

Immigration Policy in Europe Amid Multiculturalism Crisis

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The majority of European countries host significant immigrant communities, and as such, multiculturalism is not an option but rather a necessity for them. However, as many political leaders, scholars, publicists and religious figures have emphasized, multiculturalism has failed in Europe. Despite the fact that Europe's demographic crisis means that migrants are vital for future growth, Europe is overlooking the moral values of its new citizens and concentrating solely on Western values. While Western democratic principles are being tested by the current economic crisis, European countries are tightening their immigration policies, contributing to the further erosion of multicultural values. In this key chapter of our history, these current developments will be a litmus test for Europe and the humanity in general.



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Early 2015 saw the emergence of a series of faultlines in cross-cultural relations. As mosques were set ablaze in Switzerland and Germany and rallies were held against the Muslims, Western societies have become divided. Protests are staged by those who oppose the migrants on the one hand, and by advocates of peaceful coexistence with representatives of different cultures on the other. While Western societies are split on the subject of multicultural tolerance, the position of the political establishments are, regrettably, unequivocal.

It is no secret that in recent years, political leaders, scholars, publicists and religious figures have made statements on the failure of multiculturalism. This failure is attributed to rejection of Western values by the labor migrants, particularly from the Muslim countries, who were once welcomed, in line with the migration policies of the Western European countries.

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Nevertheless, it is evident that Western perceptions of tolerance and multiculturalism are based on the imposition of their own values upon others. Thus many European countries considered as immigrant nations – where immigrants account for at least 10% of their population - are merely attempting to assimilate migrants of different cultures and faiths to European society. That is to say, multiculturalism is conceived as the dominance of Western values and as an unremarkable component of the mosaic composition of Western society. This, in turn, threatens the fate of the multiculturalism for Europe's population, which in fact is comprised of representatives of various cultures and peoples. In reality, the overwhelming majority of the European countries are immigrant nations - and as such, multiculturalism is not an option but a necessity.

Indeed, there are quite a few people in academic circles who contest this thesis. Vladimir Malakhov, a fellow at the Philosophy Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences poses the question, "How can there be multiculturalism in France? This is a state that recognizes no "ethnic groups" and merely grants citizenship".¹ This is why it is meaningless to talk about the existence of multiculturalism in such countries as France, let alone to debate the

¹ Владимир Малахов (22 декабря 2011) *После мультикультурализма: Европа и ее иммигранты*, Polit.ru, available at: <http://polit.ru/article/2012/01/27/malakhov/> (accessed 28 January 2015)

crisis of multiculturalism.

Western civilization in the face of new challenges

In the wake of the massive death toll of WWII, Western European countries sought to increase their economic capacity by importing cheap migrant labor from the colonial nations. Rapid economic growth in the post-war era exceeded increase of available domestic labor force volumes by several times. Europe's aging population together with the abundance of cheap labor in the neighboring regions led European nations to encourage labor migration from their former colonies.

The vast majority of Europe's labor migrants are Muslim. Migrants from Africa's non-Muslim countries and from India, were still committed to their cultural values. Therefore, from the 1950s, France, Germany, Belgium, Netherlands and other Western European countries saw the emergence of a new, non-Christian generation that defied Western values. For comparison, the Muslim population of Europe in the 1950s stood at 800,000; in 2010 this figure reached 44 million.²

Thus, Europe is now facing two major challenges. Firstly, the centuries-old notion of national identity was challenged by the influx of migrants, and Europe encountered new lifestyles. Second, the migration of Muslims to European countries brought different value systems to Europe.

With regard to the first challenge it must be noted that the majority of European countries today are immigrant nations, meaning that migrants account for at least 10% of the population. Given that Europe is experiencing a demographic crisis, this trend will only accelerate. According to Eurostat, the natural growth of the population in the European Union in the years 2010-2060 is projected at 16 million people, while the number of migrant is projected to peak at 86 million people during the same period – 17 % of the overall population.³ The growth of the migrant population in Europe is

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² Pew Research Center (27 January 2011) The Future of the Global Muslim Population, available at: <http://www.pewforum.org/2011/01/27/the-future-of-the-global-muslim-population/> (accessed: 18 January 2015)

³ Eurostat (2014) *Natural growth of the population in the European Union*, Available at: <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache> (accessed 15 January 2015)

substantial, owing to the immigration flow of the previous years, mixed marriages and higher birth rates among migrants⁴.

There is an important distinction between the European multicultural model and other Western versions. Unlike the “Old continent”, Western societies established in the countries of the new world (Canada, Australia, New Zealand) do not see a crisis on the horizon; on the contrary, they are viewed by most experts as success stories. The main distinguishing feature is that the formation of the national identity in the new world countries coincided with an era of migration during which European migrants dominated the scene. In Europe, however, formation of the national identity took centuries earlier, and as a consequence, the new inhabitants of the Old Continent have experienced difficulties in integrating. Given that the migrants are not in a dominant position in society, assimilation appears to be the aim of the European model.

Although the proportion of migrants varies by country, the general approach remains unchanged. France, for instance, has a particularly high proportion of migrants. According to the 2008 data of the French Statistics Institute (INSEE), 19% of the population (12 million people) has either been born abroad or has at least one migrant parent (first and second generation migrants). The research revealed that some 40% of children born between 2006 and 2008 have at least one migrant grandparent.⁵

The proportion of migrants in the United Kingdom is also rising steadily. According to rough estimates, the UK’s population is likely to reach 77.1 million by 2051 and 85.7 million by 2081, and 24 million of those – i.e. one third of the population - will be of non-British origin.⁶ Similarly, in countries such as Germany, Italy, Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands, migrants account for over 10% of the population.⁷ From the perspective of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, these migrants represent rather different values. As well as migrants from Islamic cultures, Indians,

4 ibid

5 Catherine Borrel et Bertrand Lhommeau (2010), *Être né en France d'un parent immigré*, INSEE, available at: http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/document.asp?reg_id=0&ref_id=ip1287 (accessed: 29 January 2014)

6 Coleman D. A. Projections of the Ethnic Minority Populations of the United Kingdom 2006-2056 // Population and Development Review 36(3), September 2010. P.441

7 ibid

Chinese, and Vietnamese also preserve their values within the local populations in Europe.

This challenge may appear not so immediate for the countries with a young population. However, the aging populations in most of the leading European nations and the decline in the number of working age citizens precludes Europe's rejection of the multicultural ideology. For example, according to one study, in 50 years time, Europe's biggest economy – Germany will see its population shrink by 10 million, down to 72 million people. Moreover, while the proportion of people over 65 was 20.5% in 2012, by 2062 this figure is projected at 30.1%.⁸ Therefore, for Germany, reliance on migrant labor is unavoidable.

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For the European countries that are experiencing a demographic crisis, the migrants are vital for future growth. In the meantime, Europe is overlooking the moral values of its new citizens and concentrating solely on the Western values. In the eyes of the West, the newcomers must be the component of a homogenous society, with their behavior and ethic norms discarded as incompatible with Western values. Nonetheless, time is showing that migrants who were encouraged to come to Europe to provide cheap labor have been inclined to preserve their values. Occasional disrespect towards Europe's new residents feeds radical sentiments, leading to the hardening of migration policies.

History demonstrates that it is centered solely on Western cultural and religious values, European society cannot offer a universal value system. Those who contend that multiculturalism has failed solely because migrants rejected Western values seem to have forgotten that several centuries ago, the cultural diversity of the indigenous population of the newly discovered continents and of the slaves imported from Africa was not only rejected but obliterated. This viewpoint fails to account for a multitude of reasons for the crisis of multiculturalism.

⁸ Arastu Habibbeyli (02 July 2014) *Western Multiculturalism Upon Crisis: New Challenges, Dilemmas (Article I)*, New Times, available at: <http://newtimes.az/en/relations/2870/> (accessed 28 January 2015)

Europe's fear of turning Muslim

The fact that Muslims constitute the vast majority of the migrants arriving in Europe gives rise to another challenge. However, Europe regards this not so much as a challenge, but rather as a threat to its system of values and its future in general. Western civilization attached great importance to religious values; for many centuries, Christianity has served as the nucleus of the Western value system. And from the religious standpoint, Islam has historically been the arch rival of Western ideology. Buddhism, on the other hand, with its foundations in the Far East, was located far away from the “Old Continent”, and thus was unable to consolidate its presence there.

Jews, notably, were persecuted in Europe for centuries, with Jews subject to forced expulsion at several points in history. It was not until the early 19th century that they were finally accepted as equal citizens. However, antisemitism returned with a vengeance when Europe experienced harsh economic crises in 1930s and war between 1939-45 (WWII). One of the gravest crimes in the history of humanity - the Holocaust - saw the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators. This took place in the very heart of the European continent, based on the idea of the racial superiority of some nations over others.

Islam-West relations were more aggravated and bloody clashes occurred as one side would gain advantage over the other. The most bloodiest endeavors of the Europeans, being the bearers of Christianity, against the Islamic world, were the crusades.

Throughout history, it twice happened that Europe was exposed directly to Islam. The first time was in the aftermath of the establishment of Cordoba Caliphate, and the second time was when European territories, extending all the way to Vienna, were incorporated into the sphere of influence of the Ottoman Empire. In both cases, Europe showed religious intolerance towards the Muslims in the wake of the collapse of the empires. Religious persecution of the Muslims in Spain and the Balkans and the annihilation of the Islamic cultural legacy exemplifies historical Western approaches to Islam.

Today the situation has changed. For the first time in history, Islam is not an alien religion in Europe, but the one followed by a significant minority. The West is encountering Islam once again, with Muslim migrants arriving from Turkey, North Africa and former colonies of the Near and the Middle East. At present, Europe faces the possibility of a Muslim future for itself. Labor migrants are not arriving through invasion; they are becoming part of fabric of society. Under such circumstances, Europe will not be able to fend off this wave of Islam with conventional means.

For the first time in history, Islam is not an alien religion in Europe, but the one followed by a significant minority.

According to researchers, due to the influx of migrants and traditionally high birth rates in migrant communities, an estimate 20% of Europe's population could be Muslim by 2050.⁹ Some argue that the West and Islam cannot coexist. Democracy or sharia law; freedom or Islam – these are suggested as major dilemmas for European society. Still, it is a reality that the Islamic values are already a choice for part of Europe's population. In the absence of a tolerant approach to this reality, and unless Islam gains its place in the system of Western values, Europe's fate will be in jeopardy.

The number of practicing Muslims in Europe, the popularization of Islam as a religion, and the demographic growth rate among Muslims are seen by some as threats to the future of the Western society. As a result, Islam is viewed with deep suspicion by some in the West. The biggest challenge for Western-style multiculturalism is the fear that minorities will one day become majority.

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According to a survey conducted by Eurobarometer, 39% of respondents in the European Union believe that discrimination based on religious beliefs is widespread. This figure stands at 66% in France, 60% in Belgium, 51% in the Netherlands and 51% in the United Kingdom.¹⁰

9 Adrian Michaels, (08 August 2009) *Muslim Europe: the demographic time bomb transforming our continent*, The Telegraph, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/5994047/Muslim-Europe-the-demographic-time-bomb-transforming-our-continent.html> (accessed: 27 January 2015)

10 Eurobarometer (November 2012) *Discrimination in The EU In 2012*, Special Eurobarometer 393, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_393_en.pdf (accessed: 30 January 2015)

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However, the fate of the multiculturalism in Europe depends on the dialogue between Christianity and Islam, and the coexistence of religious and secular values. This is the only solution. It is only in a tolerant society that multiculturalism can mutually enrich cultures and foster values that unite different peoples.

Western democratic principles: Tested by the economic crisis

The global economic recession has damaged the multicultural values of the West. In the countries where the economic crisis has been felt more severely, for instance in terms of high unemployment, attitudes towards newcomers are more aggressive. The French newspaper “Le Parisien Dimanche” conducted a survey among the French on a referendum to impose restrictions on the free movement of migrants; 60% of respondents favored quota restrictions for migrants.

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Soaring unemployment and weakening social benefits, against the backdrop of surging migration, is testing the resilience of the Western multicultural values and tolerance. The inability of migrants to incorporate themselves into the universal Western lifestyle – together with the leniency of the European legislation on migration, is perceived as a major reason for the failure of multiculturalism. In the meantime, this course of events has fuelled the rise of far-right political parties, and heightened racist and chauvinist rhetoric.

Migrants, who were once welcomed and whose influx was encouraged by European nations, are now being treated contrary to universal values of justice, democracy and human rights, purportedly to preserve the Western identity. The present political approach to the issue of migration is regressive in terms of democratic principles, but Europe’s political leaders appear happy to resort to this policy.

Encouraging labor migration for economic reasons, and then subjecting migrants to discrimination, contravenes the values of multiculturalism. If the loss of national and moral values is considered a victory for multiculturalism, then it invalidates any

discourse on tolerance. We believe that the crisis of multiculturalism is the result of a misguided policy pursued by Western policymakers. It seems that the Western tolerant posture towards multiculturalism had simply collapsed under the weight of the economic crisis.

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Multiculturalism and immigration policy

The role of European immigration policy in the current crisis is often debated. In this discussion, Western versus non-Western philosophies of life and history are key topics.

One of the likely reasons for the volatility of today's multicultural society is that multiculturalism was initially considered based on perceptions of historical ethnic minorities. Subsequently, however, European officials began to call for the integration of labor migrants with common cultural values. This policy fell short of expectations. Regardless of the European officials' views that migrants were there temporarily, the policy failed to convey the reality.

It was in Europe that for the first time, migrants were held as equal to traditional ethnic minorities. Thus the leading nations in this respect - Sweden and Netherlands - launched measures for protection of migrant minorities in the early 1970s and 1980s respectively. The state allocated funds for projects such as native language education, support for native language media outlets and cultural events. Of course, this only involved a limited circle of socially engaged migrants. But as the number of migrants spiraled upwards and they opted to adhere to their own values, the governments abandoned this strategy.

Eventually, both countries began to backtrack in legislative terms in the early 1990s. In Sweden, the law protecting the rights of migrants and holding them equal to traditional minorities (Samis and Finns) was amended.¹¹ The Netherlands terminated its minority assistance program in 1983.¹²

There are still a number of countries that have imposed strict

¹¹ Saininen M. "The Swedish Model as an Institutional Framework for Immigrant Membership Rights//Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies. 1999. Vol.25

¹² Entzinger H. The Rise and Fall of Multiculturalism: The Case of the Netherlands, Joppke C., Morawska E. (red.), Toward Assimilation and Citizenship, Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan. 2003

immigration controls and experience no problems with multiculturalism. Japan's experience can be suggested as a successful model. Its immigration legislation is fairly conservative. Obtaining citizenship in the country is associated with a complex process. There are strict standards by which the number of labor migrants is regulated, leaving no room for political maneuvering. For that reason the Chinese, Koreans and Brazilian residents encounter no discrimination or problems.

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In Azerbaijan, multiculturalism is recognized as a way of life, and it is one of the few places where multiculturalism is not challenged by populist statements by the politicians or campaigns by radical nationalist groups. At the crossroads between West and East, North and South, Christianity and Islam, and between different civilizations and cultures, Azerbaijan's experience attests to the perpetual nature of multiculturalism. "Multicultural state – common society" represents a successful formula for multiculturalism in Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan, a predominantly Muslim country, is also home to several other ethnic and religious groups, including Christian and Jewish communities. Respect and tolerance for national and religious minorities has played a vital role in the development of the country from antiquity to modernity. Representatives of all minorities have been present in the Azerbaijani government since independence, and the rights of minorities has been also recognized in the constitution and other national legal instruments. It is no surprise that Azerbaijan is amongst the world's most tolerant societies and certainly ranks among the top of the Muslim-majority nations of the world.¹³

In his speech at the opening of the Second Baku International Humanitarian Forum, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev said, "Multiculturalism is our way of life. Although it is a relatively new concept, multiculturalism has been part of our people's life for centuries. For centuries, representatives of different religions and nationalities have lived in Azerbaijan like one family".¹⁴ The principal condition for thriving multicultural-

13 Arye Gut (22 January 2015) *Azerbaijan: Tolerance and multiculturalism*, Congress Blog, available at: <http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/foreign-policy/230293-azerbaijan-tolerance-and-multiculturalism> (accessed: 01 february 2015)

14 Azərbaycan Prezidentinin Rəsmi internet sahifəsi rəsmi internet sahifəsi (04 oktyabr 2012) *İkinci Bakı Beynəlxalq Humanitar Forumun açılış mərasimində İlham Əliyevin nitqi*, available at: <http://www.president.az/articles/6390/print> (accessed: 29 January 2015)

ism is the coexistence of universal and national ideas, and the preservation of national identity encompassed by a system of multicultural values. In order to further foster values of multiculturalism, in 2014, the government established two institutions that solidified the country's role as a model for ethnic and religious tolerance. The position of State Counsellor on Multiculturalism, Interethnic and Religious Affairs was created, and the Baku International Center of Multiculturalism was launched. This new center immediately began to build on Baku's role in advancing intercultural, inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogue and humanitarian programming.

Hence, the failure of the Western experience does not denote stagnation or demise of multiculturalism in general. Many successful examples around the world demonstrate that people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds are capable of moving forward while preserving their identity and demonstrating mutual respect. Multiculturalism must be recognized not as an ideology that aims to assimilate the differences, but rather a daily way of life that in many cases has endured for centuries.

Conclusion

Even though the notion of multiculturalism was originally introduced in the West, it is now facing a serious crisis in Europe, with emerging negative attitudes towards ethno-religious and cultural minorities. This has resulted in statements by political leaders, scholars, publicists and religious figures on the failure of multiculturalism. However, the recognition of the peaceful coexistence of different civilizations and cultures and mutual enrichment as a way of life - is the only light at the end of the tunnel for humanity. An ideology that is aimed at creating a standard criteria for our values has already collapsed under its own weight. That said, efforts by new Europe to determine its future can be considered within several categories.

However, the recognition of the peaceful coexistence of different civilizations and cultures and mutual enrichment as a way of life - is the only light at the end of the tunnel for humanity.

The first is assimilation through integration. Instead of ensuring the integration of migrants in the host country, the primary objective of Europe's multiculturalism policy continues to be the isolation of migrants from the political life and their assimilation.

For example, in Germany, the ultimate aim of the multiculturalism policy is not to ensure the integration of migrants and subsequent generations in the German society, but to make sure that they end up isolated and return to their home countries, owing to linguistic, cultural and other barriers. Vladimir Malakhov of the Philosophy Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences believes that, “Multiculturalism efforts in Germany pursues segregation rather than integration.”¹⁵

The second is acceptance of second generation immigrants to the cultural-social-political life of the country. The policy of the Italian government can be seen as an example. It was no coincidence that Italy’s former Prime Minister Romano Prodi said, “By welcoming immigrants we have gained vast resources. We must continue on the road of integration. The next generation of immigrants must become the next generation of Italians”.¹⁶

The third is the promotion of cosmopolitan values on the global scale. The West endeavors to sell its values globally as a universal idea. This phase can be seen as an effort to transform the Western model into a universal value system. This means that exposing migrants to the Western values commences whilst they are still in their home countries, prior to their migration to Europe.

By doing so, the West believes that the problems faced by migrants within the European society can be overcome through global-scale cosmopolitan values that defy national-cultural mindsets. Today, the process of globalization is being steered towards the identification of a universal model of cultural values. The key feature of this emerging trend is that the Western culture is not satisfied by dictating its own cultural values; it also controls the process of the creation of value criteria for other cultures.

The fourth is a rigorous migration policy. Switzerland’s referendum on the restriction of migrant flow to the European Union through a labor force quota in February 2014 signalled a new

¹⁵ Владимир Малахов (13 декабря 2012) *Мультикультурализм в Западной Европе: по ту сторону риторики*, Российский Совет По Международным Делам, available at: http://russiancouncil.ru/inner/?id_4=1155#top (accessed: 25 January 2015)

¹⁶ Arastu Habibbeyli (04 July 2014) *Western Multiculturalism Upon Crisis: New Challenges, Dilemmas (Article II)*, New Times, available at: <http://newtimes.az/en/relations/2873> (accessed: 28 January 2015)

trend. It symbolized the mood regarding the restriction of migration - not just from outside, but also within the European nations.

Thus, nowadays, European countries are seeking a solution to the multiculturalism crisis through the promotion of cosmopolitan values that neglect cultural, social, and religious particularities. This approach will serve as a litmus test for the West and the humanity in general.