

THE PROBLEM OF ISLAMIC IDENTITY IN EUROPE

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Europe has built over the last decades a union that confirms to the world the identity of the countries included. Consisting different countries, the European Union has mixed cultures and borders that would seem a little bit unclear to some. Mixed with Western identity and Islamic one, Europe seems to face a challenging proximity. Being the second largest religion in Europe after Christianity, the Islamic identity is under argument whether it's a part of Europe identity or an intruder of it. Do they both share a unite identity of Europe? Can we call it a shared identity? Can one actually delete the other? Is it so dangerous to accept the Islamic culture in westernized countries? So, what is the Islamic identity? Why has it been under criticism for so long? How did it enter Europe and how Europe is accommodating?

Presenting some facts, we should know that when we talk about the spread of Islam in Europe first we should divide it into 4 quarters, Eastern Europe and Western Europe and the south east (Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, etc.) and south west of Europe where the south part were Muslim countries and that didn't match the boundaries of Europe. When we look at the history, European and Russian leaders had Muslim allies and they had mosques in their countries where it wasn't a big deal. So, there was a time where Islam and Europe were conceded to one another.

So, we were inherited the idea that 'Europe' (North West Europe to be exact) is all about civilization, freedom, progress, superior. We were also inherited the Islamophobia, and that Islam is only related to Arabs knowing that there are 1.62 billion Muslims around the world, and that Muslims in the United Kingdom were found more than in Lebanon and in China more than in Syria in a study done by the Pew Research Center in 2014. Shedding the light on the media, it played an important role in passing on this in heritage from one generation to another. Not only feeding it more lies, but also shedding the lights on extremists in titling it with 'why we should hate Islam'.

Islamic identity and well-being are not antagonists to one another. It is not necessary correlated to Arabs and Middle East. The same way Christianity is not only related to west only. However, men in power knew how to create a shielded castle to their own ignorance and that is by spreading this ignorance among people. Wars caused by caliphs, rulers, kings, presidents, whatever they call themselves over time, in the name of any religion has done nothing over the years but increased the gap between people among each other and among people and religions.

From socio-cultural point of view, I think there is a claim from the Europeans that Islamic tradition and rules may not fit the westernized life style, and a fear that this may interfere with their social life. Europe actually cares about all people living within its lands to have the same rights. So, with great number of Muslim immigrants, Europe is in a complex between providing total comfort and equal rights

for the immigrants for their world image in one hand, and between taking precautions from the claimed effect of these immigrants in their countries. So, may a 'Muslim-Western' identity occur or even allowed from both sides? After all, Islam and Europe did share history once.

A turning point would be the events of 9/11 that brought Islam again to the number one media subject after being hiding in the shades for several years. The media played a major role in directing what happened to make it a campaign against Muslims. Ever since, it actually succeeded in creating that propaganda about Muslims and stereotyping them.

Terrorism has no identity; unfortunately, those terrorists who are killing, bombing, forcing their identity, are doing so in the name of Islam, knowing that Islam and all religions are free from these people and condemn them. So, I am with taking extra safety measurements to prevent these terrorists, but I am not with making campaigns against 'Islam'. I think the government and the people share the responsibility of being aware and acknowledged to realize that Islam is the number one victim of these terrorist. Europe has done an excellent job in the extra measurements against Muslims, but terribly bad in informing people about Islam.

Feeding people with ignorance, government increased the hatred against followers of this religion making them in the victim list again. So, a question is raised, are people in power, the ones who are capable of making decisions, associates in all the crimes? May it have been that they wanted this to happen so they lead people to it? Many became enchanted by the religion that they converted and some turned their hatred to respect and love. Others, some just kept on polluting the world with this propaganda. We all fear what we don't know, so just know; for, knowledge is power.

Islam, being viewed as an extreme religion in the west, it gained a worldwide hatred thanks to people in power who provoked and nourished that hatred among people. However, the beauty in God's creation of humans is that he created us with the ability to feel and think. In the last few years, we have witnessed an enormous breakthrough in the world; people are refuting against their rulers mainly because of feeling inequality, injustice, insecure, not having their rights, not treated well as human beings. These humane values are not for one kind of people with certain background, but are for all human races. It is wrong to label certain religion because of some extremists who happens to be holding that religion in their pockets on their identity card. Anyone can be bad or good regardless where they come from or what they believe.

The Islamic identity should be understood positively in other societies with positive interaction. Accepting Muslims in Europe and integrating them would enrich the culture and build a tolerant environment in the country they live and eventually in the whole world.