

Europe - Islam. Reflections on Uneasy Relationships

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Abstract: The aim of the article is to describe the relationship between Europe and Islam based on the analysis of economic, cultural and social factors, including demographic changes in Europe and in the Muslim countries. This article was developed due to the use of mainly qualitative research, particularly on the basis of the analysis of sources and desk research, as well as on the results of own studies on the change of value systems among the young generation of the Arabs. The entire article was adhered to the thesis on the inevitability of the civilization conflict that we are witnessing in the reality of the migration crisis, and also in the age of 'dying' Western civilization.

Keywords: Islamic culture, death of Europe, Western culture, clash of civilizations, globalization, radicalism

INTRODUCTION

The search for rational and simple answers to the question: *why Europe and the 'Islamic world'* has been stuck in the crisis of mutual relationships since the very beginning of the shared history and it will probably never receive an objective answer. Any attempt to identify the reasons behind the antagonism between these disparate beings almost always results in barriers that cannot be overcome without careful analysis of several major issues in the social, cultural, political and economic spheres. Moreover, delving deeper into the historical context of relations between Europe and the African and Middle Eastern countries seems indispensable for reasonable understanding of the essence of the present situation. In particular, the colonial history of the mentioned regions plays an important role in shaping the actual circumstances in the Old Continent. The geographic proximity, interdependence of interests as well as cultural and political influences of Europe in Africa and the Middle East have made these regions an important economic and political area called the 'Europe's underbelly'. The metaphor is justified by the fact that they have become, on the one hand, dependent on Western civilization and susceptible to its influence, and on the other, the source of social and economic threats. By adopting these general arguments as a starting point, it is worthwhile to risk putting forward a paradoxical thesis that Europe and the Arab States situated in its environment constitute, on the one hand, interdependent and, on the other, dichotomous wholeness in the sphere of politics, economics and culture. This paradox substantiates the mutually exclusive issues: interdependence and dichotomy situated between two extremes, which

simultaneously describe the situation of contemporary Europe suffering from several 'tumors' deciding its future as a civilization, social community, great economy and democratic political community.

Europe's problems are by no means endogenous, as they to a large extent stem from global challenges. One of them is the historical stigma of colonialism attached to Europe and states, not only the Arab ones, but all post-colonial regions of our globe and its child called 'neo-colonialism' that has shaped the uneven development of the world economy and disproportionate access to material goods. The second issue, resulting from the former, concerns a growing 'vacuum' between poverty and wealth in the world. The third problem is the demographic 'catastrophe' in most states representing Western civilization and the uneven distribution of the world population. Relating this to the situation in Europe, another paradox is seen, with the declining European population and the fertility rate confronted with the ever-growing Arab population on one side and the mass influx of representatives of 'strange' cultures into the territories of European countries on the other. The fourth issue draws attention to the dependence of national economies of both European and Arab states on mega-corporations that dictate conditions on the world market. Finally, the fifth problem is immigration to Europe, which is most likely caused by economic factors, but also the drastic and traumatic events in recent years in Ukraine, Africa (not just Northern part) and the Middle East.

THE GLOBAL ECONOMY AND RADICALISM ETIOLOGY OF THE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS

On the ground of the issues addressed the following question arises, which is worth asking although it will presumably remain rhetorical: Does the modern world-wide economy have to be based solely on the assumptions of liberalism underpinned by the recognition of the omnipotence of macroeconomic indicators and the profit maximization in isolation from the social impact? Despite the resistance to changes observed among economic elites for years, more and more frequently voices emerge that stigmatize this economy model, pointing to threats not only for the future of the economic and political world, but also for the peaceful development of humanity and the continued functioning of democracy in the current form. The criticism of liberalism - as Witold Orłowski argues - does not concern exclusively the left-wing social democratic circles, but also appears in the views of representatives of right-wing circles connected with Christian democracy [15]. The following reflection flows from the latter environments: (...) if classical liberalism is called struggle for existence, free-for-all, selfishness, the response is 'no'. On the other hand, liberalism in the sense of economic and personal freedom - definitely 'yes'. Provided that we additionally have the state understood as a community that has to take care of the most vulnerable social groups. Therefore, it should be acknowledged that our material goods are only a task. Such is the Christian vision. We have not been given this for all eternity; we only have been assigned a task. Liberalism in the version of egoistic pursuit of the goal at all costs - is definitely not acceptable. In contrast, liberalism in the Christian version - absolutely (...) [8].

What does liberalism in the world economy lead to? In order to answer this question the reference should be made to two of the above mentioned problems of the modern world: uneven development of the world economy and disproportionate access to material goods, and the growing world-wide 'vacuum' between poverty and wealth. This is only a part of reality, because liberalism has more profound effects, manifested in the form of conflicts, wars, crises and the violation or demolition of social order, exemplified by, among other things, the uprising in North Africa and the Middle East called the Arab Spring, the civil war in Syria, the civil war and destabilization of Libya, as well as the strengthened position of the proto-state conventionally called the Islamic State or the anarchy of Somalia. The effects of the liberal economy, globalization and neo-colonialism are increasingly affecting European societies. Their manifestation is the growth of Islamic radicalism, which, besides the migration crisis, poses the greatest challenge for modern societies. It is therefore justified to argue that

these two phenomena preclude the creation of serene relationships between Europe and the world of Islam, including the economic sphere.

Radicalism in its original form is a result of the merger of the sphere of religion with politics, and its sources should be sought in the doctrine of orthodox Islam. Misperception of the phenomenon based on media stereotypes brings the sources of radicalism to the poverty, backwardness and Arab societies' civilizational regression. Oftentimes radicalism is equated with the religion itself, which in the perception of the 'Western world' is anti-democratic, devoid of tolerance and hateful towards the rest of the world. The subjective perception of the phenomenon through the prism of hostility influences the 'imaginary' vision of the bipolar world, with a 'good' European on one side, and a cruel, wild Muslim praying to Allah on the other. Such understanding of the genesis of Islamic radicalism is not only untrue, but also common. Even worse, it deepens the conflict by transferring it to the civilization ground and affecting the social awareness in a destructive manner.

The real cause of the escalation of Islamic radicalism is the economic factors that are the primary cause for conflicts and crises of various scales and nature. One of them is the political crisis in the states of North Africa and the Middle East, where long-term dictatorships and the authoritarian political systems have collapsed. The second variant is the social crisis affecting Arab and Muslim citizens themselves, which has taken the form of revolution and mass rebellion having their roots in dissatisfaction with the then existing governments and huge disparities in the standard of living. It should be borne in mind that the knowledge we have from the media shows only a fragment of reality, since there are much more aggrieved societies - 'beneficiaries' of the liberated world economy, the expansion of mega-corporations and unprecedented exploitation than the ones that made a spurt called the Arab Spring. The 'cage' of isolation, extreme poverty and backwardness can be metaphorically referred to as the 'ticking time bomb', which will explode over time revealing the determination of societies left at the mercy of poverty [4]. Every now and then, this 'bomb' reminds of itself and traumatic events take place the effects of which are drastic not only for them but also for Europe.

The scale of poverty and social inequalities in the world is illustrated by the data from the year 2015, according to which the 62 richest people held total assets estimated at \$ 1.76 trillion, which accounted for the half of the overall capital of the world's poorest inhabitants in that year. According to Oxfam, in the years 2000-2015, the financial resources of just a few dozen economic elite leaders - in spite of the economic

crisis - increased by half a trillion dollars. It would not be surprising if it were not for the fact that at that time the property of 3.6 billion inhabitants of the world decreased by a trillion dollars [1]. In simplistic terms, it can be assumed that crises, including social and economic ones, serve to multiply the wealth of rich people to the detriment of the poorer part of the global society. Therefore there is a reason to claim that Robert Merton's age-old theory, called the Matthew effect, still corresponds to reality. Wherever there are more or less turbulent changes and political transformations as well as economic crises, there is an unbridled process of further enlargement of the economic gap between poverty and wealth at the micro, meso, macro, and mega levels (across national borders) [1].

The social dichotomies resulting from economic diversification, apart from the purely ontological grounds, have their relation to the axiological plane, which is manifested, among other things, by religion. By virtue of the natural religious dichotomies shaped over the centuries of the inglorious common history of both cultures, religion today is a tool for exploring the underlying cause for the conflict between Islam and Europe (and not just for it). It becomes particularly effective when it finds fertile ground of uneducated and susceptible to manipulation social groups, for whom poverty and civilizational stagnation is dictated by the existence of other than Allah - the so-called 'evil God'. The reality is, however, quite different. Despite being a natural precondition for a conflict, religion is at the same time a 'smokescreen' for conflicts arising on the grounds of economic and social pillars that having been observed in most Islamic countries.

To confirm the above, the discussion should cover the etiology and course of the Arab Spring. Why did such a dynamic rush happen at all and what was its purpose? The reasons for that are manifold; nonetheless the religious factor certainly is not one of them. The prime cause was a social factor – the young and relatively well-educated and at the same time unemployed societies of Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Morocco, Jordan and other Arab states, experiencing increasingly the effects of despotic governments and the global crisis of 2008-2009, desired freedom, prosperity, democracy, and also the right to self-deciding their own destiny. It should be assumed that not autotelic but instrumental values gave impetus to the uprising, and certainly this outbreak was not intended to destabilize social order in

Europe. The aim was to break with existing forms of rule, improve the economic situation and create a new, better social order. In many cases the goal was achieved, but the effects of the Libyan and Syrian revolutions surprised not only Arab societies, but also the whole world, including Europe. It is essential that not religion, but the wish to improve living conditions pushed the Arab youth to rebellion and revolution. What justifies the growth of radicalism after the Arab Spring? It is uneasy to answer the question in simple terms, but one of the reasons was the natural filling of the vacuum that had arisen after the fall or disruption of dictatorships.

It is worth taking a closer look at the genesis of the religious Islamic State that was created at the beginning of the century after wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. It was not established - as it is generally accepted - under the influence of the vision promoted by a group of orthodox Muslims and dreams of Medieval Quran-based social order, but as a result of striving to change the political and economic order in the modern world. Unlike the effects of the Arab Spring, the essence of ISIS is based on the struggle with everything West, and orthodox Islam is only a form and a specific instrument to this end. Due to the lack of opportunities for effective fighting against the existing political and economic order, ISIS has expanded in the ideological sphere, where religion is turned into a tool. It is a structured protest, a kind of revolution within which, through the instrumentalization of the fight against the infidels, the poor world is opposed to the rich world. The revolt takes on morally and politically repulsive forms, but it does not come as a surprise since in the past, not less bloody revolutions and revolts were inscribed on the history cards of both Europe and the Muslim states.

However, a question is raised about shaping the ISIS perception in the public opinion. The world media, without understanding the essence and character of the ISIS phenomenon, reduce causes of the conflict only to the sphere of social consciousness - the clash of two different civilizations. These are they, which give rise to a misperception that confronts Islam with Europe. At one extreme of this confrontation there is a liberal, mild civilized society, and on the other backward, medieval and brutal Islam, striving to destroy the civilization created by the white man. What is the truth about ISIS? Does the very idea of its creation and the fight against the West on many fronts justify raising panic among the Europeans in the media? The truth is that the Europeans have no idea why the Islamic State was formed, what it has been fighting for and what the goals of this struggle are. The post-truth i.e. the truth shown in a distorting mirror does not serve either party and will not contribute to tackle problems between the 'Islamic world' and Europe. In order to mitigate the effects of the existing conflict and to prevent its spread,

¹ The Gospel of St. Matthew: 'Whoever has will be given more, and he will be given abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him' (Matthew: 13:12).

a dialogue based on compromise on both sides is necessary. On the one hand, there is a need for radical changes in Western policy towards developing and third world countries, a reduction in the scale of mega-corporations' expansion and the introduction of rational agreement, then in the future, this ship - as Amin Maalouf stated – carrying all humanity will soon sink: (...) *my main* desire is to choose words in such a way that the 'travelling companions' would be convinced that the ship we have boarded is drifting blindly on the rough sea without a course, a destination and a compass, and that quick action is required so that we all do not go to the bottom' [13].

These words seem to illustrate the situation which not only Europe but the whole world has faced. The destructive effects of deepening economic diversification and social inequalities are becoming palpable for the Muslim states and for the West as well. Firstly, poverty and lack of stabilization is seen, secondly, waves of immigrants and terror, which have the desired effect in the minds of the Europeans. Will it ever be possible to solve the self-accelerating conflict between the West and the 'world of Islam'? It appears infeasible in current circumstances when neither party is going to abandon the adopted strategy.

DYNAMICS OF DEMOGRAPHIC PROCESSES IN EUROPE AND THE ARAB WORLD

The demographic differentiation is another significant destructor of Islamic-European relations. Their destructive nature is unprecedented, because for a dozen or so years most European countries have recorded negative demographic growth, which affects the low fertility rate and the aging society. Such a state of affairs confronted with the demographic boom of the 1970s and 1980s in the Muslim states is a serious problem, especially in the face of mass immigration that has engulfed Europe - with varying degrees – for over the past 25 years.

The demographic change in Germany is a notable issue, where despite the fact that the population of 'native' citizens has been clearly declining for several years, the upward trend in the growth of the population of German citizens has been markedly visible. Since 2013, the German population has been growing steadily due to immigrants assimilating and acquiring German nationality. In the year in question the number of inhabitants amounted to 80.5 million, rose to 80.7 million in 2014, 81.2 million in 2015 and 82.18 million in 2016 [22]. According to the German Federal Statistics Office, this figure will continue to grow for the next 5-7 years, however in the next 50 years, depending on the variant of the intensity of the immigrants' expansion, Germany will regress. As a result, by 2060, under the variant of the low intensity the German population could reach the size of about

redistribution of the Earth's riches. On the other hand, it is essential to completely abandon the problem solving and the expression of discontent through terror and violence. This is a challenge for both parties, but it is not impossible. If both 'worlds' fail to reach an 67.6 million, while with the high intensity variant - 73.1 million [14]. The age structure of German citizens is a substantial observation. Predictions for the future indicate that the period analyzed will be characterized by a decrease in the working-age German population. By analyzing the year 2013 with 49 million people aged 20-64 living in Germany, worthy of emphasis is the future that will bring down the population of the working-age Germans. As a result, their population at this age will be about 34 million in 2060 [14]². The fall not only of the entire German population, but mainly its working-age part by 15 million justifies the thesis that in the coming 50 years they will become a minority in their own country.

Another observation indicates that unfavorable phenomena, beyond the impact on the population size and ethnic structure, will have irreversible economic effects. One of them is the reversal of proportions in the social structure, where a significant surplus of retired people and pensioners over working people will occur. This means that a gap in the labor market will appear as well as the problem of the rapid increase in social expenditures for post working-age citizens. The issue to be discussed is filling the labor market gap with immigrants, since they are not always enough qualified to skilled jobs formerly occupied by the Germans, and in many cases their productivity does not match the cultural and economic realities of Germany. Similar trends have been observed in other 'old democracy' states, each with its own internal and peculiar problems of demographic change and immigrants.

It is worth adding that fertility, i.e. the number of children per woman of childbearing age, is the basic indicator determining the demographic prospects of every society. It is assumed that the fertility rate in a demographically stabilized society should be 2.11-2.15. The analysis of statistics describing fertility in Europe provokes reflections that in the current realities most European societies have no chance to exist as culturally and ethnically homogeneous 'social beings' and within one century (and in some cases earlier) they are likely to become minorities in their own countries. Assuming that the nominal fertility rate conventionally guarantees

² *Ibidem*. Other forecasts point to a completely different trend, because in their light the population of Germany will decrease by 23 million in 2050, while in 2100 - by half, i.e. to 38.5 million. Nowadays in Germany the so-called DINK (*double income, no kids*) is in fashion. This is precisely the fashion that underlies the demographic problem of Germany.

demographic stabilization for 100 years, it is that the vision of Europe 'without the Europeans' can become a fact. Will this really happen? If we adopt fertility and natural growth as objective criteria of evaluation, then indeed legitimate concerns about the future of Europe can arise. However, if we look at the expanding European population, these concerns cease to matter.

Interestingly, at the beginning of the century the UN projections assumed an exponential decline in the European population. They indicated that the size of the population of the Europeans amounting to 728 million in 2000 would drastically decrease to 556 million in 2050 [19]. More pessimistic forecasts estimated that if the then fertility rate - 1.4 remained unchanged the population of Europe would drop to 207 million at the end of 2100 [7]. As it turns out, the 2000 forecasts have not come true and demographic data

obvious

impose the need for their verification. It is evidenced by the size of Europe's population in 2016, which amounted to 743.3 million, not less than 700 million as it had been assumed. This means that it has grown by over 15 million within 16 years, which is the yearly average of about 1 million. There is, however, a nuance associated with the ethnic structure of most Western European countries. Namely, in the age of the population growth of citizens, the population of 'indigenous Europeans' decreases while the population of the so-called 'new Europeans' - immigrants and their families who have gone through or are undergoing the process of integration decreases.

The analysis of fertility indicators in Western Europe in 2016 is particularly significant from the point of view of the demographic situation in this region (Figure 1).

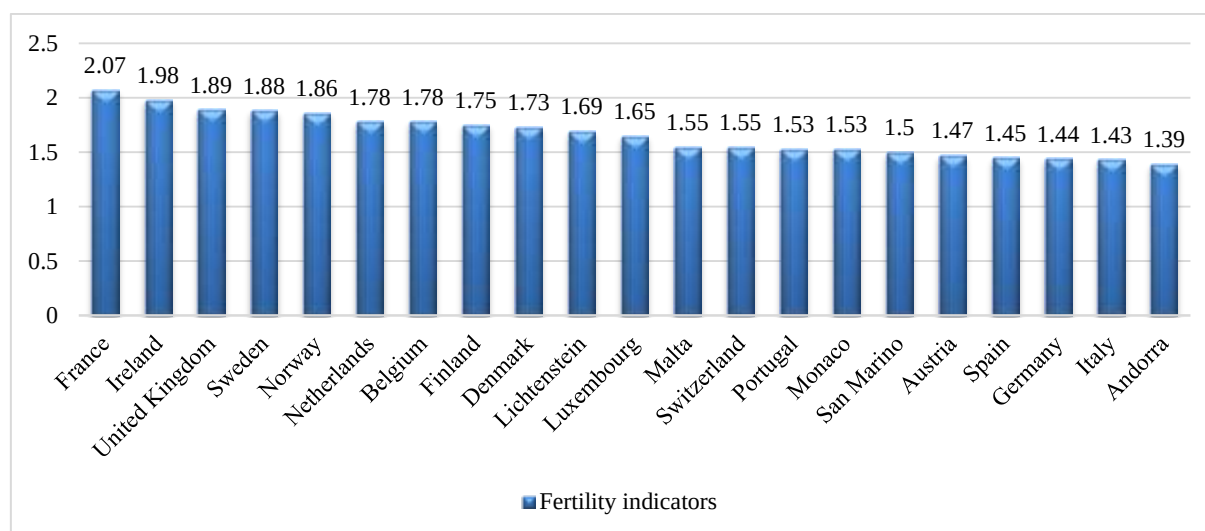


Fig. 1. Fertility indicators in Western European countries in 2016.

Source: Own study based on: The World Factbook 2016. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2127rank.html> [accessed on: 12.06.2017]

The analysis of the values of the fertility indicators shows a strongly negative tendency, since only few countries can be classified as demographically stable. France has the highest value - 2.07, while Ireland - 1.98, Portugal - 1.91, Great Britain 1.89, Sweden 1.88 and Norway - 1.86 are on the borderline of demographic safety [20]. Other Western European countries have been at risk for its decline for years, although the last 5 years have shown that fertility has slightly changed for the better. The growth of this indicator also denies the prevalent forecasts from the early 21st century for avalanche-style decline. At present, the average fertility rate for Western European countries in 2016 was 1.7 and, importantly, it has increased by 0.2 over the past 5 years.

It is worth noting, however, that today in some

countries where the so-called 'old' immigrants live, children of women from other countries are taken into account when calculating the fertility rate. This means that the fertility of 'indigenous Europeans' is much lower, and that growth is a function of the integration or acquisition of immigrant citizenship. Such countries include mainly, but not only, Germany. In the light of the realities mentioned above, the question arises, not whether the process of displacing Europeans has become a fact, but whether it has the power to force them out of the 'Old Continent' irreversibly? This question is difficult to answer unequivocally, since the dynamics of population processes in confrontation with demographic change calls into question the sense of modeling the future. Still, it is worth recalling the age-old P. Buchanan's thesis published in 'The Death of The West' at the beginning of the century, that not only

Europe but also the United States would be dominated by peoples from other civilizations, especially by the civilization of Islam [7].

Low fertility is not only a domain of Western countries, because in the past 15 years the downward trend in birth rate has been recorded in all countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Relatively the best,

although deviating from the nominal value, is fertility in Russia - 1.61, in Estonia - 1.6 and in Lithuania - 1.59. Other countries in the last 10 years have reported a drop in fertility rates almost every year. In Poland this indicator is 1.34 [9] and is close to Slovenia - 1.35 and Romania - 1.34 [20]. The diagram (Figure 2) shows the fertility rates in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

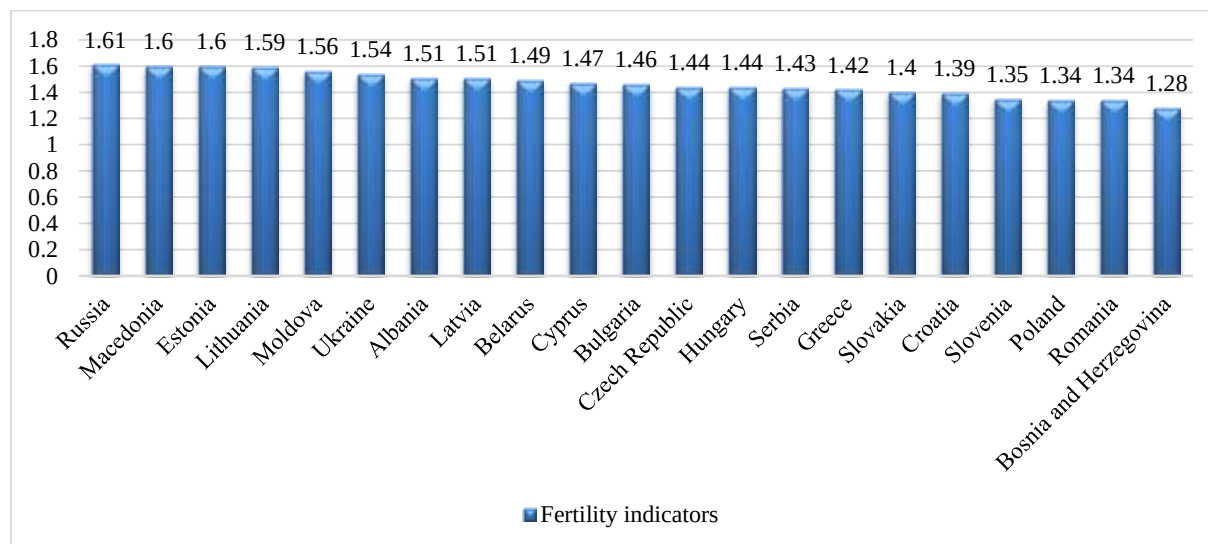


Fig. 2. Fertility indicators in Central and Eastern European countries in 2016.

Source: Own study based on: The World Factbook.2016. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2127rank.html>[accessed, on: 12.06.2017]

In 2016, its average value for the region in question was nearly 1.47, which means that within a decade demographically stable populations have lost their ability to survive. It is alarmingly low, and at the same time it awakens the reflection on the reason for the lowering propensity to procreate in societies with, until recently, births far above the nominal value. It is also unfavorable when taken together with the average value for the Western European states of 1.7. Probably the main cause for its decline in Central and Eastern Europe is the change in the value systems after the political transformation in the former Eastern Bloc countries, and the resultant economic factors ensuing from the transition from a shortage economy (state-controlled) towards a free-market economy. Precise

explanation of the phenomenon is hard and requires long-term and interdisciplinary research similar to those conducted by Ronald Inglehart in the 1970s on the impact of changing the type of economy (from a shortage to free-market economy) on changing value systems (from materialistic to post-materialistic) and also aiming to diagnose the tendency of Central European societies to reproduce; at present such studies are carried out in Western Europe by to the International Center for the Family in Milan.

In addition to the fertility rate, natural growth is an important estimator of demographic stabilization. According to 'The World Factbook' data, in 2016 the birth rate in Europe was as follows (Figure 3).

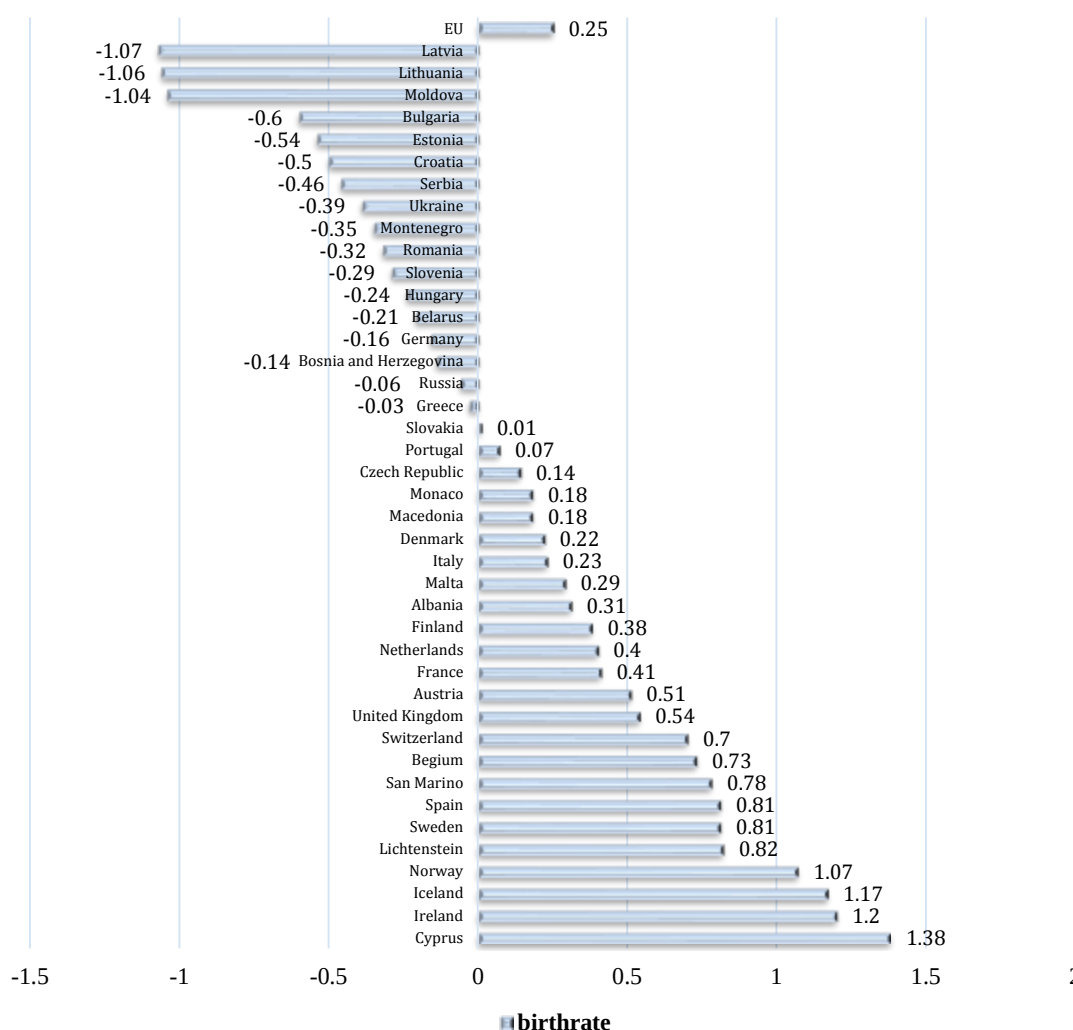


Fig 3. The birth rate in Europe in 2016 (%)

Source: Own study based on: The World Factbook, 2016. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2002rank.html>. [Accessed on: 12.06.2017].

Among the 45 analyzed European countries, 18 show a negative population growth rate, 17 of which represent Central and Eastern Europe [21]. This is another - alongside the fertility rate - harbinger of the deep demographic erosion of this part of the continent. Causes for low birth rate are to be found both on the ontological and axiological planes, where the indirect plane referring to instrumental values influencing the level and quality of living seems to be more important. The etiology of declining birth rate has been the subject of research by the International Center for the Family (Centro Internazionale per la Famiglia) in Milan, which conducted surveys among childless families in Italy and other countries in 2015. The results proved that although 58.8% of the surveyed families considered childlessness as the sole cause of their personal choice, the main motives for that were the following: child maintenance costs, occupational stabilization and standard of living as well as the reluctance to abandon

the 'quiet' comfortable lifestyle [10]. A similar trend has been observed in Germany, where 52% of German women claimed that they could not imagine life without having children, while 48% was of opposite opinion. It is noteworthy that nearly 30% of women declared aversion to having children, justifying such a stance with limitations to personal development, considered a life priority. For comparison, almost 50 years ago, only 15% of Germans declared aversion to motherhood and substantiated that with economic factors. At that time, maternity was widespread and recognized as a crucial value in the pursuit of one's life aspirations [10]. The example of Germany and Italy is just a part of reality that describes demographic change in Europe. This problem is gaining importance, as there is a real danger of irreversible changes that may primarily affect the ethnic and cultural structure of Europe, and secondary its economy and global position.

The analysis of estimates affecting European demographic safety is only one area of consideration. In order to reflect the scale of the problem it is appropriate to analyze fertility and birth rate in selected countries that are the source of immigration from Africa, the Middle East and Asia to Europe. It is worth emphasizing that the fertility in the Muslim states has been declining gradually since the 1980s. In the mid-

1980s it was over 5, and in the 1990s more than 3 children per woman of childbearing age [4]. In spite of the decline and diversification depending on the state, its value influences the inclination to leave their own states in search for better living standards. Among the Arab states – immigration ones, the highest fertility in 2016 was as follows (Figure 4):

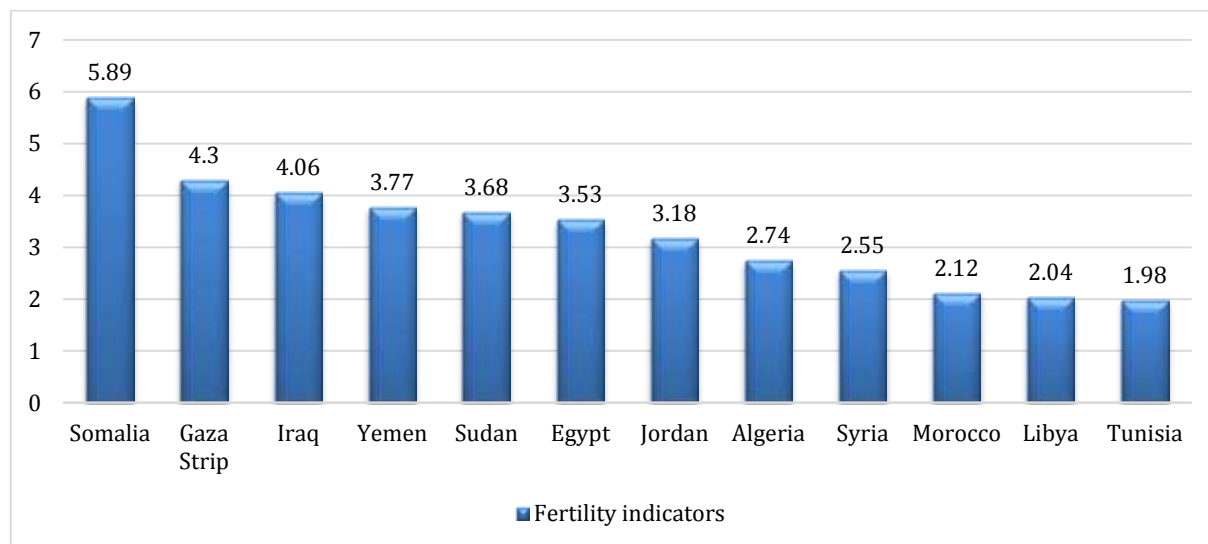


Fig-4. Fertility indicators in the Arab states in 2016

Source: Own study based on: The World Factbook 2016. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2127rank.html> [accessed on: 17.06.2017]

Apart from the Arab states, also selected Muslim immigration countries, show a high fertility rate. These include: Afghanistan, where, despite a few decades of civil war, it is 5.22, South Sudan - 5.19, Nigeria - 5.13, Ethiopia - 5.07, Senegal - 4.36, Eritrea - 4.07, Pakistan - 2.68, and India³ - 2.45 [21]. Similarly to the fertility rate, also the birth rate in the immigration countries is high or very high: in Iraq - 2.87%, Egypt - 2.51%, Senegal - 2.42%, Yemen - 2.37%, Afghanistan - 2.34%, Somalia - 1.9, and Algeria - 1.88%, Libya - 1.8%, Sudan - 1.69%, Syria - 1.56%, Morocco - 0.99, Tunisia - 0.89, Lebanon - 0.85%, Jordan - 0.83%, Eritrea - 0.81% [21]. It should be noted that in some countries the birth rate has been slowed down by conflicts, revolutions and civil wars, as in the case of Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Egypt or Libya. In spite of this, the scale and pace of the population growth in Europe, in the Mediterranean region, means expansion into the 'rich North'. On the one hand, it is a huge threat to the 'Old Continent' not only of a cultural, but also economic, social and political nature, and, on the other, it is a sort of alternative to its demographic problems.

³ In India, the Muslims account for about 14% of the total population of the state, with 80% representing Sunni faction.

What is beyond dispute is that the process of enriching European culture with foreign cultures is still continuing, as multicultural ideas based on mutual respect and tolerance in the face of contemporary problems of mass immigration seem to remain in the sphere of dreams. Is there any prospect, however, of gaining mutual benefit from the immigrants' expansion to the European continent? Is the surplus of the population of the Middle East and Africa capable to fill the population vacuum in Europe? Finally, assuming that the above is feasible, will the clash of cultures not be strong enough to leave long-term consequences for the integration process? These uneasy and probably rhetorical questions have their subliminal message – they are to stimulate reflection on the real, not just media, issues associated with the migration crisis. In theory, both Europe and the Islamic world should naturally benefit not only from immigration, but also from the achievements of both cultures. In practice, more negatives than advantages of immigrants' expansion to Europe come to the fore.

THE 'ISLAMIC WORLD' AND EUROPE - DISCOURSE ON THE JOINT FUTURE

A turning point in the relationship between the Islamic world and the West was the September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center. For the whole

international community this event has become a symbol of the resurgence of terrorism stigmatizing the Muslim states as the source of all evils in the world. At the same time, this event marked the beginning of a wave of mutual hatred exposed not only in the media, but also in a way that contributed to the open conflict between the USA and countries supporting terrorism.

It is necessary to emphasize the dual and at the same time relativized by different arguments perception of the conflict between Islam and the West. This relativism appears to be a dichotomy of interests between the parties to the conflict, as well as avoiding measures to resolve it through dialogue. At the same time, mutual application of 'hard power' - on the one hand, asymmetric operations and, on the other, open confrontations have become a fact. The assessment of mutual relations from the perspective of the 16-year period since the September 11, 2001 attack suggests that this unprecedented event was inevitable, that a similar attack would sooner or later occur. Why such a supposition? If we examine the history of relations between the 'Islamic world' and the West of the past 20-30 years prior to September 11, 2001, a 'melting pot' was dominating, in which fiction and hypocrisy created by politicians of both sides are mixed with interests of states and corporations as well. This model of the relationships between both sides creates a background for conflicts and terrorist attacks. Unfortunately, the 'beneficiaries' of these games are people - ordinary citizens suffering from destructive wars conventionally called 'home', such as in Somalia, Syria and Libya, or previous wars under the 'banners' of fighting terrorism in Iraq, Afghanistan and other parts of the 'Arab World'.

If the present relationships are considered from the perspective of the future of mutual relations, the question arises: *are there any opportunities for resolving this 'strange' conflict by peaceful means?* The analysis of recent years' events allows the view that while governments of conflict-affected countries are willing to consent, two factors are obstacles to its achievement: firstly, the global economy and the influence of multinational corporations in conflict regions, secondly, unwillingness to stop the spread of terror on the part of Muslim groups taking interest in the holy war with the West. Hence, a specific stalemate has been reached, because neither party will give up the creation of its own strategy. Thus, the world has faced a conflict of civilizations that can have unpredictable scale and consequences.

The assessment of mutual relations between Europe and the Muslim states imposes the need to consider them from the perspective of social perception. For the purpose of this analysis, the authors used a fairly distant in time public opinion poll conducted from March to June 2004 by the Center for Strategic Studies

at the University of Jordan in Amman. The study was carried out in the selected Middle Eastern countries such as Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Palestine with the purpose to diagnose the attitude of the people of the aforementioned states towards the Western states. Their momentum merits acclaim as they were conducted on a very large sample of 9700 people representing various social and professional groups, including students, business employees and the media workers. The size and complexity of the research tool is also worth emphasizing. The questionnaire consisted of as many as 150 questions with extensive cafeteria [17]. The results, published in a report titled 'Revisiting the Arab Street: Research from Within', proved that the then Arabs treated the West as one political wholeness.

The analysis of the study results clearly showed the dichotomous and historically conditioned image of the major Western countries surveyed namely the United States, Great Britain and France. They became the research subject due to their historical and contemporary influences in the Middle East. The Arabs responded most favorably to France (57%), judging its policy as the least expansive and rather the most positive towards the Arabs. Also in the light of the criterion of respect for national values and global position, France was again ranked most highly. Definitely the image of the United States and the United Kingdom earned the lowest scores, which was shaped by many factors, including the intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq. Only 25% of the respondents expressed a positive attitude towards these countries, but the distribution of responses was dependent on their national identities. 75% of respondents from Syria, 70% from Palestine, 60% from Egypt, 55% from Jordan and only 20% from Lebanon negatively rated the USA. Similarly, 60% of respondents from Palestine, 55% from Jordan, 55% from Syria, 54% from Egypt and 20% from Lebanon delivered a negative opinion on the UK, particularly for the Middle East policy. According to the respondents - contrary to popular belief - not religion but the lack of respect for Arab values is the root cause for the conflict between the West and the Middle East. Arab respondents disagreed with the American approach to and interpretation of terrorism, and also questioned the policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Iraq war, arguing that it had been unreasonable. Despite these discrepancies, especially with regard to the United States, the Arab social opinion in 2004 approved stronger relations between their countries and the West, particularly in terms of cultural and economic relationships. At the same time they expressed the negation of the US policy towards the Middle East [17].

Studies performed in subsequent years in smaller Arab countries have confirmed the earlier tendency towards aversion to the United States and the

United Kingdom. Public opinion has gained in significance during the Arab Spring and until now, when the Middle East stigmatizes the 'bleeding wound' – Syria destroyed by civil war and political games. Apart from the Western states' policy towards the 'Islamic world', which is important in the perceptions of not only the Arab but also most Muslim states, the influence of globalization on their economy and culture matters. R. Ożarowski identifies with such a view: Fear of losing own identity and vision of the weakening of Islam through globalization processes is an existential threat to them, identified with the Americanization of the world, manifested in the gradual replacement of the values and traditions of the Arab culture with 'outer' ones [16]. This is not the only opinion promoted within this trend, since it is also 'alive' among the social elites of the Muslim states. In their view, the consequence of globalization must be 'the elimination of the boundary between the Islamic world (*dar al-islam*) and the world of the infidels (*dar al-kufr*)' [16], and this means that the blurring of cultural boundaries between Islam and the West has become a reality. This is reflected in the legitimate concerns attributed in particular to the young generation of Muslims who are susceptible to the megatrends of mass culture. In the face of cultural change the resistance of conservative circles sunk in tradition and faithful to the values of Islam increases.

It is worth exploring, however, whether this resistance in the face of cultural change is reasonable. Considering that the Islamic world negates isolationism and establishes cooperation with the West in many spheres, cultural change seems unavoidable. One of the manifestations of such cooperation is the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, which was signed in Barcelona in 1995. The partnership was initiated as a result of the international conference with representatives of the European Union member states and 12 Mediterranean countries: Israel, Cyprus, Malta, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco and the Palestinian Authority. It was established in the fields of politics and economy as well as on the socio-cultural level. The joint action to create civil societies in the Arab countries was identified as one of the most substantial issues.

Since 1995, a number of cooperation programs has been implemented under the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, which has contributed positively to the development of political awareness and to the growth of the political culture of Arab societies in that region [3,24]. Thus, by adopting cooperation as a natural consequence of coexistence of two great cultural circles in the close geographical proximity and as an inevitable social and economic fact, common views on the limitation of cultural diffusion should be negated not only in the Muslim environment but also among European conservatives. In the realities of the 'world

without frontiers', this diffusion can become a boon and a cure for antagonisms. This view can be certainly denied because the migration crisis in Europe seems to be the main barrier to the integration and assimilation of both civilizations. Moreover, slogans about multiculturalism based on tolerance and mutual respect should be left to theorists as a material for historical analysis and modeling the future. However, the extrapolation of facts even from the distant past, e.g. the history of ancient Rome, shows a certain pattern in which cultural heterogeneity has created a relatively homogeneous social being capable of not only surviving but also for social development and progress. This is just one example of creating social wholeness based on conflicting and antagonistic foreign ethnic communities.

Later history has confirmed that such a mechanism becomes a kind of regularity, even a social law, in which 'unity is built by multiplicity'. This example refers to the United States - a state whose motto included in the national emblem 'e pluribus unum' meaning 'out of many, one' clearly describes the nature of the state and draws attention to tolerance and respect for foreign values. Thus, referring the Arabs and Muslims' attitude to the Americans exposed in the 1990s and later studies, it is worth considering whether these fears are not too exaggerated, or indeed global corporations are no worse than the Western states' policy. This is, of course, the authors' own reflection, however it may indicate the direction for comparative research.

The analysis of the cultural change and relationships between the 'Islamic world' and the West put the spotlight on the important thread, i.e. differentiation in the level of gender egalitarianism. The woman and her social position in Islamic culture is still the subject that keeps on sparking negative emotions, but it is worthy of emphasis that it should not be generalized to all Muslim or even Arab states. Almost all of them have their own - endemic and peculiar attitude towards the position of women in society. Still, the stigma of an 'enslaved' and deprived of all rights Muslim woman affects the image of Arab culture in the perception of the Europeans. In spite of the stereotypes and, in many cases, the overstated views on this subject in the perception of European societies, a serious dichotomy exists between the two cultures in this area of social life. The West denies the isolation of women and depriving them of their rights, while the 'Islamic world' denies the egalitarian approach to women's participation in public life. This issue is broad enough to focus special attention on it. The results of Polish research indicate that in the area of female emancipation, the Arab world has a lot to do, and numerous behaviors that occur in the 'World of Islam' are in Western societies considered reprehensible and

unacceptable [12].

According to the 2003 study conducted for Zogby International, a clear criticism emerges of the US policy towards the Middle East and the Gulf States. This study is important inasmuch as it is consistent with the critical period of the Second Iraq War and was conducted on the sample of 2620 men and women in Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and Jordan. The specific characteristics of each country, including class and religious divisions, were taken into account in the selection of the research sample [6]. In the light of the then opinion of 95% of the Saudis, 66% of the Moroccans, 60% of the Egyptians, 58% of the Jordanians and 74% of the Lebanese, the US foreign policy, including the Iraq intervention, did not serve democracy. As many as 3/4 of the respondents indicated that the war in Iraq would not support achieving peace in the Middle East, and would have a negative impact on Israeli-Palestinian relations. At the same time, it would contribute to the rise of terrorist threats not only in the United States, as it was indicated by more than 80% of the Moroccans and Lebanese, 74% of the Egyptians and 78% of the Jordanians [6]. The then research to a large extent proved to be the anticipation of the present.

Apart from the cited criticism of the US policy, it is worth noting that - as K. Brataniec claims: Opinion polls carried out in the Arab countries have proved that the Arabs are very open towards the West. They are characterized by self-criticism towards their own problems, high awareness of historically conditioned resentments with respect to the West, and what is more they express their willingness to cooperate and engage

in dialogue with Western societies. The overwhelming majority of the Muslims believe that democratic institutions can function properly in their countries. Despite mutual prejudices, a complicated international political situation emotionally involving both sides and the relationships between the Muslims and the Westerners are not as bad as Western public opinion feels. Apart from differences, there are also areas where the position of both Muslims and Westerners is similar: the attitude towards democracy, the condemnation of terrorist attacks and the problem of fundamentalism [5].

The analysis of the results of the above studies on the attitude of Arab societies to the West allows the thesis that, contrary to popular stereotypes Arab societies do not show extreme hostility towards other cultures, including those inhabiting Europe. Any antagonisms between these societies are a natural consequence of cultural differences that underpin the civilizational conditions in which they arise. The results of the authors' own research conducted in 2006-2008 on a sample of 641 respondents, including 341 representing the Arab states and 323 from Poland evidenced that the lack of cultural competence in both Western and Muslim societies have underlain mutual stereotypical perception of cultures. The results of the research mentioned above indicated that fundamental differences are visible at the level of hierarchy of values concerning: family, love, religion, honor, friendship, work, freedom, money and career. Table 1 presents the structure of value systems based on the above criteria and the attitude of the Arabs - traditionalists, the young liberal Arabs and the radical Arabs towards the young generation of the Poles.

Table-1. The hierarchy of values declared by the young Arabs – including the differentiation of the attitude towards Islam vs. values of the young Poles

Level	Young liberal Arab	Arab – traditionalist	Radical Arab	Young Pole
1	love	family	religion	love
2	family	love	honor	friendship
3	work	religion	family	family
4	friendship	honor	work	work
5	honor	friendship	friendship	career
6	religion	work	freedom	money
7	freedom	career	career	religion

Source: own study based on the research conducted in the years 2006-2008 in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen. N=664

The results of the research indicate that the value systems declared by the young generation of the Arabs oscillate more around the values declared by the young Poles than the values of the traditional and radical Arabs. In simplification, this implies that cultural change has been taking place in Arab societies. Both the ranks assigned to the declared values and their types (except honor, freedom, career and money) are consistent in most cases. The Arab states are extremely diverse in terms of their relation to religiosity. Despite

being essential the feature is rarely stressed with sufficient strength in the world literature. Islam has been undergoing numerous transformations, and therefore it is difficult to expect that the believers' attitude to the religion remain unchanged [2, 23]. Three main attitudes adopted by modern Muslims towards religion can be distinguished: liberal, traditional and radical. The differences between them are not exhausted in the religious space, but also - to some extent - manifest themselves at the level of the approach to the

basic values (see Table 1).

It seems appropriate to close the analysis of contemporary relations between the 'Islamic World and the West' with Edward W. Said's views on the distinctness and unity of cultures. He argues that the greatest advancement in the contemporary cultural theory is the belief that cultures constitute heterogeneous, interconnected and interdependent mixture. Creating any barriers is completely incompatible with historical experience. Furthermore, E. W. Said believes that the concept of 'Western civilization' is the result of the ideology that seeks to recognize the superiority of one culture over others. Such a division leads to a number of falsifications; hence divisions between people and societies are created to a large extent, the effects of which are hostility, mutual reluctance and conflicts among peoples [18, 6].

CONCLUSIONS

It is difficult to present a synthesis of issues describing the relationships between the 'World of Islam' and Europe, devoting to this complex subject matter a few or even a dozen pages of text. The authors are aware that the issues raised are merely a part of the whole spectrum of problems associated with relations between the diverse and historically antagonistic 'worlds' and are somewhat benchmark for the search for new knowledge about them. It is also challenging to find a common denominator for the objective evaluation of their real relationships, devoid of stigma of media stereotypes. This difficulty arises due to the lack of cultural competence on Muslim societies on the part of the Europeans and vice versa. Interestingly, the widespread phenomenon - irrespective of the ethnic context - is also the lack of cultural competence in the knowledge of own culture. This applies equally to both Muslim and European societies. This means that the fundamental barrier in Western-Islamic relations is not to be overcome. Probably the primary cause of this state of affairs is the natural resistance to acquiring expertise and experience with a foreign culture. This reluctance results also from the influence of the media on our perception, which creates a negative image of cultures in both 'worlds'. There is an image of a European - a haughty, rich, expansive and conceited representative of Western culture opposed to an uncivilized, dirty, uneducated, vindictive and aggressive Muslim. This is the media and pop culture, which have created such a profile of mutual stereotypical perception.

Apart from the issues of neo-colonialism and globalization, which, besides cultural factors, are the most important cause of antagonism between the 'Islamic world' and the West, the authors focus on the phenomenon that has been plaguing Europe for several years. It is the migration crisis - the secondary

consequence of the disintegration of socio-political systems in Africa and the Middle East.

With an objective assessment of this phenomenon from the scale perspective, it is indeed possible to talk about the crisis, since never before, after World War II, Europe collided with such a serious migration problem. Never before has there been such a serious dilemma focused on finding the 'golden mean' between the surplus population of immigrants and refugees and the population 'vacuum' of the indigenous Europeans. It is a paradox because in the age of inflow of foreign cultures there is a real chance to solve demographic problems in Europe. As it turns out, negligence in the past migration policy, the disintegration and the lack of funding for immigrants' education caused that in the face of the ever-growing clash of cultures, not to say the civilizations, any efforts to create a tolerant and multicultural Europe make no sense. This means that the 'Old Continent' is dying. Adverse fertility indicators, low birth rates and aging populations seem to confirm this view. The fact is that 'strange' cultures fill the ethnic landscape of Europe but live in their own 'world', devoid of any symptoms of cultural assimilation and social integration.

As a summary, the authors want to draw attention to the controversial issue underpinned by a few rhetorical questions: is the current migration crisis in Europe not a work of its own past colonial policy? Does it repay the debts for exploitation and negligence? Finally, will the wave of immigrants irreversibly change the ethnic and cultural landscape of Europe? These questions will be left unanswered.

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