

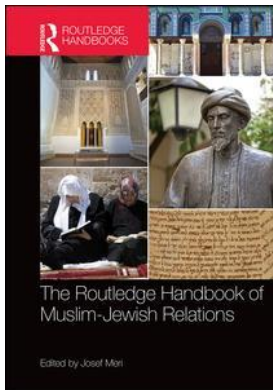
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### Communities and identity

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# Communities and identity

## Continuity and change

*Ben Gidley and Nasar Meer*

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This chapter explores notions of community and identity among Jews and Muslims in the West and the Middle East, including similarities and interactions between groups and traditions (see Chapters 1, 2, 8, 13, and 18 in this volume). It starts with a brief discussion of the contested meanings of these key terms before introducing their importance to classical Judaism and Islam. The differing contexts in which Judaism and Islam developed – exile and minority one hand and ideal of the Caliphate on the other – have led to contrasting inflections of community and belonging as well as some similarities. The chapter goes on to explore how the arrival of modernity reshaped community and belonging globally and how multiculturalism, identity politics, and other more recent configurations have reshaped them yet again.

Before starting, it is worth registering the contested uses of our two key terms, *community* and *identity*. For example, Brubaker and Cooper argue that *identity* “tends to mean too much (when understood in a strong sense), too little (when understood in a weak sense), or nothing at all (because of its sheer ambiguity),” concluding that it “is too ambiguous... to serve well the demands of social analysis.”<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, as we argue throughout this chapter, used carefully the term offers rich insight into social processes. Careful use might mean talking of “*identities*” in the plural rather than “*identity*”; identities are never *singular* affiliations.<sup>2</sup>

As well as a *subjective* dimension (how we see ourselves), identities include an *ascriptive* dimension (i.e., how others categorize and describe us) and a *differential* dimension (i.e., the “others” against which our identities are defined, the “constitutive outside” of our identities); to understand identity, we need to understand how these dimensions work together. The cultural theorist Stuart Hall suggested that the term *identification* might be more useful analytically than *identity*, the former naming an active, unfinished process, rather than a finished state of being.<sup>3</sup> In this respect, identities are all to some extent socially constructed and shaped by the specificities of time and place. This means that they are highly complex, operating in intersection with one another – and with other lines of difference such as gender or class. While theorists understand identities as always “in process” (as Hall put it; i.e., in

a state of being formed and reformed), many people understand their own identities as far more permanent, as residing deep within themselves.

*Community* is a similarly complex term. Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman points to the imprecision around its use: “Community’ conveys the image of a warm and comfortable place, like a fireplace at which we warm our hands on a frosty day. Out there, in the street, all sorts of dangers lie in ambush; in here, in the community, we can relax and feel safe.”<sup>4</sup> Other sociologists have attempted a clearer definition: “sense of familiarity and safety, mutual concern and support, continuous loyalties, even the possibility of being appreciated for one’s full personality and contribution to group life rather than for narrower aspects of rank and achievement.”<sup>5</sup>

A related term is community *cohesion*, which can refer *both* to the glue – the social bonds – maintaining individual communities – *and* to the bonds that tie different communities together in a given place. As we shall see further, this term has been contested, reflecting the diverse and changing ways in which communities have functioned over time.

In relation to faith and ethnic groups, *community* works on at least two levels: the face-to-face immediate community, perhaps coming together as a devotional congregation, and a second, larger meaning that becomes more prominent in the context of societies that are ethnically or religiously plural, which groups co-religionists or co-ethnics together in contrast to other members of a society, however loose their institutional or communal ties are in practice. The objective is to grasp, as political philosopher Iris Marion Young described, the ways in which “as products of social relations, groups are fluid; they come into being and fade away.” In this respect, we often find that Muslim and Jewish “group identity may become salient only under specific circumstances” since Muslims and Jews and alongside “most people in modern societies have multiple group identifications, moreover, and therefore groups themselves are not discrete unities.”<sup>6</sup>

Following from this discussion of our key terms, a series of questions emerge, which this chapter will explore, drawing on the histories of Jewish and Muslim peoples. First, how do the religious identities of Jews and Muslims relate to other identities, including ethnic identities? Have Jews and Muslims formed ethnic communities or communities of faith? How has the condition of minority – the main condition under which Jews have lived during the period between the destruction of the Second Temple and the creation of the State of Israel, as well as the condition experienced by Muslims living outside majority Muslim lands, including in the West – made a difference to forms of identity and community available to Muslims and Jews? Across each of these questions is the recognition that processes of identification are rarely straightforward issues of choice, for they often comprise a response (sometime a challenge) to prior processes of categorization.

## The centrality of community in Judaism and Islam

Community has been a central concept of both the Jewish tradition and the Muslim tradition. Within the Jewish tradition, there are at least three terms meaning community: *‘edah*, a community of the like-minded; *tzibbur*, a group of people who have come together for a particular purpose; and *kehillah*, a sustained and organized collective.<sup>7</sup>

The meanings of these terms have shifted over time. Prayer, as well as the rituals that mark the cycle of death, require the presence of a quorum (*minyan*) – a sharp contrast with Christian, Hindu, or Buddhist tradition, in which isolated ascetic practices have been a common feature. *Tzibbur* is the kind of contingent community created by the *minyan*. The devotional importance of the *minyan* only emerged in exile; there was no fixed quorum in

Temple Judaism in Palestine but, instead, the concept was laid down in the Talmud, written at the time of the Babylonian exile, on the basis of exegesis on biblical texts. The Jerusalem Talmud accepted a quorum of six or seven, while the Babylonian Talmud required the now orthodox ten.

These face-to-face forms of community sit within a larger circle of connection denoted by the term *Am Yisra'el*, the people of Israel, the trans-local kinship of all those who share in the covenant made during the Exodus from Egypt. The annual retelling of the story of Exodus at Passover reiterates this sense of peoplehood that transcends the more contingent forms of face-to-face community carried in terms such as *kehillah*. The Jewish historian Salo Baron argued that this kind of pan-Jewish ethno-religious sense of community emerged in the Talmudic period, the first six centuries of exile, during which communities dispersed in the Near East and the Mediterranean built and sustained a powerful infrastructure for regular long-distance contact along trade routes whereby rabbinical authorities codified Jewish law in response to the queries of the communities.<sup>8</sup>

Community was also a central concept in classical Islam, in a sense that resonates far more with the extended concept of the *Am Yisra'el*. The Arabic term *umma*, meaning nation or community, appears sixty-two times in the Qur'an. The Arabic term may be related to Hebrew *ummā* or the Aramaic *umetha*, terms that relate to peoplehood or community. Although the term's meaning evolves over the course of the Qur'an, it primarily refers to the wider community of believers, as in 3.104: "Let there be an *umma* among you, advocating what is good, demanding what is right, and eradicating what is wrong."<sup>9</sup>

The term emerged in a context in which early Muslims were shaping a new community of the faithful out of a society that was predominantly tribal. It "entailed a consciousness of belonging to a community whose membership was open equally and without any qualification or restriction, except that of the faith, to all believers."<sup>10</sup> The term thus indicates a form of community that is (like *Am Yisra'el*) trans-local and (unlike *Am Yisra'el*) trans-ethnic – not the face-to-face communion of a congregation, nor the kin-like bonds of tribe. In this sense, the concept of *umma* conveys the universal message of Islam, which enabled rapid growth of the faith first within but then beyond the Arabic world.

Very rapidly, under the first Caliphate, the meaning of community in Islam became bound up with forms of political belonging, as Islam became a mode of governance as well as a faith. The concept of the *umma* was, until the Mongol destruction of the 'Abbāsid empire – to some extent even until the fall of the Ottoman dynasty in the twentieth century – bound up with that of the Caliphate. The role of the caliph, as the executive arm of the state in a specific imperial territory *and* as the protector of the entire Islamic community beyond this state, had both a territorially specific and a universal dimension. Long after the political provenance, this settlement finds expression in the congregational prayer that is often held as "an example of a community in harmony with believers standing in rows and functioning with one body," while the *Hajj* or pilgrimage continues to symbolize "equality and the breaking of barriers between nations, classes and tongues."<sup>11</sup>

In contrast, in Babylonian captivity, when the Talmud was written (sixth century BCE) and especially after the destruction of the Second Temple (70 CE), the predominant Jewish experience was of exile and minority in lands ruled by non-Jews, and the meanings of community and sources of internal cohesion became increasingly anchored in the institutions of collective Judaic practice, that is, in the organized *kehillah*. In the Talmud, for instance, it was suggested that Jewish scholarly life required ten institutions, including a court of law and a charity fund. These institutions have tended to maintain a very high degree of autonomy in conditions of minority (including under Muslim rule).

The Islamic and Jewish traditions, then, both developed a complex understanding of the relations between community's local, face-to-face scale and its extended, trans-local scale. This distinction – between the Jewish minority, exilic condition, and the Islamic experience of being a religion of state – structured the ways the two faiths conceived community and identity for most of the first millennium after the emergence of Islam and into the modern era.

### Exilic Judaism and classical Islam

In biblical and Talmudic Hebrew, the term *kehillah* (*kehillot* in plural form) simply meant an assembly of people. In medieval Europe, however, it increasingly took on a more specific meaning relating to the particular institutional form taken by Jewish communities in different parts of the world. As discussed in Chapter 1, a range of ways for Jewish and Muslim communities to live together flourished in the Islamic world. Jews were guaranteed protection of life and property and freedom of worship under Islamic law. In general, what this meant in early Muslim lands is that *within* Jewish communities Jewish religious institutions retained considerable autonomy and authority, while maintaining a strongly distinct Jewish identity marked off from Muslim neighbours. As discussed in Chapter 1, the norm was relative tolerance and pragmatism rather than persecution, but the distinct status of Jews meant that a pan-Jewish identity – primarily religious – was sustained.

In Christian lands, persecution was more common, and this too contributed to the maintenance of a distinct Jewish identity. However, Baron describes a pan-Jewish identity sustained by regular contact with centralized rabbinical authorities across the Roman and Islamic world and breaking down in the Christian world in the medieval period as Jewish communities were increasingly dispersed and autonomous: effectively states within states.<sup>12</sup> As the Babylonian centre of Jewish life declined, the role of the *kehillot* – self-governing communities in diaspora – grew. In the later Middle Ages, historians Elazar and Cohen have argued, regional confederations of *kehillot*, known as *va'adim*, became increasingly significant, mediating between local communities and the feudal state.<sup>13</sup>

By the late medieval period, Jewish communities in the Christian world increasingly functioned similarly to guilds or other corporate bodies representing the various estates of an essentially pluralist society. As with the other corporate bodies of the *ancien régime*, the rights and responsibilities (including proscriptions and exemptions) of Jewish communities were governed by charters agreed by the monarch or feudal lords.

Theological dialogue with Christian clerics encouraged reflection on the spiritual dimension of community too, and the holy community of Jerusalem as represented in the Torah became an important model for thinking about the communal.<sup>14</sup> The legal dimension of the communal was increasingly important, as Jewish communities recognized the authority of rabbinical courts on a local and increasingly regional basis and as the feudal state increasingly regulated its relations with Jews through such authorities.

Toward the early modern period, as the non-Jewish estates increasingly came to be governed by more universal forms of law, the difference of the Jews, and the autonomy of their legal system, became more sharply focused; this period saw the emergence of formal segregation in Jewish ghettos, for example in Venice from 1516. These communities combined oligarchic and democratic dimensions: communal notables carried considerable personal authority, but there was a notion – as expressed in an example from Prague in 1579 discussed by historian Susan Boettcher – of communal leaders acting “with the will and prior knowledge of the entire community.”<sup>15</sup>

In many ways, this paralleled the forms Jewish community took in Muslim lands in the same period, where Jewish status was increasingly codified within a state-regulated plural polity. The Ottoman Empire saw the development of the *millet* system, which required Jews and Christians to pay tax in lieu of military service as well as the *zakāt* imposed upon Muslims (roughly 2.5 percent of household income), with the tax collected by central authorities within the Jewish communities, so that communal notables had a key role in mediating relations between the communities and the state.

Islam in this period developed a radically different dynamic. Whereas Judaism was a minority faith, Islam was a religion of state. In this context, Islam was less of an identity but was a religious faith shared by people in communities that were often identified by language, ethnicity or tribe. As much of the Islamic world – such as the cities of North Africa, the Levant, the Balkans, and Iraq – was fundamentally plural ethnically, Islam was a common force across lines of difference, rather than something marking people off as different. Only in relatively rare cases in the pre- and early modern world – such as in parts of the Russian and Chinese empires – did Muslims live as minorities ruled by others.

Community and identity in Islam were complicated by the relationship between ethno-linguistic Arab identity and religious Muslim identity. The privileged role of the Arabic language in Islam (as the philosophical language in which God dictated the Qur'an to the Prophet) as well as the privileged role of descent from the Quraysh (the tribe of the Prophet Muhammad), has meant that the Arab identity had a hegemonic role within classical Islam. However, the ascendancy of non-Arab dynasties – the Mamlūks, the Mughals and Ottomans – after the fall of the 'Abbāsids changed this relationship, as did the spread, through conversion and conquest, of Islam far beyond the Arab world into sub-Saharan Africa and into Persia, the Indian subcontinent, and Southeast Asia. In this context, the trans-local, trans-ethnic, indeed global dimension of the *umma* became increasingly significant.

## The coming of modernity and the transformation of community

The forms of community and identity described in the previous section were profoundly transformed through the series of processes that constituted *modernity*. The Renaissance, Reformation, and Enlightenment and the emergence of national and democratic states changed the relationship between individuals and collectives. The *ancien régime* had seen the division of society into communities or estates in which faith was one of a series of relatively tightly scripted markers of community. Modernity unmoored individuals from their communities, making possible a conception of *individual* identity. As Bauman puts it, “The sameness [which underpins community] evaporates once the communication between its insiders and the world outside becomes more intense and carries more weight than the mutual exchanges of the insiders.”<sup>16</sup>

Some scholars have argued that Islamic theology, with its conception of the soul as the “private property” of the individual, was influential on the thinkers within Christendom who laid the intellectual groundwork for the unmooring of individuals from the communities and tightly scripted identities of the feudal era.<sup>17</sup> Other scholars have criticized this framing as “elaborated within the confines of Western modernity”<sup>18</sup> such that it retains its ethnocentric anchorage and repeats the binary narrative of the West and the rest, progress and slowgress<sup>19</sup> in a manner that ignores alternate paths to modernity within the Islamic world and elsewhere.

In conditions of modernity, as individuals became unmoored from communities, the concept of community and the sources of cohesion came into clearer view by virtue of community's contrast with an increasingly individualized wider society. Thus, the German

sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies, writing in 1887, described the opposition between *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society): Community, for Tönnies, was characterized by a natural common understanding between its members, who were in fundamental ways the same as each other, while *Gesellschaft*, emerging with modernity, was based on impersonal relations between strangers.

In Europe, the unmooring of individuals from communities was accompanied by a shift in the ways in which peoples were categorized, from religion to race. While earlier European taxonomies had divided the world into Christians, Jews, Mohammedans, and the rest,<sup>20</sup> modern secular science drew categories from philology (e.g., the concepts of the Aryan and the Semitic) and then raciology.<sup>21</sup> However, there is a sense in which the secularity of the modern nation-state was a myth: Confessional identity and denominational authority were bound up with nationhood in many contexts, as shown by Linda Colley's characterization of an earlier Britain as "a protestant Israel" and Geoff Levey's reminder that despite its wall of separation, the United States has always remained "One Nation Under God."<sup>22</sup>

Modernity's secular drift, as described for example by Catholic philosopher Charles Taylor, did not always or everywhere weaken faith so much as set it loose from the *ancien régime's* bundles of markers of community, making it available as an identity that might cut across communities. From Protestantism, secular Enlightenment thought inherited the dichotomy between *faith*, which is an internal, personal, intellectual matter, and *practice*, deed, ritual, or culture, which is collective and tangible. This binary meant that Jews who accepted the promise of citizenship had to conceive of their religion as an "ism," an abstract religion or "confession" like Protestantism. In practice, such a dichotomy was hard to sustain for the mass of ghetto Jews, for whom their Jewishness was not an ism but a dense fabric of everyday practices, rituals, and traditions; not something one could retire to one's home to do in private but an entire way of life.

It was in this context that what came to be called "the Jewish question" emerged in Europe.<sup>23</sup> As Europeans were recast as citizens and unmoored from the estates of the *ancien régime*, the persistence of Jewish community became anomalous. In the pre-modern order, Bauman argues, "the Jews were just one estate or caste among many." The law had been "a network of privileges and dispossessions."<sup>24</sup> To attain the new universal rights of citizenship, Jews were expected to relinquish the specific entitlements they had as Jews. Emancipation (as the universality of law) was incompatible with what were seen as any particularities or particularism (including Jewish particularity). To become full citizens, Jews could no longer be fully Jewish.

The emancipation of the Jews, starting in France and spreading across Europe, came, then, with the price of relinquishing a specific identity as a separate nation or community. The dichotomy between citizen and Jew was deployed in the formula proposed in 1789 by a member of the French Constituent Assembly, Clermont-Tonnerre: "Everything must be denied to the Jews as a nation and everything must be granted to them as individuals; they must not form either a political body or an order in the State; they must be individual citizens."<sup>25</sup> Emancipation, then, pointed toward the next stage in the abolition of particularities: assimilation. The emancipation of the Jews was to prove a poisoned chalice: the opening up of opportunities for mobility but at a price: losing cultural distinctiveness. This process played out differently in different countries of the Christian world; it was most fully developed in France, whose official philosophy of integration remains a rigid secularism in which all cultural distinctiveness or communitarian affiliation is seen as suspect.

Across the West, though, those Jews unwilling or unable to pay the price of assimilation – Jews arriving from Eastern Europe, for example, or ultra-Orthodox Jews – were seen

as backward and suspect. However, all Jews faced the risk of accusations of dual loyalty, of maintaining a state within a state. These discourses became central to modern anti-Semitism – and, as we see further, set a template for later anti-Muslim racism.

The Jewish response to this normative monoculturalism in the modern nation-states of Europe was what Steven Bayme, Mark Levene, and other historians have called the “Jewish liberal compromise”: the contract whereby Jews were Jews in the private sphere but national citizens in the public sphere, differing only from other citizens by their private faith. This compromise was played out differently in different national contexts. In England, for instance, they would be Englishmen of the Jewish faith: As Levene puts it, English Jews...

upheld the view that the English Jew should have the same status in society as a Congregationalist or Quaker. One’s Jewishness was henceforth not a collective interest... but purely a matter of individual religious choice ... [T]his view argued that being Jewish in no way cut across one’s identification with the British nation, nor could it be deemed to cut across one’s loyalty to or ability to serve the British state.<sup>26</sup>

However, the normative monoculturalism of the modern nation-state was often more contested than the foregoing description allows. While some scholars have emphasized the lack of pluralism in European countries,<sup>27</sup> historian David Feldman has spoken of a tradition of “conservative pluralism”: “From the middle of the 19th century pluralism... became the predominant political response to religious diversity [in the United Kingdom].”<sup>28</sup> As increasing numbers of Christians were affiliated to non-Anglican denominations, the Anglican Church began to advocate for state support for the Roman Catholic Church and other denominational institutions as a way of maintaining the state support it enjoyed rather than lose it.

Even in France, the heartland of laicity and universalism, there was a degree of pluralism, embodied in the consistorial model established by Napoleon, by which relations between the state and Jewish communities were mediated by “consistories” elected by “notables” within the communities who in turn were nominated by the local authorities. The consistories represented the interests of the communities to the state and in turn were charged with responsibilities such as ensuring that local synagogues followed rules of decorum set centrally and that Jews did not evade military service.

Nineteenth-century cycles of migration from Ireland and later from Eastern Europe expanded the Roman Catholic presence in Britain and later the Jewish presence. Both groups were subject to processes of racialization<sup>29</sup> as well as civil discrimination on the basis of their religious affiliation but, with the active support of the Established Church, both in due course have come to enjoy some of the benefits associated with Establishment. These included Catholic schools and later Jewish schools which, in 1944, were granted the right to opt into the state sector while retaining church control. By the twentieth century, Britain was an example of “moderate secularism,” accommodating non-Anglican confessions<sup>30</sup> and pluralizing the church-state link through constitutional reform, public policies, and social services delivery.

Most striking, English law was pluralized to the extent that citizens are able to take certain civil legal cases to parallel structures of religious law, most notably Jewish *beth dins* and from the 1970s *Shari’a courts*<sup>31</sup> – with the active support of the leadership of the Anglican Church.<sup>32</sup> The later, contingent incorporation of Muslims followed a similar pattern, with Jewish and then Muslim chaplains introduced along the lines of Catholic and Protestant chaplains in the military or in higher education across the majority Christian world, including France. For



example, in the United States, Muslim chaplains were introduced into the military in 1992,<sup>33</sup> following upon the concessions afforded to other groups.

### The melting pot and hyphenated identities

Religious minorities in secular normatively Christian nation-states have actively struggled to find space in the context of the varying political opportunity structures shaped by the prevalent “philosophies of integration”<sup>34</sup> in each nation-state. Through Tocquevillian processes of “argument and experimentation” through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Catholic and Jewish groups historically battled and sought inclusion. Levey lists a series of Jewish campaigns against Sunday closing laws and denominational schooling and holidays,<sup>35</sup> expanding American religious pluralism such that, by the middle of the Cold War, there had been re-forging of an American public culture around a putative “Judeo-Christian” identity in which “being a Protestant, a Catholic or Jew are three acceptable ways of expressing American identity, that being religious has become in fact an evidence of adherence to national values.”<sup>36</sup>

This was facilitated by a series of factors. Jews never presented a demographic challenge to Protestant ascendancy. American Protestantism “tended to maintain a philio-Hebraic attitude,”<sup>37</sup> and there was a relative absence of the forms of religious anti-Semitism that predominated in Europe. Jews, along with other European migrants, were slowly and conditionally included in the racial category of whiteness, defined against the rigidly ascribed blackness of African-Americans.

America came to see itself, in the image popularized by Anglo-Jewish writer Israel Zangwill, as a “melting pot” – but the meaning of this term was contested. For the anti-Semitic Henry Ford, whose immigrant factory workers were required to go through a ceremony in which they entered a giant melting pot in “ethnic garb” and emerged as identical Americans, differences would be melted down through a process of assimilation. For Zangwill, America’s civic culture was capacious and open to difference.

From the time of the First World War, when Jews and other “white ethnics” served as white in a racially segregated American military, intellectuals such as Zangwill, Horace Kallen, and Randolph Bourne were developing notions of “hyphenated” belonging; the human heart, Zangwill wrote, “is large enough to hold many loyalties.”<sup>38</sup> Bourne argued that this kind of hyphenated identity characterized what he called “transnational America.”

American cities were increasingly characterized as a mosaic of “ethnic quarters,” with the Jewish ghetto taking its place alongside Chinatowns and Little Italies (notably cast as the “ethnicity paradox” as described in the classic works of Chicago School Sociology, e.g., by Robert Park or Louis Wirth).<sup>39</sup> Already in the 1900s, there was a Bosniak Muslim quarter in Chicago and, by the 1940s, an Arab-American quarter in Dearborn, MI. By the 1960s, the concept of “hyphenated identity” was deeply embedded,<sup>40</sup> not least for Jewish Americans but also for Arab-Americans and other Muslim citizens.

The pluralism of the American melting pot was particularly conducive to the formation of ethnic identities, but the twentieth century saw the rise of ethnic identities globally, particularly in populations where religion was declining as an anchor of identity. For example, anti-Jewish pogroms in Russia and Romania in the early twentieth century led to a rise in pan-Jewish ethnic consciousness among Jews in the Russian Empire and across the diaspora, with images of the atrocities circulating in an increasingly trans-national print media and a language kinship and common blood (rather than co-religious affiliation) tying diasporic Jews and the victims of the pogrom.<sup>41</sup>

This kind of pan-ethnic identity was paralleled in the Islamic world by the rising nationalisms within the Ottoman Empire, including the emergence of a strong pan-Arab political identity (often championed above all by Christian and Jewish rather than Muslim Arabs) and by Syrian, Palestinian, Egyptian, and other such (often competing) more regional nationalisms.

## Multiculturalism

In the present era, both community and identity have become key terms in both public and academic political and philosophical discourse. As individuals become increasingly unmoored from communities, the desire for community becomes stronger, and identity, as a substitute for the warmth of face-to-face community, takes on a more prominent role:

“Identity”... owes the attention it attracts and the passions it begets to being a surrogate of community: of the allegedly “natural home” or that circle that stays warm however cold the winds outside... Identity sprouts on the graveyard of communities, but flourishes thanks to the promise of a resurrection of the dead.<sup>42</sup>

The hyphenated identities sketched by Bourne’s generation became mainstream. Literary scholar Werner Sollors characterized the drama of American hyphenated identity in terms of the dichotomy between Old World “descent” (the blood lines of race and kinship) and New World “consent” (civic nationalism). Sollors shows how immigrant novels, especially those by Yiddish writers, staged this tension in stories of the tug between the inherited culture and its family obligations and tight moral codes, on one side (exemplified by arranged marriages), and, on the other, the free choices associated with the new (exemplified by romantic love).<sup>43</sup> The template created in these American Jewish immigrant novels has been replicated in other multicultural countries and in other media for Muslim groups, too – from Hanif Kureishi’s *My Beautiful Laundrette* to Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane*.<sup>44</sup>

The fall of Communism led to a shift in emphasis from class to other identities, including religious and ethnic identifications. The hyphenated identities of the modern period gave way to the rise of “identity politics” in which these identifications became central organizing principles of social action. Communitarian philosophy, emphasizing our responsibilities to members of our communities over our rights as individuals, became increasingly prominent in the postmodern period. What Charles Taylor named “the politics of recognition” became an organizing principle of political culture as minorities demanded the right to cultural difference. The earlier emphasis on assimilation was replaced by an emphasis on *acculturation*, the two-way (rather than unilinear) processes of cultural psychological change resulting from people of different cultures interacting.

In this respect, “multiculturalism” as a concept is – like very many others – “polysemic,” such that multiculturalist authors cannot be held entirely responsible for the variety of ways in which the term is interpreted. This is something noted by Bhabha who points to the tendency for multiculturalism to be appropriated as a “portmanteau term,” one that encapsulates a variety of sometimes contested meanings.<sup>45</sup> In this respect, the idea of multiculturalism might be said to have a “chameleonic” quality that facilitates its simultaneous adoption and rejection in the critique or defense of a position.<sup>46</sup> One illustration of this is the manner in which multiculturalism is simultaneously used as a label to describe the fact of pluralism or diversity in any given society and a moral stance that cultural diversity is a desirable feature of a given society (as well as the different types of ways in which the state could recognize

and support it). Some have turned to this variety in meaning and usage of the term as an explanation of the allegedly “widely divergent assessments of the short history and potential future of multiculturalism.”<sup>47</sup> Either way, it is certainly the case that the political struggle for group-differentiated citizenship that became prominent in the 1960s and 1970s, in the form of feminist, anti-racist, and gay liberation movements, brought group-based mobilizations and what would become known as “*new* social movements” into normative conceptions of multicultural citizenship<sup>48</sup> that have had implications for Jewish and Muslim public claim-making and visibility.

As an increasingly confident politics of recognition emerged, Jewish communities often cleaved to the older model of the liberal compromise, minimizing rather than asserting cultural differences.<sup>49</sup> Mainstream commentators, such as British prime minister Margaret Thatcher, often framed Jews as a model minority, assimilating culturally and demonstrating their loyalty.<sup>50</sup> In the late twentieth century, Muslim identities were a very minor feature of mainstream accounts of ethnic minorities and discourses of multiculturalism in the West, and Muslims were often seen by the same mainstream Western politicians as a model minority much like the Jews – socially conservative, family-oriented, politically quiescent. However, after the “Rushdie affair” (in the wake of the publication of Salman Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses*), moral panic around Muslim minorities began to coalesce: The affair alerted the public imagination to the presence of minorities who subscribed not solely to a national identity or a south Asian regionalism but to a potentially universal Muslim identity that provided an increasingly salient category in the course of self-identification and public claims-making.<sup>51</sup>

### From ethnic to confessional pluralism?

Multiculturalism was shaped in an age when culture and ethnicity were the dominant modalities through which difference, identity, and community were understood in both academia and the public square. In the current century, however, faith has returned to the heart of debates about these issues. There has been a flooring-out of the trend toward secularization, due to drivers such as “the higher religiosity of immigrants, the rates of religious retention amongst immigrant groups, and differential fertility rates amongst the religious and non-religious populations.”<sup>52</sup>

Some scholars thus argue that we are living in a post-secular era. They argue that religion, faith communities, and spiritual values have returned to the centre of public life across the global North, reshaping public policy, governance, and social identity. They argue that this return is exemplified by the rising number of religious spaces in our urban landscapes.<sup>53</sup> Baker and Beaumont identify such spaces as both “spaces of belonging” and “spaces of becoming” where, for example, young Muslims develop practices of citizenship and secular citizens learn to understand diversity.<sup>54</sup>

And this trend impacts on dynamics of identity and community as well. Since the 1990s, sociologists have described a shift from ethnic to religious identities, for instance to specifically Islamic identities among younger generations of Muslims in Europe, no longer describing themselves, for example, as Dutch Moroccans, British Asians, or Scottish Bangladeshis but rather as Dutch, British or Scottish *Muslims*.<sup>55</sup> Leonard argues that something similar is happening in North America, that “‘Muslim American’ might be thought of as an emerging pan-ethnic label among young Muslims” from ethnically diverse backgrounds.<sup>56</sup> Ali argues that this trend has occurred “in part as a reaction to inter-generational conflicts and in part as a consequence of heightened intra-Muslim youth interaction in educational institutions, youth forums, and cyber space.”<sup>57</sup>

The *Satanic Verses* affair of 1989 initiated a global public debate about Muslim minorities, focusing on their Islamic identity rather than ethnic identity – reflecting and stimulating both increasingly assertive “Muslim consciousness”<sup>58</sup> as well as heightened external ascription of Muslim identity. It was in the wake of this affair, for example, that a Muslim umbrella body was created in Britain, paralleling earlier Jewish organizations, and debates over Islam in the public square, for instance concerning veiling regimes, were often the sites for discourses and counter-discourses about such forms of identity.<sup>59</sup>

These identity dynamics have become bound up with processes of securitisation since 9/11. In its wake, Western policy makers insisted the world was seeing the “clash of civilizations” foretold by Samuel Huntington, framing geo-politics in religious terms that echoed those of the pre-modern age. Muslims across the global North became seen as “suspect communities.”<sup>60</sup> Racism and prejudice against Muslims as Muslims (rather than, or as well as, based on perceived cultural difference, foreignness or racial identification) have become increasingly prominent.<sup>61</sup>

In many ways, the forms of anti-Muslim racism emerging from this draw on older forms of anti-Semitism: themes of religious and cultural difference to the extent of fundamental civilizational incompatibility, the fear of dual or divided loyalties, paranoid fantasies of global conspiracy, even specific images such as the terrorist, are features of both contemporary Islamophobia as well as classical anti-Semitism.<sup>62</sup> For example, the moral panic that Muslims want to impose Shari’a law echoes older fears of Jews wanting to create a state within a state. Other common features are newer, particularly the concern with religious spaces and places: for example, Jewish attempts to institute *eruvim* (barely visible boundary markers to create a legal breach in prohibitions on particular activities during the Sabbath) have met with hostility in many European countries, as has the building of mosques or of minarets.

And, just as in the earlier age of mass Jewish migration (when anti-“alien” campaigns were often euphemisms for anti-Semitism), anti-Muslim racism is often tied to immigration politics and xenophobia. In continental Europe, the image of the migrant and the image of the Muslim have been bound together, and it is often anti-immigrant parties who lead campaigns to restrict Muslim religious rights. This has been dramatically exemplified in the demand from some European political leaders to take only Christian refugees from the Middle East or the insistence that refugee flows harbour terrorists. And it is in this context that we have seen something of a return to assimilationism, with the insistence from some commentators and politicians that Muslim identity may not be compatible with “republican values,” “liberal values,” “British values,” and so on.<sup>63</sup>

The rise of Islamic identity politics is related to this. According to Grasso, this is shaped by “Islam’s potential to provide a coalescing identity for those who feel that they are unjustly discriminated [against] and victimized”.<sup>64</sup> He claims that there is “evidence that second generation Muslim immigrants are choosing specific elements of Islam and Muslim practices to signal their ‘otherness’ and resentment towards a mainstream society which they feel has failed them”.<sup>65</sup> Processes of securitization and stigmatization strengthen Islamic identity politics; just as the philosopher Hannah Arendt said at the time of the Holocaust “when one is attacked as a Jew, one must defend oneself as a Jew,” so today young Muslims attacked as Muslims increasingly defend themselves as such.

However, there is also evidence from across Europe and North America that Muslim minorities, despite stigmatization, identify with their countries of residence, following the pattern of hyphenated ethnic identities described earlier. For example, in the United Kingdom, Heath and Roberts, drawing on analysis of the U.K. government’s Citizenship Survey, report: “We find no evidence that Muslims or people of Pakistani heritage were in

general less attached to Britain than were other religions or ethnic groups. Ethnic minorities show clear evidence of ‘dual’ rather than ‘exclusive’ identities’: 43 percent of Muslims belong “very strongly” to Britain, and 42 percent say that they belong to Britain “fairly strongly.” Taken together, these figures are higher for Muslim respondents than they are for Christians or those of “no religion.”<sup>66</sup> In short, “overall British Muslims are more likely to be both patriotic and optimistic about Britain than are the white British community.”<sup>67</sup>

This confident British Muslim identity is paralleled in other nations of the global North, such as the United States, where the political scientist and public intellectual Muqtedar Khan identifies a significant population who “are not Americans who are Muslims or Muslims who have been born in the United States. They are American Muslims.”<sup>68</sup> The Middle East and North Africa and other Muslim majority areas are also increasingly characterized by complex, multiple, and intersecting identities. Religious identity has been the dominant Western frame for discussing identity in the Middle East and other predominantly Muslim regions, exemplified by the influential work of Bernard Lewis.<sup>69</sup> As Ali argues, however, this framing is simplistic, with faith-based identities intersecting with ethnic, national, political, and other identities, sometimes comfortably, sometimes uncomfortably. Thus, the rise of pan-Muslim solidarities, the resurgence of the idea of the Muslim *umma* or global “community of believers,” has coincided with the rise of an increasing range of possible identities for Muslims in both the West and the Muslim world.

The evidence suggests that “Muslim trans-nationalism should not be treated as a post- or near-9/11 phenomenon, but rather as a space and set of practices that have evolved over decades.”<sup>70</sup> Some scholars argue that Islamic identities are increasingly embraced over ethnic identities precisely because they are more ductile and multivalent rather than more obdurate: “Tyrer and Ahmad (2006) found that Muslim women respondents rejected notions of an essential, authentic primordial ethnic identity which they should adhere to and instead stressed the dynamic, contingent, and fluctuating nature of their identities.”<sup>71</sup> The literature shows similar patterns elsewhere: for example in Germany,<sup>72</sup> France,<sup>73</sup> and Belgium.<sup>74</sup>

It is in this context that we have seen a turn in some countries of the global North from multiculturalism to a “multi-faith” approach to community and identity. Around the turn of the century, politicians such as George W. Bush and Tony Blair spoke positively of the role of “faith-based” institutions in a democratic polity. In the United Kingdom, a national body (the Muslim Council of Britain) was created to represent mainstream Muslim opinion, on a model similar to the Board of Deputies of British Jews and with some encouragement from the main national political parties. It played a decisive role in gaining public recognition of Muslim issues and Muslim group identity alongside those of ethnically defined groups, and it successfully lobbied for the state funding of Muslim schools on the same basis as Christian and Jewish schools.<sup>75</sup> Laws against religious discrimination were introduced in 2003 and strengthened in 2007 and again in 2010. Legislation against incitement to religious hatred was introduced in 2006. These developments have taken place with the active support of the leadership of the Church of England.

Under the coalition and Conservative governments after 2010, this trend continued in the United Kingdom; *Creating the conditions for integration* (2013), setting out the government’s agenda on identity and community, made almost no references to race and far more to faith than to ethnic identities. The document did not mention racism but highlighted hate crimes against Muslims and Jews. At the same time, the document noted that “Christianity – and faith in general – plays an important part in the heritage and culture of our nation” and affirmed the right of municipalities to “include [Christian] prayers as part of the formal business at council meetings”. Here we can see a full return

to the conservative pluralism of an earlier age, with Jewish and Muslim minority rights affirmed in a way that does not diminish normative national Christianity. As Feldman argues, “As different groups have reasserted the centrality of religion to the politics of diversity, so multiculturalism has returned to territory that is easily accommodated by the practices of conservative pluralism.” While multiculturalism as a term has been discredited across the West, the political settlements and public policies that shaped it, increasingly recalibrated for a multi-*faith* world, remain substantially in place.<sup>76</sup>

### Beyond identitarianism?

Thinking about Muslim and Jewish communities today faces a number of challenges. Both communities seek to conserve their authentic core in an increasingly individualized world, but the centrifugal forces driven by postmodernism continue to lead to innovation and renewal. In the rise of pan-Muslim identity politics, the plight of Palestinians has an iconic role – and correspondingly, the rise of pan-Jewish identity politics has included an increasingly hegemonic role of Zionism in Jewish communities. This means that the Israel-Palestine conflict often overshadows Jewish-Muslim contact; Muslim anti-Semitism and Jewish Islamophobia are one dimension of this, but there are also increasing attempts to maintain and nurture cross-communal contact. Synagogues have led the campaigns in many Western countries for taking in more Syrian refugees – often invoking a Jewish history that includes a refugee experience. Mosques have played major roles in providing support for synagogues that have been attacked by the far right or in funding the repair of synagogues with dwindling communities. The January 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris targeted Jews – but also saw Muslims defending the lives of Jews.

If the experience of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia has played a significant role in maintaining and even strengthening pan-Jewish and pan-Muslim identities, the similarities across these racisms<sup>77</sup> also provide the grounds for solidarity. Attacks on ritual slaughter, infant circumcision, or distinctive head coverings, sometimes *aimed* at only one of the two populations, affect both equally. For example, French prohibition of ostentatious religious symbols aimed at the Muslim headscarf have also proscribed Jewish *kippot* (skullcaps). These common concerns have given rise to collaboration between Jewish and Muslim religious leaders in many Western countries. To give just one example: After the Paris terrorist attacks of November 2015, there was a wave of arson attacks on mosques across the world, including one on the Masjid Al-Salaam in Peterborough, Ontario; the nearby synagogue immediately raised money for repairs.<sup>78</sup>

More broadly, multi-faith and inter-faith movements involving Jews and Muslims and others are increasingly common features of congregational life. Mosques and synagogues increasingly offer space for prayer to other groups; there is a growing movement for multi-faith prayer spaces on a small scale (in airports or colleges, for example) but also larger purpose-built structures.

The emergence of new forms of Jewish and Muslim identity – the development of a bottom-up synthesis between religious and national identities by Muslim youth, the continued dialectic between centrifugal and centripetal forces in religious communities, the continued rise of confident hyphenated forms of belonging, fragile instances of Jewish-Muslim solidarity – are all examples of the suppleness of identity formation in the contemporary world. Hybridity, diaspora, and trans-nationalism are increasingly important frames for thinking about our increasingly complex identities: Mixing and connections across boundaries are increasingly important.

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## Further reading

- Brenner, Michael and Derek Penslar, eds., *In Search of Jewish Community: Jewish Identities in Germany and Austria, 1918–1933* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998). Rich historical case studies of Jewish explorations of the concepts of community and belonging in the crucial period between the full emancipation of European Jews and the start of the Nazi genocide.
- Garnett, Jane and Alana Harris, eds., *Rescripting Religion in the City: Migration and Religious Identity in the Modern Metropolis* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013). A collection of essays on contemporary and historical forms of religious belonging and interfaith contact in urban contexts, focusing on Muslim, Jewish and Christian examples from across the globe.
- Goldberg, Harvey E., Steven M. Cohen, and Ezra Kopelowit, eds., *Dynamic Belonging: Contemporary Jewish Collective Identities* (New York: Berghahn, 2011). A collection of essays drawing from a range of disciplines exploring changing Jewish identity, in particular through rich ethnographic case studies.
- Levey, Geoffrey and Tariq Modood, eds., *Secularism, Religion and Multicultural Citizenship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). A collection of essays whose ambition is to bring to bear theoretical rigor, historical insights, and cultural analysis upon questions of political theory and the risks associated with secularism, and the compatibility of Islam and Western liberal democracy, through the study of cases in Britain, Germany, France, the United States, Australia, and India.
- Meer, Nasar, *Citizenship, Identity and the Politics of Multiculturalism: The Rise of Muslim Consciousness* (2nd ed.), (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2015). Explores the dynamic interactions of multiculturalism with Muslim identities. Theoretically informed by writers concerned with minority consciousness, difference and recognition, it charts progress on policy questions in the arenas of education, discrimination legislation, and public representation. Cumulatively, it shows how multiculturalism can foster a meaningful citizenship for Muslims today.
- Modood, Tariq, *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea* (second ed.), (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013). Offers a defence of political (as opposed to philosophical) multiculturalism, arguing that different minorities need to be accommodated in different ways, and so a single template is not appropriate nor necessary as long as there is a strong sense of an inclusive, plural national identity and religious and other identities are welcomed on equal terms. The second edition develops the argument that a policy of integration is incomplete without multiculturalism and a moderate secularism.

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