

Politico.EU: 'Europe's Muslims hate the West'

Leon de Winter, a Dutch novelist and political commentator, pushed the boundaries of acceptable discussion following the Brussels attacks with a recent piece titled "[Europe's Muslims hate the West](#)." At the core of his argument is the difficulty or even outright refusal of some Muslim immigrants to assimilate to the West.

He begins by arguing that the typical postmodern, Western response to terrorism is to find a reason to blame ourselves rather than putting responsibility on the perpetrators and the communities that support them. Usually, poverty or racism is to blame. The argument being that if we solve these problems of primarily material well-being, then everyone can keep their beliefs but somehow coexist in a peaceful society.

To that end, de Winter argues:

"The first reaction to the Brussels massacres among postmodern European intellectuals was predictable: What did we, Europeans, do to them, our Muslims? How could followers of a religion that is proudly called 'the religion of peace' commit these kinds of atrocities?"

People like Peter Vandermeersch, the Belgian editor-in-chief of Dutch newspaper NRC-Handelsblad, and Belgian writer David Van Reybrouck, both accomplished intellectuals, argued that Belgium must have done something terrible to deserve this. Their line of reasoning: The terrorists' fury must be a reaction to their inhumane treatment at the hands of the West.

So, we blame ourselves in order to remain blameless. Safer to blame our own societies and socioeconomic conditions than to blame the religious and cultural concepts with which terrorists poison their own minds.

According to reports, the unemployment figure in Brussels' infamous Molenbeek neighborhood – now referred to as the jihadi hothouse of Europe – is 30 percent. This is a relatively high figure in Western Europe, but not unusual in southern European countries or the Arab world. There is poverty in Molenbeek, but that poverty is relative. There is no starvation, no homelessness, no lack of medical infrastructure, no lack of schools.

Compared to average living standards in Morocco or Egypt, the average living standard in Molenbeek is comfortably middle-class. Like in any other Western European country, many Belgian institutions and organizations offer support when families need housing, food, education, and health care. Opportunities for success, and to study and become a respected member in society, are countless compared to those that exist in many immigrants' countries of origin. Still, there is deep resentment among the younger generations of immigrant Moroccan families.”

Is poverty the real driver of discord between Muslim immigrants and their host societies or is something else to blame? To that question, de Winter provides a powerful argument that it is not poverty, but rather a failure to assimilate that is driving much of the violence.

“The other explanation for the high unemployment figures among Muslims in Europe has nothing to do with exclusion and discrimination. A large segment of the migrant population is doing just fine, but a significant number – some say as many as 50 percent – have not rid themselves of the mental and cultural conditions that have kept their home country in its ‘developing country’ status. The denial of equal rights to women, the lack of separation of state and church, bad education, excessive religiosity, patriarchal machismo – these are all on display in areas with a high percentage of migrants, including Molenbeek.

In December 2013, Professor Ruud Koopmans of the Berlin Social Science Center published a study on 'Fundamentalism and out-group hostility,' in which he compared hostility among Muslim immigrants with hostility among Christian natives in Western Europe. He writes: 'Almost 60 percent agree that Muslims should return to the roots of Islam, 75 percent think there is only one interpretation of the Quran possible to which every Muslim should stick and 65 percent say that religious rules are more important to them than the laws of the country in which they live.' In regards to Christian citizens he concludes: 'Less than 4 percent can be characterized as consistent fundamentalists.'

On hatred of Jews and homosexuals among Europe's Muslim population, Koopmans finds: 'Almost 60 percent reject homosexuals as friends and 45 percent think that Jews cannot be trusted. While about one in five natives can be considered as Islamophobic, the level of phobia against the West among Muslims – for which oddly enough there is no word; one might call it "Occidentophobia" – is much higher still, with 54 percent believing that the West is out to destroy Islam.' Recorded rates of Christian hate toward Muslims hover around 10 percent.

'Occidentophobia' is an interesting term. It expresses a refusal to accept the essential concepts of life in the West. Young men like the perpetrators of the Brussels attacks have refused to embrace the social codes of Belgian life. They were raised on the idea that their religious ethics trump the ethics of the infidels (close to non-existent, in their eyes, in any case). Their second-rate socioeconomic status was therefore a humiliating affront, an indignity to be destroyed."

He concludes rather pointedly,

"What did 'we' do to 'them'? We opened up our cities, our houses, our wallets. And in our secular temples of progress –

our metro stations and airports and theaters – their sons are killing themselves, and taking our sons and daughters with them. There is nothing for which we need to apologize. ‘Occidentophobia’ originated in the Muslim community. We need to demand they abandon it.”

Now, some will argue that “we” of the West bombed and destroyed their homes and that that justifies such attitudes and actions by immigrants. Such an argument, though, is in many ways an admittance that “they” are at war with “us”, seeking revenge as they can. If that’s the case, then the logical thing to do would be to push for the halting of unjust military actions in the Middle East, but also to not let waves of individuals into the West who seek to destroy it.

When one sees videos, like the one below from Germany in which Turkish nationalists are supposedly shouting “With Allah’s help, we shall conquer you”, one wonders about the wisdom of opening the West to such immigrants.

