Religious identities in times of crisis
An analysis of Europe

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Introduction

Throughout history, religion has played a significant role in social relations. Religion makes a significant contribution to defining a group’s identity and it affects intergroup relations (Seul 1999). At certain points, these relations have paved the way for controversies as a result of negative sentiments towards ‘others,’ and Islamophobia can be pointed out as the most recent example.

In terms of religious identity, Christianity has been the dominant one in Europe. Historically, inter-sectarian conflicts, Crusades against the Muslim World, expulsion of Jews from Spain in the 15th century, and the Holocaust in Germany under Nazi rule demonstrate this dominance. Currently, fewer people define themselves as Christians and it is strongly debated that religion is losing its dominance over society (Nelsen and Guth 2015). It is stated in a report of the Pew Research Center (Masci 2015) that people who identified themselves as Christians constituted 74.5% of the entire European population in 2010, while the proportion of unaffiliated people was recorded at 18.8%. The same report presents projections for 2050. The Christian population is expected to go down to 65.2%. This decrease is projected to occur as a result of demographic changes of two groups. As far as the Christian population is concerned, religious shifting and negative population growth play significant roles. For instance, the proportion of unaffiliated people is expected to increase to 23.3%. Muslims, which were 6% in 2010, are projected to reach 8.4% of the population in 2050 due to natural causes such as a high fertility rate. But when migration is taken into account, Muslims will make up around 10% of the overall population of Europe by 2050. It is important to highlight that these projections were reported before the massive refugee influx which started in mid-2014.

Religious identity provides a sense of belonging for those who start to live in a different country under unfamiliar conditions and cultural codes (Hirschman 2004, p. 1228); hence it would not be wrong to claim that newcomer Muslims in Europe are more likely to identify themselves with their religion. Even though it presents a cause for unification, it also creates a barrier which challenges the integration of these newcomers in the host society (Foner and Alba 2008, pp. 368–369). Consequently, different characteristics between newcomer
Muslims and Christian-populated host societies become clearer and cause tension, since an invisible boundary has been drawn between them. At the same time, this tension has been reinforced by various other factors, such as media reporting and security-oriented policies. They foster negative impressions about the differences, which then leads to the marginalization of Muslims. At this point, it is important to highlight that the marginalization of religious identity does not mean that a person with no religious affiliation would tend to shift to any religious affiliation. Instead, marginalization simply reinforces existing religious divisions. Within this context, this chapter aims to provide a theoretical analysis to discuss the process regarding the marginalization of religious identities in Europe by giving special attention to anti-Islamic sentiments reflected in the debates concerning Islamophobia.

Characterization of the crisis: recent inter-religious interactions in Europe

A crisis can be defined as an event or a series of events that brings about uneasiness with significant consequences for individuals and the groups to which they belong. Crisis shores up collective identities which are then critical in engendering differences between groups. For an individual, identity answers the question ‘who am I?’ But collectively, it brings together people who have similar answers and carve out space in society. In this light, identity defines differences (Schneeberger 2009, p. 85). According to the Social Identity Theory, individuals may describe themselves with respect to membership in a particular social grouping (Mlicki and Ellemers 1996, p. 98). Doing so highlights shared characteristics that define the collective (Turner et al. 1987, pp. 50–51); hence the ‘other’ may either be another individual or another group. Once the level of definition shifts from individuality to group consciousness, relations with the ‘other’ evolve in the same direction as well; and consequently, intergroup relations gain importance.

Social identities are formed with respect to intergroup differences. The group that individuals bind to is called the in-group; non-members belong to the out-group. For each in-group, there is at least one out-group with which it competes. Since individuals tend to increase their self-esteem and positive self-image (Turner 1982), they elevate the perceived status of the in-group over the out-group (Hogg and Abrams 1993). During this process, internalized stereotypes and norms are employed (Hogg, Terry and White 1995) and can even be exaggerated (Demirtaş 2003). According to Hogg (1993), the reasons why individuals tend to identify themselves with certain categories or groups include feelings of discrimination and threats by an out-group. In order to challenge these feelings, they strengthen their bonds to any social category by emphasizing intra-group similarities. As a result, boundaries between groups become fortified (Al Raffie 2013).

These differences affect political order. They certainly challenge the fundamental approach of politics—the collective good—by consolidating social identities and group boundaries. This is how identity politics is conducted: it favors a group of people based on the shared characteristics of a determined identity over any other (Sheikhzadegan and Nollert 2017). Social categories, which form social identities, are large-scale sources (Deaux and Martin 2003) and religion, including having no religious affiliation, is one of them. They have an undeniable influence on shaping identities by engendering differences by drawing invisible boundaries as a ‘social-marker’ between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Nelsen and Guth 2015). For the purpose of this research, the effects of religion on forming groups based on
differences and the feeling of belonging that it provides to individuals and societies will be analyzed.

The place of religion in modern times has been debated as to whether it is neglected or not. On the one hand, Göle (2013), for instance, states that it is not recognized as legitimate within the doxa of modernity. Similarly, Daniel, Winkel and Monnot (2014) argue that it has been a victim of the secularizing power of modernity and the hegemony of the nation-state, and religion itself was in crisis after the second half of the 20th century. On the other hand, there have been social movements that have led people to assert their religious identity, like the Zionist movement, the Chechen movement (Sheikhzadehgan and Nollert 2017). Religion can also be instrumental for national healing with the intention of overcoming violence in a deeply polarized and traumatized society, as in the case of Zimbabwe after its independence (Tarusarira 2014). Moreover, certain crises for a nation can reawaken the importance of religious identities. For instance, during the Independence War of Turkey, people united around their religious identity, which was the decisive component between them and hostile forces (Doganyilmaz 2014). Furthermore, the secularization thesis itself acknowledges that crisis can increase the popularity of religion (Bruce 1997).

Religious identity can be accepted as a tool to unify individuals and societies. However, it is effective only for in-group dynamics. In terms of intergroup relations, it becomes a barrier that fosters intergroup conflict. Inter-religious interaction, alongside negatively driven consciousness, can bring about problems concerning differences. Islamophobia can be pointed out as a recent example of such a problem.

In terms of the religious belonging among European societies, Christianity is the predominant religion. The cultural roots of Europe were dominated by Christian characteristics (Nelsen and Guth 2015). In the contemporary period, European societies’ collective self-image was based on secular characteristics (Sheikhzadehgan and Nollert 2017, p. 646) since they managed to constitute a secular public sphere. Regarding relations with other religious identities, it would not be wrong to claim that Judaism was a rival; however, as stated by Göle (2015, p. 238), Jews and Christians ended up with a moral agreement and they contributed Judeo-Christian characteristics to the Greco-Roman roots of European culture. Relations with Muslims, on the other hand, have been complicated throughout history. Even though the existence of Islam in Europe dates back to the 14th century, as a result of Ottoman settlement policy in the Balkans (Doganyilmaz Duman 2016), discussions concerning inter-religious interaction started only after the second half of the 20th century when immigration became a major issue. Within the framework of this research, it is important to focus on this period. During the first decades, first-generation immigrants formed isolated communities and were not fully integrated into the local sociopolitical structure. However, since their descendants have become part of the public sphere, their visibility has increased accordingly. The real interaction between immigrant Muslims and local Christians began once they shared common space. The presence of Muslims had long been a fact and dates further back; however, as soon as new generations of immigrants started to be involved in the local culture, Muslims in Europe became a concern (Göle 2010) for locals.

People living far from their own societies under different cultural codes are more prone to protect their religious identity in order to maintain their unity and sense of belonging. In terms of intergroup interactions, this leads to a bilateral marginalization of religious identities. Once a group tends to bind a certain form of social identity, it raises consciousness not only for in-group members but also for its out-group members. Within this context, it would not be wrong to claim that both of the aforementioned reasons, which possess the power to
evoke social identity, are present. Muslims feel that they are being discriminated against, while Christians perceive that they are under threat. Brubaker (2016) highlights the result of the interaction as follows; ‘If “they” are Muslim, then in some sense “we” must be Christian (or Judeo-Christian).’ And he refers to this sense of religious leaning as ‘reactive Christianity.’ Hence, both of the groups raise consciousness regarding their social identity and contribute to the fortifying of the boundary between them.

In terms of discrimination, Roy (2004) states that Muslims are aware of the incompatibility of the public image of their religion with the European mainstream view that religion is a private affair. In addition, socioeconomic factors may be a reason for Muslims to feel discriminated against, as Al Raffie (2013) argues that low social standing relative to the host country may generate a sense of non-belonging. Regarding threat, a recent research, which was conducted by the European Council on Foreign Relations (2019), reveals significant information about European sentiments. The research asked about ‘the single biggest threat in Europe today’ and the results are as follows: Islamic radicals and migration form the first two answers that Europeans have concerns about. It is important to highlight that these two concerns are related to different experiences of feeling threatened. Perceived Threat Theory suggests two forms, which are symbolic and realistic (Stephan et al. 2002). Symbolic threat comes in the form of cultural values. The presence of Muslims is perceived as a threat to European values and culture. Realistic threat focuses on the physical and material well-being alongside political and economic power. As Kaya (2015) suggests, Muslim immigrants and their descendants have been considered as a financial burden by European societies. Their presence is usually linked to illegality, crime, fundamentalism, and conflict. Hence, the presence of Muslims is perceived as a threat due to the burden on economic resources. They are also seen as vectors of terrorist attacks with Islamist purposes (Ciftci 2012). Hence, both forms of perceived threats are present within the interaction of Muslims and Christians in Europe. The massive flows of Muslim refugees from conflict zones into Europe and their increased public visibility have given rise to the impression that Europeans are under threat. At the same time, the Islamic State (IS), an Islamist terrorist group, has carried out various brutal attacks which have left hundreds of deaths in Europe.

**Consequences of inter-religious interaction: boundary making and Islamophobia**

All social groups refer to an ‘other’ as already mentioned, and there are two types in determining it: the remote otherness, which refers to a distant group for in-group members to be afraid of, and otherness of proximity, which concerns groups that become threats since they are too close to in-group members (Akgönül 2018). As a result of recent interactions, Muslims in Europe have become subjects of otherness of proximity, which has intensified negative feelings.

Negative feelings towards Muslims may be referred to as ‘anti-Islamic sentiments.’ However, the term Islamophobia will be used in this analysis since it provides a robust definition and relevant discussions in the literature abound. Islamophobia refers to the negative attitudes or feelings towards Islam and Muslims (Bleich 2011). A report by the Runnymede Trust entitled ‘Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All’ defines Islamophobia as ‘unfair’ (1997, pp. 1–4) dread or hatred of Islam. The attacks of September 11, 2001 (9/11) in New York had a significant effect on the pervasive use of the term, and it is certain that 9/11 and further terrorist attacks with Islamist purposes have undeniable influences on the
consolidation of negative public opinion towards Muslims (Wuthnow 2005; Allen 2007). Additionally, the recent influx of refugees has become another reason for the rise of Islamophobia, a classic case of symbolic threat. However, it is important to highlight that Islamophobia is not a new phenomenon (Modood and Ahmad 2007; Poynting and Mason 2007).

Use of the term dates back to the early 20th century according to López (2011). Since then it has been redefined and there is still no consensus on its definition. Some scholars state that it applies to a range wider than fear of Muslims (from xenophobia to anti-terrorism) (Cesari 2006), while some scholars highlight its closeness to racism (Esposito 2011). Modood and Ahmad (2007) refer to a form of racism focusing on both cultural and ethnic differences, as well as Kaya (2015), who defines the term as cultural racism. Similarly, Schiffer and Wagner (2011) use the term to highlight discrimination against a religious community. Winkler (2014) points out the same issue with the term neo-racism by focusing on cultural differences. Geisser (2013), on the other hand, rejects its closeness to racism, and defines Islamophobia as a phobia of religion. And regardless of these arguments, Zimmerman (2008) defines Islamophobia as an unreasonable fear of Islam and Muslims.

Today’s world order is based on plurality, which is framed to provide harmony between differences. Islamophobia has thus been criticized strongly for being antagonistic to today’s world order. Allen (2007) for instance, discusses that Islamophobia would cause the erosion of the multicultural model. Esposito and Kalin (2015) have asked too whether Islamophobia is a challenge to pluralism. And yet, there are studies that focus on Islam’s incompatibility with Western values (Bleich 2011).

Scholarship on Islamophobia has grown over time. In addition to defining it, further studies have been conducted in order to classify Islamophobic leanings. Dekker and van der Noll (2009), for instance, highlight the attitudinal and behavioral dimensions of Islamophobia. The behavioral dimension concerns discriminatory practice and violence towards Muslims, while the attitudinal dimension refers to the unfavorable opinions about them. Akgönül (2018) presents a similar classification; he limits Islamophobia with opinion-based leanings, and he defines discrimination and even physical attacks as Muslimophobia. In accordance with all these discussions, Islamophobia will be taken here as referring to different forms of anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim sentiments including behavioral, attitudinal Islamophobia, Muslimophobia, and even discourses and practices that cultivate offensive thoughts against Muslims.

The nature of identity politics paves the way for the conflict between ‘us’ and ‘them,’ and it has the power to foster antagonism alongside chauvinism (Derviş 2015) and populism. As cited by Akgönül (2018, p. 9), Carl Schmitt states the necessity of an enemy to create and cultivate danger. He also adds that this enemy should be close enough to provoke hatred and fear in society (in other words, in-group members) to possess political dominance. Since political discourses have the power to attract attention on one certain topic and to affect public opinion (Esposito and Kalin 2015), newcomer Muslims have become the ‘other’ as the source of tension employed by rising populist movements in Europe. The Flemish Block (Vlaams Blok) in Belgium, the Freedom Party in Austria (FPÖ—Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs), the British National Party, the Danish People’s Party (Dansk Folkeparti), the New Force (Forza Nuova) in Italy, Jobbik the Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik Magyarországtéri Mozgalom), the True Finns (Perussuomenlista), the National Front (Front National) in France, and the Party for Freedom (PVV—Partij voor de Vrijheid) in the Netherlands are some political parties that apply anti-Islamic discourses to their political agendas (Doganyilmaz Duman 2018). Economic insecurity, which certain parts of European
societies have faced, also has an important role in the polarization between ‘us’ and ‘them’ in terms of the use of public services (Inglehart and Norris 2016). As mentioned earlier, the public image of Muslims in Europe has already been perceived as negative, and massive flows of refugees have engendered that image. Perception has an undeniable effect on forming public opinion and political discourses encouraging a negative public image of Muslims serve the purpose of the perceived threat. At this point, it is important to highlight that the volume of anti-Islamic discourses over all the political agenda does not share the same ratio for each political party; however, results of recent elections provide concrete proof of the support they gained as a result of employing anti-Islamic discourses.

Furthermore, state policies have considerable effects on shaping public opinion about a certain issue. They have reinforced the perceived threat coming from Muslim societies. Certain security policies, for example, have been applied in order to obstruct Muslims’ entry into Europe. Consequently, these controls have encouraged the negative image of Muslims and linked them to security concerns. The Schengen Area, for instance, has become one of the most debated topics on the EU agenda. How to protect it became a prominent concern during the 2011 refugee crisis after the arrival of Tunisians on the Italian coast, who intended to travel to France. Consequently, France intensified patrols on its national borders within the Schengen Area (Pascouau 2012). After another massive influx of refugees in 2014, Germany launched control spots along its borders with Austria in September 2015 (Harding 2015). Similarly, Sweden started to restrict entry into its border with Denmark, and Denmark launched controls over its border with Germany in January 2016 (Önnerfors 2016). Further discussions were carried out and with the support of Austria, Germany, and Sweden, the removal of Greece from the Schengen Area Member States was discussed as Greece geographically provides the first point of entry into the Schengen Area (Holehouse and Smith 2016). Alongside the refugee crisis, Islamist terrorist attacks have also raised questions about the Schengen Area. France, for instance, started to control its borders and isolated itself from the Schengen Area for a month in 2015 for security concerns (Holehouse 2015).

In addition to the aforementioned restrictions, Denmark, Norway, and Germany have adopted strict rules concerning asylum application requirements, which were strongly criticized (The Local 2016). The German government applied another restriction concerning the Dublin Agreement, which states that refugees should register in the first EU country they enter, by suspending it for Syrians who entered the EU borders from Greece (Deutsche Welle 2015). Moreover, a strongly criticized agreement was signed between Turkey and the EU about maintaining refugees in Turkey, outside the EU borders, in return for 3 billion euros on March 19, 2016 (European Commission 2016).

For the refugees who have already entered the Schengen Area, cultural orientation programs were launched with the intentions of maintaining social order and facilitating their integration into the native cultural values of Belgium (Özkan 2016), Norway, and Denmark (Higgins 2015). At this point, it is important to highlight that these programs were related to cultural differences; however, as stated earlier, religion and culture have a significant connection. These attempts were strongly debated, since they dismissed the cultural integrity of newcomers (Higgins 2015).

The othering process of a group requires various influences and the media industry plays a crucial role in this regard. Akgönül (2018) explains how this happens. Firstly, traditional media and social media emphasize the religious identity of the criminal by highlighting Islam. Secondly, the singular and plural identities are combined, with the effect that an entire group is perceived as bad and eventually criminalized. Third, the whole group is
categorized in the singular form: Muslim is bad. Indeed, a report by Runnymede Trust (Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia 2004) states that news in the UK is strongly prejudiced and unfair towards Islam and Muslims. They cultivate and deepen the ‘Muslim is bad’ perception. In another report (Esposito 2013), Media Tenor, a major media monitor, analyzed almost 975,000 news stories in the EU and the United States (BBC, ABC, and CBS) to make a comparison between 2001 and 2011. In 2001, news focusing on extremist militants was calculated as 2%, while news covering Muslims on a regular basis was limited to 0.1%. In 2011, news covering militants changed dramatically from 2% to 25%, while news covering Muslims on a regular basis demonstrated stability with 0.1%. Since media is a significant tool that has the power to shape public opinion, media coverage about extremist militants empower false stereotypes, which connect Islam with extremism and terrorism.

It can be discussed whether these policy changes can directly be linked to Islamophobia. However, it is important to highlight the perception they encourage regarding the newcomers: they are unwanted, culturally subordinated and causing concerns. The Social Identity Theory already claims that in-group members tend to exaggerate out-group negativity in order to fortify the boundary between them; hence, all aforementioned security concerns, media coverages, and discourses articulate and reinforce the characteristics to stereotype the otherness of proximity. Kaya (2017) argues that overall they contribute to securitizing and stigmatizing Islam. Also, parasocial interactions have considerable power to encourage prejudices about Muslims, as stated in the European Islamophobia Report (2017). Post-truth politics, which consists of populist discourses among right-wing political parties (Wodak 2015), has similar effects regarding intergroup relations. In some European countries, it has led to dangerous protests, as in the Netherlands (The Guardian 2015) and Germany (Launspach 2016). These protests can be considered examples of behavioral Islamophobia and they clearly demonstrate how polarization brings about social issues within a society.

Religious identity as a boundary

In terms of religious leaning and attitudinal Islamophobia, various polls have been carried out to record the general disposition of European societies regarding their own religious identity and that of the ‘other.’ Relevant statistical datasets are consulted in this section.

The secularization process has significant effects on individuals’ religious identities, and studies demonstrate that it is less spread among Eastern European societies. The religious leaning of Eastern Europeans is more solid and mostly identified with nationalist attitudes and Islamophobia is more consolidated (Pickel and Öztürk 2018). Regarding Western European societies, even though the majority of peoples identify themselves as Christians, and they think that Islam is incompatible with Western values, they are more prone to accept Muslims in their close circles as reported by the Pew Research Center (2018b). In another report (Pew Research Center 2018a), the religious leanings of Western European societies have been analyzed, which reveals that there is a positive correlation between Christian affiliation and anti-Islamic (or anti-immigrant) sentiments. The stronger people bind to their religious identity, the more they criticize the presence of Islam and assert the incompatibility of Islamic values with theirs.

In terms of religious hostility in general, a report (Pew Research Center 2017) reveals that it increased between 2007 and 2015. The most noticeable increase in government harassment and use of force against religious groups occurred during 2014 and 2015. This period coincided with the arrival of refugees and the terrorist attacks in Europe. Data
support this point. The report by the European Parliament (2017) provides statistical data collected by the European Social Survey system. Indeed, Muslims, according to this report, are among the most unwanted immigrants in Europe. Approximately a quarter of the entire respondents think that no Muslim should be allowed in Europe while approximately 30% think that ‘some’ may be allowed.

Another analysis conducted by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, a Germany-based foundation, provides the most recent data regarding anti-immigrant inclinations of European societies (Demirkan 2018). In Hungary, almost one in two people (48%) are against having any interpersonal relations with a person from a different country and culture. It is followed by Estonia (29%), the Czech Republic (28%), Lithuania (27%), Great Britain (26%), Ireland (21%), Portugal (21%), Slovenia (19%), France (18%), and Austria (18%). Five different issues are highlighted as reasons for this unwillingness: fear of losing jobs, decrease in welfare level, cultural threat, religious threat, and criminal threat. While the first two reasons are examples of realistic threat, the last three are symbolic threats. People who think that newcomers are a threat to their religion constitute 58% in the Czech Republic, followed by France, the UK, and Austria with 55% each. The proportions in other countries are as follows: Belgium (53%), Lithuania (51%), the Netherlands (51%), Ireland (50%), Norway (50%), and Estonia (50%). In relation to cultural values, 51% of respondents in Hungary think that newcomers are a threat. Following Hungary are the UK (50%), Austria (50%), Lithuania (48%), Slovenia (47%), France (46%), and Ireland (46%). In terms of security, the statistics are overwhelming, since the proportion starts with 78% in Austria and the list ends with 57% in Estonia. In other words, more than one in two people in each country think that newcomers cause an increase in criminality. This demonstrates how perception plays a significant role in intergroup relations. Here lies an important insight. The proportion of Muslim populations, the volume of anti-Islamic discourses by political parties, and the public visibility of Muslims may vary from one country to another, but attitudinal Islamophobia is pervasive across all of them.

Conclusion

European societies have become inescapably secular. This means that religious affairs have been reduced to the private sphere. Christianity’s contemporary contributions have been mainly in terms of cultural codes. And yet it remains a significant marker of social identity more so now because of the rise of Islam on the continent, even though it is not a new phenomenon historically speaking. Muslim immigrants, who headed to Central and Western Europe in the second half of the 20th century, gave rise to contentious relations between two identities, Islam and mainstream Christianity. Over time, new generations of immigrants started to assert their presence in the public sphere and to enjoy the same rights and services as their Christian peers. This interaction has taken discussions to a different level.

Several developments have exacerbated the situation. The influx of refugees, Islamist motivated terrorist attacks, security-oriented policies, media coverage, and right-wing populist discourses have defined Muslims as the glaring ‘other’ in European societies. Threats are both symbolic and realistic for targeting cultural values and the physical well-being of European societies. In this context, religious difference has become the social marker demarcating the boundary between groups.

Boundary making enhances solidarity among the members of the in-group and those of the out-group. The result is that while Muslims in Europe form an out-group for host Christian societies, Muslims define their own in-group by positioning themselves relative to...
the dominant religion. This double-sided construction plays a significant role in the boundary-making process, since two different reasons are present to evoke social identity. While Christians perceive a sense of being threatened, Muslims perceive a sense of being discriminated against. Hence, the boundary between these two groups is fortified by two parties.

The visibility of Islamic identity, sharing the same public sphere with descendants of first immigrants, and the sense of being threatened, have provoked Islamophobic leanings. The wide array of responses including fear, dislike, and hatred has paved the way for the spread of Islamophobia among European societies. The otherness of proximity as a result of the presence of younger generations and recent refugees has made significant contributions to the tension. However, the interaction is not necessarily physical. Anti-Islamic political discourses associating Islamic presence with terror and cultural attacks on European identity and values, among other reactions such as security policies and parasocial interactions as a result of media coverage, has engendered negative attitudes towards Muslims, including discrimination. This double-fortified boundary encourages attitudinal and in certain cases behavioral Islamophobia among European societies.

An important caveat is called for here. In terms of negative perceptions regarding Muslims, Eastern European societies possess deeper concerns and demonstrate accelerated Islamophobic leanings than Western European countries, where secular characteristics are more pervasive. A similar tendency is observed in terms of religious conservatism among Western and Eastern European countries, where the religious dimension of identity is identified with nationalistic leaning. At this point, it is important to highlight that individuals with more conservative religious leanings are more prone to react negatively when they feel threatened. They tend to assert the common characteristics of their in-group even more. Religion, in this case, is a useful social marker to position themselves coherently against the ‘other.’ This of course does not lead to the heightened religiosity among unaffiliated individuals. Instead, already existing religious sentiments have been reactivated.

During times of crisis, religion has been used to unify society. However, in terms of inter-religious interaction between different societies, it becomes the core reason that brings about a boundary-making process. For the case of Europe, consciousness of the difference has gained ascendency with recent interactions and within this process, Islamophobia has become a significant determiner in defining intergroup relations. The crisis has brought about the marginalization of religious identities for different sectors of society. Future studies are needed to determine the long-term impacts of the processes affecting both social structure (to analyze whether perceived threats would come true) and political ones (to observe whether anti-Islamic populist discourses would endure).

References
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