

Islam and the EU's Identity Deficit

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FOLLOWING DECADES OF EXPANSION AND development of the European Project, it is fair to speak of the evolution of a European identity. However, open discussion of that identity has been purposefully confined to a narrow set of "identity issues." The introduction of the euro, the accession to the EU of ten Eastern European countries in 2004, and the Constitution for Europe are not discussed in the context of identity, despite their potential implications. Meanwhile, the immigration question and the prospective accession of Turkey to the EU are perceived primarily as matters of identity. Why are some of these issues taken up as "identity issues" while others are not?

Identity formation usually results from conscious attempts made by elites to disseminate a feeling of a shared history and a shared destiny. Very few would deny Europeans' shared history, and there seems to be little doubt about Europeans' shared destiny in the globalized world. Particularly on material issues, but also increasingly with respect to security issues, there is a shared understanding that there is no winning without cooperation. However, the missing link between European cooperation and European identity seems to be that the elites who would systematically work on the formation of this supranational identity have opted not to do so. In EU member state politics, discussion of identity issues seems to be a losing proposition: such discussions often morph into demonstrations of popular resistance towards perceived losses of national sovereignty. Elites therefore tiptoe around questions of identity, constructing the structure of the EU while leaving the identity gaps unfilled and identity questions undiscussed. The root causes of the EU's identity deficit are closely related to those of the EU's often-discussed democratic deficit.

In the limited scope of identity debates, only the immigration question and the

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question of Turkish accession to the EU are treated as true "identity issues" throughout Europe. While these issues are both multifaceted, their common denominator is Islam. Islam is a matter of great importance in the debate on EU identity because concerns about the position of Islam in European societies and the perceived incompatibilities of Islam with the European value system—however flexibly defined—are forcing Europeans across the continent to think seriously about European identity. It cannot be said that other EU issues like the euro and Eastern European accession have had the same dramatic effects.

In a number of Western European countries, however, the debate on these two issues has been taken hostage by two extreme viewpoints. The first, perceived as a large societal problem, is the radical Islamic movement. The second is the extremist right, of which almost every EU member state has a political party. The predominant strain of thought holds that openly addressing the societal problems related to Islam will only strengthen the extremist right. This position is untenable.

If Europe is to successfully define the position of Islam in European society, it must candidly redress the identity deficit perpetuated by its political elites. First, Western European countries must place on the agenda certain values ingrained in Islam that cannot be reconciled with liberal democracy, religious tolerance, or gender equality. Second, they should condemn these specific values in the same way they condemn the anti-democratic and xenophobic values of the extremist right. This equal condemnation is a precondition for constructive policymaking.

This article will provide analysis of the evolving EU identity and the role that Islam plays in this matter. It will draw primarily on arguments and examples from the Dutch situation, but, where possible, it will try to ground its reasoning in the wider context of other West European countries.

THREE LEVELS OF IDENTIFICATION

Identity is a concept much used and misused in politics and the social sciences. The recognition that identity has different meanings in different places and at different times coincides with the understanding that identities themselves are not static, but dynamic at all times. In various forms and diverse orders, identity in Europe has evolved from predominantly tribal, to local, to regional, to predominantly religious, to national. Can we speak of the emergence of a European continental identity? Do Europeans have a shared idea of who they are, and do they identify with a shared set of institutions, symbols, and morality? To answer the identity question one must first be explicit about what is meant by identity. For present purposes this article will propose a working definition that involves three distinct levels of identity:

The first level is the political organization of the state. Within this category falls the political-administrative makeup of the state. At this level, we look at how groups and individuals identify with structures like their form of state, parliament, constitution, and the territorial political organization (provinces, regions, *Länder*, *comunidades autónomas*).

The second level refers to national identification. Components of this type are the symbolic elements of the nation-state, such as the flag, the national anthem, epic historiography, and identification with the national sports team.

The third level of identity is defined with respect to a group's moral and ethical framework. Unlike the first two levels, this level has to do with religious and ideological questions: What is considered to be right and wrong? What should be the relation between the individual and the social environment?

There are certainly imperfections in this tripartite definition of identification. In some cases, for instance, there may be some overlap between the first two levels. However, in the absence of a generally agreed upon definition, this definition constitutes a practicable and informative basis for conceptualizing the various aspects of identity.

LEVEL I: POLITICAL ORGANIZATION OF THE STATE

At the first level, manifestations of a European identity are not easy to discern. The creation of the political and administrative institutions of the EU is not matched by a corresponding emergence of a popular EU identity. The debates on political and economic integration take place almost exclusively at the elite level in the member states and among the select few in Brussels. Expansion to the 10 Central and Eastern European countries in 2004 (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Cyprus and Malta) has had a transforming effect on the EU. Interestingly, this issue did not seem to cause any disturbances in the mindset of the public. These issues are considered solely technical matters.

In the Netherlands, heavy public opposition was expected in response to the accession of the 10 in 2004. Political analysts and other opinion-makers predicted that the prospect of large groups of low-cost Eastern European workers coming into the country in a time of economic stagnation and high unemployment rates would fuel a substantial degree of popular resistance.

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In reality, there was no noteworthy or organized popular protest. The elite press did pay considerable attention to the possible implications of EU eastward expansion, but one can hardly speak of any popular engagement for or against this issue. The matter went by rather quietly in the Netherlands. Ironically, many Dutch now seem rather pleased with low-cost laborers from the former Soviet bloc countries. Compared to hiring a Dutch worker, having one's house painted by a Polish painter, or having a Czech nanny look after one's children can cost up to 50 percent less. In the health sector, where there is a significant shortage of personnel, nurses from the newly acceded countries are warmly welcomed. This observation holds for the surrounding EU member states as well. In spite of the inclusion of 75 million new inhabitants and a shift in the territorial epicenter, the eastward expansion has not sparked any rethinking of the identities of EU citizens.

The democratic deficit inherent in the selection process for members of the European Commission also concerns identity, in terms of political organization. The typically low voter turnout in European Parliament elections illustrates a generally low level of interest in issues of democracy in the EU. For the last two European Parliament elections, Dutch turnout was between 30 and 40 percent, compared to around 80 percent in national elections.¹ The democratic deficit is caused by the limited powers of the European Parliament and the unclear structures of accountability within and between the European institutions. In the Netherlands—as well as in many other EU member states—the democratic deficit is also regarded as a technical-procedural matter, not as a violation of a fundamentally democratic value system.

The same goes for the lack of democratic control with respect to the appointment of members of the European Commission. In the current situation, the government leaders of the member states compose the Commission. The European Parliament votes to approve or disapprove of the entire Commission, not individual Com-

missioners. It is true that, in 2004, the proposed ultra-conservative Commissioner Buttiglione gave up his candidacy under strong pressure from the European Parliament, but the Parliament

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holds no formal right to dismiss commissioners individually. Thus, EU citizens have only a very indirect and very limited say in the appointment of the Commissioners—members of one of the core policy-making organs in Europe.

For decades, there has been a clear pattern in which the Dutch public entrusted these issues to their elite. It has been very easy to pass national legislation concerning

the advance of European integration. Consecutive governments took popular pro-EU attitudes for granted. Persistent complaints about the inflationary effect of the introduction of the euro did not result in structured public protest. Nonetheless, in the weeks running up to the 1 June 2005 referendum on the European Constitution, three and a half years after the introduction of the common currency, the no-camp successfully raised the 'expensive euro' as a political issue. This time, coupled with strong popular dismay towards the present national government and ample objections to the accession of Turkey to the EU, it led to a landslide rejection of the Constitution. These procedural issues, therefore, do not stoke political sentiments in of themselves; but they can embody popular discontent when linked to arguments over deeper identity issues.

LEVEL 2: SYMBOLS OF THE STATE

On the second level of identification—identification with symbols—a range of symbols could serve as touchstones for European identity: the EU-flag, the Eurovision song contest, and most recently the Constitution for Europe. Technically, the constitutional treaty was no more than a consolidation of existing EU cooperation treaties to which some institutional reforms were added. European elites instead chose to call the treaty a 'Constitution.' Adoption of the proposed Constitution would, consequentially, have involved a partial transfer of symbolism traditionally reserved for the nation-state to a political level above the nation-state. In other words, in terms of identity based on symbolism, the creation of a supranational constitution indicates a move towards the formation of a United States of Europe.

Interestingly, however, this term is very scarcely used by political elites in the EU member states. The Christian Democrat Dutch Prime Minister, Jan Peter Balkenende, vainly pleaded among his European colleagues for a reference to the European "Judeo-Christian traditions" in the preamble of the constitutional treaty, but this passed only quietly in the press. The predominant arguments used by the national elites in order to market the EU Constitution revolved around European cooperation on matters of security and economic policy, such as terrorism and trade. Phrases such as "Europe and the Rest" or "We the people of Europe" remained absent from the campaign for the Constitution. Rhetoric concentrated predominantly on material gains and security. Governing parties promoted the EU Constitution as an instrument for better policies, rather than as an identity issue. It is evident that considerations of an identification-transfer were carefully kept away from the debate.

In this sense, it seems to have been both out of character and a strategic mistake on the part of the elite to present the consolidation of treaties as a 'Constitution,'

exactly because of the implicit symbolic connotations inherent in the term. When elites attempted to turn the debate on the Constitution into an identity debate, they clearly did so halfheartedly. Proponents of the "no" successfully exploited the suggestion that a transfer of symbolism is equal to a handover of sovereignty, while the elites failed to respond with a candid discussion of identity.

Because of this elite marketing strategy, the debate about the Constitution in the Netherlands remained dormant until three weeks before the date of the referendum. Most of the Dutch political parties had decided in 2004 to support the Constitution,

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letting the issue fade from the national political agenda. So, when the issue was taken up by coalition and opposition parties only a couple of weeks before the referendum, a short but heated campaign by both advocates and opponents of the constitutional treaty followed. Popular at-

tention for the EU was raised more effectively than ever, but, sadly for the government, with a disastrous outcome: 62 percent of the voters rejected the treaty, with an unexpected and massive turnout of 62 percent.²

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The propagators of the 'no' are a curious mix of the right and left. These two extremes constitute a 'peculiar union of shortsightedness' but nevertheless managed to mobilize a large popular majority for the following reasons:

First, the legitimacy of the current cabinet is questionable. The parliamentary elections of 2003 clearly indicated a popular preference for a coalition of Christian Democrats and Social Democrats. However, attempts to form such a government failed. Eventually, the Christian Democrats composed a haphazard majority coalition with the VVD (Party for Freedom and Democracy) and D66 (Social Democrats). On the basis of the election results, this outcome seemed by no means logical. Add to this suspect cabinet high inflation after the introduction of the euro, rising unemployment rates, and widespread concerns with respect to ill-integrated immigrant groups and religious terrorism, and you have an extremely unpopular government. In the meantime, European integration—of which the Netherlands is the largest financial contributor per capita—is moving ahead. The gap between those who govern and those who are governed has rarely been larger. In this climate, it was clear that the constitutional treaty's 450 pages of legal text would not be judged solely on its merits. No wonder that, now that citizens finally have a chance for their identity concerns to be heard, they take the opportunity to embarrass their government.

Secondly, many of the "no" voters against the Constitution in reality voted against

the accession of Turkey. These voters reasoned that a "yes" to the referendum would be viewed as support for Turkey's accession, and thus legitimize accelerated negotiations with Turkey. A great many no-voters said that, if they had the opportunity to vote on the accession of Turkey in a separate referendum, they would have reconsidered their no-vote on the Constitution.

LEVEL 3: FRAMEWORK OF MORALITY

The third level of identification is the framework of morality. There are two issues that form an exception to the rule of Dutch public disinterest concerning EU topics. These are the question of influx of non-Western immigrants, especially those with Muslim backgrounds, and the issue of Turkish accession to the EU. The common dominator of these salient issues is Islam. Much more than economic or political-institutional problems, concern about a potential Islamification of European culture and society is widespread among the Dutch public. Here, in contrast to the previous issues, Dutch citizens feel that their identity is on the line.

Immigration has fuelled persistent debates in Germany, France, and the Netherlands. This article will briefly set out the three most-heard viewpoints in the debate.

The first viewpoint is that immigration is an answer to problems connected with the aging population. This voice is particularly strong in the larger economies of Europe: Germany, France, and Italy. The supporters of this view regard a relatively unrestricted influx of working people from abroad as a necessary condition to uphold the pension system and to sustain economic growth.

The second voice often heard is that economic immigration of the type observed from the 1960s has cost societies more than it has benefited them. These voices are more dominant in smaller countries such as the Netherlands, Belgium, and Denmark.

At least for the Netherlands, in spite of the undeniable social success of many immigrants, longitudinal and recent empirical research seems to substantiate this second point of view. Citizens with a migrant background find themselves 2.5 times more often dependent on state benefits than others.³ In the Netherlands, the percentage of people who are officially suspected of a crime is 2.9 among first generation non-Western immigrants and 4.0 among second generation non-Western immigrants, but 1.2 for the total population.⁴ What is considered especially disquieting about these figures is that second generation immigrants appear to be doing worse in terms of social participation than their parents. In addition, school drop-out rates among students with a migrant background are more than two times higher than among non-migrant groups.⁵ This ratio is particularly important as an indicator of the expected future socioeconomic position of second and third generation migrants. These observations contra-

dict the long-held claim from immigration advocates that immigration is a solution to economic questions and that, with time, the integration problems would solve themselves.

Moreover, supporters of this second viewpoint are concerned about the ongoing entry of a specific type of immigrants, namely the group of marriage-migrants. Statistics show that about 70 percent of the non-Western immigrant population prefer to find their spouses in their countries of origin.⁶ Generally, these imported partners have low levels of education and training. Where second and third generation migrants have often made considerable progress in participating in European societies, this phenomenon will remain an obstacle to the integration of migrant groups. Supporters of this viewpoint maintain that problems related to the aging population can better be countered by financial-technical policies than by encouraging labor immigration. This perspective predictably gains sympathizers in times of economic slowdown.

Next to the two perspectives discussed above, a third perspective proposes another way to fight the aging of the population: apply an immigration policy modeled on the U.S. example. This model combines a fair admittance policy towards legitimate political asylum seekers with stricter rules for economic migrants. Migrants with economic motives must be able to demonstrate their contribution to the host economy in order to be granted a residence permit. Currently, immigration policies are typically based on humanitarian grounds without regard for labor market conditions. Filling crucial openings on the labor market in order to reduce the effects of an aging population may be done by attracting well-trained professionals, for instance, from the fast-growing economies of India and China. However, there are two main feasibility problems with this approach. First, there is little incentive for these well-trained professionals to emigrate, given that they are in high demand in their own countries. Second, those who are willing to move to the West would likely rather go to the United States, Canada, or Australia, where they will not have to learn a third language and where they will not be confronted with as much state regulation as in Western Europe.

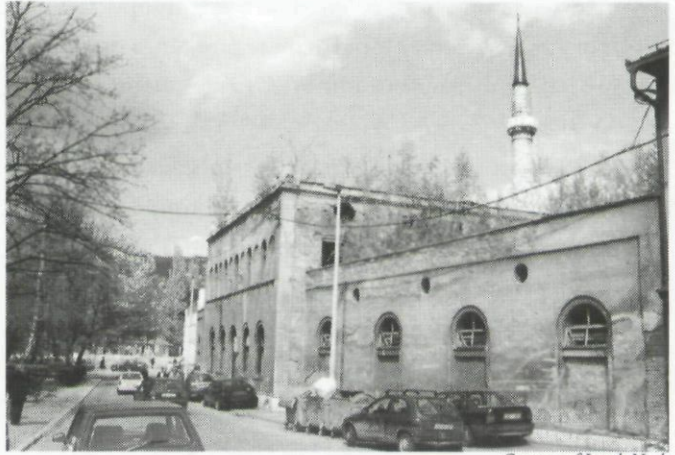
These have been the three most dominant voices in the debate on immigration in Western Europe. However, after the terrifying manifestations of Islam-inspired violence on 11 September 2001 and the bombings in Madrid on 11 March 2004, the discussion took a turn. In the Netherlands, this fear and redirection was reinforced by the political murder of filmmaker Theo van Gogh by an Islamic fanatic in November 2004. In the post 11 September era, non-Western immigrants in Western Europe seem to be divided into Muslims and non-Muslims. Suddenly it seems as if the economic considerations have moved to the background and that the real concerns with regard to immigrants have more and more to do with issues of identity and cultural background.

In addition to immigration, another Islam-related issue that concerns the Dutch

is the accession of Turkey to the European Union. As noted, previous accession rounds in 1995 and 2004 passed relatively quietly in Western European societies. But in the case of Turkey, bad weather is expected. Turkey has become a major playing card in national politics. Participants in the public debate from both the left and the right successfully exhorted the electorate to vote no in the referendum on the European Constitution. It is clear that in this debate, identity questions—in this case, the position of Islam in Europe—are predominant in a way that they were not with regard to the accession of the 10 ex-communist countries.

Champions from both sides of the political spectrum pose the same arguments against Turkish accession. The arguments against are aptly summarized by the former Dutch European Commissioner Frits Bolkestein in his statement

that, "Turkey is too big, too poor, and too different."⁷ Clearly, the first two arguments have little to do with Islam. First, Turkey is a very large country by European standards. It hosts a population of 71 million and, if current demographic trends persist, Turkey will be the largest of the EU member states before Germany, France, or Britain. Second, Turkey is a poor country whose per capita GDP is less than 29 percent of the average of the 25 current EU members.⁸ Turkey has a small westernized urban elite combined with a vast majority of rural and sub-rural dwellers, many of whom work on the land. By adopting Turkey, the EU will take on a huge economic burden. Moreover, some object to Turkey's accession because the larger part of Turkey is not geographically part of the European continent. Turkey's politically and economically unstable past, its history of political interference by the army, and its human rights record do not raise enthusiasm in Western Europe. Added to these concerns are the official Turkish position on the Armenian genocide and recent instances in which the government attempted to criminalize adultery. In a similar vein, the Dutch vice Prime Minister Gerrit Zalm once argued that, as long as refugees from Turkey are granted political asylum in the Netherlands, Turkey clearly does not meet the Copenhagen criteria for accession to the EU. However, even the harshest opponents of accession must acknowledge Turkish efforts to improve its record on some of these points such as the abolition



Courtesy of Joseph Nagle

A European mosque in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina; identity politics are no longer solely a Balkan experience.

of the death penalty. Although this is a significant step forward, progress on many points is much needed. For this reason, many believe that Turkey is not yet ready to join the family of European nations.

Besides all of these considerations, the cardinal reason why Turkey is seen as "too different" is the fact that Turkey is a Muslim country. Islamic fundamentalism is on the rise in many parts of the Muslim world, including Turkey. Obviously it would be as incorrect as unfair to equate Islam with support for 11 September-type violence, but it remains that elements in Islam inspire terrorists and are used to justify terrorist actions. Hence Islam plays an important role in the negative perceptions about Turkey as a Muslim country.

Interestingly, discomfort with Islam plays as big a role for advocates of Turkish accession as it does for opponents. Proponents reason that Turkey can function as a buffer state between liberal democratic Europe and the Islamic Middle East. Thus, the desire to keep Islam out of Europe pervades arguments from both sides of the debate on Turkey.

The debate between those who argue that Islam is compatible with liberal democracy and those who argue that it is not seems to have concluded. Conceptually, the entry of Turkey into the EU would be a great test case. However, many Europeans seem unwilling to take this risk. Granting accession to Turkey is not incomparable to Americans having to give Mexico the benefit of the doubt and make it their country's fifty-first state.

ISLAM

We have now seen how two determining issues in the evolution of an EU identity can be traced back to negative perceptions of Islam. So, why is Islam seen as a problem? What do we mean when we talk about Islam-related problems?

For various reasons, a number of different groups in Europe see Islam as a problem of great concern. Others feel very uncomfortable actually linking the words "Islam" and "problem," because they fear making an unjustified generalization, hence stigmatizing a group in society that is already seen as vulnerable.

But not articulating the problem means not solving the problem. The ongoing reservation on the part of Dutch political establishment is a significant obstacle in tackling issues such as anemic social participation, high school drop-out rates, domestic violence, and militant religious fanaticism among people of Muslim background. This is not to say that these issues are solved just by articulating how Islam and certain social problems are related, but dismantling the taboo around this topic is a necessary precondition for ameliorating the societal tensions wracking the Netherlands. A first

step towards lifting the taboo is exploring the sources of popular concern with Islam.

This section explores the sources of popular concern with Islam and tries to assess to what extent these are merely perceptions and to what extent they are real—that is to say, based on empirical evidence.

Causes of disquiet with respect to Islam can be divided into short-term and long-term concerns. The most acute is fear of pure violence committed in the name of Islam. Terrorism, by definition, aims to spread a sense of insecurity and fear among large groups of people. In this sense, Islamist terrorist groups seem to have succeeded in their attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001, in Bali on 12 October 2002, in Casablanca on 16 May 2003, in Madrid on 11 March 2004, and various smaller attempted attacks. This fear is real and it has become permanent.

In the Netherlands, a number of Islamic fanatics have been arrested since last summer. Their houses contained ample proof that they were planning to bomb the Amsterdam Airport, the port of Rotterdam, and the Parliament. Not only did they keep explosive material; they were also in possession of maps and drawings of their potential targets, including depictions of possible gaps in security measures. But individuals can only be convicted after the fact, so almost all of these young men, arrested before carrying out any bombings, were released. This has not had a reassuring effect on the public.

Next to the fear of direct violence, there seems to be major concern about Islamic social, religious, and political movements throughout Western Europe. These movements operate parallel to the terrorist networks and usually work through *dawa* (preachers and missionaries) whose job it is to spread the radical message of political Islam.

There is little doubt that these movements are the primary forces spreading Islamic fundamentalism in Europe today. Generally these organizations have no direct violent agenda themselves but, as terrorism officials warn, many young Muslim men pass through these groups and

find their way to an extremist, militant interpretation of their religion. There is a general agreement that these movements provide fertile soil for new terrorists, but intelligence services fail to penetrate

the groups sufficiently to prove direct training of perpetrators. Reports from various Western European national intelligence services point out how these networks function as safe harbors: in them, hostility towards Western society is sufficient that potential terrorists are tolerated and by no means corrected in their ideas. This concern with

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Islamic movements, like the concern with terrorism, is grounded in experience and empirical evidence.

A number of long-term concerns are also discernible. First, Islamic education is a source of worry to some. The Netherlands currently counts 43 Islamic schools; at the Ministry of Education, another 200 applications for the establishment of new Islamic schools are waiting for approval. What can be empirically established is that these schools have high concentrations of disadvantaged pupils and students, both in socioeconomic terms and in terms of language skills. What is not empirically established, and therefore has to be treated as a perception, is the idea that at least some of these schools, especially those that operate in close cooperation with nearby mosques, are potential breeding grounds for a large cohort of orthodox anti-Western students. In this context, the role of (foreign) religious leaders on school boards is often seen as troubling.

The ghettoization and Islamification of certain urban areas is also perceived as a disturbing problem. Demographic trends indicate that this particular type of ghetto formation will continue throughout Western Europe. This evident form of ethnic and cultural segregation is problematic. In cities, villages, or provinces where Islam is dominant, it may mean that bits and pieces of the Shari'a are introduced in practice even though no formal legislation in this direction is taking place. Practical observations substantiate this concern. In Western Europe, such pockets with a Muslim majority have become discernible over the past decade. An example of this is the town of Evry, south of Paris.⁹ Here, informal Islamification has already taken place. Supermarkets

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stopped selling pork and alcoholic beverages, and ritual sheep slaughter has become an official activity. Social control is extremely high among Muslims, who constitute two thirds of the total population of Evry. Although not formally institutionalized, in areas of this kind it is the Shari'a, rather than the

secular constitution, that enjoys primacy. In the Netherlands, the same phenomenon is taking place in some areas of Rotterdam and West Amsterdam. Large sectors of society are deeply uncomfortable with the gradual emergence of these types of states within the state, where rules and values other than those of tolerant and democratic liberalism dictate social conduct.

Throughout Western Europe, xenophobia forms another basis for the fear of Islam. Unlike other bases for fear, this one has no empirical grounding. Although members of traditionally xenophobic groups have often had little to no contact with Islam,

Muslims, or immigrants of any kind, they have strongly negative attitudes towards any group with diverging cultural backgrounds or ethnic origins. Besides Islam, their hostility may also be directed at Jews, Roma, or even nationals of a neighboring country. A malicious distrust of the unknown characterizes these groups, even in the absence of rational or empirical arguments.

Clearly, these groups provoke fear within the political establishment, in part because their rhetoric and, sometimes, use of symbols invokes associations with fascism and Nazism. Their abject ideas have a paralyzing effect on the discussion of immigration and Islam because established politicians and opinion-makers fear that even slightly touching on the negative elements of immigration and Islam means playing into the hands of the extremist right. This is why the Netherlands has been in a deadlock for more than a decade. The Belgian situation is also a case in point. There, for more than a decade, the political establishment has placed a *cordon sanitaire* around the xenophobic and racist Flemish Bloc, hoping its support would fade with time. Unfortunately, this did not happen. The Flemish Bloc has continuously and steadily gained supporters, while at the same time problems with radical Islam could not be addressed, and have increased as the years go by. It is clear that not addressing these issues is not only short sighted but also counterproductive.

TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP

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At the end of our tour through European identity and the role of Islam in the emergence of this identity, it is important to make some brief remarks about the role of Islam in transatlantic relations. Transatlantic relations have been seriously affected by international Islamic fundamentalism, especially in the ways that 11 September has changed Western European perceptions of Islam.

For most of the second half of the twentieth century, transatlantic relations were characterized by joint opposition to the communist bloc. The United States and Europe cooperated closely to contain what was perceived as their common enemy. As a result of this cooperation and the realization that both parties depended on each other, transatlantic relations were excellent. After the fall of communism, the United States and Europe worked together to promote democracy in the world and jointly tried to address conflicts in the Middle East and the Balkans. After September 2001, however, a rift has become apparent.

One way to understand the diverging viewpoints between the United States and the EU is to acknowledge that EU countries, who together host a Muslim population of 12 million, perceive Islamic fundamentalism mainly as a problem of domestic importance and therefore seem relatively reluctant to address problems internationally.

Although the United States has been assailed by Islamist violence in the past, it sees problems related to Islam primarily as an issue of foreign policy since it does not have to address Islam within its own society in the same way Europeans do. Given that Islamic fundamentalists see the West as their undifferentiated target, one hopes that the leaders of Europe and the United States will jointly stand up to any challenges to the liberal and democratic values of the Western world.

CONCLUSION

Certain elements of an evolving European identity can be observed, but it is clear that identification is fragmented and confined to a limited number of salient issues. Political elites eschew playing the identity card for fear of popular resistance against a perceived loss of national sovereignty. National elites may be afraid of losing ground to a supranational authority. Furthermore, both government leaders and the supranational elite face an incredible range of pressing challenges besides building a European identity: the integration of 10 new member states, improving a suboptimal EU institutional structure, the preservation of peace and stability in the Balkans, the need to reform outdated welfare systems, economic slowdown, and an aging labor force.

It is primarily the immigration question and the Turkish accession to the EU that raise issues of identity among the people(s) of Europe, both giving a central place to Islam. Yet questions about the relationship between Islam and Europe have not been adequately addressed by elites, who fear both Islamic and nativist backlashes as a result of opening up identity problems for public discussion. Ignoring the issue, however, leaves extant a dangerous identity vacuum that encourages fundamentalist intolerance of all stripes. Democracy requires candid debate, even about sensitive issues. Failure to address European identity and Islam can undermine confidence in the responsiveness of government and perpetuate dangerous democratic and identity deficits that, if unchecked, will weaken the EU at an essential moment in its history. 

NOTES

1. Nederlandse Kiesraad (2004) and Bureau Europees Parlement (2004)
2. Nederlandse Kiesraad (2005)
3. Centraal Bureau voor Statistiek, *Allochtonen in Nederland* (2002, 2003, 2004)
4. Centraal Bureau voor Statistiek and Wetenschappelijk Onderzoeks en Informatiecentrum (2005), *Verdacht van Criminaliteit, Allochtonen en Autochtonen Nader Bekeken, cahier 2005-2*.
5. Centraal Bureau voor Statistiek, *Allochtonen in Nederland* (2002, 2003, 2004)
6. Centraal Bureau voor Statistiek, *Allochtonen in Nederland* (2002, 2003, 2004)
7. Frits Bolkestein in a speech on the future of Europe, Leiden, 5 February, 2005.
8. Sociaal Economische Raad (2005)
9. See for instance "The war of the headscarves," *The Economist*, 5 February, 2004.

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