

The European Crisis of Identity: Muslim Migration and the New Racism in Europe

Briana DeJohn

Salameno School of Humanities and Global Studies, Ramapo College of New Jersey, Mahwah, NJ, 07430

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the European continent has been experiencing an influx of Muslim migrants, and this has led to the emergence of a new xenophobic attitude; constructed primordialism and the creation of “new racism.” As a result, there has been an increase in discrimination, hate crimes, and xenophobia against Muslim minorities throughout all states within the European Union due to a multitude of reasons including; the historical aspects of Muslim migration to EU countries, the overall failure of multiculturalism, and the resurgence of right-wing political and racist groups which has led to unforeseen return to radical Islamic fundamentalism by Muslim immigrants.

MUSLIM MIGRATION → CONSTRUCTED PRIMORDIALISM → CREATION OF NEW RACISM

- ❖ CONSTRUCTED PRIMORDIALISM- the social construction of ethnic identities reinforced by nationalistic sentiment within nation-states (Sheila Croucher)
- ❖ NEW RACISM- the perceived cultural, ethnic, racial, and religious differences between natives and immigrants. The outsider group (Muslims) will be seen as a threat to the host society (Europeans)



FRANCE: HISTORICAL ASPECTS

- ❖ Algerian War of Independence-terrorist attacks of Algerians on French citizens
- ❖ Restrictive policy-making starting in 1970s during Algerian War
- ❖ Algerians seen as “unassailable” and a threat to French culture
- ❖ Outward segregation of Muslims- red-lining and banlieues (project housing)
- ❖ Laïcité- secularization, no display of religious symbols which then causes the “headscarf debate”

BRITAIN: FAILURE OF MULTICULTURALISM

- ❖ Religious pluralism policy- incorporates religion into formal institutions of the state
- ❖ Native racism has led to assaults on Muslims and furthers their exclusion in society
- ❖ Terrorism as a threat to national security- July 2005 London subway bombings
- ❖ In schools: “Few Muslim girls refuse to attend music, art, biology, or sexual education classes because these subjects are seen as contrary to Islam” (Fetzer and Weitz 85)

GERMANY: RIGHT-WING GROUPS

- ❖ Focus on nationalism and xenophobia- only pure ethnics have a right to reside within the country and all foreigners must leave
- ❖ Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (NPD)
- ❖ Cities Against Islamization
- ❖ Anti-Muslim rhetoric from political parties portrayed in the media outlets
- ❖ High membership and increased number of attacks on Muslim migrants
- ❖ Violence as a means to assert political goals

CONCLUDING REMARKS

- ❖ The marginalization and alienation of Muslim migrants has created social unrest and ethnic conflicts
- ❖ The return to nationalistic xenophobia has fostered feelings of resentment within the Muslim community which, in turn, has led to the reemergence of radical Islamic fundamentalism
- ❖ Without a change in public perception or progressive EU policy-making, there will be more terrorist attacks in Europe as a result of Islamic fundamentalism

