Why Islam Is Like Spanish: Cultural Incorporation in Europe and the United States

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1. INTRODUCTION

Immigration leads inevitably to heated discussions about how boundaries between “us” and “them” might be drawn or erased. On one side of the Atlantic, the passions awakened by the Rushdie affair in the United Kingdom (in February 1989) and the “headscarf” affair in France (in September 1989) denote a simmering confrontation between “Christian” Europe and “intruding” Islam. On the other side, the heat generated by the English-only movement and the referendum on bilingual education in California (June 1998) point to an equally dramatic clash between “Anglo-America” and the “invading” Spanish language. As major foci of tension and contention, Islam and Spanish are metonyms for the dangers that those most opposed to immigration perceive as looming ahead: loss of cultural identity, accompanied by disintegrative separatism or communal conflict.

With estimates ranging from 7 to 15 million, Europe’s Muslim population is extremely diverse, including immigrants and their descendants from such vastly different regions as South Asia, North Africa, and the Eastern Mediterranean, as

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well as historical Europeans, notably Bosnians and Albanians. Where they originate in the same state, the immigrants are often differentiated by membership in different nationalities or ethnic groups—Turks in Germany are often Kurds, Algerians in France can be Arabs or Berbers—as well as by class; they are further differentiated as the result of dispersal among distinct European hosts and the concomitant experiences of acculturation. Differing widely in somatic characteristics often associated with constructions of race such as skin color and hair formation, Europe’s Muslims also practice many versions of Islam, ranging as widely as their Christian counterparts and prompting perennial calls by religious leaders for unity of the umma (community). Altogether, these differences foster a variety of political orientations and different orders of priorities.¹

Yet in the eyes of the hosts, these disparate groups share an essentialized negative identity as dangerous strangers. Much of the unease revolves around practical dilemmas and questions of principle arising from the efforts of Muslims to carry out their daily religious obligations and customary practices in a new environment. The European malaise is exacerbated by the rise of international terrorism, some of which has originated in Muslim countries and sustained by organizations that speak in the name of Islam. Echoed throughout the continent, these misgivings amount to a single question: can one be Muslim and European?²

In the United States, as reported in an extensive Ford Foundation study of relations between hosts and immigrant newcomers at the community level, “If a single source of conflict stands out, it involves the use of different languages.”³ Most of these conflicts center on Spanish. In recent decades, about one-third of all legal newcomers originated in countries whose official or dominant language is Spanish, and the proportion rose to two-thirds for unauthorized immigrants.⁴ “Hispanics” now constitute approximately 10 percent of the population and, by virtue of continuing immigration as well as of their relatively high fertility, will soon overtake African Americans as the nation’s largest minority. However, paralleling the diversity of Europe’s Muslims, they are differentiated by virtue of their origins in disparate countries, with concomitant cultural and dialectical variations. While Mexico has clearly held the lead with regard to immigration since 1960, followed by more recent flows from the Caribbean—Cuba and the Dominican Republic—the major source of Hispanics is in fact the United States itself, including not only the island of Puerto Rico, which was acquired in 1898 and whose natives subsequently became U.S. citizens, but also the borderlands of the Southwest. Conquered from Mexico in the middle of the nineteenth century, the latter have experienced sustained immigration since the turn of the twentieth century, so that most of their Hispanics have been U.S. citizens by virtue of jus soli for several generations.⁵ Settlement in different regions further compounds the initial diversity as well.
Yet here also, in the eyes of the hosts, this highly disparate population has acquired an essentialized unified identity. This has been reified by way of the institutionalization of Hispanics as one of five categories in the U.S. census defining mutually exclusive population groups—at least for the time being. Singled out as the source of the group’s unity is the fact of sharing Spanish—not necessarily as a first language, but as a tongue present in the home alongside English, or yet as the language of their forebears. The oddness of this construct is highlighted by the fact that whereas the other four categories reflect traditional American constructions of races founded on color, Hispanics can be of any race, including white and black Cubans, light and dark Puerto Ricans, mestizo, Indio, or even thoroughly “Europeo” Mexicans. By an ironic twist, one essentialism overrides another, as one word of Spanish provides an escape from the categorization of a person as black by virtue of the “one drop of blood” rule.

Why does the principal focus of contentious debates over immigration and its sequels center on religion in Europe and language in the United States? This sharp contrast cannot be explained mainly by the different characteristics of immigration in the two cases or by properties inherent to Islam and Spanish, respectively. On the European side, there is some potential for the emergence of language issues since most of the guest workers who stayed on, as well as the asylum seekers who obtained refugee status, originally spoke languages other than those of the hosts. Conversely, on the American side, there is some potential for the emergence of religious issues, as the immigrant Muslim community is as large or even larger than its European counterpart. Yet, despite the alarm voiced at the time of the bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993, political responses to the Muslim presence have been remarkably muted.

Our main hypothesis is that Islam has emerged as the focus of immigration debates in Europe because European identity, despite national variations, remains deeply embedded in Christian tradition, in relation to which Muslim immigrants constitute a visible “other.” Ironically, given the opposition between Jews and Arab Muslims in the Middle East, their image in the European imagination parallels that of the Jews from Eastern Europe at the time of their massive immigration a century ago. Although by all accounts Americans engage in a much higher degree of religious practice than Europeans, as the result of the resolution of earlier immigration confrontations, their identity is no longer anchored in Christianity narrowly defined, but rather in a more diffuse deistic civil religion that easily embraces other faiths. However, the English language emerged very early on as a crucial unifying element, entrusted with the mission of balancing religious, racial, and ethnic diversity. Seen in that perspective, Spanish bears a family resemblance to Islam in Europe: as the common speech of an expanding population, spatially concentrated in urban and rural colonies insulated from mainstream societal disciplines, it feeds fantasies of a malignant growth that threatens national unity.
2. NEGOTIATING CULTURAL BOUNDARIES

This parallel provides a point of departure for a more general analysis of the cultural dimension of immigrant incorporation in contemporary capitalist democracies, which evokes as much heat in public debates as the economic impact of immigration but has received much less attention from social scientists. Immigrants are almost always seen to be the bearers of an alien culture and, in that capacity, evoke conjectures regarding their putative impact on the receiving country’s self-defined identity and prospective integrity. Although these assessments are often specious and founded on conceptions of culture that are implicitly or explicitly ethnocentric, such beliefs do have consequences. Moreover, cultural differences that impinge on social relations need to be dealt with in some practical fashion; in a democratic polity founded on human rights, there are limits to what is acceptable. Negotiations on how to deal with cultural difference involve prickly questions because while the most important aspects of culture partake of the realm of meaning and involve fundamental beliefs and ideas regarding existence, they are embedded in concrete institutions, rules, and procedures, serving as means of communication as well as engaging all the senses.

We focus on the question, “Why Islam in Europe, why Spanish in the United States?” because a consideration of the emergence of particular elements of culture as the focal points of contentious debates provides an entry point into the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion more generally. At the heart of all debates about incorporation are the twin questions: how different can we afford to be, and how alike must we be? Negotiations about these matters in turn center on identity issues: who can become a member of society, and what are the conditions for membership? Although collective identity formation is commonly conceptualized as a self-referential process, it usually also involves self-conscious efforts by members of a group to distinguish themselves from whom they are not, and hence it is better understood as a dialectical process whose key feature is the delineation of boundaries between “us” and “not us.” The process of incorporation can be thought of as the negotiations in which hosts and immigrants engage around these boundaries.

Given established boundaries, distinct patterns of negotiation between newcomers and hosts can be distinguished:

1. Individual boundary crossing, without any change in the structure of the receiving society and leaving the distinction between insiders and outsiders unaffected. This is the commonplace process whereby immigrants change themselves by acquiring some of the attributes of the host identity. Examples include replacing their mother tongue with the host language, naturalization, and religious conversion.

2. Boundary blurring, based on a broader definition of integration—one that affects the structure (i.e., the legal, social, and cultural boundaries) of the receiving society. Its core feature is the tolerance of multiple memberships and an
overlapping of collective identities hitherto thought to be separate and mutually exclusive; it is the taming or domestication of what was once seen as “alien” differences. Examples include formal or informal public bilingualism, the possibility of dual nationality, and the institutionalization of immigrant faiths (including public recognition, where relevant).

3. **Boundary shifting**, which denotes a reconstruction of a group’s identity, whereby the line differentiating members from nonmembers is relocated, either in the direction of inclusion or exclusion. This is a more comprehensive process, which brings about a more fundamental redefinition of the situation. By and large, the rhetoric of pro-immigration activists and of immigrants themselves can be read as arguments on behalf of the expansion of boundaries to encompass newcomers, while that of the anti-immigrant groups can be read as an attempt to redefine them restrictively in order to exclude them.13

Boundary shifting can occur only after substantial boundary crossing and boundary blurring have taken place; however, it does not necessarily follow in their wake because of the possibility of negative reactions, as noted. Negotiations under way in the Netherlands today might eventually result in a shift of the boundary of recognized religious pillars to include Islam. Paralleling this, the contemporary spread of Spanish in some regions of the United States may prepare the way for a more explicit reconfiguration of these regions into bilingual entities, at least in some aspects of daily life.

Both boundary crossing and boundary shifting involve an in-between phase, occasionally fraught with awesome tension because it involves an “unnatural act”—the transformation of strangers into members, of the not us into part of us.14 Thus, an acceleration of boundary crossing and of boundary shifting can provoke negative reactions on the part of the hosts, leading to a crystallization of boundaries, the imposition of conditions that render crossing more difficult and blurring impossible, and perhaps even a redefinition of the host identity amounting to a shift of the boundary in a more exclusive direction.15 Concomitantly, some of the newcomers may react to increased boundary-crossing opportunities by resisting any sort of identity change.

Though incorporation is an interactive process, involving both hosts and newcomers, the actors are not equal: since the negotiations take place in the host country, power relationships are generally asymmetric in favor of the host majority, which naturally has the upper hand. In the cultural realm, host values and traditions are firmly implanted and benefit from institutional support, while the immigrant minorities, who may differ initially with regard to a variety of cultural elements deemed significant by the hosts—notably, religion and language—are at best in a liminal situation with regard to formal and informal membership in the host society, as well as institutional recognition.

Though in the main, boundary crossings are the actions of immigrant newcomers, the emergence of fusion in music, food, art, dress, and even speech and manners point to boundary crossings on the part of individuals from the host majority.
This may contribute to the incorporation of immigrants in general by creating buffer zones of indifference to elements of imported culture formerly thought unacceptable, and some of these elements may even come to be positively valued and celebrated. In the same vein, though boundary shifts and blurrings of host structures have the most wide-ranging effects on immigrant incorporation, as pro-active and creative actors, immigrants do not only passively react to host decisions about structures of most relevance to them, but their views of how boundaries should be drawn, crossed, shifted, or blurred are part of the negotiations about boundaries. Though their voice might be muted as a function of their marginal position, the reinforcement of the rights of persons in liberal democracies, both as the result of internal political struggles and the spread of universal human rights, bolsters the legitimacy of the aspirations of immigrant newcomers; consequently, their views on issues involving their welfare carry greater weight in negotiations.

Boundary dynamics vary also as a function of the nature of different components of culture. Hence, the cultural dimension can itself be disaggregated into discrete elements, each of which can be considered in terms of the polar situations it allows. This can then be used for mapping negotiations. Applying this to language and religion, we examine what specific issues are likely to arise, what forms the conflicts are likely to take, and what sorts of settlements might be achieved. Before beginning, however, we briefly establish the credibility of a comparison between a self-constructed nation of immigrants and endogenous nations that are reluctantly absorbing newcomers.

3. NATIONS OF IMMIGRANTS VERSUS ENDOGENOUS NATIONS?

The sharp contrast conventionally drawn between overseas nations of immigrants and Europe’s endogenous nations is founded on two misunderstandings that mirror each other. On one hand, current immigration is more of a new phenomenon for the United States than Europeans assume; on the other hand, most European countries have had more experience with immigration and cultural diversity than they usually acknowledge.

Because of the draconian restrictions imposed on immigration from Asia and Europe in the 1920s, as well as the effects of the Great Depression and of World War II, the proportion foreign born in the total population of the United States declined steadily until it bottomed out in 1965 at a mere 5 percent, the lowest level since 1830, before the Great Atlantic migration got under way. Developments of the past three decades constitute a startling departure from the 1965 baseline. As a result of less restrictive immigration and refugee policies enacted in the post–World War II period, as well as massive recruitment of temporary labor from Mexico from 1942 to 1964 and permissive enforcement of border controls until the 1980s, the proportion foreign born nearly doubled to its present level of 9 percent. Despite rising contention and legislative initiatives designed to reduce the
intake, the current immigration figure (including a net migration of some 300,000 by way of unauthorized entries or overstaying) is estimated at slightly over 1.1 million a year, a level that approximately matches the historical record established in the first decade of the twentieth century. The “second generation,” born in the United States of at least one foreign parent, makes up another 10 percent of the population. Thus, in quantitative terms, the challenge of incorporation involves nearly one-fifth of the total population, but since the immigrants are highly concentrated, it is much greater yet in the metropolitan areas that serve as the principal ports of entry.

Diversity is indicated by the fact that whereas in 1960 the top five source countries for legal immigrants were, in descending order, Mexico, Germany, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Italy, in 1990 Mexico remained at the top, but the next four were the Philippines, Vietnam, the Dominican Republic, and Korea. Between 1981 and 1990, Latin America and Asia accounted for 83 percent of all legal immigration and for a similar estimated proportion of residents undocumented. The new immigrants are also more diverse than their predecessors with regard to socioeconomic characteristics: while newcomers as a whole are less educated than natives, a higher proportion than ever before are university educated. On the other hand, in some respects, today’s immigrants are not as homogeneous as their predecessors; since 1970, some 40 percent have originated in countries whose official or dominant language is Spanish, and most of these are Roman Catholics.

On the European side, contrary to widely held beliefs in contemporary receiving countries, immigration is not an entirely new experience. Around the turn of the twentieth century, the industrial leaders had substantial numbers of foreign residents, mostly temporary workers but also some refugees, some of whom turned into permanent settlers. The most startling case is France, whose foreign-born proportion reached 7 percent in 1930—about the same level as today—and where consequently nearly one out of every four nationals has at least one immigrant grandparent from Italy, Belgium, Spain, or Poland. In the same vein, about 10 percent of the white population of Great Britain is of immigrant descent, mostly Irish but also eastern or southern European; a substantial number of Germans trace their origins to French Huguenot refugees of the seventeenth century or Polish workers of the late nineteenth; and a considerable number of Swiss are the children or grandchildren of early twentieth-century guest workers, mostly Italian. Faced with the challenge of incorporating immigrant populations marked by religious and linguistic differences, European responses in the first half of the twentieth century ranged extremely broadly, from forceful assimilation and accommodation to rejection, “ethnic cleansing,” and industrial genocide. Let us not forget that hundred of thousands of persons in Germany, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, Italy, and Greece would today trace their ancestry to immigrants from Eastern Europe had it not been for the mass murder of Jews.
by the Nazis, which also prompted many of the survivors to emigrate to Israel or overseas.

A new immigration era dawned in the post–World War II period, with the influx of Commonwealth immigrants from the Indian subcontinent and the West Indies to Britain in the 1950s and 1960s, as well as of guest workers or their informal equivalent to continental countries in the 1960s and 1970s. Concurrently, there was a steady broadening of source countries. Starting from the less developed parts of Europe itself (Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece), they expanded to include the adjoining periphery (notably, Turkey and Yugoslavia) and regions of the Third World historically connected with Europe by way of colonialism, including the West Indies—sometimes involving citizens, as with Puerto Ricans in the United States—South Asia, Southeast Asia, the Maghreb, and Sub-Saharan Africa. The proportion of non-European immigrants grew steadily, and more of them were Muslims. With over 8 million adherents, Islam now constitutes by far the largest immigrant religion in Europe and the third largest overall. 26

Although Western European countries tightened their gates in the wake of the oil shock and ensuing economic downturn in the early 1970s, most of the foreign workers brought in originally as temporary sojourners stayed on and subsequently brought in their immediate families. There was a new influx of asylum seekers from the Third World in the 1980s and, in the 1990s, of victims of the war and ethnic cleansing in former Yugoslavia. Many of the asylees turned into family settlers as well, and despite the reception of Bosnians as only temporary refugees, only partial repatriations have occurred so far. Though most receivers have tightened their admission policies, there is a continuing trickle of legal family reunion as well as a certain amount of illegal immigration. Because it is generally younger and the females are more fertile, the population of recent immigrant origin is growing at a considerably higher rate than the hosts.

As of 1995, Western Europe’s foreign resident population ranged very widely, from a high of 33.4 percent in Luxembourg and 18.9 percent in Switzerland to a low of around 1 percent in Italy (1.7), Spain (1.2), and Finland (1.3). 27 Leaving aside the outliers, there were two distinctive clusters where immigration was significant: one between 2.5 and 6 percent, which included Ireland, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and the Netherlands, and another between 6 and 9 percent, which included Austria, France, Germany, and Belgium. 28 Although the latter level appears close to the foreign-born proportion found in the United States (8.5 percent in 1990), this is somewhat misleading as European country counts usually include a large part of the second generation, many of whom retain their parents’ nationality and are therefore counted as foreign. 29 Although inclusion of the naturalized population and of members of the second generation who are citizens would make for a somewhat larger population of immigrant origin, this category would be relatively smaller than its American equivalent; when the second generation is included, the American level rises to
18.2 percent. Quantitatively speaking, Europe's incorporation load is thus somewhat lighter than that of the United States.

Nevertheless, although there is no denying that immigration played a very different role in the development of the United States and Europe, uncritical acceptance of the essentialized distinction between endogenous nations and nations of immigration fosters ignorance of Europe's historical encounters with immigrant populations, for better and for worse, and clouds the largely parallel objective experiences of Europe and the United States in the second half of the twentieth century. It is all the more striking, therefore, that debates over incorporation on both sides of the Atlantic remain imprisoned within such divergent mythic constructions.

4. RELIGION AND LANGUAGE: ISLAM AND SPANISH

Although incorporation into the host society always involves some combination of boundary crossing, boundary shifting, or boundary blurring, these processes unfold differently for various cultural elements. To begin with, language and religion manifest themselves in very different ways materially and organizationally in the public and private spheres. Second, whereas liberal regimes in contemporary times are required by their own constitutions and by international conventions to respect some cultural differences and even to provide protection from discrimination on these accounts, this does not apply equally to all aspects of culture.

Religion

In the countries under consideration, religion is not merely a matter of personal faith but has been historically embedded in distinctive and bounded institutions. Accordingly, its materialization in the public sphere involves worship, usually in dedicated buildings on prescribed holidays and at specified times, and the organization of religious bureaucracies and membership-based congregations to manage these matters. It may encompass also distinctive dietary practices, which usually involve the procurement of appropriately prepared foods and ensuring their availability in public facilities such as school and factory lunchrooms, as well as dress codes, which may clash with mainstream ones (for example, the covering of head hair and prohibitions on the display of body parts considered indecent). Religion often also entails distinctive prescriptions governing the family as well as the comportment of men and women; where this is the case, parents are concerned that the schools reinforce the appropriate norms and provide suitably different activities or even programs for boys and girls.

Although the contemporary incorporation of human rights into national legislation vastly facilitates boundary blurring, issues like the content of public education or the development of religiously based schools—which in many European
countries benefit from public subsidies—involv[e] complex negotiations, with many opportunities for difficulties and confrontations. The baseline is that contemporary liberal regimes are bound by their own constitutive rules of religious freedom not to require conformity to the majority religion as a condition for formal membership (i.e., citizenship). As interpreted today, religious freedom usually means also that no particular affiliation can be required for employment and, in most cases, that the state must intervene actively to protect persons against discrimination on religious grounds. Beyond this, in practice, religious freedom also extends into the “freedom to” sphere, in that it is generally admitted that residents should have the possibility of meeting their religious obligations, if any, in ordinary life. But since much of ordinary life today involves state-regulated elements, this may require the state to intervene, willy-nilly, to ensure appropriate arrangements, for example, with regard to facilities in education.

In this manner, the constitutional obligations of liberal regimes to respect religious freedom move contemporary possibilities away from assimilation toward the pluralist pole. However, the pluralist extreme, in the form of separate communities with concomitant legal systems, such as was found in the Ottoman Empire (and is still visible in its successor states), is ruled out because it is incompatible with the structural character of modern nation-states. Consequently, under contemporary conditions, negotiations within the religious sphere lead to a range of possible settlements that might be termed attenuated pluralism. This includes equitable funding policies or tax exemptions; access to established forms of legal recognition; regular consultation of public authorities with representatives of religious communities; sensitivity in the field of marriage and family law, including recognition of religious marriage ceremonies or delegation of the civil authority to a religious community in specified circumstances; the provision of appropriate burial facilities; chaplaincy facilities in public institutions such as the military, prisons, and hospitals; multifaith knowledge-oriented religious education in schools; and the possibility of taking holidays in conjunction with religious festivals.

By and large, negotiations regarding the incorporation of newcomer religions in liberal democracies are shaped by existing institutional arrangements governing the materialization of religion, which reflect the historical settlement of controversies arising from religious diversity and secularization, as well as the outcome of earlier encounters with immigrant religions—notably, Roman Catholicism in the United States from about 1830 on and Judaism on both sides of the Atlantic from approximately the same period onward. Two distinct institutional paradigms can be discerned, each of which occasions different difficulties and clashes and, concomitantly, leads to different patterns of conflict settlement.

Some states support a particular Christian church as the established religion, coupled with limited support for nonestablished but recognized religious
minorities (e.g., United Kingdom, Norway); however, this may shade into “conso-
ociationalism,” whereby the state, shifting boundaries so to speak, provides more
or less equal support for a number of historically established religious pillars,
sometimes including a liberal or lay alternative (e.g., the Netherlands, Belgium,
Germany). In both cases, the problem of incorporation centers on whether recog-
nition of a newcomer religion as a religious minority or pillar is a possibility and
under what threshold conditions. The alternative paradigm is the relegation of
religion to the private sphere by way of strict separation of church and state (e.g.,
the United States, France); however, this is usually coupled with the extension of
privileges to associations that qualify as religious—notably, in the form of tax
exemption on property. It is important to note that where this prevails, the histori-
cal religion of the majority usually benefits from default recognition—for exam-
ple, secularization in France is undeniably Roman Catholic–centric, whereas in
the United States, it is congregational-Protestant–centric. Hence, the matter of
threshold conditions for newcomer religions arises as in the previous case, albeit
in an attenuated form. Whatever the pattern—usually taken for granted by resi-
dents—ambiguities and inequities are often revealed and brought to the fore pre-
cisely when religiously different newcomers appear on the scene.

The process of incorporation is affected also by the significance of religion
more generally in the surrounding culture. Contemporary Western societies are
characterized, on one hand, by increasing religious diversity—not only because
of recent immigration but also because of the attraction of Eastern religions and
progress made by a variety of sects—and, on the other hand, by a decline of reli-
gious practice, particularly in Europe, which has been described as a climate of
unbelief or of religious indifference. One consequence is more peaceful coexis-
tence between religion and politics in most European countries. The emergence
and visibility of new immigrant faiths are thus taking place in a context of privati-
ization and individualization of religious feelings. These developments facilitate
boundary crossing, including not only conversion to the dominant religion of the
hosts, which remains rare, but much more commonly movement by the newcom-
ers—and especially the second generation—away from active involvement in the
ancestral religion toward religious indifference or outright secularism, which par-
allels the hosts’ position. Conversely, the attraction of exotic faiths induces some
boundary crossing on the part of the hosts. Concurrently, at the institutional level,
incorporation proceeds by way of boundary blurring, whereby newcomer relig-
ions, initially considered “exotic” and incompatible with the host society’s cul-
ture, become, in a sense, “naturalized.”

Nevertheless, progress in making freedom of worship a reality rather than a
theory has been remarkably slow. Moreover, the continuing strength of a domi-
nant church or churches and their historical contribution to the shaping of public
culture by way of holidays and rituals, for example, can be construed by immi-
grants at the individual level as pressure to conform in one way or another to the
majority religious culture. At the level of the collectivity, conditions for the incorporation of the newcomer religion into existing arrangements usually reflect expectations that it will evolve toward the organizational model similar to that of the majority religions (e.g., into an ecclesiastical hierarchy in Roman Catholic or Lutheran European countries) or, alternately, into a decentralized congeries of congregations in the United States. The state’s “neutrality,” which allows the religious immigrants to organize themselves but only if they do so in tacit or even explicit conformity with indigenous models, amounts to a policy of attenuated assimilation. This is further manifested in provisions for access to public funding, if at all available, that is limited to cultural, educational, and sporting activities rather than for strictly religious activities.

Negotiations over incorporation are rendered much more difficult when the religious boundary, as constructed by the hosts, is compounded by ethnic or racial differences. In the United States, for example, the issue of Roman Catholicism was propelled to the fore by the massive arrival of Irish immigrants in the 1830s. For thoughtful Americans who believed that their democratic republican culture was grounded in Protestant congregationalism—a view that Alexis de Tocqueville erected into a leading political theory—Roman Catholicism was dangerous because it was an inherently authoritarian religion, as confirmed by the papacy’s contemporaneous condemnation of liberalism and democracy. However, their responses to immigration were shaped also by the image of the Irish as the ethnic “other” in the formation of the English national identity. Accordingly, the process of incorporation involved protracted negotiations over both religious and ethnic boundaries: eventually, the Irish became “white” and Roman Catholicism came to be recognized as one of three American religions; this pattern of accommodation was extended to Jews as well. In Europe, a similar crisis was precipitated by the arrival of Jews from eastern Europe in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Although the religious boundary had begun to blur, as indicated by the fact that nationals of the Jewish faith gained full rights as citizens or subjects in many countries, immigration prompted the elaboration of a “new antisemitism,” which emphasized the negative traits of Jews as a race rather than as Christ killers. This construction culminated in the Nuremberg laws, which discarded religious affiliation altogether on behalf of ancestry, simultaneously sharpening the boundary and relocating it toward the exclusionary pole. The essentialization of Islam in Europe today involves a similar conflation of religion and race, but matters are complicated by the fact that race is a suppressed issue, and the contemporary context rules out the extreme historical outcomes.

Islam

Despite Islam’s longtime presence in the West, it arose on the political agenda—and, concomitantly, as an object of study by social scientists—only in the 1980s. In Europe, large-scale immigration from Islamic countries began in
the 1950s, with the arrival of Pakistanis in Britain and of Maghrebis in France and Belgium, and expanded further in the 1960s with the coming of Turks to Germany and the Netherlands. On the continent, the cultural identity of these newcomers initially arose little interest because they were viewed essentially as temporary workers, whose incorporation was limited to a subordinate role in the economic sphere.40 Living in an overwhelmingly male and perfunctory environment, with little or no opportunity for engaging in a normal life, they lent support to the convenient assumption that they were as secular as the rest of the West.41 Their religious practice, if any, was seen as a private matter, which presumably could be accommodated within the framework of established arrangements—notably, time off from work on weekends.

Islam became much more visible in the mid-1970s after Europe closed its doors to low-skilled labor migration but left open the possibility of family reunion. Transformed from single male migrants to families aspiring to permanent settlement, Muslim immigrant populations rapidly expanded.42 Concurrently, in the United States, the elimination of discriminatory racial and national provisions from the immigration system in 1965 also resulted in a rapid increase of Muslim families from Asia (including the Middle East) and Africa. It is important to note, however, that while Muslim labor migrants to Europe were drawn overwhelmingly from the peasantry or the working class and joined later by imported spouses of similar social background, recent Muslim migrations to the United States and Canada have been dominated by professionals, whose educational levels far exceed the local average for both men and women and whose religious life has adapted to the established congregational pattern, derived originally from Protestantism but espoused also by earlier Roman Catholic and Jewish immigrants.43

Concurrently, the hosts’ perceptions of Islam were also shaped by the changing international situation. In the Middle East, Nasserist Arab nationalism was superseded by Saudi hegemony, Palestinian armed actions (including terrorism), OPEC success in occasioning an oil crisis, the Iranian revolution and the American hostage crisis, the rise of Khadafi, the growth of Islamic fundamentalist movements, the Iran-Iraq war, and the Iraqi attack on Kuwait that triggered the Gulf War. These developments transformed the image of Islam in the West from a passive to an aggressive civilization, while lending support to established Orientalist beliefs, especially the idea that Islam is inherently incompatible with liberal democracy and that individual Muslims function as docile instruments of ruthless secular leaders and equally ruthless ayatollahs.44 This was further confirmed by radical pronouncements such as that of Britain’s marginal but much publicized “Muslim Parliament,” which called for Muslims to abstain from participating in political life altogether because “Britain is not an Islamic state”—a stance that strikingly echoes the pronouncements of the Vatican in the mid-nineteenth century. Altogether, there seems to be little doubt that the international standing of Islam—as opposed to other faiths brought by recent immigration, such as
Hinduism or Buddhism—has negatively colored the outlook of Europeans toward its practitioners. However, given the influence that diplomatic representatives of predominantly Islamic countries have exercised in the funding and organization of mosques in some European countries, misgivings regarding the international links of Islam are not wholly without grounds.45

With the emergence of Muslim families, the process of incorporation was broadened beyond the economic sphere to encompass cultural matters as well. As factory workers who appeared religiously indifferent—and in many cases were—left the confines of all-male communities to take on new responsibilities as heads of families, they acquired a paterfamilial devotionalism, acquiring new concerns regarding spiritual welfare, the maintenance of proper gender relations, and the education of their children.46 Accordingly, the imperatives of Islamic prescriptions and practices arose not only in the home but also into the public sector, raising issues that, as magnified by the media, appeared difficult, if not impossible, to resolve. Sectors like education, health, and social services—areas that lie at the very center of family and identity—provide many examples of how torturous such negotiations might be. Many of the points of controversy revolve in particular around negotiations about how parents might pass on their Islamic heritage to their children.47 For example, tug-of-wars around issues like physical education, sex education, and religious education in schools have been common in many places. Other areas of religious stress confronted by Muslims on a daily basis include improperly slaughtered meat, the difficulties they face in securing places of worship (particularly in erecting mosques), the lack of provisions for circumcision, and indifference of employers and of the state in making space for Islam in the workplace (e.g., provision of rooms for daily prayers, modification of shifts to take account of fasting during Ramadan).48

Having had little experience in public schools that is supportive of their religious traditions, and much that is hostile to them, it is not surprising that Muslim immigrants have voiced a growing demand for Islamic schools of their own.49 As the Muslim population grows older, other issues such as inheritance and mixed marriages are likely to emerge as well, ensuring that issues surrounding Islam will not go away quickly or quietly.

The question facing Muslim immigrants and their children is not only how they can overcome such practical problems but also how they can develop a sense of belonging and being comfortable about being not only “Muslims in Europe” but “European Muslims.” According to some observers, this would require them to relinquish their “siege mentality” and “their sense of moral superiority and righteousness and seek[ing] new ways of empowering themselves.”50 However, this is a two-way process; much depends also on how the host majority responds.

Potential arrangements regarding Muslim demands are guided by established institutional arrangements in host countries. However, faced with pressures to accommodate religious demands brought up by Muslims, the European
hosts—particularly in countries that have established Roman Catholic or Protestant churches—have tended to hold back and grant them less than has been obtained by other religious minorities and sects under existing institutional arrangements. On the other hand, in those same countries there is a tendency—reflecting bureaucratic preferences and expectations—to treat Islam as if it were or could become organized along the lines of a centralized Christian church, with a hierarchical ministerial bureaucracy endowed with authority over the faithful. This has led to intra-Muslim conflicts over the privilege of representing the community vis-à-vis the host authorities.

Living in the context of a secularized Christian Europe, many Muslims experience European claims of religious freedom as a contradiction since they receive little public facilitation and in fact face many practical difficulties in trying to live according to Islam. From the immigrants’ perspective, the hosts’ positions appear quite remote from the pluralist pole that prevails in the religious sphere with regard to the varieties of Christianity and, to a lesser extent, Judaism. In addition to the often-voiced charge that local and national authorities fail to respect the principles of human rights as they pertain to their case, Muslims widely believe that legislation and administrative regulations and practices are not being extended equitably to their own religious community and that there is extensive ignorance and insensitivity regarding minority religious matters more generally. Muslims commonly suspect that there is a hidden policy to discriminate against Islam. Existing legislation against discrimination does not seem to protect them from the manipulation of planning and zoning laws to prevent the building of places of worship, from the exploitation of administrative procedures to deny public funding to their religious organizations, or from the fact that immigration laws seem to be applied in such a way as to prevent cross-border families from celebrating rites of passage and major religious festivals together. Even at the symbolic level, recognition in some institutionalized fashion is elusive.

A particularly interesting and somewhat paradoxical case in point is the demand that was put forth by Muslims in the United Kingdom, in the wake of the Rushdie affair, to extend the existing antiblasphemy law under which the state can prosecute those who insult the Anglican deity to those who insult Allah. Were they to succeed, this would be a clear case of shifting the established boundary in the religious realm to encompass Islam. Similarly, satisfaction of demands to sanction “incitement to religious hatred” along the lines of existing legislation regarding racial hatred would involve the state positively in boundary shifting.

Conversely, the reluctance of European states to shift the boundary-defining religions that deserve special respect or protection to encompass Islam suggests, as we argued in the introduction, that despite Europe’s sociological secularization—indicated by low rates of religious practice—all European countries retain Christianity as a major component of their identity. Or, more accurately, in the wake of the Jewish Holocaust, a consensus emerged among liberal democracies on the
unacceptability of institutionalized antisemitism, and the boundary was blurred by way of a redefinition of Christian civilization into Judeo-Christian civilization to incorporate Jews as fellow Westerners. Boundary crossing thereby became easier as well, and the vast majority of the descendants of Jewish immigrants became thoroughly socialized into their respective national cultures. Jewish religious institutions evolved accordingly and gained recognition within the appropriate framework of church-state relations. Whether or not these negotiations have resulted in a fully inclusive boundary shift is still the subject of considerable debate among European Jews. What is quite clear, however, is that the religious boundary remains quite fixed in relation to Islam and, in some cases, became more clearly defined in the course of confrontations.

There is considerable variation in the extent to which Muslim newcomers and their European hosts have succeeded in negotiating routine procedures for dealing with the demands of Muslim daily life. Overall, some progress along these lines has been achieved in the United Kingdom—where matters like planning permission for mosques, permission to perform religious slaughter, sites for Muslim burial, and the like are today routinely permitted—as well as the Netherlands, where the number of state-funded Islamic schools is the highest in Europe (twenty-nine in 1996).56 As of the mid-1990s, there were no state-funded Islamic schools in the United Kingdom, but some fifteen to thirty independent schools were maintained by private funds; however, there was a breakthrough in early 1998, when the Labour government approved two schools for state funding.57 In the Netherlands and Belgium, the organization of dominant society and polity into ideological/confessional pillars is potentially accommodating to Muslim demands; however, Islam has not quite achieved a status equal to that of the other pillars. Though Muslim religious bodies do not receive direct support from the state in the United Kingdom and in Belgium, they can obtain tax advantages as charities—as in the United States. Even in France, where the situation is governed by the hosts’ adherence to a rigid republican stance and apparent suspicion regarding the link between any overt community—be it ethnic or religious—and resistance to assimilation, there are some possibilities of state assistance in the context of urban or community development projects.58

However, despite differences in the general principles governing church-state relations in Western Europe, the general conclusion is that Islamic institutions are unequal to those of the established religions.59 In addition to structural constraints, for example, the principle of recognition as practiced in Germany and Belgium means that only religions meeting certain bureaucratic criteria have access to governmental facilities and funds, and Islamic bodies as constituted in those countries often fall short of them. The diversity of the Muslim umma and the complexities of religion ensure that negotiations will not proceed evenly in all spheres. Common to all negotiations is the silence of voices of moderate Muslims. European unease, fears, and even hostility toward Islam in general do not seem, therefore, likely to wane in the near future.
Language

Paralleling the situation with regard to religion, the logic of language as embedded in social and cultural institutions differs sensibly from what one might expect on the basis of innate human abilities and inclinations. Any human being who is capable of speech can learn to speak in more than one tongue; this capacity is cumulative, in that the acquisition of a new language does not occasion the loss of the old. Accordingly, widespread multilingualism is common in many societies, historical as well as contemporary. Yet, the host countries on both sides of the Atlantic are firmly committed to achieve and maintain the paramountcy of one—or, in a few cases, several—national languages. Thus, despite the cumulative linguistic capacity of individuals, in the Western world generally, language provides the principal foundation for the formation of bounded and mutually exclusive national groups, thereby paralleling the institutionalization of religion.

However, the materialization of language in the public sphere takes very different forms from that of religion. To begin with, because communications, in order to be intelligible, must be expressed in linguistically specific ways, in the course of carrying out its activities, the state necessarily engages in linguistic choices. It can make itself blind—to religion, race, ethnicity—but it cannot choose to become deaf or mute; institutionally speaking, there cannot be an equivalent to the separation of church and state, with language relegated to the private sphere and the state adopting a “neutral” stance. The state’s choices in turn affect the value of the linguistic capital of various groups in the population, including immigrants whose original language differs from that of the hosts.

By and large, these considerations are applicable also to the institutional spheres that pertain to making a living. The coming of the postindustrial age, involving an accelerated shift from work in agriculture and industry to the white-collar sector, has decisively enhanced the importance of language skills in the labor market; since these skills are in large part language specific—an employee’s success depends not merely on how well she reads and writes but on how well she reads and writes French—the linguistic regulations and practices that prevail in the labor market become more important as well because they decisively affect the value of one’s linguistic capital. This is true also in the sphere of education, which determines access to the labor market for new generations.

Whereas their commitment to religious freedom requires liberal states to go beyond respect for the rights of individuals and at least accept or sometimes even positively sustain a measure of institutional pluralism in the religious sphere, no such obligation arises in connection with freedom of speech, which is generally construed to refer primarily to the contents of speech (broadly speaking) rather than choice of linguistic vehicle. Accordingly, the sphere of language rights is more limited than that of religious rights.

As interpreted in most host countries, freedom of speech provides for the right of persons—including immigrants—to use nonnational languages in the private
realm and today is also construed to prevent the state—in its incarnation as schoolteachers, for example—from actively repressing their use by immigrants in public, as was done historically with many indigenous and regional linguistic groups (e.g., Sami, Native Americans, Bretons), as well as with earlier waves of immigrants “for their own good.” Today, this freedom generally extends also to publications in nonnational languages, which in the past were often subject to restrictions on security grounds and the like. Overall, in Europe, commitment to freedom of speech does not prevent liberal states from insisting on the exclusive use of the national language(s) in its relations with the public; it is noteworthy that the recent expansion of immigrant rights in many European countries has not extended to any requirement that the state make room for imported languages in the provision of public services, encompassing such vital institutions as the bureaucracy, the courts, or public signage. By and large, a similar situation prevailed in the United States from the latter part of the nineteenth century onward; however, as will be elaborated later on, the situation changed as a result of the civil rights revolution, which led to the acknowledgment, in effect, of certain linguistic rights of U.S. citizens. The resulting settlement subsequently contributed to modify processes governing the incorporation of the new wave of immigrants.

In the sphere of language, as against religion, contemporary immigration countries remain clustered close to the assimilationist pole rather than the pluralist alternative, best illustrated by the experience of historical empires, against which modernizing European states elaborated their own distinctive approach. Aided by the advent of the printing press, from the sixteenth century onward, rulers of the new states undertook to establish a single language, distinctive from that of their neighbors, as the exclusive means of communication between the state and its subjects throughout the realm. Over the next centuries, the national culture penetrated steadily downward along with the spreading literacy. Whereas in the course of liberalization, states gradually relinquished the notion that a common religion was a sine qua non for national integration and survival, the opposite occurred with regard to language, which steadily moved to the fore as the single most important element in the construction of national identity, both positively as a communicative instrument shared by members of the nation and as a boundary marker affirming their distinction from others. Thus, as the result of deliberate state action as well as of the dynamics of cultural capital, monolingualism became the norm throughout the economy and much of civil society as well.

With regard to immigrants, various versions of the assimilationist position can be differentiated, ranging from support and incentives for learning the host language (with or without use of the mother tongue as the facilitating instrument) to harsh sanctions against the use of the immigrant languages. “Mild” or “soft” assimilationism is founded on the assumption that established social and economic forces will make people learn the host language but without making any provisions to facilitate this, other than by way of ordinary schools. Assimilationist
policies are sometimes implemented even before arrival, for example, by giving preference to applicants who know the host country’s language(s), as under the Canadian or Australian “point system,” or as France did with regard to Indochinese refugees.\textsuperscript{66}

A full-fledged pluralist alternative would involve acceptance by the hosts of the immigrant language(s) in public life, including both the economic and political spheres, thereby establishing the foundations for the emergence of a truly multilingual society. The commitment to the maintenance of immigrant languages might be implemented by ensuring that they will be passed on to future generations and by providing for their continuing development and expression in various art forms. However, it cannot be taken for granted that the provision of mother-tongue facilities in education indicate a commitment to pluralism, as in many cases it reflects merely an assumption that the migration is temporary, and it may indeed be part of a strategy for ensuring that settlement will not take place.\textsuperscript{67} In reality, the pluralist position occurs at most in a very limited form. Examples include the provisions of translators in specific situations—in particular, those where health and civil rights are at stake—and/or the provision of selected public services in the immigrants’ languages in some localities of immigrant concentration.

The newcomers’ objectives are usually more complex, ranging from quick learning of the host national language for economic purposes to maintaining their original language as a marker of identity and as a vehicle for community both within the host society and transnationally. What mild pluralism is encountered is instrumental from the perspective of the hosts: either to facilitate learning of the dominant language or to deal with public safety and emergencies, or yet as an instrument of trade and foreign policy (e.g., Australia). Nevertheless, while all pluralist positions are appreciated by immigrants, differences between positive and negative assimilationism matter greatly from their perspective. Except for the French Canadians—who held the linguistic upper hand at the time of the British conquest but were unable to prevent the rise of English to paramountcy and subsequently had to struggle to reestablish French supremacy at the provincial level—every immigration country has been intent upon maintaining the status quo of the dominant language and has so far succeeded in doing so.

In effect, whether or not knowledge of the hegemonic/official language is a formal requirement for political membership, newcomers are expected to learn and use it. By and large, the hosts expect massive boundary crossing by newcomers, with varying doses of the carrot or the stick in bringing this about. Boundary blurring tends to be very limited to the provision of emergency services and the like on what is expected to be a temporary basis. Against this background, the steady rise of Spanish as a widespread second language in the United States is a most unusual instance of broad-gauged boundary blurring, and the possible
transformation of its monolingual culture into a bilingual culture would constitute a unique case of boundary shifting in the linguistic sphere.

Spanish

The situation in the United States today is marked by the unprecedented conjunction of three distinct elements: (1) a modification of the traditional assimilationist stance as a by-product of the civil rights revolution, (2) the high proportion of immigrants in the latest wave who share one mother tongue, and (3) the fact that Spanish has some historical standing as an indigenous language of the United States rather than a foreign language of immigrants. Together, these features have contributed to a shift of policy toward the pluralist pole, but this shift has in turn triggered considerable opposition, propelling language issues unto the political agenda.

The American founding was a period of proactive Americanization, including in the field of language. However, the advent of massive immigration from Europe in the middle third of the century resulted in widespread use of immigrant languages—notably German—at the local level, not only in church affairs and parochial education but also in public schools. Attacks on bilingualism grew in tandem with immigration restrictionism, beginning in the 1880s; the use of German was actively suppressed after the outbreak of World War I and its aftermath, and by the mid-1920s, many states enacted statutory requirements of instruction in English only in public and even parochial schools. Knowledge of English was also made a requirement for naturalization, although the tested level was not very high, as part of an all-out Americanization campaign. This constituted yet another practical and ritual affirmation of the importance of English as a key element of American identity.

Beyond this, Anglo conformity was steadily enforced in schools and in the workplace in an often heavy-handed manner, much as was done to repress regional languages in France. These measures were not only justified in the name of patriotism and the necessities of national integration but also rationalized by way of psychological theories that asserted that bi- or multilingual socialization was harmful to children. Because of the hiatus in immigration in the 1925-1965 period, there was little or no replenishment among of speakers of the “old-country” languages among the various European immigrant groups; this, in turn, contributed to speed up their extinction, both in the private sphere and in civil society. Market forces operated in the same direction, and by the 1950s, the once lively foreign-language press was on its way out.

However, throughout this period, there was growing immigration from Mexico. This developed mostly as a by-product of the perennial recruitment of agricultural workers by way of an informal cross-border labor market in the Southwest supplemented by episodic government-organized guest worker programs. Although there was considerable return migration, these comings and goings over
the better part of a century gave rise to substantial settlement. Living and working under segregated conditions, mostly in border communities, Mexican newcomers were viewed as sojourners rather than immigrants. Their membership in American society was effectively discouraged, and their descendants were kept at arm’s length as well. Under these conditions, Spanish persisted as the dominant language of the expanding Mexican American communities. In the 1960s, these communities were swept up into the civil rights struggle, and the process of incorporation belatedly got under way. Concomitantly, the place of Spanish in American life was propelled on the agenda as well, as under a broadened doctrine of rights, the obligation to use English exclusively might be construed as a disadvantage to American citizens who grew up in a Spanish-language environment.

Concurrently, the monopolistic position of English as the language of public affairs and political participation was somewhat qualified by way of court decisions pertaining to Puerto Ricans living on the mainland. The island, which was conquered by the United States in the last year of the nineteenth century, emerged as the one exception to the general Anglo conformity pattern noted earlier when, after decades of vacillation, under the New Deal U.S. policy took a decisive turn toward bilingualism. After World War II, when the island achieved a larger measure of self-government, Spanish was established as the general medium of instruction. Concurrently, however, there was an acceleration of migration to the mainland where, as U.S. citizens and residents of New York or other states, persons of Puerto Rican birth were qualified to vote in elections at all levels. Eventually, they demanded and obtained the right to do so in Spanish. This meant that the state of New York, for example, had to provide bilingual ballots in Spanish as well as English.

Further developments toward pluralism occurred in the wake of the civil rights movement, notably by way of a 1975 amendment to the Voting Rights Act of 1965—which had been designed primarily to overcome barriers against voting by African Americans in the South—mandating a bilingual ballot when the voters of selected language groups reached 5 percent or more in a voting district. That such groups exist at all may appear strange since in theory immigrants cannot become voters without knowing some English, as this is required for naturalization. However, it is possible to be a native-born American citizen with very limited knowledge of English, particularly in the borderlands of the Southwest, because of the historical processes noted earlier. To a lesser extent, this is the case with some Chinese communities as well. Accordingly, for example, the courts have ordered the state of New York to provide Chinese ballots in certain voting precincts of New York City.

In a different vein, but in keeping with the same spirit, evidence of a high drop-out rate for Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans led some educators to argue that this might be overcome by teaching basic subjects in Spanish, and this outlook—endorsed by politicians with Hispanic constituents—in turn prompted
enactment of the Bilingual Education Act of 1967, which provided federal support to local educational agencies for bilingual education. Beneficiaries included not only Spanish speakers but also Native Americans, Chinese, and a variety of others. Although the explicit objective of the policy was to facilitate general learning and the eventual mastery of English, bilingual education, which was accompanied by more general teaching of the appropriate culture, contributed to establish and legitimize a more pluralist outlook. 72

It is noteworthy that this shift toward the pluralist pole emerged before the onset of the new immigration of the post-1965 period; however, it was vastly reinforced by this turn of events. Although all immigrant languages have been positively affected, Spanish has emerged in a paramount position among them because in the decade 1971-1980, almost a third of all immigrants originated in countries whose official or dominant language is Spanish. This trend persisted into the 1990s as well.

The high incidence of Spanish speakers has generated “critical mass” effects in both politics and the market. Politically, the big news of 1996 was not only the initially unlikely reelection of President Clinton but the emergence of Mexican Americans as a major force in California. Although the underlying demographics had been in the making for some time, their electoral impact was limited because of low rates of naturalization among newcomers and of voter registration among Mexican Americans. However, Proposition 187 and anti-immigrant measures enacted at the federal level prompted an unprecedented mobilization among Mexican-origin communities. Beyond this, the geographical distribution of Hispanics coincides with the shift of the American political center of gravity toward the Sunbelt and thereby enhances their national political weight more generally. Although voters of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Dominican origin disagree sharply on foreign policy and economic issues, they do share an interest in ensuring a special place for the Spanish language in public life. 73 Paralleling this, the big economic news of 1997 was the emergence of a “Hispanic market,” notably for media providers, reflecting not only demographics but also the steady movement of Spanish speakers into the middle class (as defined by market analysts). 74 The responsiveness of U.S. economic entrepreneurs to the opportunities afforded by Spanish speakers thus fosters a market-driven multiculturalism, which further contributes to language maintenance, quite independently of any public policy choices.

Taking place at a time of accelerating transnationalization of capital and communications, further amplified by policies promoting hemispheric economic integration, as well as transnationalization of the immigrants’ lives, these unprecedented developments in state, civil society, and the market produce feedback effects that further enhance the viability of Spanish and its incipient institutionalization as the second language of a hitherto insistently monolingual country. This unanticipated development would genuinely alter one of the major pillars of
American identity, deemed by many to be especially important because it functions as a unifying element to offset religious and racial diversity.

It is therefore not surprising that the prospect of a changing linguistic configuration has prompted widespread negative reactions. As reported in the Ford Foundation’s study of community relations cited earlier, use of different languages—among which Spanish is the most prominent—is a major source of conflict between hosts and newcomers. As can be gathered from a scanning of press reports, these conflicts arise against the background of a widespread albeit diffuse uneasiness, prompted by evidence of Latino “trespassing” into hitherto Anglo neighborhoods, such as the appearance of shop signs in Spanish, the advent of ungentrified Latino eating places or bodegas, encounters with service personnel—notably taxi drivers—whose English is deficient, or merely the sound of Spanish spoken in the street. At another level, the steady advance of Spanish has prompted the formation of organizations dedicated to the protection of English and its reestablishment as the exclusive language of public affairs by enacting local, state, and national measures to that effect. Opposition also takes the form of efforts to eliminate programs that are thought to contribute to the maintenance of foreign languages or are seen as providing disincentives to learning English. Bilingual education has emerged as a particular focus of contestation. Opposition to “Latinization” of the United States also played a major role in mobilizing support on behalf of California’s Proposition 187 and is explicitly invoked as grounds for more severe and effective repression of illegal immigration, as well as for a reduction of legal immigration, notably by way of family reunification.75

These confrontations simultaneously involve two distinct but related dynamics. The first takes place at the symbolic level, involving a struggle over the blurring of the hitherto sharp boundary between the “Anglo” and “Latin” Americas by allowing Spanish to spread into the Anglo preserve. Beyond this, it is assumed that the uneven penetration of Spanish would foster the emergence of internal boundaries delineating linguistically differentiated territories, as in Canada or Belgium, and foster ethno-regional separatism. The second involves the materialization of language and is concerned with the possibility of a modification of the country’s linguistic regime—in effect, a boundary shift—whose outcome would affect the value of the linguistic capital held by the various contending groups, providing advantages to Spanish-English bilinguals and imposing costs on English monolinguals.

However, contrary to the contentions of those who agitate the specter of separatism, there is no evidence to indicate that Spanish-speaking immigrants and their descendants fail to learn English or do so more slowly than their predecessors. In particular, evidence from the growing research literature on the subject indicates unambiguously that the children of Spanish-speaking foreign born are no less likely to learn English than any other second-generation group,76 although the possibility of historical comparisons is limited by the shortage of data, what
evidence there is suggests that immigrants today learn English as rapidly as their predecessors. However, as already noted, incentives for retaining or learning some Spanish are greater than for most other immigrant languages today or earlier. This is true also for non-Latinos, as indicated by the fact that Spanish is the most widely learned foreign language in American secondary schools and colleges. There is therefore reason to believe that the bilingualization of the United States is becoming an institutional reality, somewhat diffusely at the national level and more concretely in some regions.

This projection is by no means negated by the solid victory the supporters of Proposition 227 achieved to eliminate bilingual education from California schools in June 1998. Many Californians understood the issue as a vote for or against the primacy of the English language in the public sphere, in the sense discussed in this article, and lined up accordingly. The measure was supported by 67 percent of white voters but only 37 percent of Hispanics; Asians gave it 57 percent, blacks 48 percent. Nevertheless, the outcome is attributable in part to the support the measure obtained from a substantial portion of the parents of English-deficient children, contributing among other things to the nearly four of ten Hispanics who voted for it. As expressed in many interviews, this is in part because of the “ghettoization” bilingual education often entails in practice and the concomitant preference of parents for intensive exposure to English. This approach, in the form of immersion, also is viewed by many experts as a more effective and viable alternative, especially when implemented sensitively with the aid of bilingual teachers. But even if the referendum should result in the total disappearance of bilingual education—which is by no means ensured because of loopholes and pending court actions—Spanish is likely to become steadily more institutionalized as California’s second language because of the eagerness of the commercial media to further develop the Spanish-language market and because of the steadily growing weight of Mexican Americans in the Southern California electorate.

5. CONCLUSION

In what sense is Islam in Europe like Spanish in the United States? In that public debates surrounding the emergence of large immigrant groups identified by religion in the one case and language in the other are emblematic of larger issues of inclusion and exclusion, which in the last instance are about identity—of the hosts, of the newcomers, and, most important, of the social entities that will result from their prolonged interactions.

Challenging analyses founded on self-referential conceptualizations of identity, we have suggested a more dialectical approach, involving elaborations of the boundary that defines who we are and who we are not. As experienced in the material world, this boundary is an aggregate of different dimensions, including the cultural; accordingly, incorporation is also best understood as a disaggregated
process, involving boundary negotiations over various elements. These negotia-
tions involve distinct operations by both newcomers and hosts—individual cross-
ing of boundaries by acquiring some of the characteristics of those on the other
side, blurring of boundaries by making it possible for individuals to have multiple
memberships, and the outright shifting of boundaries to include or exclude the
other. Fraught with tensions, sometimes generating confrontations, and occasion-
ally provoking adverse reactions, these negotiations are nevertheless likely to
result in the institutionalization of new relationships.

With regard to the cultural incorporation of the most recent wave of immi-
grants and their descendants, different patterns are emerging in Europe and the
United States. Somewhat paradoxically, despite the incidence of “racist” reac-
tions on both sides of the Atlantic, in neither case does the situation lend itself to
the construction of a sharp racial boundary of the sort that has persisted in the
United States with regard to the population of African descent. This is in part
because of the strength of liberal democratic constraints against the development
de novo of such a boundary, but also because of the diversity of the relevant immi-
grant populations, many of whom are somatically indistinguishable from their
hosts, making for blurred boundaries.

Nowhere in Europe are immigrant tongues encroaching upon the paramountcy
of the national language(s), and it is taken for granted that public services and all
interactions between government and residents will continue to be carried out in
the established language(s) exclusively. At most, there are limited provisions for
rendering services more accessible to those whose knowledge of the host lan-
guage is deficient, for example, by providing for translators; governmental radio
and television usually include limited immigrant-language broadcasts in their
programs as well. In the same vein, it is taken for granted that children of immi-
grant background will receive their obligatory education in the host language—
with the exception of those considered temporary residents only, notably Bosni-
ans; however, some countries provide also for mother-tongue instruction in addi-
tion to the usual subjects. Furthermore, nowhere does the market play the role it
does with regard to Spanish in the United States. This is mainly because no immi-
grant language in Europe provides an equivalent market share, especially when
income is taken into account. 79

The situation in the religious sphere is remarkably different. Because blatant
intolerance is ruled out by domestic and international constraints on the host gov-
ernments, and because it is the shared faith of various groups who amount to a
critical mass in a number of countries, Islam will undoubtedly become a perma-
nent feature of the European religious scene. Whereas there is no gainsaying that
this development, of itself, constitutes a major transformation of the European
-cultural landscape, there is plenty of room to debate whether the glass is half full
or half empty. The hosts continue to display considerable reluctance to extend
established institutional arrangements designed to accommodate religious
diversity to Islam; conversely, innovative voices amid the immigrant communities on behalf of the adaptation of Islam to European conditions have been few and far between. This situation is attributable in the main to their reliance on imported religious officials and teachers.

In contrast with this, in the United States, despite the incidence of prejudice toward immigrants identified as "Arabs," by all reports incorporation in the religious sphere properly speaking is quite unproblematic. Muslims experience little or no difficulty in availing themselves of the opportunities open to religious organizations under the American version of separation of church and state—extending, for example, to the use of funds from foreign sources to construct and operate mosques or private schools. While this is an interesting development in the perspective of a comparison with Europe, in the American context, it is hardly remarkable: in effect, Islam is being processed by way of the flexible institutional apparatus that emerged from earlier confrontations with exogenous religions, Roman Catholicism and Judaism.

The relaxed American response to Islam can be in turn contrasted with the widespread concern evoked by the advent of Spanish. Despite the determined institutionalization of English in the early decades of the twentieth century as a condition for cultural pluralism, negotiations surrounding the incorporation of newcomers and longtime Americans of Spanish-language heritage appear to be leading to a major transformation of the country’s linguistic configuration. Given the importance of language in the formation of the American identity, the emergence of a bilingual archipelago with large islands in the country’s major population centers constitutes as dramatic a change in the cultural landscape as that of the spread of Islam within Christian Europe. Still in the making, this unanticipated outcome is the result of an unprecedented combination of positive causes and permissive factors. Most important, in addition to the preponderance of Spanish among newcomers, is the fact that the language’s unique position in the development of the American nation—which was reclaimed in the course of the civil rights struggle and its aftermath—has contributed to a blurring of the boundaries of American identity. The preferences of Hispanics, whose weight in the political arena has been increasing, in turn foster the enactment of policies that contribute directly or indirectly to the maintenance and viability of Spanish as the second American language. Moreover, quite independently of these developments, Spanish is being sustained also by the alluring market opportunities it affords to mainstream entrepreneurs, as well as a generally supportive regional international environment, including steps toward regional economic integration.80

This comparative overview points to a more general analytic conclusion, which is relevant to ongoing political confrontations and negotiations over incorporation. In short, under the conditions that prevail in host democracies today, extreme differentialism and extreme assimilationism are equally ruled out. Despite heated debates predicated on the notion that a choice is to be made
between rabid multiculturalism and heartless assimilation, these alternatives are in fact completely unrealistic, either as doctrines for the elaboration of host policies or as grounds for advancing immigrant claims. However, although the possible choices are reduced to a narrower range of middling possibilities, they are not the same with regard to religion and language. By lumping things together and failing to recognize that the same general formula—be it cultural pluralism, republican integration, or multiculturalism—refers to different institutional arrangements, depending on whether one is dealing with religion or language—or yet other elements of culture—the culture wars add to the confusion.

By and large, with regard to religion, the outcomes are likely to cluster toward the pluralist end of the continuum. Islam will be accorded recognition on both sides of the Atlantic more or less graciously and sooner or later—with the outcomes varying for different groups defined on the basis of their country of origin or of class, as well as for different countries of settlement. However, there are limits to religious pluralism, as the choices open to immigrants are also constrained by the fundamental principle shared by all liberal democracies today that all persons have equal rights. Accordingly, pluralism cannot realistically extend to the institutionalization of group differences with regard to such matters as family and gender relations. In contrast, outcomes pertaining to language are likely to cluster more toward the assimilationist end of the continuum, albeit in a softer vein than was the case in an earlier era, with greater tolerance for the maintenance of cultural and linguistic differences in the private sphere and in civil society, sometimes even with some assistance from the host state. But this is unlikely to go very far, and sociolinguistic dynamics suggest that bilingualism among the descendants of immigrants will wane in the long run—except, perhaps, in the United States. Spanish, like Islam, is here to stay.

The clustering of outcomes toward the middle in both instances does not mean that policy choices are irrelevant. Although policies may not achieve the specific objectives for which they are designed, they are endowed with great symbolic significance. This contributes to the climate within which negotiations take place and hence ultimately plays a role in shaping the outcomes themselves.

NOTES

1. The Rushdie affair provides an excellent example: while it prompted demonstrations by South Asian Muslims throughout Europe, it was hardly addressed by their fellow believers from North Africa or Turkey, perhaps because South Asian Muslims are also distinctively involved in an English-language culture.

2. Zianuddin Sardar, “Introduction,” in Syed Z. Abedin and Zianuddin Sardar, eds., Muslim Minorities in the West (London: Grey Seal, 1995), 1-17; Joseph Carens and Melissa S. Williams, “Muslim Minorities in Liberal Democracies: The Politics of Misrecognition,” in Rainer Bauboeck, Agnes Heller, and Aristide R. Zolberg, eds., The Challenge of Diversity (Hunts: Avebury, 1996), 157-86. It is noteworthy that although Carens and Williams refer in their title to liberal democracies as a whole, their discussion of misrecognition is devoted almost entirely to Europe. We are, of course, fully aware that by
treat Europe as a single case, we ignore important national-level variations. However, we believe that with respect to the phenomenon under consideration, similarities outweigh differences, some of which will be referred to in the discussion.


6. The largest groups, each with more than two million speakers, are the Turkish and Maghrebi communities based mainly in Germany and France, respectively; Peter Broeder and Guus Extra, “Language,” in Hans Vermeulen, ed., Immigration Policy for a Multicultural Society (Brussels: Minority Policy Group, 1997), 23-32.


9. Incorporation is used here as a comprehensive and value-neutral term to refer to the institutionalization of relationships between hosts and newcomers in any form, ranging from highly unequal arrangements, such as are found in the plural societies issued from plantation colonies, to integration by way of more or less mutual adjustments, such as goes on in many contemporary democracies. On plural society, see especially M. G. Smith, “Institutional and Political Pluralism,” in Leo Kuper and M. G. Smith, eds., Pluralism in Africa (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 27-66.

10. The most significant exceptions are persons who qualify for immigration as “patrials” (e.g., Jews to Israel, ethnic Germans to Germany, or the descendants of British, Italian, Greek, or Spanish emigrants to their ancestral homeland). By extension, this is sometimes applicable also to co-religionists (e.g., Malaysia’s informal policy toward rebel Muslims from the Philippines) or ideological comrades (e.g., U.S. policy toward anti-Castro Cubans).


12. Rainer Bauboeck, The Integration of Immigrants (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, PO-S-MG (94), 1994). Bauboeck’s framework emphasizes boundary crossing and boundary blurring; we have added boundary shifting and extended the whole set of concepts to all parties involved, both newcomers and hosts.

13. A further distinction can be made between legal and social boundaries. While newcomers might be accepted as formal members of the polity (e.g., through naturalization), they might still be held at arm’s length as not being “real” co-nationals. A case in point is that of an immigrant who has acquired citizenship in a Western European country but is not viewed by respectable and well-informed persons as a real European.

15. An example in the field of American immigration is the changing status of the Japanese in the early decades of the century—from the blurred boundary established by way of the Gentleman’s Agreement of 1907, whereby the Japanese were not formally excluded on the condition that Japan restrain its emigration, to their formal exclusion alongside all other Asians in 1924.


18. Yet, it should be noted that in proportion to population, the recent U.S. intake is much smaller than that of the other traditional immigration countries. As of 1994, the foreign born constituted about 16 percent in Canada and 23 percent in Australia. Israel, after a period of much reduced immigration, recently experienced a wave amounting to some 10 percent of its population in five years.

19. In the decade 1901-1910, the annual recorded average was 879,539; Jasso and Rosenzweig, The New Chosen People, 18. Because immigration visas were not yet required, the distinction between visitors and immigrants was far from clear, and there are no good estimates of overstaying or other forms of “illegal” immigration for that period.


21. In 1990 they were, in descending order of size, Los Angeles, New York City, San Francisco, Chicago, and Philadelphia.

22. The relative decline in the proportions of recent immigrants from Europe is further emphasized when we take into consideration emigration from the United States: persons from Europe have the highest propensity to leave the United States and persons from Asia the lowest; Jasso and Rosenzweig, The New Chosen People, 182.

23. European readers might note that this figure does not include Puerto Ricans who also are Spanish speaking, as they are U.S. citizens. While a common language—Spanish—dominates current immigration to the United States, there is no equivalent among immigrants to Europe.


26. Jorgen S. Nielsen, Muslims in Western Europe (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992). According to governmental figures on immigration submitted in 1995 by nineteen Council of Europe countries, Muslims are followed by Roman Catholics (over 900,000), Buddhists (over 400,000), and Hindus (over 390,000).
27. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 

28. Unofficial figures from OECD, *Trends in International Migration 1996*. The experience of immigration has now extended even to former emigration countries such as Italy and Spain and, most recently, the more successful countries of the formerly Communist world—notably, Poland and the Czech Republic.

29. Except for England and Ireland, locally born children of immigrant parentage are not automatically citizens; however, in France, jus soli comes into play more or less automatically for the locally born children of foreign nationals who reside continuously in France until adolescence. This has been a contentious issue in recent years; requirements were raised by a conservative government in the early 1990s, but its Socialist successor largely reversed the situation in 1998.

30. At the international level, the most relevant instruments are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 10 December 1948; in particular, article 18), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (United Nations, 16 December 1966; in particular, article 18), the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Council of Europe, 4 November 1950; articles 9 and 14), and the final act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (Helsinki, 1 August 1975, paragraph 1,a VII).


33. In France, for example, the display of nativity scenes in post offices and on the public square facing the Paris city hall are not considered violations of the separation of church and state, as they would be in the United States. In France, Catholic days of obligation are celebrated as public holidays. Likewise, in the United States, Protestant holidays are celebrated—but neither Catholic nor Jewish ones, despite the “recognition” accorded to these religions in such matters as public invocations in opening of the Congress.


35. For example, non-Catholic Christian denominations were recognized in Italy only in 1984 and in Spain in 1992.

36. It is useful to note that in some countries, this is a fairly recent development: in France, for example, requirements that leadership in organizations needed to have a minimum number of citizens was clearly an obstacle for many immigrant organizations, including the religious ones. This was abolished only in 1981.


39. For a brief history, see Nielsen, *Muslims in Western Europe*.


44. The new ideological representation of Islam at the level of international relations is epitomized by Samuel Huntington’s notorious “The Coming Clash of Civilizations,” *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 4 (1993): 22-49.


47. Nielsen, *Muslims in Western Europe*, 147.


50. Ibid.

51. Carens and Williams, “Muslim Minorities.”


53. Recognition was in effect accorded in the United States by the White House on the occasion of the Id al Fitr in Spring 1996: “The White House Recognizes Ramadan,” *Washington Post*, 24 February 1996, B7. First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton said on the occasion of the family event, held in the Old Executive Office Building, that the “Eid (sic) [is] an American event” and that White House recognition of the holiday was “historic and overdue.” Invited guests included African American converts, as well as Muslims from the Middle East, India, Pakistan, Indonesia, and elsewhere. According to Khaled Saffuri, assistant executive director of the American Muslim Council, Muslims had “asked before for recognition of the Eid, but our request always went unanswered.” He also said that the Clinton White House has been more welcoming to Muslims than any previous administration.


55. A telling indicator of this process are the assurances given by Prime Minister Edouard Balladur to leaders of the French Jewish community in 1994, following the Islamic “headscarf” affair, that the government’s decree prohibiting the wearing of “ostentatious” religious symbols in the schools did not apply to the wearing of the yarmulke. See


59. Ibid.


61. However, it should be noted that the situation with regard to electronic media is more ambiguous. Because the state has played a major role in allocating wavelengths or regulating the market for them, a place for minority languages has had to be negotiated with the public authorities, as in the case of religion. But the established dynamics in this sphere have begun to change with the generalization of cable.

62. However, freedom of speech—for hosts—has usually been interpreted broadly, in practice almost absolutely, for example, when in conflict with freedom from racial discrimination, as apparent in some countries where it is has been difficult to punish racially abusive language in public or incitement to racial hatred.


64. “Cultural capital” is from Pierre Bourdieu, Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984). In a few cases, where a sizable segment of the elite or of the historically resident population at large spoke other languages, this gave rise to a protracted struggle on behalf of their recognition in specified spheres—notably, state services, justice, education, and eventually work; see, for example, Aristide R. Zolberg, “The Making of Flemings and Walloons, 1830-1910,” Journal of Interdisciplinary History 5, no. 2 (1974): 127-73. Some of them achieved a status akin to that of “minority” religions in the form of regional bilingualism (e.g., Sami in northern Norway, German in Italy’s Alto Adige) and, in rare instances, parity (Belgium, Switzerland, Canada).

65. Paralleling what was done in France to discourage the use of Breton or in its colonies with regard to African tongues. Norway and the United States long imposed similar policies on their “indigenous” populations.

66. This also had other implications, notably with regard to class and education.

67. In France, where language is highly emphasized as a marker of national identity, foreign-language education was provided to the children of immigrant workers in the 1970s as part of a policy to encourage return. Likewise, whereas Norway provides bilingual education for the children of ordinary immigrants to facilitate learning of the host
language and incorporation more generally, Bosnian children, as "temporary protected persons," are educated in their mother tongue, thus emphasizing the likelihood of their repatriation.


72. However, although the establishment of bilingual education also provided an opportunity for black nationalists to advance claims on behalf of "ebonics" as a distinct language, these have by and large been unsuccessful.

73. For a useful overview of the political configuration, see "For Hispanic Lawmakers, Time to Take the Offensive: Immigration Battles Lead to a New Focus," The New York Times, 25 August 1997, A14.

74. This was illustrated by an advertisement in the business section of The New York Times, 5 August 1997, D7. Raising the question, "Why Hispanic?" it answered that "because in the next 15 years Hispanic buying power in New York will double to $89.9 Billion Dollars!" It is noteworthy that the newspaper's parent company recently acquired a Spanish-language daily and that the leading newspapers in Los Angeles and Miami publish Spanish-language editions. Also in 1997, the leading Los Angeles radio station became a Spanish-language station.

75. See, for example, Peter Brimelow, Alien Nation: Common Sense about America's Immigration Disaster (New York: Random House, 1995).


79. Although Europe has a sizable "Arab" population, opportunities for Arabic language products and services are limited because so many Algerians use French almost exclusively. Turkish nationals are quite numerous as well; however, many of them are in fact Kurdish speakers. Moreover, their income distribution is more concentrated at the lower end than is the case for Spanish speakers in the United States. However, a Europe-wide Turkish cable is reported to be under consideration (mid-1998).

80. This is indicated by a quick sample of headlines from The New York Times in recent years: "U.S. Publishers Discover Spanish as a Second Language" (13 March 1995, D6); "Diversity Pays Off in a Babel of Yellow Pages" (3 December 1995, A46); "Westinghouse Seeks Purchase" of Telenoticias, a Miami-based cable news channel begun in 1994, with 14 million subscribers in Latin America and 6 million in the United States, whose rival
Canal de Noticias is part of NBC News (3 May 1996); “A Minority Market with Major Sales: Stores Redo the Merchandise Mix and the Hispanic Dollars Flow” (2 July 1997, D1); “Newday to Start Publishing a Spanish-Language Paper” (10 October 1998, B2). However, one should also note movement in another direction: “Some new English-language magazines are aimed at Hispanic readers earning more than $30,000” (20 November 1995, D9). These trends are by no means mutually exclusive.