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Struggling over the mode of incorporation: backlash against multiculturalism in Europe

Jeffrey C. Alexander

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Abstract

Documenting the extraordinary potency and reach of the European backlash against multiculturalism, this essay provides a new theoretical model for explaining it. Rather than focusing primarily on demographic and institutional facts about Islamic immigration - such as education, wealth, participation and mobility – the author proposes a culturalsociological approach that focuses on meanings and emotions as core issues for civil societies. As the demographic presence of Islamic immigrants has intensified, the anti-civil construction of Islamic qualities has led European masses, leaders and intellectuals, not only from the right but from the centre and left, to demand homogenizing assimilation. Representing public practices of Islam as threatening European democracy, newly restrictive citizenship tests have emerged alongside growing xenophobic political parties and newly threatening neo-fascist violence. Initially brought to Europe for economic and political reasons, the question has now become whether the children and grandchildren of Islamic immigrants can be incorporated into European civil society. The conflict is not over whether immigrants should be incorporated but over the grounds for doing so.

Keywords: multiculturalism; immigration; assimilation; Islam; Europe; civil society.

A civil sphere that promises every person legal, political and cultural standing is a new social invention in the history of humankind. Aristocracies treated lower orders as practical necessities. Patrimonial empires tolerated outsiders, if they paid their taxes, as guests. In neither social system could groups from the periphery enter into the centre (Shils 1975a). Deference and sometimes even reciprocity were possible; genuine inclusion was not.

As this novel social form became available, however, the actual incorporation of out-groups has been anything but guaranteed. Inclusion is contingent; it can be blocked and reversed. Classes, religions, ethnicities, races, genders, regions and sexualities are compelled to engage in extraordinarily difficult political and cultural struggles; they have often been defeated, and sometimes even destroyed. Until recently, moreover, core groups have been willing to entertain the idea of incorporation only in an asymmetrical manner. Out-groups would be allowed to enter liberal societies if they took on the manners and morals of core groups, agreeing to make their own ethno-culture invisible, practising it in private but not public life. The problem with such an 'assimilative' mode of incorporation is that it leaves the stigmatised qualities of outsiders pretty much in place; persons can be incorporated, but not their qualities (Alexander 2006, pp. 425–58). As the recent history of modernity has amply demonstrated, however, this assimilative mode is not only hypocritical morally but empirically explosive. The cataclysmic wars and massive repressions of the twentieth century were fuelled, in some significant part, by the violent stigmas that festered, and often intensified, just beneath the surface of ostensibly inclusive contemporary societies.

As the social costs and moral lessons of these disasters sank in, the possibility of a new, more responsive 'multicultural' mode of incorporation gradually but ineluctably entered into the collective consciousness of modern societies. Perhaps not only people but their distinctive qualities could be accepted? If out-groups committed themselves to the moral discourse and legal ground rules of the civil sphere, might they be allowed to retain some of the distinctive cultural beliefs and practices initially considered foreign to the traditions of core groups? This idea of a more symmetrical bargain implies mutual learning. It is not only the incoming group that changes, but the morals and manners of core groups. Rather than repugnance, they learn to respect certain out-group qualities. Sometimes such demonstrations are merely performances of positivity in response to new forms of social constraint; often, however, they are genuine (Voyer 2011, forthcoming). Enlarging their cultural horizons, some core group members can experience genuine appreciation; some even come to revere differences displayed by the once-included, now more fully incorporated side.

Multiculturalism wears different faces. It may be stigmatized gender and sexual qualities that challenge the traditional cultural performances of core groups; it may be qualities of region, ethnicity and race. Struggles for multicultural incorporation also proceed along different paths. In Canada, once-conquered Aborigines and Quebecois forcefully demanded an alternative to assimilation. In the USA, black Americans, first enslaved and then subject to brutal racial domination, struggled not only for equality but for the legitimacy of what came to be called 'African-American' culture, which, while informing 'Americanism', was also eventually seen as distinctive in its own right. In contemporary Europe, where internal colonialism and racial enslavement have largely been absent, struggles over multicultural incorporation have centred on immigration, particularly from Islamic regions.

Historically, immigrant qualities have also been a major flashpoint in America, and some of them remain hugely controversial today (Freedman 2011). On its better days, the USA has opened its doors, imagining itself a land of immigrants; on worse days, core groups have defined America much more narrowly and locked the gates (Huntington 2004; Abdo 2006; Ahmed 2007, pp. 127-244; Campbell 2011a, 2011b, 2011c; Liptak 2011; Jaworsky 2011; Shane 2011). In recent decades, as Jennifer Lee and Frank Bean (2010) have demonstrated, anti-immigration feelings have been relatively subdued (cf. McWhorter 2012; Navarro 2012); it is continuing racism against African-Americans that constitutes the central stumbling block for the success of America's multicultural play (Glazer 1997; Secret 2011; Stille 2011). In Europe, as Michele Lamont (2000) among others has shown, the situation is quite the reverse. Not so much the racial but the ethnic and religious qualities of the new wave of immigrant outsiders have challenged the collective identities of Europe's core groups in increasingly troubling ways.¹

It is with the European struggle over how to incorporate these new immigrant groups, and sometimes even whether to incorporate them, that the present essay is concerned. The American racial struggle, still deeply fractious, has been the subject of decades of empirical analysis and theoretical debate. Europe's crisis over the representation of immigration has crystallized only relatively recently, and academic, particularly social-theoretical discussion, is still in a relatively early stage. Both contemporary social debates and academic representations have generated doubt about the very possibility of multiculturalism itself (cf. Habermas 2006; Bosetti 2011).

Inside history's most radical experiment in supra-national and antiethnic democracy, the European Union (EU), there has emerged a molting fear that, particularly vis-à-vis Muslim immigration, the independent status of the European civil sphere has become vulnerable indeed. From this sense of endangerment has followed newly restrictive legal, administrative and political measures; the rise to popularity of extremist political parties; and episodes not merely of random violence against Muslims but organized murderous attacks against outspoken supporters of the multicultural expansion of European civil societies. Certainly, immigration has triggered a wide range of responses within each European nation and substantially different reactions among them. Increasingly, however, antagonism to the seemingly anti-civil qualities of recent arrivals has sparked a backlash against immigration that is Europe-wide (Koopmans et al. 2005; Vertovec and Wessendorf 2010a). Europe's new 'super-diversity' (Vertovec 2006) is experienced as casting a threatening shadow across its future.²

The social science of recent European immigration

This sense of imminent danger has already triggered a good deal of empirical and policy-oriented research. In a widely noticed report in the Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, for example, Ludi Simpson (2007) argues that, in Britain, the contemporary clustering of immigrants is not pathological in demographic terms. Historically, immigration waves have always created patterns of ethnic separation, for reasons of both protective solidarity and economic advantage, a pattern confirmed by American discussions of dual-labour markets and ethnic enclaves (e.g. Bonacich 1972). The isolation of current Islamic immigrants, Simpson (2007) suggests, has never exceeded a 30 per cent concentration, and it is gradually diminishing: The 'index of dissimilation' has 'shown a decrease in the unevenness of residence between each ethnic group and the rest of the population', a decrease 'greatest for the mainly Muslim Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups for whom concern about segregation has been voiced most loudly' (Simpson 2007, p. 419). Surveying the immigrant 'second generation' in eight European countries, Crul and Schneider (2010) also discover increasing incorporation in terms of objective indices. Immigrant children develop significantly more ties with core group members than their parents possess, these 'mixed' ties far exceeding even those sustained by native Europeans. Educational attainment has also markedly increased, with high percentages of the second generation finishing secondary schools and moving into higher education.³ According to a Dutch study, 40 per cent of second-generation children currently in school are enrolled in colleges or universities (Duvvendak, Pels and Rijkschroeff 2009, p. 133). Among the second generation, positive feelings toward their host nations have significantly increased (cf. Kasinitz et al. 2008; Crul and Schneider 2010).

Social scientists have also observed that, despite the continent-wide backlash against multiculturalism, localities have often continued to sustain policies that adapt their institutions to immigrant difference (Crul and Schneider 2010, p. 1257). In the UK, ethnic and racial minorities are still frequent recipients of financial support and differential treatment from city governments (Meer and Modood 2009, pp. 479, 485). In France, the *grandes écoles* have instituted 'special administrative procedures' to increase their numbers of disadvantaged students; there is a 'diversity buzz' among large companies; and 'framework agreements' to increase minority hiring have been signed by unions, big companies and entire branches of the national bureaucracy (Vertovec and Wessendorf 2010b, p. 19). In such major European cities as Copenhagen, Stuttgart, Vienna, Zurich and Dublin, 'diversities practices' have been built into current institutional policies (CLIP 2008, p. iii; *The Economist* 2008a; Faist 2009; Hedetoft 2010, p. 118; Schönwälder 2010, pp. 158–63; Vertovec and Wessendorf 2010b, pp. 19–21).

These factual reports, however, say next to nothing about how these shifting structural realities of immigration are being subjectively understood by Europe's core groups, or whether, indeed, they have registered at all. In their report to the Dutch Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry in 2004, Duyvendak, Pels and Rijkschroeff (2009, p. 135) conclude that 'the facts did not corroborate the popular belief that socioeconomic integration had failed', but they make no effort to measure, much less explain, such erroneous popular belief. In its upbeat 2008 report on EU 'equality and diversity' policies, the Council of Europe carefully circumscribed its mandate as creating 'conditions conducive to the peaceful co-existence between migrants and other residents' (CLIP 2008, p. 2; cf. Commission of the European Communities 2007; The Gallup Organization 2007). Peaceful coexistence is a condition applied to a truce between warring parties. It is hardly a description of the relations one envisions within a democratic and inclusive social order.

Thomas Faist (2009, p. 179) observes that, when critics of multiculturalism address the 'lamentable' existence of contemporary ethnic segregation, they 'name ethnic diversity as the actual cause ... without examining to what extent macro-structural changes' are responsible. The really pressing sociological question is why they do not. Conceiving immigration primarily in economic, demographic and narrowly political terms, empirical researchers have largely missed the *meanings* of immigration and the emotions that such meanings create (Alexander 2003). Immigration is not simply a behavioural fact. It is also a symbol, and symbols are constructed out of difference. Immigrants are imagined as much as they are described (cf. Gonzalez et al. 2008). Such collective imaginings are a matter for cultural sociology, not demography (Sciortino 2012; Trondman 2012).

Theorizing difference and solidarity

Emotional responses to immigration tell us relatively little about the objective situation, but a great deal about the condition of social solidarity. Solidarity is about the sense of connection, a matter of feeling and meaning. How a community responds to immigration is a

matter of collective identity. Who are we, and who are we not? Who are they, and who are they not?

Sociological theory has not been well prepared to discuss matters of solidarity and difference, especially when they relate to the dark side of modernity (Alexander 2013). Classical and modern theorists were too enmeshed in the myth that, with the arrival of modernity, social action and order became rationalized. Departures from rationality and enlightened morality were widely regarded as residual categories. Hatred and prejudice, violence and exclusion have been approached as pre-modern holdovers, as indicators that contemporary societies are not yet modern enough. With more education, more development, more welfare and a better legal system, social theory has supposed, such irrational dispositions and reactions will fade away.

Obviously, this has not been the case. Durkheim (1984[1893]) and Parsons (1965) viewed solidarity as a fundamental dimension of even the most modern social life, even if they resisted its dark side. Rather than being eliminated by rationalization, solidarity remains a major focus of feeling, meaning, reward and sanction, as robust as any economic or political institution, as meaningful as religion, as emotionally affecting as family. The affective and moral meaning of 'us' – what might be called 'we-ness' – is a fundamentally structuring social force. The other side of we-ness, equally potent, is difference: who are they, and why are they here?

The experience of modernity has made it painfully clear that solidarity can be structured in strikingly different ways. 'Primordial' solidarities tie loyalty to particular groups, places and beliefs. Such bonds have been central to human society from time immemorial. Processes like cultural abstraction, institutional differentiation and territorial expansion create the possibility for a more civil kind of solidarity (Parsons 1971; Geertz 1973; Shils 1975b). Civil solidarity creates more universal ties, connections that only seem as if they are more imagined than concrete. In the name of ethical concerns, civil solidarity allows separation from, and criticism of, what have seemed earlier to be immutably binding, primordial and restrictive bonds.

Variation in the form of solidarity is closely linked to how difference is constructed. The more civil the solidarity, the more likely that feelings of connection can be extended to include apparently different others. The more one's own solidarity ties are experienced as primordial, the less likely is one to make a positive connection with strangers. The variegated construction of solidarity is central to explaining the dynamics of difference in contemporary societies.

Every modern democratic society, and even decidedly less-thandemocratic ones, possesses some version of a civil sphere. The discourse, institutions and micro-relations of the civil sphere should be considered as analytically distinct – in theory – and to some degree empirically distinct – in practice – from those that mark such non-civil social spheres as market, state, church, school and family, and from the more *gemeinschaftlich* solidarities that define ethnicity, gender, sexuality, race and region.

The civil sphere is aspirational. One might conceive such a civil world as situated among non-civil institutions and solidarities, promoting an idealizing discourse according to which justice – and the symbolic and material distributions that follow therefrom – is calibrated simply on the basis of being a fellow member of the human race. Civil solidarity sacralizes individual autonomy, yet simultaneously imposes collective moral responsibilities. Membership inside the civil sphere means that, regardless of one's status in other social spheres, one deserves to be treated with respect and recognized as having basic human rights.

But what if one has not yet arrived at the doorstep of the civil sphere, but is simply on the way? Or what if one is only approaching the doorway? How does the civil sphere deal, not with the internal boundaries vis-à-vis non-civil spheres, but with its external boundaries vis-à-vis potential members from other national collectivities, regions and civilizations?

In terms of its idealizing principles, the civil sphere requires that those who are here as citizens should be treated as full members, whether or not they have only recently arrived. Those who have been invited here to meet economic or political exigencies, or for the moral reason of asylum, should be treated as honoured guests even if they are not yet citizens. Granted civil if not political rights, such guests should be extended cultural recognition and social support commensurate with their status as fellow human beings; depending on their length of residence, they should be offered a clear pathway to citizenship. As for those who have come here illegally, without being invited, they should be treated fairly without a commitment to legal incorporation. If they create profits and political legitimacy for core groups; raise families; and participate directly and indirectly in the educational and cultural patrimony, their status should be allowed to change. They and their children should be allowed to 'naturalize', with eventual citizenship the expected result.

These are the shoulds and oughts that define civil sphere obligations in normative terms.⁴ If the discourse of civil society were ideal and civil institutions free-floating, social action vis-à-vis immigrants and sojourners would follow from these dos and don'ts. It does not, of course. The discourse of civil society is not simply idealistic and its institutions are far from being truly free-floating.

The paradox of the cultural discourse that surrounds democracy is its interest in the anti-civil; it energetically stipulates not only who is deserving, but who is not. The discourse of civil society is not just about the democratic good but the anti-democratic evil. It has a binary structure that, alongside qualities that define civility and solidarity, identifies the polluted qualities that disable groups and individuals from participating in civil life, for example being irrational rather than rational, hysterical rather than calm, secretive not open, aggressive not cooperative, deceptive rather than honest, dependent rather than autonomous, selfish rather than altruistic. The good and the bad sides of this binary together constitute the language of the civil sphere.

The binary structure of this-and-not-this is a cultural, semiotic necessity. Meaning is not objective but relational; it can be made only through difference. But there is something more than cultural necessity involved. The cultural creation of difference has an immensely significant *social* significance. It pays off handsomely in non-discursive terms. Rather than floating free, civil spheres are instantiated in actually existing social relations. The 'signifiers' that compose the sacred abstractions of civil discourse attach themselves to 'signifieds' on mundane social ground. Rather than being completely independent, real civil spheres are restricted by the vagaries of time, place and function. They have feet of clay.

The positive side of civil discourse – which motivates the aspiration to recognize 'humanity' as the operative solidarity – faces the fact that real civil spheres are brought to life inside narrowly delimited national and regional collectivities. They are directed and sustained by social actors of particular religious, racial and linguistic stripes, who have occupied the territory of civil society for extended periods. Because of such particularities of time, place and identity, more primordial, noncivil qualities – qualities other than those indicated by common membership in the party of humanity – assume social importance inside 'real civil societies' (Alexander 1998). Even in the most democratic society, one is not only defined as a member of the civil community but as a member of the tribe. It is not that these more particular, non-civil qualities replace idealizing discourse about civil bonds. What they do, rather, is bend it toward their own purposes. Here is the pride and the prejudice that limit civil aspirations in even the most democratic nation states. In real civil societies, there is a hierarchy of qualities, arranged according to which are deemed most and least capable of promoting civil participation. Those that most often get the green light 'just happen' to embody the particular qualities of the core group: the folks who arrived early, whose ancestors were connected with the sacred ground or who have some close connection with those who were.

The greater charisma that typically attaches to core group qualities (Shils 1975c) is perceived as empowering civil capacity, allowing some categories of human beings to appear more civil than others. Such particularistic distribution of putatively civil charisma justifies exclusion and domination, especially when combined with hierarchies emanating from non-civil spheres, such as economic and political failure or success. Insofar as immigrants do not possess core charisma, sojourners are stigmatized, regardless of their citizenship status. Many immigrants are so polluted that they will never be allowed to become citizens, and no pathway for naturalization will ever be laid out.

Reconstructing European civil society

The conflict between primordially pure qualities, which seem naturally to warrant civil incorporation and emancipation, and polluted qualities, which seem to justify exclusion and repression, marked the bloody first half of Europe's twentieth century. The principal antagonisms of the First World War were motivated by such primordial nationalities; in the Second World War, otherness was keyed more to racial and religious terms. Such hatreds fuelled not only 'external', international military campaigns against liberals, communists and Nazis, but 'internal', intra-national genocidal campaigns against entire categories of people, Jews, Slavs, and Romani, homosexuals and the disabled.

The European community, and later its putative Union, emerged from the burning embers of these struggles. It aimed to extend the broad tent of the civil sphere across the continent, subordinating national, ethnic, religious and regional ties to a more universalistic 'European' solidarity constructed from the trauma of Europe's internecine past. The effort to create such a European civil sphere fuelled, and was fuelled by, the emergence of nationally democratic regimes (Judt 2005).

The post-war European project was put into place by a cosmopolitan carrier group, its rules administered by a centralized bureaucracy without the full panoply of supporting civil institutions. There were, for example, scarcely any effectively Europe-wide media of communication; the reach of EU law was gradual and halting; the power of European voting and political party organization was minimal. Yet, despite these limitations, the European super-state succeeded in significantly reducing ethnic, racial and religious othering inside the continent, and eliminated the possibility that such sentiments, when they did circulate, would trigger genocide or war. Pacifying Europe's internal relations, however, has not necessarily helped to civilize Europe's relations with others who want to come into it from outside. In fact, the new idea of a unified and pacified Europe may have made it even more difficult, creating collective amnesia about the history of Europe's own fractious prejudices and its construction from earlier waves of immigrants (Nelson 1970; Bade 1987; Stovall 1998; Lucassen

2005). Certainly, the post-war settlement in Europe was worldhistorical: democratic inclusion and welfare states at the national level; a supra-national, relatively cosmopolitan European civil sphere on top. The danger is that this settlement has also generated an equal and opposite reaction, creating a Fortress Europe vis-à-vis the world outside. As this fortress has confronted the tsunami of globalization, social turmoil has been the result.

The new immigrant other

During the centuries of Europe's colonial expansion, non-western others – at least those not enslaved – were compelled to remain in their peripheral place. They were not allowed to move into the metropole of the colonizer itself. The post-colonial world that emerged after the Second World War undercut the territorial rootedness of these nonwestern subjects. This shift was facilitated by dramatically increased global opportunities for movement and communication and was intensified by the demographic shrinking of Europe's working population.

Significant numbers of non-European others began arriving in Western Europe. They were invited for political and economic reasons, not - at first at least - because national groups actually wished to expand their putatively homogeneous civil cores (Die Zeit 2011). In 1960, as post-war economic recovery took hold, non-western others were 'imported' as unskilled manual labour. Large-scale Gastarbeiter (guest worker) programmes (cf. Topcu 2011; Topcu and Ulrich 2011) emerged in Germany, Switzerland and Austria, and soon after, if less conspicuously, in other European nations as well. For other European states, opening up to non-western immigration was a matter of imperial failure triggering a new, post-colonial strategy. Responding to their loss of colonies with a mixture of prurience and dignity, Britain and France opened up their national civil spheres to former colonials (Meer and Modood 2009). The Netherlands did the same, guaranteeing full civil rights for immigrants from Surinam and Antilles. Eventually, millions of former colonials migrated to metropoles, with immediate or eventual citizenship guaranteed. The number of non-western immigrants was also swelled, particularly in Scandinavia, by new policies offering generous asylum to non-western victims of political, ethnic and religious persecution (e.g. Vitus and Lidén 2010; Valenta and Bunar 2010; Larsen 2011; Olwig 2011).

By the early 1970s, the initial conditions triggering expansive immigration had either abated or changed. Post-war economies levelled off, guest worker programmes ended, and the open door to former colonials was closed (Schain 1999, pp. 207–8). While most guest workers from within Europe returned to their home countries, however, many from outside Europe stayed. Constitutional protections prevented them from being forcibly repatriated. Family transfer policies allowed them to be joined by their families, and their birthrates far exceeded the fertility of native groups. By the 1980s, immigrants from outside Europe had become a significant presence inside. Today, upwards of 32.5 million residents are non-nationals (people who are not citizens of their country of residence), about 6.5 per cent of the entire European population (Vasileva 2011) and higher in the western part. In Germany, the figure is nearly nine per cent (Vasileva 2011) and in many larger cities much higher, anywhere from 15 to 40 per cent. Inside such urban areas, immigrant residence in economically disadvantaged areas is often more concentrated still.⁵

Having been brought inside European territory by reason of economy and state, immigrant outsiders now faced the question of whether they would be allowed to become members of the civil sphere. This has proven to be wrenchingly difficult to answer. In 1969, an influential policy report for the French Economic and Social Council referred to the new 'influx of non-European origin, and principally... the flow from the Mahgreb' and asserted, as a self-evident fact, that such migrants constituted as 'an inassimilable island' (Schain 1999, p. 207). The primordial qualities of these sojourners were not just different from this or that national core group, but markedly distinct from those that had historically defined Europe itself (Zolberg and Woon 1999, p. 7). The immigrants were not western; they were not Christian; they were not white. They did not come from societies thought be modern, but from so-called oriental societies, from Africa, Turkey, Arabia and South Asia, all lands that had been conquered by the West. If there was one quality uniting these ethnically and racially disparate immigrants, moreover, it was the most historically stigmatized trait of all – their Muslim religion. The battle between Christian Europe and Islam had stretched over six centuries, from the first Crusade in 1099 to the Ottoman sieges of Vienna, with the long occupation of the Iberian Peninsula in between. For three centuries, the West had been able to claim victory in this millennial confrontation, but with the end of colonialism, the battle had been fiercely rejoined. In the transition from Nasser's Pan-Arabism to the rise of Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the Iranian Revolution, the Gulf and Iraq Wars and Al Qaeda terrorism, the image of Arabic Islam was configured in seemingly more aggressive and anti-civil ways (Zolberg and Woon 1999, pp. 7-9). For increasing members of the European civil sphere, ancient enemies outside were becoming the new immigrants within.

The resistance to multiculturalism

One response to this demographic super-diversity was to undertake the arduous task of making the European civil sphere more freefloating, to separate it further from traditional core group qualities and to begin positively evaluating instead of denigrating non-western origins, customs, skin colour and religion. At least until the early 1990s, there were signs that European masses and elites were indeed moving in this direction. Indian, Pakistani, Maghrebi and Middle Eastern ethnicities certainly altered the physiognomy of Europe. Economically productive ethnic enclaves emerged. In Britain and the Netherlands, curries and rice salads challenged sausage and sauerkraut, bangers and mash. Immigrant access to education was streamlined; urban accommodations to religious and cultural differences were made; and a handful of non-western figures entered into Europe's cultural and political elites. In France, Britain, the Netherlands and Scandinavia, sometimes even in Germany, liberal and socialist political figures and social scientists alike proclaimed that the historical opportunity for creating a post-national, newly multicultural Europe was at hand (e.g. Soysal 1994; Vertovec 1996; Caglar 1997; Modood and Werbner 1997; Soysal 1998); so did many public intellectuals. Stuart Hall famously spoke about the 'rebranding Britain' and a new sense of 'plural blackness' (Modood 2009, p. 243).

Even during these early decades, however, the new non-western immigration was also engendering decidedly less accommodative reactions (Bade 1994). For many Europeans, it was like waking up after an evening of post-war self-indulgence without a morning-after pill. The Tory MP Enoch Powell gave his incendiary 'rivers of blood' speech in 1968 (Grillo 2010, p. 51). By the later 1990s, such spasms of antagonism were congealing into a wider backlash against disengaging the European civil sphere from its primordial foundations. By the 2000s, multiculturalism was being renounced by intellectuals and political leaders on both left and right. The events of 9/11 gave sharp impulse to this developing reaction, and expressions of revulsion and hostility were spreading widely, if unevenly, inside the mass culture of Europe.⁶

This risible cultural turn polluted the public practices and places of Islam, translating them into the negative categories of civil discourse. Protestors placed pig heads in front of mosques, splashed pig urine and blood on doorways, and defaced walls of Muslim worship with graffiti (Allievi 2009). In 2009, the Swiss passed a national referendum outlawing minarets (Gole 2011), and the extremist Dutch political leader Geert Wilders began pronouncing upon mosques as being palaces of hate (Allievi 2009; DutchNews.nl 2011; Erlanger 2011). A group of leading Danish cartoonists attacked the prophet Allah, depicting him as a narrow-minded tyrant, a buffoon and a malicious prig (Hedetoft 2010). In 2011, the French Republic finally made it illegal for girls and young women in public schools to wear the traditional headscarf. Over the course of two decades of vitriolic public debate (Bowen 2007), the veil had been constructed as a sign of submission to patriarchal authority and religious dogma, despite contrary evidence from social scientists (Gaspard and Khosrokhavar 1995) and often from the wearers themselves. Denying citizenship to a fully veiled Moroccan woman in 2008, a conservative French cabinet minister called the *niqab* a 'prison' and a 'straightjacket', insisting 'it is not a religious insignia but the sign of a totalitarian political program that promotes inequality between the sexes and is totally lacking in democracy.' The woman replied, 'they say I am under my husband's command [but] I want to tell them: It is my choice' (Bennhold 2008; cf. Barchfield 2010). Writing in the leftist Guardian newspaper, British Foreign Minister Jack Straw (2006; cf. Wheatcroft 2006), whom the conservative Times newspaper once described as the one 'decent man' in British politics, sharply polluted Islamic female clothing as well. Stressing the binary between civil sacred and anti-civil profane, Straw denounced the 'incongruity' between 'the fact of the veil' and 'the signals which indicate common bonds'. Straw (2006) suggested that such covering made honest face-to-face relations impossible: 'I felt uncomfortable about talking to someone "face-to-face" who I could not see [because] I could not see what the other person means, and not just hear what they say.' He concluded 'such a visible statement of separation and differences' as 'wearing the full veil' was bound 'to make better, positive relations between the two communities more difficult."

Insofar as Muslim practices and places are constructed as dangerously anti-civil, the presence of Muslims threatens European democracy. By the middle of the last decade, Europe-wide polls were reporting that 'a vast majority feels that their country has reached the limits of cultural or ethnic diversity' (Coenders, Lubbers and Scheepers 2004, p. 3). Four in ten respondents opposed granting civil rights even to legal immigrants, and one-third of those surveyed supported repatriation. According to this backlash group, it was multicultural policies that created the segregation of European societies. The problem was too much respect for Islamic difference, not anti-Muslim discrimination and social disadvantage. In 2005, a MORA poll commissioned by the BBC (BBC News 2005) reported that one-third of the nation's citizens believed that multiculturalism 'threatens the British way of life', viewing it as 'incompatible with the values of British democracy', and that slightly more than half agreed that 'parts of our country don't feel like Britain any more because of immigrants.' In 2007, the Conservative leader David Cameron equated

multiculturalism with 'cultural separatism', denouncing it as a 'deliberate weakening of our collective identity' (The Economist 2007). That same year, *The Economist* reported that 'a new obscenity has entered the lexicon, alongside the anatomical and the blasphemous: multiculturalism' (The Economist 2007). In 2008, Labour minister Hazel Blears declared that Britain should not 'risk using public money on projects that might unnecessarily keep people apart' (The Economist 2008b), and Cameron called multiculturalism a 'disastrous' and 'wrong-headed doctrine' that instituted 'quite literally, a legal apartheid' (Mail Online 2008). What the speechwriter for Labour's Home Secretary David Blunkett called the new 'm-word' (in Vertovec and Wessendorf 2010b, p. 14) denoted nothing less, according to a widely read British columnist, than a policy of 'state coercion' that 'stifles debates' and is 'ruthlessly policed by army of bureaucrats' (Phillips, cited in Vertovec and Wessendorf 2010b, p. 7). The French spoke of 'Balkanization' and 'communitarianism' (Simon and Sala Pala 2010, p. 92), the Germans of 'parallel societies' (Vertovec and Wessendorf 2010b, p. 8). Wilfred Schäuble (2006), Germany's powerful Christian Democratic Interior Minister, explained: '[I]f we want to feel part of a collectivity, then there must be something that connects us at a deeper human level, at the level of religion and culture, values, and identity.'

Intellectuals provided seemingly sophisticated rhetorical justifications for the anti-Muslim backlash. In agreement with Samuel Huntington's (2004) strident pronouncements about the civil incapacity of recent Hispanic immigrants to the USA, conservative intellectuals in Europe widely warned against Islamic qualities as disabling for democratic societies (Prins 2002). In 2005, for example, the influential Italian commentator Oriana Fallaci told the *Wall Street Journal*:

Europe is no longer Europe, it is "Eurabia", a colony of Islam, where the Islamic invasion does not proceed only in a physical sense, but also in a mental and cultural sense. Servility to the invaders has poisoned democracy, with obvious consequences for the freedom of thought, and for the concept itself of liberty. (Fisher 2006)

Five years later, the conservative German writer Hans Monath (2010) declared in *Der Tagesspeigel*: 'Islam is not part of Europe. Islam has over the centuries always been an opponent of Europe. Islam has not become part of the culture or of social life in Germany, whether in terms of law, policy or constitutional thought' (cf. Huntington 1996; Caldwell 2009). More surprisingly, and certainly more revealing of the scope of backlash sentiment, many liberal and socialist thinkers also protested Islamic immigration, citing either transcendental political

principles or pragmatic reality. According to American political scientist Robert Putnam (2007), his quantitative studies have demonstrated that social diversity destroys social capital (but see Portes and Vickstrom 2011). German sociologist Christian Joppke (2004, 2008; Joppke and Lukes 1999) has claimed that the supposedly communalist principles of multiculturalism flout the putatively neutral, nondiscriminatory space of the liberal public sphere (but see Kivisto 2012). In 2000, the Dutch sociologist and Social Democrat Paul Scheffer (2000) published a lengthy critical essay in a prominent evening newspaper, the NRC Handelsblad. 'The Multicultural Drama' became one of the most influential intellectual-cum-political polemics of the emerging backlash movement. Looking back fondly to the day when 'the political elite... used to possess a clear civilizing mission', Scheffer (2000) declared that 'integration while maintaining identity is a pious lie', denounced 'the house of cards that is the multicultural society', and called for restoring the 'even-handedness' and 'brutal bargain' of assimilation (cf. Everman 2008).⁷

If multiculturalism is sharply discredited, yet Islamic immigrants are in Europe to stay, the only solution is to purify their polluted qualities. Whether governed from left or right, one European nation after another has shifted, sometimes subtly but more often with increasing outspokenness and clarity, from entertaining a more multicultural to demanding a more assimilative mode of incorporation. Rather than speaking explicitly about homogeneity and assimilation, this new stance is widely described as 'civic integration' (Carrera 2006, p. 19). In 2004, David Goodhart (2004), the head of Britain's Equal Opportunities Commission, declared that, because 'most of us prefer to be with our own kind', nations have a right to make 'shared histories and similar values' a prerequisite for social incorporation. In 2006, Oxford Analytica (2006) represented this new policy as moving from the recognition of difference to an emphasis on 'loyalty, integration, and European values'. In 2007, the Labour government Commission on Integration and Cohesion published the much-trumpeted Our Shared *Future.* In his foreword to the report, the Commission's chair, Darra Singh (2007, p. 3), described its aim as creating a 'strong society where civility and courtesy are the norm'.

Such shifting cultural construction has had increasing material effect. Much tougher immigration and naturalization policies have been one immediate result. During the course of the last decade, so-called 'citizenship tests' have been erected as bulky barriers to immigrant incorporation (Bauböck and Joppke 2010; Goodman 2010, 2011, 2012b). Rather than concentrating on impersonal and universalistic facts concerning length of residence, employment record and legal status, the new criteria demand would-be citizens demonstrate familiarity with particularistic national traditions. The British test asks

what to do in a pub when one's neighbour spills beer on one's lap (Hansen 2010). The Dutch asks about homosexuality, nudism, women's dress codes and atheism, and exempts westerners from taking it (Michalowski 2010; Orgad 2010; cf. Groenendijk and van Oers 2010; Prins and Saharso 2010). Austrian state tests inquire about the names and dates of historical battles (Michalowski 2010), the German exams about polygamy and Christian culture (Bundesamt für Migration und Fluechtlinge 2008). Some recent data suggest that these new citizen tests have substantially raised failure rates and dramatically reduced citizenship and naturalization (Goodman 2010; Groenendijk and van Oers 2010; Goodman 2011, 2012a):

In Germany, the increased demands that are made on candidates' German language abilities has done away with much of the positive effects that the 2000 liberalization of nationality law initially had on naturalization rates. In the Netherlands, naturalization rates have significantly declined since the introduction of stricter language requirements. (Koopmans 2012, p. 27)

Other recent numbers (see report by Vasileva 2011 using Eurostat figures) seem to indicate that, despite these restrictive measures, immigration into Europe, legal and irregular, proceeds apace.⁸

When new immigrants do arrive, they find rules for actually granting citizenship toughened and changed. The French rewrote their Civil Code, from bestowing citizenship on immigrant children at birth to waiting until they attained their majority at the age of eighteen. Even then, they must show themselves to be 'well assimilated to customs and manners' à la française (Bowen 2007, p. 52). Under a new rubric called 'earned citizenship', the British now demand a three-year probation period (Chourdhury 2011). In Germany, would-be citizens must spend 600 hours in German language instruction (Grieshaber 2005; *Deutschland Today* 2012). In Denmark, they are required to attend civic classes at their own expense, and family members of naturalized Danish immigrants must wait three years to join them, needing also to pass an attachment test (Hedetoft 2010).

There is more to the European backlash against multiculturalism than polluting sentiments, discriminatory actions, and even newly restrictive laws and policies. Under the guise of demanding assimilation to common democratic values, extremist political parties have moved aggressively onto the European stage (Berezin forthcoming). Hate-spewing populist demagogues have gained, not only public podiums, but parliamentary power in Sweden, Finland, Denmark, France, Italy, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Greece. There has also been an incendiary rise of extra-political militia that moves past rhetoric to violence outright. In Germany, the Office for the Protection of the Constitution recently reported 25,000 Germans active in such far-right groups (German Federal Ministry of the Interior 2011). In Norway, on 22 June 2011, Anders Breivik massacred seventy-seven persons in Oslo and Utoeya, most of them children and youths. Styling himself a crusading Knight Templar (Lewis and Cowell 2012), his chilling manifesto echoing the anti-civil logic of the polluting European backlash stated: 'All over Europe multicultural elites are waging total war against their populations. Their goal is to continue the strategy of mass migration which will result in Islamic Europe – a Europe without freedom: Eurabia' (cited in Ring 2011, p. 8).

Conclusion

For a while, during the last decades of the twentieth century, it looked as if a post-national, globalizing Europe might escape the harsh constraints of assimilative absorption. What has transpired, instead, is an intensive struggle over the mode of incorporation. The possibility of opening up Europe's core groups to non-western Muslim outsiders has triggered a backlash movement among both elites and masses. This is certainly a social and political fight, but at its foundation are matters of culture, structures of feeling that, for many, make it seem inconceivable that non-white, non-western, Islamic people – with their unfamiliar physical appearances, religious practices, political beliefs and gender commitments - possess the virtues required for participating civilly in democratic societies. Yet, tens of millions of these stigmatized persons are in Europe to stay, and demographic and economic realities mean that their percentage of the population will only increase. As these persons try to move from the economic into the civil sphere, the empirical instabilities of assimilative incorporation have been vividly displayed. Allowing persons but not their qualities to be incorporated reinforces foundational prejudices of core groups. The pollution of these qualities must be challenged and changed. The culture structures of real civil societies need broadening if outsiders are to become more familiar than strange. Only by making itself multicultural can Europe preserve its democratic values in the globalizing world that it confronts today.

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Notes

While in recent decades the USA has, despite massive immigration, coped relatively 1. more successfully with outsider ethnicity and religion (Schuck 2009), its historical difficulties with socio-economic outsiderness - class incorporation - have become more glaring. These problems have been exacerbated by the phenomenon of the underclass, in which lower-class status, exacerbated by de-industrialization, has become intertwined with stigmatized race (Wilson 1987). The qualification 'relatively' is important here. Americans often express intense hostility to Hispanic immigration and reservations about Islam that range from the merely sceptical to the aggressively outrageous (Abdo 2006; Ahmed 2007; Shane 2011). However, whereas Islam constitutes the dominant religious identity among recent immigrants to Europe, most stigmatized immigrants to the USA - Hispanics - are Christian. In the USA, in other words, the religion of the dominant immigrant group overlaps with the core group's, whereas in Europe it contrasts with it (cf. Casanova 2009). For degree of complementarity as a predictor of incorporative success, see Alexander (1980). 'Europe' in the following discussion designates primarily what has been traditionally 2 understood as its 'Western' part. Post-Soviet 'Eastern' Europe has not been a primary destination for the new immigration, but rather itself has actually contributed to migration into the West.

3. Germany is a marked exception, with much lower rates of immigrant educational mobility; Switzerland and Austria have higher rates than Germany, but not nearly as high as most other European nations (*Der Spiegel* 2007; Reimann 2010).

4. Such an understanding of civil sphere obligations vis-à-vis immigration departs sharply from the more restrictive interpretation of Rawlsian principles evoked by Christian Joppke (e.g. 2004, 2008) in his 'liberal' attacks on multicultural responses to immigration. In the present essay, and more systematically in *The Civil Sphere* (Alexander 2006), I advance an understanding of multicultural incorporation that challenges the kinds of claims, advanced also by Joppke and Lukes (1999, p. 5), that assert that 'multiculturalism appears as a critique of Western universalism and liberalism' and that it privileges 'ontologically the group over the individual' (Joppke and Lukes 1999, p. 5). In the empirical conflicts considered here, communitarian claims on behalf of group culture are more likely to be the enemy, rather than the friend, of multiculturalism. Not multiculturalism but the backlash against it promotes what Joppke and Lukes (1999, p. 4) criticize as the 'socio-moral elevation of primordial group over society-wide citizenship identities and logalties.'

5. Significant as they are, these figures do not do justice to the extent of immigration into Europe, for they measure only immigrants who have remained non-nationals. If one were to measure all residents of foreign background, a category that would include immigrants and children of immigrants who have become citizens but may still display marked cultural differences from traditional core groups, the figure becomes much larger. It more than doubles, for example, in Germany, where 20 per cent of residents are reported as having a 'foreign background' (Hoßmann and Karsch 2011).

6. The claim that Islamic immigrant qualities are anti-civil is spurred by their equation with jihadi violence. Conflating qualities exhibited by numerically tiny terrorist groups with the ethical status and democratic capacities of a world religion is deeply misleading. While concern about radical Islamist terrorism is justified, making civil exclusion seem like common-sense self-protection is not.

7. Such intellectual caricatures of multiculturalism as particularistic and divisive echo the early philosophical manifestos inspired by identity politics (e.g. Young 1990), which conceptualized multiculturalism as emphasizing the recognition of difference at the expense of broadly shared civil solidarity. Though in itself oblique to identity theorizing, Will Kymlicka's (1995) influential approach to multiculturalism complemented such a 'thin' approach to national solidarity by concentrating on the rights of internally colonized people, for example French-Canadians and native first peoples, to practise their distinctive cultures so long as they recognized the majority's merely legal rights (cf. Meer and Modood 2012).

Such emphases ignore the 'thick' cultural work involved when core groups become open to difference, on the one hand, and out-groups become socialized into the discourse of civil society, on the other. It is largely because of this thinness among earlier multicultural advocates that empirical sociologists began calling, a decade ago, for the return to a revised idea of assimilation (e.g. Brubaker 2001; Alba and Nee 2003; Kivisto 2005). From the perspective of the present essay (cf. Alexander 2006), however, the thickness of contemporary incorporation cannot be conceptualized as assimilation, for the latter emphasizes abandoning difference for homogeneity. A new mode of incorporation has emerged in opposition to the assimilation, and it is precisely the difference between these modes that needs to be theorized (cf. Wieviorka 1998; Kymlicka 2011; Meer and Modood 2012).

8. Aggregate measures may camouflage the nature of particular effects. As Sarah Wallace Goodman (personal communication September 9, 2012) has pointed out, newly restrictive integrative requirements do not aim at curbing all immigration; they leave such categories of immigrants as the highly skilled and asylum seekers relatively untouched. Some of the new civic integration measures, moreover, are aimed at permanent residents who have already migrated.

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