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WHY MUSLIM INTEGRATION FAILS?

BOOK REVIEW

One of the fiercest political debates in the Western world, and especially in Europe, is on the integration of Muslim immigrant communities. Since the large-scale migratory wave of 2015–16, the debate has grown even more intense, and various affected states have been looking for workable solutions for this problem. Their policies can be grouped into two strategies, assimilationist and multicultural. The authors' rigorous field research conducted in 2009–10 among Senegalese immigrants in France offers an extremely close insight into the nature of religious discrimination and offers political recommendations to improve the situation. The research is groundbreaking in the sense that earlier it was only assumed, but not proven, that the reason for the discrimination against Muslims is their religion only. The authors also prove that there is a discriminatory equilibrium between the French and Muslim immigrants, where both sides behave negatively towards each other, in a mutually reinforcing vicious cycle.

The first chapter is an introductory outline of the research questions, the methodology and the conclusions. The authors seek the answer for the questions whether Islamophobia is indeed existent among the indigenous ethnic French population, whether it is indeed contributed to religion only, and no other confounding factors, such as region of origin or race. Is it entirely irrational or has rational components? In each case, different policies would be necessary to counter this discrimination.

Research confirms that Muslims are discriminated against because they are Muslims and this discrimination has both rational and irrational elements. This is the basis for the discriminatory equilibrium of negative behaviour towards each other, which is mutually reinforcing, and this situation does not improve over time, instead, each generation is less and less integrated. The research suggests that assimilationist strategies offer better outcomes than multiculturalist ones, but they are not sufficient alone. Both sides need to make sacrifices at micro, meso and macro levels to achieve an equilibrium shift.

Chapter two shows that there is discrimination against Muslims in the French labour market, and that it is attributed to their religion. Even though the host population is very secular, they discriminate along religious lines. The choice of the sample makes it possible to isolate the religious factor from other sources of discrimination. Serer and Joola communities migrated from Senegal to France in the 70s. These communities met Islam and Christianity at about the same time in the 19th century.

Research methodology used a voting game, a correspondence test, and an income survey. In the voting game, religious distance was the only factor that caused a significant difference in the likelihood of a candidate being elected as a leader. In the correspondence test, three equally qualified CVs, one with a French name, one with a Senegalese Christian name, and one with Senegalese Muslim name were sent to job advertisements. The CVs were different only in the religion of the applicant. The results showed that Muslims were discriminated against compared to native populations or Christian immigrants. It also showed that racial

discrimination did not reach statistical relevance, even with an attached photo to the CVs, but religious discrimination was significant. Income surveys conducted among Senegalese Christian and Muslim immigrants showed that this discrimination also translates into diverging living standards among the respective communities.

In chapter three, a deeper insight into the research strategy convincingly explains how the selection of the sample population meets the criteria of unbiased study. The sample contains both Muslims and Christians, they are from the same country and ethnic group, their original conversion to any of the two faiths did not correlate with any advantage in the country of origin, and they arrived at the same time and circumstances in France. The behaviour of rooted French – with four French grandparents all born inside France – was examined towards each of the Senegalese subgroups. All participants were recruited from the 19th District of Paris, the most multicultural environment available.

The sampling procedure outlined in chapter four shows how the authors countered the selection bias during the games, surveys and interviews of 2009 and 2010. In fact, the sampling was likely to produce a lower level of discrimination and mutual mistrust than it is in reality.

Chapter five describes the research protocols of each type of research tool applied in 2009 and 2010, and the exact methodology of the interviews, surveys and experimental games – simultaneous trust game, speed chatting game, voting game, dictator game and strategic dictator game. Supplementary research conducted in 2010, including more games – name game, beauty game, double strategic dictator game – helped to fine tune the results of 2009, and provide more accurate answers.

Chapter six answers the question "why is there religious discrimination in France?" and identifies a rational part in Islamophobia. It has three segments: religious norms, gender norms and mastery of French language. Firms rationally find it problematic that their Muslim workers proselytize or try to enforce the observation of religious holidays, fasting or prayer times in the workplace, thereby causing economic disadvantage to the firm and undermining esprit de corps by separating themselves during mealtimes. Gender norms are also significantly different among Muslims and Christians, as it is proven by empirical studies. Senegalese Muslim donors donated significantly more to men in the dictator game, while rooted French and Senegalese Christian donors donated more to women, and the two latter groups' behaviour was statistically no different. Senegalese Christian behaviour converges to rooted French, whereas Muslim behaviour diverges. HR recruiters consistently refer to these attitudes as detrimental to their enterprises' esprit de corps.

Chapter seven focuses on the non-rational segments of Islamophobia. The simultaneous trust game revealed that even though the rooted French players did not trust the Senegalese Christians more than the Senegalese Muslims, they still sent less returns to them, which proves that there is a purely taste-based aversion towards them among rooted French. The 2010 confirmatory name game tests also prove that this distaste is related only to the other party's religion and not their race or foreignness. This discrimination can be ameliorated through socialization, as the speed chatting game proved. However, the level of altruism towards Senegalese Muslims decreased significantly as their number around the French increased. This effect was not observed in the case of co-religionist immigrants.

The book refers to a survey made among Serer and Jola immigrants asking whether they think that laïcité is an obstacle to religious liberty. The answers by Senegalese Muslim and Christian respondents did not differ significantly. However, this does not necessarily mean that they are also secular, and it would also be important to clarify what each respondent understands under laïcité. Similarly, the referred survey that would show that gender norm

differences between Muslims and Christians are exaggerated, only shows the attitude about the willingness to educate sons and daughters. Even if these attitudes are statistically similar, there are other aspects of difference in gender norms that are much more relevant when we talk about misogyny, like attitudes about divorce, inheritance, sexual freedom or roles in society.

Chapter eight describes the discriminatory equilibrium, which is a self-reinforcing vicious cycle of distrust between rooted French and Muslims whereby they act towards each other in mutually reinforcing negative ways: 1. Muslim immigrants display behaviours that feed into French rational, statistical discrimination against them in the labour market; 2. rooted French exhibit unprovoked taste-based discrimination against Muslims; 3. Muslims, perceiving more hostility in France, separate more from the host society than do their Christian counterparts. This discriminatory equilibrium does not improve over time, instead, each subsequent generation of Muslim immigrants is less integrated than the previous one, as the data of the research reveals.

Chapter nine provides proof that the findings uncovered in France, namely that Muslims integrate less successfully, and their separation increases over time spent in the host country, are not specific to France only, but they can be applied to Western Europe and the United States. The authors used the European Social Survey to prove this in the European context, and the Detroit Arab American Study in the United States context.

Chapter ten gives policy recommendations to find a way out of the discriminatory equilibrium. The recognition of the discriminatory equilibrium means that governments have to address both the rational and the non-rational elements of discrimination at the same time, which poses a serious challenge. The recommended policies are grouped into three levels, the individual (micro), societal institutions (meso), and state (macro).

At individual level they recommend the nudging theory, taking small steps in the desired direction to eradicate the problem. This can be achieved by broadcasting the non-rational elements of Islamophobia, thereby discrediting it, not only for the general public, but also in schools. Choosing not exclusively Muslim names for children might also decrease the chance that rooted French will discriminate against them based on a sign of Muslimness.

At meso level, the first step should be providing equal opportunities in the educational system. At the same time, diversity training programs should be conducted for management and recruiters, highlighting the economic advantage of eliminating discrimination, including the threat of penalizing a systematic recruitment behaviour favouring Christians. To this end, an institution should be established to monitor firms' recruitment procedures by using correspondence tests and audit studies.

A positive incentive could be the application of a "diversity compliant" label to firms whose workforce meets the diversity criteria, thereby displaying social responsibility. Merely the expression of religious conviction should not be punished, but forcing one's conviction on others must be restricted, just like using public places for worship, or the compromising of security or hygiene standards because of religious considerations. Noncompliance to these regulations should be a legitimate reason for one's removal from the workplace – thereby providing a nudge to shift the discriminatory equilibrium in relation to the rational part of Islamophobia. Other recommendations include the option of more flexible working hours, offering different meals at workplace restaurants, and allowing certain public national holidays to be taken out on other occasions, for example Eid al-Adha, or Pesach, the training of imams in France under the auspices of the French Council of the Muslim Religion (CFCM).

With regard to state level, the debate is between assimilationist and multiculturalist tendencies. According to the authors, multiculturalist policies increase the divergence in

cultural norms between Christian and Muslim minorities, whereas assimilationist policies reduce this gap. The policy tools recommended to nudge the discriminatory equilibrium are citizenship contracts, free language courses, and mandatory courses on national values.

This book is an essential read for anyone, who intends to formulate a well-founded opinion about the integration of Muslims in Europe. It is groundbreaking in the sense that the research methodology successfully isolated the religious effect as a reason for discrimination, and that the authors rightly hold both sides responsible for the discriminatory equilibrium, not just blame native European populations. The offered solutions may or may not work, as their results are yet to be seen, but the most important conclusion is that they only need to be applied in places where Muslim immigrant communities constitute a large enough segment of the population to raise such concerns. Countries where such communities do not exist yet can employ another simple and successful strategy, namely preserving the current cultural and ethnic cohesion of the workforce and the population in general.
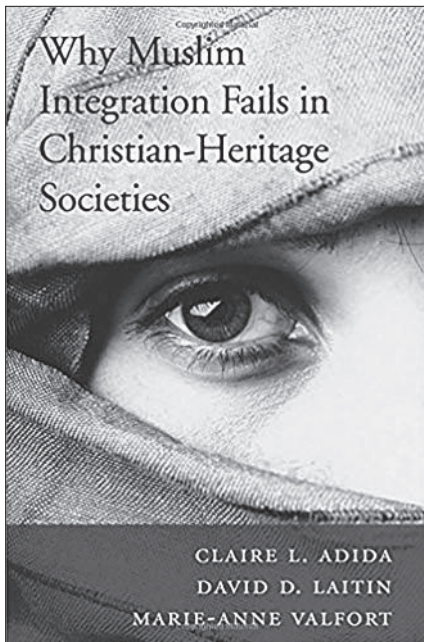
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