



IDENTITY AS A MAJOR FACTOR IN INTEGRATION TO THE WESTERN SOCIETY

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Abstract

Many different changes have occurred within Muslim communities all over the world over the last decade. Some Muslim communities have managed to become front-runners in the shift towards democratization and in encouraging Muslim regimes and states to make a transition to liberal democracy and a market economy. Liberal Muslims and others who watch these changes have acknowledged the contributions of those communities. In this regard, the Gülen movement has a particularly positive image. However, how this movement has been helping Muslims in the West to integrate into their societies has not been analysed. This paper investigates the identity crisis among Muslims in the West as a part of the identity crisis in Western society generally, and asks how the views of Fethullah Gülen, a prominent spiritual and religious leader of moderate Muslims, help Muslims to deal with this crisis. Does he think it is necessary to feel 'Westernized' in order to be integrated into Western society? If so, how controversial is being 'Westernized' for Muslims living in Western society? Does becoming 'Western' go against Muslim belief and attitude? If so, how avoid stigmatization and negative labelling from both sides — the 'Westernized Muslims' on the one side and those who reject being 'Westernized' on the other? The following two hypotheses guide the discussion: first, that the identity issues among Muslims have increased since 9/11 and have marginalized them in the West; and second, the Gülen movement challenges traditional notions of identity and encourages Muslims to accelerate the process of integration into Western society.

1. Introduction: Importance of the Problem

The impact of globalization on the movement of people made a tremendous impact on identity of peoples in the West. According to the estimation of the World Bank, at the beginning of the 21st century, about 2.5 percent of world's population, or roughly 130 million people, lived outside their countries of birth, and that this number is rising at a rate of approximately 2% per year (World Bank, 2000:38). The migrants, especially from the Muslim world who migrated to the West deepened the identity crisis of the West, which has already been challenged in terms of identity.

Identity is a target of various disciplines such as sociology, political science, international relations, anthropology, etc. It is involved in human relations and consists of its most important features and

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forms the conditional nature of social, political and economic relations (Guerrina, 2003, p.136). It also is a set of feelings that defines belonging both in individual and political sense and could be divided into three categories, which are social identity, cultural identity, and political identity. Social identity refers to an individual's relationship with social structure. Cultural identity relates to history and heritage, and political identity refers to the relationship between citizens of a state and/or nation (Guerrina, 2003, p.137). In this meaning, nation building is people's active search for their identity through their particular culture, history, language, and identity. For Max Weber, the nation is a cultural community on a solidarity form and the state is a political institution and an organisational form (Weber, [1922] 1978). But there are two types of nation, one is a civic nation and the other is ethnic one. The civic nation is a territorially based community of common descent, based on "historical territory, legal-political community, legal-political equality of the members, and common civic culture and ideology..." whereas the latter is based on descent where the nation is "seen as a fictive 'super-family', and it boasts pedigrees and genealogies to back up its claims..." (Smith, 1991, p. 12).

National identity, according to Smith, is based on those traits that are common to both of these versions, namely "(1) historic territory, or homeland; (2) common myths and historical memories; (3) a common, mass public culture; (4) common legal rights and duties for all members; [and] (5) a common economy with territorial mobility for members" (Smith, 1991, p. 14). This type of identification has been challenged with recent developments in the world, especially by globalisation, which increases interconnectedness, weaken institutional mechanisms and organisations that have hitherto sustained national identities. It also is somewhat different from the Islamic view of nation and nationalism. First of all, emergence of nationalism is a result of different historical events in the West and the Muslim World. In Europe, secularization of the Reformation gave birth to nationalism by underestimating the sense of Christian nation and rising the "national selfishness" and the "individual selfishness" (Hassan Al-Banna, p. 26), but in the Muslim world it is a result of the destruction of the Islamic *ummah*, or the last Caliphate, the Ottoman Empire, by the Europeans and the emergence of a new economic structure and relations.

Like in the West, nationalism was a new phenomenon of 'imagined' identity in the Muslim world. In history, identity was religious in its content and was perceived in the light of religion. For instance, the West was identified mainly Catholic during the premodern era, but was divided into Catholic, Protestant, and emerging secular identities during the early modern era (the sixteenth, seventeenth, and early eighteenth centuries). In the late eighteenth and the nineteenth century, this identity was transformed into a new division between liberal, socialist, and nationalist identities. In the modern era (the twentieth century), the West was challenged with its democratic, communist, and fascist/national socialist identities.

In the Muslim world, a lot of changes have also occurred in regard to new definition of identity. The equivalent of 'nation' in the Qur'an is *ummah*, which applied to religious communities mainly. However, it also is human societies united not only in religious beliefs and behaviour but also in social, economic, and political framework. Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Khaldun, the medieval Muslim philosophers used this conception to describe communities based on "mere" ties of blood or language, and are designated with the term '*asabiyya*' (cited in Hourani, pp. 20-25). However, "modern" ideologies, among them the conceptions of nationality and nationalism challenged this vision of the *ummah* well in the eighteenth century. For instance, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani tried to re-define the term by incorporating the politically and socially useful aspects of European civilization into the Islamic *ummah* without sacrificing the essential religious, moral, and cultural identity of the latter.



He wrote “the centre of attention is no longer Islam as a religion, it is rather Islam as a civilization. The norm of human action is no longer the service of God; it is the creation of a human civilization flourishing in all its parts” (quoted in Hurani, p. 114). Al-Afgani’s views on new definition of *ummah* was spread very quickly because many Muslims in Ottoman Empire had already experienced the new sense of identity. The destruction of Ottoman Empire accelerated this process and Islamic culture and religion, Arab culture and language, local cultures and traditions – had been utilized for the purposes of creating new identities. In general, the identity was defined in four trends such as: territorial nationalism, integral nationalism, ethnic (Arab, Turkish, etc.) nationalism and Islamic nationalism. The supporters of the first trend sought to build a new community on the basis of civic notions of nationhood. Second, integral nationalism espoused ethnic criteria of “nationality”. The ethnic nationalism stressed on ethnic identities. Finally, Islamic nationalism sought to reconcile ethnic identity with the cosmopolitan Islamic teachings on the nature of the trans-national Muslim *ummah* (Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski, pp. 81-93).

For Gülen, combination of Islamic and Turkish (ethnic) nationalism is more relevant. Based on liberal interpretations of the Qur’an, the civic nation is more appealing to Gülen when he sees the Turkish nation based on not racism but on common culture, history of all Anatolian people and supports democratic and pluralistic society (Güleng, p.140). According to Gülen, history, territory and culture play an important role in definition of nation. For instance, Gülen interprets the collapse of the Ottoman Empire as a negative impact on culturally authentic modernization of Turkish, Arabic and other nationalities (H. Yavuz, 2003b, 274). However, Gülen argues that this identity should not take on an identity of confrontation and conflict, but rather one of co-operation and coexistence. Therefore, Gülen’s goal is to raise Muslim consciousness and to get involved in modernity, democracy and a free-market economy, so as to get Muslims to enter into those global processes and to turn Turkey into a regional power: “What has been going on in modern Turkey is the reconstruction of the Islamic tradition in terms of modern idioms to create a new Turkey that can become an exemplar of political, economic, and cultural success for Muslims around the world” (H. Yavuz, 2003b, p. 238).

Thus, the modern interpretations of identity, nation and nationalism in the West and the Muslim world coincide. The identity question is not anymore defined by territory, ethnos, language, culture and history, e.g. territory has been excluded from this definition and ethnos is not based on racism. Now there is a common trend in the West and the Muslim world which stresses on co-existence and cooperation and tries to reconcile ethnic identity with civic notion of nationhood. Under this impact, the Muslims like other communities in the West try how to maintain both national identity and preserve cultural particularity.

2. Literature Review

The literature review shows that there are three main approaches on the identity question in the West. The first approach perceives the West as a cultural civilization and supports the Western identity³⁶³ formation on the bases of cultural and historical values. The second approach suggests that the Western identity should be political which must be based on political and social values of West. Michael Bruter, Lars-Erik Cederman and Jon Erick Fossum are the best representatives of this stream (L. Cederman, 2001; J.E. Fossum, November 12, 2005). The third approach perceives the Western

³⁶³ The Western identity refers to the identity in EU particularly in this research..



identity between cultural and political identities. For them, the Western states are political unities, but their nations use their cultural values to understand and interpret the political values of their states. Furio Cerutti's "A Political Identity of the Europeans" is one of best representatives of this approach.

All these approaches are characterized in two main groups: constructivist and traditional or deconstructivist. The latter is an idea, which is based on Western Christianity and sees the problem of integration and adaptation from the context of the clash between the civilizations. (B. Lewis, S. Huntington, etc.) However, the constructivists support the idea that it is mistake to see culture entirely in terms of conflict and cultural differences should not be exaggerated in terms of integration and adaptation (Delanty, 1995, p.17). The works of Gülen can also be included in this stream.

Some scholars and politicians argue that the Western identity is based on only Western Christianity (e.g. S. P. Huntington, B. Lewis). For instance, S. P. Huntington sees Islam and Muslim identity as a deconstructive factor in the West when he writes that problem for the West is Islam, a different civilization whose people is convinced of the superiority of their culture, and is obsessed with the inferiority of their power (Huntington 1997, p. 217). This deconstructivist approach to the problem was challenged by the constructivists who argue that the Western identity went through different identity formations. The constructivists concentrate purely on politics in identity formation and do not agree with the notion that identity at the European level can only be based on national level. For them, the role of national identity at the EU level is thin and the existence of culturally imposed trade-offs is not important. (M. Bruter, 2005). They argue that the Western identity was transformed into a new division between liberal, socialist, and nationalist identities. Today, in our post-modern era Europe is once again defined by liberalism that is characterized with the hyper-individualism dividing the society into different small groups. Therefore, "it is mistake to see culture entirely in terms of conflict..." and "cultural differences should not be exaggerated" (Delanty, 1995, p.17). Instead, Western identity should be based on the core European values, which are solidarity and a concern with social justice, and the principal identity of people in the Western civilization, is defined by an ensemble of liberal ideas: (1) liberal democracy; (2) the free market; (3) the open society; and (4) an individualist culture, but the religious identity of Western society should not be underestimated, too. Bo Petersson and Anders Hellstrom suggests that the legitimacy of the present Western order has to be enhanced among its peoples through nurturing of common identities within the EU which can make it most lasting and solid unit (B. Petersson and A. Hellstrom, 2003, p. 236).

Gülen's view on this subject also relates to the constructivist approach to the problem. Since Gülen strives for political, economic, and cultural success of Muslims in the world, their identity struggle in the West is not alien to him and he offers some solutions to the identity crisis in the West. According to Gülen, modern Western identity was once based on the trinity of Greek thought, Roman law and Christianity and Eastern identity is based on faith and morality (Gülen, 2004f, p.148), and the Western identity should be enhanced with Eastern faith and morality (Gülen, 2005c. p. 56).

Thus, the identity concept is moving from the traditional view to the constructivist approach because the deconstructivists rarely acknowledge the mutability of other collective identities and are inclined to see other nationalities and religious groups as obstacles to self-realization. However, migration and then globalization brought a general acceptance of the idea of multicultural identity and inter-community dialogue.



3. Research Questions and Hypotheses

To grapple with this issue, I took a constructivist approach, which attempted to arrive at what is considered true by eliminating differences and by synthesizing common grounds or potential similarities in the West. I looked at different concepts from a collective perspective, followed by a similar examination at the personal level focusing on what I regard as being the major characteristics of the Muslims as individuals and as a people in the West in the shade of thoughts of Gülen.

From the follows the hypotheses guiding this research are: first, the identity crisis issues among Muslims have increased since the 9/11 and have marginalized them in the West. Second, Gülen movement challenged the traditional notions of identity, which is based on territory, ethnos, culture and history, in the Muslim community and encouraged them to accelerate the process of integration to the Western society. Testing of these hypotheses is based on the comparison of actual cases, the identity problem of Muslims in the West as an independent variable, and Gülen movement as a dependent variable.

4. Identity Crisis in the West

The Western society needs some kind of identity to exist and the Western national identity is one form of collective identities. This national identity, however, is not just any collective identification, but is broader than all other social and individual identifications, embodies, coordinates, and grades all social and individual identifications. In this meaning, the foundation of a nation in the West is based on and legitimized by the ideology of an absolute, unique national identity which functions as a mechanism for the formation and control of the community of "us" in juxtaposition to the community of "them" (Panagiotopoulou, 1997, p. 349).

Identity in the West is not a natural state of being and is a process of inclusion and exclusion. Individuals are not born with an instinctive identification with a particular group, and in this meaning, the identity construction is an artificial process, but this process is based on a shared culture and heritage (Guerrina, 2003, p. 138). Therefore, the Muslims also go through the process of inclusion and exclusion. In this regard, their identity has a fluid nature because of the involvement of social relations, political and economical circumstances.

Since the nations are active in the social, political, and economic discourse of the West, the Muslim identity as a part of general identity in the West are moving away from the ethno-cultural identity towards a state-central identity. It became possible especially under the impact of formation of the global identity, which eliminates language, territorial, custom, religious barriers and leads to the globalization of culture. Such identity is cosmopolitan in nature because it is not supported by a common past, common historical origins, historical memory, or a sense of continuity (Panagiotopoulou, 1997, p. 350).

The Western identity is a kind of global identity, which desires to build not a West of institutions but a West of individuals guided by the non-identity of the national (Delanty, 1995, p. 5). However, many still support traditional aspect of identity which emphasizes on alienation from others and definition of "Us" and "Others" which is at the heart of the identity construction process in some Western countries (Delanty, 1995, p. 5). For instance, Huntington also defines civilization as a "cultural entity ... the highest cultural grouping ... defined by both common objective elements, such as language, history, religion, customs, institutions, and by the subjective self-identification of people ... A



civilization may include several nation states or only one" (Huntington 1993, p. 24). But Gülen's suggestion about the global character of Western civilization and identity is more appealing. Gülen suggests that if Western civilization is based only on science and technology, it will be paralyzed. If it claims to be the civilization of future, it should combine science and Eastern faith and morality in order to establish true civilization (Gülen, 2005c. p.56).

Today's identity formation in the West is about two things: (1) the growth of a new system, which upholds national identities, while at the same time symbolizing and encompassing those common Western ideas and experiences that have developed during the history; and (2) the existence of Western structures which makes it easier for different groups and communities to express their different identities within the dominant culture (B. Petersson and An. Hellstrom, 238). In this regard, the West represents a system in which both the fundamental and more cultural and ideological aspects of Western identity are reflected. It is a framework in which national identity is fundamental, yet where different identities are also important. The main categories of the culture are national and cultural identities. If the Western identity is based on one sole national culture, then it is exclusive and restrictive, because in national cultural point of view, the Western identity is controversial and not clear because the West is consisted of many diverse nationalities and groups, on the one hand, and there is discontinuity of historical culture than continuity and difference than sameness on the other. The West is still culturally thin and there is no common Western language and common Western memory that can bind many diverse peoples, and for many there are only the memories of divisions. Culture is not stable and changes according to the surrounding environment. These are common features of the nation-states in many Western states in the process of becoming a state-nation. However, culture still plays an important role and associated with the geographical and political space. Therefore, legitimacy of the present Western identity has to be enhanced among its peoples through nurturing of common identities, which can make it most lasting and solid. In this process symbols, like flags, anthems play great role but with considering the historical experiences (Petersson and Hellstrom, 2003, p.238). In this regard, Gülen suggests that the existence of distinct and unique cultures should first be 'distilled' before being absorbed into the indigenous culture because otherwise, cultural and civilizational crises can occur, but communities should also be allowed to produce a distinctive culture in order not to become a 'barren tree' (Gülen, 2005c. p.55). Thus, the cultural foundations of the West are not in a pre-political cultural identity and relating Western identity to the Christian heritage does not offer much substance. The cultural dimension of the West is the mixture and recombination of current exiting identities through the interface of the encounter of the global with the local.

In this meaning, the top-down creation of a global identity in the West as a process of transformation of national identities for the purpose of strengthening of the West as a cultural reference is important. Therefore, the Western cultural identity is hybrid, mixed and evolving. It also includes the Muslim identity and culture but with a condition of fully integration of "others" into the national culture of the states in which they are citizens.

Many Muslims have accepted the core Western values, which are based on solidarity and a concern with social justice and do not feel a conflict in terms of cultural identity in the West, if it is seen in positive terms and cultural differences are not exaggerated. The Muslim scholars have also been encouraging Muslims in the West in this process. For instance, al-Qaradawi says, "[We urge] Muslims to integrate into the societies within which they live without conceding their faith" (quoted in "Scholar with a streetwise touch defies expectations and stereotypes" by Owen Bowcott and Faisal al Yafai, July 9, 2004, *The Guardian*).



Like al-Qaradawi, Gülen preaches that Muslims should be able to have a new, flexible Muslim identity, which can be changed under the market economics and neo-liberal economic policies within the current tendencies of modernity. For him, being a Muslim in the modern world, especially in the Western world means to support and consolidate modern institutions of democracy, the rule of law, a free-market economy, and so forth. Muslims should not isolate themselves from the world but interact and to create a shared understanding, a shared experience and a shared code of ethics (Yavuz, July 21, 2004a).

Thus, the identity in the West is complex with many layers which means individuals have multiple identities. The Western institutions recognize the multiple bases of identity that are found in any group and individual and take into account variation in levels of commitment to the identities which people are tied into. Therefore, the complexity of Western identity is reflected in the complexity of the society itself. This kind of identity does not depend on one factor. Today the West is multicultural and many communities, including Muslims claim their own location within this boundary of values of solidarity and social justice. There should not be tension between the national, religious, and Western feelings. And indeed, the Muslims attempt to fully integrate into the national culture of the Western society by bringing the Eastern faith and morality to the science and technology based Western civilization.

5. Identity Crisis among Muslims in the West

Religion is among many factors, which affect the level of democracy and formation of the Western identity, but the democratic community begins with the acceptance of fundamental values, including the religious values and identity. Therefore, the religious identity should not be underestimated. However, there is no easy answer to the question of what constitutes the religious identity of a person or human group. The demographic diversity of Muslims themselves in the West - theologically, economically, and culturally - also makes it harder to answer to identity question. For instance, what are the characteristics of Muslim? How is Muslim identity shaped into a shared image in the West? Some suggest that there is such a thing as only a Muslim, but some argue that there is no such a person today because Muslims have been assimilated into the local cultures and languages of the majority societies in which they now live in the West. However, the term 'Muslim' indicates an identity-something the person defines who he/she is. This sense of self is expressed by membership in a group, or affiliation in something like culture or religion.

The major categories of Muslims in the West are the devout and secular, immigrant and Western-born Muslims. But for all of them, the sources of their identity are the Qur'an and the narrations of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) based on the basic tenets of Islam, which are belief in one God and Prophet Muhammad as the final messenger of God, charity, fasting, prayers and the hajj pilgrimage for those who can afford it. The different *urf and adats* (cultures) are also the sources of their identity.

Linguistically, the word *Islam* means 'peace, salvation, and submission.' This should first be "established in our inner worlds, so that we are at peace with God and natural environment, and then throughout the world and then universe" (Gülen, 2005a. p. 209). In regard to the integration with the world, Islam preaches that Adam represents the creation of all races. The origin of human being is the same regardless their color, peoples do not display different physical characteristics. Islam makes the idea of a common ancestor likely and advocates the idea of one creation, not two (one for Gentiles, the second for the creation of Adam.) According to Gülen,



“human beings, unlike other creatures who tread the path nature have free will. We bear the gift of freedom and obligation to harmonize our life with nature. This harmony is also the path of our exaltation and progress, the path upon which God created human nature” (Gülen, 2005a, pp. 201-203).

Gülen suggests that to harmonize our lives depends on how much we realize our personal integrity and remember that we are social beings (Gülen, 2005a, p. 202). A good Muslim is the one who is powerful both physically and spiritually, and also has scientific and technical competence (Gülen, 2005a, p. 194). A good Muslim is also the one regards whatever pleases and displeases others as a measure while interacting with others (Gülen, 2005c. p.59). In this meaning, Islamic identity theologies promote unity not segregation as a divine command and condemn any kind of racism and discrimination.

Although, the immigration is very difficult undertaking (Gülen, 2005a, p. 263), the teachings of Islam make the adaptation of Muslims to the Western society easy. However, the laws in the Western states also help Muslims to become legal citizens and residents of these states. For instance, the older generation of Muslims became citizens of the West through naturalization process, which is granted to those individuals who have met some years of residence requirements, then wait a further period of time for the processing of the application and be able to communicate in state language. It demonstrates that many Western states do not limit their citizenship to ethnic population nor discriminate individuals on an ethnic basis. They have established a relatively liberal naturalization procedure, but the only concern lies with the preservation of the state culture and language. The commonality of naturalization process is the same in many Western states which includes:

1. Permanent residence permit for some period of time to the date on which an application for citizenship is submitted;
2. Knowledge of the state language in accordance with the requirements;
3. Knowledge of the state's history, geography, and laws.
4. Loyalty to the state;
5. Oath in applying for citizenship, etc (Chinn and Truex, 1996, pp. 134-135).

The younger generation became citizens of the West because traditional idea of citizenship in many Western states which is based on the *Jus Sanguinis* model that bases citizenship on blood decent, was replaced with the *Jus Soli* method that allocates citizenship to all those who were born on the territory, regardless of the citizenship of their parents (Chinn and Truex, 1996, pp. 134-135).

Although, the older generation became the citizens of the Western states, still have cultural or social ties with their countries of birth. Many of them see their religious identity in ethnic or religious culture alone, and are pessimistic that their culture will be weakened over time. For instance, Dr Muzammil H. Siddiqi suggests that there is a decline in strict adherence to specific Islamic values among the younger generations. However, I suggest that Muslims in West are combining their faith, ethnic background, and the folkways of their adopted land in many different ways. I also witnessed that later generations of Muslims who were born here often embrace their faith with more enthusiasm than their parents, who may have distanced from their religious identity due to many reasons.



Against the notion that the younger generation is assimilated in the dominant culture, I would suggest that Muslim identity in the West displays itself in three layers: social, cultural and political. The social identity of Muslims refers to Muslim's individual relationship with social structure. The cultural identity of Muslims relates to Islamic history and heritage. Since Muslim identity in the West is very much politicized, I will here emphasize on political identity of Muslims.

The political identity of Muslims refers to the relationship between citizens of a state and/or nation. However, the view of alienation process in the identity process, which sees "Us" as a homogenous mass and denies the multiple identities in "Us" and the "Other", has received a great deal of attention since the securitization of migration in the EU since 9/11. In conservative politics Muslims were perceived as a threat, which have provoked confusions between Muslim legal immigrants and asylum-seekers. In general, the Muslim identity has been associated through the figure of 'the foreigner' within security discourse, Islamic fundamentalism and the threat of terrorism. Moreover, cultural and historical values are strongly embedded in the politicians' behavior in the EU (Douglas Alexander, Speech at the Centre for European Policy Studies, October 15, 2005). The laws passed in some European countries make it harder for Muslims and others to practice their religion. A poll by USA Today/Gallup reported that 39 percent of respondents favored requiring Muslims, including U.S. citizens, to carry special identification. Many politicians support the idea of racial profiling in the US (Speeches of Rep. Peter King, chairman of the Homeland Security Committee; U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk (R-Ill.) and John Faso, a New York Republican running for governor).

This tendency in political life of the West resulted in categorization of Muslims as liberals or moderates and radicals. Radicals as rogue Islamists are defined Muslims who are willing to do anything except to destroy America and its power, but the liberal Muslims concentrate on liberal values such as religious tolerance, freedoms of conscience and speech, civil liberties, social justice, public welfare, and educational development (Muqtedar Khan, 2003, p. 418). Some suggest that fundamentalist movements in the West are a direct response to globalization pressures exerted by Western cultural and economic values and the movement "tends to draw people who feel cut off from what they see as a traditionally Islamic lifestyle, including converts to Islam in European countries, such as Britain, France and Germany. At the same time, fundamentalists find themselves unable to fit in to the respective societies in which they are living. The fundamentalists have recast religion outside of cultural contexts" (Roy, 2003).

The Liberal Muslims or moderate Muslims are mostly among the Muslim intellectuals who have achieved a negotiated peace with modernity as an existential condition of our time and advocate democracy, religious tolerance, interfaith relations, peaceful co-existence and education (Muqtedar Khan, 2003, p. 419). For them, the religion is not a subjective faith or a cultural tradition, but it is what the Qur'an promotes religion as a distinctive path to the divine (The Qur'an, 23:53 and 30:32).

6. Gülen's Approach to Eliminate the Identity Crisis among Muslims

Gülen's views are deeply rooted in favoring Islam as a religion and Anatolian people as a nation, which act in framework of tolerance and pluralism. In this regard, Gülen is a moderate Muslim and criticizes the religious bigotry in the form of religious extremism and favors modernism, nationalism, tolerance, and democracy without sacrificing religious precepts. He opposes politicized Islam imposed by the radical Muslims emphasizing the view that no individual or group has a monopoly on interpreting Islam manipulating the emotions of Muslims. However, he also is critical to the current



foreign and internal policy trends in the world, including the West. He highly criticizes the prejudiced view of Islam particularly among the political elites who have lack of knowledge about Islam and the trends in the Muslim communities. Gülen also criticizes a state-controlled secularist fear of religion and sees the secular fanaticism a blind persistence, which is against the tolerance as the acceptance of differences as a result of dialogue to promote cooperation (Gülen, 2004f. p.240). However, like the other moderate Muslims, Gülen is against the view of radicals to see the backwardness of the Muslim world as a Western production but sees this backwardness as a result of the internal dynamics. For Gülen, backwardness of the Muslim world was a result in pressure for centuries from both within and outside and under restrictions put on feelings, thoughts, culture, and education of Muslims, it was impossible for a person to remain with human faculties, let alone realize a renewal and development. The backwardness of the Muslim countries is due to the continuation of feudal and tribal systems and lack of education, and values like democracy, human rights, spread of education across society, economic prosperity, equality in production, the institutionalization of consumption and income in a way that prevents class formation, the supremacy of law and justice have never been fully realized in Islamic societies (Gülen, 2004f. p.240).

Gülen is also very critical of the regimes because of harsh restrictions or fanaticism. He supports the idea of republicanism, which is in accordance with the idea of “consultation” in Islamic sources. Like the idea of “consultation”, republicanism promotes peace tolerance and dialogue and does not mean being anti-religious. This view seeks integration with the modern world by reconciling modern and traditional values (Aras and Caha, December 2000, p. 10, Kuru 2003). In this regard, Gülen writes that the current religious situation in both Iran and Saudi Arabia is not what the Islamic states promoted in history because religion has never been a tool of manipulation and repression but instead religion was and should always be a private matter, and its requirements should not be imposed on anyone (Gülen, 1995b, p. 223). Gülen highly criticizes the fundamentalist approach to the problems and preaches: “Muslim cannot act out of ideological or political partisanship” (Gülen, 2000g. p.5). However, the excluding Muslims in the Western society is also harmful, too, because a nation fails to establish relationships as strong as the family members cannot be considered a nation (Gülen, 2005c. p.92).

Thus, many Muslims see religion as a source of morality and ethics but do not want religion to become a tool of politics, because if something then goes wrong in politics, people will blame religion. In this regard, Gülen wants religion to remain above politics when he says: “religion is the relationship between people and their Creator. The feeling of religion lives in the heart’s depths and on the inner world’s emerald hills. If you turn it into a display of forms, you’ll kill it. Politicizing religion will harm religion before it harms a government’s life” (Unal and Williams, 2000, p. 36).

Although, young generations and converts have been facing social, economic, cultural and political problems in the process of adaptation and finding their places in the society and the search for identity became fierce in the dominant traditional culture surrounding them, many young Muslims in the West are able to shape their identity and integrate with the modern world by reconciling modern and traditional values. It is possible when people do not neglect their children and abandon them to a foreign culture risk losing their identity, as Gülen suggests. If a young Muslim knows from where he came from and the destination of his life, together with his responsibilities will take on the responsibility of bringing justice and happiness to the society and will be able to think freely and respect freedom of thought since freedom is a significant dimension of man's free will and a key to the mysteries of human identity, otherwise, distancing from Islam leads to degeneration and loss of peace (Gülen, 2004f. p.245).



These teachings of Gülen helped many members of young Muslim generation to accept Western civilization as a suitable foundation for material life while considering Islamic civilization suitable for spiritual life. (Aras and Caha, December 2000, p. 11) This strong foundation of Muslim identity will bring some relief to the identity crisis in the West among Muslims and integrate them to the society easily, and also brings relief to the Western society which still goes through the process of identity formation. Moreover, Muslims should not feel discouraged because this trend was even stronger during the World War II when thousands of innocent Japanese-Americans were interned in camps after Pearl Harbor because their loyalty to the U.S. and Canada was doubted.

7. Conclusion

The identity in the West is complex and has many layers, and individuals have multiple identities. The complexity of West is reflected in the complexity of the society itself. The migration to the West brought another complexity to the society and challenged the old notion of identity which was once based on Western Christianity (e.g. S. Huntington, B. Lewis). The diversification of the Western society promoted the idea to see cultures in unity and not exaggerate cultural. However, this problem is not completely solved in the West, especially in the EU which suffers identity lack. Muslims found themselves in amid of this process which contributed to the identity crisis among Muslims.

The religious identity of Muslims should not be considered as a problem in the West because today Muslims are the second largest religious group in many Western countries. However, many Muslims, especially the young generations and converts have been facing social, economic, cultural and political problems in the process of adaptation and finding their places in the society. The inner struggle of many of them is to find out where their identities truly lie: on secularized Western identity or faith-based Eastern identity. This search for identity became fierce in the dominant traditional culture surrounding them. Although, Muslims suffer the lack of agreement between themselves when it comes to the interpretation of Islam and considered the less integrated group to the society, and have been facing social, economic, cultural and political problems in the process of adaptation and finding their places in the society, the teachings of progressive Muslim scholars help many young Muslims in the West to shape their identity and integrate with the modern world by reconciling modern and traditional values (Gülen, al-Qaradawi, etc.). They encourage Muslims in the West to enjoy these core Western values and hold on their religious identity. For instance, Gülen invites them to integrate to the Western society fully by obeying the local laws (Yilmaz 2003, Yilmaz 2005) and by supporting the liberal democracy, market-economy without sacrificing their Islamic belief and morality. He invites Muslims to accept Western civilization as a suitable foundation for material life while considering Islamic civilization suitable for spiritual life. However, he also acknowledges the political obstacles before Muslims, therefore, invites the political elite in the West to support the attempt of Muslims to eliminate differences and synthesize common grounds or potential similarities and allow Muslims to claim their own place in the identity construction of the West as equal citizens.

Thus, Gülen's views are very progressive and can be used as a model to eliminate the identity crisis among Muslims in the West. His ideas of identity mean that identity is not merely given and the personal and collective identity should be recognized within the certain parameters. We are all as human beings shaped by social and historical context, therefore, a dynamic relationship with others, acknowledging responsibilities, and dialogue is the last step to reach to progressive and peaceful society.