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Freedom & Diversity: A Liberal Pentagram for Living Together

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Europe's Angry Muslims: The Revolt of the Second Generation

by Robert S. Leiken

Oxford University Press, 354 pp., \$27.95

Muslims in Europe: A Report on 11 EU Cities

by the Open Society Institute

346 pp., available at opensocietyfoundations.org

The Emancipation of Europe's Muslims: The State's Role in Minority Integration

by Jonathan Laurence

Princeton University Press, 366 pp., \$80.00; \$29.95 (paper)

The New Religious Intolerance: Overcoming the Politics of Fear in an Anxious Age

by Martha C. Nussbaum

Belknap Press/Harvard University Press, 285 pp., \$26.95

Immigrant Nations

by Paul Scheffer, translated from the Dutch by Liz Waters

Polity, 390 pp., \$84.95; \$29.95 (paper)

1.

According to US Census Bureau projections, non-Hispanic whites will be outnumbered by other ethnic groups in the United States in about 2042. As a chorus chanted at a Chicago cabaret: "In 2042, there'll be more of us than of you." If Turkey joins the European Union, then by 2030 one in every five residents of the EU could be Muslim. This diversity is most visible in cities such as London, Amsterdam, Toronto, and New York. Some 37 percent of New Yorkers are foreign-born; in Toronto, the figure is close to 50 percent. Three hundred languages are spoken in London. One in four newborns in Britain have at least one parent who was born overseas.*

These are not just “immigrants.” Increasingly, they are people “with a migration background,” as the German government classifies them, or “postmigrants,” in Robert S. Leiken’s snappier phraseology. It has long been observed that the problems of conflicted identity, or cultural schizophrenia, can be most acute in the second or third generation. Cheap air travel, the Internet, satellite TV, and mobile phones bring the two homelands closer than they were for Irish or Italian migrants to the US a hundred years ago. Even more than Italian-Americans in the early twentieth century, today’s Turkish-Germans, Pakistani-Brits, Mexican-Americans, Cambodian-Canadians, and Chinese-Australians feel that they belong to two worlds.



Reuters

Malala Yousufzai, a Pakistani schoolgirl from the Swat Valley who was shot by the Taliban in early October for advocating education for girls. She is now receiving medical care in Birmingham, England.

These new Europeans, Canadians, Americans, or Australians cannot be characterized simply by one group identifier, be it culture, ethnicity, nationality (“the Turks”), religion (“the Muslims”), or a specially invented collective marker such as “Hispanic” or “Afro-Caribbean.” In

Birmingham, England, for example, a city that is expected to have a nonwhite majority by 2024, the postmigrants are not just Hindu, Sikh, or Muslim, but also Punjabi or Mirpuri (from Mirpur in Azad Kashmir), Labour, Conservative, or Liberal Democrat voters, supporters of this or that soccer club, and, by no means least, Brummies—residents of the great city of Birmingham, with its distinctive accent and local patriotism. Around a million people in Britain now identify themselves as of “mixed” ethnicity. In many countries, more and more people are, as President Barack Obama once famously put it, “mutts like me.”

The multiculturalist literature, with its tendency to pigeonhole people by culture, often fails to acknowledge the sheer diversity of this increasingly mixed-up world. More than ever, that must include the diversity to be found inside a single human skin, mind, and heart.

2.

“Multiculturalism” has become a term of wholly uncertain meaning. Does it refer to a social reality? A set of policies? A normative theory? An ideology? Last year, I served on a Council of Europe working group with members from eight other European countries. We found that the word meant something different, and usually confused, in every country.

Some, though not all, of the policies described as “multiculturalism” over the last thirty years have had deeply illiberal consequences. They have allowed the development of

“parallel societies” or “subsidized isolation.” Self-appointed community leaders have used public funds to reinforce cultural norms that would be unacceptable in the wider society, especially in relation to women. This has come close to official endorsement of cultural and moral relativism. A perverse effect has been to disempower the voices of the more liberal, secular, and critical minority within such ethnically or culturally defined minorities.

If, therefore, you want to elaborate a version of multiculturalism that is genuinely compatible with liberalism, as some distinguished political theorists do, you have to spend pages hedging the term about with clarifications and qualifications. By the time you have finished doing that, the justification for a separate new “ism” has evaporated. Why not simply talk about the form of modern liberalism suited—meaning also, developed and adapted—to the conditions of a contemporary, multicultural society?

When understandings of liberalism were expanded to embrace equal liberty under law for people of all social classes, it was not thought necessary to speak of “multiclassism”; nor, when extended to those of all skin colors, “multicolorism”; nor again, when to those of all genders and sexualities, “multigenderism” or “multisexualitism.” Painful though this will be to those who have expended their academic careers on multiculturalism, the term should be consigned to the conceptual dustbin of history.

To say this it is not necessary to endorse any crude summary judgment on whether multiculturalism was, in the famously parodic terms of *1066 and All That*, a Good Thing or a Bad Thing. One of the word’s crippling handicaps is precisely that it has included some very bad things (e.g., publicly subsidized, illiberal postmigrant community ghettos in Western European cities) and some quite good things (e.g., efforts to get neighbors better acquainted with one another’s cultures).

To be clear: it is the “ism” that should be a “wasm.” Although the adjective “multicultural” questionably gathers in one tag what are in reality multiple kinds of human difference—religion, ethnicity, language, nationality, color, etc.—it has become a generally understood shorthand for the mainly postmigrant diversity of these societies. There is no need to throw out the descriptive baby with the prescriptive bathwater.

3.

How, then, if not by referring to “multiculturalism,” should we summarize the challenges posed and opportunities offered by the increasingly multicultural character of these societies? On the principle that one should not use complicated terms when simpler ones will do, I suggest “combining freedom and diversity.” This does not mean that freedom and diversity are first-order values of comparable worth, like peace and justice. Increasing

diversity can certainly enhance freedom. Where there is no choice, there is no freedom. The more choices between different ways of life we have readily available, on our big city doorstep, the greater the effective freedom we may be said to have.

But in practice, growing diversity can also be a challenge to existing freedoms—and to the social practices and shared understandings that historically have sustained those freedoms. From Robert Putnam’s influential work on the erosion of social trust to the violent controversy around the Danish cartoons of Muhammad, from ethnic minority slums to Arizona’s illiberal immigration law, anyone with eyes to see must recognize that we are far from a condition of rainbow nation bliss.

When I say “combining freedom and diversity,” I refer mainly to diversity as a reality. So the phrase might be parsed at greater length as “how to defend and enhance the freedoms of an open society in conditions of growing diversity.” This requires close attention to the details of policy on education, housing, the labor market, welfare, culture, political representation, and so on. The local level is as important as the regional, national, and—in Europe—supranational ones. What works for Pakistanis in Bradford may not work for Turks in Berlin or Berbers in Rotterdam, let alone for Mexicans in Los Angeles or Cambodians in Toronto.

Nor is this only a task for public policy. It is the personal responsibility of every one of us who lives in such a society. The character of everyday interactions, at school, at work, on the street, in the café, will affect the attitudes of migrants and postmigrants at least as much as any high policy. Small slights alienate, small courtesies integrate.

4.

A conspectus of “what is to be done” would therefore fill an encyclopedia. Here I can only sketch certain qualities that should run through and inform both public policy and personal conduct. I propose a pentagram of liberal virtues: inclusion, clarity, consistency, firmness, and liberality. Theoretically, these may be understood as expressions of the attempt by Isaiah Berlin and others to blend liberalism and pluralism. Practically, they draw lessons from a half-century of trial and error. Needless to say, these five liberal pluralist virtues are effective only in combination, hence the image of a pentagram.

Inclusion

At some high level of unworldly abstraction it may be possible to argue that restricting immigration into rich, free countries is illiberal. In real life, limiting immigration is the precondition for maintaining a liberal society. (Let everyone enter Switzerland who would

wish to, and see what happens next.) What liberalism does require, however, is that everyone who has arrived in a given legal-political space—be it a single state, the territory of the EU, or the larger Europe of the Council of Europe—should have their human rights respected, even if those people are there briefly and illegally. It further requires that those who live there legally, for longer periods, should be entitled to that fuller “equal respect and concern” that Ronald Dworkin prescribes as the duty of the liberal state to all its citizens.

Over the last half-century, many Western European countries have fallen down on both steps of this two-step argument. They have let in very large numbers of people, through a combination of deliberately generous, chaotically unmanaged, and simply illegal immigration. Countries like Norway, with no modern experience of large-scale immigration, have experienced an inflow approaching the record proportions of immigration to the United States before World War I. Until recently, however, most European states have done far too little to integrate the new or not-so-new arrivals and their children—that is, to enable them to feel at home, as fully participating members of the societies in which they live.

In a famous article entitled “The Multicultural Drama,” published in 2000, the Dutch political writer Paul Scheffer criticized the Netherlands’ policy of “liberal admission and limited integration.” By “liberal” he presumably meant “generous,” but in truth, as he himself argues in his excellent book *Immigrant Nations*, this combination was not liberal at all. In Germany, for example, by 1994 more than seven million inhabitants out of a total of 80 million were officially listed as “foreigners.” They included Turks who had lived in Cologne or West Berlin for thirty years.

Most Western European countries, including Germany, have now moved toward granting citizenship to long-term residents, but Germany’s revised citizenship law continues to demand that they renounce any other citizenship. This is increasingly unrealistic, and arguably unreasonable, in a world where ever more postmigrants have two closely connected homelands. As one woman in the British city of Bradford put it: “Pakistan is our country. Britain is our country too.”

The mere granting of citizenship is only the beginning of inclusion. These days, many Western European countries have introduced citizenship tests and ceremonies. The questions in those national knowledge tests may have a somewhat random quality, and might be failed by people whose families have lived in the country for generations. (To some amusement in Britain, even Prime Minister David Cameron could not immediately tell the American talk show host David Letterman what “Magna Carta” means in English, and who composed “Rule, Britannia.”) The ceremonies may be perfunctory, or teeter on the

verge of self-parody (tea, sandwiches, and a pianist playing “Land of Hope and Glory,” while the rain patters down on the roof of an English village hall). Nonetheless, the new citizens I have spoken to found these ceremonies moving, or at least “nice.”



Chris Steele-Perkins/Magnum Photos

Children playing in Wolverhampton, England, 1978

Beyond that single festive affirmation of civic national belonging, the hard grind of inclusion happens in multiple settings: education, housing, the workplace, media, politics, entertainment, and sport. Few things help more than unselfconscious everyday mixing at home, school, and work. The novelist Zadie Smith recalls growing up in London with girls in headscarves, Jewish boys with yarmulkes, and Hindu kids with bindis on their foreheads: “United in the same primary schools, we were neither mesmerized by, nor especially frightened of, our differences.”

In France, despite its great republican tradition of difference-blind integration through schooling, the problem of educational segregation persists because postmigrants are concentrated in particular city quarters. Careful studies have demonstrated the existence in the French labor market of severe discrimination against people with foreign names in general and Muslims in particular.

In journalism, there is a double challenge of representation: to report the lives of people from different cultures accurately and with understanding, and to have individuals from those backgrounds visible and audible on television, in print, and online. The two kinds of representation need not coincide. Indeed, African-Americans should not always be reporting on African-Americans, Muslims on Muslims, women on women. In politics, too, visible representation of both the faces and the interests of significant minorities is

desirable; and again, the two need not coincide. Cem Özdemir, a leader of Germany's Green Party, speaks for voters with a special concern about the environment, not specifically for his fellow German Turks or Turkish Germans.

Entertainment and sport probably have the largest impact on the perceptions of a wider public. Most European soccer teams boast a strong showing of players of migrant background—France's legendary Zinedine Zidane, now retired, Italian striker Mario Barwuah Balotelli, and former England captain Sol Campbell, to name but three. The magic in their boots has done more for the emergence of “a new We” than anything done by any politician.

Clarity

In multicultural societies, the basic principles and values of the political community, including the rights and duties of the citizen, need to be spelled out more clearly. Most European countries with high levels of immigration have made moves in this direction. Italy, for example, produced a Charter of Values in 2007. The EU has a list of eleven “common basic principles on integration” that, while necessarily general, are both liberal and clear.

It is also important to distinguish between the liberal essentials, on which there can be no compromise, and those parts of civic life in which negotiation and accommodation are both possible and desirable. One mistake made by many European societies over the last decade has been to spend vast amounts of time and indignation on what are at best secondary issues—the question whether the minaret on the Cologne mosque may be higher than the spire of Cologne cathedral, a referendum on banning minarets in Switzerland, all the endless controversies around hijab, niqab, and burqa—while allowing large concessions in matters where there should be none, including equality under one law, freedom of expression, and the fundamental rights of women.

So these societies have been needlessly intransigent on nonessentials, and dangerously lax on essentials. In 2008, for example, British authorities received reports of some 1,600 suspected forced marriages while the police reckoned so-called “honor” murders were running at an average of one a month (with the real numbers in both cases likely to be higher). These are horrifying figures for any country, but especially for one that prides itself on being “the mother of the free.”

Jonathan Laurence, whose study of European governments' recent approaches to their Muslim populations usefully draws on the historic experience of other minorities in Europe, tells us that the preamble to Napoleon's agreement with the French Jewish community

included explicit reference to the Talmudic principle *dina demalchuta dina*—“the law of the land is the law.” How people of different faiths and cultures get to that point is their own business, but get there they must, or the foundations of a free society are fissured. An essential corollary is that citizens of whatever background have an equal opportunity to work toward changing that law of the land, through a democratically elected legislature.

Consistency

Modern secular liberal states claim to give their citizens equal treatment under one law. The arrival of people from diverse cultures, faiths, and countries exposes this claim to a probing searchlight. Why, for example, are there blasphemy laws protecting only Christianity? Faith schools for only some faiths but not all? Memory laws covering only some genocides, such as the Holocaust? Pockets of legal exceptionalism for only some communities, such as the Amish in the US? “Double standards!” cry articulate representatives of new minorities—and they have a point.

We then stand at a fork in the road. We can multiply the taboos, so that those of all communities and faiths are equally protected, or we can dismantle previously unchallenged taboos, moving toward a more consistent liberalism of equal treatment. Representatives of more socially conservative postmigrant minorities would often prefer us to take the former route. Thus, for example, British Muslims lobbied early in the last decade not for the British blasphemy law to be abolished, but for it to be extended to give equal protection to Islam. In the event, Britain repealed its blasphemy law and replaced it with a new offense of “incitement to religious hatred.” However, following a campaign by defenders of free speech, that offense was qualified by what has come to be known as “the English PEN clause,” which protects “criticism or expressions of antipathy, dislike, ridicule, insult or abuse” of religious beliefs and practices. The net effect was to move toward a more consistent liberalism—but it was a close-run thing.

It is, to be sure, unrealistic to expect the achievement of total consistency. In a remarkable letter he wrote in 2004 to the German legal scholar Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, the man who was then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger and is now Pope Benedict XVI somewhat plaintively insisted that Sunday must surely remain the day of rest: a reasonable enough practical point. However, he went on to argue that a state could not entirely cut itself off from its cultural roots, and become what he called a *reiner Vernunftstaat*, a state built purely on reason.

This is to elide two things: the claim that a secular, liberal state needs some shared values to underpin it, and the claim that such values must be tied to one particular culture. The challenge of our time is precisely to build on values that are defensible in the light of reason

and can be found across cultures. “Believe me,” insists the philosopher Almut Bruckstein Çoruh, “the basic values of the German constitution (Basic Law) can very well be justified from the Jewish and Islamic traditions.”

Firmness

The liberal essentials that a free country requires all its citizens and residents to respect should be clearly defined and limited in scope, but they must then be unflinchingly defended. This requires new responses to new challenges. Thus Britain, for example, now has a Forced Marriage Unit, which is a joint initiative between the Foreign Office and the Home Office since—in this world of dual homelands—many of the forced marriages actually take place in countries such as Pakistan. In 2007, Parliament passed the Forced Marriage Act. The British police have developed a wide-ranging strategy to combat what they call “honour based violence,” including forced marriages, murders, and female genital mutilation. As they rightly comment, “There is no honour in the commission of murder, rape, kidnap and the many other acts, behaviour and conduct which make up ‘violence in the name of so-called honour.’”

In our time, one of the biggest threats to established liberties comes from violent intimidation to deter free speech. In an Oxford University research project on freedom of expression (www.freespeechdebate.com), we have formulated a core principle thus: “We neither make threats of violence nor accept violent intimidation.” Those are two sides of the same coin. To yield to violent intimidation is, in effect, to encourage those who have made threats of violence to make more of them, and others to follow.

This is a challenge that many European societies have failed badly to meet over the last twenty years. What in American free speech literature is called the “heckler’s veto” has in our time become the assassin’s veto. There are certainly tens, probably hundreds, of individuals in or from Europe who are living under a threat to their lives, just because of thoughts or feelings they have expressed, in writing, speech, drama, or visual art. They include not just non-Muslim and ex-Muslim critics of Islam, but also Muslims who have criticized what is done in the name of their own faith. Sikhs, Hindus, and others have also felt the violent edge of intimidation.

Far too often, the reaction of the forces of law and order has been to try to suppress the forms of expression giving offense, rather than focusing on those who threaten violence. Faced with violent demonstrations, the British police told those who were staging the play *Behzti*, which painted a biting negative picture of Sikh community life in Britain, to stop the production. While the actions of the state are of secondary importance in some other areas, such as entertainment and sport, the state’s role is vital here since it has the

monopoly of legitimate violence. A more diverse society is bound to manifest more sharply conflicting views. The job of the liberal state is not to reduce, let alone to eliminate, that conflict, but to ensure that it remains within peaceful bounds.

Jeremy Waldron has recently argued that European-style laws against “hate speech” should be seriously considered in the United States, on the grounds that they protect the dignity of vulnerable minorities. My own view is that Europe should move more in a First Amendment direction. We in Europe can learn from the way the United States has traditionally used freedom of expression precisely to help it live with diversity. As President Obama observed at the UN General Assembly, reflecting on the controversy around the “Innocence of Muslims” YouTube video, “in a diverse society, efforts to restrict speech can quickly become a tool to silence critics and oppress minorities.” In a liberal democracy, a hateful tweet is best combated by popular condemnation and social pressure—which social media also allow and magnify—rather than taking the time of police who have more important things to do.

The state needs to intervene decisively at the point where “hate speech” becomes what Susan Benesch calls “dangerous speech.” As Benesch argues, determining when that line is crossed requires a careful analysis of the specific circumstances of speaker and audience. But “if you say that, we will kill you”—when seriously meant—clearly qualifies as dangerous speech. Combating violent intimidation should not, however, be left to the police and the courts alone. Threatened individuals, be they a famous writer or an unknown young woman in an oppressive community, need solidarity from the wider society. They should be able to feel that there are people they can turn to for protection and for support. (Such solidarity does not, however, require holding back criticism of the views of those individuals. Self-censorship is not a good way to defend free speech.)

Institutions such as political parties, trade unions, schools, universities, and publishers all need to play their part. It is, for example, lamentable that Yale University Press (full disclosure: Yale is my American publisher) decided not to publish an already prepared section of illustrations to the Danish scholar Jytte Klausen’s book about the controversy around the Danish cartoons of Muhammad. As a result, in a careful, scholarly book entitled *The Cartoons That Shook the World*, the one thing we cannot see is the cartoons that shook the world.

At the moment, facing down violent intimidation is the most important example of this essential liberal firmness, but it is not the only one. Firmness is also required in the face of popular, tabloid-stoked hysteria (“something must be done!”), overt and covert lobbying by rich and powerful interests at home and abroad (from Rupert Murdoch, through all manner

of ethnic and faith-based groups, to the authorities of Saudi Arabia and China), and every other pressure to prevent or pervert the consistent application of explicit standards to all members of a multicultural society.

Liberality

I describe the last side of the pentagram with a word that picks up some old, now half-buried connotations of “liberal.” The meanings of “liberality” include generosity, open-mindedness, and freedom from prejudice. It evokes the strand of liberalism that takes a generous, curious, imaginative interest in other cultures, philosophies, and ways of life. Most brilliantly represented by Isaiah Berlin, this liberal pluralist approach goes beyond the mere affirmation that liberal societies do not require all their citizens to be liberals. It takes seriously the proposition that we can understand, appreciate, and learn from others even while profoundly disagreeing with them. Its qualities are evoked in phrases such as “liberal mind,” “liberal spirit,” and Lionel Trilling’s *The Liberal Imagination*.

Martha Nussbaum eloquently speaks for, and continues, this tradition in her book *The New Religious Intolerance*. She pleads for the use of our “inner eyes,” for that “curious and sympathetic imagination” that is adept at “recognizing humanity in strange costumes.” Like Trilling, she illustrates this liberal imagination with works of literature—in her case ranging from Lessing’s *Nathan the Wise* all the way to the children’s books of Marguerite de Angeli. We can’t all be novelists or poets, but some of their imaginative skills are essential if we are to combine the stern, singular legal and political requirements of equal freedom with the baggy, polyphonous reality of social and cultural diversity.

To say “a curious...imagination” implies that you go on to find out a bit more about the others next to whom you are now living. This is essential because, as the writer Devla Murphy has observed, “if you know nothing about a people, you can believe anything.” The Council of Europe now promotes what it usefully calls “intercultural” education and understanding. Yet paper knowledge will be useless without the imagination to inform it. With a little imagination, and with human contact, we soon discover the shared humanity beneath unfamiliar garb and tongue. This is the subject of many a novel and poem, but also, as Zadie Smith recalls, the everyday experience of schoolmates and neighbors engaged in joint activities that have nothing to do with getting to know each other’s cultures: smoking your first cigarette behind the school gym, for example, or campaigning for a new local bus route.

Behind the curtain of alien idiom, we may also find insights that we can recognize as valuable and true. As we have seen, this will not always be the case: sometimes there is ineradicable conflict, requiring only toleration up to the frontier of the liberal essentials,

and iron firmness at that frontier. (Violent intimidation of free expression, honor killings, and forced marriages are all-too-actual examples.) But closing ranks in the defense of basic values and human rights does not require, and should not lead, to the closing of minds.

Reflecting on the sometimes hysterical debate about Islam in Europe, in an essay originally entitled “The Dialectics of Secularization,” Jürgen Habermas insists that since fellow citizens should be “taken seriously as modern contemporaries,” so

secular citizens are expected not to exclude a fortiori that they may discover, even in religious utterances, semantic contents and covert intuitions that can be translated and introduced into a secular discourse.

In contemporary Western Europe, this admonition is addressed to a secular, if not an atheist, majority. In the United States, one has to turn this around, addressing the expectation to a religious majority in respect of an atheist minority. But as Habermas himself points out, it is not just a call to the given majority.

As someone whose ancestors have been at home in England for as long as our sketchy family tree stretches back, I do feel a special obligation to reach out, in a spirit analogous to hospitality, to assist those more newly arrived to feel at home in England. But if we take seriously the aspiration to create a “new We,” there has to come a point when those whose families arrived somewhat more recently are as much hosts as I am. To treat them still as guests—let alone as *Gastarbeiter*—is precisely the illiberal thing to do.

Moreover, while postmigrants remain an overall minority in most Western countries, there are London boroughs in which they already are, and whole English cities in which they soon will be, a majority. So the very distinction between majority and minority will become inadequate. Meanwhile, the “We” and “They” are, with the aid of love and lust, getting ever more gloriously mixed up together.

The demand for liberality therefore extends to the whole of a multicultural society, not just to its current majorities. If the atheist is called upon to allow the possibility of hidden value “even in religious utterances,” the Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, or fundamentalist Christian is equally called upon to have the imaginative generosity of spirit to understand the values of, say, a homosexual atheist. While liberality cannot be codified in law, let alone delivered by government departments, it is the vital fifth ingredient in combining freedom and diversity.

Having reached the last corner of the pentagram, a disaffected reader may complain, “but here is nothing new; just old, familiar liberal virtues, applied and adapted to the new circumstances of multicultural societies.” Exactly so.

1. *

This essay draws upon my 2008 Isaiah Berlin Lecture at Wolfson College, Oxford; my 2011 Tony Judt Memorial Lecture at New York University; participation in a Council of Europe working group chaired by Joschka Fischer, which reported in 2011 under the title *Living Together: Combining Diversity and Freedom in 21st Century Europe* (PDF file); and my concluding address at a June 2012 conference in Oslo organized by the Fritt Ord Foundation and *The New York Review*. ↩

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