

MUSLIMS IN THE WEST:  
ASSIMILATION OR INTEGRATION?  
THE DILEMMA OF DECLINING TRUST AND  
RISING POPULIST PARTIES

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*Introduction*

The growing presence of Muslims in the west coupled with social tension has provided fuel for xenophobic, nativist political parties throughout the western world. The rise of extreme right-wing parties and populist leaders is not just a European phenomenon, but a western one.

On the one hand, for the first time in history, in spring 2013, two major extreme right-wing parties across Europe: the French National Front and the Freedom Party in the Netherlands began to collaborate for the most recent 2014 European elections. Four more far-right parties joined this initiative: Austria's Freedom Party, Sweden's Democrats, Italy's Northern League and Belgium's Vlaams Belang. Recently, Trump's phenomenon has been launching radical ideas against Muslims (in particular what it is being called anti-Islamization<sup>1</sup> and anti-Muslimism) not only in the US but in the whole western world as well<sup>2</sup>.

In the last twenty years, the subject of Muslims in the West has become a central issue all over the world. It evidences stereotypes and prejudice towards Muslims which is clearly observable in far-right parties that describe Muslims as fanatics, dangerous and irrational. These parties claim Islam is a major threat to all people

who belong to the Western world. Consequently, a number of candidates and often populists and right-wing parties in many western countries such as France, Austria, Italy, Denmark, Great Britain and the Netherlands have made a crackdown on Islam the pillar of their political platforms. The parties have performed surprisingly well in recent elections. For example, the Freedom Movement came in second in Austria's national elections in 1999. Similarly, in Italy two parties with xenophobic tendencies: the separatist Northern League and post-fascist Nationalist Alliance, performed well in the 2001 elections. In this light, the French national front shocked the world in 2002 when it beat President Jacques Chirac in the first round of presidential voting. All these kinds of developments raise questions about the future and what will happen if the western world is led by populist parties and leaders? Why do contemporary voters cast their votes for such parties?

On the other hand, there is a tiny bright side in multiculturalist countries such as the UK where Londoners have set a unique example by electing Sadiq Khan as the first Muslim to be the mayor of the greatest city in the world. This scenario was repeated in Germany when Muhterem Aras, a Green Party politician, was elected as the speaker of a state parliament in Germany, taking the post in Baden-Württemberg from a member of a populist anti-immigration party. Similarly, Justin Trudeau, the Canadian Prime Minister, has formed a noteworthy cabinet that reflects diversity of Canadian society.

The voices against Islam are rising not only because of far-right parties or exaggeration of politicians and the press. There is also a large number of publications and authors that illustrate the mythical character of the Islamic threat to the West. For instance, American political thinkers like Francis Fukuyama or Samuel Huntington in his thesis of a "clash of civilizations," claim that the

Western culture is under the threat from the Islamic and Confucian civilizations, and have urged western elites, in particular European ones, to defend cultural traditions such as humanism and Christianity in the face of Islam<sup>3</sup>.

All of these issues raise the question which scenario will happen in the West? Are we going to witness populist leaders and extreme parties leading the western world one day? How would it be? What would be the future of Muslim minorities then? Will it be integration or assimilation or might there be a third new model we have not any idea about yet. This paper demonstrates all kinds of such questions in three sections. First: it define the major concepts of the study. Second: it analyzes the development of the relationship between Muslims and the West in many dimensions. Third: it highlights the political progress of far-right and populist parties.

### *1. Theoretical framework*

In this section, the paper illustrates major notions of integration and assimilation. Moreover, it clearly distinguishes between populism and extreme parties in terms of ideology. Furthermore, it tries to find an answer to the question why the outlook of western citizens has changed to be in favour of populist parties compared with the past in order to state some major elements that explain the change of Western citizens' political behaviour.

To begin with, it is quite essential to mention that this paper refers to Islam as a religion that belongs to the Muslim world with Arabic countries and another Muslim states in the Middle East such as Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and Kashmir. In terms of religion, Muslims are diverse in their ethnic and linguistic affiliation, and political adherence, e.g. Sufi, Sunni etc. However, this paper puts an emphasis on Muslims who live permanently in the West<sup>4</sup>.

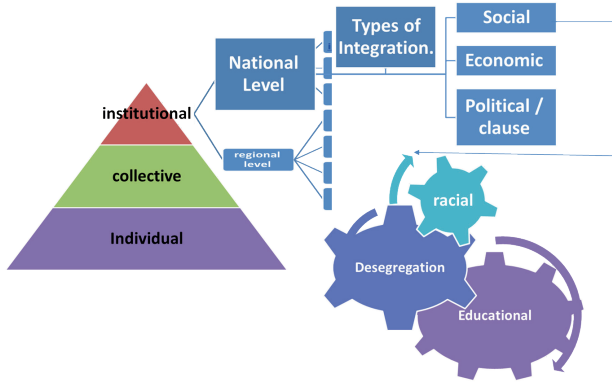
In this regard, the West is a term referring to the western world which includes different nations and has its roots in the Greco-Roman civilization in Europe and the advent of Christianity in the common era. One of the main patterns of the West is that Western culture has been heavily shaped by the expansive imperialism and colonialism of the 15th to 20th centuries, which is reflected in the three fundamental Western features which are Christianity, human rights and democratization. Likewise, it could be defined as standing in opposition to the cultures and civilizations of the Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia and the remote Far East. Therefore, Western culture is a term used very broadly to refer to a heritage of social norms, ethical values, traditional customs and belief systems that are associated with the Western civilization and lifestyle. In the contemporary era, in particular after globalization, the Western culture is facing new value systems such as post-materialism. Alongside, there is the existence of political pluralism, prominent subcultures or countercultures and increasing cultural syncretism.

### *1. Integration*

Moving on to the concept of integration, which is a process of mixing things or people together that were formerly separated<sup>5</sup>, there are two levels of integration that can be individual<sup>6</sup>, collective and institutional<sup>7</sup> levels, which depends on whether communities are heterogenous or homogenous.

As shown in figure No. 1, institution-wise, integration could be applied at the national or regional level. Starting with the national level that includes: social integration which is the lowest step that reflects the process of moving the refugees and underprivileged sections of a society into its mainstream. This is directly linked to

Figure No. 1: *Levels of Integration*



Source: Designed by the author.

two sub-forms that are called racial integration or desegregation that refers to social and cultural behaviour and the educational integration of students with disabilities; economic integration that focuses on the economic aspect which refers to trade unification between different states. An integration clause in a contract is a term used to declare in the contract the final and complete understanding of the parties<sup>8</sup>; regional integration occurs mainly between states when political actors enter into a regional agreement in order to enhance regional cooperation through regional institutions and rules. At both levels the direction of an integration process might be horizontal or vertical and these paths refer to a style of ownership and control based on microeconomics and strategic management.

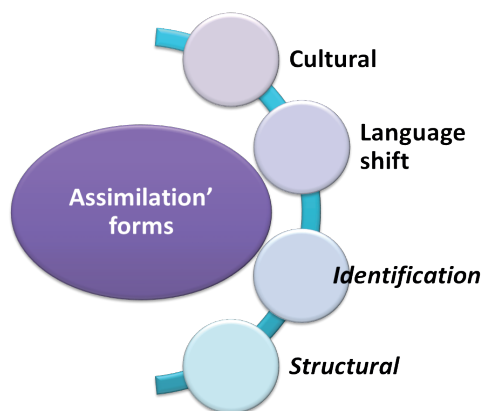
## 2. *Assimilation*

From a linguistic perspective, the English word assimilate comes from the Latin *assimulare* which means to make similar. People of different backgrounds and beliefs undergo assimilation when, by living together, they come to see themselves as part of a larger community, or when

a small group is absorbed into, and made part of, a bigger group, such as the Irish immigrants in America in the 19th century. Assimilation can also refer to ‘the absorption of new ideas into existing knowledge’<sup>9</sup>. It is a more or less orderly adaptation of a migrating group to the ways and institutions of an established host group<sup>10</sup>, for example, the assimilation of Muslims into the majority to create a “melting pot” society<sup>11</sup>. It is the opposite of multicultural.

In this aspect, Jean Piaget defined assimilation as a term referring to another part of the adaptation process where religion and culture are forced to disentangle themselves. The form of assimilation could be cultural where the minority group adapts gradually to the customs and attitudes of the prevailing culture and customs or a language shift when minorities are forced to speak another language. Many forms are shown in Figure No. 2.

Figure No. 2 shows the forms of assimilation:

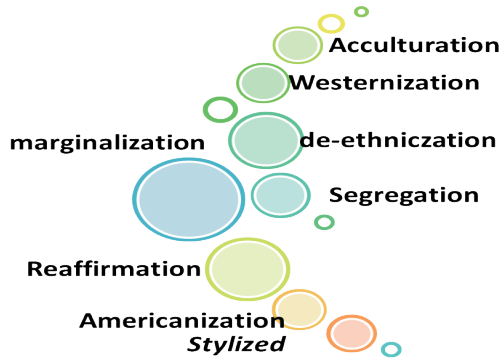


### 3. Terminologies associated with the concepts of the study

Western literature has many notions that refer to assimilation (although there is huge distinction between them), such as marginalization, segregation, de-ethnicization,

religious secularism, Americanization, reaffirmation, Westernization and acculturation<sup>12</sup>, as presented in Figure No. 3.

Figure No. 3 mapping the notions associated with assimilation



Source: Designed by the author.

To begin with, segregation means to physically and culturally segregate Muslims from the majority population, creating a sense of estrangement on both sides. The de-ethnicization process, on the other hand, is inevitably linked to cross-cultural immigration<sup>13</sup>.

Moving on to religious secularism, which is a baffling concept as it means that people have to start to identify themselves as “spiritual” rather than “religious.” They embrace a sense of their own self-defined “spirituality.” This phenomenon increasingly seems to mean to be spiritually self-aware while distancing oneself from religious institutions. Recognition is precisely what is at the core of the politicization of Islam. It is the basis of identity politics or a principle of multiculturalism in the countries of immigration. At the same time, it becomes a way of “re-appropriating” an identity. It appears in the discourse as a source of “ethnic pride”, of “self-enhancement”, for the immigrant<sup>14</sup>.

Regarding the Americanization of Islam, it has to do with acculturation and assimilation. Realizing the gradations of “adopting versus adapting,” of modifying and blending versus “drifting” in cultural attrition. Conversely, the reaffirmation of the Muslim identity means a reaction to the social exclusion, unemployment and discrimination that Muslims experience in their adopted countries in the West. However, acculturation is a process of opposition to a unitary event, a process of adaptation to new circumstances/conditions of life, a process whereby a society’s culture is modified as a result of the coupling of several cultures together, it is a dynamic process. It has two levels, individual or group ones.

Finally, “stylized” is ‘a version of classical assimilation that was a necessary part of the process of upward socioeconomic mobility for immigrant groups. Assimilation as a social process to be explained rather than as a causal factor affecting outcomes’.

Another term that has appeared is called “transnationalism.” Like traditional assimilation analyses, transnationalism emphasizes the fact that individual migrants tend to migrate along with family and friendship networks. Transnationalism also emphasizes the “large scale economic, political, and legal structures within which immigrants develop their communities and lives”. Likewise, transnationalism sees immigration as an “on-going process through which ideas, resources, and people change locations and develop meanings in multiple settings”. Immigrants often maintain their interest in the home country, and their attachments may be strong to two or more “homes” at once. Their motivation for immigration can be complex and multifaceted. They seek opportunities in a new country, but maintain strong ties to the old country<sup>15</sup>.

To conclude the theoretical part, first of all, it is not clear that the differences between current and past immigrants are either unique enough or significant enough to render the classical assimilation theory inapplicable. Also,



it should be noted that there is some danger of negative consequences of “downward assimilation” Furthermore, assimilation theories have been criticized for having an “establishment” bias. What is more, the shift from the culture of origin to the core host country’s culture is not necessarily a shift from an inferior to a superior culture. Besides, the stylized assimilation story “assimilation as upward mobility” is too simplistic to adequately represent the experiences of today’s immigrants. Furthermore, assimilation is associated with higher levels of at-risk behaviours among immigrant adolescents as well as higher levels of ethnic heterogeneity in consequence thereof.

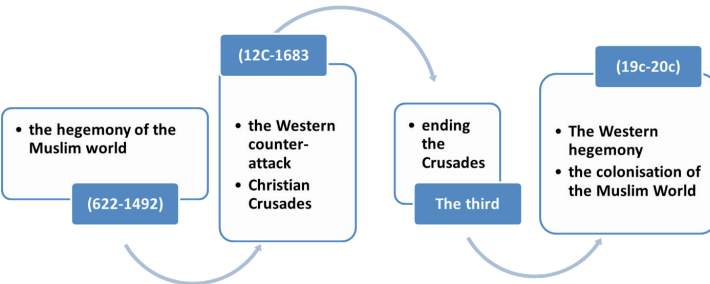
*II. Multiple dimensions to analyze  
Muslim -West relationships:*

*1. Historical dimension*

Christian-Muslim relationships have oscillated between clashes and positive encounters. From a historical perspective, major shifts took place in the international relationships between the Christian and the Muslim World.

In terms of negative attitude of the West towards Islam and the Muslim World, starting from the historical origin of the rivalry, it could be divided into four periods as seen in Figure No. 4.

Figure No. 4. *The four historical Christian-Muslim encounters*



As it is clear from the diagram, there are four major steps in that relationship. The first period started with the hegemony of the Muslim world in the period 622-1492 when the Muslim World experienced an enormous expansion with Islam spreading from the Arabian Peninsula to North Africa and some parts of Asia and Europe. The second period overlapped with the first one because of the Western counter-attack from the 12th century until 1683. It was clearly visible due to the Christian Crusades launched. The third period started with the end of the Crusades and the fourth was the Western hegemony and the colonization of the Muslim World (19c-20c).

In this regard, Christian-Muslim relations have been clashes and positive encounters. On the one hand, the good elements of these encounters could be classified into three eras; the first began when Negus returned the gifts of the Quraysh and kept Muslims under his protection. The second became apparent during the Umar ibn al-Khattab era, when Muslims gave the key of the Church of the Resurrection to Christians to be responsible for its safety, which was a critical symbol of mutual trust. The third, treating the Crusaders with kindness and making sure that Muslims and non-Muslims lived in peace and harmony with each other in the Saladin era.

On the other hand, major elements of bad encounters can be exemplified by four points. First, during the Crusades, Muslims accused Eastern Christians of helping the Crusaders to take control of Islamic territories and to put an end to the Islamic rule. Consequently, Eastern Christians suffered from oppression and persecution at that time. Second, in Spain Muslims and Jews were expelled by the Christian Crusaders of Spain during the eighth century. They were forced to convert to Christianity. Otherwise, they would be killed. Third, Muslim lands were devastated, Islamic education systems were supplanted by secular or Christian ones, Muslims were murdered and enslaved in many nations and Muslim cultures were ac-

cultured by European colonists. Fourth, Christian Armenians faced institutionalized discrimination during the Ottoman era.

Thus, all these kinds of bad encounters were enough to besmirch the relationship between both religions and somehow it was the beginning of institutionalized discrimination for all of them, for Muslims by the crusaders and for Christians by the Ottomans.

## *2. Political dimension*

The insight of this approach mainly focuses on the ideas of the clash of civilizations<sup>16</sup> and the indispensable enemy that has been raised by political scientists and politicians to explain the negative image of Islam and Muslims in the West. In this aspect the assumptions of the indispensable enemy<sup>17</sup> and the clash of civilizations<sup>18</sup> have been the significant judgements which perceive the Muslim world as a great threat to western identities, especially by boosting immigration into Europe. Consequently, the world will face a new shape of war which is a 'societal cold war' between Western<sup>19</sup> and non-Western countries<sup>20</sup>.

The reasons behind this approach are the increasing Muslim immigration to the West as well as political Islam.

Regarding political Islam, absolutely one of the fundamental reasons that explain the attitude towards Muslims in the West is the violence of fundamentalist movements. Because of this, the world has witnessed so called the 'neo-orientalist/essentialist interpretation' and the 'neo-Third Worldist/contingencists' interpretation. At this stage, the ethnocentric individuals attribute the emergence of Islamic political movements mainly to Islam as a religion, completely neglecting the influence of the social, economic, political and cultural conditions in the Muslim world. They consider Islam to be a dominant ideology in the Muslim world, incompatible with modernity. The supporters of this

approach advise Western governments to fight against Islamic political movements by being allies with secular regimes because the terrorist threat comes primarily from the European indigenous Muslim immigrant population.

Another argument to what the so called Islamic threat relates to increased immigration to the West of people of Islamic background. The presence of relatively large groups of Muslims residing in Western countries is fairly recent. The majority of Muslim immigrants settled in the West only after the end of the Second World War, either by spontaneous migration during the 1960s and 1970s, or as a result of recruitment by western governments. Recently, immigration has been restricted to family reunions and the search for political asylum.

To make a long story short, the pro-political perspective has stated that a new world order will be formed through a huge clash between the eight world cultures<sup>21</sup>. What the author notes in this respect is unleashing the 'I and they' culture and putting a clean separation between 'us' and 'them' (the Others). At the same time, second- and third-generation Muslims do not identify themselves either with their family roots, the culture of their country of origin or with the European country, but with a new transnational Islamic identity that separates religion and ethnicity<sup>22</sup>.

### *III. The surge of populists against Muslims in the West*

In this section, the study deals with the definition of populism, its ideology and reasons for surge of this kind of thought in the contemporary era.

#### *1. Populism: definition and principles*

The concept of populism is one of the most controversial and highly ambiguous terms in comparative political literature.

On the one hand, there is a large number of scholars (such as Taguieff 1986; Freedman 1998; Mudde 2004) that no longer link populism to pathologies. Populism is conceptualized as a kind of rhetoric, political strategy and weak political discourse rather than ideology. This discourse deals with three meanings of the notion of the people: the people as the sovereign based on Greek democracy definitions that value the role of the people who are the source of political legitimacy<sup>23</sup>, the people-class (the ordinary poor people versus the wealthy elite, i.e. Main Street as opposed to Wall Street), and the people-nation that emphasizes its religious and ethnic roots and core values. In a like manner, populism separates the 'true' patriots (pure people), from the 'oligarchy' and the self-serving and corrupt elites that are decried as enemies of the homeland by populists. Thus, populism is used as a political strategy to achieve power and authority by bypassing existing institutions to govern allegedly on behalf of the people. To put it another way, populism is allegedly a "citizen's revolution that reflects a profound radical and rapid transformation of political, economic and social-cultural structures".

On the other hand, some argue that populism is a "thin-centered ideology" which shares some principles of both the left and right of the ideological spectrum. For instance, populism reflects some ideas of nationalism and socialism.

In this context, the populist rhetoric has a lot in common with nationalism and nativism, mainly: a conspiratorial mindset; the affirmation of the right of the majority against the minority, asylum seekers, all immigrants, global finance and transnational elites; the demonization of political opponents; the fascination with more or less charismatic leaders; the search for scapegoats as well as an anti-European stance. Along with the above, populist discourse reflects the economic aspect of socialism.

Overall, populism is a slippery term that describes anti-elitist appeals against old-established parties; this refers to both the left- and right-wing parties in the West. Populism polarizes politics between friends and enemies, turning the stigmas of the people into virtues and dividing the community into two categories which are; 'the pure people' versus the corrupt elite. As a result, this ideology is being described as anti-elite conservatism. In other words, populism created a 'new social cleavage' based on included and excluded people according to criteria such as culture, "language, blood, and territory". Populists exclude indigenous people and those who are considered as non-white Others. The excluded category called 'pueblo' refers to uncivilized, unruly people: the barbaric masses. In this context, populists stigmatize these segments of the population as a threat and an irrational force<sup>23</sup>.

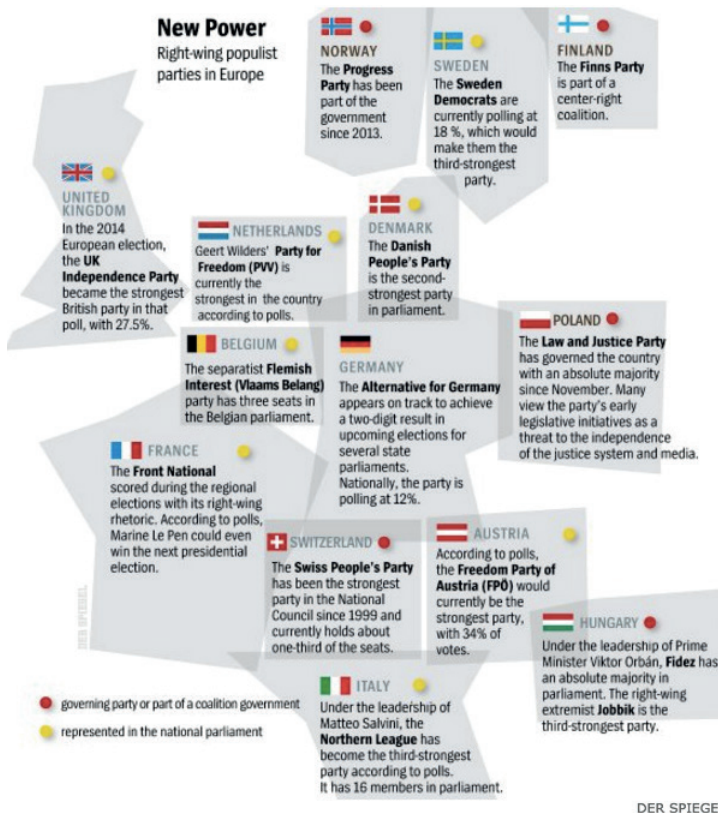
Consequently, academics and pundits alike are prone to assume that populism has authoritarian traits, lies between democracy and totalitarianism, has undertones against capitalism and bourgeois representative democracy. Hence, populists assume that the will of the people is always right and they indeed fight against the hideous elites. Needless to say, populists are against representative democracy, mediation, checks and balances, pluralism and contestation, and are more likely to be anti-institutional when it comes to defending minority rights ('circumvent minority rights') and independent constitutional bodies ('checks and balances') to establish a new political cleavage and open up the political life to non-elites<sup>24</sup>. Furthermore, they believe that the existing kind of democracy does not provide an opportunity for the people to express themselves by bringing up the pragmatic phase of democracy. Therefore, populist leaders are in favour of majoritarian democracy (redemptive phase) that is built on the will of people according to their views.

I. *Western citizens and populists:  
reasons for a change in political behaviour*

Although populism is not a new phenomenon, it is on the rise. Literature on populism shows that populism began with the Russian anti-authoritarian movement of the second half of the 19th century and in American grass-roots politics of the 1890s<sup>25</sup>. At the time, populist leaders and parties could not bring out a voter turnout and played a minor role in both local and national elections. In addition, they were not able to get any seats in the regional elections. Recently, populists have spread all over the western world, e.g. Preston Manning and the Reform Party of Canada in Canada, Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party in Australia, Britain's UKIP in the UK and Ross Perot's Reform Party in the US. There is a "Der Spiegel"<sup>26</sup> map to illustrate this presented in Figure No. 5, showing the countries where far-right and populist parties have a seat in parliament (yellow dots) or are actually part of the government (red dots). It turns out that the xenophobic far-right has surged in countries as diverse as Sweden, the UK, the Netherlands, and Hungary<sup>27</sup>.

Putting the spotlight on the US, many political pundits and commentators mocked Trump as a candidate for the American presidency and yet he scored high in the polls and then won the election. In the UK, the Conservative government promised an In-Out referendum on Britain's membership in the EU in January 2013. Since then, the UK has left the EU. Furthermore, populists have come to govern in Poland and Hungary. In addition, populists are members of coalition governments in Switzerland and Finland. Concurrently, its grassroots have been boosting in France, the Netherlands and Sweden, which make one think of a domino effect in the French presidential election this year. Not to mention the rise of populists in Southern Europe and the Alternative für Deutschland in Germany. All of this leads to questions why do western

Figure No. 5. *Der Spiegel* map of populist parties in Europe



Populist Party, Spiegel, February 10, 2016, accessed in Sept. 2015, Available at <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/alternative-for-germany-shows-its-true-right-wing-colors-a-1076239.html>

citizens vote for them? How could populist parties have had such a huge impact when these parties could not win in previous national elections? What impact will it have on the Muslim integration policy?



Table No.1 maps the populist parties in the West

Country	Party Name	Acronym
USA	Donald Trump/Republican Party	RP
Canada	Progressive Conservatives party	PCP
Australia	Pauline Hanson's One Nation	ONP
Norway	Norwegian Progress Party/Fremskrittspartiet	FrP
Hungary	Movement for a Better Hungary/Jobbboldali Ifjúsági Közösség Jobbik	JMM
Germany	National Democrat Party/Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands	NPD
	Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West/Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes	Pegida
Bulgaria	National Attack Union/National Attack Union	NSA
Finland	Perussuomalaiset/Finns Party	PS
Netherlands	Partij Voor de Vrijheid/Party for Freedom	PVV
Sweden	Verigedemokraterna/Sweden Democrats	SD
Switzerland	Schweizerische Volkspartei/Swiss People's Party	SVP

Country	Party Name	Acronym
Belgium	Vlaams Belang/ Flemish Interest	VB
The United Kingdom	United Kingdom In- dependence Party	UKIP
Romania	Partidul România Mare/Greater Roma- nia Party	PRM
Netherlands	Lega Nord/Northern League	LN
New Zealand	New Zealand First	NZF
France	Front National/Nat- ional Front	FNF
Greece	Chrysí Avgí /Golden Dawn	ChA
Denmark	Dansk Folkeparti/ Danish People's Par- ty	DF

In Australia, which has not suffered from devastating terror attacks, Pauline Hanson's ONP party has become more aggressive on immigrants, moving the coalition to the right. At the same time, the Austrian Freedom Party is riding an anti-immigrant wave, focusing mainly on Muslims as a critical threat to the Christian-European civilization. In Norway, the Norwegian Progress Party (FrP) with its appeals to anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiment and fears of "Eurabia," came to power as a junior partner in a coalition government with the Conservative Party (CP) in the parliamentary elections of September 2013. In Hungary, the Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik) is the second most popular party in the country. Currently, Jobbik commands the second-highest number of seats among all opposition parties in the National Assembly<sup>28</sup>. Meanwhile in Germany, the National Democratic Party rejects the concept of liberal democra-

cy and expresses hostility towards Muslims<sup>29</sup> as an attack on the German ethnic community<sup>30</sup>. On the other hand, Pegida<sup>31</sup>, the “Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the Occident,” which is a movement against the Islamization of the West<sup>32</sup>, promotes such slogans as “Nazism=Islamism” and “Trump is right”<sup>33</sup>.

## *2. Why are populist leaders and parties on the rise?*

We will begin with what explains the contemporary growth of this discriminative notion of populism. Explanations of the rise of populist parties in comparative literature can be sub-divided into three categories demonstrating: (I) economic inequality and deprivation, (II) cultural accounts, (III) the gap of political trust between old-established parties and politicians and citizens.

The argument that populism reflects rising economic and social inequalities within affluent societies has been found in Western historiography since industrialization. In this view, the economic insecurity thesis explains growing income inequality in developed Western nations, the loss of manufacturing jobs and stagnant wages, the cracks of the welfare state. Thus, based on this assumption, the mass support for populist leaders and parties is a result of deflation, marginalized sectors who are the losers from global markets and knowledge economy and society. As a consequence of economic stagnation, the unemployed (particularly among the young), unskilled workers, less-educated people and those reporting difficulties in making ends meet endorse populists<sup>34</sup>.

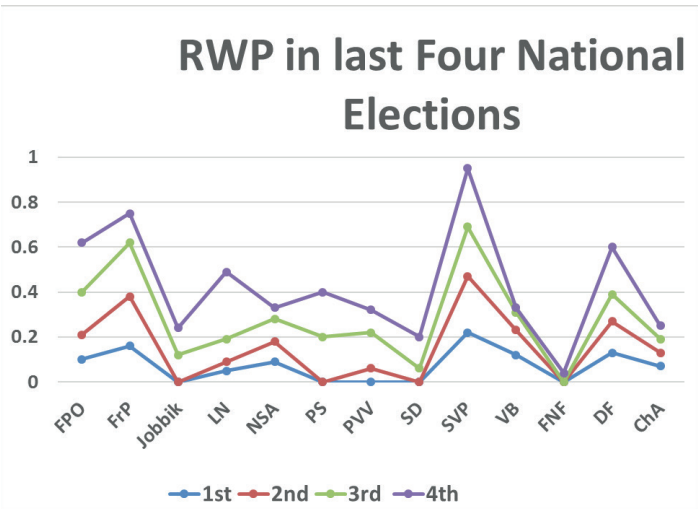
The argument of cultural backlash emphasizes that supporting populists today is largely a nostalgic reaction among older people, those holding traditional values and retro norms, against long-term processes of value change that took place during the late twentieth century. This argument assumes the attacks of Post-Materialism on

traditional values, increased tolerance among the new generation living in the West for the expression of diversity such as same-sex marriage, secular values, societal shifts for women's roles in the knowledge economy, lifestyle, humanitarian assistance, cosmopolitan and multi-lateral agencies like the EU and the UN. Consequently, populism seems to be a historic development that describes a 'silent revolution and 'silent counter-revolution' against the transformation that indicates an intergenerational shift from Materialist to Post-Materialist values and leads to changing conditions that influence the basic societal interaction and alter the basic value priorities of certain generations in most advanced industrial societies. This analysis also reveals that most populists are prone to blame minorities and migrants for deteriorating circumstances, loss of manufacturing jobs and inadequacies. And that explains the hostility towards migrants, minorities, asylum-seekers, refugees, and guest-workers in the West, in particular, towards Muslims. Thus, populists raise the banner of monoculturalism against multiculturalism and immigration<sup>35</sup>. At the same time, xenophobia is only one part of the cultural backlash against economic and social inequalities; there is also the gap of political trust. Old-established parties and politicians have failed to implement effective policies and fulfil voter expectations. Besides, the impact of the personalization of politics that leads to widespread corruption, erodes state sovereignty, especially over almost thirty years of knowledge economy and economic globalization. All of that go hand in hand with the lack of legitimacy and trust. In this context, Nicolaus Heinen and Ann-Kristin Kreutzmann<sup>36</sup> have shown growing discontent and dissatisfaction among citizens by measuring and analyzing certain indicators regarding political trust in the EU, support for the euro and globalization, public attitude towards immigration, labour market, healthcare provision, the econom-

ic situation and unemployment in individual European countries.

Building on this thesis, there is much empirical evidence emphasizing that the rise of populist parties is noticeably gaining momentum in the West at the expense of the mainstream parties whose influence is being diminished. One of major elements that highlights a shift of the political landscape in the West is the increasing voter turnout for populist leaders and parties. This phenomenon is clearly visible in the result of the last four European national elections as shown in Figure No.6.

Figure No. 6 shows the growth of populist parties in the last four national elections



For example, in Bulgaria, the National Attack Union won 21 out of 290 seats in the recent legislative election in July 2009 and two seats in the 2009 European Parliament election. The same scenario repeated itself in Finland, where the Finn Party or the “True Finns,” an anti-immigration party, has become the third largest par-

ty in the country's parliament by winning 19.1% of votes in the 2011 parliamentary election, moving on to become the second largest party by receiving 17.7% of the votes in the 2015 election<sup>37</sup>.

Moving on to the Netherlands, the Party for Freedom (PVV), which has an extremely strong assimilationist and anti-Islamization populist agenda<sup>38</sup>, became the third largest party in the 2010 general election by winning 24<sup>39</sup> seats and the third in the 2014 European election by getting 4 out of 26 seats. Similarly, the Swiss People's Party (SVP), an anti-Islam populist party<sup>40</sup>, has become stronger in the 2000s. The party won 54 seats in the Federal Assembly in 2015 and received the most votes in 16 of the 26 Swiss cantons in the 2015 National Council election. In France, the French National Front, which rails against the Islamification of France, has become the most powerful extreme populist party in Europe since the ascension of its new leader Marine Le Pen<sup>41</sup>. The FNF received 4.5% and 15% in 2008 and 2011 regional elections respectively. By the 2014 European election<sup>42</sup>, the FNF had become the frontrunner and it is highly possibility that it could win the presidency in 2017<sup>43</sup>. In the same context, the Danish People's Party (DPP) in Denmark took 37 seats out of 179 in the parliament<sup>44</sup> and 27% of votes in the 2014 the European Parliament election. Furthermore, tracing the voter turnout on the regional level, as can be seen in Table No. 2, populist parties have made massive gains in the European election, especially in the last two European election in 2009 and 2014.

Table No. 2 shows the populist seats in the European Parliament at the years 1994–2014

The State	Abv.	party	Elections						
			1994	1996	1999	2004	2007	2009	2014
Greece	ChA	Chrysi Avgi / Golden Dawn	0/25					0/22	3/21
Denmark	DF	Dansk Folkeparti/ Danish People's Party			1/16	11/14		2/13	4/13
France	FN	Front National/ National Front	11/87		5/87	7/78		3/74	21/74
Austria	FPÖ	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs/ Austrian Freedom Party		6/21	5/21	1/18		2/19	4/18
Norway	FrP	Fremskrittspartiet/ Progress Party							
Hungary	JMM	Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom/ Movement for a Better Hungary						3/22	3/21
Italy	LN	Lega Nord/ Northern League	6/87		4/87	4/78		9/72	5/73
Germany	NDP	Natsionalen Savuz Ataka/ National Attack Union							
Bulgaria	NSA	Natsionalen Savuz Ataka/ National Attack Union					3/18	2/17	0/17
Romania	PRM	Partidul România Mare/ Greater Romania Party	0/99		0/99	0/99		0/99	1/99
Finland	PS	Perussuomalaiset/ Finns Party			0	0		1	2
Netherlands	PVV	Partij Voor de Vrijheid/ Party for Freedom						4/25	4/26
Sweden	SD	Sverigedemokraterna/ Sweden Democrats			0/22	0/19		0/19	2/20
Switzerland	SVP	Schweizerische Volkspartei/ Swiss People's Party							
Belgium	VB	Vlaams Belang/ Flemish Interest	2/25		2/25	3/24		2/22	1/21
The UK	UKIP	United Kingdom Independence Party	0/87		3/87	12/78		13/72	24/73

Source: European Parliament elections 1994, 96, 99, 2004, 07, 09 and 2014 Available at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/home.html>.

To conclude, the West adopted the policy of the guest-worker towards Muslims during the 1950s and 1960s, when the post-World War II European economies boomed and labour was scarce. The policy of this strategy was that integration was unnecessary because immigrants would only stay for a short time. Thus, the strategy was based on the idea that migrants would come to fill labour market shortages and then would return to

their home countries after a certain time, for instance, unskilled workers in West Germany in 1955–1973. Nowadays, this strategy has completely failed leading to a loss of public trust, particularly in Germany, the Netherlands, France or the United Kingdom, because these temporary migrants have become permanent immigrants which has led to another policy.

The minority or “multicultural” policy proposes that the endorsement of cultural diversity leads to higher levels of acceptance towards ethnic out-groups. This strategy was used, for example, in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. However, it has also lost its legitimacy, as it turned out that the outcomes with regard to socio-economic integration were violent protests, ethnic clashes, militant political action, and ultimately terrorism.

The third policy applied in Austria and Germany is a pluralist strategy, which can be defined as neutral but open to different religions.. This strategy deals with all various religious groups under the umbrella of the national constitutional framework<sup>45</sup>.

The fourth current assimilation policy is a strategy that reflects a kind of social contract with Muslims as individuals. All Muslims and migrants who have accepted this contract are welcomed in the West<sup>46</sup>. The articles of this contract obligate them to behave as natives do and become Westernized, accepting the dominant culture. This strategy is worth noting in France. However, this assimilation policy has come under the fire especially when Muslims have increasingly faced marginalization and discrimination from the secular state.

The policy of assimilation is to melt Muslims into the social mainstream and acculturate Muslims and newcomers into the Western values of “liberty, equality, fraternity,” as in the case of France. All of these historical policies are linked to the rise of populists, once again leading us to a spot with a clash of civilizations.



These insights have been raised by political and economic scientists and pioneering politicians to explain the negative image of Islam and Muslims in the West. In this aspect the assumption of the indispensable enemy and the clash of civilizations<sup>47</sup> have been the significant notions.

In this regard, the Muslim world has been a great threat to Western identities, especially by increasing immigration to Europe. Consequently, the entire world will face a new form of war which is a 'societal Cold War' between Western<sup>48</sup> and non-Western countries<sup>49</sup>. To make a long story short, the pro-political perspective has stated that a new world order will be formed through a huge clash between the eight world cultures<sup>50</sup>. What the author notes in this respect is the unleashing of the I and they culture and putting a clean separation between 'us' and 'them' (the Other), which has led to intercultural war and conflict. What is more, the lack of trust towards western politicians is linked to the rise of populists who definitely believe that the Islamic threat relates to the growing immigration of Islamic background to the West<sup>51</sup>.

#### *IV. Discussion*

The decline in political trust is one of the fundamental features in advanced industrial democracies that fuels and gives rise to discontent and dissatisfaction among Western citizens. Consequently, Western citizens have changed their political behaviour by increasing their support for extreme movements and populists at the expense of liberal elites. This phenomenon leads to the replacement of established parties by populist leaders and parties that take advantage of the rapidly expanding influx of Muslim immigrants living in the West. Concurrently, with the negative impact of the knowledge economy and the silent counter-revolution against multiculturalism,

grassroots populism has been growing throughout the Western world.

This grassroots movement brings with it to the table the basic principles of populism, particularly mono-culturalism versus multi-culturalism and majoritarian democracy against the rights of minorities, in particular, against the rights of Muslims and migrants. Thus, Muslims in the West are going to face extreme assimilation policies rather than integration. This can be anticipated especially when analyzing the unhidden lines in populist discourse. For example, the American populists spoke about a 'culture war' in the 1990s. Donald Trump has renewed the notion by trying to ban all Muslims from entering the US in his first executive order, monitoring mosques and building a wall on the Mexican border. There has been a domino effect that has moved to Canada when a young man shot at a large mosque and killed six Muslims during their prayers. Not to mention, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. This is based on anti-immigration sentiments and racial resentment. What is more, the Trump phenomenon has been noticed by Western populist leaders and parties such as the Front National in France, Geert Wilders' PVV, the Austria's Freedom Party, the Swiss People's Party and Norway's Progress Party. All this leads to the possibility that the entire world will witness a domino effect beginning in France once the FNF wins the presidential elections and induces us to enter an era of the clash of civilizations.

#### NOTES

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18. Samuel Huntington expressed his opinion regarding this assumption based on a differentiation between Western and Eastern cultures.
19. Countries that will take the Western side are Japan, India, Latin American and Africa.
20. Which pertains to the Confucian-Islamic connection.
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