarding the category to which they belong, i.e., religion, medicine, human rights, or the legal system. Examples include the debates over circumcision or the Muslim headscarf that were read as religious expression by some and as cultural artifacts by others.

Religious education, in the best scenario, fosters the ability to step into the shoes of other discursive partners. Teenagers can demonstrate this ability independent of whether they can read fluently or not. Therefore, developing methodologies for researching (inter-) religious competence independent of literacy will be a central task for future research.

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# Accommodating to Swiss Religious Pluralism

## Interrogating Muslim Integration and Swiss Citizenship

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Multiculturalism has increasingly become a controversial category in contemporary European democracies over the past decade (Joppke, 2004; Vertovec, 2010). The call for what David Cameron called a “more muscular liberalism” – namely, a limitation of the *laissez-faire* policy that has long characterized the British model of the incorporation of cultural minorities – has become the default position in almost all Western societies. The issue of the accommodation of the Muslims’ presence plays a crucial role in calling into question policies of difference that were put in place in the 90s (see Brubaker, 2001). The Muslim Question (see Gianni, forthcoming) plays a central role in this drift (Modood et al., 2005). Over the past decade, Muslim immigrants have become generally seen as the cultural-religious group which is the most difficult to integrate in European societies. Moreover, recent events such as the attacks on *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris in January 2015 and the subsequent pressure reinforcing security measures against *homegrown* terrorists, concern over the recruitment of (supposedly) young *jihadists*, as well as the presence of radical groups at the southern borders of Europe have certainly contributed to keep high the level of moral panic in Western societies directed at the Muslim presence and immigration. This is also fostered by the increasing electoral strength of several right-wing political parties that have put the Muslim “problem” at the core of their political platform, contributing to the continuous politicization of Islam and Muslims in almost all European countries (see Betz and Meret, 2009; Van den Brug et al., 2015).

The Swiss case well illustrates this general trend and represents a very interesting laboratory to study the issues raised by the Muslim presence in democratic

countries. This is due to at least three characteristics: first, the multicultural complexity of Swiss society that plays a role in the difficult relationships that Switzerland has historically had with immigrants; second, the institutional complexity of the Swiss federal political system that entails different levels and dynamics of power; and finally the specificity of the Swiss democratic, participatory, and direct ethos, which provides citizens with a large power in defining who belongs to the nation and under which conditions. Contrary to other Western countries where crucial public decisions are taken by the juridical system or by political elites, in the Swiss system of direct democracy debates taking place in the public sphere are particularly important because Swiss citizens are asked to vote on a wide range of issues. The results of direct democratic referendums directly affect policy making. As shown by Vatter (2011), the direct democratic system plays an important role in legal discrimination against cultural and religious minorities.

It is plausible to think that the intersection of these three aspects contributes to transforming the accommodation of immigrants and cultural-religious minorities (as Muslims) into a relevant and existential political issue. At the same time, these characteristics also provide a very interesting (if not unique) case to understand how to figure out fairer and more democratic ways to cope with the question of alterity and cultural difference in democratic societies generally. My broad assumption is that if the Swiss conception of citizenship and democratic integration would be used to accommodate immigrant cultural and religious minorities, the issue of the Muslim presence would become less problematic and more fair.

In what follows, I first present the main characteristics of the Swiss case with regard to multiculturalism and citizenship, and then provide some theoretical elements in order to assess their potential to fairly address the accommodation of the Muslim presence. We start from the assumption that, with regard to Muslims and Islam, the regulation of religious pluralism goes far beyond the determination of the relations between the State and religious denominations; the regulation of religious pluralism is connected with issues such as integration policy, public security, civil liberties, immigration control, etc., that are at the core of citizenship rights. The multicultural backlash that has marked European societies does not only concern the determination of which symbolic and material resources to provide (or not) to minority cultural or religious groups; it deeply and strongly concerns democratic citizenship rights and fair political integration. The extent to which the integration of cultural or religious minorities is seen as a “problem”, is generally dependent on the way multiculturalism is represented and conceived by political institutions. In other words, the way “multiculturalism” is constructed as a certain kind of social and political reality has important implications regarding the ways the integration of alterity is normatively understood and envisioned. A *certain* understanding of

multiculturalism as a conflicting social and political reality leads to a *certain* kind of integration or citizenship as a possible solution to such conflicts. In a sense, the Muslim Question is a kind of *stress test* for democratic institutions. The ways institutions cope with the inclusion and integration of alterity say something very important about the quality and the legitimacy of a democratic polity and society.

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## 1 The ambivalent Swiss position towards multiculturalism

To understand why Muslims are seen as a problem in Switzerland, it is therefore important to understand the main narratives of the Swiss understanding of its multicultural reality and its relation to foreigners.

Constituted by four linguistic groups and two religious communities, the Swiss political system has been able to defuse the centrifugal forces inherent in multinational states. According to several scholars, federalism, direct democracy, and consociational politics are the key elements explaining the settlement of potentially threatening (multi)cultural tensions (Linder, 1994). In particular, federalism is generally seen as the successful institutional device that has allowed combining the local self-government power of ethno-cultural minorities and a civic common integration at the level of the State (Brooks, 2000).<sup>1</sup> In this light, it is fair to say that the Swiss political system can be seen as representing a successful case of the accommodation of multicultural social and political dynamics (Deutsch, 1976).

Nevertheless, this image captures only part of the Swiss relation to cultural pluralism. The country is confronted by a transformation of its multicultural social and political dynamics. In about twenty years, these have shifted from the accommodation of the original territorialized (either religious or linguistic) minorities to the problem of the accommodation of claims articulated by minorities for whom the territorial reference is not an issue and who are culturally and religiously exogenous to Swiss culture. More specifically, the original Swiss multiculturalism is endogenous, and characterized by the dynamics among the original, territorialized linguistic communities, while the new forms of non-territorialized multiculturalism are imported and the result of immigration flows and the settlement of

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1 According to him, “the Swiss case in particular demonstrates the fact that regionally based ethnolinguistic divisions do not necessarily prevent the development of a strong political nationality” (2000, 120).

immigrants (and asylum seekers).<sup>2</sup> In fact, at the end of the year 2013, 1,937,400 foreigners lived in Switzerland, making up 23.8% of the population.

The original Swiss form of multiculturalism is generally represented in public culture and discourses as constitutive of Swiss identity and has therefore been constantly promoted through public policies or institutional devices; on the contrary, the exogenous one is marked by much reluctance to be recognised as an effective (not to say positive) part of contemporary Swiss society. On the contrary, it is often considered as a threat to the already complex Swiss multicultural model. Therefore, in order to preserve its original multicultural character, the Swiss political system has historically implemented a restrictive, assimilative, model of the incorporation of foreigners (D'Amato, 2010).<sup>3</sup>

More specifically, in Switzerland, public recognition of cultural groups is generally seen as a problem and not as a satisfactory way to foster, through public policy and state decisions, the political and social integration of the members of minority groups. Contrary to countries (such as Canada or Australia) that have legally and politically endorsed multiculturalism as a principle governing public policies towards cultural minorities, Switzerland has never made such a move. In particular, Switzerland can certainly not be considered an example of having implemented multicultural policies for non-territorialized minorities. The accomplishment of the integration process does not ultimately depend on the role of the state, but on the willingness of immigrants to integrate.<sup>4</sup>

Immigrants are clearly at the core of the Swiss fear of exogenous multiculturalism. Post WW II, Switzerland has become *de facto* a destination country for immigrants, in particular through the arrival of a high number of guest-workers who contribute to the expansion of the Swiss economy. Although the presence of these workers was expected to be temporary, since the end of the 60s, because of family reunion policies, an increasing portion of them settled in the country. This phenomenon triggered significant reactions among the Swiss population; through direct democracy, xenophobic movements attempted six times to introduce into the federal constitution dispositions limiting the number of foreigners in the country or restricting immigration policy. Through these attempts and the public debates

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2 (see <http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/fr/index/themen/01/01/key.html>).

3 The restrictive model of incorporation, and therefore the difficulty of being naturalized, can explain why residents of Switzerland comprise so many foreigners. (Koopmans et al., 2005).

4 Foreigners must have "*la volonté de s'intégrer*" [Press release of the Federal Office for Foreigners, March 8, 2002 [[http://www.auslaender.ch/news\\_info/pressemitteilungen/agesetz01\\_f.asp](http://www.auslaender.ch/news_info/pressemitteilungen/agesetz01_f.asp)]].

that followed, the question of foreigners became a political problem and remains so. Although all xenophobic popular initiatives were rejected by Swiss citizens, the ideas that they promoted had an impact on government's attitudes towards immigration. The underlying logic of Swiss consensual democracy entails that the federal government is very much concerned by the opinion of the minority that loses a popular vote (especially if a significant amount of voters is against the measure that has been accepted or refused). Therefore, even if a majority of the Swiss population voted against the radical solutions suggested by nationalist and xenophobic groups, general Swiss immigration policies can be qualified as restrictive and access to the national and political communities is based on an ethnic conception of citizenship (Kriesi, 1999), which is very reluctant to make space for the recognition of cultural differences.

The questions related to the Muslim presence, therefore, must be understood in relation to this historical tradition of restrictive access to citizenship for immigrants. Since the end of the 1990s, the Muslim population has experienced an increasing demographic, social and political visibility. Although their immigration is a quite recent phenomenon, in relatively few years Muslims have become the second largest religious group in Switzerland, behind Christians. The population of Muslims increased almost 20 times between 1970 and 2000 (from about 16,000 to 315,000), reaching in 2012 almost 5% of the overall residents of the country. This is explained by the war in the former Yugoslavia, which compelled many people from the region to reach Switzerland, where they had relatives, to benefit from temporary admission as refugees. While the presence of the first generation of immigrants (especially from Turkey and Kosovo) was considered temporary (because of their *guest worker* status), Muslims are nowadays permanently settled in Switzerland. They mainly come from three geographic locations: Turkey, the Balkans, and North Africa, the latter being only 6-7% of the Muslim population. Swiss Islam is therefore primarily European: according to a report of the Federal Council on the situation of Muslims in Switzerland (2013), only 10 percent have a passport from a non-European country. The Muslim population is also characterized by high social and ethnic heterogeneity. Moreover, the recent naturalization of the second and third generation of Muslim immigrants has highly increased the number of Muslims holding Swiss citizenship. These were less than 15% in 2000, and they increased to about 35% in 2012. This means that there are about 180,000 Muslims living in Switzerland who are full citizens. Islam and Muslims are therefore permanent features of Swiss society.

## Muslim Integration: Institutional Features

If the “term integration implies the idea of a process of give and take on both sides [and] the term assimilation suggests that the immigrants must do the adjusting” (Klausen, 2005: 10), it seems clear that Switzerland is following an assimilationist approach to handling the Muslim presence. The main narrative on the integration of Muslims, articulated by media and political actors, seems very compatible with what Brubaker (2001) called “the return of assimilation”. Although the term assimilation has been progressively eliminated from public debate for a decade, the actual and symbolic content of what is generally put under the label “integration” looks very similar to what is generally understood by assimilation. Foreigners are asked to adapt to Swiss democratic rules, to accept such rules, and to show their willingness to integrate (that means learning a national language, being financially autonomous, avoiding committing crimes, etc.). To put it differently, there is a both an implicit and explicit symbolic pressure for Muslims to conform to the dictum “*Switzerland? Love it or leave it!*” This is not a Swiss specificity, as it is possible to find similar public discourses in almost all European countries (see Deltombe, 2007; Poole, 2002; Parekh, 2008).

The case of Muslims is very interesting in apprehending the internal dynamics of Swiss multiculturalism and Swiss relations to alterity. In particular, it shows the weaknesses of the Swiss model of accommodation of non-territorialized forms of multiculturalism and a lack of active integration policies for cultural minorities.

The social visibility of Muslims is conversely related to their social and political resources. In Switzerland, Muslims are a weak group (Gianni and Giugni, 2014). At the social level, the Muslim presence has gained public visibility during the last decade. Nonetheless, besides a few weak national organizations and some locally strong associations, the group lacks political resources, both at the formal and the informal level. At the formal level, for instance, there are very few Muslim representatives in the local assemblies and none in the Federal parliament. At the informal level, Muslim leaders don’t have (besides some personal contacts) clear and sustained relationships with institutional actors (political parties, public authorities, etc.). Their ability to have an actual impact on decisions is almost irrelevant. Moreover, because of the organization of Swiss federalism, the cantons are in charge of the determination of their legal and political relations with religious communities. This means that there are significant differences in the way cantonal authorities deal with this question and, furthermore, that it is very difficult for Muslims to build umbrella organizations at the federal level. Contrary to the situation in other European countries, the Muslim population living in Switzerland is still principally constituted by foreigners (about 65%) of whom the average age

is quite young. This means that the overall majority of this population does not benefit from the political rights that might enable them to increasingly participate in the political realm.

The weakness of Muslim groups has not prevented the strong politicization of the Muslim issue in Switzerland. Several reasons can be mentioned to explain such a public relevance. Certainly, the effects of international situations and events have played a role in the negative representations attached to this population; but there are also internal factors. On the one hand, we note the progressively public visibility acquired by some (often Swiss citizens) Muslim religious and associational leaders voicing their willingness to be integrated into Swiss polity and society, not *despite*, but *with* their cultural particularities. This attitude is different from that of previous immigrant groups, which were mostly silent and publicly invisible. On the other hand, some matters oppose Muslims to local authorities (as, for instance, the wearing of headscarves, the possibility of having Muslim areas in public cemeteries, etc.), and the politicization of these issues by local political actors has contributed to creating a “Muslim problem” which has progressively become an important feature of the Swiss national political debate. According to several empirical analyses, since the beginning of the last decade, Muslims have increasingly received negative media attention and are often regarded with suspicion or as a threat to be managed (see Clavier, 2009; Ettinger and Imhof, 2011; Gianni, 2003, Gianni and Clavier, 2012). The banning of (new) minarets, which was accepted by a popular vote of Swiss citizens in November 2009, well illustrates such trends. The political campaign surrounding this vote led to a very emotional and harsh public debate about the Muslim presence in Switzerland. In particular, it was structured by narratives which constructed Islam in terms of fear, distrust, hostility, and as incompatible with democratic values. In sum, Muslims have become the main figure of otherness in the Swiss debate; the “foreigner” is becoming the Muslim. Feddersen (2015) shows that Muslims living in Switzerland were not perceived as a distinct group until the beginning of the new millennium; they were classified according to their country of origin, and thus identified for example as Bosnians or Turks. In the last decade, Muslims living in Switzerland are no longer perceived according to their nationality, but according to their religious belonging. This means that Muslim immigrants who were once primarily foreigners became “Muslim” through the politicization of this group that has occurred since 2001.

One of the recurrent topics in the public debate concerns Muslims’ capacity to accept democratic norms and liberal values, such as, for instance, equality between men and women (Parini, Gianni and Clavier, 2013). In particular, Muslims are constructed as being unable and/or unwilling to contain their religious identity in the private sphere, claiming therefore for a public recognition of their faith and

its practical implications. According to the Swiss People's Party and a majority of Swiss citizens, such a recognition would entail a redrawing of the boundaries between the public and the private spheres, and such a redrawing would entail important dangers for the stability, values, and practices of Swiss liberal democracy and, more generally, for Swiss culture. The recognition of Muslim values and practices – the argument goes – would entail a slippery slope dynamic leading to the colonization by cultural difference of the public space and institutions, and hence would be conducive to social and political instability in an already complex (because of its territorialized multiculturalism) and fragile society. Instead of being recognized, Muslims are expected to accept, to adapt, and to conform to Swiss values and norms, and possibly to be, as previous generations of immigrants, the most invisible in the social and public sphere. Unsurprisingly, Muslims are often seen as being one of the most difficult groups to integrate because of their (supposed) overwhelming conception of religion. Conversely, EU and EFTA citizens are considered to be *culturally close* to Swiss values and easy to integrate into Swiss society (Ruedin and D'Amato, 2015).

What is interesting to note is that these social representations are not supported by clear empirical evidence. First, the number of Muslim associations having asked for recognition by the State is very low, and almost none has obtained such recognition (Monnot, 2013). Second, Muslim associations generally do not ask for an institutionally special treatment of Islam; at most, they ask for equal treatment with other religious groups. Third, although the Muslim population is globally well integrated, there has been over the last decade an exponential politicization of this minority in public discourse (Ruedin and D'Amato 2015). Such politicization has been (and is) mainly driven by electoral reasons: the Swiss People's Party (SVP), the party that launched and supported the popular initiative for the banning of minarets, is very successful in mobilizing voters' support for issues pertaining to immigration, foreign policy and integration, in particular concerning Muslims. During these votes, the SVP achieved support well beyond its normal electoral share. This means that the perception that Muslims are a problem for Swiss society is not only shared by right-wing supporters, but also—although for different reasons—by voters at the center and the left. Besides the Swiss People's Party, almost all political parties have outlined measures aimed at addressing some issues related to Muslims (headscarves at school, cemeteries, etc.). Nonetheless, the SVP remains the major actor politicizing Islam and Muslims. The cantonal sections of the party regularly problematize and launch popular initiatives against (supposedly) Islamic practices and Muslims' visibility. Two examples are worthy of being mentioned: the first is the initiative launched in the Canton of Valais stipulating that children cannot wear the headscarf in public schools. This initiative calls into question the strategy of

the pragmatic and case by case accommodation of the cultural and religious that has historically been followed by Swiss institutions. The second case exemplifies the politicization of Islam by the SVP: the Faculty of Theology of the University of Freiburg, which is traditionally Catholic, has very recently created the *Swiss Centre for Islam and Society* (Centre Suisse Islam et Société), whose purpose is to promote cultural and theological exchanges between Muslims and non-Muslims. In particular, one of the purposes of the Centre is to provide complementary training on Swiss culture, values, and practices to imams practicing in Switzerland, so as to make them more aware of the social context in which they will have to function. The cantonal section of the SVP has launched a popular initiative against this Centre and succeeded in collecting the required signatures (6000 required; more than 9000 were collected). The initiative, which will be voted on in the near future, aims at inscribing in the Cantonal constitution that the creation of such a centre is forbidden. What is striking about this case is the fact that the aims of the Centre should be the same ones fostered by the SVP; namely, a better integration of Muslims in Switzerland and the local training of imams in order to avoid the arrival of imams from foreign countries who are not able to understand the languages or the values predominant in Switzerland. This centre provides Islam with visibility and academic recognition; this is what the SVP wants to avoid.

## **Muslim Integration: Individual Aspects**

More generally, the politicization of the Muslim presence is linked to a discursive (re)affirmation of (supposedly) authentic Swiss cultural and democratic values which has led to a clear binary construction of the alterity at stake, in this case Muslims. Such an alterity has been built on the social construction and representation of what can be called a “generalized Muslim” (van den Brink, 2007), namely, one portrayed as possessing given and fixed cultural-religious attributes, as being deeply opposed to the ethos of democracy and gender equality, as being a threat to liberal norms, and, more generally, as being a problem for democracy because of his, and not her, religious radicalism. In other words, through a discourse of essentialization, Muslims have been depicted as being driven by a (religious) conception of the good which strictly determines their behaviors, political culture, and capacities of integration.

Are these representations sound? Has public discourse an actual impact on personal attitudes and policy outcomes (Ettinger and Imhof, 2011, 37; Mader and Schinzel, 2012, 128-129)? As far as we know and on the basis of the empirical research that we conducted, the answer to these questions is negative.

Qualitative (Gianni et al., 2005) and quantitative (Gianni, Giugni, and Michel, 2015) research shows that the main representations and perceptions that Muslims living in Switzerland have about citizenship or integration are the following. First, regarding citizenship, contrary to what is often asserted in the public debate, Muslim respondents conceive of citizenship in a very passive and apolitical way.<sup>5</sup> For the question “in your view, what does it mean to be a citizen and/or a good citizen?”, the answers emphasised: (a) a very pragmatic understanding of citizenship, related mainly to its practical advantages (passport for travelling easily to other countries, residence permit, etc.); (b) a conception of citizenship as strict adaptation to dominant social, legal, and political norms; and (c) an *apolitical* representation of citizenship, conceived only as a status providing rights and duties to which one must conform. In other words, citizenship is not perceived—as one would expect from individuals who, in part, have been socialized in the Swiss highly participatory democratic system—as a status providing the resources enabling Muslims to act politically in order to modify some laws according to their interests or faith; instead, it is seen as the final step in the adaptation process (or the acculturation process) to Swiss dominant norms. As one respondent sums it up: “a good citizen follows the rules, pay taxes, and sorts the garbage”. Globally, a general trend can be observed: when questions about integration or citizenship are at stake, the large majority of respondents use expressions such as “respect for norms” or “following and respecting the rules”. Not exactly the attitude we may expect from individuals willing to overturn democratic institutions.

But more importantly, what matters about these results is that they show the extent to which the representations attached to Muslims before and during the campaign about minarets were empirically misleading. In fact, these representations constructed Muslims as being driven by religious values and as behaving according to a hidden political agenda, while the individuals interviewed expressed exactly the opposite idea. Such an interpretation has been corroborated by quantitative research based on data collected in 2009 (between 4–6 months before the vote on minarets). This showed that, first, a very high proportion of Muslim respondents considers that in order to be integrated in Switzerland, Muslims should obey the law (on a 0–10 scale, the mean of the Muslims respondents is at 9.5); second, Muslims consider themselves as well integrated in Switzerland (on a 0–10 scale, the average is 8); third, Muslims living in Switzerland express a higher degree of attachment to Switzerland than to other Muslims; fourth, Muslims have a score of trust in institutions (such as the government, the parliament, and the judicial

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5 It is important to recall that, at the time when these interviews were collected, 85% of Muslims were not Swiss citizens.

system) which is higher than the score of native Swiss respondents; fifth, Muslims participate politically less than Swiss citizens; sixth, Muslims do not consider the opinion of imams when political issues are at stake; imams' influence, when considered, concerns mostly questions pertaining to family issues; finally, the Swiss model of integration is very much valued (see Gianni, Giugni and Michel, 2015).

These data do not entail that Switzerland is perceived as being heaven by Muslim residents. For instance, about 1/3 of the respondents have felt discriminated against at least once; about 60% of them consider that Islam/Muslims should be more recognized by Swiss authorities, for instance by implementing some special rights or some exemptions from existing laws. Moreover, from the analysis of the answers provided by 300 non-Muslim Swiss citizens, it emerges that a significant percentage of the latter have quite negative perceptions of Muslims. For instance, they indicate a low degree of trust towards mosques and Muslim associations (an average of 4 on a 0-10 scale) and a relatively high proportion of them (between 13 and 29% depending on the question) are not happy to enter into relations with Muslims. In addition, they mostly defend an assimilationist and strongly secularist conception of the State and of public space when it comes to the accommodation of Islam.

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## 2 Assessing integration and citizenship in Switzerland

Empirical research shows that, contrary to what is often voiced by right-wing political actors, who depict them as increasingly politicized and therefore as a potential threat to internal security and political stability, “ordinary” Muslims settled in Switzerland globally accept and are willing to adapt to the general democratic rules. This does not mean that forms of radical and political Islam do not exist; but—at least until now—there is no urgent and clear problem posed by Muslims in the country and in comparative terms, for instance, the number of jihadists having left the country to enrol in ISIS is very low compared to other European countries. So why are Muslims represented as an existential problem for Swiss society?

In my view, the high social and political relevance of the Muslim presence is dependent on internal factors, namely, the public philosophy of citizenship and integration (Favell, 2001) that characterizes the Swiss model of inclusion of immigrants and the Swiss *ethos* about foreigners.

The categories of integration and citizenship are at the core of the debates on the accommodation of culturally plural (or multicultural) societies. They are very controversial categories because of their essentially contested nature, in the sense that they are constituted by both empirical and normative dimensions whose defi-

nitions are too controversial and plural to allow for the determination of a unique and commonly accepted meaning. In other words, debates on integration and citizenship are dependent on specific historical traditions about state building, are by definition politically conflictual, are ultimately open-ended, and raise deep normative issues. Democratic states do not have a common philosophy of integration and citizenship; different models of citizenship exist (see Held, 2006), as well as several understandings of social and political integration. In some countries, integration is conceived as being radically different from assimilation; in others, integration seems to be a more rhetorical notion hiding a classical assimilative approach to the incorporation of foreigners. With regard to democratic citizenship, these two ways of conceiving integration are certainly not equivalent. On the one hand, they raise different implications in terms of right, duties and political agency; on the other hand, they refer to different ideas about how a multicultural society should be constituted.

As Alejandro (1993, 3) asserts, citizenship belongs “to the realm of the symbolic; that is, a space of symbols that previous generations constructed as well as a domain which is always in a process of reconstitution and whose meaning the state seeks to define”. As a symbolic construct, citizenship is marked by the sociological processes underlying logics of identity (see also Young, 1990). In particular, the cultural values and attributes embedded in the institution of citizenship constitute the symbolic standard determining who is part of a political community, who is not, who should be and who should not, how one has to behave as a citizen and how one should behave in order to become a citizen. According to Alejandro “citizenship is a sign of membership, while some individuals may feel excluded from crucial descriptions and purposes of their society. Citizenship suggests a shared identity, while some citizens do not fit into that identity or may want to abjure from its implications”. In other words, citizenship is not just a set of rights and duties, but also an identity (Joppke, 2007). Integration, therefore, is not just a question of social, civil, and political rights and of opportunities; it is also strongly related to the acceptance by immigrants of the main cultural values of the host society. The degree of such an acceptance depends on the requirements embedded in the philosophy of integration, namely the country’s ethos providing a symbolic meaning and an institutional structure for the incorporation of aliens. This explains why citizenship is a key category to understand and assess dynamics in multicultural societies. On the one hand, it establishes cultural boundaries and forms of otherness; on the other, it is the primary locus where inter-subjective recognition and integration of alternative representations of the social and political community can take place. Therefore, citizenship can be both a drag on the integration of others, and a transformative category for power relations between citizens and non-citizens.

The construction of Muslims as a threat to the democratic order raises crucial questions regarding the possibilities offered to them to function as citizens. The affirmation of the superiority of some dominant cultural norms and the injunction to conform to them expresses a *defensive* conception of citizenship that codes as *offensive* claims and practices that don't easily fit within it. Besides the fact that it creates the opposition between "good" and "bad" citizens, the *thickness* of such a model of citizenship entails a progressive *de-politicization of citizenship* as a category of practice; this leads to a lack of reflection on the *political* means to foster the integration of the members of minority groups into the polity, in particular when it concerns actual participation in the definition of new or revised common values.

The overly controversial presence of Muslims in Europe raises a very harsh debate over the scope, contents, and aims of integration policy and of citizenship and integration. Increasingly, the injunction to adjust to common norms is required or presented as being necessary to preclude the loss of democratic values. Switzerland is not an exception. Muslims in Switzerland are required to adapt to Swiss norms and values and, as shown earlier, several legal acts compel Muslims to renounce to some behaviours.

The problem with the pressure for a unilateral adjustment to (supposedly) Swiss values put on Muslims is that it calls into question their social and political agency. If political and social integration means to be part of and to contribute to a common collective project, then this entails that Muslims—as all citizens—should have the symbolic and material resources to participate in this dynamic. This means that they should be considered and recognized as full participants in the society, and therefore as moral equals. Recognition is a very important resource for figuring out a fair accommodation to multicultural societies (Taylor, 1994; Kymlicka, 1995), for the lack of recognition of the social existence of a group can be more threatening for the stability of liberal institutions than recognition. As Galeotti (1993, 597) convincingly asserts, "If a social difference is denied public visibility and legitimacy in the polity, the group associated with it inevitably bears social stigmata". This obviously does not mean that all Muslims' or Muslim organizations' demands on public authorities should be accepted; some practices and norms are more compatible to democratic practices than other. But still, there should be a democratic process stipulating which values or practices should be accepted or amended in a society. This process entails a strong conception of democratic citizenship (Barber, 1984).

Interestingly enough, the Swiss democratic model is built on such a thick and exigent conception of citizenship. The logic of integration as adaptation which is generally referred to in debates about about the integration and the accommoda-

tion of Muslims calls into question some of the basic shared principles on which Swiss democracy is built, for instance the commitment to compromise, a strong conception of democracy, and the idea that values are not *external* to politics, but rather the product of political participation and deliberation (Barber, 1984). There is a republican stance in Swiss political culture and in the Swiss model of citizenship that offers the institutional and cognitive resources to think of *processual means* to foster forms of integration built on common participation in the resolution of conflicting issues. This institutional thinking works when conflicts between territorialized cultural minorities are at stake; but this is not the case for the accommodation of non-territorialized minorities, and certainly not for Muslims.

As in other European countries, Swiss public opinion has not yet realized that the Muslim presence is no more temporary, but permanent. The Swiss model of incorporation of immigrants has long functioned on the basis of the idea that immigrants were mostly a temporary work force, so that immigrants would ultimately go back home. This is obviously not the case anymore. Muslims are part of the religious and cultural landscape of contemporary European countries and have to be conceived of and treated as full citizens and recognized as moral equals. The Swiss case shows that, although very democratic, the treatment of the Muslim minority is not always up to the standards of what democratic citizenship requires. To find fairer and more democratic ways to cope with Muslims is not just a moral necessity; it is also a way to defend and develop democratic institutions.

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# Muslim as Minorities

## New Identity Challenges for Europe

Samim Akgönül

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### Introduction

Today Muslims in Europe are perceived as being a unique and homogeneous population all sharing the same needs and claiming the same rights. Actually, it is only an active part of Muslim communities that are visible and thus seen.

During the last two decades, questions concerning Muslim communities in Europe have been high on the agendas of both European public opinion and academic researchers. The on-going public and political debate has brought scholars to prominence through research on this question. Thus, since the end of 1980s, “Muslims in Europe” has become one of the main topics debated in the social and political sciences.

The interest in Muslim communities in Western and Eastern Europe has diverse roots. In Western Europe, Muslims are still seen by public opinion as “migrants”, *i.e.* foreigners. In Eastern Europe, on the other hand, they constitute old minorities. In both parts of Europe, however, the question has recently gained in interest.

There are two main reasons for this increasing interest. It is related, on the one side, to the “image” of Muslims and Islam arising from by violent actions linked to *Islam*. The events of September 11, 2001 in New York and Washington, and Pennsylvania; the terrorist attacks such as those in Madrid and London; the assassination of Theo Van Gogh in Amsterdam in November 2004; the cartoon crisis in Denmark in September 2005; and the Charlie Hebdo killings: all created a heavy climate in which the perception of Muslims, in the European view, became assimilated to “danger”.

However, the main reason for the need to understand these Muslim communities is not terrorist attacks. The end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have witnessed the birth of a new generation of European Muslims. These Muslims were born on European soil and have been socialized and educated in Western European countries. Despite a discourse on communitarianism, these new generations are in strong interaction with the majority society and consequently their concerns are “European”. The debates about European Islam show that the subjects that pervade European public opinion, also find their place on the agenda of young Muslim intellectuals who want to create a European identity in conformity with Muslim norms, together with an Islamic identity in conformity with European values.

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## Which Europe?

The title of this article contains three terms and all three are problematic. If we start at the end, we must first examine the concept of Europe. What kind of Europe are we talking about? Is Europe a “civilizational”, political, institutional or geographic entity? Are we talking about Europe of the Council of Europe with its 47 members from Iceland to Russia through Turkey and Eastern Europe, or about Europe of the European Union, with its 28 members excluding not only Turkey but also other European “Muslim” countries as Bosnia or Albania?

It is clear that even if we take the institutional Europe *sensu stricto*, in other words, the EU-28, there is a large sociological, legal and economic disparity between Muslim communities in Western Europe and those in Eastern Europe.

Above all, in Eastern Europe, Muslim communities have a “traditional presence” as relics of the multi-religious empires that were Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empire. Therefore, these Muslims are not considered aliens in the countries where they live, especially since their members often, if not always, hold the citizenship of the country and a number of these communities are legally recognized as minorities. The best examples are the Muslim minority in Bulgaria and that of Greece, both members of the European Union. Although the presence of these minorities is still complex within the Bulgarian and Greek definitions of “nation”, they have a legitimacy of existence in the eyes of public opinion and politicians and may not, except in the case of war, be threatened with expulsion!

Things are different in Western Europe, where the presence of Muslims is considered, rightly or wrongly, as the result of migration. Therefore, these Muslims are still perceived as foreign elements and therefore not part of the legitimate society. They are at best a “question” for the states, if not a “problem.” This confusion

between Muslim communities and migrations is now obsolete since the vast majority of Muslims living in countries such as Britain, France, the Netherlands and Belgium, were not only born in the country of residence and socialized in these countries, but in addition, they hold the citizenship of these countries. Therefore, these groups cannot be considered migrants or foreigners. However, there is also a difficulty in qualifying them as “minorities” as we shall see below.

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## Who are these Muslims?

The second problematic concept in the title of this paper is “Muslims”. The problem of defining Muslims in Europe stems from two facts.

Firstly: even though some European countries have a long history of Muslim presence, Muslims in Europe are still “minority groups”, numerically speaking, which are being and have been described mainly by the *majorities*. Legally speaking, among the Muslims in Europe, some groups can be defined as “minorities”, while others cannot.

Secondly: concepts such as identity, ethnicity, religion, culture and nationality are ambiguous and dependent on relational issues. In addition, these are dynamic concepts vertically (in time) and horizontally (in different contexts). Particularly, when it comes to describe minority groups, it is difficult, if not impossible, to describe them wholly adequately, because the very wish to do so relates to the asymmetrical power relationship between the majority and the minority.

In short: it is empirically relevant for scholars to recognize the fact that the way that we describe Muslim minority groups in Europe does not necessarily correspond with how these groups think about and understand themselves – nor do they necessarily think about themselves primarily as ‘Muslims’ rather they might have other intertwining categories to describe themselves

When majorities define (and thereby identify) ‘Muslims’ in Europe, this expresses their categorization of ‘a group’ that can be distinguished from other groups by virtue of its ‘Muslimness’, but naturally, all Muslims are not ‘Muslims’, religiously speaking. Here, the category of Muslim means “belonging” and has nothing to do with belief or Muslim behaviour.<sup>1</sup> Some, but not all, of the members of the minority groups of ‘Muslims’ fit into the scholarly understanding of what it means to be a ‘Muslim’ and belong to a group of which we define as ‘Muslims’. Some ‘Muslims’ might not think about themselves as distinctly ‘Muslim’ but rath-

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1 For the Theory of three “B” see Akgönül Samim, *The Minority Concept in the Turkish Context, Practices and Perceptions in Turkey, Greece and France*, Leiden, Brill, 2013.

er in ethnic, national or cultural terms or, for example, in a mixture of ethnic and religious terms while others entirely identify themselves as ‘Muslims’ and actively articulate the Muslim identity as separate from their ethnic/national identity.

Another central issue is defining Muslims in (oppositional?) categories of ‘practicing/observing Muslims’ vs. ‘cultural/nominal’ Muslims because this can also vary a great deal depending on the specific context. The categories themselves are ambivalent because they are often used as binary opposites and as such, used politically to distinguish between ‘good’ (‘non-practicing and therefore secular and integrated/assimilated’) and ‘bad’ (‘practicing therefore fundamentalist’) Muslims.

When it comes to describing Muslims, it is relevant not to make matters of practice the only standard description because it is possible to self-identify strongly as a ‘Muslim’ while not observing the fast or participating in any Islamic rituals. Although many Muslims will be adequately described as either ‘practicing’ or ‘cultural’, this does not mean that matters of practice do not necessarily involve self-identification as a Muslim.

The self-identification as ‘Muslim’ can correlate with other issues than the level of religious observance. It can express attitudes towards the majority; other ethnic and national groups and it can be related to gaining minority rights as a ‘group’. Likewise, we cannot presume that the Muslim identity is equally important in all situations. A so called ‘practicing Muslim’ or a ‘cultural Muslim’ is not confined to being *just that* at all times – depending on the context, it can be relevant for a cultural Muslim to accentuate his or her religious identity while a practicing Muslim might choose to tone down his or her religious identity or *vice versa*.

And above all: ‘Muslims’ have other identities as mothers, fathers, students, or professional identities, Turks, Tartars and Lebanese, Lithuanian, British, etc. which are not necessarily detached, i.e. self-understood separately from being ‘Muslims’ but might very well be understood as intrinsic elements of what it means to be ‘Muslim’.

To be Muslim can be equivalent to being Turk or Arab. In the halal business, some halal products are only ethnic products or everyday life objects. In France one can buy “halal salt”, i.e. from Turkey! Particularly in Western Europe where some of the third and fourth generation immigrants with Muslim background are articulating senses of global Islam and the Muslim *umma*, it is important to constantly evaluate and check the true nature and salience of the categories which we use to describe these groups.

In addition to these points, the concept of “Muslims” is covering a very large and differentiated context, which have very different histories, populations, diverse political systems and thereby also very different ways of counting or not counting ‘Muslims’. In some countries, such as Denmark and France, it is illegal to register

people with regard to their religion while in other countries it is voluntary for people to register as 'Muslims' for the national census.

All this does not mean that Muslim groups are vague and indefinable concepts, which can only be grasped theoretically, but only that one needs to demarcate very carefully what one means, when describing Muslims:

1. Definitions of any group imply categorizations *per se* which is problematic when studying heterogenic (minority) groups—including problems concerning insider/outsider perspectives (categorization vs. self-identification).
2. Problems with equating 'practice' and Muslim identity.
3. Empirical complex situation(s) with regard to differentiated European national states
4. Many studies on minority groups are conducted by majorities. This problem of representation can be reduced (but never eliminated) when the majorities and scholars **a**) keep the minorities' perspectives (i.e. self-understandings) in mind when describing them and **b**) reflect critically upon that majority scholars are involved in creating the minorities and representations hereof with whatever that involves (politically, ethically etc.).

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## What is a minority?

Finally, the third concept used in the title is, perhaps, the most difficult one because there is not a single universal definition of the "minority"

It is very difficult to give a unanimous definition of a minority, in order to apply (or not) to the case of Muslims in Europe. Legal instruments have preferred not to give exhaustive definitions in order to not exclude any particular community.

The concept of religious minority is the root of the minority concept, insofar as relations between minorities / majorities are mainly based on the perception of otherness—the religious affiliation being the first since Roman times, and on the principle of domination—the monarchs of the Middle Ages imposing their religion on their subjects. Thus, the first minorities are religious and the first feelings of otherness are based on religious behaviour. Therefore, we can relate the concept of a religious minority in a political sense, to the existence of a particular religious "organization". This faith-based organization (and I use that term in its most basic definition, i.e., the mobilization of collective actors who tend to a self-regulating religious group where people feel they have a common religion) is therefore a response on the part of the minority to the majority. The structure i. e., the religious organization adopted by the minority, is the only way to exist within the situation

of a majority religion. In this case the majority religion is considered dangerous, oppressive, theologically misguided, and expansionist.

Thus, a situation of permanent rivalry rather than pluralism occurs—interspersed with temporary alliances—not only between the majority and the Muslim minority, but also between different religious minorities (and different Muslim groups) competing for legitimacy. In order to highlight this sense of otherness and the resulting rivalry, we must focus on the question of the definition of a minority and a majority. Unfortunately, this is an endless debate, and no definition can satisfy each particular case.

The concept of Muslim minority may cover two areas: From a sociological perspective, a minority is a community of individuals possessing a common sense of belonging. Their number is less than another larger community that possesses another sense of belonging. They are socially persecuted, or at least they believe this to be so.

In the wider context, most minorities have two “objective” qualities: language and faith as the two determinants of a community identity. Serge Moscovici’s “minorité nomique”<sup>2</sup> strives to preserve these two indispensable pillars of its identity at all costs. However, in the case of minorities under the sovereignty of another culture, preserving the native language requires great effort. This is especially difficult in modern societies, where the interaction between the minority and the majority is continuous. Therefore, the minority faith, being the second pillar of the community, is prioritized as it is easier to transfer, facilitates detachment from the rest of the society and enclosure within itself, and is more discursive. The definition of the religious minority considers this second pillar to be the one that prevents the adoption of the majority culture. Based on Capotorti’s timeless definition,<sup>3</sup> the concept of minority in general and religious minority in particular may be articulated as follows:

- a) **Being different from the majority** both by belonging to a different group and engaging in different behaviour. Contemporary documents describe these “differences” as ethnic, religious and linguistic in nature. Based on this, a minority can be defined as a subgroup surrounded by a geographically larger group (na-

2 Serge Moscovici, *La Psychologie des minorités actives*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996.

3 Francesco Capotorti, *Study on the Rights of Persons Belonging to Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities*, Nations-Unies, 1979.

tion/society/community) where members of the subgroup possess qualities that are different from the surrounding larger group.<sup>4</sup>

- b) **Being fewer in number** within the borders of a country recognized as a state. It is not important whether the minority is regionally a majority in any part of the country. While easily applicable in the case of unitary nation-states, this criterion is harder to apply in the federal case, and has a number of inherent problems. Nevertheless, almost all bilateral and multilateral international documents require a minority to reach a certain level of concentration in a given geographical region without prescribing specific numbers or percentages in order for it to benefit from specific rights. Since modern states grant the freedom of worship to all citizens without regard for geographical concentration, these specific rights are usually centred on language.
- c) **Not being culturally dominant.** The concept of dominance requires definition. “Dominant majority” and “oppressed minority” carry different meanings in American and European sociology.<sup>5</sup> While American sociology uses the term “minority” for all groups that feel oppressed by one or more dominant majorities by any means, the same term is used in Europe for groups that demonstrate “objective” differences that give rise to discrimination. The relations between being oppressed and being dominant are best explained in Bourdieu’s work.<sup>6</sup> Regardless of the field of study, including “minorities,” the workings of the society are always based on the structural mechanisms of competition and dominance. These mechanisms are consciously or unconsciously reproduced by individuals and groups that form part of the socialization process, and become *habitus* that are transferred by schools and the family in particular.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, dominance constitutes one of the primary criteria for being in the minority. As a result, a dominant religion cannot be construed as a minority religion even if its followers are regionally minor in number.
- d) **Being citizens of the state in question.** If the individuals forming a group are not citizens, they are classified as “aliens.” Although the measure of citizenship is unanimously accepted from a legal perspective, it has some problems in

4 Henry Fairchild (ed.), *Dictionary of Sociology*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1944, 134.

5 Charles Marden, *Minorities in American Society*. New York: American Book Co., 1952, 26.

6 Laurent Mucchielli, “Pierre Bourdieu et le changement social”, in *Alternatives économiques*, 175, 1999, pp. 64-67.

7 Pierre Bourdieu, Jean-Claude Passeron, *La reproduction. Éléments pour une théorie du système d’enseignement*. Paris: Minuit, 1970, 19.

practice. From a sociological point of view, there are many communities that cannot benefit from rights granted to minorities despite possessing all qualities describing a minority. Groups that constitute sociological minorities but are not citizens of the state they live in may be the result of various historical, political and sociological occurrences. There are three frequent cases: Changes of state not accompanied by the summary exile or exchange of a population, as in former Yugoslavia;<sup>8</sup> forced population exchanges; and, more recently, immigration. Considering this last point, while there frequently is a legal distinction between citizens and aliens in the same immigrant communities in Europe, this distinction does not exist from a sociological perspective. From that perspective, even if a group that holds a faith different from the majority is not naturalized within the state it lives in, it should still be considered a religious minority. In practice, citizens and aliens within the same immigrant community view themselves as a part of one and the same community, and share places of worship.

- e) A fifth and “subjective” measure must be added to the above four “objective” criteria: The presence of **minority consciousness**. “As social classes may not exist without class consciousness, minorities cannot exist without minority consciousness.”<sup>9</sup> This consciousness may become manifest, or sometimes manufactured, by associating with a group. Sometimes, this association is dictated by the majority. In both cases, the religious minority is aware that it is a minority. Awareness of this special situation manifests itself in various ways during the identity building process. The majority that dominates this process may strive to disregard the ramifications of this consciousness or to prevent it from becoming manifest. Other countries, where the minority religion in another country is in the majority, make efforts to preserve or even encourage this consciousness. For example, influential Islamic countries strive to protect and strengthen Islam that is in minority in non-Islamic countries, while countries where Catholicism is in the majority worry about the situation of minority Catholics in Muslim countries.

8 Emmanuel Decaux, Allain Pellet (ed.), *Nationalité, minorités et succession d'États en Europe de l'Est*, Paris: Montchrestien, 1996.

9 Baskın Oran, *Türkiye'de Azınlıklar, Kavramlar, Teori, Lozan, İç Mevzuat, İçtihat, Uygulama*, İstanbul: İletişim, 2005, 26.

## Conclusion

Analysis of the three concepts in this article is clear. There is no Muslim minority in Europe. There are groups that identify themselves as such but also identify themselves as Turks, Arabs, Bosnians—and as women and men, and as practitioners and non-practitioners ... and as Shia or Sunni, etc. These groups are often sociological minorities but are rarely legally recognized as such. There are also major differences in the situation in Western Europe and Eastern Europe but also large differences in status between countries such as Britain or France. Therefore, the categorization of “Muslims” in Europe is useful for understanding the subject, but requires deconstruction of the category when undertaking socio-political and historical analysis.

My last conclusion is less clear: The majority imprisons the minority in its most important difference, and rejects the individualisation of its members. As a reaction, the minority tends to protect that aspect of its identity considered under threat and danger. Nowadays, at a discursive level, that is the situation of Muslims in Europe. Actually, in social life, Muslims are not only Muslims. They are women or men, young or old, socialists or nationalists. They are Sunnis, Shi’as, or Alevi, believers or non-believers, conservatives or secularists. They have, like all people, multiple identities and multiple belongings. However, because they feel attacked on the basis of their muslimness, they therefore become defensive about this muslimness. In that sense, yes, there is a Muslim minority in Europe.

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# Muslims and Austro-European Values

Minela Salkic Joldo

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## Introduction

Due to recent developments, including a media focus on the Muslim presence and several terrorist attacks, it is important to discuss both the issue of what it means for Muslims to live in a pluralistic society and how to preserve and promote a commitment to peaceful and meaningful coexistence among the people of our diverse society in Austria. For years, rather for decades, several questions have been posed: Who are Muslims and can others live with them? What value system is their religion based on, and how much do these ideals differ from the values of others?

This chapter deals with the question of Austro-European values and how much they differ from Islamic values. This will further be considered in terms of the place of moral education within the Austrian educational system.

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## Historical and statistical background

In order to understand why this topic is that important for Austria and its Muslims, I will introduce some historical and statistical facts. One of the most crucial facts is that Muslims in Austria represent the country's largest religious minority. At the same time they have become one of the most challenging communities for Austrian society and the government. Muslims have had a long history in Europe and especially in Austria and due to this fact most of them can no longer be considered immigrants. They were born and grew up in Austria – Austria is their home.

Even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Muslims were a visible part of Austria (Schmied 2005). With the occupation of Bosnia in 1908, the Austrian monarchy gained half a million Muslim citizens. In 1912, their status was regulated by the official recognition of its new Islamic minority by adopting the so-called “Bill of Islam” (see Bundespressdienst Österreich 2007).

The Bosnian scholar, Smail Balic, played a significant role in this context. In the 1960s Balic induced a “Muslims Social Service” in Vienna (Kizilkaya & El Hadad 2012, 8). He worked many years on establishing a recognized religious community and in 1971 submitted application to the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture. The processing took several years until finally in 1979 the Ministry approved his demand. This is how today’s Islamic Community in Austria came into being.

According to the census of 2001, 338,988 persons declared themselves to be Muslim (Statistik Austria 2002). Based on legislation of 2006 the traditional census was replaced by a register-based census. Accordingly, the census of 2001 was the last census in which data about the religious affiliation of citizens was collected. As the data on religious affiliation were not collected in the course of the 2011 census, it is necessary for other factors such as the nationality or the birthplace of Muslims to be assessed in determining religious affiliation. A further difficulty lies in calculating the number of Muslims holding Austrian citizenship, since their number can only be partially extrapolated through naturalization after their previous citizenship. In addition, the number of converts to Islam remains unknown. According to calculations made in 2012, the number of Muslims had increased to 573,867, which constitutes 6.8% of the total population (Kizilkaya & El Hadad 2012, 8).

Muslims’ historical background, legal establishment, and large numbers in Austria show how important it is to resolve the question of shared values. But what exactly are values?

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## Values

The term ‘value’ is used every day by diverse persons in different contexts. Universal values such as freedom, equality and others are employed, but these definitions are superficial and are interpreted by people through the lens of their culture, tradition and religion.

The question of the origin of values emerged towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Joas 1999, 37). The usage of the term ‘value’ beyond its meaning in the context of economics arose at this time. Existing conceptual historical studies agree that the current term ‘value’ was derived from economic life, from the field of economic

sciences in the 18<sup>th</sup> century via philosophy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and from there to the cultural and social sciences and public discourse of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Hence values are not considered to be merely general goals that govern people's actions in several areas in life. Rather, values are what is absolute and worth striving for. Meulemann (1996, 26) calls them the "ideas of what is desirable", but these are not merely requirements of individuals, but what the collectivity agrees to perceive as being of value and what has been fixed in tradition for generations.

## **a Austro-European Values**

The European Union sees itself as a community of values, and this is deeply rooted in its constitution, which declares that "the European Union remains even after the entry-into-force of the Constitution a supranational integration community of its own kind as well as a special community of law and values" (Läufer 2005, 15).

The EU Constitution explains the character of the European Union as a legal community and community of values through the incorporation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, as being significantly enhanced through subjective and objective performance guarantees of fundamental rights based on the values of the Union (Läufer, 2005, 15). In addition, the EU has succeeded in enshrining in the Constitution the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe, and also the inviolable and inalienable rights of the people to guarantee and protect them. Equally important is the establishment of the guiding principles of freedom, democracy, equality and constitutionality as universal values (Läufer, 2005). Human dignity, the right to life and integrity, as well as the prohibition of torture and slavery are part of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, since December 2009 legally binding for all members of the EU.

Promoting these values and imparting these to immigrants is the responsibility of the state. The process of integration in Austria is built on the similarities of the values of the majority society and those of the immigrants. Austria bases integration on universally applicable common values that seem to connect all people. It is believed that integration cannot be achieved without common principles and values. For this reason, Austria has ordered the formulation and articulation of these principles and values.

Human dignity is the basis of the Austrian Constitution as well as the "basis of our social life" (Bundesministerium für Inneres, 2013, 9). Austria lists six principles and eighteen values which are inevitable for integration and human dignity.

These principles comprise conceptions of freedom, the constitutional state, democracy, republic, federalism and the separation of powers. These principles are

enhanced by three values, which are considered important for harmonious coexistence among the people of a pluralistic society (Bundesministerium für Inneres 2013, 9).

Rather than elaborating all major Austrian principles and values, I will focus on the following two very crucial ones: freedom and federalism.

In order to establish freedom as a principle, values such as self-determination, responsibility for self and others, self-discipline, as well as the opportunity for self-realization are considered fundamental. All people in Austria enjoy the personal freedom to determine their own needs autonomously; they can legally determine as individuals the way they want to behave, their lifestyles, careers or religions. Self-determination also requires a lot of responsibility towards others and their freedoms, which should be as important as one's own. Hence it is necessary to maintain self-discipline regarding one's own needs and desires.

Due to Austria's history of expansion and today's mobility, many people who live in Austria are diverse in their cultures, traditions and religions. To ensure peaceful coexistence, Austria further needs a principle of federalism. Federalism means the preservation of the greater community through personal responsibility and performance (Bundesministerium für Inneres 2013). In this case, federalism may be associated with values such as diversity, personal responsibility and accomplishment.

## **b Islamic Values**

Values have an important place in philosophy, in this case in Islamic Philosophy and Islamic Ethics. Majid Fakhry (1991) distinguishes two stages in the foundational phase of Islamic ethics that are built on one another in a chronological order. The first phase is the adoption of principles from the Qur'an and the Prophetic traditions. The second phase, emerged as values derived from various 'foreign' traditions of ethical reflection were integrated in 'Islamic ethics' (*akhlaq*) that became established as a separate discipline within the Islamic intellectual heritage.

Ethics are one of the major sub-areas of Islamic philosophy. It deals with the reasoning behind evaluating bad and good actions. The aim of ethics is to develop standards and rulings that distinguish actions on this basis.

The first and most important source of Islamic ethics is the Qur'an. It provides general examples of virtuous and moral actions. Along with the Qur'an, the Prophetic tradition is considered the second source, with its explanations of Qur'anic verses and practical examples for action established by the Prophet himself. However, God transfers his ideas and expectations of beautiful and morally good

behavior through the Qur'an and the Prophet's example and these behaviors are known in Islamic tradition as *adab* and *akhlāq*.

Based on the ethical principles in the Qur'an, according to Özdil (2014) the following priorities regarding *akhlāq* and *adab* can be summarized:

- Acts advised against, such as murder, slander, defamation, indecency, envy, lies, deception, arrogance, pride, boasting, tyranny, injustice, etc.
- Decent behaviors, such as honesty, self-examination, patience, forbearance, forgiveness, modesty and humility, modesty, and charity.

Immediately after the Prophet's death the community attempted to establish ethical standards for his successor. The community was concerned with defining good and bad behaviors and actions, and collections of virtues and standards were made that could be applied in the selection or training of those who would occupy various positions of religious authority (judges, imams, teachers).

Over the centuries, many Islamic scholars have dealt with ethical issues, but one of the most important representatives of philosophical ethics in the Islamic world is Abū 'Alī ibn Miskawayh (d. 1030). The work of the Neo-Platonist, Ibn Miskawayh, and his followers provided the foundation for an entire Islamicate ethical tradition. He was the most important writer of ethical works in Islam and the fundamental concept in his ethical teaching is the concept of the *good*.

The broad virtue theory of Ibn Miskawayh's (1968) elaborates on the soul and its powers and faculties, and he identifies (following Plato and Aristotle) four cardinal virtues: wisdom, temperance, courage and justice. These four cardinal virtues are generic terms for all other virtues such as acumen, knowledge, intelligence, modesty, stability, generosity, good manners, peacefulness, dignity, temperance, fortitude, perseverance, selflessness, helpfulness, piety (Pietsch 2013, 10ff).

It is clear that the Islamicate system draws on the same Hellenic tradition as much of Western philosophy as it developed later in Europe and that these two Abrahamic faiths have been in long conversation and interaction in struggling with similar issues of revelation based and rationally derived principles, whether existential or ethical. Thus from either side—Muslim or Austrian—the sense that the values of the “Other” are alien is misplaced historically and conceptually.

The liberty of living in a democratic country allows Muslims to engage in harmony with its value system. The major differences between ‘social’ and religious values are that religious values can invoke God as part of the argument and that, in addition to human-human relationships, religious values in theistic systems take into account aspects of the relationship between humans and a transcendent being.

## **Imparting Values**

In Austria, imparting values to Muslims is mainly envisioned as a component of German language courses in the framework of the Austrian integration program and in schools. In addition, several projects and developments in the context of values education have arisen and become established in educational, social and institutional areas.

### **a German-Integration Courses**

Austria has created several institutions and organizations for values education, which are collectively seeking best methods for offering a quality curriculum to immigrants. One of the institutions responsible for integration is the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF).

The aim of the course is to teach the German language since learning the language is a prerequisite for the acquisition and extension of a residence permit in Austria. Laws and regulations regarding integration are stated in the establishment and residence law (NAG). In §16, sentence 1 of this law, it is stated that the German integration courses should teach elementary knowledge of the German language: themes from everyday life including elements of citizenship, and themes that impart European and democratic values so that immigrants become capable of participating in social, economic and cultural life in Austria (BGBl. I Nr. 100/2005, § 16, 1).

The law and its regulations intend to impart some degree of value integration as a unit, for example at the level of learning the local language. When we talk about German courses and values education, these are in a kind of conflict, especially with the value of diversity. It's understandable that these courses are intended to provide a sort of support to integration, so that life for immigrants is facilitated, but the question is still are we at the same time compromising diversity as a value by promoting the local system as a dominant model for shared values?

### **b The Schools**

Since the 19th century and the establishment of the modern nation state, schools are regarded as being educational institutions in the service of the homogeneous nation. In recent years, many things have changed regarding linguistic diversity: bilingual education is now offered in the public schools, there are competitions to promote multilingualism and others (see BMBF 2015).

With the aim of preparing students for their future life and careers, the question of values has become a priority. The question of values is also a priority because so much can fail to develop during the independent social and emotional development of the child and his or her upbringing by parents and other caregivers. By imparting values, it is hoped to eliminate these negative developments in so far as it is possible and to replace them with useful values. Lämmermann (2005, 254) believes that the imparting of values is doomed to failure with this objective because values education could not effect “deprogramming”.

The Austrian educational system has the task of facilitating the development of youth according to moral, religious and social values as well as the values of truth, goodness and beauty through stages of development and their education appropriate lessons (BGBl. I Nr. 38/2015). The schools should therefore implement instruction incorporating the relevant values and impart these to the pupils, but which specific values they are is not explained in the law.

School-based imparting of values has been designated as the task of religious education and its successful implementation is mandated. In Islamic religious education values are mediated through different topics presented to the pupils, for example, “coexist with one another” or “Islam and democracy”. It is said that peaceful coexistence requires values which are to be brought from everyday life to the classroom (BGBl. II Nr. 234/2011, S. 41). The curriculum of Islamic religious education is about ‘European’ values such as honesty, helpfulness, human dignity, equality, freedom, responsibility, and others. The goal is to explain those ‘European’ values to the pupils, in such a way as to bring these into harmony with Islam.

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## Conclusion

Values are an important part of society so that they can be applied and therefore it is necessary to have this debate take place at all levels of society. Europe and the Islamic tradition have produced systems of values; some are identical and others may differ. It must be emphasized especially that “difference” does not automatically mean “incompatibility”.

The key point is that neither of the two positions should claim exclusivity in its definitions; values are known, but what is understood by them should be left to every society in their own time and place to work out for itself.

Such an approach to the subject of values, where they are repeatedly discussed, criticized and defined by society, is an opportunity for values to become reflected in the diversity and evolution of society. It is also important to know that democratic Europe, as well as Austria, give their citizens the freedom to live at peace while maintaining their own value systems.

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# Religious Pluralism, Education, and Citizenship in Ireland

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## Introduction

This chapter explores the evolving situation in the Republic of Ireland with regard to the intersection of religious pluralism, education, and citizenship. Our contention is that, as a result of history, the developing relationship between Church and State, and the rapidly changing cultural milieu of the Irish context, these three issues are inextricably linked in Ireland. What follows is a broad overview of the changing Irish context and a consideration of some of the implications of this for education and citizenship.

The focus here is on the Republic of Ireland, sometimes referred to as the south of Ireland, and which is, it needs to be noted, quite distinct from Northern Ireland. There are thirty-two regional counties in Ireland; six of these are governed by the United Kingdom and are known as Northern Ireland, the part of the island known for what are often referred to as “the troubles,” the longstanding issues between Catholics and Protestants that have cast a long shadow over the island. The remaining twenty-six counties, which attained independence from the United Kingdom in 1922, are known as the Republic of Ireland, and often referred to simply as Ireland. The population of the Republic of Ireland has grown quite dramatically in recent decades and now stands at approximately 4.5 million people (Central Statistics Office Ireland [CSO], 2011).

## Religious pluralism

To many on the outside, it would seem that the Protestant-Catholic divide is the most obvious religious issue in Ireland. Indeed, in Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom, there is close to an even split between the number of Protestants (48%) and Catholics (45%) (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, 2011). However, the Republic, even in the modern era has been and continues to be predominantly Catholic. Thus, while the Catholic-Protestant divide remains a lively issue in Northern Ireland, this is not the predominant concern in the Republic, which has rapidly undergone significant historical, social, and cultural developments.

Part of the difficulty in tracking the various changes that have taken place in the Republic of Ireland is that, like many other countries, there is a strong historical connection between religious and national-cultural identities in Ireland (Fuller, Littleton, & Maher, 2006). To be Irish, in the minds of many, is to be Catholic. Because Catholicism in Ireland is woven tightly into the fabric of the culture, there is an added level of complexity when considering the growing diversity and changing religious landscape in Ireland. By way of example, one might compare statistical figures from the census with statistics regarding religious observance.<sup>1</sup>

The 1946 census of Ireland notes that there were 2.9 million people in the twenty-six counties, 2.7 million of whom were Catholic, representing roughly 93% of the population. In 2002 the population was 3.9 million, with 3.5 million, or 90% of the population, still identifying as Catholic. In the latest census of 2011, the total population was 4.5 million, and 3.8 million, roughly 85%, still identified as Catholic, a significant percentage by any measure, even if there is a trend toward marginal decline (CSO, 2011). These numbers do not give us the whole story, however. As recently as the late twentieth century it was commonly stated that Ireland, along with Poland, had the highest percentage of attendance at religious services, primarily the mass, in all of Europe. In the mid-1980s, Ireland's regular, weekly mass attendance was nearly 90%. By 2011, this number was down to 40%, with some figures suggesting a number as low as 20%, a drastic drop in a thirty year span (Mac Gréil, 2009; O'Mahony, 2011). This discrepancy between self-designation as Catholic and levels of participation highlights the complexity of thinking about religious identity in Ireland today (Fuller, 2002). It has also led to renewed reflection within the Catholic community about how to communicate faith appropriately in contemporary Irish society (Byrne, 2011).

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1 On some of the difficulties in using Irish census data in mapping religious identity and observance, see Macourt, 2011.

One of the most significant factors that contributed to the changing landscape of Ireland over the past number of years was the phenomenon of the Celtic Tiger, the economic boom that took off in Ireland in the 1990s and into the early part of the twenty-first century (Donovan & Murphy, 2013). As one of the poorer European countries before the economic boom, Ireland was a relative latecomer to economic growth; however, when the Celtic Tiger hit Ireland, it brought a host of social changes with it.

One area in which this can be seen is the rise of and openness to secularism (Breen & Reynolds, 2011; Taylor, 2007). Much of Western Europe was moving toward a broadly secularist culture long before Ireland, which retained its strong ties to its religious past. While direct causation on this matter may be difficult to substantiate, it does seem that as the economy grew during the Celtic Tiger, the influence of the dominant Christian traditions began to wane, and it became increasingly more acceptable to identify oneself apart from any religious affiliation, to identify as atheist or non-religious, or to simply walk away from the church(es) (Maher & O'Brien, 2014). Indeed, the biggest changes percentage-wise on the most recent census are those claiming no religion, including atheists, who came in at over 270,000, a figure that had doubled in a 10 year period (CSO, 2011).

A related factor has been (and continues to be) the sexual abuse scandals that have shaken the church in Ireland and elsewhere (Keenan, 2012). These horrific revelations, many of which, although historical, are continuing to surface, have done untold damage to the perception of the Catholic Church and its authority in Ireland, and many people have simply turned away from considering the church as any source of moral or religious authority in the wake of these scandals (Cassidy, 2002).

Taken together, the Celtic Tiger, the increasing openness to secularism, and the scandals within the Irish church have dramatically altered the religious landscape of Ireland. While many have retained the self-designation as Catholics, the notion of Catholic Ireland is very different from that of a generation ago (Inglis, 1998).

Along with this decline of Catholicism, a second issue that has altered the religious landscape of Ireland has been the rise of immigration, and with this the increase in religious diversity. For much of its modern history, Ireland has been known more for people leaving than for arriving on its shores. As Rami & Lalor note,

For decades dating back to the famine in the 1840s, emigration has been a significant feature of Irish life. It has varied in terms of intensity from decade to decade, but has always persisted as a necessary safety valve for a country that was incapable of creating enough economically viable jobs to absorb the natural growth in the labour force.

In Ireland's more recent history, the decade of the 1950s saw a sharp fall in total employment and a substantial rise in net outward migration. This resulted in a situation where the Irish population fell to its lowest ever level in 1961. From 1988-89, 70,600 people (approx. 2% of the population) left the country as economic migrants. (2006, 522)

During the Celtic Tiger, however, Ireland opened itself to migration from Europe and beyond in an unprecedented way, and because of the social and economic opportunities, this invitation was taken up with great enthusiasm. For example, "from April 2004 to April 2005 a total of 70,000 migrants entered Ireland. ... This was the highest annual figure since migration estimates began in 1987" (Rami & Lalor, 2006, 523).

Not only was Ireland in uncharted territory in terms of people coming to the island, but this would bring unexpected diversity to what had been a very mono-cultural society. For example, while the greatest numbers of immigrants to Ireland have come from Eastern European countries such as Poland, there are growing segments of the population from Africa, Asia, and South America. Thus the ethnic and geographical diversity now seen in Ireland has brought unparalleled religious diversity. Islam, virtually non-existent in Ireland just a few decades ago, has developed a growing presence in Ireland in recent years, with nearly 50,000 Muslims noted in the most recent census, an increase of fifty percent from 2006. Some of the fastest growing religious traditions at the moment are apostolic and Pentecostal Christians, in large part because of the rise and predominance of African Pentecostal churches throughout the island (Ugba, 2006; Ugba, 2009). While many of these groups are still quite small, they are increasingly visible, particularly in the capital Dublin.

These developments have led to some disquiet, as a formerly hegemonic society comes to terms with increasingly numerous religious minorities.<sup>2</sup> There are nagging societal questions that remain around issues such as Irish identity and how religion fits into this. The role of the Catholic Church in broader society is undergoing a dramatic shift, there is a growing presence of those who identify as

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2 An example of this was recently highlighted when it was noted that religious groups are meeting in industrial parks and spaces that were created for industry, not gatherings of people. And yet, Muslim, Hindu, and evangelical churches are using these spaces, renting or buying them and renovating them for their own purposes. This has raised questions about health and safety regulations, and community leaders are now facing questions about such developments. This is one example of how Ireland is just starting to grapple with the complexities of religious diversity (Colfer, 2013).

non-religious, and there is an increasing plurality of religious traditions that have reshaped the religious landscape of Ireland.

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## Education

One area where these questions of plurality and Irish identity have an obvious impact and which has been at the forefront of civic discourse in Ireland in recent years is that of education and educational provision.

Education in Ireland has, throughout the modern era, been inextricably tied to both nationalism and religious traditions, notably the Catholic Church. As Ireland became an independent state in the early twentieth century, the new state was struggling economically and socially (Coolahan, 1981; Williams, 2005). In this context, the church was confirmed in its role as educator, something already established under British rule, and engaged further in providing education and schools, thus reinforcing a cooperative relationship between church and state that continues to this day.<sup>3</sup>

There are, for example, very few state-run primary schools in Ireland. All primary schools are under patronage of some sort, with core funding supplied by the government. Of the 3,100 primary schools, almost 2,900 of these, over 90%, are Catholic schools (McGrady, 2014).<sup>4</sup> As Ireland has become more diverse, questions about this patronage system have risen to the forefront of societal discourse. Pressure has been mounting on government to provide for those who are from other religious traditions, or who are unhappy with the religious influence on Irish education in general (Irish Human Rights Commission, 2011; Renehan, 2011).

The move toward educational provision that is not necessarily aligned with particular religious traditions but is responsive to the diverse nature of Irish society finds particular expression in the debate about religious education. The Education Act of 1998 removed the prohibition on State involvement in religious education (Tuohy, 2013; Williams, 2005). This change marks the beginning of the shift from understanding the learning and teaching of religion as a solely ecclesial task to appreciating its role in responding to religious pluralism and therefore a legitimate

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3 More broadly, “Irish identity was to some extent bound up in the promotion of a view of Irish culture defined largely by its language, arts and sporting traditions within a mainly Church-controlled education system” (Lalor & Rami, 2006, 527).

4 The numbers are less hegemonic at second level, but still indicative of the issues. Secondary schools run by religious communities account for over 60% of secondary schools, with roughly 30% of schools under the patronage of broader educational bodies.

activity for the State to be engaged in. Since 2000 the State has been directly involved in the provision and resourcing of a syllabus and examination for second-level Religious Education that may be studied by pupils of all faith traditions or convictions (Department of Education and Skills, 2015). However, it is only with the publication of the “Report on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector” in 2012, commissioned by the Minister of Education and Skills, that the State has become increasingly involved with the question of the provision of religious education at primary level (Department of Education and Skills, 2012a). The concern at primary level is that pupils must not be excluded from any aspect of school life on the basis of either religious or secular affiliation.

On June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2012, *The Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector: Report of the Forum’s Advisory Group* was published (Department of Education and Skills, 2012b). Though referring in the main to provision for a diversity of patronage models at primary level, there is a significant statement about the teaching of religion that has implications for religious education. The Report distinguishes between two particular approaches to religious education: Denominational Religious Education (DRE), which focuses on learning how to live according to religious guidelines, and Education about Religion and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics, which promotes learning about religions.

The Forum’s distinction between DRE and ERB is an attempt to respond to Recommendation 1720 (6) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (2005). Recommendation 1720 calls on governments to “do more to guarantee freedom of conscience and religious expression, to encourage religious instruction, to promote dialogue with and between religions, and to further the cultural and social expression of religions.” Section 8 of the same Recommendation then states that “even the countries in which one confession largely predominates must teach the origins of all religions rather than privilege or promote proselytising”.

Through the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, the State is developing a syllabus for ERB and Ethics that invites pupils into a way of learning about religion and beliefs that is characterised by an understanding of cultural heritage, so as to have respect for religious believers. Developments in religious education are increasingly taking account of the requirement to be responsive to the possibilities inherent in a pluralising society. This is apparent in the increasing awareness of *The Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs* issued by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in 2007, as well as in the emerging conversation about how the Council of Europe’s 2014 document *Signposts: Policy and Practice for Teaching about Religions and Non-religious World Views in Intercultural Education* (Jackson, 2014) can be implemented.

Important questions remain, particularly in the public domain: should religiously-affiliated but state-funded schools be allowed to teach religion in a formative manner, for example preparing students for sacraments such as First Communion? Or should all schools move toward a more phenomenological religious studies approach that includes ethics and learning about religions? Or can there be a balance of both (Lane, 2013)? There have, in recent years, been a number of constructive and fruitful projects which have been exploring the role of religious education in Ireland. At the level of academic research, the Irish Centre for Religious Education (ICRE, <http://www.materdei.ie/icre>) has been fostering conversations around these very fraught yet important issues (Byrne & Kieran, 2013). In terms of praxis, a number of new school types have taken shape in recent decades, many of which are addressing the question of religious education in creative ways (see Norman, 2003; McGrady, 2014). The Catholic Schools Partnership has also contributed positively to discussions about a renewed focus on Catholic education and religious education in Catholic schools (Catholic Schools Partnership, 2012; 2014). Nevertheless, all this is an ongoing discussion in Ireland, and one that will take some time to work itself out, as indeed it should.

This conversation around the role of religious education in schools has led to other developments, such as a renewed emphasis on adult religious education. For example, the Catholic Church in its framework document *Share the Good News: National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland* (Irish Episcopal Conference, 2010), gives new priority to adult faith development, recognising the need for members of faith communities to reflect on what their faith means to them in this changing world, and then to look to parish and schools for support in the religious education of people (SGN). There is no presumption that, for example, all young Catholics will attend Catholic schools, but an expectation is voiced that all schools will respect and support young Catholics in their faith (SGN).

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## Citizenship

The issues of religious pluralism, immigration, and the challenges to education in Ireland have obvious consequences for citizenship and citizenship education in this small country. To begin with, the face of the citizenry is changing in Ireland. One striking example comes from research done by the Catholic archdiocese of Dublin in 2004 which found that in 92 schools in the Dublin area, there were 104 different nationalities representing 28 different religious traditions, a reality that would have been unthinkable less than a generation ago (Rami & Lalor, 2006).

What does this mean in terms of educating for citizenship? Notions of citizenship were first introduced to Irish educational contexts in the 1960s as “Civics”, though there were difficulties in terms of agreement on its purpose and implementation even then. In fact, because Civics was not mandatory, it was often timetabled together with Religious Education and taught as one subject to save time (Jeffers, 2008).

In the 1990s, a new subject was introduced at second level as a compulsory subject: Civil, Social, and Political Education, or CSPE. This subject was meant to help students develop a sense of belonging and skills to live in an increasingly diverse Ireland. But ambiguity about the place and role of this subject in the broader curriculum has remained. The subject has a low status in many schools, is not a priority of students or teachers, and is often regarded as an “easy” subject (Jeffers, 2008). There are new initiatives in place, including those attempting to incorporate European perspectives (Citizenship Education in Europe, 2012; Schreiner, 2013). However, the question of citizenship education remains a complex one in the current curriculum. Indeed, the importance of such subjects is magnified in light of the broader changes which Ireland is witnessing: “The profound changes in Irish life have called into question the exact nature of what it means to be Irish and how the notions of Citizenship and Identity are fostered and promulgated” (Rami & Lalor, 2006, 529).

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## Conclusions

Ireland’s newfound diversity has put increasing pressure on the educational system, on the question of religious education, and on the notion of citizenship. Moving forward, some of the issues at the forefront of these developments will include the following:

First, “mono-cultural attitudes” can no longer be presumed (Feldman, 2003). What does it mean to be Irish in the twenty-first century? There is a slow but growing recognition that Ireland is no longer hegemonic, both in terms of religious (or non-religious) identities, as well as ethnic and national identities. Engaging constructively with changes to the notions of Irish identity as well as citizenship will be paramount in the coming decades. Within this, dominant religious traditions are facing a new reality where their influence is on the decline, and how they respond to this new situation will be highly significant. Both ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue have increased in recent years, but there is still much work to be done in this area as Ireland comes to grips with the practical reality of plurality. There is also a need for better communication and mutual

understanding between religious traditions and the growing number of those who would claim no religion.

Second, the education system will have to continue to grapple with how education is conceived and shaped, from the issue of school patronage, to questions of the role of religious education and the place of education for citizenship. The presumed hegemony of a generation ago will no longer suffice, a reality to which those on the ground, particular teachers, will readily attest.

These challenges are many and great, but they are not insurmountable; indeed, while some of these challenges are new to Ireland, they are familiar to many of Ireland's European neighbours, and Ireland has much to learn from those who have and continue to face these challenges in constructive ways in the broader European context.

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# Challenges of the Institutionalization of Same Sex Marriage for Religious Pluralism in Denmark

Niels Valdemar Vinding and Emil Bjørn Hilton Saggau

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## Introducing the Danish religious landscape

The Danish religious landscape has been significantly transformed, especially during the last three decades. This transformation is marked by the shift from near religious hegemony towards a much more diverse religious population. Originally, the Danish Lutheran state church was closely intertwined with the governmental administration of the country after the reformation in Denmark of 1536 and the peace at Westphalia in 1648. This state church became a national people's church following the enactment of the Danish constitution of 1849, but according to the Constitutional Act it is still under the authority ("support", Art. 4) of Parliament with the monarch (Art. 6) being a mandatory member of the church (Nielsen, 2012; Christoffersen, 2012).

Today, the Church of Denmark (Danish: *Folkekirken*) is still the majority church, albeit with declining membership that, however, still comprises almost eighty percent (78.4% in 2014) of the population according to the *The Danish Ministry for Ecclesiastical Affairs* (2014). During the sixties, Denmark, like many other Western European countries, opened its labour market to an immigrant labour force from a wide range of countries, although Muslim workers were predominant. This new Muslim minority of immigrant workers increased as refugees from the struggles and wars in the former Yugoslavia, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria and Iraq entered the country. The Muslim minority has increased from 0.6% of the population in 1980 to 4.2% in 2012, and there are presently almost 250,000 Muslims (Jacobsen, 2013). In 2012, the Danish religious landscape consisted of 94 Christian

congregations, apart from the majority church, 11 Muslim communities (incl. one Alevi), 4 Buddhist, 3 Hindu, 3 Jewish, and 3 other communities (Fischer-Nielsen, 2012). The increased Muslim minority introduced, with Prof. Jørgen S. Nielsen's words, a "challenge of diversity" (2012) to the Danish system which has been the subject of considerable public debate for more than twenty years. Most central were questions raised by immigration and secondly questions of foreign values, culture, and religion. In this chapter, we will discuss the contemporary challenges of creating an order of religious pluralism in law, civil society, and social institutions through an analysis of the case of the institutionalisation of same-sex marriage in Denmark in 2011-12.

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## The legal framework

The Danish religious landscape and subsequently the case for same-sex marriage unfolds in a space defined by several institutions and laws. The foundation of the current Danish state is the Constitutional Act of 1849, which clearly stated that the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark is one of the main pillars of the Danish state, according to article 4. The Lutheran people's church was therefore established as the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark and promised to be "as such, supported by the state" (Art 4). The state has in several ways—including financially and structurally—supported the Lutheran church since then. In the constitutional act, the Church of Denmark was conceived to be autonomous by way of delegation through an establishment by law (Art 66).

This constitutional promise of a legal framework for the Church of Denmark has, however, never been realized. Several attempts have been made since 1849, but all of them have faltered due to internal political disagreement both within the major parties and the Church of Denmark itself (Vinding & Christoffersen, 2012). The relationship between this majority church and the state has therefore not been explicitly regulated and remains a sort of grey area in regulation. The relationship has been described by Lisbet Christoffersen, professor of Ecclesiastical Law at University of Copenhagen, as an "intertwinement", which stresses the pragmatic and legal ability to distinguish between state and church, but still maintains the inseparability that echoes the soft secularism characteristic of Denmark (Christoffersen, 2006, 109). It has been argued—among others by the Lutheran priest and member of a right-wing party, J. Langballe (2013)—that this lack of a constitution is replaced by an organic relationship. The church and its congregations regulate the internal life of the church and the parliament regulates the external parts. This wording has been carefully chosen because it resonates with the rights to freedom

of religion and freedom of belief, which distinguishes between a free *forum internum* of the church and a regulated *forum externum* (Krömer, 2013).

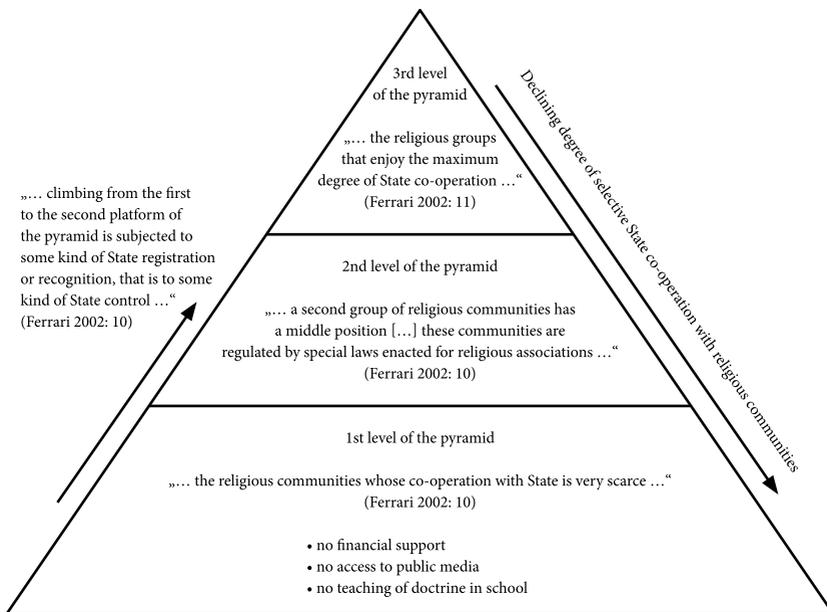
Regarding other religious communities and their place in Danish society, this has primarily been regulated from the point of view of the majority church (Vejrup Nielsen, 2012, 42). The constitution guarantees freedom of religion to “religions other than the Lutheran Church” (Art 69), which in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries meant the explicit recognition of eleven religious communities by royal decree. In 1969, this system of recognition was changed so that a religious community could be approved by the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs in order to perform marriages with civil legal validity according to the Danish Marriage Act of 1970 (Christoffersen, 2012). In 1998, after considerable pressure from scholars and the religious communities, “an advisory committee on religious denominations” (Danish: *Rådgivende Udvalg vedr. Trossamfund*) was established to promote more transparent criteria and administration leading to the approval of religious communities. The committee consists of impartial and knowledgeable persons, who advise the Minister on approval of religious denominations, clarifying what and who should be considered a religious community with “god-worship” as the defining feature. An approval from the Ministry means that the community will enjoy tax benefits, but mainly entails that it is allowed, among other things, to perform marriages with civil legal implications (Vinding, 2013, 128-29). This amounts to the state’s most significant engagement with religious communities other than the Church of Denmark.

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## The structures of the landscape

Legal norms and political discourse have constructed certain structures within which the religious denominations and communities may act. These structures can be identified as belonging to specific predominantly West European models of church-state relations. According to Italian professor of law and religion, Silvio Ferrari, these structures can be mapped into three governing models. Ferrari classifies these models as a separation system, with France as the epitome, a concordat system, building on explicit agreements between state and church as found in Spain, and a national church system, e.g. Denmark or England, that have established churches (Ferrari, 2002). The Danish system is to a large degree constructed around the national church model, which in turn poses the current legislative and cultural challenge to the possibility of religious pluralism. These structures are the ones that have come under pressure from increased diversity that forces the shift from religious hegemony towards greater pluralism.

To qualify his mapping of church and state models, Ferrari introduces a “pyramid of priority” (see fig 1) that depicts the degrees of relations to and cooperation with the state. The pyramid points to a compartmentalisation of religious communities in the wider religious landscape. The dynamic of the pyramid is that as communities increase in their collaboration with the state, they come closer to the nucleus of the state and thus they increase their influence and positional power while at the same time subjecting themselves to greater state control. Similarly, communities that climb down the pyramid decrease their cooperation by disassociating themselves from the state, but will lose access to state and any institutionalised privileges they might have (Vinding, 2013). The pyramid model is applicable to the Danish context, where the implicit hierarchy of the religious communities could be divided into three categories that correspond to the levels in the pyramid.



**Figure 1** The Silvio Ferrari Pyramid priority of selective state co-operation, from Vinding, 2013, 44, and based on Ferrari, 2002.

First of all, the Church of Denmark occupies a position close to the state as guaranteed by the Constitutional Act. This legally defined position secures that the church is explicitly supported by the state and that the church is governed by parliamentary sovereignty delegated to the relevant departments of state. The prime

example of this is the office of the priest in the Church of Denmark. While being called into office according to Lutheran principles, the priest is at the same time legally a public employee and paid as such and therefore obliged to pray for the state and the royal house in his/her sermons according to the official Royal Decrees for High Mass (1992).

A bit further from the nucleus of the state and thus a little further down the pyramid are the secondary positions occupied by the “traditionally acknowledged” religions in Denmark, who by royal decree were accepted into Danish society before 1970. According to Ferrari’s corporation status model, “approved” communities, such as most Muslim communities, also occupy middle positions within the pyramid. There are no significant legal or economic difference between the acknowledged and the approved religious communities, but within the public discourse the mark of the royal decree creates a symbolic and seemingly arbitrary distinction between the traditional religious communities and the new – often immigrant – ones (Vinding, 2013, 133-34).

The third category is characterized by very little co-operation between religious communities and the state. Here are religious communities and organizations that either have no interest in state relations, or have been unable to secure approval, or do not necessarily understand themselves according to the same definitions of religion employed by the advisory committee on religious denominations. Without substantial empirical data, it is difficult to distinguish membership in this third category, as very little is written about the motives and ambitions of these “unknown” communities.

Overall, this structure is the one that best describes and frames the interaction of state and religions in Denmark and this is, of course, much more complex than the model described above is able to grasp. The principal distinctions will, however, explain some central points in the analysis.

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## **The challenges of religious diversity**

The social and political structure of Danish society and the Danish legal framework have not been constructed for a pluralistic religious landscape. They have, in fact, been constructed to support the majority church and only provide space for other religions by extension of the available constitutional freedoms. Many of the changes in the legal framework in the 1990s were intended to make up for this and thereby promote the possibility of greater equality between religions through outlets such as the new advisory committee on religious denominations after 1998 (Vinding & Christoffersen, 2012, 17).

The political and legislative agenda on religions and—more widely—a value-based *ethos* did shift significantly after September 11, 2001, and in particular with the Liberal-Conservative Danish Government after November 27, 2001. This new centre-right government turned the discourse towards a much more critical focus on foreign cultures and religions—especially on Muslims in Denmark. It was within the critical heat of the public discussions of foreigners and Islam that the Danish Cartoon Crisis of 2005/06 unfolded (Nielsen, 2012). The shift in agenda was marked by stricter immigration laws and several attempts to limit the religious freedom of Muslim communities, such as a severe restriction on the numbers of Imams starting in 2004 and the ban on wearing headscarves and other religious symbols for people working within the judiciary beginning in 2009 (Jacobsen, 2013). These laws were not intended to decrease freedom of religion, but were promoted for other purposes, such as limiting radicalization within Muslim communities or protecting the neutrality of the judiciary. They reveal, however, that freedom of religion was considered of secondary importance in relation to national security or the secularity and neutrality of civil servants. Religion—primarily Islam and to a certain extent also Judaism and Christianity— increasingly became framed as a problem rather than as a solution in the wake of 9/11 (Vinding & Christoffersen, 2012).

The public debate on religion became limited to narrow discussions of headscarves, halal diet in public schools, Muslim children's lack of participation in sports and several other issues of symbolic significance (Bektovic, 2012, 231). Primarily targeting the Muslim minority, these cases have become a roadblock for the discussion of greater religious equality and pluralism within the legal framework of the Danish state and perhaps even a roadblock for a substantial discussion on prudent legislation regarding security, anti-radicalisation, and counter-terrorism issues.

This public discourse has changed even further since the new Social Democratic and Moderate government was elected in 2011. This new government has championed a more out-spoken secular position and argued for both a further separation of the majority church and state as well as for same-sex marriage within this very church according to their Coalition Agreement (2011, 66, 74). In relation to the “approved” communities, the new government has signalled a tighter grip on the economy of these organizations (Mathiesen, 2014)—mainly to prevent donations from and to fundamentalist groups—and at the same time in very symbolic gesture, the government representatives refused to participate in the inauguration of the first major purposely-built Danish mosque in 2014 (Politiken, June 19, 2014).

In general, the public discussion of religious pluralism in Denmark has often boiled down to the issue of whether or not a pluralistic or multicultural society

threatens social or national cohesion. It is feared that a pluralistic society will simply become a series of parallel communities without any connections to each other. Conversely, several of the Muslim communities and other religious minority communities view a pluralistic society as the legal and social framework that allows the existence of religious and cultural identities other than the Christian majority one to share in solid principles of freedoms and rights (Bektovic, 2012).

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## **Marriage as a contested nexus between state and religion**

One central nexus of relations between all the religious communities—including the Church of Denmark—and the state lies in the institution of marriage with all the contested legal, social, and religious interpretations that go with it. As mentioned, it was not until the change in the Marriage Act of 1970 that Danish regulation of religions was brought up to date from its former nineteenth century model. Since then, the Marriage Act has been the key point in the expression of relations between religions and the state—apart from the financial aspects, which to a large extent are without any religious content. The performance of marriage is the most substantial sphere wherein all approved religions and the state interact, and so it has both religious and civil legal implications. The performance of marriage with civil legal validity has become the trademark of recognised and approved religious communities through which they signalled to their communities and the civil society that they, in fact, have been accepted to the point where their actions have civil legal efficacy. In the performance of marriage, the performer (priest, imam, rabbi, etc.) becomes both a civil servant and a religious representative, and his actions and wording are formed between state and religion (Vinding & Christoffersen, 2012). The Marriage Act is therefore one central prism that provides insight into the relations between state and religion and – crucial for this investigation – reveals the structures and idea of pluralism embedded in the state's actions and political discourse as well as the responses from religions.

One other reason for focusing on marriage law is due to the fact that the issue is a major trend in contemporary politics in Europe, especially the issue of allowing—and in particular of not allowing—family reunification for migrants and refugees, which is why it has come under significant academic scrutiny. In particular, in Denmark, where this matter has been dealt with in one of the strictest ways in Europe, such academic criticism has been voiced in the face of symbolic and values-based legislation, which caters to a number of particular right-wing agendas. Significantly, Liversage and Rytter (2014) have provided a volume on *Marriage and Migration – Consequences of Danish Family Reunification Legislation 2002-*

2012. Here, the authors demonstrate that once again marriage and its definition and proper value base has become a battlefield of contested understandings, especially in relation to religions and cultures that do not follow the norms of the majority.

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## **Marriage law as instrumental in greater sexual equality**

One of the main trends that has seriously influenced the relations between religion and state within the discussions of the marriage laws has been the promotion of equality between couples of same-sex as well as heterosexual couples. In 1989, same-sex civil marriage—referred to as “registered or civil partnership”—was allowed in civil legislation, which made it necessary for the Church of Denmark to discuss and subsequently take a stand on the issue. In 1995, after years of discussion, a majority among the bishops arranged a working committee in order to shape a clear position for the church on same-sex marriage. In 1997, the committee issued a report, known as the “Thomsen Report” that was followed by a press release in which the bishops of the Church of Denmark officially recognized the status of same-sex “partnerships”. Thereby they dismissed all Christian-based criticism of such “partnerships” and allowed priests the possibility of holding a voluntary, “unauthorized”, and informal service celebrating the civil contract (The Danish Ministry for Ecclesiastical Affairs, 2010, 24-25). This was an attempt to defuse public criticism of the church for discriminating against same-sex couples while still keeping the majority of church members satisfied. It was by and large a successful initiative and only met with serious opposition from the more biblical fundamentalist wing within the Church of Denmark, who in turn published a report in 1997 criticizing the bishops’ stance and renouncing any form of celebration of same-sex partnerships within the church. In 2005, several Bishops went even further and issued a guideline for a form of unauthorized mass marking the initiation of same-sex partnerships (The Danish Ministry for Ecclesiastical Affairs, 2010, 26).

Within the political system this liberal attitude and voluntary arrangement was, however, not seen as satisfactory and six bill proposals to the parliament in the years from 2001 to 2010 were put forth to either allow same-sex couples the right to marry within the churches or to simply make marriage gender-neutral (Danish Ministry for Ecclesiastical Affairs, 2010, 26). This political insistence reignited the discussion of the status of same-sex couples within the Church of Denmark. By demand from the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs, a formal hearing was launched and an advisory committee set up. In September 2010, they published a report on “The Church of Denmark and Registered Partnerships”. The committee,

consisting of twelve representative members from the church's clergy, theologians, and members of the congregations did not reach a consensus conclusion. A 3/4 majority of the committee agreed that a sort of blessing of same-sex partnerships was reasonable and only half of the committee favoured an introduction of a new and authorized ritual for same-sex partnerships. They all agreed, however, that priests should be given the liberty to refuse the performance of such a ritual or celebration (The Danish Ministry for Ecclesiastical Affairs, 2010, 26).

After the elections of 2011, a significant change in the legislative program came about and in March of 2012 a bill on gender-neutral marriage was introduced by the new coalition government of the Social Democrats, the Social Liberals, and the Socialist People's Party. This bill was adopted into Danish law in June 2012, making marriage a legal union whether between two people of different sexes or between two persons of the same sex. This law had two noteworthy consequences. Firstly, the union is termed marriage and not just civil partnership, and secondly, gender-neutral marriage was to be introduced into the Church of Denmark, meaning that bishops were expected to produce a liturgy and ritual for gender-neutral marriage and priests in the church were expected to celebrate it (Homotropolis, 2012).

The discussions that followed were divided on the issue of what marriage is as opposed to a registered partnership. Religious communities, denominations, and churches argued in favour of "traditional marriage", while the political parties with a parliamentary majority argued in favour of gender equality in marriage. The population was split on the matter and although there were more people in favour than against, there was no absolute majority on the matter. A survey commissioned on the day of the parliamentary vote by the Danish newspaper *Kristeligt Dagblad* demonstrated that 48 percent agreed that marriage should be gender-neutral so as not to distinguish between men and women in all the language of the bill, while 32 percent disagree and 14 percent neither agreed nor disagreed (Vincent & Johansen, 2012). All but one of the bishops accepted the new law and they designed a ritual for same-sex marriage with close resemblance to the ordinary one (Arendt et al., 2012). A poll taken at the announcement of the new bill in November 2011 indicated that only 28% of the clergy did, in fact, oppose gender-neutral marriage and that more than 62% of the clergy supported a ritual bringing sexual equality into the church (Dramshøj & Jensen, 2011). During the public announcement of the intention to draft the bill, the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs in a public debate stated "that we will allow other religious communities to perform same-sex marriages as well" (Hansen, 2011). The debate and implication of the law was thus broadened to include all religious communities and denominations.

## The responses and reactions from the religious communities

In response to the change in the marriage law (L106 2011-12), the religious communities and denominations voiced staunch opposition. The Ministry announced the bill into public hearing in January 2012 and received more than a hundred responses from religious communities and other civil society organizations. In addition, the bill was debated in three separate sessions in parliament and in one open session where a theologian, a professor of law, and two bishops addressed the matter in dialogue with the parliament. These official responses, the parliamentary debate, and the public session are the sources for material in the present chapter.

The ten bishops of the Church of Denmark were all key players in the debate about the bill, but were in fact not acting as one separate unit representing the church. They were rather acting as ten separate individuals with their own theological viewpoints ranging from acceptance and embrace of the bill to complete rejection. The main body of the bishops, priests, and their congregations backed the bill, but did voice some discontent due to the fact that the Ministry did not follow the recommendations of the 2010 report, as expressed in the Bishop of Lolland-Falster's official response to the bill (Lind, & Johansen, 2011). As referred to earlier, 62% of the clergy and eight out of ten of the bishops were predominantly positive towards the bill and several congregations expressed their positive attitude during the hearing of 2012. One chairman of a congregation, Henrik Fibiger-Henriksen, expressed that they "found it satisfying that there now would be introduced in the ecclesial domain equality and equal worth" (2012). None of the predominantly positive bishops expressed any serious concern about the effect of the changes on the Church of Denmark or the relationship between state and church. They viewed the bill as a necessary step towards equality without any theological or doctrinal significance and, in fact, welcomed the bill as a small change in the frame of the church. One Dean in the Church of Denmark, Peter Holm (2012), summarized their general opinion in an article as follows: "It is Christianity that provides, first and foremost, interpretations of life and the world, and the Church of Denmark—as an organization—is only the frame for these interpretations in a relatively secondary way".

By contrast, a very vocal minority within the Church of Denmark saw the bill as a clear violation of the former informal agreement between the parliament and the church. In this unspoken agreement, parliament would only govern the *forum externum* and would have no say in any sort of doctrinal content of the *forum internum*. As one of the two bishops against the law, Lise-Lotte Rebel of Helsingør, stated in her critical oral response in the parliament session on the law on same-sex marriage: "If marriage has nothing to do with faith, it does not belong to the

church. And when it has something to do with faith, then the parliament must not interfere” (Rehling, 2012).

She elaborated her position further in her official response to the bill:

The People’s Church, as an Evangelical-Lutheran church, has a well-defined and confessionally based theology and an actual liturgical praxis in relation to marriage... The parliament has without doubt the right to govern the Danish society ... but the legal work on such a complex area must not overlook the danger of transgressing the border between political life and relations that belong to the church and religious communities, among others, the Danish National Church’s confessional creed. (Socialudvalget, 2011-12)

She clearly sees the secular and the religious domains as separate. The state has only the power to govern the civil and secular society, and if it tries to govern ecclesial and doctrinal content of a church, such as a ritual on marriage, it crosses the border of its domain. She views marriage and the ritual connected to it as doctrinal content in contrast to the majority of bishops and priests, and therefore denies the political system any rights to change the semantic of marriage so as to include same-sex couples. In her official statement she also addressed the consequences of the law in relation to religious freedom if the law only is applied to the majority church. Bishop Rebel further stated that:

while wishing to create equality between humans of different sexual orientations, the proposed law at the same time introduces a completely new distinction between people’s rights that is based on their religious affiliation.... This problem emerges from the fact that this country’s political leadership acts as if they were the owners of the People’s Church, while other religious communities are treated as autonomous in their creeds and liturgical praxis (Socialudvalget, 2011-12).

Lise-Lotte Rebel argues that the bill discriminates between the two religious spheres because it explicitly accepts the collective refusal of the marriage of same-sex couples by other religious communities but not from the majority church. She argues that the political system claims the right to govern the Church of Denmark and at the same time relinquishes this right with respect to governing the other communities. The bishop’s remarks point to the political system acting arbitrarily and demonstrate a dual deficiency in the Danish system, where there is freedom of religion, but no autonomy for the Church and no equality for other religious communities. This opposition was supported by several of the critical congregations that in general highlighted the Evangelical-Lutheran creed, the *Confessio Augustana*, on marriage as a stumbling block for the law in their response in the official hearing.

Along with this “credential” position another more “biblical-fundamentalist” position voiced its discontent. This more conservative position voiced a line of argument marshalled by, among others, Prof. Asger Christen Højlund from the right-wing *Lutheran School of Theology in Aarhus*. His response is both remarkable as well as desperate, and seeks to find a way to convince his audience by using as many different arguments as possible before coming to the argument that marriage is sacred. First, in his response to the bill, Prof. Højlund argues socio-anthropologically against the definition of gender-neutral marriage. Then he argues figuratively, then historically, then by open reference to heteronormativity, then by reference to human rights and the legal protection of marriage, then biologically, then rhetorically, then ethically, then by reference to the good of the child, then politically for the good of society, then by reference to gender identity, then by reference to language and then—finally—theologically. It seems that the only unifying force behind all these arguments is an opposition to same-sex marriage. A large group of congregations, several networks for “preservation of marriage”, twelve priests, seven persons and various petitions signed by some 1500 persons voiced similar positions individually. Each of these groups, priests, networks, etc., felt compelled to write, and did so in an increasingly desperate manner. In fact, one of the priests even signed the letter itself with the conclusive words: “In frustration, Karsten Christensen”. (Socialudvalget, 2011-12)

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### **A common ground: religious unity beyond the state**

Most of the Christian minorities, such as the Apostolic Church, the Baptist Church, the Methodist Church, the Pentecostal Church and the Catholic Church, and so forth, were all invited to respond to the hearing. Quite uniquely, they chose to answer collectively in a letter dated 13th February 2012 through the ecumenical body established between the majority church and the other churches, known as The National Council of Churches in Denmark (*Danske Kirkers Råd*). In this response they found a common approach and a shared opinion. In general, their response leaves much of the detailed discussion regarding same-sex marriage aside, and only expresses concerns in relation to religious freedom as such. In the response they state that they want a special provision embedded in the bill that would allow the minority churches and approved religions to be collectively exempted from the law. The National Council of Churches in Denmark states that if the status of approval of a religious community were to be linked to unconditional acceptance of same-sex marriage:

There will be according to the opinion of The National Council of Churches in Denmark a case of discrimination against the religious community and a serious attack on freedom of religion. (Socialudvalget, 2011-12)

In the hearing, various other minor and non-Christian communities also felt compelled to express their opinions, among them the Federation of Danish Alevi Communities (DABF). They formulated a position that closely resembles that of The National Council of Churches in Denmark. They expressed their understanding of the agenda of equality within society, but at the same time are concerned with the consequences if they refuse to allow same-sex marriages within their community.

None of the other major Muslim communities expressed their opinion in the official process. Only one article in a major Danish newspaper revealed the common position among Muslims, Jews, and Christians and that the position was argued for from many directions. On behalf of the Catholic Church in Denmark, a priest, Niels Engelbrecht, said: "In the Catholic Church we see sexuality as an assignment which God has given us, and not as something that serves love alone, but one that has other purposes as well" (Geist & Klingsey, 2012). By comparison, the Chief Rabbi in Copenhagen, Bent Lexner, argues against same-sex marriage on basis of values, whereas Imran Shah from "Islamisk Trossamfund" (*Eng.*, Islamic faith community) argues by reference to freedom of religion and maintains the right not to perform same-sex marriages (Geist & Klingsey, 2012). In spite of the variation found in their patterns of argumentation, the religious community, apart from the majority church, found common positions with The National Council of Churches in Denmark.

The collective response through The National Council of Churches in Denmark and DABF therefore reveals quite a different pattern and idea of pluralism and religious freedom than that of Church of Denmark. They view themselves as collective, but separate units, with a right to self-determination on the grounds of religious freedom. Religious pluralism is in their opinion only possible when the state does not interfere in their collective internal matters. They accept the state's right to govern and promote sexual equality in civil society, but only up to the border of the religious dominion. In other words, they accept legitimate jurisdiction, but refuse the validity of a legal norm which will violate their religious tradition. They see such a violation in the introduction of the label of "marriage" applied to same-sex partnership and they worry that this legal norm and political agenda will become a tool for governing their religious content. The worry is that this legal norm will force them to either accept new religious doctrines on marriage or lose their position and standing within Danish society. Such consequences of a same-sex marriage law are in their eyes a clear "attack" on religious freedom.

Within civil society and among the communities themselves there have, however, been several initiatives promoting peaceful co-existence and a pluralistic religious society beyond the measures of the state. Several organizations and forums have been created with this intention in mind. These have to a large extent been based on private initiatives and close local collaboration among the various congregations and denominations with success only limited to their communities and not the public at large (Jacobsen, 2013).

When looking at the position of the churches and the religious communities outside the Church of Denmark, one thing in particular is clear: from their religious points of view gender-neutral marriage is overall seen as unacceptable. And, furthermore, there is significant resistance from almost all parts of the religio-organisational field in Denmark, except from an eight-to-two majority amongst the bishops and a significant portion of the clergy in the Church of Denmark.

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### **Same-sex marriage equality as a game changer for religious pluralism**

Already in the report from 2010 the question of religious freedom and the possibility of a serious change in the relationship between states and religions are touched upon. One member of the committee opposing a new ritual clearly states that the state—and the committee itself—has “no mandate in its foundation to introduce a [religious] ritual” (The Danish Ministry for Ecclesiastical Affairs, 2010, 56).

This quote highlights the central problem concerning religious pluralism that the case of same-sex marriage poses, which is: to what extent can the state interfere in the affairs of a religion in order to promote other sorts of political agendas. As one committee member points out, there are certain aspects of religious life such as rituals in which a state cannot govern without dismantling religious freedom and a pluralistic religious landscape. In his closing arguments, another member of the 2010 committee remarks that the case of same-sex couples’ status within the Church of Denmark is not just a circumscribed subject, but consequently and logically will also extend to other religious communities that perform marriage with civil legal validity (The Danish Ministry for Ecclesiastical Affairs, 2010, 58). This is a logical consequence, which the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs mentions in the announcement of the bill and an aspect to which the religious communities responded.

The public discussions and official hearing reveal that the majority church first and foremost is not a united entity, but rather a sort of Lutheran umbrella for various, very different Lutheran congregations. Within this organization there are very

diverse interpretations of marriage and of the frame of the Church of Denmark. The state, however, does not treat the Church of Denmark as such a diverse entity, but rather acts if it were one body of civil society that can be governed or nudged by legal norms. In this context, Silvio Ferrari's observations in his pyramid model about the degree of cooperation between established churches and the state seem painfully accurate in the case of the minorities opposed to the bill. As is clear from the debates and the hearing, the political system and most of the parliament acted without any serious reflections on whether or not they transgressed the borders between state and religion. Rather, they saw it as their duty to promote equality in Denmark even within the religious domain of the Church of Denmark, seeing it as a part of the extended state apparatus. Here, a priest in the Church of Denmark was reduced to a civil servant. The idea of religious freedom and pluralism therefore limited itself to—in the legal framework—the individual right to refuse participation in acts that contradict one's religious belief. If a Lutheran group or congregation within the majority church disagrees on legal matters or ritual practice, enforced or applied by the state, they only in a collective sense have the right to become a "free" congregation. Such a step implies that they must leave the Church of Denmark and only maintain very little formal connection to it. Religious pluralism and the right to dissent within the majority church are thus limited by the state to the individual level of the priests.

Regarding religious freedom and religious pluralism, the law of 2012 shows a significant difference between the Church of Denmark and the other approved religious communities. The law accepts only individual religious freedom within the majority church, but at the same time acknowledges the collective right of religious freedom of the other denominations. This pattern reveals empirically some of the dynamics of Ferrari's model. At the top of the pyramid of priority, the state expects complete organizational submission and only allows the minimum of religious freedom. The communities further from the nexus of the state are, on the other hand, provided with more collective rights that can only be obtained by the communities close to the state if they abandon their position. The state does in the legal framework of the same-sex marriage bill differentiate the proportions of religious freedom between the Church of Denmark and the other communities according to their position within the religio-organizational field.

Another pattern of interest in the case of same-sex marriage is apparent in the responses from the approved religious communities. On the one hand it shows that the various Christian churches of different denominations are capable of working closely together on the ground of ecumenical dialogue in Denmark. This case shows that these churches have established a pluralistic forum that provides them with common ground from where they can act together. This forum is beyond the

control of the state and is in fact a private initiative based firmly in civil society. On the other hand, the case also reveals the lack of cooperation between the other religious communities and Christians even if they do share the same position. The case is unique because all of the traditional religious communities share the negative attitude towards the law, but fail to act together.

Finally, the case of same-sex marriage reveals that several agendas of freedom can be viewed as exclusive from the point of view of traditional organized religions. The majority of religious communities are not opposing the promotion of sexual equality in civil society per se, but they all oppose this sort of status within their religion. They view the agenda of same-sex marriage within the Church of Denmark as a shift in norms posed by the legal framework and fear the consequences of this shift in relation to their status. They fear a further degree of estrangement between the state and religious communities if same-sex marriage is applied as a standard to measure religious communities. This shift has already been seen in the public discourse, where it became visible during the inauguration of a new mosque in 2014. Several politicians and members of the Church of Denmark refused to participate in the inauguration due to the fact that the Muslim community in charge did not show a positive attitude towards same-sex couples and homosexuals in general (Politiken, June 19, 2014). The fear of estrangement from the state among the religious communities is therefore perhaps more real than imagined.

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## **Conclusion: the possibility of religious pluralism beyond the state**

From the late 1980s and onward, the growth in religious diversity in Denmark has given rise to both an increased need for pluralistic policy in a number of areas—including marriage—and an increased political opposition to religion in general. The immigration policies and laws, as well as heightened security and anti-radicalisation measures, and the subsequent increasingly tough debates, are all part of this trend. These measures and debates reveal that freedom of religion and the protection of a pluralistic religious landscape were relegated to a secondary position, below other agendas. Religion—primarily Islam and to a certain extent also Judaism and Christianity—is framed as a potentially dangerous problem rather than as a solution.

The state has a vested interest in keeping the unity of marriage as an administrative object. However, the consequence of the minority religions' opposition is that the understanding and institution of marriage diversifies and ceases to be a co-

herent carrier institution for whatever the state might want from it. Civil marriage and religious celebrations become segregated and as this happens they are pulling apart the tightly knit intertwined structures distinct to Danish soft secularism with the consequence of a poorer administrative understanding of and empathy for the religious minorities in Denmark. The effect of the Danish state's change in marriage law was ultimately to estrange these religious communities and their understanding of marriage.

The case of same-sex marriage also reveals a dynamics of estrangement and encouragement in Ferrari's model that affects the relationship between state and religion in relation to religious pluralism. The case shows how the state, as an actor, through the promotion of various agendas—in this case same-sex equality—can pull or push actors within the religio-organisational field towards the state or further away from it. The relationship between state and religion is not static, and different organizations are therefore treated differently in changing political contexts. This incoherent treatment of religious organizations according to the place they occupy, as this case reveals, is also embedded in the degree of religious rights that these organizations are given. The very idea of religious pluralism in Denmark is therefore enacted as a collective privilege for a limited selection of organizations and only as an individual right for others according to their place in the field.

The religious organizations are therefore forced to consider what they value most and then move around the field in order to maximize or protect these values. In our particular case, this is very visible in the congregations within the Lutheran umbrella Church of Denmark. They can collectively choose to stay close to the state in order to maintain a high degree of public support, funds, and influence, while simultaneously losing a collective right to not accept same-sex marriage. In order to secure the right to govern internal religious affairs autonomously, they have to move their congregation away from the state on an organizational level and become a "free-church", thereby losing the former level of state support and access. It therefore seems that at an organizational level, religious pluralism in Denmark is only fully available beyond the border of state regulation. Once religious groups move through being approved or supported into the field of religious organizations regulated in relation to the state, they are immediately subject to some level of state control in terms of religious pluralism. This is not done through any sort of hard legal regulation, but rather through a soft regulatory power exercised through other laws, discourses, and promotion of political agendas. The Danish state does therefore allow religious pluralism on a formal level, but at the same time regulates it through categories that are not very well defined legally but rather are socially established.

The Danish case of same-sex marriage opens a series of perspectives on the future of religious pluralism in Denmark. The contested institution of marriage was changed to promote greater equality across sexual orientations, but nothing was done to promote greater equality of religions or to protect the internal autonomy of the Church of Denmark. In fact, the promotion of sexual equality became another demonstration of the lack of public support for religious pluralism. While taking nothing away from sexual minorities, the institution of marriage could have been used politically and legally to secure greater legal equality between religions. Yet nothing of the sort came to be, and the voices and input from significant minorities in the Danish religio-organisational field were largely ignored. The willingness of the centre-left government to open a legislative emancipatory programme for sexuality would have been an excellent opportunity to work towards greater religious pluralism and taking a further step towards equality of religions, but little has been done so far.

This legislation has not yet been finalized in Denmark and minority religious communities in Denmark still have the freedom to perform marriages with civil legal validity without being forced to wed same-sex couples. However, we conclude that the Danish legal and social framework for religious organizations does not promote religious pluralism, which has a negative effect on both the majority church and other religious communities, in particular concerning their relationship with the state. In fact, it is the institutions of the state itself that challenge religious pluralism.

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## **Section 3**

# **Balkans and Eastern Europe – Islam, Dialogue, and Plurality**

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# Interreligious Dialogue in the Macedonian Context

From Natural Diversity to Secular Theocracy

Ali Pajaziti

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## Introduction: Interreligious dialogue

The expression “interreligious dialogue” refers to positive interaction between people of different faith approaches, worldviews and communities. Although it is difficult to draw out the aims of the modern interreligious movement, which contains many disparate groups and individuals, certain common goals do seem to emerge. Most participants in this dialogue seek to respect the other’s point of view, as well as to share their own (NWE, 2015). Interreligious dialogue, also referred to as interfaith dialogue, is about people of different faiths coming to a mutual understanding and respect that allows them to live and cooperate with each other in spite of their differences. The term refers to cooperative and positive interaction between people of different religious traditions or faiths at both the individual and institutional level. Each party remains true to their own beliefs while respecting the right of the other to practice their faith freely (coistine.ie).

Interreligious dialogue implies a form of communication among the representatives of different religions which rejects the method of forcing the other party to accept the convictions and ideas of a particular religious group, and seeks similarities rather than differences among diverse religions. Interreligious dialogue is a way of communication that is carried out in an atmosphere of equality, tolerance, sincerity, love, respect, peace, and transparency, in order to offer the representatives of other religions the opportunity to learn about similarities and differences and enable them to know, listen to, discuss, understand, cooperate, coexist, and get closer through experience. This is also seen as an issue of the East and West,

as a peace-targeting and humanitarian attempt—such as to aim for a civic establishment based on overall human solidarity. Interreligious dialogue opposes the way of evil the world has undertaken. It is against wars, atheism, nihilism, and relativism. The expression “interreligious dialogue” is quite often replaced by the notion of “inter-civilizational dialogue”, especially since 9/11 and the aggravation of relations between the West and Islam. Interreligious dialogue is criticized for attempting interreligious synthesis, for underestimating distinctive elements of certain religions and for bringing with it the danger of creating an interreligious area, which would mean a new artificial faith, a “single global faith”, sometimes called a Vatican-established and politically-based religion. Some other people oppose it because according to them ecumenism is against state policies, and others see it as a form of secularization of religions, etc. (Sezen, 2006, 12, 15; Pajaziti, 2009, 126). In general, the dialogue requires mutual respect (Nasr) and cannot stand political agendas, created in the background and based on conspiracies; it requires sincerity, honesty, and understanding even for great differences that may exist as such.

In the context of dialogue, the notion of tolerance, which has a paternalist meaning, is quite often mentioned. This means the tolerance of the majority for a minority. “Tolerated” persons or groups aim at being accepted and finding some space within the society.

Nowadays, when the world is undergoing rapid changes, when scenarios of a clash of civilizations are already happening, when intolerance is constantly growing (Jahanbegloo, 2011, 13), the benefits and advantages from engaging the representatives of other cultures become even more important. In this respect, Ali A. Mazrui’s words are completely meaningful when he says, “In the 21<sup>st</sup> century the dialogue of values will prevail over the clash among cultures” (Mazrui, 2002, 10).

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## **Focusing on Macedonia from a culturological perspective**

Macedonia is a “civilizational corridor” where East and West are being brought together. This can best be illustrated by the presence of the various Islamic cultural elements alongside the Slavo-Orthodox ones, exemplified by the many mosques (580) and churches (1952) found throughout Macedonia. A good example of this is the capital city of the country, Skopje. If Skopje is a microcosmic Macedonia and the Old/Ottoman Market is one of its segments, then we can focus on it as a space in which we shall find many elements of this cultural diversity: from St. Spas to Mustafa Pasha, from the Albanian to the Macedonian apprentice sailor, etc. Skopje has another element by which it can be easily identified, the Stone Bridge, an ancient object that has a specific significance, both for the citizens of this city and for

the ones who come to visit it. A Bosnian philosopher from Macedonia has given a brilliant description of its significance:

Each bridge is a metaphysical miracle, the Skopje one, especially! Passing over the bridge you not only pass from one side to the other side of the river Vardar. This bridge connects the born and flourishing cultures in one place, in the same city, Skopje. Its arches connect Europe and Asia; East and West; Christianity with Islam, drawing them together in a way unparalleled at the earthly level. On the same bridge you can find a mihrab inscribed with messages from the Holy Qur'an, while the Orthodox priest casts the cross upon the river on the occasion of Epiphany. Because of the Stone Bridge, Vardar is known as the Second Bosphorus as well. Analysts say, a real Bosphorus. (Muhic, 2007, 29)

The cultural mosaic named Macedonia, which is described as a “deep diversity” (Taylor, 1994), is a natural condition. If we have a look at the statistical data, we shall notice that diverse ethnic and religious belongings can be found there, which in turn create a heterogeneous situation. Seen from the religious point of view, the majority of the population belongs to the Christian religion; however, there are voices which say that half of the population belongs to the Islamic religion (IRC-Islamic Religious Community). There are more than 30 religious communities in Macedonia.

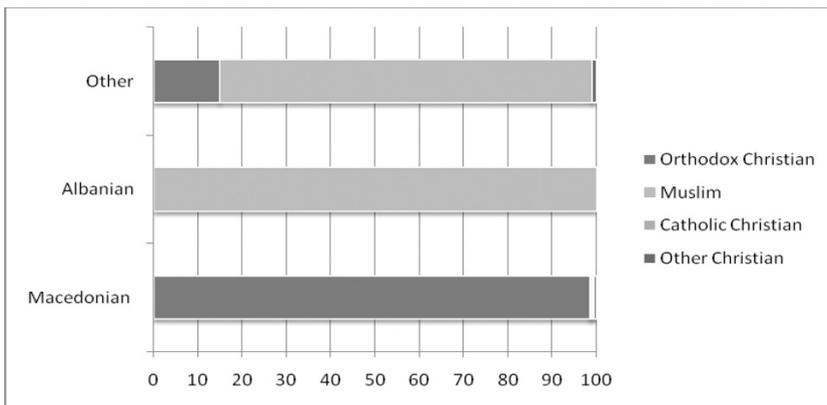
According to the 2002 National Census (which now represents old data), this religious diversity is clearly shown:

**Table 1** Data regarding the number of religious adherents (2002 Census)

Religious community	Number	%	Together with the Diaspora
Orthodox	1,310,184	64.78	2,000,000
Muslims	674,015	33.33	900,000
Catholics	7,008	0.35	17,391
Christians (Community is not mentioned)	15,862	0.78	904
Protestants	520	0.03	
Adventists	487	0.02	5,000
Baptists	102	0.01	100
Evangelicals	272	0.01	1,000
Evangelical – Methodists	1,303	0.06	5,000
Reformists	28	0.00	
Jehovah Witnesses	1,105	0.05	1,105
Jewish	71	0.00	208
Hare Krishna	40	0.00	200
Unspecified	433	0.02	

Religious community	Number	%	Together with the Diaspora
Atheists	3,524	0.17	
Undefined	1,377	0.07	
Unknown	6,216	0.31	
Total	2,022,547	100.00	2,930,903

It must be noted here that the Albanians living in Macedonia compose the great majority of the Muslims there, whereas among the Macedonians one can find Christian Orthodox in the majority along with Muslims, Protestants, Adventists, Baptists, etc. The ethnic dependency issue is, however, much more sensitive, as it coincides with religious adherence. The majority of the Slavic groups are of the Christian religion, whereas the majority of the Albanians, all Turks, and the Romas are mainly Muslims.



**Figure 1** Macedonian ethnicity by religious affiliation

Source: PCA Household Survey September 2009 (Bartlett, 2010, 60)

Since 2006 when VMRO-DPMNE came into power, events have followed a negative trend, especially in terms of the relations between the two largest ethnic groups. During this period, Premier Gruevski, using a *limited democracy* (I. Acevski) and illiberal policies (F. Zakaria), tended to minimize the Albanian factor by every means, using Machiavellian methods as well, by dividing Albanian factions on a party basis. The Brodec case<sup>1</sup> and a show of the government's might through

1 In this 2007 incident seven Albanians were killed by the police in the town of Brodec.

brutal intervention, the violence of the election cycles, theocratisation of the political scene (state-sponsored crosses and churches), the manipulation of some cases in 2001 such as the one in The Hague (some ex-soldiers of the National Liberation Army were prosecuted by legal institutions even after amnesty) etc., are some of the steps taken to regain the pride which the party lost in 2001.

This situation has caused new tensions as well as inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflict. This has led people living in the same society to build up prejudices against one another. In the cultural sphere there is “a Macedonian Culture War” which was transformed into a dominant point of the VRMO-DPMNE traditionalist (conservative) political strategy during 2006-2015. A key point of this strategy is the “defense of the Macedonian ethnos”, the national iconography, the MOC (Macedonian Orthodox Church), the change in demographic trends (the racist law on fertility where only Macedonian zones would have benefits), and the re-reading and re-writing of Macedonian history, morality, and politics. This strategy draws “the borders of the differences” between “us” and “them” in a militant way. Democratic Macedonia is being redefined as “Ethnic Macedonia”, which develops a conservative agenda and constructs Macedonian history on a mythological basis, thus spreading political hysteria.

Other than these trends, we note that in Macedonia, the religious dimension is also a problematic one. The government privileges the MOC, i.e., the Christian religion, develops provocative pro-Orthodox policies, like the crosses placed on the Ottoman objects (towers), the Millennium Cross in Vodno, favors (MOC) in the process of the denationalization of the lands of religious communities, etc. The state supports the churches but discriminates against smaller religious communities, which materially aren't helped out at all (Vranishkovski, 2010). According to the media, the Government has given 20 million Euros for building the Church of St. Elena and Constantin.

A highly placed representative of DR (New Democracy) articulated that the current government aims at the Christianization of Macedonia, as it tends to represent the country as being mono-religious and mono-ethnic, a position which damages inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations, thus resulting in the destruction of constitutional secularity by the Prime Minister, who usually has Orthodox representatives near him (*Koha*, 2010). Furthermore, one can easily notice the crosses printed in the school textbooks published in Albanian.

The human rights report produced by the U.S. Department of State (2009 Human Rights Report: Macedonia) openly states that that the support given by the state to the Orthodox Church in the central plaza of the capital has created more inter-ethnic tensions and has generated concerns regarding the division of the church from the state. (Pajaziti, 2011, 36)

One of the problems of 2011 is the “Case of the New Church-Museum in the Ancient Castle”, an attempt at maniacal “churchification” of the public sphere. In addition, 2012 was a year of political and cultural turbulence in Macedonia, as witnessed in the Vevchani case (a scandalous carnival), Nish (chauvinistic fanatic fans), Gostivar (the execution of two young Albanians by an ethnic Macedonian policeman), attacks on urban busses in Skopje (beatings of Albanian students by Macedonian hooligans), Smilkovci (the macabre execution of five Macedonians), that caused an increase in “ethnic tensions with religious dimensions” (Reynal-Querol, 2000, 15) as a distinctive feature of the Balkans.

In Macedonia, it is very evident that there is an institutional tendency to orthodoxize or slavicize society. This can be best seen with the new church in the castle and the “crosses on every rock”. The absurdity of the *orthodox theocratization* is greater when the church is in total crisis, when its number of visitors/adherents has fallen a lot. The Macedonian political establishment, particularly the current one, is making a fatal mistake for the whole society, provoking other religious communities, in particular Islamic ones. Almost all public buildings are now sanctified by priests, as in a Caesar-Papal model, not a secular society. The State clearly shows its bias by favoring one religion over others. This latest case of *the church in the Ottoman castle* doesn’t need comment. Insanity has reached its peak with the churchification of the ancient castle. Our vital space is narrow. Macedonism as a Slavic-Orthodox ideology is spreading its wings like a real Lucifer. It is a provocation that tends to put Albanians and Muslims into a ghetto and gives the impression that Macedonia equals the church, and that even the ancient Ottoman buildings must reflect a level of Orthodoxy. Surely this cultural fanaticism and religious rage exceeds the scope of fundamentalism and appears as panoramic and optical terrorism. (alipajaziti.net)

All of the above analyses reveal that in Macedonia, the principle of laicism has been violated and that there is now an asymmetrical secularism.

Professor Mirjana Najchevska, former president of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights and a civic activist, says that the state quite often and directly interferes in religious issues and on the basis of protecting national interests, it places the Macedonian Orthodox Church—The Ohrid Archbishoprics in a special position, thus directly impacting the secular character of the state.

In this time of the rule of nationalists, such as VMRO, the state supports the MOC, and it is obvious, direct and demonstrative support”, says Sasho Ordanoski, a well-known journalist. The same is confirmed by the citizens themselves. Ivan Grozdanov, a member of the Christian-Baptist Church in Macedonia, considers the decision of the government to establish an Orthodox church in the center of Skopje to be a serious violation of the rights of other religious communities in Macedonia.

“It is obvious that the government began to establish a medieval church state. It is about a harsh violation of the Constitution and the warranted equality of religious communities”. The Islamic Religious Community openly accuses the state and the existing conservative powers of granting exclusivity to the Macedonian Orthodox Church—the Ohrid Archbishoprics as well as the selective implementation of the constitutional provision of secularism. According to this entity, when it comes to establishing new religious facilities or the restoration of old construction, the MOC has an exclusive right and is allowed to build churches and other religious buildings wherever they please. (portalb.mk)

The latest cases of unreasonable actions of the government include the construction of a hotel building on the foundations of the Burmali Mosque (built in 1495) in the center of Skopje, as well as the erection of a statue of a controversial historic figure, that of the murderer Andon Qoseto, on the foundations of the Yelen Kapan Mosque, which made the IRC react against the government, the City of Skopje, and Center Municipality, accusing them of the desecration of sacred foundations, of destroying the sublime and the right to faith of more than 40% of the population of the Republic of Macedonia.

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## **Interreligious dialogue: Platform Macedonia**

Though Macedonia is known as a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-religious state, as “a historic pillar of tolerance and respect of universal civic values” (Pavlovska, 2011, 3), the relations among different entities, especially between the two major communities, i.e., Albanians and Macedonians, which also mark parallelism in the religious sphere with Muslims and Orthodox, have been pretty fragile and unstable recently. The year 2001 was the time of challenging coexistence, a year in which this country escaped from the civil war for a while, whereupon there were many attacks on religious facilities (57 Islamic buildings were destroyed by the military-police forces, of which 20 remain out of service, whereas just one church was damaged by the Albanian armed forces) (Shehapi, 2002, 10).

There have been many attempts since the conclusion of the armed conflict for reconciliation and dialogue among ethnic and religious communities in Macedonia. One of those initiatives is interreligious dialogue. The healing of tense interreligious relations is a noble initiative which requires keeping cool heads and good will. Such was the initiative by the late President, Boris Trajkovski, who organized a forum for dialogue of civilizations in August 2003 in Ohrid. He knew the practice of interreligious dialogue was unknown in Macedonia, but he thought it might prove to be practically useful as one of the steps in preventing a civil war

(Mojzes, 30). Four years later, the Second World Conference on Interreligious and Inter-civilizational Dialogue was held in Ohrid on 26-28 October 2007, having as a main topic “The contribution of religion and culture in peace, mutual respect and coexistence”. Another conference held again in Ohrid on 6-8 May 2010, titled “Religion and Culture – an inseparable relation among nations” was along the same line as the previous events. Some 300 representatives attended: about 200 were foreign participants from some fifty countries, with the other third of the participants coming from Macedonia.

The last conference, held in Skopje on May 10-12, 2013, was the continuation of the former two world conferences held in Ohrid in 2007 and 2010 respectively. Several topics marked the organization of this conference, such as “Pluralist societies and religious tolerance”, “Clashes in modern times and challenges of coexistence in peace”, “Living together by respecting differences”, “The contribution of media to the interreligious and intercultural dialogue” and “Theoretical and historical foundations of global interreligious dialogue”.

At this conference, 250 political, cultural and religious leaders from Macedonia and 25 other countries met in the capital Skopje at the Third World Conference on Inter-Religious and Inter-civilization Dialogue focusing on “Freedom and Dignity – Fundamental Values”. The Conference sponsors were the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Macedonia, the UNESCO Alliance of Civilizations, the Council of Europe, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Arab League, the Council of Churches, the International Conference for Religion and Peace, the International Organization of Francophonie, other NGOs, etc. (Bolleter, 2013).

Among its main objectives were the following: recognizing the role and the importance of freedom and dignity as universal human rights and as fundamental values in interpersonal, interreligious and intercultural relations; appreciating cultural and religious differences because diverse cultural and religious traditions have a great creative potential and represent a means of understanding and mutual respect. The need for further strengthening and motivation of interreligious dialogue was also discussed, indicating the theoretical and historical foundations of the global interreligious dialogue and the role of youth in these movements.

In his speech, the President of Macedonia said, among other things, that, “Macedonia has a long-lasting tradition in this field. At the core of that is the experience of our multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and multi-religious society, which has maintained a peaceful co-existence of religions. This tradition of coexistence and religious tolerance has created solid friendships between people of different religions. As a result, Macedonia is one of the rare countries in Europe where Orthodox Christians and Muslims worship God under the same roof. These are places where religions not only meet, but also overlap in space and time” (Ivanov, 2013).

The conference was concluded by reading out the Conference Declaration through which the participants called for better interaction and partnership among governments and religious communities towards the elimination of violence and all forms of terror and the promotion of peace, development and human dignity. The observance of a common heritage, cultural variety and the dignity of every single individual make up the fundamental values of intercultural dialogue that help us eliminate ethnic, cultural, and religious divisions.

This conference, however, was not attended by any representative of the local Islamic Religious Community, which caused a loss of significance to a greater and wider dialogue, since problems exist at a local level in terms of the relations between the state and one of the two major religious communities in Macedonia. The reasons behind the absence of the IRC representatives were numerous: the prohibition on reconstructing the Charshi Mosque in Prilep, the mosque in Lazhec, the crosses placed on towers in Bitola and Prilep, the refusal to denationalize lands and other property belonging to the IRC (only 16% of nationalized property has been returned to this institution), the allocation of a site to construct the Islamic Center in Skopje, the exclusion of the Islamic element from the Skopje Center within the Skopje 2014 project, etc.

Through dialogue, parties can get to know and understand each other better; in this context, the Ohrid and Skopje conferences achieved their goal, which was to present a platform of pacifism and universal dialogue extending beyond the Balkans.

The dialogue between the IRC and MOC was more vital in the period from 2000 to 2006 when the Faculty of Islamic Sciences was led by Prof. Ismail Bardhi, who was the Dean of the Faculty at that time. There were more mutual visits, staff exchange, lectures on “the others’ religion” in both theological faculties, etc. In the period from 2003 to 2007, a total of 26 exchange lectures impacting 590 students were organized. For some years now the cooperation between these two religious communities has not taken place at the desired level. The IRC, through its Secretary General, claims that there are about 3-4 annual meetings, and that there is a need for a more efficient collaboration, not just solemn meetings, for coexistence cannot be effected through advertising campaigns alone, but rather concrete on site activities are necessary.

In this respect, relations are spoilt by occasional declarations made by irresponsible theologians, as was the case with Boban Mitevski, professor at the Orthodox Theology Faculty and chief of the cabinet of the leader of the MOC, Archbishop Stefan:

...the actual situation on site reveals that Muslims are invading the territory and they are marking it by constructing religious buildings, even in those areas where they have neither population nor believers. As a reaction, we are constructing churches and crosses and defending our territories from the invaders. We are protecting our own territory and we are striving for providing all of our believers appropriate conditions so that they can freely and honestly observe and cultivate their religious feelings (plusinfo.mk).

The same goal was behind the placement of the huge 51-meters high cross in front of the blocks of flats constructed by “Cevahir Holding” – a present in the form of a donation by the Macedonian World Congress, whose president justifies it by saying that they have the right to mark their ethnic territory. Mitevski calls the Turkish investor “a Muslim company” and adds that the cross should prevent Muslims from settling in Christian areas.

During Ramadan 2014, the IRC did not take part in the *Iftar* organized by the Prime Minister, due to numerous unresolved issues and unrealized promises (Tahiri, 2014).

We can conclude that there is a big gap between the two major religious communities in Macedonia. According to Bardhi, one of the main reasons for these spoilt relations is the fact that theologians are not collaborating in their respective fields and are not promoting interreligious dialogue. According to him, this is evidence of the lack of trust in God, of a deficient theology, and of a negative tradition (Shenja, 2013, 17).

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## Conclusions

Some people consider Macedonia to be a role model for the successful coexistence of citizens of different backgrounds; however, findings say that the situation is that of living beside one another, and not with one another. In this respect, the state plays the most negative role, since it has historically and traditionally taken the side of one of the religions. Favoring one religion and disregarding the others has proven to provoke religious, cultural, and ethnic hatred. The desecularization of the state, i.e., the tendencies for theocratization (MRT 1 as a public service and the Orthodox Christian symbolism, Macedonia Timeless, the Church in the Castle, the new cross in the airport, the start of the new academic year 2012/2013 with a Christian liturgy, etc.) are all facts that damage relations among religious communities and the relations among citizens of different religious communities. The factual situation since 2006 speaks in favor of a secular theocracy with a civic religion of national politics (nationalism) occupying the public sphere in which

the government has replaced God. In Macedonia, the state is secular, but with pro-Christian actions, with no fairness to other religious communities. Today, citizens of this country are faced with a nation targeted by the VMRO-DPMNE in the sense of Huckabee's "God-centred" nation, not in a real sense, but rather at the level of politicizing religion or utilizing it for political aims. The lack of transparency and dialogue about crucial issues creates doubts, causes protests, and provokes clashes, whereas the lack of intercultural and interreligious dialogue is the cause of the low level of the integration of the society.

The platform for interreligious dialogue initiated in 2003 is very important for the cultivation of a culture of tolerance, for the advancement of the feeling of coexistence, for mutual recognition of entities, for the de-Balkanization of Macedonia and beyond, for the re-establishment of bridges among people, for the reconceptualization of the culture, and for the spiritual understanding of religion that will make people more humane, generous, transparent, and active in the creation of a positive social environment, within their pro-social actions and behaviors.

In summary, we recommend the following:

- The positive practice of organizing conferences on interreligious dialogue should continue, since it affirms the constructive role of religion which is the revitalization of confidence;
- All religious communities in the country should be included in dialogue platforms;
- There is a need for a transformed social atmosphere where religious communities and their representatives would feel equal before the state—there should be no bias but rather neutrality on the part of the state should be strengthened when it comes to religious communities;
- There should be more publications that speak about interreligious dialogue;
- NGOs should contribute more to organizing events, conferences, discussions on coexistence and intercultural tolerance;
- Clerics, through concrete actions, should work towards making it clear to everyone that coexistence is essential;
- The educational system should include in all of its curricula subjects that talk about religions in general and local ones in particular;
- The media should be more careful in transmitting their journalistic messages, since they have an immediate positive and/or negative impact on the society.

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# Youth and Religious Dialogue in Macedonia

Muhamed Jashari

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## Religion in Macedonian society

In speaking about multiculturalism or multi-religiosity in multi-religious or multi-ethnic societies, such as the Republic of Macedonia, it is impossible not to mention the religion factor. This is because religion is considered to be one of the key institutions of society and one of the most important social elements in the global era.

Henri Bergson said that in the past as well as today we can be faced with societies which do not cultivate art, philosophy, or science, but we cannot come across a society where there is no religion. The German scholar of social phenomena, Hans Frayer, asserts that human beings since the era of the most primitive cultures lived within social groups, and also lived according to religious norms. Even though religion has to do with private matters of belief grounded in the subjectivity of humans, it is in constant interaction with society, and not only that, religion is an influential phenomenon in social life. It is assumed that the oldest and most loyal friend of a human in his inner and outer life is the phenomenon called religion. The human being always seeks happiness, whereas the primary place wherein he finds comfort and happiness is religion (Pajaziti, 2003, 48).

Religion puts more emphasis on the individual psychological functions that are of great importance for making sense of life. It reaches from the public into the private sphere. At different periods its effects have been greatly reduced but it has never entirely disappeared. (Matevski, 2013, 47).

The American researcher, Meredith McGuire, asserts that religion constitutes one of the most powerful forces that is felt deeply and has a great impact on hu-

man society. It impacts interpersonal relationships and has a profound influence on family, on community, and on economic and political life (McGuire, 2007, 27).

With the establishment of the Communist system in the Balkan Peninsula and in Macedonia, religion was declared an enemy of society and citizens and religious people were unwanted persons for the Party which promoted paradise in this world (Gellner, 2001, 84), while members of the Communist Party enjoyed authority and numerous privileges.

With the destruction of Marxist ideology, the value of the phenomenon called religion immediately began to increase (Pajaziti, 2012, 54). The population of this region immediately started to identify itself with religion and religiosity. Religious edifices such as mosques or churches that once used to be empty now began to fill with practicing believers. So during the transition period religiosity appeared to be the expression of the *Vox Dei* (Divine Voice) or as a “return to sacrality”.

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## Multiculturalism and Multi-Religiosity in Macedonia

Seen from a theoretical angle, multiculturalism is a “recognition of differences”, or as Charles Taylor says, “Multiculturalism is a policy of recognition or antipode of non-recognition”.

Whoever wants to see how ethnicity and religion operate in the Balkans can encounter that in Macedonia. The Republic of Macedonia is a representation of the historical reality, whether cultural or religious, of the Balkans, and that is because it is a country with great ethnic and cultural diversity.

The cultural mosaic called Macedonia is special because of its deep diversity and this is a natural situation for this country. Macedonia may be properly considered a country with a complex society (Aceski, 2013, 88). Whoever visits Skopje should not be surprised if at the same time he or she hears the Adhan (call to prayer from the mosque) and also the church bells ringing.

According to the census of 2002 in the Republic of Macedonia there are the following ethnicities: Macedonians – 64.18%, Albanians – 25.17%, Turks – 3.85%, Roma -2.66%, Serbs – 1.78%, Bosniaks – 0.84%, Vlachs – 0.48%, and the rest – 1.04%, while the religious composition of the population of Macedonia is as follows: Macedonian Orthodox 64.7%, Muslim 33.3%, other Christian 0.37%, other, and unspecified 1.63% (State Statistical Office, 2002).

On the basis of these figures we see that Macedonia is a microcosm of the Balkans, a country with great cultural, religious, ethnic and linguistic heterogeneity. The Turkish intellectual and current Prime Minister of Turkey, Ahmet Davutoglu, during his visit to Skopje a few years ago, stated that, “Macedonia

is the epicenter, or the heart of the Balkans” (Ahmed Davutoglu, December 2012).

Therefore, we can again affirm that Macedonia is “Catena Mundi”, or the cross-roads of civilizations, the corridor where East and West meet, as well as Islam and Christianity. This fact is proven by its Islamic religious monuments but also its Orthodox Christian structures (Pajaziti, 2012, 31). As Macedonia possesses a multicultural, multiethnic and multi-religious society, respecting “the other” becomes indispensable to the prosperity of the state and its future.

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## Youth and religion

There is no doubt that the youth is the most vital layer of a society; to invest in youth means investing in the future of the country and society in which you live. Youth is a separate social category which is the basis of the future development of the society.

Youth is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood’s independence. That’s why, as a category, youth is more fluid than other fixed age-groups. The United Nations, for statistical purposes, defines “youth”, as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by member states. Thus, in its reports, the Secretary-General also recognized that, the term ‘youth’ varies in different societies around the world (United Nations, Definition of Youth).

The National Youth Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia defines the young as people who are able to assume responsibility for their own lives and make decisions on all issues pertaining to them at all levels.

According to Macedonian society’s former historical, social, political and ethical practices, and in the absence of any internationally recognized definition, the term youth as used in the Republic of Macedonia signifies a separate socio-ethical category of population aged between 15 and 24 (Republic of Macedonia National Youth Strategy, 2005). It is worth mentioning that among the total number of inhabitants of the Republic of Macedonia, 23% are 15 to 29 years of age (Republic of Macedonia National Youth Strategy, 2005).

Although during the period of Communism interest in religion among youth was extraordinarily low, we can say that religion didn’t completely disappear. According to research studies conducted at that time, especially those done after the 1970s, 34.8% of the youth aged 15 to 25 years believed in God. According to research conducted in the 1980s, 72% of Macedonian youth were non-religious, while the lowest percentage of non-religiosity was found among Macedonian youth of Albanian heritage—38%.

We should mention that the most non-religious youth during the times of the former Yugoslavia were the Montenegrin youth, with a percentage of 79%. Amongst the Muslim population the percentage of the non-religious was 45% (Pajaziti, 2003, 70).

Despite the fact that the Communists tried to present religion as a threat to society, no age group, nor any segment of the population, was completely detached from religion. After the fall of the Communist system, religious consciousness was raised among the population of Macedonia, so that in a research survey conducted in 1991, 64.3% of the population of this country had a belief in God, whereas 57.6% had some religious feelings (Ibid).

Research about the attitudes of the young towards education, culture, politics, and the economy, including religion, in the Republic of Macedonia was conducted in September, October, and November of 2013. The age group of those surveyed in this research was 15 to 29 years old. In this research the young belonging to the Macedonian ethnic group were 67%, the Albanian young 25%, whereas 8% of the youth were from other ethnicities living in the Republic of Macedonia.

In the question asked of youth regarding religious affiliation, 63% of them expressed themselves as belonging to Orthodox Christian belief, 34% were Muslim, whereas 0.4% were Catholic. In this research only 2% of the youth answered that they were atheists. In response to the question about religious practice only 3.4% answered that they *regularly* practise religion, whereas 18.8% answered that they *hardly ever* practice religion. It is worth mentioning that on the basis of this research Albanian youth had the higher percentage of those practising religion in comparison with Macedonian youth. 25.5% of the Albanian youth *regularly* practice their religion [presumably Islam], whereas the *regularity* of Macedonians' religious practice is 14.7% (Ibid).

A large number of the youth that took part in this survey were born exactly at the time when religion once again became part of public life. We could say that religion among Macedonian youth enjoys a high popularity and a large number of youth are religious.

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## Youth and NGOs

A non-governmental organisation (NGO) is any non-profit, voluntary citizens' group. Some are organized around specific issues, such as human rights, environment, health, religion, etc. Civil society must at any given time manifest the will and interest of the citizens. It must be distinct from government-controlled institutions. That is the reason it is referred to as "the third sector" of the society.

Among the places where the young of different ethnicities and confessions in Macedonia meet and face the same challenges, different NGOs play an extraordinarily large role in terms of multiculturalism, multiethnicity, promotion of peace or mutual respect. Through NGOs the young get to know each other, exchange ideas, carry out activities or projects, and undertake new initiatives.

When it comes to NGOs and their activity in the Republic of Macedonia, it is worth mentioning that there are around 6,000 registered NGOs, including student, sport, cultural, youth and religious organisations.<sup>1</sup> This growth in number caused a respective growth of interest in the NGOs. A great number of NGOs were established after the conflict of 2001.

In the survey which was carried out in 2013, youth were asked to declare their trust or distrust toward a total of 16 (public and private) institutions on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 meaning “do not trust at all”, whereas 4 signified “trust a lot”.

According to these results, among young people in Macedonia, the scale of trust is higher toward NGOs (2.16) than for political parties (1.95), or the parliament (2.05). Various NGOs in Macedonia in recent years have carried out activities to raise general public awareness about political culture, participation in elections, as well as human, cultural and religious consciousness.

Below we will mention several student youth organisations which, in recent years, have conducted activities and undertaken various beneficial initiatives for Macedonian society. Among them we can mention: Islamic Youth Forum—IYF, Mladinski Obrazovan Forum—MOF, Student Youth Organization (Deca), etc.

IYF is a youth organization that was founded in 2000, the mission of which is to promote and cultivate universal Islamic and human values in the youth, as well as protecting them from deviation (IYF, Activity Catalog, 2013).

The materials published by this organisation state that it is an “.. organization that proceeds with integration processes”. Another of the policies of this youth religious organization is encouraging dialogue with others. It is worth mentioning that this youth organization is active in various cities of Macedonia, while it is also an organization affirmed in the international arena.

This organisation from time to time organizes forums and conferences discussing different topics, with speakers from Macedonia and abroad. In recent years within its activities this organization has addressed several topics, among which we can mention the following: “Islam and Globalization”, “Integration of Muslims in Europe”, “Human Rights”, “Youth and Interethnic and Interreligious Tolerance in the Republic of Macedonia”.

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1 [http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/wbstorage/Files/analiza\\_nvo.pdf](http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/wbstorage/Files/analiza_nvo.pdf)

Several years ago IYF, together with some other youth organizations in Macedonia, initiated the “March of Peace”. This initiative was undertaken with the aim of fighting interethnic tensions, as well as building bridges of cooperation among different ethnicities in the country.

One of the activists of this youth religious organization asserts, “The Islamic Youth Forum is an organization which promotes the highest Islamic and human values among the society in which it is active. It is becoming a symbol of peace, unity, tolerance, youth integration, intellectual and spiritual development. Its aims are to create a civil society whose reflections will affect everyday living, changing the world for the better” (Lion, age 20, Skopje).

Youth initiatives in the Republic of Macedonia are welcomed by the youth, especially by students, exactly due to the fact that they undertake initiatives that meet the needs of the society. We can realise this from their declarations:

“They are very fruitful organisations, and recently there has been a big flux. We can see that the youth are becoming aware, dedicating some of their time to follow lectures and to join very important social projects. Youth Educational Forum—YEF has a very wide background, with thousands of projects undertaken to meet the interests of the youth” (Zana, age 19, Skopje).

“NGOs have a positive influence on the youth, as they implement many projects, seminars, trainings; they have presentations on which they debate, and they work on important topics which are of interest for the citizens, especially the youth” (Sofija, age 23, Skopje).

Undoubtedly different NGOs serve as facilitators of communication among youth in Macedonia. A large number of students are active in NGOs with the purpose of raising awareness of the youth and citizens in general. This makes a special contribution to breaking down stereotypes between ethnic communities.

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## Conclusion

Youth are the foundation of every society. The more that the intellectual level of the young is nurtured and developed, the more the society is enriched. The best possible investment that could be made by a government or state is the investment in young people. At the same time religion is one of the crucial institutions of a society. It is part of our daily routine and interactive activity. Equipping the young with religious values means equipping them with human or universal principles. The different youth NGOs and confessional initiatives in Macedonia are good contributors to mutual understanding and tolerance that facilitate building bridges of cooperation.

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# From Religious Nationalism to Religious Pluralism

## The Kosovo Case

Jeton Mehmeti

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### Religious nationalism and religious pluralism

Religion and nationalism and at times religious nationalism have often triggered harsh public debates in the Western Balkan countries. To some foreign observers the entire Balkan Peninsula represents a typical case of religious nationalism. According to political scientist Barbara-Ann Rieffer, “religious nationalism is the fusion of nationalism and religion such that they are inseparable” (Barker, 2009, 13). The former Yugoslavia is the most notorious example of modern religious nationalism in Europe. “It fits the pattern of religious nationalism perfectly... When conflicts have arisen between ethnic groups on the peninsula, religion has played a central role in identity formation” (Barker, 2009, 144). Barker shows how religion has been used as a constitutive element of nationalism and an effective political mobilizing force. Religion, according to him, has been instrumentalized to gain independence; to acquire political legitimacy; to create internal socio-political unity; to provide a political counter-ideology; and to fortify the cultural ramparts around a society. However, the author raises a number of questions that are relevant to the case of Kosovo: when is national identity defined in terms of religion? As an extension of it? In opposition to it? Or as a substitute for it? And when does it cease to be important?

Nationalist movements adopt religious language, build on the religious identity of a community, and rely on the assistance of religious leaders and institutions to promote its cause. Tomanic has examined the consequences of the Serbian Orthodox Church supporting and promoting the nationalist campaign of Slobodan Mi-

losevic, first for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and later for Kosovo. Tomaniq concludes that if the Church had not blessed Serbia's wars, many civilian casualties would have been avoided, especially in the case of Kosovo where Serbia was engaged in a war with NATO in 1999, in which case both human and technical losses were massive. But the Church had also been directly or indirectly involved in other military campaigns. Tomaniq mentions at least three such occasions. In 1594 Serbs of Banat were led by Bishop Teodor Nestorovic in a military campaign against Ottomans. Five centuries later, in 1941 Patriarch Gavril blessed the Yugoslav army in revolting against German forces, an uprising which lasted only twelve days. Fifty years later, in 1999 when Serbia went to war with NATO over Kosovo, Patriarch Pavle explained to the Serbs that for them this war means "defence, and therefore it is blessed by God", de facto legitimizing Milosevic's wars as a "sacred endeavour" (Tomaniq, 2006). The Serbian resistance lasted only 78 days.

History has shown that when religious authorities support military activity, then the activity becomes a sacred endeavour, while the whole conflict becomes more fanatical. As Hans Küng puts it: "The most fanatical and cruellest political struggles are those that have been coloured, inspired, and legitimized by religion" (Kung, 1986, 442). The head of SOC during the dissolution of Yugoslavia, Patriarch Pavle, neither distanced his Church from nor apologized for the genocide and aggression of Serbian military forces against non-Serb civilians, like Muslims in Bosnia, Croats in Croatia, and Albanians in Kosovo. The Church's tone towards Kosovo did not change immediately after the war. The acting Patriarch Bishop Amfilohije Radović made the political statement: "Damned be the one who recognizes Kosovo", referring to the countries that were recognizing Kosovo as an independent state after the declaration of independence in 2008 (Morina, 2010). Pavle's successor, Patriarch Irinej, continued with the same tone and promised to "protect Kosovo and Metohia, because Serbia without Kosovo and the holy sites that are there, is without soul, mind and heart" (Morina, 2010).

A more positive discourse towards Kosovo was recently noticed from the new Bishop Teodosije Šibalić of Raska and Prizren, who stated at an interfaith conference:

We are deeply aware that the painful events of the last decades and particularly the armed conflict intensified the atmosphere of animosity between the Serbian and Albanian communities in Kosovo but we also believe that the power of forgiveness and reconciliation is stronger and we have to find the way out of the vicious circle of hatred and prejudices. In this process, we religious leaders have a particularly important role and responsibility in front of God our Creator and Benefactor (2013).

The Bishop also stated that although the conflict in Kosovo was not a religious one, religion has nevertheless played a role in the culture of the people who misleadingly still see religious sites as symbols of national ideologies rather than as the house of God. “We must change this perception and this is our primary task now”.

The nationalistic tone of the Serbian Orthodox Church towards Kosovo has gradually changed, partly due to interfaith dialogue initiatives. A great number of interfaith dialogue conferences, roundtables, and other initiatives that brought together representatives of religious communities in Kosovo have been organized since 1999. Such initiatives are built around the concept of religious pluralism and interfaith harmony. Among the organizers are foreign embassies serving in Kosovo, religious and non-religious international organizations like OSCE, Tony Blair Faith Foundation, Gülen Movement, World Conference of Religions for Peace, as well as local governmental and non-governmental organizations.

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## **The struggle for reconciliation and interfaith dialogue**

There has often been an association between religion and conflict in many local or international wars where religious differences were the primary cause of the conflict or at least made the differences between two sides wider. The Kosovo-Serbia war was not entirely a religious war, although religious authorities played a significant role in it. Although religion can contribute to violent conflicts, it can also be a powerful factor in the struggle for peace and reconciliation. Interfaith dialogue is necessary both during the armed conflict as well as during the peace-building process. Successful dialogue during the conflict can lead towards peace, while dialogues after the war can help reduce if not eliminate prejudice and discrimination against members of another religious community. “At its most basic, interfaith dialogue is a simple concept: persons of different faiths meeting to have a conversation”, argues David Smock (2002, 6). This conversation is carried out amongst people of different faiths on a common subject, with the purpose of learning from and about one another. But dialogue is not debate. In dialogue each partner must listen to the other as openly and sympathetically as possible, in an attempt to understand the other’s position as precisely as possible. Leonard Swidler categorizes interfaith dialogue into three areas: the practical—where we collaborate to help humanity, the spiritual dimension—where we attempt to experience the partner’s religion, and the cognitive—where we seek understanding of the truth.

In general, interfaith dialogue should be a platform to know more about each other, to learn from each other, to develop rapport and establish respect for all. Thus, interfaith dialogue is not a theological debate, nor is a platform for conver-

sion and polemics. Moreover, discipline, respect, sincerity, sensitivity, sympathy, responsibility, patience, among other attitudes, should form the fundamentals of the etiquette of interfaith dialogue. For interfaith dialogues to be well received and accepted and thus become more effective, it is first necessary to clearly clarify the premises and paradigms, the objectives and the etiquette of such efforts, something also referred to as the “what”, the “how”, and the “who” of the initiatives.

In general, heads of religious communities have shown a good commitment to engaging in dialogue activities. Indeed, the first meeting among religious representatives happened during the war, and continued in a regular manner until it was interrupted by the events of 2004, to resume again in 2006 continuing to this day. In most cases these meetings were organized by international organizations and were held in various places such as: Vienna on 15-16 March 1999, Amman 29-30 November 1999, Sarajevo 9 February 2000, Pristina 9-10 April 2000, Oslo 29 September 2001, Sarajevo 1 November 2003, etc. (Bislame, 2009).<sup>1</sup> It is important to say that the interfaith dialogue meetings had been regularly held until 17 March 2004. On this day 19 people (11 Albanians and 8 Serbs) were killed in the worst clash between Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians since 1999, and a number of religious buildings were destroyed. These events were a step backward in the interfaith dialogue initiative, but not the main obstacle to the progress of dialogue.

The main obstacle to dialogue and reconciliation was the involvement of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) in politics. The first problem was that the head of SOC for Kosovo, Bishop Artemije (bishop of Raska and Prizren), was at the same time the head of the Serb National Council of Kosovo, a political position which came into direct conflict with his position as the spiritual leader of the Kosovo Serb community. He was continuously asked by his counterparts, the former president of the Islamic Community Rexhep Boja and the late head of the Catholic Church, Mark Sopi, not to interfere in politics. Indeed, any political intention or motivation can hinder the flow of dialogue initiatives, especially in the case of Kosovo where the essence of the problem was more of a political, ethnic, and social character, rather than a religious one.

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## **Secularization and sacralization of Kosovo**

Most debates about the role of religion in public life in Kosovo revolve around the issue of secularism. Secularism and secularization are closely linked to modernity and modernization. Secularization is defined as the deliverance of man, first from

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1 <http://www.bislame.net> Retrieved Feb 13, 2009

religion, and then from metaphysical control over his reason and language. It is “the loosing of the world from the religious and quasi-religious understandings of itself, the dispelling of all closed world views, the breaking of all supernatural myths and sacred symbols...it is man turning his attention away from the worlds beyond and toward this world and this time” (Al-Attas, 1993, 17).

The central presupposition of modernization theory, on the other hand, is that something can be identified that distinguishes “modern” societies from those that are less modern (i.e., “traditional” societies). Among the characteristics that might signal the presence of greater modernity are higher levels of industrialization, a greater use of advanced technology, overall indicators of higher economic development, more literacy, a more comprehensive educational system, greater urban density, and more extensive administrative capacities on the part of the state (Wuthnow, 1992). Since religion has been an integral feature of traditional societies, the progression from traditional to modern, according to modernization theory, is thought to have serious repercussions for religion. At the least, a shift towards modernity weakens religion’s standing in society; at most, it completely destroys it.

The Constitution of Kosovo establishes Kosovo as a secular state and neutral on matters of religious beliefs. The secularization process, however, did not begin in 2008 when the Constitution was ratified, nor did it start with the UNMIK administration in 1999. According to some authors the secularization process in Kosovo began in the 1960s, when important integration and modernization policies were implemented in Muslim-populated areas of the former Yugoslavia. This led to these populations’ rapid emancipation and secularization. The process gave birth to an atheistic political and intellectual elite, as well as to a radical marginalization of the Muslim religious clergy. Islam was thus reduced to the private sphere: practices of worship, annual religious feasts, and traditional ceremonies for weddings and deaths (Iseni, 2009).

Under the UNMIK administration, many Saudi-funded organizations were established in Kosovo whose mission, apart from providing food and health services, was the reconstruction of destroyed mosques and the building of new ones. They also provided religious education. As a result, a small number of young girls and women took to wearing the *niqab* (full body and face veil), while small groups of young men began to grow long beards (Krasniqi, 2010).

Under UNMIK Kosovo became a hot spot for international faith-based organizations.<sup>2</sup> Islamic-based organizations were very active until 9/11, when some of

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2 One author has listed at least 70 Christian organizations that were operating in Kosovo under UNMIK. See: [orientalizmi shqipetar, https://orientalizmi.wordpress.com/tag/organizatat-e-krishtera-ne-kosove/](https://orientalizmi.wordpress.com/tag/organizatat-e-krishtera-ne-kosove/), Retrieved 15 February 2015

them were eventually banned from operating in the Balkans. A large volume of literature with religious content was produced and distributed. With the advancement of technology and the Internet, the debate about Islam increased too. The religious revival in Kosovo and the return of Islam and religious practices to the public sphere are seen by some observers as a change that has followed a logical route for a country in a post-Communist and post-conflict situation (Iseni, 2009).

In Kosovo traditional and religious norms are strongly upheld. Any attempt to introduce a harsh form of either secularization or sacralization will not be successful. This claim is based on Nicolas Demerath's concept of directed versus non-directed secularization and sacralization. According to Demerath (2001) forced secularization or sacralization is never as successful as that which occurs in a more organic fashion. As a result, he says, the religiously minded Iberian states and the secular-minded former Communist states are likely to continue to revert back to their natural states as dictated by religious frontiers and threats.

Is Kosovo following Demerath's concept of direct secularization? If one looks at the relationship between the state and religious communities, one can see that Kosovo has a tendency to go in that direction. The government has proven to be quite reluctant in accommodating the needs and wants of religious communities, often under the premise of secularism. For religious organizations, the state's obligations towards religious communities go beyond the constitutional provisions that guarantee freedom of belief. The Islamic Community, in particular, has repeatedly asked for a better law that regulates the status of religious communities. The government has been very reluctant to respond to such requests. The only law that regulates the organization of religious communities in Kosovo is the 2006 Law on Freedom of Religion in Kosovo. This law appears to be very general and its focus is on guaranteeing freedom to express one's religion and freedom of religious association, and while it repeats the fact that there is no official religion in Kosovo, the Law recognizes five religious groups in Kosovo, namely the Islamic Community, the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Jewish Religious Community, and the Evangelical Church.

Although the Law was adopted in 2006 when Kosovo was under the UNMIK administration, until now the government has not succeeded in amending this Law. Due to constant demand from religious communities, especially from the Islamic community, the government has responded by including the new draft law for amending and supplementing the Law on Religious Freedom in its Legislative Program each year since 2011. Practically, however, nothing has changed.

## Conclusion

The government of Kosovo, while maintaining its secular approach to regulating public affairs, should take a proactive approach to listening to the wants and needs of religious communities. There is an urgent need to modify the Law on Freedom of Religion which is very vague and ineffective. The new law should cover at least three important aspects: to regulate the legal status of religious communities, to regulate their financial functioning, including potential state financial benefits, and to regulate the status of the clergy. Religious pluralism should be promoted because, if nothing else, it prevents one of the participants from assuming a hegemonic position and setting himself up as a tyrant over the others. The principle of secularism, adopted these days in one form or another by almost all European countries, enables us to think that not only must religions mutually tolerate each other, but a nonreligious authority, the state, should be trusted with the task of ensuring that they are fairly situated within the public space and guaranteeing that every citizen also has a personal sphere for religiosity that lies outside the control of the state itself, as well as outside of that of the religions.

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# The Contribution of Religious Education to Intercultural Dialogue in Kosovo

Muzaqete Kosumi

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## Introduction

In life we can only begin to break down the imaginary walls that surround us all if we are taught the reasons why we are different. Religious education is not about brainwashing us into thinking a different way; it's about enabling us to understand each other.

Whether religious education should be placed in the academic curriculum is one of the renewed discussions currently taking place throughout Kosovo. This debate was initiated by the Islamic Community of Kosovo in order to introduce religious education in public schools as a right of everyone to be informed about the religion to which they belong. Our society in Kosovo has always been tolerant and a good religious education plays an important role in helping to keep the country a tolerant and inclusive place to live. In this regard, religious studies not only promotes acceptance of diversity, but allows people to see the similarities in one another, rather than the differences.

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## Religious education in Europe

Religious education functions in different ways in almost all European nations, naturally taking into account their historic and social specifics. In the United Kingdom, Greece, Romania, Germany, Sweden, Iceland, and Norway, etc., religious education is an obligatory subject, whereas in Albania, Kosovo, Bulgaria,

Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia, religious education is not required in public schools. In Serbia, religious education has a confessional basis and was introduced in academic year 2001-2002 as a subject in the curriculum (Wikipedia/religious education).

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Islamic religious education in public schools is an 'optional-compulsory' subject, which means that pupils may choose the subject but may then not later withdraw. This subject is taught by Muslims who are trained and licensed by the Islamic community and paid by the state. It is offered once a week in all the grades if there are seven or more interested pupils (Neilsen, 2009).

The purpose of my research was to investigate if people were in favor of or against religious subjects being taught in schools. In order to elicit this I used questionnaires. The questionnaire contained four, open-ended questions. The questionnaire was anonymous, and I was present while the participants filled out the questionnaire in order to provide additional information and explanations should that be necessary. I distributed them in diverse locations because I wanted to know the opinions of people from all over Kosovo.

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## Participants

My respondents consisted of 65 people from 7 to 75 years of age starting from elementary school pupils, to high school students, university students, parents, and grandparents from different places like Runik, Podujeva, Presheva, Malisheva, Pristina, Vushtrri, and Klina. I also went to the Cathedral that is near the Faculty of Philology of Pristina University where a woman welcomed me. I told her that I would like to talk with some of the Catholic religious leaders but unfortunately none was there. She took my phone number but no one phoned me. Therefore I do not have any concrete opinions of Catholic leaders. I sent a questionnaire to the Protestant leader as well and Mrs. Leonora Kurti responded to the email answering my four questions. What is important to mention here is that the "Protestant Evangelical Church in Kosovo is against the introduction of religious subjects in public schools". She also declared that the other religions in Kosovo are against the introduction of religious subjects in public schools.

I also sent a questionnaire to the Islamic Community and Dr. Sabri Bajgora, the Grand Imam, was the one who answered my questionnaire. Of course he was in favor of including religion in the public school curriculum. Also, Mr. Qemail Morina, the Dean of the Faculty of Islamic Studies, answered my questionnaire and was in favor, as was Mr. Besa Ismaili, professor of English Language, who thinks that there is an urgent need to introduce religious subjects in public schools. Dr.

Lirak Karjagdiu, professor in the Department of English and Literature, was also for including religious studies, but as an optional subject, not as an obligatory one, and she emphasized that all religions should be taught, not only one.

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## Discussion

Starting with the first question that had 80% of the respondents in favor of including religious education in the curricula of public schools, I obtained a general sense of what would happen with the next questions as well. Among 65 respondents from all over Kosovo 80% of them were in favor. What does this show us? People want the society to be changed because it has started to decay and, of course, no matter what kind of religion will be taught, each religion would direct students towards good things such as respecting one another without discrimination. Pupils from the beginning of adolescence would learn what would happen if they used drugs, alcohol, etc. Nowadays parents are too busy dealing with other things and religious subjects are like a guide for their children that is a benefit for them and their children.

If religious education is included in the curriculum, of course things would change for the better in our society, therefore of course it should be included.

In the second question, regarding which elements would change for the better if religion would be taught, “behavior in society” received the most votes. Our society has started to bypass good traditions such as respecting the people surrounding us, starting with parents and so on, so in this field, people think society needs a big change. Then second ranked was drugs, it seems that in our society this problem is increasing. According to Interpol in 1999, 40 percent of the heroin distributed in Western European countries—Switzerland, Germany and the Scandinavian countries—came from Kosovo ([www.setimes.com](http://www.setimes.com)). This was viewed as another important issue where teaching religion could have a positive impact.

Alcohol and prostitution had the same percentage each: 13.84 which means that these two are still not as great a concern, but of course they are present in our society and if preventative measures are not taken they will become as crucial as the first ones.

Who should choose the teachers, who will be the religious education teachers in public schools, was the third question in our questionnaire and respondents (46.15%) thought that the best ones to make the choice should be the Islamic Community of Kosovo and the Catholic Church, because they think that they are the ones that are most closely related to religion and know better whom to choose. The second choice was the government of Kosovo (26.15%), and even though Kosovars

very often criticize the government, in our survey they surprised us. Third ranked was the population itself (15.38%). This is not what I and a lot of Islamic scholars think. Imagine what would happen if they actually had to choose? Everyone would have a preferred religion and there would be a mess. The least voted for was the Madrasa (Medresseh Religious High School in Pristina) with 12.3% because it is only a high school and people did not think that they could be adequate in choosing the teachers. Islamic leaders said that qualified religious scholars should be those that teach this subject, and that not everyone who had religious knowledge according to MASHT (The Ministry of Education, Sciences and Technology) would qualify for teaching religion.

The fourth question was whether the teachers should be Imams/Priests or other persons who are qualified for that position?

49.23% agreed that those qualified for this position are people who have completed their studies at the University of Theology and 44.6% voted for Imam/Priests. What does this show us? Even though the difference between them was just 4.63%, many of our respondents did not want Imam/Priests to be chosen as teachers because not all Imams/Priests have finished the level of university training that qualifies them to lecture about the topic of religion.

Mr. Qemajl Morina said about religious education in schools: "Uncertainty, especially concerning aspects of religion, causes barriers among ethnic groups but when people recognize each other's beliefs, these barriers fall, because the principles that connect them are bigger than those that separate them. Therefore, through religious education we may derive benefits and create an affinity among people of different beliefs."

A deputy of the Party of Justice, Dr. Ferid Agani, a long-term advocate for the inclusion of religious education in public schools, argued before Kosovo's Parliament and in front of the other deputies in favor of religious education. He, besides others, said: "The essential issue is the extent to which students gain or lose with the implementation of religious education in schools." According to Agani, with the implementation of religious education students do not lose anything, but benefit a lot. He said, "We all are conscious of the major moral crises that have impacted our society and especially the youth."<sup>1</sup> Research conclusively demonstrates the indicators of this crisis, such as the increase in alcoholism, suicides, prostitution, delinquency of minors, etc.

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1 <http://www.zeriislam.com/artikulli.php?id=1061> Retrieved Sept. 8, 2015.

## Conclusion

Based on my survey most of the respondents from Kosovo supported religious education in schools. However, my survey was just like a drop of rain in a big ocean and of course there are a lot of things that need to be done to derive a substantial conclusion about the topic.

Personally, I think knowledge of different religions will give people a better understanding and a higher tolerance for diverse faiths. Therefore, through imposing the study of religion on students, they will be taught to care about the viewpoints of others. This is one fundamental thing missing in society today since a selfish attitude held by many in society allows for conflict rather than compromise. By teaching youngsters to care about other people's points of view, we teach them to learn to value other people's ideas and cultures, hence directing them in ways to build society through compromise rather than to tear it down through conflict. This approach is difficult, but its potential results are worth the effort.

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# Religious Pluralism

## A Historical and Philosophical Analysis of Diversity in Albania

Bayram Karci

A variety of typologies have been developed and used in the classification of the approaches of theologians and religious groups towards diversity of religions. The most commonly used typology is that developed by a Christian theologian, Alan Race. Race developed a three-category typology in classifying Christian attitudes towards diversity, namely exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism. According to Race's classification, exclusivists believe that salvation is possible only through a single religion—the religion which they follow. According to the exclusivist view other religions may embody some truths but these truths are insufficient for the salvation of their believers. Their evidence lies in the conflicting truth claims of religions since they hold that all religions cannot be logically true at the same time.

Inclusivists believe that the only complete and true religion is the one that they follow, and it is the one that can grant salvation. At the same time they recognize that God has revealed some truths to a variety of peoples and nations in different ways; hence there can be some truths in these religions. Therefore, it is possible that the believers of these religions can be saved as well. Pluralists value all religions equally and do not distinguish among them. They believe that all religions – or at least some major religions – are true and that they are equal with regard to granting salvation to their believers (Race, 1983).

In accordance with this schema, the following chapter will discuss the historical roots of inclusivist, pluralist, and exclusivist approaches among Albanians and will try to demonstrate the evolution of pluralist and inclusivist religious consciousness as well as the threat of exclusivist approaches. The chapter will discuss the issue in three parts. The first part will discuss the demography of Albanian

religious communities and the legal basis of religious pluralism. The second part will discuss the historical formation of the current religious landscape which laid the basis of inclusivistic and pluralist religious consciousness in Albania. Finally, the third section will analyze the challenge of globalization to the faith traditions.

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## The Demography of Religious Communities and the Legal Basis of Pluralism in Albania

Despite its diverse religious and cultural population, Albania has long been known as one of the most peaceful countries in the world in terms of tolerance and co-existence. Despite serious religious and ethnic conflicts in the region, Muslim, Catholic and Orthodox Albanians have lived in peace and harmony and have adopted a pluralistic or at least an inclusivistic approach towards each other's religions. Albania has two Christian communities, namely the Romano-Western and the Eastern-Orthodox. There are two communities among Muslims: Sunni and Bektashi. During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there existed a Jewish community who fled during World War II and sought refuge in Albania, but they left Albania later on. There are also a small number of atheists and citizens who are not members of any religious organizations.

According to the census data collected in 2011 56% of Albanians are Muslims, making Islam the largest religion in the country. The majority of Albanian Muslims are Sunni with a small Bektashi minority (2%). Christianity is practiced by 16% of the population (10% Catholics and 6% Orthodox). The remaining population (about 25%) is either irreligious or belongs to other religious groups.

**Table 1** Census Data 2011, INSTAT

Religious Affiliation	Population	Percentage
Muslims	1,587,608	56.70
Bektashi	58,628	2.09
Catholics	280,921	10.03
Orthodox	188,992	6.75
Evangelicals	3,797	0.14
Other Christians	1,919	0.07
Believers without Denomination	153,630	5.49
Atheists	69,995	2.50
Others	602	0.02

Religious Affiliation	Population	Percentage
Prefer not to Answer	386,024	13.79
Not relevant/not stated	68,022	2.43
Total	2,800,138	100

Although the most commonly practiced religions in Albania are Islam and Christianity, religious observance and practice is generally low and census data shows that few Albanians consider religion to be a dominant factor in their lives. Looking at the 2011 census data we observe that only 75% of Albanians responded to the religious affiliation question and almost 22% of the participants did not respond at all or did not state any religious affiliation.

Constitutionally, the Republic of Albania is a secular state. The constitution of the Republic of Albania states that the state is neutral on questions of belief and conscience. Freedom of religion is protected under Albania's current constitution, particularly by means of articles 3, 10, 18 and 24. Article 10 of the constitution sets the general principles of mutual collaboration between the state and religious communities. It states,

1. In the Republic of Albania there is no official religion.
2. The state is neutral on questions of belief and conscience and guarantees the freedom of their expression in public life.
3. The state recognizes the equality of religious communities.
4. The state and the religious communities mutually respect the independence of one another and work together for the good of each and all.
5. Relations between the state and religious communities are regulated on the basis of agreements entered into between their representatives and the Council of Ministers. These agreements are ratified by the Assembly.
6. Religious communities are juridical persons. They have independence in the administration of their properties according to their principles, rules and canons, to the extent that interests of third parties are not infringed. (Constitution of Albania, 1998)

Today, The State Committee on Cults, which is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth, and Sports represents the state and oversees relations with religious organizations. The committee is responsible for regulating relations between the state and religious communities, as well as protecting freedom of religion and promoting interreligious dialogue and understanding. Currently there are five religious organizations that are officially recognized by the state.

These are the Muslim Community of Albania, Bektashi Order, Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania, Roman Catholic Church of Albania and Protestant Evangelical Church. Yet the State Committee on Cults reports that there are more than 220 religious groups, foundations, organizations and educational institutions operating in the country (Albania 2013 International Religious Freedom Report).

Albanian state authority provides legal recognition to religious groups and requires the accommodation of their religious practices within reasonable bounds. The state is neutral on questions of belief and conscience, yet it recognizes that all religious communities are equal. Religious communities have independence in the administration of their properties. Therefore, the Republic of Albania can be considered a pluralistic state in terms of religious faith and practice.

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## **Historical Roots of Religious Diversity and Tolerance in Albania**

Christianity came to Albania with the Apostle Paul in the 1<sup>st</sup> century and spread very fast in Albania with the invasion of the Roman Empire. After the division of the Roman Empire in 395 CE, the southern parts of Albania fell administratively under the sovereignty of the Eastern Roman Empire, but the northern parts stayed dependent on Rome. After the religious schism of 1054 the Christians of the south joined the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople, while the Christians of the north remained dependent on Rome. In the late middle ages, Albanian lands became a battlefield between Catholic Rome and the Orthodox East. Whenever Rome started to advance in Albanian lands, feudal lords embraced Catholicism; whenever Byzantium was the victor and Rome retreated, they embraced Orthodoxy. The arrival of Islam took place in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. By the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the region had largely embraced Islam (Vickers, 2001). Lack of harmony, disputes and tensions between the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Church, poorly educated clergy, as well as a lack of respect for ethics had an impact on the conversion of large numbers of Albanians to Islam during that period (Kruja, 2008).

Historically, it has been argued that the legal pluralism of the *millet* (ethnic/religious community) system in the Ottoman Empire contributed to the formation and preservation of diversity and harmony in Albania. The Ottoman *millet* system allowed separate legal courts for non-Muslims and minorities to rule themselves with regard to personal status law. Non-Muslims were subject to their own ethno-religious groups in the field of private law, and in regards to public law they were subject to state law. It was also left to the non-Muslims to implement

their own laws and institutions in dealing with conflicts before the authorities of their religion. Islamic law was not imposed on non-Muslims except in cases where non-Muslims came into complaints with Muslims or where both parties agreed to be judged by Islamic law when their own religious laws were inadequate. Welfare, commercial enterprise, schools and other social institution were also left to the *millets*. Such a pluralistic practice allowed ethnic, cultural and religious differences be cherished and facilitated establishing a pluralistic society (Yılmaz, 2010).

Implementation of the *millet* system facilitated a peaceful coexistence for non-Muslim minorities in Albania. The system allowed Catholic and Orthodox Christians to have their own courts related to private law and let them administer their schools, welfare, commercial enterprise, and other social activities freely. The *millet* system contributed to the preservation of a separate ethnic and religious identity and, eventually, it created a nationalist consciousness distinct from that of Muslims. The League of Prizren, which facilitated the process of the independence of Albanian lands in the Balkans, can be seen as a significant outcome of this nationalist consciousness.

Albania declared independence in 1912. The main figures who initiated the process of independence were among the prominent religious figures of the various religious communities. Despite the majority of the Muslim population, the founders of the new state did not favor any religion or sect in order to preserve the harmony, tolerance and pluralistic structure of the society. In 1964, religious practices were officially banned in Albania, which made the country the first and only constitutionally atheist state ever to exist. The communist regime of Enver Hoxha tried to slowly eradicate the institution of religion from the public sphere in its first period between 1946 and 1964. The new constitution passed in 1963 prohibited sermons in mosques and churches completely. In 1964 the state banned all types of religious activities and closed down mosques, churches and all kinds of religious institutions. In the second period of communism a severe oppression of the practice of religion took place. Many great religious scholars had to face persecution, imprisonment and exile (Vickers, 2001).

After the fall of state communism in 1991, for the first time in their history Albanians experienced democracy and freedom. Muslims, Orthodox, Catholics and Bektashis have urged authorities to protect the freedom of religious communities, and the ban on religion was lifted, with the religious organizations resuming their activities and a gradual revival of religious practice together with the restoration and rebuilding of churches and mosques. Religious communities have requested the drafting of a resolution on the legal status of religious communities, as well as the re-allocation of properties confiscated during the communist system. Legal recognition of religious communities has been resolved by the new constitution

passed in 1998. However, there has been little progress on the restitution of religious properties confiscated during the communist system.

Albanians have been a special example and a unique symbol of religious harmony in the history of the Balkans. Muslims, Catholic and Orthodox Christians have always lived in harmony and coexisted without divisive confrontations. Along with fidelity and generosity, religious tolerance has become one of the three most distinguishing cultural values of the Albanian culture (Kruja, 2008). Nuredin Çeçi narrates the story of the Kala neighborhood in Elbasan, an example of religious tolerance and harmony in Albania. He wrote,

The best example of this tolerance and coexistence between religion was the “Kala” neighborhood, inside which existed the church of “Saint Mary”, in which the Orthodox believers performed their rites, and the “King” mosque where faithful Muslims performed the prayers. On special days the inhabitants of this neighborhood, despite their different beliefs performed family visits to each other to show respect and gratitude. The Muslims were welcomed and accompanied by special honors in the Christian families: they were not served pork and alcoholic drinks. Some families even kept special kitchen utensils, which were used only when they were expecting Muslim friends, especially Muslim imams. (2012, 468)

The sense of national identity among Albanians is not to be confused with religious issues. Nationality comes first for many Albanians. Religious differences among Albanians do not serve as sources of conflict. Rather, such differences make them more mature in their mutual relationships; they make Albanians more inclined towards their shared interests. Edith Durham, a British historian, visited Albania at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Comparing Albanians with other nations in the Balkans she wrote, “‘Turk’... means in the Balkan Peninsula ‘Muslim’, and has nothing to do with race. Many ‘Turks’ know no Turkish, and talk pure Serb. With the Albanian it is otherwise. He is Albanian first. His religion comes afterwards” (1905, 242). In her travels in Albania, Durham observed that religiosity among Muslim Albanians was weak and a kind of religious pluralism was effectively in practice by the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. She wrote,

Many of the people are extraordinarily lax about it (religion); in no place that I know have the Albanians taken the trouble to build a really fine mosque, and there are whole districts where the women are unveiled. Oddly enough, where they are veiled they are veiled extra thickly. A good Mohammedan should turn Mecca-wards and pray five times a day. I have spent day after day with Moslem gendarmes and horse-boys, and never seen an attempt at a prayer... In many villages ‘Moslems’ still give each other red eggs at Easter, and I have seen them making pilgrimages to a Christian shrine. I am told that some swear by the Virgin.

There are often Christians and Moslems in the same family. If a Moslem charm fails to cure they try a Christian one, or vice versa. The cross or the verses out of the Koran are simply amulets. Under all lies a bed-rock of prehistoric paganism, which has, perhaps, more influence in their lives than either of the other two (1905. 246).

But the source of such a de facto religious pluralism cannot be theological; rather this is an outcome of the practical approach of Albanians to religion. National feelings generally stand above religious differences in the Albanian identity. An Albanian firstly is the member of an ethnic community and then of a religious community. Pashko Vasa, a 19<sup>th</sup> century Albanian writer and poet, also an important figure in the organization of the League of Prizren, was reported to have said, "The religion of Albanians is Albanianism" (Vickers, 2001).

Many fierce conflicts between Muslims, Catholics and Orthodox Christians have taken place in other parts of Balkans such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Kosovo and Macedonia over the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Once living peacefully, Muslims, Catholics and Orthodox Christians took part in Europe's deadliest clash since World War II, after the collapse of the Republic of Yugoslavia. Bosnian Muslims clashed with both Serbian Orthodox and Croatian Catholics in Bosnia and Herzegovina; Muslim Albanians clashed with Serbian Orthodox in Kosovo; Muslim Albanians confronted Orthodox Macedonians in Macedonia. Unlike other countries in the Balkans, no major conflicts occurred between religious communities in Albania. One of the most important reasons why such a major conflict did not occur in Albania is perhaps, that national identity comes first for Albanians and all Muslims, Catholics and Orthodox Christians there are all of Albanian origin.

Skanderbeg (Gjergj Kastrioti) is the national hero of Albanians. Skanderbeg was born in 1405. He was taken as a hostage at a young age and he served the Ottoman Empire during the next twenty years. He was appointed as sanjakbey of the Sanjak of Dibra by the Ottomans in 1440. In 1443, he abandoned the Ottomans during the Battle of Nis and captured the castle of Kruja. In 1444, he was appointed commander of the League of Lezhe, which assigned him the position of Chief of the League of the Albanian people. He defended the region against the Ottomans for 25 years (Vickers, 2001). Today, the national emblem of Albania (coat of arms) carries the seal of Skanderbeg (helmet). Despite the fact that he resisted the Muslim Ottomans and obstructed the spread of Islam further in Europe, he is loved and respected by Muslims, Catholics and Orthodox Christians and honored by all as the undisputed national hero of Albania.

National holidays in Albania are celebrated with a greater participation than religious holidays. All Muslims, Christians, and Bektashis participate in the celebration of national holidays and embrace Albanian national values. Religious

festivals of one religious community are also celebrated by all Albanians. Religious authorities and state officials visit religious institutions of communities on religious festivals and holidays. When Pope John Paul II visited Albania in 1993 Muslim, Orthodox and Bektashi leaders participated in the welcoming ceremony of the pope. Again in 2014, Pope Francis visited Albania and he was welcomed to Albania by a ceremony participated in by the leaders of religious communities including Muslim, Bektashi, Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant Christians.

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## **The challenge of globalization**

Progress in transportation and information technologies has paved the way to globalization. Especially progress in information technologies and the discovery of the telephone, satellite systems, the Internet, and social media has changed the face of globalization to a large extent. Modern information technologies have virtually unified the world, which has never happened before. Globalization has had the effect of strikingly increasing not only international trade, but also cultural exchange. It encompasses a range of social, political, and economic changes. Globalization has had an enormous impact on the lives of Albanians in many ways. Especially, by the end of communist era, in the 90s, Albanians had a chance to travel abroad and encounter new cultures. Some of them traveled for the purpose of employment; some of them traveled for the purpose of education. Some of those who traveled abroad adopted secular western values; some of them adopted extremist tendencies. Yet, they all have brought these new cultures and tendencies to Albania.

After the collapse of communism, hundreds of young Albanians traveled to Muslim countries such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Tunis to get higher education. While most of those who are educated in Turkey, Jordan, Syria and Egypt preserved the inclusivist approach towards non-Muslims, most of those who were educated in Saudi universities adopted Salafi ideology and along with it they adopted an exclusivist approach towards non-Muslims. The majority of imams who serve in Albanian mosques today embrace Salafi ideology and they are sponsored by foreign Islamic charities. Miranda Vickers, an expert on Balkan issues, drew the attention of the international community to the problem back in 2006 at a workshop sponsored by NATO. She said,

Foreign Islamic relief organizations have substantial aid packages which makes it very difficult for local groups without such funds to try and maintain Albanian Muslim tradition, against those influenced by imported Islamic practices.

Such local organizations do not have the financial resources to address the material and spiritual needs of their constituents. As a consequence, older Albanians with their tradition of tolerance risk being marginalized by foreign Islamic groups who prefer to focus their “assistance” on the spiritually malleable youth. (2007, 28-29)

A group of Salafi imams defied the Muslim Community of Albania in March of 2010 by creating their own official organization—the League of Albanian Imams. Salafi groups are growing stronger in Albania as more young men return to Albania to work for a stricter and more rigorous implementation of Salafi ideology. The war in Syria had a mobilizing effect among these Salafi groups. Beginning in 2011 they started organizing demonstrations, raising funds and recruiting fighters from among Albanian youngsters to fight in Syria. Noticing the threat, the Albanian government had to take action in order to prevent the radicalization of its young citizens and their involvement in acts of terror. The Albanian government revised its penal law in November of 2014 and made the financing of terrorist groups or affiliation to armed groups in another country punishable by seven to fifteen years of imprisonment in order to prevent its nationals from joining extremist groups (Criminal Code of the Republic of Albania). After this move of the Albanian government Salafi groups retreated and started rejecting their role in the financing and recruitment of fighters for Syria.

Despite the fact that Salafi imams control most of the mosques of Albania, their influence among Albanians has been very limited. Albanian Islam has evolved over centuries molded with tolerance and respect to diversity and it has become a part of Albanian national identity. Therefore, Albanians see the exclusivist tendencies of Salafism as something foreign to Albanian values that has nothing to do with religion. The majority of Muslim Albanians still pride themselves on their tradition of religious tolerance and moderation.

Another threat that globalization brought to the culture of religious tolerance and coexistence in Albania has been the threat of evangelical Christian cults and sects. After the collapse of communism, missionaries from around the world also arrived in Albania and started teaching exclusivist accounts of Bible with the intention of proselytizing powerless Albanians. Miranda Vickers relates an account of such Christian missionaries in Albania as follows:

In the immediate aftermath of the end of communism, by far the most aggressive manifestation of religious fervor came from the Christian evangelical movement. Missionaries and clerics from a variety of European and American Churches flooded into Albania, much to the bewilderment of Albanians as many of these highly motivated zealots came from the wilder fringes of cultist movements...

Before long however, many Albanians had become irritated by these insistent, humorless and dogmatic missionaries or “soul buyers”, who were gradually eclipsed by the other three main religions (2007, 27).

Census data collected in 2011 supports this idea. It reports the percentage of evangelicals at only 0.14 %. This information alone is enough to demonstrate that Albanians did not seem to be attracted and manipulated by the activities of evangelical sects and cults. Because of the tolerant approach of Albania’s faith traditions to diversity, Albanians did not embrace the exclusivist view of missionaries and they did not have any major impact on the lives of Albanians.

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## Conclusion

In accordance with the schema proposed by Christian theologian Alan Race, this chapter has discussed the historical roots and the current state of Albanian religious pluralism. The chapter concludes that the majority of Albanians, whether religious or not, are inclined to at least inclusivist and, in some cases, pluralist outlooks. The research further concludes that the roots of Albanian religious pluralism lie not in theological discussions but rather in the practical outcomes of the historical experience of Albanians and their response to historical developments, such as invasions, conflicts, confrontations, oppressions and opportunities.

Albanians have set a special example and become a symbol of religious tolerance in the history of the Balkans. Muslims, Catholics and Orthodox Christians have always lived in harmony and have coexisted without divisive confrontations. The pluralistic judicial system of the Ottomans, called the *millet* system, facilitated a peaceful coexistence of Muslims with non-Muslims. It has contributed to the preservation of the Albanian ethnic and religious identity and, eventually, it has created a nationalist consciousness distinct from that of Muslims. The sense of nationality is not confused with religious issues; therefore, religious differences did not serve as conflict sources among them, rather, such differences made them more mature in their mutual relationships.

Albanians are facing many difficulties and issues today. Influences of exclusivist ideologies threaten their inclusivist religious traditions. They threaten the Albanian culture of tolerance, coexistence and respect of differences. Evangelical missionaries threaten to distort their beliefs. Yet, the most important challenge for the religious traditions of Albania today is to preserve the authenticity of their faith traditions and maintain the independence of their respective faiths in order to preserve the centuries old culture of tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

The exemplary case of the coexistence of faith traditions throughout the long sweep of history became important, not only as a cultural and historical issue, but above all as a constructive experience for all societies. The Albanian model of religious tolerance based on universal values holds a great value in the global debate about the need for understanding and coexistence of faiths, cultures and civilizations.

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# The Phenomenon of Contemporary Pluralism

## A Christian-Orthodox Interpretation

Laurentiu D. Tănase

The subject that I was invited to consider concerns an Orthodox-Christian theological interpretation of the phenomenon of pluralism. I will restrict myself to an analysis of this interpretation that is based on examples seen in the Orthodox Church in Romania. I would like to point out that it would be too complex to attempt to issue an opinion about the Orthodox Church in general on pluralism, knowing that there are in fact real differences of approach and theological interpretation between the different ethnic Orthodox Churches: Russian, Greek, Serbian, Romanian and so on. These differences are influenced by ethnic backgrounds, canonical autocephaly, and administrative autonomy.

Up to now Orthodox theology has not officially and explicitly articulated its religious doctrine on pluralism. In a book published in 2008, V. Karkkainen mentioned that: “Eastern Orthodox theologians have not written on the topic (religious pluralism) and none of the Eastern Trinitarian luminaries, either past (Vladimir Lossky among others), or present (John Zizioulas among others), have touched the topic in any depth” (2008, 9). However, we have a very rich Catholic theological literature on this topic. Theologians like Rahner, Dupuis, D’Costa and Panikkar were encouraged to analyse religious pluralism, especially after the Second Vatican Council 1962-65. This demarche “soon spread to Protestant spheres as well”(Karkkainen, 2008, 3).

In our societies, be they in the East or West or in Southeastern Europe, modernity now challenges Christian churches to discover theological arguments, revealed and authorized religiously, that can explain how to live as Christian believers together with adherents of other faiths and religions and to establish the kinds

of relationships contemporary Christianity can have with other religions. For the theological doctrine of the Christian Church, the dogma of the Trinity is considered to be the foundation of a theology of religions, and it is a foundation to explain and harmonize the relations of Christianity to contemporary pluralism.

This new challenge confronts not only Christianity, but also all contemporary religious identities. Indeed, it is considered that “the challenge of pluralism has never been of such urgency as it is in the beginning of the third millennium” (Karkkainen, 2008, 2).

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## What is religious pluralism?

What do we mean by religious pluralism? Before answering this question, it's necessary to mention that pluralism was first defined by political science as representing a set of rules and scientific theories offering specific empirical guidance to the USA of the 1960s, on the democratic development of political power and political decisions exercised in local communities.<sup>1</sup>

Later on, the analysis of contemporary pluralism, was extended to the other fields of social research, namely in the economic, cultural, or religious areas, in the latter case being designated by the term “religious pluralism”.

As mentioned above, pluralism is a defining characteristic of modernity whose constituents include:

- political, technological and ideological changes in the second part of the twentieth century;
- the deep respect for law and rule of law;
- stable political organization;
- globalization of markets;
- increased role of consumption, generators of social status, and a modern lifestyle;
- utilitarian competition in all areas of social life including the religious life;
- clear differentiation of the private and public by creating a legal framework that limits abuse, particularly political abuse, and promotes democracy;
- secularization of religion through its migration to a marginal area of interest of contemporary society as a result of the rationalizing process of science;
- exponential development in high class technology as a result of scientific progress.

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1 Gordon Marshall, John Scott (eds.), Raluca-Nicoleta Turcanu, Catalin Georgescu (transl.) *Dicționar de Sociologie – Oxford University Press*, III-ed., București, 2014, 540. (*pluralism*)

Complex pluralism is taken as a functional manifestation of contemporary society. This social characteristic determined scientific interpretations that generated the conclusion that “the discourse on pluralism knows how difficult the concept is in itself and that, therefore, it would be more appropriate to talk about pluralisms (in the plural!)” (Karkkainen, 9). And because we are in the land of etymological understandings and we create semantic shades from the perspective of religious significance, is it necessary to mention that there are clear differences related to the distinction between plurality and pluralism. Religious pluralism defines a scanned image of contemporary society at a given time, which emphasizes the existence of religious identities, distinctly outlined.

Considering the profound transformations which contemporary European society as a whole is undergoing, it is necessary to show that pluralism with its multiple social constitutive realities represents an important component of European construction. We cannot consider the project of European unity a success, without observing a pluralistic mentality operational in all areas.

Pluralism is an asset of plurality and we can't define pluralism without plurality. Religious pluralism means a “rough parity between religions with none having final authority, and certainly not to the exclusion of others. While Christianity has experienced this effect most dramatically, in principal no other religion is immune to it” (Karkkainen, 2).

Among the religions that are called upon to clarify their relationship with contemporary European pluralism, Islam is one of the major challenges to European integration, balance, and social harmony. The expression “rough parity” highlights the difficulty of establishing what would be an effective manifestation of religious pluralism in societies, which must adjust the balance of pluralism, tolerance, and relations among different religious identities.

In the same way “rough parity” also refers to relations between religious denominations and the state in which they are found. Through religious pluralism a balance must be kept along with social harmony by eliminating, or at least discouraging, any religious conflicts fueled by absolutist religious doctrines. This makes religious pluralism face an extremely difficult task in keeping the balance between different religious actors. Its task is even more complicated as, naturally, every religion tries to impose its own doctrine and to dominate.

Each religious ideology promotes its teachings about religious truths and an absolute supreme in society and among its followers. In respect of this fact and in the absence of other religious messages that are more relativistic, a natural question arises: How can religious competition be managed by various European states (including Romania) that support unquestionable religious truths. More precisely, through what legal and social tools can contemporary states succeed in keeping a

balance or “rough parity” among competing religious identities? Clearly, this may be done by adopting and applying relevant legislation and by undertaking social actions that define and justify religious pluralism.

An important step for promoting religious pluralism in civic mentality and attitude can be successfully achieved through the public education system. School classes about religious identity and its importance for the various human communities can be an excellent approach to promoting pluralism among young generations.

Wherever religious pluralism is not protected and encouraged through appropriate laws, religious law became state policy and thus excludes any form of religious freedom and expression different from that of the majority. Such an absence of pluralism leaves room for extremism and religious fundamentalism.

In the other words, all human rights and fundamental freedoms are strongly affected in societies where religious pluralism does not work, feeding violent religious conflicts. In this respect certain undemocratic Muslim countries are examples, where only structured shari'a compliance is allowed. Often in such politico-religious state structures, any religious identities other than Islam are restricted.

From a sociological perspective, Fenggang Yang, relying on James A. Backford's and Robert Wuthrow's research, proposes the following scholastic definitions to distinguish terms realting to pluralism:

1. plurality (or diversity): describes the status or degree of religious heterogeneity within a society;
2. pluralization: is the process of increasing plurality within a society;
3. pluralism: refers to the social arrangements favourable to a high or increased level of plurality (Yang, 2010, 195-7).

As we can observe, plurality and religious pluralism generate religious competition, and any competition without specific rules can generate internal religious conflicts.

Pluralism, like any social initiative, is built, maintained and promoted! The main instrument for promoting pluralism is dialogue. Dialogue in the broadest sense is a component of communication sciences. Thus dialogue takes place through communicated ideas, feelings, and attitudes. In a simple analysis we identify three very important elements in the act of communication dialogue:

1. interlocutors,
2. message/ content release,
3. availability to dialogue.

In other words, in the dialogue structure we can identify: people/ ideas/mentalities. If we look closely at these three components of dialogue we see that they have one thing in common—namely, the educational process. Education develops the social personality of the individual, refines and organizes reason—the source of ideas, and along with socialization— as a complementary process to education, forms an individual's attitudes and reactions, comprising his mentality.

Interpreting all of the above aspects as a whole we understand that behind pluralism, dialogue, and education are individuals who become the subjects of socio-cultural and religious initiatives, people who have their subjectivity, their goals, their interests, their limits, etc. Clearly we live in a society where we cannot ignore the new modern structural behaviours that facilitate multiple personal contacts. The competition of ideas and mentalities engenders dialogue within the cultural and especially the religious sphere.

The major contemporary religions like Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, or Judaism must not only find the most adequate strategies for advancing their messages, but it is also expected that they should shoulder a sense of responsibility so as to avoid possible interreligious conflicts. A solution, in this case, is interreligious dialogue structured on the pluralist logic that I have mentioned above.

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## **The challenges of pluralism for Christianity**

Are the major contemporary religious convictions prepared to comprehend and engage the challenges of pluralism and the importance of interreligious dialogue?

From the perspective of Western Christianity, the Roman Catholic Church has already developed a true theology of religions that, interpreting the dogma of the Holy Trinity, stressed the need for understanding religious pluralism from the perspective of revealed sacred text, the Holy Bible.

Socio-economic realities and the European geographical context did not cause the same impetus within the Orthodox Christian Church. However, due to the shared, uniform Christian doctrine of the Trinity, as a monotheistic religion we can expect that the Eastern European Orthodox Church will ultimately embrace the Occidental church's point of view regarding religious pluralism.

To better understand the position of the Romanian Christian Church towards religious pluralism and the way in which it reacted to this feature of 20<sup>th</sup> century modernity, we will offer a brief analysis of some of the most recent approaches of the Romanian Orthodox Church to religious pluralism.

Please note that actual democratic pluralism could only express itself in Romania after 1990, more precisely, after the disintegration of the totalitarian commu-

nist regime. During the communist period we cannot talk about religious pluralism because the political system did not allow, for about 50 years, the emergence of religious freedom. From this perspective, religious pluralism in Romania has not had the social and legal framework needed for free development and social recognition.

After the fall of the totalitarian communist regime in December 1989, we were able again to recover pluralism in Romania—and, implicitly, religious pluralism—as it had manifested itself in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and the interwar period. After 1990, the Romanian Orthodox Church, unprepared for the religious freedom specific to democratic regimes, has often reacted in a defensive way, rejecting or denying the idea of religious plurality (Tanase, 2008, 11-14).

However, we believe that such a reaction was not only based on a dogmatic assumption of ultimate, absolute theological truth, seen as the condition for obtaining salvation, but was also an institutional manifestation of self-defence in the face of active proselytizing missionary propaganda, especially that of neo-charismatic Protestant Christians.

It is very interesting that such a reaction did not direct itself towards distinct religious identities like Judaism or Islam. On the contrary, Patriarch Daniel of the Romanian Orthodox Church publicly expressed his disapproval of the translation into Romanian of Salman Rushdie's book, *The Satanic Verses*. He equally expressed his "solidarity with the Muslim community in Romania condemning manifestations affecting the spiritual and religious symbols, regardless the official religion they express/serve".<sup>2</sup>

The Patriarch Daniel of the Romanian Orthodox Church also expressed his explicit and official opinion regarding the challenges of contemporary religious pluralism during the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg in 2011. In his speech "on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue", Patriarch Daniel pointed out that Europe should develop a new culture of dialogue, cooperation and coexistence through, mutual respect for human dignity (Lumina, 2011).

In order to promote this attitude, Patriarch Daniel considers that "education can play an important role in the development of inter-religious dialogue". In this respect, family, school, religious and ecclesial community or media can make a significant contribution... in the expansion of the inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue. Without losing sight of the importance of preserving religious identity

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2 "Versetele Satanice" îl fac pe Patriarh mai catolic decât Muftiul; în *Știrile Rol.ro – România Online*; 21 decembrie 2007 (<https://stirile.rol.ro/versetele-satanice-il-fac-pe-patriarh-mai-catolic-decat-muftiul-99183.html>) (Retrieved October 14, 2014).

specific for European religions, Patriarch Daniel points out that “religious and inter-cultural dialogue should call for unity between states and religions for responsible cooperation in order to promote a common state of wellness in every country, not only inside Europe, but also in its relations with other continents ... inter-religious dialogue should be based on human dignity, human rights, democracy, rule of law and freedom of expression ... all perceived as universal values” (Ibid).

Insisting on the benefits of inter-religious dialogue for contemporary society as a response to the religious pluralism of the Christian Church, Patriarch Daniel, insisted on “the need for dialogue and cooperation between political and religious leaders...to prevent feelings of fear ... uncertainty and anxiety.”<sup>3</sup>

However, the Orthodox Church in Romania has not developed an explicit theology of religions to be used as an instrument of defining Christian doctrine in the interest of religious pluralism. Trinitarian dogma, we consider, may be seen as an important starting point in addressing theological pluralism, as we noted in the case of Western Catholic Christian theology, but for now the theological debates of the Orthodox Church are concerned with other social or dogmatic issues, especially those related to the preparation of the pan-Orthodox Synod of Constantinople which is announced for 2016.

On the other hand, although religious pluralism and interreligious dialogue could be majors topics of discussions at the 2016 Pan-Orthodox Synod in Constantinople, until now these issues have not been regarded as main themes of analysis and theological debate among the Orthodox Churches.

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## Conclusions

What we consider most useful to remember is the need to build effective and sustainable tools for inter-religious and inter-confessional dialogue. Pluralism is a characteristic of contemporary societies—especially at the beginning of the third millennium—without relativizing the faith promoted by every religion. It is necessary for religious leaders to make an effort to develop bridges of dialogue and not to cling to exclusivist aspects which could separate and feed extremism and increase social tensions.

The plurality of religious identities is a reality of contemporary Europe. Religious leaders should encourage the development of a theology of pluralism, explaining the paradox of the oneness of God as seen through cultural, ethnic, linguistic and philosophical way through which we can express religious identity.

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3 Ibid

If we refer to the Romanian society where Orthodox Christian identity is almost 90% of the total population, the Romanian Orthodox Church has not yet faced the challenges of Western European plurality (such as secularization, a strong secular sense, aggressive separation between State and Church, rationality, etc.). For such a challenge we consider that the Romanian Orthodox Church has all the theological mechanisms necessary for a constructive approach as regarding inter-religious dialogue.

Patriarch Daniel of the Romanian Orthodox Church has made several official statements in order to support a new European culture of inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue as a solution towards the challenges of the contemporary pluralism. Obviously, it will be a longterm effort and involve shared responsibility and there will be no certainty of finding a balance among religions but the impulse must be supported at every opportunity.

Catholic theologian Yves Labbe believes that inter-religious dialogue can become difficult if we try to compare religious doctrines opposed to each other in terms of revelation and purpose. But inter-religious dialogue can equally accelerate and produce clear social benefits in terms of social cohesion if focused on an explicit argumentation based on an authentic religious life. (Labbe, 2004, 128).

In 2011 at the Council of Europe, Catholic Cardinal Jean Louis Tauran, President of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, highlighted as a necessity today the fact that “in Europe no religion could hope to hold sway through force. Religion is now not only inherited, but also chosen. Inter-religious dialogue is strong in Europe because of its culture of co-existence.... Mankind could work together within the framework of inter-religious dialogue to ensure that the name of God would never again be invoked to justify violence and discrimination (Parliamentary Assembly Report, 2011).

In other words, we want to emphasize that a dialogue based on religious experience and facts is more preferable than a dialogue of doctrines. Different religious identities and, hence, religious pluralism are part of our contemporary life, both individually and collectively. In this regard, the actions of interreligious respect and dialogue should be encouraged.

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# Headscarves in the Classroom

## Secularism and Religious Difference in Bulgaria

Rositsa Atanasova

This paper explores the development of the principle of secularity in Bulgaria as well as the contours of its present application. The notion of separating church from state was introduced by the communist regime but had the effect of turning religious institutions into channels of state authority. The relief of post-communist secularism, in turn, is deeply fragmented. The current legislative framework and practice try to reconcile the socialist legacy with the demands of a democratic society committed to religious pluralism. As a result, an incoherent paradigm has emerged that allows for varying attitudes towards different religious traditions under a host of political pressures. These tensions have come to the fore in the ongoing debate on the place of religious symbols in public schools. This chapter adopts the treatment of the Muslim headscarf as a lens for exploring them. It argues ultimately that an autonomous notion of secularity that is both true to the Bulgarian context and consistent in its treatment of religious difference is still in the making.

The communist regime was the first to proclaim the separation of church and state in Bulgaria with the aim of abrogating the privileged position held by the Bulgarian Orthodox Church under prior constitutional arrangements. Following Bulgaria's independence from the Ottoman Empire, the Turnovo Constitution named Bulgarian Orthodoxy as the official religion of the new state (Constitution of the Bulgarian Principality of 1879, Art. 37). The 1947 Dimitrov Constitution, however, removed any reference to a traditional religious denomination and stipulated instead that "the church is separate from the state" (Constitution of the People's Republic of Bulgaria of 1947, Art. 78). It further provided that "citizens are guaranteed freedom of conscience and religion, as well as freedom to conduct

religious rituals". Article 79, in turn, defined education as "secular, democratic and progressive in spirit", and thus formalized the on-going removal of confessional instruction from public schools (Ballinger & Ghodsee, 2011, 13). While the constitutional provisions posited the principles of separation of church and state, as well as the secular nature of education, it remained to be seen what their practical implications were in the context of socialist Bulgaria.

The Law on Denominations of 1949 detailed the essence of the communist conception of separating church from state that entailed securing firm state control over religious institutions. While the first two articles reiterated the freedoms listed in the Constitution, the law established a strict regulatory regime of religious activities in Bulgaria. As a general format, the first sentence of each article posited certain rights, which were thereafter circumscribed by the subsequent provisions of the same article. Unlike the Dimitrov Constitution, the law acknowledged that the Bulgarian Orthodox Church was the traditional religious denomination of the Bulgarian people (Law on Denominations of 1949, Art. 3). Despite such nominal privileging, the measure heavily circumscribed the social and educational activities of all denominations (Art. 20; Art. 15). It forbade them contact with religious communities abroad without state sanction and subjected their leadership to the strict scrutiny of the newly created Directorate for Religious Affairs (Art. 9). The ultimate aim of these reforms was to turn religious institutions into channels of state authority.

Rather than delineating the respective spheres of activity of both church and state, the legislative framework paved the way for subjugating organized religion to the aims of the communist regime. Notwithstanding the use of identical terminology, then, secularism in the context of socialist Bulgaria entailed a radically different phenomenon than its counterparts in Western Europe. Ballinger and Ghodsee have pithily baptized it "socialist secularism" in order to emphasize that "socialist regimes deployed the secularist discourse in unique and fascinating ways" (2011, 7). Krasteva, in turn, contends that Communism secularized society without secularizing the state, which had the effect of heavily politicizing religion (2014, 20). She notes that despite the rhetoric of separation, the state treated the various denominations differently, and often had inconsistent attitudes towards each of them (Krasteva, 2014, 19). The BOC, for example, was privileged only to the degree that it allowed the regime to harness the symbolic value of Bulgarian Orthodoxy for the formation of Bulgarian national identity as well as to promote a spirit of solidarity with other socialist countries (Krasteva, 2014, 19). Islam, on the other hand, was seen as a foreign religion that fostered problematic bonds between Bulgarian Muslims and the neighboring nation of Turkey (Ballinger & Ghodsee, 2011, 9). Socialist secularism was ultimately a functional relationship of co-opting religious institutions for the political goals of the communist regime.

Along with the alignment of the religious with political imperatives, perhaps the most striking aspect of the socialist paradigm of the secular is the permeability of the classical divide between the public and the private spheres. Ballinger and Ghodsee argue that unlike secularism in Western Europe, the case of social secularism allows us to examine how a state polices religion in both spheres (2011, 8). While French *laïcité* opted for banning the headscarf in public institutions, for example, the socialist state in Bulgaria prohibited Muslim women from wearing it altogether. Socialist propaganda cast the headscarf as a sign of female subservience to men and justified the ban by invoking the pursuit of the communist ideal of equality between men and women (Ballinger & Ghodsee, 2011, 19). Muslim women were thus encouraged to embrace socialism in both their public and private lives at the expense of Islam. In light of such obliteration of the public-private dichotomy Krasteva calls socialist secularism “anti-secular secularism” (2014, 19). Notwithstanding the constitutional guarantee of freedom of consciousness and religion, the state took keen interest in the religious beliefs and practices of its citizens and transformed religion into a paramount locus for policy-making.

The fall of the communist regime in 1989 as well as the demands of the new democratic order necessitated a reconceptualization and a new articulation of the principles of separation of church and state in post-communist Bulgaria. The 1991 Constitution stipulates that “all citizens are equal before the law” (Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria of 1991, Art. 6(2)). Accordingly, “there shall be no limitation of rights or the grant of privileges based on race, nationality, ethnicity, sex, origin, education, convictions, political views, personal and social status or material status.” Article 13(1), in turn, posits the freedom of religion in the new constitutional order. It further provides that “religious institutions are separate from the state” (Art. 13(2)), but that Eastern Orthodoxy is the “traditional religion” of the Republic of Bulgaria (Art. 13(2)). Subsequent legislation and the lived practice of disentangling religion from the fabric of the state should be considered yet again to determine the contours of post-communist secularism. This chapter proposes to do so by examining how the secularist discourse has been incorporated into educational laws and their application. The headscarf debate in the Bulgarian public schools provides a particularly valuable lens, which may expose to the greatest degree the tensions, challenges and internal inconsistencies of the doctrine and practice of secularism in contemporary Bulgaria. The variable geometry of this phenomenon has led Krasteva to term it “elastic (post)-secularism” (2014, 8). The ultimate concern of this study is to discern to what extent an autonomous concept of the secular emerges in post-communist Bulgaria in the process of reconciling its communist legacy with the democratic claim to pluralism.

A brief overview of the chronology of the headscarf debate in Bulgaria proves instrumental in contextualizing the current treatment of the symbol in the public schools and the courts. In 2006 two high school students in Smolyan refused to remove the veil in compliance with a school-mandated uniform that prohibited the headscarf. The case attracted public attention because the Alliance for Islamic Development and Culture (AIDC), rather than the girls, submitted the complaint to the Committee for the Protection from Discrimination (CPD) (Aneva, 2006). As Krasteva observed, the political discourse did not simply reflect the event, but actually constructed it (2014, 59). One of the girls had worn the veil for three years prior to the incident pursuant to an approval that the Ministry of Education had granted in 2003. The dominant public sentiment, however, suspected the AIDC of promoting the re-Islamization of a region with a significant Muslim population (Asenov, 2006). The organization argued in its submission that some schools purposefully required students to wear a uniform in order to preclude Muslim girls from wearing the veil. The CPD ultimately held that the ban on the headscarf in schools where there was an internal requirement for wearing a uniform did not amount to discrimination (“The Committee for the Protection from Discrimination”, 2006). It further fined the school administration for directly discriminating against all uniform-wearing students by allowing the two girls to defy the established dress code. The CPD also fined the AIDC for “inciting discrimination” as well as the Ministry of Education for mishandling the case and for condoning the unfavorable treatment of the uniform-wearing students. Prior to the decision, the then chairman of the CPD, Kemal Eup, commented that the Committee could recommend to the Ministry of Education the ban of all religious symbols from the public schools in a way analogous to France (Aneva, 2006). Krasteva notes two discursive lines at this stage of the debate (2014, 59). On the one hand, the Muslim girls and their supporters claim the right to religious freedom and expression, while the chairman of the CPD, on the other hand, pursues a secularist argument inspired by the French notion of *laïcité*. The particular legal confrontation at hand, however, was decided along neither of these lines. The CPD decision, rather, upheld the validity of the internal school regulation in the name of uniform treatment of all students.

Subsequent headscarf cases as well as the limited application of the solution proposed above to schools requiring uniforms, stimulated calls for a legislative pronouncement on the place of religious symbols in public schools. In light of the CPD decision, school administrators feared sanctions and came up with ad-hoc solutions to manage the headscarf in the classroom (Stoyanova, 2009). Some girls conceded to taking off their headscarves upon entering the school and putting them back on upon leaving. Others were offered the option of no longer attending

classes and following an individual study plan instead. In the wake of these cases the head of the Regional Inspectorate of Education in Smolyan urged the adoption of a law that would provide clear guidance to school administrators on how to act in such instances. So did the CPD, whose chairman deemed that a general regulation on school uniforms could provide a convenient solution across the board (Aneva, 2008). The anticipated proposal for a new law on school education came forth in 2009 under the auspices of Daniel Valchev, Minister of Education at the time. The text did not contain a blanket ban on all religious symbols at school but prohibited only those that were deemed “aggressive” and “intrusive” (Stoyanova, 2009). It was left to individual schools to gauge whether a particular symbol fell under these categories. In response to the legislative proposal, the CPD chairman requested an explicit definition of the religious symbols that would be banned under the new law (Simova, 2009). He did not consider the headscarf a basic symbol of Islam, as, in his view, it was worn across religious traditions and in some cases merely as a protection from bad weather. It was rather the specific way of wrapping it and wearing, that, according to Eup, demonstrated an allegiance towards a particular ideological position, which was foreign to Bulgaria and incompatible with the secular nature of public education (Aneva, 2008). The legislative proposal ultimately failed to pass due to political dynamics that are beyond the scope of this paper. The inconclusive outcome notwithstanding, Valchev asserted that as long as he was Minister of Education “there would be no religious symbols in schools” (Pankova, 2009). Despite the seeming neutrality of his position, the text of the proposal as well as the public debate on it left little doubt that the headscarf was the main target of the frustrated reform.

The current legislative framework does not contain any pronouncement on the place of religious symbols in Bulgarian public schools. While the 1991 Constitution stipulates the separation of religious institutions from the state, unlike the Dimitrov Constitution, it does not explicitly define education as secular. This omission caused some tension between the CPD and Daniel Velchev prior to the controversial proposal since the Minister contended that he was not entitled to initiate legislation without a constitutional amendment to that effect (Aneva, 2006). It was in that context that the CPD chairman suggested the pragmatic resolution of the issue through a regulation on school uniforms. The principle of the secular nature of Bulgarian public education is instead posited in Article 5 of the Law on Education (2014). The meaning and content of the principle is developed in the Regulations on the application of the law (Regulations on the Application of the Law on Education, 2014). One of the goals of the educational system articulated in the measure is to foster “a free, moral, and entrepreneurial individual, who, as a Bulgarian citizen respects the laws, the rights of others, their language, reli-

gion, and culture” (Art. 1(5)). Article 4(1), in turn, tells us that “secular education does not permit the inculcation of students with ideological or religious doctrines”. Only the historical, philosophical, or cultural aspect of religions could be taught through the curricula of the various subjects (Art. 4(2)). Since 2003, however, religion could be taught confessionally in secular schools as a mandatory or as an optional elective (Art. 4(3)). Under Article 25(5) schools have the right to determine their internal regulation, school symbols, rituals, and uniforms. Students’ dress and appearance while attending school should suit their status as students as well as “good morals” (Art. 135(3)). A student must further wear a school-mandated uniform, should there be one, “in the appearance and with the elements” described in the internal regulations of the institution (Art. 135(4)). Both the Constitution and the Law on Education ultimately underscore that school education until the age of 16 is mandatory (Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria of 1991, Art. 53(2); Law on Education of 2014, Art. 7(1)).

The account of the secular nature of public education that emerges from the relevant provisions reveals significant internal contradictions. The article that has the most direct bearing on the meaning of “secular education” links the term with a ban on religious and ideological indoctrination. The juxtaposition suggests that the primary concern of the lawmaker was to ensure the neutrality of curricular content. Such a reading is further corroborated by the insistence that religion should be taught only from a historical, philosophical or cultural perspective. The next section of the very same article, however, allows for confessional instruction in public schools in the form of electives. Krasteva notes that the incongruous manifestation of secularity in the educational system is a reflection of the ambivalent attitudes that the post-communist society holds towards secularism (2014, 58). In her view the state is institutionally powerful, but symbolically weak in the face of ecclesiastical and nationalistic claims that frame the public debate in transcendental and identity terms. These voices have crucially urged the introduction of Eastern Orthodoxy as a mandatory subject, while insisting that other religions be studied privately (Krasteva, 2014, 51). The essence of their claim, Krasteva explains, is that the public space is defined in ethno-national terms and accessible only for the religion of the majority (2014, 52).

This dimension of post-communist secularism further complicates the debate about the admissibility of religious symbols in public schools. The appearance of students is regulated under the general law to the extent that it must not contravene the ambiguous term “good morals”. Other than that, it should comply with the internal regulations of the school, in particular where the institution has introduced a mandatory uniform. Following the CPD decision on the headscarf in 2006, its chairman saw the uniform as a pragmatic solution to the thorny issue of religious

expression, on which the law is silent. The headscarf was implicitly qualified as a religious symbol. If it had been considered otherwise, there would not have been a conflict with the principle of secularity, yet the girl's right to freedom of religious expression as such was never engaged. There was furthermore no justification for the assumed incompatibility of the headscarf with the school uniform. Couldn't a girl, for example, wear all the required elements of the uniform along with her headscarf? While the headscarf continues to pose challenges in the classroom, as shall be discussed shortly, several schools have opened Orthodox chapels on their premises (Koleva, 2013). Islam, according to that view, cannot have a legitimate claim in the public sphere as it is perceived as the quintessential and threatening "other" in the post-communist context (Krasteva, 2014, 47). An asymmetry in the evaluation of religious expression emerges as a result of this dichotomy. Orthodox religious symbols become an expression of national identity and values when they pierce the secular fabric of the state, whereas public discourse qualifies their Islamic counterparts as "fanatical whims" (Krasteva, 2014, 61). Secularism in the Bulgarian public schools is thus deeply fragmented.

In a recent pronouncement on the admissibility of the Islamic headscarf in the public classroom, the Administrative Court in Sofia held that there had been no discrimination against an eighth grader who was expelled for refusing to attend classes unveiled. When Saide Mehmed started wearing the headscarf to school, the administration sought the advice of a number of public institutions due to "lack of experience" (Decision #5531, 2014, 2). Following these consultations, the school adopted an updated version of its internal regulations that enumerated the duties imposed on students with regard to their appearance. The regulations reiterate the provisions of the Law on Education to the effect that school education is incompatible with ideological and religious indoctrination and that it does not allow for any limitation of rights or privileges based on students' race, nationality, ethnicity, sex, and origin (Decision #5531, 2014, 2). The measure then stipulates, seemingly as a consequence of the foregoing, that students cannot express through their dress any ethnic or religious affiliation. Should a student violate this requirement, he or she will be removed from classes for as long as the student refuses to conform. This provision of the internal regulations ultimately provided the legal basis for Saide's expulsion. She was allowed to go back to school, without a change in dress, upon the intervention of the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, an NGO active in the field of human rights in Bulgaria (Decision #5531, 2014, 3). The girl's parents meanwhile submitted a complaint to the CPD. The Committee decided that the administration's requirement that Saide take off her veil at school does not amount to discrimination. The girl and her family then filed an appeal of the CPD's decision with the Administrative Court in Sofia.

The Administrative Court upheld the school-mandated restrictions on student appearance as compatible with the provisions of the Constitution and the Law on Education. The Court began its analysis by pointing out that the school is entitled to regulate the dress of its students under the Regulations on the Application of the Law of Education (Decision # 5531, 2014, 4). It then cites the secular nature of education stipulated under Article 5 of the Law on Education to conclude that this principle applies “not only to curricular content but to the holistic organization of the educational process” (Decision #5531, 2014, 4). Since secular education is defined in the legislative framework as incompatible with religious and ideological indoctrination, the Court reasoned that the internal rule prohibiting dress that expresses ethnic or religious belonging is in compliance with the higher legal norms. The judicial analysis then acknowledges that the right to freedom of religion is “absolute, personal and inviolable” and that the state is responsible for securing the necessary conditions for the meaningful exercise of that freedom (Decision #5531, 2014, 4). The court stresses, however, that the right in question is not absolute under both national and international law. Under Article 57(2) of the Constitution and Article 7(2) of the Law on Denominations, limitations of the basic right to freedom of religion are permissible, according to that reading, when it goes against national security, public order, health, and morals or the rights and freedoms of others (Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria of 1991; Law on Denominations of 2002). Should there be a conflict between a personal right and public interest, therefore, it is legitimate to limit the individual freedom through a system of normative acts to ensure “normal tranquility and security” as well as the ability of others to exercise their citizenship rights (Decision #5531, 2014, 4). The court cites the analogous limitation in international law under Article 9(2) of the European Convention of Human Rights along with two Strasbourg cases against Turkey in which the veil ban has been upheld. The principle of the secular state, according to the Court, is the basis for the prohibition on religious symbols in Turkish universities. The Court asserts in conclusion that the Bulgarian state had discharged its duty to offer Saide access to education, but that it was ultimately the parents’ responsibility to ensure her attendance given the mandatory nature of public education until the age of 16.

The decision of the Administrative Court in effect upholds the status quo with regard to the place of the headscarf in Bulgarian public schools but does so on conceptually tenuous grounds. To begin with, it adopts a broad interpretation of the principle of secular education that goes beyond curricular content. As discussed above, such a reading has no basis in the legislative framework. The secular nature of public education is not a constitutional principle in Bulgaria, nor does a coherent and autonomous notion emerge when it makes its appearance in the Law of Education. Furthermore, it does not correspond to the contested practice of secularism

in the post-communist context. The Court thus imbues the term with content that closely resembles the logic of French *laïcité* but that does not have its roots in the Bulgarian tradition of separating church from state. The internal logic of *laïcité*, then, allows the court to assert that the mere act of donning a religious symbol amounts to religious or ideological indoctrination and a violation of other people's right to freedom from religion. The very same notion also undergirds the assertion that religious conviction is a personal, and not a public matter, thus drawing a distinction that is once again difficult to square with current and historical national paradigms. The example of Turkey that the court cites is very telling in this regard. The brand of secularism introduced by Atatürk was very much of French inspiration, but instead of pursuing the separation of religion and state, it amounted to an overall effort to keep Islam in check (Evstatiev, 2014). The court thus struggled to fit this normative content into the constitutional language that prohibits the privileging of individual citizens on the basis of religion.

The legal analysis that the court offered as justification for its decision is equally problematic. At present there is no law in Bulgaria that regulates the place of religious symbols in public educational institutions due to the lack of democratic consensus when such a proposal was tabled. Rather, it is an internal school regulation that creates a special regimen that disproportionately affects the Islamic headscarf. A very specific reading of the principle of secularity is thus channeled through schools' autonomy to regulate student dress at the expense of its application to other areas of the educational process, such as curricular content or the religious neutrality of the educational space. The judicial analysis essentially depends on circular reasoning by stipulating that the internal regulation is compatible with higher legal norms since it seeks their implementation. As has been argued already, however, the legislative framework does not offer an autonomous concept of post-communist secularism, thus leading the judges to measure the validity of the internal regulation against their own conception of the proper separation between religion and state. The main difficulty with this approach is that it relies on visions of secularity that are not indigenous but rather emerged in other historical and cultural contexts. The unfortunate outcome of these assumptions is that the court dispensed with the necessary balancing exercise. There was never a discussion, in particular, on exactly how the girl's exercise of her freedom of religious expression infringes upon national security, public order, health and morals, or the rights and freedoms of others. Such an infringement is merely asserted in the court's reasoning due to the very act of veiling. The lamentable paradox of the decision is that it ultimately suspends basic rights such as the right to freedom of religion and the right to education, which derive from international or constitutional legal norms, in favor of a school-mandated regulatory regimen.

The pronouncement of the Bulgarian judiciary on the admissibility of religious symbols in the public classroom, however, is unsurprising in light of current Strasbourg jurisprudence. The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has repeatedly upheld the validity of domestic restrictions on the right to freedom of religion under Article 9 of the ECHR, in particular regarding religious expression in public schools. In *Leyla Şahin v. Turkey*, for example, the court upheld the ban on the headscarf in Turkish universities, as there was a legal basis for the interference with the applicant's right to manifest her religion (2005). The Turkish Constitutional Court had previously sanctioned the prohibition and the ECtHR deemed the interference necessary in a democratic society in light of the state's margin of appreciation (para. 114). In *Aktas v. France*, in turn, the ECtHR declared inadmissible the applications of six pupils expelled from school for wearing conspicuous religious symbols (2009). The court underscored once again that the interference was prescribed by law and pursued the legitimate aim of protecting the rights and freedoms of others and the public order. It further stressed the role of the state as a neutral organizer of various religions. The cumulative effect of this jurisprudence has been to divest the right to freedom of religion and its manifestation of any effective protection unless domestic legislation provides for it. Under the margin of appreciation doctrine the state effectively has free rein to regulate the place of religion as it pleases even if that entails disproportionate restrictions and governmental imposition of a positive notion of secularism under the guise of neutrality.

In light of calls for a more activist judicial approach in this sphere, as well as a lower chamber decision to that effect, Prof. Joseph Weiler argued in his submissions as counsel for Italy in the *Lautsi* case that given the diversity of church-state arrangements in member states, it was not for the ECtHR to set a unified standard (Joseph Weiler's testimony before the ECtHR, 2010). The case concerned a challenge to the presence of crucifixes in Italian state classrooms. Bulgaria, along with seven other members, joined the proceedings as a third-party intervener. It submitted a joint statement with the governments of Armenia, Cyprus, the Russian Federation, Greece, Lithuania, Malta, and the Republic of San Marino. These states argued that many symbols of religious origin had become state symbols and "inevitably" had a place in state education as part of national identity (*Lautsi v. Italy*, 2011, para. 47). The position adopted by the Chamber, they contended, was thus "not an expression of the pluralism manifest in the Convention system, but an expression of the values of a secular state" (para. 47). While secularism was a respectable political position, in their view, it was not neutral, nor was a state that supported the secular as opposed to the religious within the educational sphere. According to the third parties, the important part was not the presence of religious symbols in the classrooms, but the extent to which the curriculum con-

textualized religious difference and taught children pluralism and tolerance. The Grand Chamber of the ECtHR unsurprisingly found that no issue arose for consideration under Article 9 ECHR. Given the lack of European consensus, the judges reasoned, the question of religious symbols in classrooms fell within the margin of appreciation of each state unless domestic measures led to indoctrination. On the basis of these facts, the court concluded that the presence of the crucifix in the classroom did not amount to indoctrination since it was not accompanied with compulsory teaching about Christianity.

While one can sympathize with Prof. Weiler's argument that the ECtHR is not in a position to set a unique and rigid rule for the relationship between religion and state in Europe, the court's jurisprudence has served to establish a double standard in the sphere of religious freedom depending on the nature of the applicant. The liberal use of the margin of appreciation doctrine to shield state interpretations of the principle of secularity implies that the state is free to flaunt religious symbols in the classroom under the pretext that they are effectively a part of national identity, whereas when individuals do so, their manifestation of religious affiliation necessarily amounts to indoctrination and breaches the public order. It is difficult not to see such approach as discriminatory, in particular in light of the power asymmetry between the state and its citizens. Bulgaria's intervention in the *Lautsi* case might have been dictated by diplomatic exigencies, yet the Bulgarian Ambassador to the Holy See qualified the court's decision as "an affirmation of the freedom of religion and education, in tune with the Christian values that are characteristic of our countries" (Ganchev, 2011). Such statements tend to reinforce the notion that Islam, and practicing Muslims by extension, are alien to Europe. Domestic measures that strike unequally at religious symbols in the classroom thus perpetuate the sense that particular forms of religious affiliation are singularly targeted.

The post-communist model of Bulgarian secularism that emerges from these pages is fragmented and often self-contradictory. An autonomous and indigenous vision of what the separation of religion and state entails in the contemporary context is therefore still in the making. As Bulgaria struggles to regulate this relationship, however, it is of vital importance that it adopts a framework that treats uniformly the various religious traditions in both law and practice in order to avoid the further marginalization of minority communities. The classroom, above all, as the primary locus of civic integration can become a forum for the participatory negotiation of these tensions, rather than a channel for the top-down enforcement of one particular vision of secularity.

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# Transformed Perceptions of Islam and Muslims in Ukraine in the Wake of the Social and Political Changes caused by Euromaidan

December 2013 – 2014

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The events in Ukraine which took place at the cusp of 2013 and 2014, and which continue up to the present (2015), have caused a radical rethinking of a number of stereotypes, as well as the breakdown of previous social relations together with the formation of new ones. This transformation has influenced the Muslim community of Ukraine as well. In the public space of Ukraine, an intensive transformation of Muslim themes is taking place, and these transformations have impacted all Ukrainian Muslims. A review of these developments has important ramifications for understanding the situational and contextual nature of evolving religious plurality and pluralism in diverse European contexts.

In my chapter I aim to show how the actualization of the “Muslim Question” arose, and how the attitude of Ukrainian society toward the Muslims of Ukraine changed from negative to neutral, and even to moderately friendly. I’ll also try to demonstrate how relations inside the Ukrainian Ummah (Muslim community) were themselves in a state of flux and in what way the legalization of armed jihad was justified by some Muslims in the context of the conflict. At the conclusion of this chapter I will address potential developments and difficulties that Ukrainian Muslims may face in the future.

As a theoretical base for my research I will rely on Ernest Gellner’s work on nationalism in relationship to Muslim society, which was formulated by him in numerous works, especially *Muslim Society* (1981), as well as in *Nations and Nationalism* (1983) and *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and Its Rivals* (1994). Appealing to Max Weber’s idea that the rise of capitalism (or industrial society) was paralleled by a transformation of religious ethics, and to a great

extent was determined by this transformation, Gellner applied this model to Islam.

Gellner thinks that the ways of adaptation of Islam to the contemporary world were not borrowed from the West, but were found within Muslim tradition itself as an “official” or “puritan” version of Islam, which transformed into a Muslim fundamentalism closely paralleling Protestantism. At the same time, “folk” or “unofficial” Islam, which was predominant within agricultural societies, has disappeared or is disappearing under the impact of modernization. Thus Islamic fundamentalism was regarded by Gellner both as an analogue to European nationalism and as its alternative.

In my research I utilize Gellner’s concepts in part, where he indicates a close interconnection of two phenomena – nationalism and Islamic fundamentalism, or, in a wider sense – reformism. I will show that this interconnection is quite explicit in the case of the Ukrainian events and the example of the Ukrainian Ummah. It should be noted, however, that this interconnection works not because of the processes of modernization, which Ukrainian society had passed through in the first half of the twentieth century, but because of the actualization of nationalism as a result of both internal and external threats (pro-Russian separatism in the East of Ukraine and Crimean annexation).

Before the aforementioned socio-political events and in the aftermath of the subsequent forced political crisis attitudes to Muslims in Ukrainian society were evaluated differently by various researchers, although the majority of them agreed that Islamophobia played a central role. The head of the Group for Monitoring Minority Rights, Vyacheslav Likhachev, thinks that Islamophobia became one of the most prominent forms of xenophobia in Ukraine (Likhachev, 2011). The head of the External Affairs Department of the Mejlis of Crimean Tatars, Ali Khamzin, stated that in Ukraine “aggressive chauvinistic Islamophobia” rules (Khamzin, 2013).

The campaigns started by nationalistic forces against the building of mosques soon became the most vivid examples of Islamophobia. Being under the pressure of right ultra-radical powers, the city council in Khmelnytsk refused to discuss the question of allocating the land for building a mosque (Budivnyctvo mecheti u Hmelnyckomu, 2014). The local powers of one town, Belaya Tserkov, canceled the previously taken decision to allocate land for a mosque after a strong anti-Islamic campaign (Pravozashitniki schitayut..., 2011). Similar campaigns took place in other cities, in Lugansk and Kamenets-Podolsk in particular.

Islamophobia also appeared in the form of inaccurate publications in the mass-media and in politicians’ speeches, where they invoked an “Islamic threat”; and in hate crimes towards Muslims (street attacks in particular) as well as crimes

towards Islamic religious infrastructures (like vandalism to tombstones in Muslim cemeteries or the firebombing of mosques) (V Harkove podozhgli mechet, 2011; V Sumah na mecheti narisovali svastiki, 2011).

Such an attitude is related to a pervasive level of xenophobia in Ukrainian society. According to the data of sociological research titled "Regional tolerance, xenophobia and human rights in 2012," the index of interethnic distance in 2012 was 4.5 out of a maximum 7. This index characterizes interethnic, interracial and international relations in Ukrainian society as *merely alienating*. In Western Ukraine, xenophobia is primarily directed at Arabs, Africans, Crimean Tatars and Jews, while in Eastern Ukraine it targets Asians, Arabs, and the representatives of Western European and Atlantic national and cultural groups (Germans, French, Americans, Canadians). The results of the research are an indication that Muslim ethnicities are at the top of the list (Analytical report, 2013).

One of the reasons for such attitudes is the long-term absence of Islamic organizations within the religious space of Ukraine. After the deportation of Crimean Tatars in 1944, Islam in Ukraine disappeared from the public sphere of religious life, becoming mostly a matter of personal faith and a ground for everyday practices. The reports by the authorities in Religious Affairs indicate that from the end of the 1940's until 1990 there were no registered Muslim communities (Brylov, 2014, 182). Moreover, Orthodox Christianity has remained the majority religion in Ukrainian society for centuries. Duke Vladimir of Kiev is named the "Baptizer of Rus" in church history for establishing Christianity as the state religion. The return in the 1980-90s of Crimean Tatars to Crimea after their deportation was closely connected with the land and estate conflicts of repatriates and this instigated Islamophobic perceptions that have persisted for the past 50 years.

The recent situation in Ukraine has changed rapidly, occurring within just a few months of the social and political conflict known as "Euromaidan", followed by the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. At this point, the changing of attitudes toward Ukrainian Muslims on the part of the rest of society as well as a transformation of the relations inside the Ukrainian Muslim community (Ummah) have gone through several stages, each closely connected with the stages of the conflict itself.

The first stage of Euromaidan (November 21-30, 2013) centered around the protests against the delay and further rejection by the Ukrainian Government in signing the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement. At this stage the religious factor was not present and had no influence on Muslim affairs.

The religious component of EuroMaidan became manifest on the night of November 30, when the protesters, mostly students, who were almost ready to leave the European square where the protests had taken place, were violently attacked and dispersed by "Berkut" (special police units). A number of protesters, in order

to save themselves from being executed, took shelter in Mikhailovskiy Monastery where the monks allowed them to come in. The important issue here is that the Monastery belongs to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kiev Patriarchate, a church that is not recognized by the Universal Orthodox Church, and that was known for its clear pro-Ukrainian position and its opposition to the political position of the authorities at that time. It was precisely this fact of the involvement of religious organizations in the social conflict through supporting the protesters at the beginning of the confrontations that would determine the future presence of the religious factor in the conflict from that moment forward.

On the next day, December 1, some 500,000 to 1,000,000 people marched into the streets of Kiev, protesting the unreasonably outrageous crackdown on the students. This mass protest received the title “Maidan of Anger” and was the beginning of the next stage of civil confrontation (Slavinska, 2013). As a result of the protests, the Kiev City Council building became the headquarters of the protesters. Maidan Nezalezhnosity, the main city square, became the epicenter of the protest where a tent encampment soon appeared, hosting protesters from all regions of Ukraine. It was at this point that the first Muslims appeared among the protesters. In particular, female Muslims wearing Islamic clothing styles attracted attention.

One of the Muslim women, Jamila, an ethnic Ukrainian who had converted to Islam, said that the reason for her coming to the square was anxiety for her daughter’s life. Her daughter was a student at one of Kiev’s universities known for its pro-Ukrainian position. “When I imagined that my girl might have been beaten in the ribs, in the head, I could not stay at home any longer”.

It is important to note that from the very beginning of the protests, there was no unity among the Muslims of Ukraine on how to treat Euromaidan. Many Ukrainian Muslims are originally from Russia and have relatives there, so they could not accept the anti-Russian and pro-Western rhetoric of the protests. The only Muslim group that unconditionally supported the protesters was that comprised of ethnic Ukrainians who had converted to Islam. It is also worth noting that Euromaidan was supported by Ukrainian Muslims who sometimes espoused opposite interpretations of Islam—from the followers of traditionalistic apolitical Islam to the supporters of radical teachings like jihadist Salafism. So we can say that in this case the issue of national identity became more important than religious concerns. In other words, we should agree with Ernest Gellner and accept his proposition from *Muslim Society* (1981) that “the two processes, ‘purification’ or radicalisation of religion, and nationalism, are often intimately intertwined, to a degree that it is hard to say which one is ‘merely’ the external form of the other” (Gellner, 1981, 59).

There was no unity among the Crimean Tatars either. The support of Crimean Tatar Salafis for the then-existing government and president became a vivid example of the split in Muslim society with regard to the question of anti-government protests. In mid December 2013 a pro-government meeting, “AntiMaidan”, was organized by the state authorities to show that not all Ukrainians support anti-government protests. The representatives of Crimean Tatar Salafis from the organization “Sebat”, known for forcible takeovers of land plots, took an active part in those meetings (Sebat, 2013).

The next stage of the civil conflict began in mid-January 2014, after the Ukrainian parliament passed anti-protest laws limiting the constitutional rights and freedom of the citizens. These laws were approved through violating proper voting procedures. As a result, the peaceful protests gave way to violent clashes between the protesters and the militia.

It was during this time that a Chechen woman, Amina Okueva, a surgeon who joined the protesters as a medical volunteer, became quite popular. Although a Salafi, she joined the protesters in spite of her colleagues from “Sebat” being on the other side. She commented on Facebook that she would only accept criticism of her activity from those who were “at the forefront in Syria, where I tried to go, but was not accepted”. According to this comment and a number of others, where she clarifies her religious views, Okueva supports the idea of jihadism, quite popular among Chechens who took part in armed actions against Russia and had to immigrate from there.

A widespread mass-media outcry followed the so-called “Prayer Marathon” which took place in Donetsk beginning in March 2014. One of the organizers, Fr. Tikhon Kulbaka, the head of the ecumenical department of the Donetsk Exarchate of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, noted that the “Prayer Marathon” was an ecumenical space, where Roman Catholics, Greek Catholics, Orthodox of the Kiev Patriarchate, Protestants, and later Muslims and Buddhists joined together. The priest said that this Prayer Mайдan was the last place in Donetsk where one could see Ukrainian symbols (Kochmar, 2014).

The position of the major religious communities of Muslims also played a role. Thus, the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Ukraine, being a member of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, promoted a peacemaking position towards all sides of the conflict and took an active mediating role in negotiations between the authorities and the protesters (Zayavlenie Vseukrainskogo Soveta Cerkvei, 2014).

It is important to note that Muslims were actively present in the public space of “Euromaidan” participating in common inter-confessional worship, which regularly took place at the very center of the events—Independence Square.

However, the key role in changing attitudes toward Muslims among the majority of Ukrainians was played by events that followed the success of “Euromaidan”, the fall of President Yanukovitch and the success of the opposition powers. These events were, namely, the annexation of Crimea by Russia and the rise of separatist movements in the East of Ukraine, in the Donetsk and Luhansk areas, which adopted openly pro-Russian positions.

In March 2014 Russia annexed Crimea. According to sociological research conducted among the largest ethnic groups in Crimea (Russian and Crimean Tatars), the most pro-Ukrainian position was taken by Muslims—the Crimean Tatars (Crimean Society, 2009, 19). The new central authority of Ukraine found itself in a complicated social, political, and economic situation, and was not able to withstand the forced aggression. That is why the patriotic segment of Ukrainian society expected the position of the Crimean Tatars to be in favor of the anti-Russian forces in Crimea. In the publications of that period it was commonly asserted that Crimean Tatars would declare jihad on Russia. Assertions such as these tended to surface the existing biases within Ukrainian society that Islam is a religion of war and bellicosity. However, at that moment such bellicosity appeared to be eagerly awaited by those in society weakened by the internal processes in the face of the external threat. Moreover, those biases were not only common amongst ordinary citizens, but also amongst the Christian clergy. For example, during one of the interconfessional meetings, the head of one of the major Christian confessions of Ukraine asked the representatives of the Ukrainian Muslims when they planned to declare jihad on Russia.

The “Muslim” factor became even more visible at the time of the anti-terrorism operations undertaken in the eastern parts of Ukraine. Soon after the impeachment of president Yanukovitch, separatist movements appeared in the eastern territories. Their demands were quite broad – from the decentralization of power and more autonomy of local powers to separation from Ukraine and the creation of an independent state or even to join Russia.

Volunteer battalions, which included Muslims as well, played an important role in the anti-terrorism operations. The most interesting case here is that of the volunteer battalion “The Special Hundred ‘Crimea’” including Crimean Tatars who had left Crimea after the annexation, as well as Ukrainians who had converted to Islam (Skoro “Krym”, 2014). The majority of the fighters in this military group are Salafists. The head of the Hundred is Valid Abu Yusuf (Ivan Selentsov), who lived for a long time in Germany and was one of the active members in the Salafi project “Read!” directed towards the Islamisation of Germans. He was deported from Germany by the German national security services and sent to Crimea. In March 2014 he was kidnapped by Russian national security services and deported from

Crimea (Stadnik, 2014). The key motivation of this group of volunteers became the war with Russia and pro-Russian forces, which were associated with anti-Muslim politics. Armed actions against separatists are regarded by the members of the Hundred as a defensive jihad (jihad al-dafa'a).

The statement on the website of this group indicates:

The Muslims of Ukraine regard this war as a defensive jihad (holy war). The Muslims of Ukraine, represented by the Hundred "Crimea", came to the borders of their homeland to defend themselves and their compatriots, to defend their families and their loved ones, to defend their honor and their property, as well as the honor and the property of their fellow nationals, regardless of their religious beliefs or nationality. The Muslims from the Hundred "Crimea" are ready to defend the natural right to practice their religion, the rights of which were completely provided by Ukraine. The Muslims of Russia do not have such a right today. (Segodnya flag Ukrainy, 2014)

At the same time an interesting phenomenon has occurred—the members of the Hundred, who are mostly Salafi, are in fact involved in a special "Jewish-Islamic dialogue". The Hundred "Crimea" is part of a special task unit of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine "Dnepr-1" which is financed by the head of the United Jewish Community of Ukraine and the president of the European Jewish Union (EJU), one of the richest persons in Ukraine, Igor Kolomoyski, who is regarded as one of the main lobbyists of the Hasidic movement, "Chabad", in Ukraine (Sponsory iudeiskih svyatyn podtverdili, 2011). Moreover, the battalions "Dnepr-1" and "Dnepr-2" are often regarded as the "private forces" or "private forces company" of the Ukrainian oligarch. That makes the situation even more unusual: Kolomoyski, who has Israeli citizenship and is famous for financing the restoration of Judaic religious objects in Jerusalem, and for his readiness to take part in restoration of the Third Temple (Briman, 2010a), as well as attempts to secure the isolation of Iran in Europe (Briman, 2010b), now also appears to be the sponsor of the "Salafi" battalion. Such a specific cooperation, I think, bears witness to the predominance of national self-identification over a religious one found among Ukrainian Muslims, who take an active part in the confrontation with Russia and pro-Russian separatists.

The reason for pro-Ukrainian sentiments among the representatives of the ideology of political activism in Islam lies in liberal legislation in Ukraine, which does not require the interdiction of this or that religious organization, does not provide a list of forbidden religious literature, etc. For example, the communities of Hizb ut-Tahrir were openly present in Ukraine and organized party congresses there (Dorofeev, 2013). Salafi communities and organizations, closely connected to the Muslim Brotherhood, also were quite active without experiencing any restric-

tions from the state. After the annexation of Crimea the situation in the religious sphere changed dramatically; now there were searches of mosques and madrasahs, as well as scrutiny of certain mass-media companies so as to target Islamic movements restricted in Russia, such as Salafi organizations, Hizb ut-Tahrir, Nurcular, and others (Muftiyat Kryma, 2014). Major Internet sources issued articles with titles like “The Islamists in Crimea are up to Something” (Muhin, 2014). Crimean society was already Islamophobic due to reasons I have described at the beginning of this chapter, and now the anti-Islamic sentiments became even more pronounced. In the religious sphere only those organizations which demonstrated a loyal pro-Russian position were left alone.

The rising of a militant mood among Ukrainian Muslims did not remain unnoticed by international radical Islamic movements. Abdul Karim Krymski, the head of “Crimean Tatar Jamaat” (military troop) as a part of “Jaish al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar”, called upon Crimean Tatars in his video of May 2014 to “refresh the memory of their ancestors, who gained tribute from Moscow” and “to take the path of Jihad” against Russia. At the same time, in his speech he equated Ukraine and Russia as territories where infidels (kafirs) are humiliating Muslims. In his view it’s useless for Crimean Tatars to address international organizations and they have to initiate open war with unbelievers:

We see that Muslims and Tatars who moved to Ukraine are humbled, while here [in Syria] the Muslims are walking with heads held high; we just see the difference... We ask Allah that He will set Tatar Crimea, Tatars, the people of Crimea on this path [Jihad], so that we could through joint efforts establish the laws of Allah on this land. (Amir Salahaddin Shishani, 2014)

One important role in forming a positive image of Ukrainian Muslims in inter-religious dialogue is being played by some Muslim military personnel who are part of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU). They are represented both by ethnic Muslims and Ukrainians who have converted to Islam. For example, in one of the mechanized brigades of AFU 10 Muslims who are in military service are ethnic Ukrainians. Two of them converted during the time of the anti-terrorism operation in Donbass (Marchenko, 2014). In the words of one of the Muslim soldiers, 33-year old Nikolay Sylich (Salim), there are no problems of religious disagreement, and in fact, they are fighting shoulder to shoulder with Christians:

In our brigade Muslims and Christians are fighting shoulder to shoulder, both are growing beards (laughing). The officers have positive relationships with us, and do not impede our religious worship...

Unfortunately, it is not always possible to perform prayer (Salat) on time. However, the guys have already gotten used to us, treat us with understanding and respect, and it's even interesting to them to see how we are praying". (Ibid)

In the words of another Muslim soldier, a reconnaissance man of the 72nd mechanized brigade of AFU, Ainur (name changed): "What kind of problem might there be between Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, Jews, when it concerns primary matters? It is your home, your Motherland, and somebody invades" (Verner, 2014).

As a result of conflicts in the East of Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea, a very curious phenomenon is observed in Ukrainian society: from the perspective of having a common enemy, those Ukrainian Muslims who demonstrated patriotic pro-Ukrainian positions were positively perceived by the society, in spite of their ideological differences. Moreover, the notion of jihad is now understood positively – of course, only in the case when it is jihad against Russia and pro-Ukraine.

A typical example of such an attitude can be seen in the following comment made by Yuri Biryukov, an advisor to the President of Ukraine:

Kadyrov's hogs (Chechen pro-Russian fighters [author's interpretation]) were in panic because of being attacked by battle-hardened Wahhabi-like men shouting, "Allahu Akbar". The hogs were so confused that sometimes they shot each other. I extremely respect the Crimean Tatar Volunteer Battalion. They are battle-hardened men, not blowhards. (Krymskie tatory v zone ATO..., 2014)

At the same time, those Muslims who are neutral, or who propose dialogue with the separatists and have a more pro-Russian position, are treated as a "fifth column" or as collaborators.

One of the other examples of "positive Muslim" image construction came from the Mufti of the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Ukraine (SAMU-Ummah), Said Ismagilov. Said himself (his original name—Sergey) and his organization belong to the modernist segment of the Ukrainian Muslim community and are affiliated with an association of non-governmental organizations (Alraid) which have close ideological, financial and organizational connections with the Muslim Brotherhood movement (Brylov & Yarosh, 2011, 262). According to the statistics of the State Department of National and Religious Affairs, 11 communities (less than 5% of all Muslim communities in Ukraine), located mostly in the East of Ukraine in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions, belong to SAMU/Ummah. Today those territories are controlled by pro-Russian separatists (Naumets, 2014).

Said Ismagilov is not widely supported among the Muslim communities of Ukraine, but because of his participation in the aforementioned Prayer Marathon,

and his actively declared pro-Ukrainian position, he became quite popular among the patriotic segment of society. From the perspective of Ukrainian society Said Ismagilov is regarded as a “real Ukrainian patriot” and a “true Muslim”. Moreover, by making various statements “on behalf of the Muslims of Ukraine”, he is regarded by the nationalist patriotic segment of Ukrainian society as a representative of all Ukrainian Muslims, becoming in some way a “media Mufti”.

Said Ismagilov pays special attention to questions of interconfessional dialogue, mostly with those denominations that also express nationalistic, pro-Ukrainian positions – especially with the representatives of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kiev Patriarchate. As he notes,

Today it’s easier to find common moral and religious vectors with Greek Catholics and Orthodox of the Kiev Patriarchate, with their hierarchs and spiritual leaders, because they are open, loyal to Muslims, and oriented to constructive dialogue (Ukrainci zrozumily, 2014).

The figure of Said Ismagilov is also an outstanding illustration of Ernest Gellner’s thesis on the closeness of nationalism and Islamic reformism:

The Islamic Reformation came later, was perhaps needed less badly in a faith already ever-inclined to reform, and it came from the centre of the religious establishment, though under the impact of extraneous forces; and it seems to have unified rather than fragmented the community of the faithful. It was also a precursor of nationalism, put closer to it in time, and sometimes indistinguishable from it. (Gellner, 1985, 8)

Two interconnected phenomena—[Islamic] modernism and [Ukrainian] nationalism—are united in this “Media Mufti”, who is not acknowledged by the majority of Muslims who belong to “traditional” society, but who is popular among “nationalistic” Ukrainians. Being an adherent of the ideology of the modernist Muslim Brotherhood movement (Brylov, 2014, 187), Ismagilov appears as a supporter of Ukrainization and sees the future of the Ukrainian Ummah as a small, consolidated, nationally conscious society (see e.g. Evloeva, 2014).

Being a bright media figure of the modernist-nationalist segment of Ukrainian Muslims, Said Ismagilov attracts other Muslim organizations with nationalist overtones such as the “Slavic Islamic League” (SILa—the acronym is a play on words, “SILa” translates into English as POWER), which appeals to a base of Russian and Ukrainian nationalists who are converts to Islam. This organization espouses the ideas of the preservation of the ethnic identity of Slavic Muslims in

Islam and the further promotion of Islam among their compatriots (Obrashenie redaktora, 2014). According to the statements of SILa, Said Ismagilov became one of those figures worth noticing – together with the aforementioned Salafi, Amina Okueva, who “attained the reputation of being proponents of Ukraine, faithful citizens and friends of Ukraine” (Sozdan Ukrainskii Musulmanskii Centr, 2014).

It is important to note that the positions articulated by Ismagilov and Okueva in public space are strengthened, in part due to the correspondingly rather weak presence of other Muslim communities in informational space. For example, the largest Spiritual Administration in Ukraine—the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Ukraine headed by Sheikh Ahmed Tamim which calls itself (SAMU) in distinction from from Ismagilov’s group (SAMU-Ummah)—is extremely unwilling to have contact with the mass media. In a private discussion Ahmed Tamim explained that the mass media almost always distort information and regularly present Muslims in a negative way.

I see the real reason for this weak presence within the public sphere as being due to the anxiety of possibly causing a rift inside the communities controlled by Tamim. The large scope of the communities within the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Ukraine unites both pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian Muslims. That is why the head of SAMU has to be much more cautious in his public speeches than Said Ismagilov.

However, because of growing competition in mass media space, SAMU has activated its informational policy and become more open in expressing its position on the conflict in the East of Ukraine. On the Internet and other mass media especially popular have been video and photos of the representatives of various religious organizations of Ukraine during the March for Peace in Ukraine or the March for Unity (Jan 18, 2015), where the vice-head Mufti of SAMU is seen walking shoulder to shoulder with the head Rabbi of Ukraine (Pravoslavnye, musulmane, iudei, 2015).

As a result of the wide visibility of Muslims (who represent various teachings in Islam and various religious communities) in the informational field of Ukraine, as well as their pro-Ukrainian position, certain changes emerged in the relationship of the state to Muslims.

On November 18, 2014, the head of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Ukraine, Sheikh Akhmed Tamim, and the head of the Department for External Affairs of SAMU, Khusameddin al-Khalavani, were praised by the Chair of the Parliament, Alexander Turchinov, for providing a “substantial contribution to the spiritual renaissance of Ukraine, the drive for peace and prosperity in Ukrainian society, and active social and charitable activity” (Predsedatel Verhovnoi Rady Ukrainy, 2014).

Another example of changes in attitudes towards Muslims from the side of the Ukrainian official authorities can be seen in the Memorandum for cooperation

between Crimean Tatars and the Dnipropetrovsk region, which was signed by the governor of the Dnipropetrovsk region, Igor Kolomoyski, and a member of the Parliament of Ukraine, Crimean Tatar People's Commissioner for the President, ex-head of the Mejlis, Mustafa Dzhemilev. One of the points of this convention was the return of the mosque built in 1914 to Crimean Tatars. The conflict between Dnipropetrovsk Muslims and local authorities regarding this mosque had lasted for more than 10 years (Starinnuyu dnepropetrovskuyu mechet, 2015). The interests of the Crimean Tatar community are represented by Elvin Kadyrov, who was removed from the post of Imam of Alushta Mosque Jukara-Jami of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Crimea for being a member of Hizb ut-Tahrir (Ivanov, 2004), which indicates that the role of this Islamist movement is increasing among the Crimean Tatar population.

It is too early, however, to talk about changes in the attitude of Ukrainian society towards Muslims in general. No serious research on changes of the level of xenophobia in general, or Islamophobia in particular, has been undertaken. Even the possible decrease in Islamophobia (relying on analysis of tonal changes in the Ukrainian mass media) might be questioned. What are the reasons for such a decrease? Is it connected with the social interrogation of intolerance in Ukrainian society in general, or is it the result of the appearance of a new "foe" in pro-Russian separatists and Russia? To judge by analogous processes in Russian society, it probably reflects situational changes, connected with the armed conflict in the East and the annexation of Crimea. Thus, according to the research of the Russian Levada Center, the Ukrainian crisis and confrontation with the West have put important problems for Russian society such as international and migration policies on the back burner. In October 2013, 66% of Russian citizens supported the slogan "Russia for Russians", reflecting the highest level of a xenophobic mood ever recorded by the Levada Center. In August 2014, only 54% were ready to support this slogan (Natsionalizm, ksenofobiya i migratsiya, 2014).

This interpretation that situational changes may explain the apparent improvement of relations with Muslims might be implicitly supported by the results of the snap elections to the Parliament of Ukraine held in 2014. The attempt made by Said Ismagilov and Amina Okueva to transform media popularity into political power failed. The party "Ukraine – united country", which had Said Ismagilov in the top 5 of representatives, received only 0.12% (Vidomosti pro pidrahunok golosv vyborciv po zagalnodержavnomu bagatomandatnomu vyborchomu okrugu, 2014). Amina Okueva, who represented branch #136 in the Suvorov district of Odessa, received only 2186, or 3.72% of votes (Vidomosti pro pidrahunok golosiv vyborciv v odnomandatnomu vyborchomu okruzi, 2014).

The question now arises as to whether the perceived changes in the level of Islamophobia are sustainable, and if so, for how long will this last. Will the improvement of the attitude toward Muslims have a constant character, or not? In what way will the immigration of the Crimean Tatars, who often express fundamentalist views, into the Western part of Ukraine where the major part of the population is known for its religiosity and are mostly Greek Catholics, have an influence on interreligious relations? Is there a risk that after the slowdown in events in the east of Ukraine, interconfessional relations will deteriorate in the West of Ukraine where xenophobia towards Crimean Tatars has always existed? Those concerns are justified when viewing the reactions of the representatives of Muslim organizations. The aforementioned Mufti of SAMU-Ummah, Said Ismagilov, argued against the building of a mosque in Lviv by Crimean Tatar migrants, saying: "We don't have to make meetings or to fight for our rights in Lviv... Muslims have to make a good name for themselves among the Lviv locals, and only after that can they discuss the building of religious structures" (Batig, n.d.).

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## Conclusion

From the beginning of the social-political and forced conflict in Ukraine (end of 2013 until the present), the attitude towards the Muslims of Ukraine has had an implicitly xenophobic character. At the same time liberal laws in religious affairs opened wide possibilities for the activity of almost any Islamic movement (excepting openly radical ones). After the conflict started, the religious factor (including an Islamic one) became an issue of great importance in Ukrainian society. At the same time, social-political conflict from the end of 2013 to the beginning of 2014 demonstrated the absence of unity both among Ukrainian Muslims as a whole as well as inside the various Islamic groups in Ukraine. The split within the Salafi movement, where one section of the community took the side of the Euromaidan protesters while the other side supported President Yanukovitch, became a remarkable example.

The role of religious factors increased because of the armed conflict with pro-Russian separatists in the East of Ukraine. The annexation of Crimea and military actions in the east of Ukraine led to the migration of Muslims from those regions into the Western and Central regions of Ukraine, and that led to a shift in the power balance inside the Ukrainian Ummah itself. Those members of Hizb ut-Tahrir, who became repressed by the Russian security services in Crimea, migrated to Ukraine, so the position of the movement strengthened there.

The militarization of Ukrainian society and a social demand for patriotism led to the activation of reformist movements inside the Ukrainian Ummah which turned to national-oriented rhetoric. Such rhetoric is quite in demand in current Ukrainian society, so that those representatives of the Ukrainian Ummah, who have little support inside the Ukrainian Ummah itself, became quite popular among Ukrainians thanks to mass-media exposure, which led to the phenomenon of the “media Mufti”, or “Mufti for non-Muslims”.

Furthermore, armed conflict in the east led to the legitimization of the notion of Jihad, especially in its defensive meaning (jihad al-dafa’a), within social discourse. The radical part of the Ukrainian Ummah, whose representatives joined volunteer battalions who were fighting for territorial integrity of Ukraine, also became quite active.

Together with the consolidation of society against common foes, inter-religious dialogue became more intensified, and the national ideal became a uniting factor within it. However, at this point it is too early to talk about the irreversibility of the existing changes. Moreover, there are a number of potential problems that may arise as a result of the current situation. First of all, there is a risk of an increase of interconfessional tension inside Ukraine, connected with the migration of Muslims into regions of Ukraine that are characterized by a high level of Christian religiosity. Because of the activities of radical groups inside Ukraine and a rise in interest in inter-Ukrainian events from the side of international Jihadist movements, there is also a risk of Ukraine becoming a transit corridor and base area for such radical groups that have claims against Russia. However, it is premature at this point to talk about essential changes as certain facts, because the situation is developing and changing every day and the role of religious plurality in Ukrainian society continues to evolve.

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Zvit pro merezhu cerkov i religiinyh organizacii v Ukraini stanom na 1 sichnya 2014 roku (Forma 1)

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# Muslim Leaders and the State in Contemporary Tatarstan

## A Case Study

Leyla Almazova

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### Introduction

Prior to the Ukrainian crisis, the Russian mass media was dominated by the issue of radical Islam. Despite the shift in public interest to the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, issues concerning Islam's everyday existence and the functioning of various branches and movements of Islam in Russian society continue to linger both in the pages of news publications and the day-to-day lives of ordinary Russians. The Internet overflows with sites and fora dedicated to Muslim problems. Muslim activists continue to struggle for the freedom of their incarcerated brethren. And, as ever, those special branches of state agencies that are dedicated to fighting religious extremism go on with their work.

Methods of combating non-traditional religious elements are quite extensive, ranging from arrests and legal persecutions of leaders of the Islamic community to the state's financial support of Muslims it deems loyal to it. Both the former and the latter, however, are most likely simply extreme manifestations of the state's interest in ensuring social stability. More often than not, government agencies are more circumspect in their work with religious communities, preferring to replace certain undesirable leaders with those who hold beliefs that are more in line with the state's conceptions of civil loyalty.

Since 2010, Tatarstan—which for a long time was considered an enclave of inter-denominational peace, agreement, and order—has witnessed events that have gradually dismantled this, as it turned out, myth.<sup>1</sup> The 2012 assassination of Vali-

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1 For example, when three armed persons assaulted the automobile of the head of the counter-terrorism committee in Nurlat and were then killed by the police.

ulla Yakupov, the deputy to the chief mufti of Tatarstan, and the attempted assassination of mufti Ildus Faizov only strengthened the impression that things were amiss among the Republic's Muslim community. The subsequent counter-terrorism measures undertaken by law enforcement agencies – the gist of which is extremely difficult to establish—agitated Muslims and led them to accuse law enforcement agents of numerous transgressions.<sup>2</sup>

For its part, the Republic's community of experts is scrambling to figure out the situation, conducting research, including investigating the leaders of radical movements, with the goal of deciphering the social threat posed by these various groups (Guzel'baeva, 2014; Safiullina, 2014, Muratova, 2014). Analysis of those articles, as well as conference presentations of listed authors and my own research experience demonstrate one stable pattern – most leaders and groups that are prosecuted or labelled as suspicious and extremist by the police and other law enforcement organizations are not considered to be threatening or radical by researchers. The difference in the assessment of those Muslim groups by scholars and state authorities depends on the approach to studying Islam as a phenomenon.<sup>3</sup> Scholars are interested in understanding the religious ideology of various leaders and trends as competing ideologies in the free market of ideas. State authorities are still trying to prove that there is “right” or “good” Islam and a “wrong” or “bad” Islam<sup>4</sup> – the “right” one is an Islam that collaborates with the state, is based on local religious traditions and denies any foreign influences while the “wrong” one is an Islam that has a tendency to violence (that point obviously could be accepted by researchers

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2 A gathering in support of Tatarstani Muslims. Retrieved from <http://kavpolit.com/blogs/ali-charinskiy/157/> on July 23, 2014.

3 Since the year of publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (Said, 1977), the orientalist community is re-evaluating its approaches to the study of non-European cultures. Meanwhile, one still encounters “successful” attempts to explain everything that goes on in Muslim communities by means of references to the Qur'an and Muslim traditions – or through certain fundamental principles that are intrinsic to Islam and alien to Christianity or Judaism (Gellner, 1984; Lewis, 2002). Here, it should be noted that Islamic Studies scholars are ever more frequently coming to the conclusion that “the key question is not what the Koran actually says, but what Muslims say the Koran says” (Roy, 2002, 10). If we approach the issue of studying Islamic discourse in modern-day Tatarstan from this point of view, we will see that only through this approach can we understand the proliferation of the various interpretations of Islam even within one, relatively small republic.

4 From the lecture, read by the employee of Presidential Apparatus of the Republic of Tatarstan (Department of State-Religious Affairs) Idlar Galiev at the Kazan Federal University (28 May, 2015).

too) or is influenced by foreign religious organizations, even non-violent ones, or is independent from traditional religious authorities.

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## The problem of terminology

When attempting to describe the different outlooks of the Muslim activists in Tatarstan, the researcher is first faced with the question of how to refer to Muslims who hold this or that perspective. Further difficulty lies in the fact that even the leaders of a single branch of Islam may disagree about various issues of theology and worship. It is customary to term those who aim to spread the local Islam of Tatarstan adherents of “traditional” (Batrov, 2014) or “official” Islam (Yakupov, 2006). Among those who do not number in the ranks of the traditional religious establishment, there are those who are accused of spreading Wahhabi ideology and who are frequently referred to as Salafists. Furthermore, there are also several liberal thinkers,<sup>5</sup> as well as the leaders of Sufi groups.<sup>6</sup> The present chapter’s goal is to evaluate the difference in views held by leaders of “official”/“traditional” Islam and those who are accused of Wahhabism. To this end, we surveyed and examined the views of two Muslim leaders whose destinies seem diametrically opposed in the current day. They are the young imam Khalim Shamsutdinov, who was appointed head imam of the Dzhamiy (Congregational) Mosque in Yelabuga in 2013; and 50-year-old Idris Galyautdin, who served as imam of the Tauba (Penance) Mosque in Naberezhnye Chelny between 2002 and late 2014, when he was deprived of the position of imam. The survey, taking the form of in-depth interviews, was conducted during February and March, 2014.

The reason for choosing these two particular imams is that Idris Galyautdin is frequently accused of spreading non-traditional (for this region) interpretations of Islam, (Valiulla Yakupov accused Idris Galyautdin of spreading Wahhabi injunctions against the commemoration of the dead, while Damir Shagaviev cites Galyautdin’s book *Yedinobozhie [Tawheed]* as an example of Salafist theological literature) (Shagaviev, 2014, 139). His removal from the post of imam, which occurred without much scandal, is explained by the authorities’ unwillingness to

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5 There are representatives of so-called liberal Islam in Tatarstan. Foremost among these is Rafael Khakimov (Khakimov, 2003). New Age Islam also exists in Tatarstan, its chief representative is Ayrat Bakhtiyarov (Bakhtiyarov, 2007).

6 Valiulla Yakupov identified Said Nursi and Suleyman Tunahan as influential in Sufi circles. With that said, other Sufi groups feel themselves perfectly at ease and participate in the official structures of the Islamic establishment of Tatarstan (Almazova, 2014).

have a graduate of a Saudi religious school as head of the mosque in Naberezhnye Chelny, the second most important city in the Republic. In turn, Khalim Shamsutdinov was appointed imam of the congregational mosque in Yelabuga as a purveyor of traditional Hanafi-Maturidi views.<sup>7</sup>

It should be noted that the biographies of these two leaders are very different. Whatever similarities they share are limited to a few points: Both come from rural localities, and both the grandfather of Hazrat Idris and the great-grandfather of Hazrat Khalim served as imams during the most trying days of the creed during Soviet atheism. In all other qualities, the two are unlike. Hazrat Idris, having celebrated his fiftieth year, has already “passed the half-point of his earthly life”, whereas Hazrat Khalim is only beginning his career as imam in a large congregational mosque. The former received his education at the twilight of the Soviet era in the Mir-Arab Madrasa in Bukhara and went on to study in Saudi Arabia from 1993 to 2000. The latter attended the Russian Islamic Institute in Kazan. The former is the author of over eighty religious books and brochures and is famous throughout the Republic as well as beyond its borders. Hazrat Khalim, meanwhile, has not yet informed his fellow believers with his own scholarship.

To compare the religious positions of the two imams, we chose the following questions, which typically evoke specific polemics among Muslims of differing sensibilities:

1. The question of “place” (*makan*) in respect to Allah.
2. The question of innovation (*bid'a*) and issues arising from it: that is, the observance of the birth of the Prophet (*Mawlid*); the commemoration of the dead (on the third, seventh, and fortieth days); the Little Hajj – the Bolghar pilgrimage;<sup>8</sup> and attitudes towards Sufism.
3. The question of the different legal schools (*madhahib*).
4. The question of the face veil for women (*niqab*).<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> As of 2005, Yelabuga is part of a free economic zone.

<sup>8</sup> Bolghar is the former capital of Volga Bulgaria. According to tradition, Islam’s spread among the ancestors of modern-day Tatars began with arrival of the Prophet’s Companions (Sahabah) to this city.

<sup>9</sup> This question was asked only because a woman in a niqab (full face veil) is typically associated with foreign influence. Historically, Tatar women did not begin wearing the niqab until recent times.

## The question of “place” as it pertains to Allah

It is well known that the “place/location” of Allah is an issue in Muslim dogma. As such, it is far removed from politics and everyday life. However, in contemporary Islam, as in centuries past, this question often acquires an explicitly political aspect, since it determines which school and, accordingly, which country, will serve as the reference point for believers. In other words and more broadly, this question asks which centre of power this or that territory belongs to. The Internet bristles with materials on this topic. According to the traditional Kalam theological perspective, God has no place (*la makan*). Opponents of this view point to various Qur’anic verses (e.g. 67:16) and hadiths (e.g. the famous hadith about the slave girl who pointed to the sky when asked about Allah’s location), claiming that He is physically locatable in heaven or on His throne.

Our respondents provided the following statements in response to the question of Allah’s “place”:

Hazrat Khalim:

In our Maturidi creed (*‘aqidah*), we do not say that Allah is above. Allah exists without place, without direction. We do not say above, to the left, to the right – otherwise, we would be saying that he has a place – and that would be anthropomorphism – a grave sin.

Hazrat Idris:

My father would always raise his hand and say that Allah sees – and that stayed with me. No one has convinced me otherwise yet – as I was taught then, so I say now: He is in heaven. I am not saying that he sits or that he has a circulatory system or legs or what have you. Muhammad ascended to the seventh heaven – so heaven exists. I was told that Allah is on His throne – I cannot go so far as to say that he is everywhere. Even if they say to me “if you do not deny that Allah is in heaven, we will take away your right to lead prayers as imam”, I will reply, “Okay, I can perform ritual prayer (*salat*) without this just as well”.

It bears mentioning that as he composes his pamphlets about questions of *Tawhid* (the unity and uniqueness of God), Hazrat Idris uses the literature that he studied in Saudi Arabia, which divides *Tawhid* into three parts: 1) *Tawhid al-Asma was-Sifat* (unity of the names and attributes) 2) *Tawhid Rububiyyah* (unity of lordship), and 3) *Tawhid al-Uluhiyyah* (divine unity). In doing so, he does not concern himself with the relationship between this concept and the local Hanafi creed (*Iman dersleri*, n.d.), which doesn’t include this division of the notion of *Tawhid*. Although when it comes to the question of Allah’s place, Hazrat Idris confidently insists on his posi-

tions, when it comes to the question of the division of *Tawhid*, he simply states that he used his Saudi textbooks without considering the issue and is ready to amend the relevant parts of his publications to conform to local theological traditions.

The question of innovation (*bid'a*) and issues arising from it: that is, the observance of the birth of the Prophet (*Mawlid*); the commemoration of the dead (on the third, seventh, and fortieth days); the Little Hajj—the Bolghar pilgrimage; and attitudes towards Sufism.

It is well-known that certain fundamentalist groups, guided by the theory and praxis of Abd al-Wahhab, founder of the Wahhabi Movement, consider certain local traditions – the observance of the Prophet's birthday, the commemoration of the departed by reading the Qur'an at a feast table, as well as a host of other religious rituals – innovations that did not exist in the times of the Prophet and that are proscribed by Islam. For their part, the traditional apologists appeal to Hanafi norms of jurisprudence (*fiqh*), according to which it is permitted to use local customs (*'adat*) so long as they do not contradict the Qur'an and the Sunna. What do the two religious leaders – who belong to opposing camps, according to experts – say about this issue?

Hazrat Khalim:

During the Soviet era, commemorative rites were a way to preserve Islam. If it were not for these assemblies, probably the religion would not have survived. People gathered and read prayers and the Quran. Today, praise Allah, we are free to practice our faith. But these rituals remained – to remember the deceased at specific times – after three, seven, and forty days. Is it necessary to strictly preserve these customs? I think that, nowadays, strict adherence to them is already unnecessary. However, I wouldn't say that this is a sin because there will be many who become familiar with the faith thanks to these rituals. Certain scholars hold the belief that the deceased may be commemorated at any time – that it could be done on the thirtieth day, for example. This is a good deed.

Hazrat Idris:

The departed need our prayers, and need them immediately after the funeral; we must always read the prayers for them. But I am opposed to anyone specifying a time because the prayer may be read at night and during the daytime. It is permitted to offer the poor man even half a persimmon fruit in memory of the deceased – this already is good. It is permitted to give charity (*sadaqah*)—there are no problems here. It is not correct to limit this to some kind of specified time. What if a person has no money? Or he is ill and someone tells him, "Come on, you need to perform the mourning ritual?" After all, Islam does not wish to create difficulties for people. Allah assigned the time of ritual prayer (*salat*); the believer has full discretion in other forms of prayer.

Here are the imams' opinions on the "Little Hajj".

Hazrat Khalim:

What is important is the intention with which Muslims go to Bolghar. If their intention is to familiarize themselves with history—it is good. If, however, Muslims are going there as they would to sacred ground—that is not right.

Hazrat Idris:

It depends on the goal with which people go to Bolghar: Perhaps they have friends or relatives there or perhaps they wish to visit places with historical significance. But not graves! One may not venerate graves! You may recite supplications (*du'a*) for the deceased, "O Allah, forgive him and have mercy on him." But, after all, one may not ask for favors even from a prophet. Even if there is some prophet buried in Bolghar—do not ask for blessings at his grave.

When it comes to Sufism, the imams' opinions are likewise completely compatible. Hazrat Khalim says that "Sufism is nearness to Allah and what matters is the form that this takes on." For his part, Hazrat Idris says the following:

There are two types of Sufis—some perform all of the rules of Shari'a and distinguish themselves from among others with their heightened righteousness – such a one was Caliph Umar;<sup>10</sup> others, however, believe that they have achieved the highest step of righteousness and therefore do not have to perform their obligations—this is bad Sufism.

And so we see that the imams' opinions are compatible on these questions. Both they—and many other imams who have been educated in the spirit of local Islamic traditions—admit that nowhere does Shari'a stipulate strict observance of the dates of the commemoration of the dead, and these are therefore neither required nor even desirable. Likewise, both imams are engaged in the ideological work of de-sacralizing the act of visiting Bolghar. The crux of the matter is that there are many, especially members of the elder generation, who perform the quasi-profanal ritual of walking around the partially-preserved columns at the ruins of the congregational mosque or placing coins in the niche at the monument to the three Sahabah.<sup>11</sup> As for Sufism, this branch of Muslim thought is understood as a heightened attention to spirituality and moral goodness and is, in this form, welcomed.

<sup>10</sup> Hazrat Idris meant the Umayyad caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (670).

<sup>11</sup> Ethnographer Raufa Urazmanova has documented this in her photographs.

## The issue of different legal schools (*madhahib*)

Fundamentalist leaders often preach the principle of non-madhhabism (*la-madhabiyyah*), which opposes adherence to one of the four Sunni schools by followers of the traditional Islam of this region. Both religious leaders under discussion belong to the Hanafi *Madhhab* (legal school). Both constantly quote Abu Hanifa and emphasize his importance to the Islamic creed. Hazrat Idris, who studied in Saudi Arabia, where the Hanbali Madhhab predominates, says the following:

Madhahib appeared in their respective times and I declare that all of them are valid. Some believe that there shouldn't be any madhahib, but I always explain to them that there are only four madhahib and this is as it should be, while our madhhab is that of Abu Hanifa. My son is currently studying in Saudi Arabia and he is being specially taught in accordance with the Hanafi Madhhab.

To my remark that the Tatar scholar Şihabetdin Marjani addressed different questions with solutions adopted from diverse madhahib, Hazrat Idris responded with the following:

I am not so great of a scholar that I understand all the madhahib, so I believe that it is important to follow one madhhab.

On the issue of performing the ritual prayer, Hazrat Idris follows the Hanafi tradition and believes that Muslims should follow the imam: "Since the Hanafi Madhhab is established in Tatarstan, everyone must follow the rules of the performance of Salat according to this madhhab". With that said, the imam also pointed out that foreign Muslims from other CIS countries, as well as the republics of the North Caucasus, frequently visit the mosque and that they perform the Salat according to their custom and their regional traditions. They may, for example, say "Amin" loudly after reciting the opening verse of the Qur'an (Surat al-Fatihah) or plant their legs apart widely during the Salat. It is difficult to regulate such conduct during prayer, even though Hazrat Idris holds special discussions on this topic with the visitors. Hazrat Khalim says that before Salat, he always warns the congregation that the ritual prayer will be conducted in conformity to the rules of the Hanafi Madhhab and that he therefore requests that everyone follow the imam's actions during the ritual.

## The issue of the Face Veil (*Niqab*)

Tatarstani society is currently witnessing fierce discussions about the right of Muslim women to wear the niqab or face veil. It is worth pointing out that, in our region, wearing the hijab has almost become the norm over the last few decades. Meanwhile, the niqab is seen as an obvious piece of exoticism that has been imported by foreign cultures and religious traditions. By and large, both imams share the same outlook on the donning of the niqab.

Hazrat Khalim:

The important thing is to cover the *'awrah*;<sup>12</sup> therefore, wearing the hijab is obligatory (*fard*). It is also correct to don the niqab (face veil)—it is no sin to do so. However, because doing so is not customary among us, it may frighten people and have a negative effect on the perception of Islam by Russian society. In that case, it should be foregone.

Hazrat Idris:

The complete veiling of a woman's face with clothes was prescribed to the wives of the prophet. I tell my wife [the spouse of Hazrat Idris wears a niqab] that I do not feel comfortable when I go to the store with you—even the police are afraid of you! But she got used to the niqab when I was studying in Saudi Arabia and doesn't wish to change her style of dress. She is more comfortable this way.

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## Conclusion

The authorities' behaviour towards Muslim leaders in the region is fairly predictable. The state, as represented by its institutions and agencies, seeks to limit the ability of members of the opposition to disseminate their views. This contravenes Article 28 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, which states that each person is guaranteed the right to “freely choose, possess, and disseminate religious or other convictions and act in accordance to them” (Constitution of Russian Federation, 1993). The state does not limit itself to monitoring and persecuting

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12 The *'awrah* is the part of the body that is not supposed to be seen by members of the opposite sex.

religious activists; ethnic and political leaders who do not agree with the authorities' assimilationist or foreign policies are subjected to these measures as well.<sup>13</sup>

When it comes to the views of the two Muslim leaders of Naberezhnye Chelny and Yelabuga, we may draw several interesting conclusions and pose further questions for enquiry.

It is utterly evident that their respective Islamic educations played the greatest role in forming the imams' worldviews. The local Islamic education may serve as a reliable screen against the penetration of foreign influence; however, it rarely facilitates the emergence of intellectuals who are capable of independent theological work, and it does not provide sufficient knowledge to adequately prepare its students for engaging in theological polemics with Islamic scholars. At the same time, it does not suffice to explain the prolific authorship of Idris Galyautdin as merely the consequence of a foreign education. Most likely the imam's studies at the Mir-Arab madrasah and the Islamic University in Riyadh were augmented by his natural literary talents. According to him, sometimes he does not stand up from his writing desk until he has finished his current work (typically, a pamphlet of 50–60 pages). The imam writes in the Tatar language, and then somebody translates his treatises into Russian.

Our study of these two imams' views reveals that their disagreements about all but the question of Allah's place are minimal and, in many ways, even complementary. It would not be appropriate to call Idris Galyautdin a Wahhabi or an adherent of strict Salafi ideology in all questions of theology and fiqh. The authorities, however, have deemed the imam's further tenure as community leader dangerous: With his experience of living in mono-denominational Saudi society, Hazrat Idris holds slightly different attitudes towards the handling of theological issues, the performance of various rituals (during Salat, he does not actively combat the loud pronunciation of "Amin" at the end of the Surat al-Fatihah, which is not common to the Hanafi branch of Islam), and issues of Muslim etiquette (worshippers may attend the mosque without wearing socks and may wear shortened trousers). Law enforcement agents claim that this is all fraught with further deviations from local Islamic tradition and therefore not far removed from evoking protest on the part of "traditional" Muslims.

And yet, how dangerous are divergent views about whether Allah is in heaven or everywhere and nowhere? Is it really necessary to combat the practice of wear-

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13 By way of example, we may bring up the arrest of Rafis Kashapov (<http://nazaccent.ru/content/14420-tatarskogo-aktivista-rafisa-kashapova-arestovali-na.html>) or the suspended sentence passed down to the outspoken Tatar activist Fauziya Bayramova (<http://www.svoboda.org/content/article/26617813.html>)

ing shortened trousers? Or the too-loud enunciation of “Amin” during Salat? If ours is a truly democratic society that adheres to the norms of the Constitution—which permits its subjects to “practice and disseminate any religion”—then it is evident that such facts as appointing muftis or chief imams under the pressure of state authorities must be evaluated as the state interfering in religion, which in our society is separate from the state. In a democratic state, the most effective form of combating religious extremism should entail broad outreach programmes and transparent relations between the state and religious denominations.

In the meantime, the aforementioned state policy that supports official Islamic clergy, represented by the local Muslim Religious Board (MRB),<sup>14</sup> drives young and activist Muslims into the camp of the opposition. As a former member of the Hizb at-Tahrir organization, whose name can’t be mentioned here for reasons of his security, said, “Muslims have a very sharp sense of justice and honesty. The Muslim Religious Board deprived itself of honor. Even if a member of the official clergy cites the Quran, but adds that we have our own “Traditional Islam”—that damages his credibility, because everybody knows that “Traditional Islam” is a state-created project”.<sup>15</sup>

The state wants to work with predictable Muslim organizations, in the case of Tatarstan this is the MRB of the Republic of Tatarstan. But because historically Islam hasn’t had a single center of authority overall or in any particular country (like the Pope in the Catholic Church or the Patriarch in the Russian Orthodox Church) and because of the wide spread of information through the Internet, it is impossible to expect that Muslims could be controlled through the MRB and the persecution of non-official leaders. State and society must learn how to work with different religious communities in the new age of information technologies and the spread of universal values such as freedom of conscience, religion and beliefs.

And most importantly, society itself must be built on a foundation of justice, egalitarianism, and fraternity. There should be no corruption, and the authorities must themselves abide by the law. Only then will those who believe that the world should be radically reformed according to religious laws lack the arguments to recruit new members to their ranks.

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14 <http://dumrt.ru/en/> Retrieved Sept. 8, 2015.

15 From the letter of one of the former leaders of the Hizb at-Tahrir organization in Kazan.

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