

A GREAT CHALLENGE FOR THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION: MUSLIM MINORITIES

Oğuz URAS¹

Abstract

A successful Western performance at the realization of a coherently united Europe is going to be the most significant paradigm shift in IR theory after Westphalia. The European Union phenomenon powerfully challenges the concept of modern state both in economic and political terms. On the other hand, socially, the rebirth of menacing nationalism withholds the status quo. The EU has been challenged by the minorities - and of course by the minority perception of the majority- on its way to perfect cohesion. Muslims in Europe have been in cultural confusion for 50 years. This confusion has brought about a friction between the center and the periphery and has led to the neologism of Islamophobia. The EU was comparatively quick to realize the new world order after the 9/11. Its institutions are trying to analyze the current situation in the EU hinterland and are trying to solve the disagreements through various activities.

Key Words: Islamophobia, Muslim Minorities, Intercultural Dialogue, European Integration.

I. Introduction

We are being challenged by Islam these years. Globally as well as locally ... We must take this challenge seriously. We have simply left it flapping around for far too long, because we are tolerant and rather lazy.²

The passionate rise of Islam, claiming the succession of previous Abrahamic religions, was perceived as a serious and baleful challenge by the West, which is characterized by Christianity. Normally, this led to a great tension between the partisans of the two religions. Millions have suffered; the survivors saw the 'others' with a gloomy mark on their forehead. The reality of these smudges can be discussed, but it is certain that the opaque vision

¹ Upon completion his BA degree at the Department of Political Science and Public Administration of METU, the author moved to Houston, Texas in 2003. He had language training for one year and had worked as a social studies teacher at several state high schools between 2004 and 2007. Currently he is a teaching assistant at Fatih University, Department of International Relations.

² This is a translation of a statement made by the Danish Queen Margrethe II in April 2005. Many debates have been held on what she really meant. While radical religious people, both Christian and Muslim, interpreted her words negatively, imperturbable interpretations regarded it as sincere advice to Christians to take intercultural issues more seriously.

of the specious devotee caused many things to go wrong and sowed seeds of today's clashes. Whereas, if the sincere thinkers of the bloody centuries could have been accompanied by righteous rulers, we had not have had to deal with many of the conflicting issues which are derived from mutual misunderstanding among peoples.

Western enlightenment has two great offspring: The United States of America and the European Union. Although USA is the hegemonic power of 21st century, the EU is the most desirable outcome of the western civilization with its humanitarian aspects. One of the remaining missions that the EU must realize for being a perfect society is that it must achieve a thorough integration, leaving none of the segments aside. Therefore, the EU must try to understand Islam and its adherents as its very best, and Muslims have to deeply analyze the European perception of Islam and make the necessary amendments in their lifestyles in order to prevent repeating their ascendants' sins.

Europe is basically divided into three sections according to their religious tradition (Protestant Northern, Catholic Mediterranean, and Orthodox Eastern)³ which have different experiences with the Muslim world, and thus a separate analysis of these regions is required for more comprehensive research. The purpose of this paper is to present some signs⁴ of Islamophobia against Muslim minorities in the EU member countries and the precautions that the European Union, as a supranational power, has been taking to prevent existing and potential tensions in order to realize full unity beyond mere political and economic integration. Therefore, I am not going to discuss the internal and external boundaries of Europe and whether the EU and the Europe are same or not.⁵

³ Anthony M. Abela, "Solidarity and Religion in the European Union: A Comparative Sociological Perspective", in Peter Xuereb (ed.), *The Value(s) of a Constitution for Europe*, 2004, p. 72; Jean Bauberot, *Avrupa Birliği Ülkelerinde Dinler ve Laiklik*, Ufuk Kitapları, İstanbul, 2003, p. 335.

⁴ Thomas F. Pettigrew classifies these signs (in general terms) as "blatant and subtle prejudice" and "direct and indirect discrimination". While the traditional blatant prejudice and direct discrimination are close, hot and straightforward, the modern latter concepts are less obvious, cool and distant. Thomas F. Pettigrew, "Reactions toward the New Minorities of Western Europe", *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 24 (1998), pp. 83- 88.

⁵ Some scholars perceive the debate of whether the EU constitution has religious remarks or not between member states and the EU institutions as a thin line between Europe and the European Union. See Luca Mavelli, "Islam and European Integration: Re-enforcing or Overcoming the Divide?", unpublished paper, 2007, p. 2.

II. Islam and Europe

Whoever attempts to classify the historical signifiers of the European civilization, Christianity appears to be the common element shared by all.⁶ The deeply rooted relationship between the Occident and the Orient always had a religious notion throughout the history: beginning with the first Muslim conquerors of Iberian peninsula of 7th century, followed by the crusades for rescuing the Holy Lands from the hands of the “heretics”, the relations with the final actor of the East- the Ottomans, and the colonization process have all determined the ‘international relations’ of these two. So, it was a whole millennium of struggles and fights. It is impossible to say that the memorial of a thousand years does not effect today’s European perception of Islam and its followers despite the fact that the religiosity of the *European citizen* has been diminishing after the World War II.⁷

A. Muslims Presence in the European Union

Some Facts

The Muslim population of Europe soared after World War II. The unskilled worker demand of the ruined continent was supplied mostly by the former colonies and nearby Muslim countries. Turks had chosen Germany⁸ and Austria,⁹ Algerians and Moroccans migrated to Spain¹⁰ and France,¹¹ and South Asians preferred the UK.¹² The first appearance of Muslims in vast numbers in Europe has been more than fifty years. The grandchildren of first generation immigrants are now citizens of the EU countries. Even though some of the data is unofficial, 13¹³ to 16¹⁴ million Muslims are living in EU countries. The three EU countries with the highest Muslim population rates are France (8.5%), the Netherlands (5%), and Austria (4.8%); and the three member states with the highest Muslim population are France (6,000,000), Germany (3,300,000), and the UK (1,650,000).¹⁵ It is projected that by the

⁶ Mavelli counts these signifiers as the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and the Christianity (Ibid., p. 2.), while the classification of Grace Davie, borrowing from O’Connell, consists of the monotheism of Judeo-Christianity, Greek rationalism, and the Roman organization. See, Grace Davie, *Modern Avrupa’da Din*, Istanbul, Küre Yayınları, 2005, p. 7.

⁷ Abela, Ibid., p. 76.

⁸ 2.6 million, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3997.htm>.

⁹ 134.000 in 2001. Sabine Kroissenbrunner, “Islam and Muslim Immigrants in Austria: Socio-Political Networks and Muslim Leadership of Turkish Immigrants”, *Immigrants & Minorities*, Vol. 22, Issue 2 & 3(2003) , p. 190.

¹⁰ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4385768.stm#spain>.

¹¹ 1.550.000 Algerians and 1.000.000 Moroccans. l’Islam dans la République, Haut Conseil à l’intégration, (Nov. 2000), p.26.

¹² http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/history/uk_2.shtml.

¹³ European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), *Muslims in the European Union: Discrimination and Islamophobia*, 2006, p. 29.

¹⁴ *The Economist*, 3 April 2003, pp. 33-36.

¹⁵ Ibid.

year 2050, 1 of every 5 Europeans will be a Muslim. Philip Jenkins estimates that 25% of the European population is going to be Muslims in 2100.¹⁶ These numbers clearly show how much cooperation and how deeply integration is required for a peaceful Europe.

Relations between the Mainstream Society and the Periphery

After the 9/11 attacks, the newest product of the *fear factory* started using its influence in the *market*. Muslims have become the subject and the object of a popular *phobia* in an accelerated manner. The question of “otherization” of Muslims in Europe has two dimensions. On the one hand, the problem has roots in the historical sediments in the minds of older generations. On the other hand, even though young people do not feel themselves religious, some of them are under the influence of xenophobia and racism towards the immigrants, such as the “Lonsdale Youth” of the Netherlands.¹⁷ Since migrant and Muslim are synonyms in Europe¹⁸ the hate evolves into Islamophobia.

Social Situation

The main problem to thoroughly determine the real situation of Muslims in European social life is inadequate data.¹⁹ Relevant existing data is very short and it is impossible to distinguish between religion and ethnicity in it. Some proxy categories, like the names, are exerted to make a classification.

Employment

Even though the 2000 Employment Equality Directive clearly requires all Member States to prevent inequality and discrimination on the grounds of religion in employment, occupation and vocational training,²⁰ differences in wages, negative type of employment and low unemployment rates of Muslim groups are still a fact. The headscarf is a matter of controversy in employment.²¹

¹⁶ Philip Jenkins, “Demographics, Religion, and the Future of Europe”, *Orbis: A Journal of World Affairs*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (Summer 2006), p. 533.

¹⁷ EUMC, *Ibid.*, p. 79.

¹⁸ Luca Mavelli, *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁹ EUMC, *Ibid.*, p. 44.

²⁰ Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of European Commission, “Religion and Belief Discrimination in Employment- the EU Law”, 2006, p. 6.

²¹ EUMC, *Ibid.*, pp. 44-50.

Education

Various reports and studies on immigrant students show that non-native born pupils have much lower literacy scores than native pupils. According to 2006 OECD report, this performance gap is significant in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, and the Netherlands. Additionally religious education is given –if any- either by imams who have little knowledge about the local culture and even do not know the language of the country, or by the lecturers who are trained by the governments and not liked by the Muslims. The headscarf is again a matter of controversy in education.²²

Housing

Muslims appear to suffer higher levels of homelessness, poor quality housing conditions, poorer residential neighborhoods and greater insecurity. Some of them even do not have access to basic facilities such as drinking water and toilets. Exploitation through higher rents and purchase prices is another problem. Segregation of Muslim residents from the rest of the society prevents deeper integration.²³

B. Some Issues & Debates

It is widely believed that Muslims in Europe are not willing to accept the modern way of life,²⁴ liberal democratic structure of EU²⁵ and tend to have an inclination towards “salafism”.²⁶ Conversely, Muslims think that their values are not respected and that there is hypocrisy in the European approach to the “others”.²⁷ The stereotypical depiction of the media plays an important role on these reciprocal understandings.²⁸ Therefore, whether the mainstream is ready to embrace Islam and whether Muslims can sincerely regard themselves as Europeans is the main question. To overcome this problem, some issues have to be resolved urgently.

²² EUMC, *Ibid.*, pp. 50-54.

²³ EUMC, *Ibid.*, pp. 54-59.

²⁴ EUMC, *Ibid.*, p. 36, table 5.

²⁵ Ali Akbar Mahdi, “Book Review: Muslim Europe or Euro-Islam: Politics, Culture, and Citizenship in the Age of Globalization by Nezar AlSayyad, Manuel Castells”, *Contemporary Sociology*, Vol. 32, No. 5. (Sep. 2003), p. 629.

²⁶ Oliver Roy, “Islamic Evangelism”, *Project Syndicate/ Institute for Human Sciences*, (April 2004).

²⁷ Luca Mavelli, “Appropriation and Redemption in Contemporary Western Discourses on Islam in Europe”, *St Antony's International Review Religion and World Order*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (January 2008), p. 85.

²⁸ EUMC, *Ibid.*, p. 31.

Muslim Women

The EU cannot tolerate any type of inequality, and gender equality is a core value. EU institutions are constantly warning member states to avoid inequality between men and women and to construct equal conditions in all areas of life without referring to a particular social segment.²⁹ The most controversial issues are forced marriages, honor killings, and the headscarf. While the first two are also condemned by Muslims –and the EU is aware of it³⁰– the headscarf issue is very complex and multifaceted. Instead of perceiving wearing headscarf as a religious duty, it is seen as a symbol of oppression and gender inequality by most Europeans. Perhaps this is a “spillover effect” of the exaggerated presentation of wrongdoings of Muslims and because of stereotyping.

The Cartoon Lampoon

A hot debate launched after *Jyllands-Posten*, a Danish newspaper, published some cartoons ridiculing Prophet Muhammad on 30 September 2005, accompanying with a text briefly saying that Muslims who reject secular democracy have to be ready to live with mockery. This was followed by prompt democratic and undemocratic reactions. Some simply regarded the issue as an example of freedom of expression, which is an indispensable value of the EU, and some perceived it as a provocation and a xenophobic event. Here, two discussions have to be mentioned.

David Irving, a British historian, was on trial (and then sentenced to prison) in Austria because of Holocaust denial during the row over the Danish cartoons. For some, this was clear proof of the European duplicity. On the other hand, for some others like French philosopher Andre Glucksmann, “truths” and “beliefs” must be separated, so poking fun at Islam (or any religious belief) cannot be regarded as denying Holocaust.³¹ Secondly, Alexander Gainem draws an analogy between Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism regarding the cartoon issue. He calls our attention to the Nazi German media of pre-war period which depicted Jews in their caricature in a very similar way as *Jyllands-Posten*.³²

The view of EUMC (now Fundamental Rights Agency, FRA) is an adequate conclusion of the issue:

²⁹ EUMC, *Ibid.*, pp. 38-40.

³⁰ EUMC report refers to the 1981 Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights.

³¹ Mavelli, *Ibid.*

³² <http://www.islamonline.net/english/Views/2006/02/article09.shtml>.

The hard-won contest of freedom of expression is part of the principles and values that the EU is founded upon, and a fundamental cornerstone of European societies that is non negotiable. However, freedom of expression does not preclude the protection of people from racist and xenophobic language. Freedom of expression is not an absolute right; international law and the legal order of EU Member States lay down certain limits that our democratic societies consider are justified in order to protect other fundamental rights. Freedom of expression and the protection against racist and xenophobic language can, and have to, go hand-in-hand – the two together make democracy meaningful.³³

Rushdie Rush die

In October 1988, Salman Rushdie published his highly controversial novel *The Satanic Verses*. Similar to the “cartoon controversy”, some perceived it as a matter of freedom of expression and some took it as an assault to the beliefs and values. A fatwa was issued calling for his execution. The intensity of the reactions caused Rushdie to apologize. Nevertheless he took his apology back in 1998. This, according to Grace Davie, summarizes the Europe which has problems in taking religion seriously.³⁴ A very recent event supports Davie’s opinion: The fundamental trio of the EU, France, UK, and Germany were opposed to the proposal of the United Nations Human Rights Commission on preventing any type of religious insult, especially against Islam.³⁵ (The proposal was accepted by 21 to 10 votes.)

III. Islamophobia

A. *The Manifestations of Islamophobia*

The term *phobia* refers to an irrational fear which drives its owner to obviate the dreadful subject by any means.³⁶ Therefore, the question is whether the term “Islam” and “phobia” fits to define the situation in Europe. The 9/11 and successive terrorist and personal attacks - March 2004 Madrid, July 2005 London bombings, Theo van Gogh murder in November 2004 - triggered many verbal and physical attacks against Muslims. These events compelled the European Union to take action and analyze the situation scientifically.

³³ EUMC, Ibid., p. 43.

³⁴ Grace Davie, *Modern Avrupa’da Din, İstanbul*, Küre Yayınları, 2005, p. 167.

³⁵ Ahmet Kurucan, “Dialog ve Çifte Standard”, *Zaman Gazetesi*, 5 April 2008, <http://www.zaman.com.tr/haber.do?haberno=673579>.

³⁶ Edmund J. Bourne, *The Anxiety & Phobia Workbook*, 4th edition, New Harbinger Publications, 2005, p. 9.

The EUMC Report of Muslims in the EU provides the largest³⁷ available collection of data and combines the events that can be perceived as manifestations of Islamophobia and the measures to combat it. As EUMC emphasizes many times throughout the report, the data in hand is not very reliable. The main reason for this is while countries record incidents, they do not classify them according to the religious beliefs of the victims. The second important reason is that most Muslims do not report the incidents that happened to them. There is a tendency to treat the assaults, either verbal or physical, as regular events.

The data collected from official and unofficial sources shows that some specific types of violence are observed more commonly in some specific countries. For example: Denmark- vandalism, verbal attack; the Netherlands- youth confrontation, arson; Austria- headscarf insult; Sweden- vandalism; Germany- attacking food stands; Greece- arson; Spain- verbal abuse, physical attack; Ireland- headscarf insults; and Italy- graffiti.³⁸

B. The Endeavor of the EU to Prevent Islamophobia

Applying the notion of “selective memory”³⁹ to the case of “Islam in Europe” could be a good start in this fight. In order to prevent likely ‘upcoming world wars’ and atrocities, what Europe did after World War II was to tie the giants of the continent to each other as tight as possible. But how could this be achieved between the peoples who had wars named as “thirty years”, “hundred years”, and the wars that devastated the whole continent leaving millions of dead and wounded, orphans, and widows behind? The answer was simple: “Forget about it!” So, the peoples of Europe selected what they were going to remember in order to avoid future catastrophes and to unite for being a main actor of world politics in the 21st century. The EU tries to improve the relationship between Islam and Europe in its territory by building channels of dialogue and practicing the concept of selective remembrance in this context.

The EU both sponsors and supports all initiatives throughout Europe which serve to prepare minds for the firmest possible cohesion. A communication⁴⁰ from the European Commission states that “Integration is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and

³⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Fundamental_Rights_Agency.

³⁸ EUMC, *Ibid.*, pp. 60-90.

³⁹ Mavelli (2007), *Ibid.*, pp. 7-9.

⁴⁰ 1 September 2005, COM(2005) 389 (not published in the Official Journal).

residents of Member States”. To deepen the integration, a full-forced struggle is essential.

The last chapter of the EUMC Report gathers official and unofficial endeavors together. Briefly, official efforts are intercultural dialogue (Belgium, France, Italy, Portugal, Sweden),⁴¹ integration (Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, UK, Austria), political participation (UK, Greece), official support for Islamic Foundations (France), education initiative (Luxemburg, UK), police initiative (Austria, UK), and analyzing Islam (Sweden). Civil, social, and community initiatives are interfaith dialogue (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Austria, Poland, Sweden, Finland, UK), integration (Denmark, Germany), media (Denmark, Poland), education (Germany, Ireland, UK, Luxemburg) and information initiatives (Hungary, Austria, Slovak Republic).⁴²

An interesting finding is that Spain does not have any initiative mentioned in the report. It is interesting because of three reasons: first, she has the most deeply rooted historical relations with Islam in Europe; secondly, one of the most destructive and deadly terrorist attacks happened inside her territory and many incidents as examples of “blatant prejudice” occurred afterwards; and lastly, she is the partner of Turkey in a UN dialogue platform: Alliance of Civilizations.

2008 European Year of Intercultural Dialogue

In October 2005, the European Commission adopted a proposal to declare 2008 as the “European Year of Intercultural Dialogue” (EYID) with a budget of 10 million Euros.⁴³ EYID recognizes the cultural diversity of Europe as a great advantage and encourages those living in the continent to explore each other.⁴⁴ For this purpose, seven thematic Brussels meetings are organized which are hosted by the European Commission’s Directorate General for Education and Culture, and chaired by the journalist Shada Islam.

The first debate was on 5 March, focusing on the impact of immigration on intercultural dialogue with the speakers, Vice-President of the European Commission - Franco Frattini, German MEP - Cem Özdemir, Bashy Quraishy

⁴¹ Most of the countries in parentheses use also other means of “the combat”, and the specific tool before the parentheses is being used by many other Member States. The parentheses only show for whom the aforementioned method is prior.

⁴² EUMC, *Ibid.*, pp. 91-106.

⁴³ EC Press Release, Brussels, 5 October 2005, IP/05/1226.

⁴⁴ http://www.interculturaldialogue2008.eu/406.0.html?&redirect_url=my-startpage-cyid.html.

- chair of the advisory council of the European Network Against Racism, and Joris Rijbroek - strategic advisor for diversity and integration policy for the city of Amsterdam. The following quote from the speech of Jan Figel, the European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, on the eve of the debate summarizes the objective of the EYID perfectly:

Europe faces many significant challenges that have their roots in intercultural relations. We must meet these challenges head-on, and bring out the best in our continent's cultural and religious heritage. But we will only do this if we break down the barriers of ignorance through dialogue. With the Brussels Debates we will be able to make a useful contribution to the future vision of intercultural dialogue in Europe.⁴⁵

The second debate, was held on 3 April, and concentrated on the responsibilities of the artists and cultural institutions for cultural exchange. The speakers were the Dutch-Turkish photographer -Ahmet Polat, Jette Sandahl - the Director of the City Museum of Copenhagen, and French MEP and orchestra director - Claire Gibault. The third round, entitled "New Horizons: Active Citizenship to Bridge Inter-Religious Divides", focused on inter-religious dialogue on 14 May with four participants: Ján Figel - European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, Imam Dr. Abduljalil Sajid - chairman of the Muslim Council for Religious and Racial Harmony UK, Nadine Iarchy - European Vice-chair of the International Council of Jewish Women, and Mario Mauro Vice - president of the European Parliament. On 4 June, the fourth debate was held with the participation of Vladimír Špidla - European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Benoît van Grieken - Corporate Social Responsibility Manager of Randstad Belgium, Vice-President of the European Network against Racism - Chibo Onyeji, and Kyriacos Triantaphyllides - Member of the European Parliament. The debate was entitled "Couscous Culture: Is that what Intercultural Dialogue in the Workplace is all about?" At the next round, with the topic of "Multilingualism - a bridge or a barrier for intercultural dialogue?", the question whether having more than one mother tongue is an obstacle for dialogue or it is an opportunity for a better mutual understanding of different cultures of Europe was raised. On 10 September, Leonard Orban - EU Commissioner for Multilingualism, Sandra Pralong - Member of the Group of Intellectuals for Intercultural Dialogue, and Claude Moraes - MEP, praised multilingualism as a strengthening factor for dialogue while Abram De Swaan - Emeritus Research Professor for Social Science at the University

⁴⁵ <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/384&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>.

of Amsterdam, asserted that language diversity was an obstacle for intercultural dialogue. The title of the debate of October 1st was “Education – Ready for the intercultural challenge?”. The presenters were Ján Figel - European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, Professor Jagdish Singh Gundara - UNESCO Chair in Intercultural Studies, Fred van Leeuwen - Secretary General of Education International, and Marianne Poncelet - Secretary General of the International Yehudi Menuhin Foundation. Not surprisingly, the conclusion of the debate was the quality of education was an essential component of the European unity which must be accessible for all varied cultures of the Continent. And at the last debate of this series, which was held on 5 November, the capacity of the media in intercultural dialogue was discussed with the participation of Viviane Reding - European Commissioner for Information Society and Media, Bettina Peters - Director of the Global Forum for Media Development, Forward Maisokwadzo - from the Exiled Journalists’ Network, and MEP Christa Prets.⁴⁶

As it can be clearly seen solely by looking at the titles and the participants, instead of discussing the issue from a theoretical framework, such as historical causes or philosophical foundations of the intercultural relations, the debates were in search of prompt, practical solutions to the problems which emerge from “the dearth of dialogue”.

Other Projects

In different Member States, numerous projects are going on particularly targeting youth. The spectrum is very wide: from religious architecture to bioethics,⁴⁷ from youth gatherings to high school workshops⁴⁸ and to religious platforms,⁴⁹ a variety of efforts are taken by Europeans as preemptive measures for potential misunderstandings. Apart from these, a 16-month master’s program was established entitled “Euroculture”. The focus of the program is on cultural and social developments, with a focus on history, norms, values, and citizenship.⁵⁰

Judicial Measures of the Combat

The very first competence of fighting against any type of discrimination is the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. It was adopted

⁴⁶ http://www.interculturaldialogue2008.eu/408.0.html?&redirect_url=my-startpage-eyid.html.

⁴⁷ <http://www.interculturaldialogue2008.eu/375.0.html>.

⁴⁸ http://www.leedsdec.org.uk/european_citizenship.htm.

⁴⁹ www.semaineseric.org.

⁵⁰ <http://www.rug.nl/let/onderwijs/internationalestudies/euroculture/erasmusmundus>.

in Nice in December 2000 by the Presidents of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission, and it constituted a political undertaking that has no binding legal effect. It is part of the Lisbon Treaty and will gain a binding effect when the Lisbon Treaty comes into force. It consists of a preamble and 54 articles in 7 chapters. The most significant articles in terms of religious freedoms are:

Chapter II Freedoms

Article 10 Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right includes freedom to change religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or in private, to manifest religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.

Article 14 Right to education

3. The freedom to found educational establishments with due respect for democratic principles and the right of parents to ensure the education and teaching of their children in conformity with their religious, philosophical and pedagogical convictions shall be respected, in accordance with the national laws governing the exercise of such freedom and right.

Chapter III Equality

Article 20 Equality before the law

Everyone is equal before the law.

Article 21 Non-discrimination

Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, color, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited.

Article 22 Cultural, religious and linguistic diversity

The Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity.⁵¹

⁵¹ Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf.

There are also some important directives in this text such as the Racial Equality Directive, Employment Equality Directive, and Council Directive of 29 June 2000. Additionally, the European Commission highly encourages national legislative actions to prevent discrimination.⁵²

IV. Conclusions

Despite the fact that the relationship between Islam and Europe is very old, the current tensions are ostensibly the consequence of the migration wave of unskilled Muslim workers after World War II. The contemporary clash of the mainstream with the periphery has a number of reasons: historical antagonisms, mutual misunderstanding, stereotyping, the shock of massive terrorist attacks, and bewildered Muslims' silence against the allegations.

The position and the approach of the European Union to the situation is the key in the reconciliation of the two civilizations. This is both necessary for the West's internal cohesion and for world peace. Moreover, accomplishing such a mission contributes a lot to the role of the EU as a world power.

Enhancing the physical living conditions of its "guests"⁵³ and utilizing every single dialogue opportunity are essential. However, consolidating tranquility requires more action. An iconoclastic three-folded paradigm shift is imperative for the old continent, as well as the rest of the world:

- *Popular Christian perception of Muslims*

For example, ridiculing some sacred values is legitimized by freedom of expression. Some members of the Western culture think that if they can deride Jesus, why they can not do the same thing for Muhammad. Without realizing how a Muslim individual perceives and adheres the prophet, this statement remains superficial. Two quoted passages (ref. no: 32&44) in this paper are providing great hope, but remains just as sincere wishes for now.

- *Islam understanding of Christians*

Europeans should try to understand the basis of some rulings of Islam, like headscarf.

⁵² Press Release IP/06/1830, dated 19 December 2006, congratulates the ratification of UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity by Member States.

⁵³ The immigrants of the early 1960 and 1970 were named as "guest workers".

• *Islam understanding of Muslims*

For more than a century or two, Muslim scholars have stopped producing knowledge and finding answers for contemporary issues. Although Europe ceased to be a “madrasah” of Islam after the deportation of Andalucía Muslims and does not have an adequate infrastructure for now, its gorgeous tradition of science would be a great foundation for this mission. Muslims must reinterpret their understanding of some concepts, such as jihad, marriage, women, and find satisfactory responses to some modern questions, like democracy, secularism, economic issues.

Although plenty of valuable articles have been written on minority issues in Europe and on Muslim communities in some European countries, there is a lack of research and reliable data on the role of religion in the tensions between majority and minorities. It is still so vague that to what extent the origin of the prejudice against minorities is ethnic, religious, economic or something else. The best available report which searches for an evidence of Islamophobia in Europe, as referred many times in this article, was presented in 2006 by the EUMC.

The aforementioned attempts of the Union are encouraging. The aforementioned attempts of the Union are encouraging but insufficient. Binding legislation is an “ordeal” in international relations. Yet, instead of issuing directives, the EU should make directly applicable regulations that can raise the awareness of 27 Member States and their 497 million citizens. Additionally, the EU should clear all doubts, inside and outside the Community, about being a “Christian Club” by reviewing its attitude towards Turkey, and towards potential candidates like Bosnia-Herzegovina and Albania, whose populations are mostly Muslim.

Consequently, Anthony Giddens proposes a concise principle which would be a strong foundation for overcoming the tensions:

Yet, as “civilizations”, Christianity and Islam have more in common with one another than they have differences, originating as they do from overlapping resources. . . . each also contains very strong traditions of tolerance and moderation. We must hope that these allow two cultures increasingly to live peacefully alongside one another.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Anthony Giddens, *Sociology*, 3rd ed., Oxford, Polity Press, 1997, p. 459.