

## Book Reviews

***Why Muslim Integration Fails in Christian-Heritage Societies.* Edited by Claire L. Adida, David D. Laitin and Marie-Anne Valfort. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016. 264 pp., \$45.00 (cloth).**

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In *Why Muslim Integration Fails in Christian Heritage Societies*, Claire Adida, David Laitin, and Marie-Anne Valfort set out to answer two questions:

- (1) Is the “host population of Christian heritage societies really Islamophobic”?
- (2) And, “If Islamophobia is confirmed, is it indeed a response to a real threat, or is it at least partly non-rational”? (p. 5)

To answer these questions they conducted a series of experimental games with residents of Paris, France, supplemented with tests involving identical resumes sent to employers; interviews; surveys and ethnographies of immigrants; and secondary sources. They conclude that, “Muslim integration into Christian heritage societies of the West is by and large a failure,” (p. 126), and both Muslims and host societies are at fault.

In part one, the authors describe conflict between Muslim immigrants and host societies and identify hypothetical mechanisms at fault. In part two they explain their methods, detailing their 2009 and 2010 experiments—including games called trust, speed chatting, voting, dictator, strategic dictator, double strategic dictator, and incomes.

In part three, the authors conclude that their experiments and surveys prove that members of the host society are biased against Muslims, and that such discrimination is based on religion rather than national origin. In a chapter titled “Muslim characteristics that feed rational Islamophobia” they argue that compared with Christians, Muslims are

more misogynist (Muslims of both sexes prefer men to women in experimental games), more religious (their religious practices are often incompatible with French employer preferences), and more attached to their home countries, cultures, and language. In the subsequent chapter we learn that the French dislike Muslims for “nonrational” reasons too, including statistical generalization and “distaste.”

In part four the authors generalize their findings to other Christian heritage societies, including the United States. And, they recommend policies to enhance integration, such as Muslims taking Christian names, and employers allowing Muslims to exchange Christian holidays for days off during Ramadan.



While the book is timely, its objectivity and balance is undermined by a number of unexamined, problematic assumptions, as well as selection biases in the choice of country, human subjects, and experimental design. Firstly, France was nominally chosen for its large, unassimilated Muslim population, primarily from North Africa (pp. 191–195). The authors anticipate, yet then dismiss, arguments that France’s colonial history, particularly relations with Algerians (for the 150 years that Algeria was a district in France, native Algerians were denied citizenship as “Muslim,” regardless of their actual religious beliefs), might make France a special case—asserting that “every Christian heritage society is distinctive in its own way.” (p. 169).

Secondly, randomly selected Christians and Jews with four French-born grandparents—designated “FFF”—were chosen to represent the host population. The mysterious inclusion of Jews, but not the far more numerous Arab or black FFFs (at least, readers are never told whether any of the FFFs are black or Arab, or if any of the Jewish FFFs are of North African descent) is inexplicable, unless one *presumes* a chasm between Judeo-Christian and Muslim cultures. Not long ago, of course, the book’s title and chapter headings might have referred to Jews rather than Muslims. Moreover, including Jewish FFFs increases the risk of bias: Jewish attitudes towards Muslims are influenced by factors other than religious commonality with Christians.

Thirdly, selected FFFs all lived in Paris’s 19th *arrondissement*, one of the most ethnically, culturally, and racially integrated neighborhoods in France. While the area was selected to underestimate anti-Islamic bias, the choice inevitably underestimates racial bias as well. Since the FFFs were obliged to choose between Christian and Muslim immigrants, and not between immigrants and other white FFFs, the conclusion that the

French are guilty of religious rather than either racial or combined racial and religious prejudice is unsupported.

Fourthly, the authors chose Christians and Muslims from Senegal to represent the immigrant other because Senegal, they claim, is France's only former colony from which Christian and Muslim migrants arrived with "similar prospects for success" (p. 32). The exclusion, however, of the very population—North Africans—that led the authors to select France in the first place, precludes the study from distinguishing between anti-Arab and anti-Muslim prejudice. The book often blurs the distinction between Muslims, Arabs, and North Africans—including those who drink beer and eat pork.

Ultimately, only by ignoring the colonial origins of French anti-Muslim sentiment, centuries of orientalist discourse, and decades of anti-Muslim propaganda, are the authors able to read the current maelstrom as a clash of civilizations. They praise Nicolas Sarkozy for not mentioning rioters' Muslim origins, when he called for power-hosing the *racaille* ("scum") from the suburbs (p. 194), but fail to mention his role provoking the 2005 riots, when as Interior Minister, he defended officers who chased and abandoned two teenaged boys to their death in an electric substation; chastised the youths as criminals; and then defended police who shot tear gas into a mosque full of women and children. Discounting the pain caused by housing and employment discrimination, racial profiling, police violence, and coded campaign rhetoric, the authors interpret the rage of France's suburban youth through their own prism of religious and cultural conflict.

Finally, the authors cite a single study of Christian and Muslim Arab immigrants in Dearborn, Michigan to show that cultural and religious incompatibility explains Muslim failure to integrate in *all* Christian heritage societies. The Dearborn study's authors, however, actually reached *the opposite conclusion*: Christian Arabs migrated generations earlier than Muslims and differences in integration reflect difference in timing of migration—not religion. Adida, Laitin, and Valfort's decision to cite that study rather than more extensive Census and Pew data showing Muslims are among the most successful immigrants in America (exhibiting higher levels of professional attainment than the native born) is puzzling. If anything, the United States proves that Muslim integration did succeed in Christian heritage societies, at least until 9/11 changed everything.