# CONSTRUCTIVE INTEGRATION OF CANADIAN MUSLIMS:

## Comparison with Canada, Bosnia and France

**Imam Zijad Delic**

Imam Dr. Zijad Delic is the National Executive Director of the Canadian Islamic Congress and is promoting the *Muslim History Month in Canada*. A native of Bosnia & Herzegovina and a Canadian citizen, Imam Delic is a trained religious scholar and a holder of a B.A. (Hons) in Islamic Studies and Arabic and a PhD from Simon Fraser University.

ABSTRACT

After placing Canadian Muslims within the context of Canadian multiculturalism, a comparison is made with Muslim experience in Bosnia and Herzegovina and France. This reveals three different models by which the essentials of the Canadian approach can be more clearly identified and lessons learned articulated. A vision for integration and inclusion is developed that calls on both Muslims and Canadian society as a whole to work together for its realization. The report concludes with ideas on how to overcome the obstacles of integration and inclusion and how to expand the opportunities for the engagement of Canadian Muslims in Canada's civic, economic, social and political life.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Constructive integration is a notion of multiculturalism, where multiculturalism is a policy, a philosophy and a lived reality for Canadian Muslims. I argue in this article that being Muslim is compatible with *being a good Canadian citizen; one reinforces the other.*

Canadian Muslims live in a multicultural society, which encourages integration through participation and shared citizenship. For Muslims, this model opens opportunities to renew and reform their communal outlook within the mainstream society while maintaining their religious beliefs. This approach is unlike the one experienced by Muslims in France, who live in a model of systemic assimilation, or Muslims in Bosnia, who were politically and socially under pressure to abandon their religious beliefs and become "others".

My central question is: how can Muslims in Canada preserve and remain faithful to their religious beliefs and constructively integrate in a pluralist society? Although Canadian society is highly inclusive, minorities, when making adjustments to social realities, may be following a pattern of either assimilation or isolation. However, some members of these groups fail to see, due to lack of information, the most beneficial third alternative to assimilation or isolation, which is constructive integration, the core element of Canadian multiculturalism.

Constructive integration offers balanced choices, enhances positive experiences and minimizes undesirable extremes. It can help minorities – visible or religious – engage in their surroundings, reconcile societal differences and create realistic opportunities for everyone – minorities and majorities – to contribute positively to society as a whole. Intellectuals of the Muslim faith in western democracies encourage the adoption of constructive integration through spontaneous participation as means of progress and reform.

The expression of Muslimness, i.e., identifying with Islam as a religion in Canada, varies depending on the almost 100 different countries, cultures, languages, and traditions where Canadian Muslims hail from. The variety of "Muslimness" is compatible with Canadian multiculturalism and can also adjust through dialogue and policy development to become a sort of Canadianness that is an expression of Islam unique to Canada.

### 2. CANADIAN MUSLIMS: AN EXCELLENT COMPLEMENT

Canada is a country of vibrant diversity. It is home to a wide variety of ethno-cultural groups, making up the mosaic of Canada's current population (Kymlicka, 2007, p. 39). Canada is a land of immigrants and their children who comprise one of the world's leading democratic multicultural societies. Canada is "the showpiece of multiculturalism" (Vasta, p. 16, 2007), and "is among the most poly-ethnic and poly-religious countries in the world today" (Elmasry, 2005, p. 1). Indeed, the Canadian approach to diversity naturally reflects a Canadian reality of several regional, communal and personal identities, in addition to the national identity (Banting et al., 2007, pp. 648, 650). Newcomers to Canada have always brought

their religious beliefs, practices, conceptions of community and institutions with them, adding their distinctive richness to Canada's multicultural mosaic (Bowlby, 2001, p. 8).

Among the many factors that characterize multicultural societies, religion plays a dominant role in the formation of personal and communal ethnic identity. Max Weber and Emile Durkheim hold that "religion is necessary to a society as a vital mechanism of integration for human beings and as a means to unify symbols" (Driedger, 1989, p. 20). Scholars have emphasized the importance of religion as a vital element of identity (Gordon, 1964; Barth, 1969; Mol, 1976; Abu Laban, 1983; and Herberg, 1989). According to Mol (1976), "religion defines… [humanity's] place in the universe." Yousif (1992, p. 535) also suggests that the defiance of religious practices or beliefs means stepping outside one's boundaries or place and thus "outside of one's own identity."

Religious diversity is a fact of life in Canadian society (Dib, 2006, p. 39), just as is the racial and ethnic diversity (Adams, 2006, p. 76). Canada encourages all citizens to preserve their heritage as part of the cultural mosaic (Gall, 2006, 69). Religion occupies a significant position in Canada's constitutional framework (Gull, 2006, 70). Section 2(a) and 2(b) of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1977) provide that everyone is entitled to freedom of religion and belief and guarantees this basic freedom. The Supreme Court ruled in 1985 that freedom of religion under the *Charter* includes freedom of religious speech, including "the right to entertain such religious beliefs as a person chooses, the right to declare religious beliefs openly and without fear of hindrance or reprisal, and the right to manifest religious belief by worship and practice or by teaching and dissemination" (Dib, 2006, p 42).

Over the past three decades, a large number of Muslims have made Canada their home (Statistic Canada, 1981, 1991, 2001), bringing along various cultural and religious expressions from their country of origin. Whereas they often constituted the majority of the population in their country of origin, they come to Canada where they are a minority. Some of the challenges they face are internal: accommodating to a different national culture, reframing one's personal identity, and living with a conflict between first and second generation Muslims. Other challenges are external: dealing with systemic Islamophobia, discrimination and/or racism (Abu Laban, 1980). In response to these challenges, Muslim intellectuals and leaders reject the concept of being regarded as the "other" in Canadian society and prefer to preserve distinct Islamic values and simultaneously work to integrate Muslims more fully into Canadian society.

The necessity for the constructive integration of Muslims has grown exponentially in Canada, with their emergence as a national group with a presence in every province and major city. This, however, does not mean Muslims are by any means a recent addition to Canada. Although the majority of Muslims came to Canada within the last three decades, smaller numbers have existed at least since the middle of the 19th century (Scholes, 2002). They have settled wherever economic opportunities presented themselves, especially in Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia and Alberta, as shown in Table 1. Canadian Muslims have come from nearly every continent – South and South-East Asia, the Arab world, Africa, Eastern Europe, and the Caribbean.

**Table 1: Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims in Canada – Provinces and Territories**

| Province and Territories | Canadian Sunni Muslims | | Canadians of Various Shi'ite Muslim Affiliations | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | % | Number | % |
| NFDL & Labrador | 600 | 0.12 | 30 | 0.03 |
| Prince Edward Island | 170 | 0.03 | 25 | 0.03 |
| Nova Scotia | 3,300 | 0.68 | 250 | 0.27 |
| New Brunswick | 1,200 | 0.25 | 50 | 0.05 |
| Quebec | 91,600 | 18.79 | 17,000 | 18.45 |
| Ontario | 291,500 | 59.81 | 61,000 | 66.19 |
| Manitoba | 4,600 | 0.94 | 500 | 0.54 |
| Saskatchewan | 2,000 | 0.41 | 200 | 0.22 |
| Alberta | 45,000 | 9.23 | 4100 | 4.45 |
| British Columbia | 47,000 | 9.68 | 9000 | 9.77 |
| Territories | 225 | 0.05 | – | 0.00 |
| Canada | 487,500 | 100% | 92,155 | 100% |

Source: Statistics Canada 2001 and author's estimates.

The diversity of Muslim ethnic origin has been reflected in the diverse expressions of Islam. Although the majority came from countries with Sunni Muslim majorities, each group observed its own doctrinal and ritual forms of faith. Sunni Muslims represent almost three-quarters of all Canadian Muslims, at 487,500 people, or 1.5% of the population of Canada in 2001. There is a significant number of Shi'ite Muslims in Canada as well, who also have diverse expressions of faith and who originate from several countries. Moreover, diverse national backgrounds resulted in the attendance of particular communities at different mosques and centres such as the South Asians, Arabs, and Africans, Turks, Fijians, Bosnian and others.

Muslims in Canada have several different customs and lifestyles, including eating habits, matrimonial customs and artistic expressions. These cultural expressions are significantly influenced by the wider world of Muslim tradition. For example, the first word in the Qur'an is an invitation to "Read" (in the sense of learning), while a most famous *Hadith* of the Prophet Muhammad is "to seek knowledge even in China" (meaning, even in the most distant land from the vintage of 7th century Arabia). The variety of Muslim expression is a living evidence of "world culture" *(Weltkultur)*, where the doors are always open to diversity of expressions and to adaptability. Muslims in Canada know and readily embrace Canadian identity.

Those looking for a single reality of Islam's expressions in Canada may be disappointed. Canadian Muslims do not constitute a monolithic bloc at all. Recent research shows distinctions among different groups of Canadian Muslims (Bayer, 2003). Any attempt to study the Canadian expression of Islam has to take into consideration the dynamics of Muslim diversity. Not only is the Canadian expression of Islam highly diverse, but for many Canadian Muslims, it is a novel experience to live in a pluralist liberal democracy like Canada. It would be fascinating to study the interplay of Muslim diversity and Canadian identity, as Muslims establish roots in Canada and their children become fully and constructively integrated.

I argue that an objective analytical construct would recognize that the expression of "Muslimness" in Canada is compatible with Canadian multiculturalism and can adjust through dialogue and public policy development to become a sort of "Canadian-ness," that is, an expression of a uniquely Canadian Islam.

A number of factors led Muslims to choose Canada as their home, although these factors vary from one individual or family to another (Abu Laban, 1983 and Haddad, 1978). Yousif (1993, p. 17) mentions five reasons for Muslims to come to Canada:

a) better economic opportunities; b) political instability in their homelands; c) educational opportunities for their children; d) desire to join or reunite with family members and friends already in Canada; and e) the freedom of expression (religion) and association guaranteed by the Canadian constitution. In short, "they all came for a better life." (Sirajul Islam, 1999, p. 133).

Early records indicate that there were 13 Muslim residents in Canada in 1871, who came primarily from Syria (Abu Laban, 1983, p. 76). North America's first mosque was *Al Rashid*, established in Edmonton, Alberta, in 1938 (Yousif, 1992, p. 534). Until the Second World War, the growth rate of the Canadian Muslim population was slow. It only reached 3,000 in 1951 (Zaman, 1999, p. 14). Reforms in Canada's immigration policy during the 1960s led to a regular inflow of immigrants of the Muslim faith. Further liberalization of immigration rules in the 1970s led to an even greater influx of Muslim immigrants (Rashid, 1985, pp. 15-19). The 1981 Census of Canada listed the number of Muslims at 98,165 (Statistics Canada, Vol. 1, p. 9). However, researchers believe that the number should be larger. Muslim associations have estimated the number of Muslims in Ontario alone in 1987-88 at 100,000 (Hussaini, 1990). That estimate is based on surveys of Canadian Muslims and community phone directories of households (p. 23). The 1991 Census counted 253,000 individuals of the Muslim faith, more than twice the number reported in 1981. In 2001, the Census reported 579,640 Canadian Muslims; again more than double the 1991 figure. According to more recent estimates (Mujahid and Egab, 2004), Muslims in Canada numbered more than 750,000 in 2004, accounting for 2% of the national population.

**Table 2: Muslim Population in Canada from 1871 to 2007**

| Year | Population |
|---|---|
| 1871 | 13 |
| 1952 | 3,000 |
| 1981 | 98,000 |
| 1991 | 253,000 |
| 2001 | 579,640 |
| 2004 (estimate) | 750,000 |
| 2007 (estimate) | 1 million + |

Sources: Census Canada: 1981, 1991, 2001; Hamdani (1984); Mujahid & Egab (2004).

Canadian Muslims are among Canada's most highly educated citizens. A recent Environics Survey of Muslims in Canada (2007) also suggests that Canadian Muslims are well educated: 45% of them have at least one university degree.

However, a disturbing contrast is that Muslims as a group have the second-highest unemployment rate in Canada; 14.4% of Muslims are listed as jobless, almost twice the national unemployment rate of 7.4% (2001 Census; Mujahid and Egab, 2004; MCCO-G 2004).

## 3. MUSLIMS IN BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA: SYSTEMATIC EXCLUSION

On July 27, 2007, Bosnian Muslims celebrated 600 years of Islam in their nation. The celebration reminded the world that Balkan Muslims are not transient communities, but are indigenous to Europe. Mustafa Ceric, a leader in Bosnia, observed during the celebration, "This is an opportunity to remind the world that we are indigenous Muslims in Europe and that by celebrating centuries of

| Table 3: Education | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Highest Level of School Achieved (15 years old and over)** | **Muslims** | **% of Muslims** | **Total Population** | **% of Total Population** |
| Population 15 years + | 411515 | 100 | 23901360 | 100% |
| Less than High School | 102290 | 24.9 | 7476900 | 31.3 |
| High School Certificate | 55475 | 13.5 | 3367875 | 14.1 |
| Post Secondary Education | 253760 | 61.7 | 13056560 | 54.6 |
| - Some Post Secondary | 51450 | 20.3 | 2590165 | 19.8 |
| - Trades certificate/diploma | 25420 | 10.0 | 2598925 | 19.9 |
| - College certificate/diploma | 43800 | 17.3 | 3578400 | 27.4 |
| - University below Bachelor | 16230 | 06.4 | 601425 | 04.6 |
| **- University degrees (total)** | 116855 | 46.0 | 3687650 | 28.2 |
| - Bachelor's degrees | 74445 | 29.3 | 2534010 | 19.4 |
| - Above Bachelor's | 9630 | 03.8 | 382955 | 02.9 |
| - Master's degree | 26475 | 10.4 | 642055 | 04.9 |
| - Doctorate | 6310 | 02.5 | 128625 | 01.0 |

Source: 2001 Census; MCCO-G 2004.

Islam in the heart of Europe, Muslims want to naturalize Islam in Europe. Bosnians have demonstrated how Islam can be harmonized with a European way of life" (*International Herald Tribune*, July 28, 2007).

The same words were echoed by Michael Schmunk, the German Ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina: "Islam as practiced in Bosnia could be a good model which might contribute to social progress in Europe", and that Bosnian Islam would fit into current social fabric in Europe (*The European Weekly*, November 20, 2007). Smailovic (1980) emphasizes that "the roots of Islam in the Balkans are more than five hundred years old" (p. 133). Shakir (1975, p. 152) holds that Islam appeared in the Balkans in the 10th or 11th century when Muslim rule expanded into Sicily and other parts of the Mediterranean Sea. Others claim that Islam was introduced to the Balkans twelve centuries ago, even before it became dominant in the Eastern Mediterranean region (e.g., in Christian Syria). They explain that the Muslim kingdoms in Spain (Granada, Andalus, etc.) were established since the 8th century and that a large number of men from the Balkans served at the courts of these kingdoms (pp. 19-28). However, records of the earlier presence of Islam in the Balkans, at least prior to the Turkish phase, are still poor and incomplete (Smailovic, 1980). Therefore, the Turkish period is the best documented phase in the history of Islam in the Balkans (p. 133). From that time on, and especially during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Islam quickly spread in the region (Smailovic, 1980), and Muslims, Christians and Jews thrived and lived in harmony.

A substantial conversion of Balkan people to Islam occurred in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (Balic, 1992, p. 385; Donia, 1981). One reason which encouraged Balkan people, especially in Bosnia, to adopt Islam was the way they were treated by the Kingdom of Hungary, which maintained an oppressive rule over Bosnians. Eventually, Hungary itself was a target of Ottoman expansion. Balic concludes that "a large part of the indigenous population of the Balkans, led by the aristocracy, adopted the Islamic faith… thus the political propaganda that Bosnian Muslims betrayed the nation by adopting Islam, a non-Serbian faith, is nonsensical." (1992, p. 385).

The decline of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century led to fatal consequences for the Muslim people of Bosnia in particular and the Balkans in general (Khan, 1996, p. 52). The rivalry between the European powers over the decaying Ottoman Empire resulted in the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1878 by the Austro-Hungary Empire. This occupation "had a considerable impact on the life and status of Muslims and their future in the Balkans" (Smailovic, 1980, p. 133).

The proof that Bosnian Islam was authentic and not driven by loyalty to the Ottoman Empire, is that Turkey attempted to supervise Muslim functions in Bosnia, but Bosnian Muslims eventually freed themselves from Turkish influence. However, the promise of liberalization by Europe was a hollow one. As soon as Turkish rule ended in the Balkans, it was replaced by Austro-Hungary rule, which exercised a strict control over Muslim religious life (p. 134). To maintain their culture, Bosnians established a domestic council of Muslim clergy, the *Ulema Medzlis*, in 1882. The situation did not improve under the Austro-Hungary Empire or under a united Yugoslavia later. For much of the twentieth century, Muslims in the Balkans faced rigorous trials (pp. 134-135).

After the First World War, Serbs and Croats refused to recognize Bosnian Muslim identity, and suddenly, what was an Ottoman Question (i.e., Problem) in Europe, became a "Muslim Question" in Balkans politics. The struggle for recognition of Bosnian identity has been at the core of virtually all conflicts in former Yugoslavia that involved Bosnian Muslims. Bosnians were caught between two competitors for power – Serbs and Croats. Such competition resulted in demands "by both competitors that Bosnian Muslims be "nationalized" either as "Serb Muslims" or "Croatians" of the Islamic faith." (Khan, 1996, p. 57). During the communist regime of Joseph Tito in Yugoslavia, Muslims launched a difficult struggle for recognition, but the communist regime has created even more barriers to their recognition than those that existed under the Austria-Hungary Empire. In the 1948 Yugoslav census, Bosnian Muslims had three choices for ethnic self-identification: Serb-Muslims (i.e. Serbs of the Islamic faith); Croat-Muslims; or ethnically "undeclared". It was government policy at the time that Muslims should be absorbed into either Serb or Croat ethnicities (Khan, 1996, p. 60). Muslim resistance to this policy is shown by the fact that 8% declared themselves as Serb-Muslims, 3% Croat-Muslims, and an overwhelming majority of 83% as ethnically undeclared (Ramet, 1992, p. 179). Census taking changed in 1971, as a category was created to designate Bosnian Muslims as Bosnians (Balic, 1992, p. 384), and Bosnian Catholics as Croatians, and Bosnian Orthodox as Serbians. From then on, Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats were competing to win over Bosnian Muslims as belonging to their national identity, in a country that was officially atheist and recognized no religion. The two national groups worked openly towards eliminating Bosnian identity from the political vocabulary and popular consciousness in the Balkans.

Bosnian Muslims have vied for national identity for the past 30 years. The 1981 Yugoslav census counted two million people in Bosnia as Muslims (Friedman, 2000, p. 174). This proved that Tito was responding to the needs of the various peoples of Yugoslavia. However, such self-identification in the census was possible "until the death of Tito". The institutions Tito created and the ambience of multinational acceptance in the land of "Brotherhood and Unity, also died" (Friedman). In the 1991 census, Muslims in the national sense accounted for about 44% (1, 9 million) of Bosnia. Those who marked "Yugoslav" (242,682 or 5.5%) or "Other" (104,439 or 2.4%) were almost all Bosnian Muslims, while tens of thousands of Bosnian Muslims chose to self-identify as Croats or Serbs (Balic, 1992, p. 385).

The death of Tito signalled the disintegration of Yugoslavia, and an unexpected brutal aggression against Bosnian Muslims took place between 1992 and 1995. Although the Serbs and the Croations quickly established their national states, they denied to the same for Bosnia. Bosnia, like the other former states of Yugoslavia, began to affirm its belonging to Europe as a country with a Muslims majority. The Serb and Croat citizens, supported by neighbouring states, were not tolerant of this affirmation. Bosnians never actually wanted to establish a state based on religion and were a proud European nation. Early in 1988, Ferhad Efendi Seta, a Bosnian Muslim leader, said: "Those who adopted the Islamic faith in this country have the good fortune of originating from long established European inhabitants and in participating in the finest achievements of European culture" (Balic, 1992, p. 386).

Despite all affirmations by Bosnian Muslim leadership that Muslims want peaceful dialogue with their neighbours, and that Bosnian Muslims only want to maintain their distinct expression of Islam within Europe, Bosnian aspirations in the 1990s became a target of abuse not only by the mass media and political authority of the Government of Serbia, but also by some Serbian intellectuals who participated in a campaign that prolonged the historical exclusion of the Bosnian Muslims (Balic, 1992, p. 386). Things turned for the worst. What was a verbal exclusion under Tito and the Austria-Hungary Empire became a violent physical exclusion of the Muslim population in 1990s. It was clear, as Bringer suggests, that the rhetoric that Bosnians were bringing international Islam into the Balkans had the undesired effect of turning Bosnian Muslims into "others," "intruders," "those who do not belong," "those who threaten our well-being, power and prosperity"; "in order to pacify them, they had to be dominated or eliminated" (2002, p. 214).

Bosnia's claim to belonging to Europe is a genuine one. Following the end of the Ottoman rule in the Balkans, Bosnians lived under the Austro-Hungary Empire (Karcic, 1999, p. 147), which "opened for Bosnian intellectuals the potential of a positive relationship between Islam and European culture." Many recognized that rejecting European norms and institution was not the right path for the Muslims of Bosnia. A position of selective adaptation of European culture was gradually developed by enlightened Bosnian intellectuals, who emphasized the importance of adapting European culture while keeping a Muslim lifestyle. Ceric (2007) points out that the expression of Islam among Bosnians was quite distinctive from other Muslim countries. Despite the experience of being ignored and rejected by Europe and the rest of the world during the time between 1992 and 1995, Bosnian Muslims continued to stand for a tolerant, liberal, modern and European interpretation of Islam (Moe, 2003).

Although Ceric (2007) understood the feeling of Muslims being rejected in Europe because of religion, he insisted that Bosnians needed to make efforts to "fit in" in Europe. He stated "Europe is not yet ready to accept Muslims as they deserve to be accepted, but unfortunately, Muslims are also not living up to their responsibilities in Europe… we Muslims have no choice but to work for our presence in Europe and to show that we are ready to accept the values of human rights, democracy, transparency, accountability, the rule of law and all those values that are also Islamic values."

Today's Bosnia should be a case study for millions of European Muslims who have no role model to guide them. Bosnian Muslim religious scholars understood the European social context, as they are inheritors of a long tradition of living in a country with a Christian majority since 1878. Bosnian responses to the challenges of modernity under the Austro-Hungary Empire laid down a foundation for dealing with similar issues in the following decades. One of the reasons for Bosnian Muslim success in

adapting was the role played by Muslim clergy who relied on *fiqh* (Muslim jurisprudence) to modernize Bosnian society without a loss of identity. This response was an early embrace of the "challenges of modernity" (Karcic, 1999, p.158). Today's Bosnian Muslim clergy have the skills and knowledge to deal with the challenges facing Muslims in Europe.

The image of a mosque, a Catholic church, an Orthodox church and a synagogue, standing shoulder to shoulder in Sarajevo is a strong metaphor of the tolerant pluralist, inter-religious relations that have characterized Bosnian history and for which Bosnian Muslims particularly claim credit (Moe, 2004). Bosnian history provides an exceptional case of religiously motivated harmony among various religious groups. Karic (1999) calls Bosnia "a grand multicultural or multi-religious tapestry," "a filigree", "a mosaic comprised of four communities". It is "a society of Abraham," and "the only country in Europe which sprang out from the pages of the Holy Bible and the Qur'an" (pp. 90-92). The peaceful co-existence of four major religions has indeed been a feature of Bosnian history (Moe, 2004, p.1). Some Bosnian intellectuals seek a secular nationalistic trend, reject the "multicultural" identity and prefer to speak of a single Bosnian culture that integrates Islam, Roman Catholicism, Serbian Orthodoxy, and Judaism (Mahmutcahajic, 1999, pp. 163, 301-2). However, they still recognize the Bosniak, Bosnian Croat and Bosnian Serb ethnicities long established under the communist regime (Moe, 2004, p.3).

Bosnian history is about how different faiths have co-existed peacefully for centuries. This co-existence can be attributed to the peaceful nature of Islam towards peoples of other faiths (Karic, 1999, p. 91; Moe, 2003, p.3). Bosnian Muslims recognize Christianity and Judaism as Abrahamic faiths or People with a Holy Book and that followers of these other faiths should enjoy rights in countries with a Muslim majority. This has been exemplified in the "*Ahdnama*" (Covenant), by which Sultan Mehmet al-Fatih in 1463 granted security for life and property of Franciscan monks who worked in Bosnia to spread Catholicism (Mahmutcahajic, 2002; Hafizovic, 2002). Roman Catholics contributed to tolerance, while Orthodox Christians and Jews also had good relations with Muslims (Karic, p. 91).

Bosnian Muslims became the group that was mostly identified with Bosnia as a homeland, but a homeland that recognized unity in diversity and religious pluralism (Mahmutcahajic, 1999). At the centre of Bosnian nationalism is the understanding that non-Muslims would recognize and protect the rights of others (Mahmutcahajic, 1999, p. 110). Today, Bosnian Muslim identity in the Balkans is still an issue and a source of tension. This standstill only hinders Muslims, Catholics and Orthodox in Bosnia & Herzegovina from a vision that enhances the constructive integration of Muslims in the Balkans and Europe. A joint effort among all the groups is the step forward for everyone.

## 4. MUSLIMS IN FRANCE: ASSIMILATION AS OFFICIAL POLICY

The Muslim presence in France "dates back to [the] 12th – 14th centuries, during the time of the Andalusian epoch". Muslims lived since the 8th century mostly in the south of France, particularly in Avignon (Ramadan, 1999). However, the contemporary presence of Muslims in France started with the rise of French colonial power in Africa, continuing with the arrival of new waves of Muslims in France at the beginning of the 20th century and following the Algerian War of Liberation 1954-1962 (p. 5).

While Muslim immigrants arrived in France in the late 19th century, more significant Muslim migration happened after World War II, especially in the 1950s, 1960s and 1980s (Vaisse, 2006, p. 1). A large influx of Muslims immigrants occurred in France in the 1950s, following the collapse of the French empire and due to France's need for labour, especially after the Second World War and the loss of population. A majority of Muslims came from North Africa, followed by Black Muslims from Sub-Saharan Africa. (*Muslims in the UE - Cities Report: France 2007*, p. 16).

Following World War II, immigrants arrived from Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, and sub-Saharan Africa – Senegal, Mali and Mauritania. Immigration from Turkey occurred in the 1960s after France and Turkey signed the first agreement on labour movement (p. 17). These immigrants came to France without their families at the end of the 1960s. In the 1970s, immigration occurred through family reunification: many women and children joined their families (Cities Report: France 2007, p. 17). Besides immigration, some other factors have led to an increase in the Muslim population in France, such as a high birth rate among Muslims, a need for immigrant workers due to the aging of France's population, and flight from impoverished and unstable home countries in the last decades (Gallis, 2005).

"France is all the French," said Charles de Gaulle, President of the French Republic, referring to the unifying power of French secularism. However, Maillard (2005) comments that "Some among those French are Muslims" (p. 62).

There is no precise information about the size of the Muslim population in France, but estimates vary between 5 million (Vaisse, 2005, p. 1) and 8 million (Front National's estimate, Vaisse, 2005). Several academic and institutional surveys also provide information on the Muslim population (Gallies, 2005). There is agreement that approximately 10% of the population of France, or about 6-7 million people, are Muslims of whom up to one third have French citizenship (Gallis, 2005, p. 22). There is reason for the absence of an official count. In keeping with France's republican ideal that all citizens are equal, the collection of statistics on racial, ethnic, or religious backgrounds of the population was forbidden and this lack of statistics did not permit scientific research into incidences of racism in employment and social achievements among religious and visible minorities in France (*Les critères raciaux restant interdits dans les statistiques*," LM, September 16, 2005).[1] Since 1872, the national census of France stopped collecting data about religion. This was made more difficult in the 20th century as France became officially secular along the republican model of its revolution (equality, fraternity, and liberty).

The relationship between France and the Muslim world has always had ups and downs (Wharton, 2004). Since the

time Napoleon entered Egypt in 1798, the relationship has been paradoxical; this colonial past having an impact on Muslim integration in French society. French Muslims are not a coherent group and are divided by their national origin, language, culture or ethnic background (Gallis, 2005, p. 23). One of the most important factors, common to all Muslim populations throughout Western Europe and North America, (Kepel, 1987), is the heterogeneity of Muslims. This heterogeneity has been a serious factor in why the Muslim voice in French politics is weak. Therefore, it is no surprise to find the representation of French Muslims in public life to be significantly less in proportion to what would be expected given their numerical strength (Wharton, 2004, p. 16).

Not all French Muslims are immigrants. While first generation French Muslims held French citizenship, they kept strong ties with their country of origin. The situation is different with second generation French Muslims. They are born in France and as such are French citizens by *jus soli*. They speak French as their mother tongue and readily absorb French culture and as such cannot be designated as immigrants. However, even this reality does not make second generation French Muslims welcomed by the mainstream compared to the relative welcome accorded to first generation immigrants from other European countries, including Jews and Protestants, Italians and Russians. Muslims who are relatively well integrated into French society and who think of themselves as French find themselves sometimes being treated in a sub-standard way (Tlemcani, 1997). Most French citizens of North African origin feel they are trapped in a hopeless downward spiral of joblessness, racial discrimination, and clashes with police. What Black Americans have experienced in inner city ghettos in the United States, Muslims are experiencing in the banlieux ghettos (suburbs) in France. Many researchers claim that the French have never fully accepted North African immigrants; and they have accepted second generation Muslims perhaps even less (Vertovec & Peach, 1997, pp. 42-50).

Canadian Muslims live in a multicultural society, which encourages integration through participation and shared citizenship. For Muslims, this model opens opportunities to renew and reform their communal outlook within the mainstream society while maintaining their religious beliefs.

While France intensely protects its secular policies, Muslims try to live in a society of power relations coupled with their own socio-economic weakness. Part of the power relation stems from France's colonial past and the *colon* mentality that never disappeared (Wharton, 204). "Some observers believe that there remain lingering notions of inferiority in the French Muslim population that grew out of the relationship between France as a colonial power and the subject populations in North Africa and elsewhere" (Gallis, 2005, p. 24). The colonizer/colonized relationship is an important element of how French public opinion views French Muslims. This dichotomy is decisive in shaping Muslim self-awareness in French society and in Muslim perception of their role in the societal space which has been assigned to them in France. This factor has led to the development of a Muslim identity in France which is socio-political rather than strictly religious. To illustrate, while the Catholic Church is a religious establishment in France, French Catholics lead normal lives in a French secular society, whereas Muslims do not (Wharton, 2004, p. 17). Identification with Islam as a socio-economic reality is therefore externally imposed by the host society rather than a result of any strong religious convictions among Muslims.

The difference in the speed of integration of immigrants between Europe and North America is not enough to explain the tension which underlies French society (Ramadan, 1999, p.25). Joppke (2007) explains that state policies in the last 40 years in Europe were not set up to properly accommodate migrants and religious and visible minorities. What was put in place is insufficient or even harmful. Even in a state long believed to adhere to articulating a coherent model of secularism, as the case is in France, failure of public policy has been notable not only following the 2005 Paris riots but much earlier. A review of French post-war immigration experiences noted that the State was fixated on refining instruments of immigration control while integration policies remained "badly defined in objectives and principles," "incoherent," "contradictory" and "insufficient" (Cour des Lomptes, 2004, pp. 9-10).

Even the simplest of Muslim expression of religious belief, such as wearing the head scarf (Hijab), burial rites and cemeteries, or the purchase of Halal food are viewed even in official circles – and among academics in the name of freedom of conscience and worship in France – as expressions of extremism and fundamentalism. This attitude reflects a narrow approach to integration. The proclaimed freedom of all French citizens in law and in official discourse has led to a paradoxical situation, where tolerance of diversity is subsumed in normative assumptions of the superiority of mainstream cultural norms, values and models. Effectively, the representatives of the dominant collective community have created the "other" (Knocke, 1997).

There is a widely held view in France that Muslims are not well-assimilated. France demands of its citizens and residents to embrace French language and French cultural norms. This embrace is usually guided by the strong hand of the State. In the past several years, "the French government has adopted new measures to assimilate and control its Muslim population" (Gallis, 2005, p. 27). Even though the French government accepted multiculturalism

as a phenomenon that enriches social life (Gallis, 2005, p.21), in reality, France has discouraged multiculturalism in practice (Gallis, 2005, p. 2). Attempts to assimilate immigrants led France to the formation of barriers between mainstream society and the various ethnic communities (Hussain, 2004, p. 107). This approach ignores the Canadian multiculturalism principles that participation and integration of minorities cannot be achieved without developing a sense of belonging to society. The sense of belonging, shared values and trust can only emerge from the people, in this context from French Muslims themselves. It cannot be forced on them since "social cohesion cannot be engineered" (Amin, 2002, p. 972).

The debate over assimilation in France is not new. For many years, the public education system, military service and employment have played a major role. This has also been the State approach to manage religious practices (Gallis, p. 22). A 1905 law recognized Catholicism, Protestantism and Judaism and introduced means for these three religious groups to develop representative bodies that would deal with the State regarding matters of importance, on behalf of their respective religious groups. Only in the mid-1980s did France officially recognize the Muslim faith, and only in 2002 did Muslims in France gain the right to create an official institution representing them before the French government (Gallis, 2005, p. 22).

Consequently, France has recognized conditional, not voluntary integration – the State respects the individual's cultural or religious characteristics as long as the individual is ready for a social contract in which he/she would promise or swear allegiance to the principles of secularism and the unity of the Republic. This promise includes shunning practices and cultural norms that are foreign to France and that would lead to *communautarisme*. The idea of such a contract lacks the element that it has to be voluntarily accepted by both sides – otherwise, it would not be a "contract." According to the Haut Conseil's initial proposal, for an integration contract to be valid, there must be "the willingness of immigrants [minorities] to fit into the host society." This process has to be voluntary" and mutual (2001, p.60).

While France offers a favourable climate for fruitful relations among diverse religious groups, it remains deeply influenced by a Christian past despite the social reality of the presence of a substantial number of Jews and Muslims. Indeed, France's openness includes respect for all religious groups, acceptance of all forms of worship without officially supporting any of the groups, and allowing citizens to believe or not to believe. However, such policies are not always reflected in reality (Lamand, 1994, p. 102). Due to different historical, political, cultural and religious reasons Christians, Jews, and Muslims do not occupy equal status in French politics or society. The framework of equality of these three groups is questionable since some are more equal then others.

The Open Society Institute (OSI, 2002) quotes a French Muslim leader as saying: "Muslims have rights but the problem emerges when it comes to practice" According to the OSI Report, "neither the legal system nor the State public administration has succeeded in formulating clear answers for a number of issues linked to the public management of Islam such as the construction of places of worship, Muslim plots in local cemeteries and ritual slaughter (p. 115). "Theoretical tolerance has not yet materialized… To say that the State has to recognize and respect the religious identity of everyone supposes, for instance, that the French State and Muslims are in agreement on what exactly constitutes a Muslim identity" (Ramadan, 1999, p. 24). Thus, in reality, secular French society resists the recognition of Muslims as a spiritual community with a different and unique religious entity [as they did with Christians and Jews]. Public opinion and government policies strongly oppose such recognition under the premise that it would lead to the Lebanonization of France (Wharton, 2004).

The needs and concerns of French Muslims have long been ignored and considered to be of secondary importance. However, Muslims have developed more and better working relations with the French State (Cities Report, 2007, p. 20). "The situation of Islam in France has evolved considerably" and "it [Islam] became more visible in the public space." Few French Muslims see conflict between being good Muslims and citizen living in a modern society. Seven in ten French Muslims or 72% perceive no such conflict, a view shared by virtually 74% of the French general public (Allen, 2006). This attitude of French Muslims is quite positive even though they are more likely to report experiences of racism compared to Muslims in other EU countries.

Rediscovery of religiosity among French Muslims started in the 1970s in the course of social struggles, and the French Socialist Party has facilitated a progressive integration of Islam in France starting in the 1980s. Since the 1980s, there was a marked increase in riots in the suburbs that involved young people of North African origin, which allowed the National Front (a far right party) to strengthen its support among French voters. The National Front vilified young Muslims and encouraged xenophobia against immigrants and minorities living in France. In the 1990s, French Muslim organizations have appealed for a reassessment of official secularism. They argued that while they accept its global frame, they maintained that it should permit a balanced integration approach and that the State should apply it in the light of the new reality of French society that has a large Muslim component (Ramadan, 1995). "Limited legal reform could be introduced, or at least discussed to permit respect of both French identity and Muslim worship; when all is said and done, it appears that it is more a question of strictly implementing what the laws say rather than a matter of reform" (Ramadan, 1999, 26). Ramadan (1999) suggests that in their quest for solutions in the current conflicts, "if only Muslims in France knew – or were interested in – these laws and tried to organize themselves in order to obtain the rights which are effectively theirs, more progress could be made".

Several surveys and studies on French Muslims and the place of Islam in their lives (such as by the French Institute of Public Opinion IFOP, 1989, 1994, 2001, Michele Tribalat 1992, Claude Dargent 1998-2001 and Brourard and Tiberj 2005) confirm that religion continues to play an important role among French Muslims and that even if they do not practice their religion regularly, they at least respect it as a

point of reference for their identity (*Cities Report: France*, 2007). Out of the 6 million Muslims in France, approximately 33% say they observe the practices. The IFOP study suggests that the majority of Muslims are attached to Islam or at least recognize their Muslim origin (95%). Muslim institutions in France are not under supervision from the countries of origin and French Muslims also have leaders that understand Islam and are knowledgeable about French culture and laws. France should take into account the Muslim presence and allow Muslims to find their place in French society (Cesary, 1994, pp. 147-156)

## 5. EXPRESSION OF "MUSLIMNESS" IN A CANADIAN CONTEXT

Since the middle of the 19th century when the first Muslims arrived in Canada, Canadian Muslims and their children have made significant moves toward embracing and adapting to a liberal democratic society. This is not to say that they have abandoned their beliefs, but that embracing democratic values is compatible with the faith of Islam.

Throughout 14 centuries in a variety of geographic and cultural contexts, Islamic teachings have not obstructed Muslim societies from change and reform, no matter when or where Muslims have lived. Muslim intelligentsia have predominantly urged Muslims to embrace new social and political realities while remaining faithful to a Muslim lifestyle in western societies. Islam is a civilization because it is able to express its universal and fundamental principles through time and space (history and geography), while integrating diversity and taking on the customs, tastes and styles that belonged to various cultural contexts (Ramadan, 2004, p. 214).

Integrating into western cultures is a significant process in Muslim contribution to different cultures. Such an approach is founded on Islamic intellectual and spiritual tradition – namely the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*. However, Muslims' practices of their religion is often confused with loyalty and belonging to cultures of origin and are misjudged as not embracing and being loyal to the host nation. Ramadan (2004) explains this experience:

> They tried without really being aware of it, to continue to be Pakistani Muslims in Britain and the United States, Moroccan and Algerian Muslims in France, Turkish Muslims in Germany, and so on. It is with the emergence of the second generation that problems appeared and the questions arose: parents who saw their children losing, or no longer recognizing themselves as part of, their Pakistani, Arab, or Turkish cultures seemed to think that they were losing their religious identity at the same time. However, this was far from being the case. Many young Muslims, by studying their religion, claimed total allegiance to Islam while distancing themselves from their cultures of origin (p. 215).

This brings us to constructing a Canadian expression of Islam and the question of how the integration of Canadian Muslims should emerge: How would Muslims accept change and transition without abandoning traditional religious values? How can Canadian Muslims create a new, visible and self-sustaining Canadian Muslim culture with a distinct Canadian expression of Islam?

Being able and willing to address these two challenges will help Canadian Muslims reconcile their religious beliefs with the challenges of a multicultural environment. To succeed, Muslims in Canada must bring to the fore dimensions of reading and re-reading the texts of Islamic tradition, with, as Tariq Ramadan says, "the aim of recovering forgotten principles or discovering a horizon as yet unknown" (p. 216). Muslim identity is not, as some Muslims and non-Muslims think, a narrow-minded construct, confined to rigid and inflexible principles. Rather, it is based on a constant dialectical and a dynamic movement between the foundational sources of Islam and the environment in which Muslims find themselves. Its ultimate aim is to find a way of living harmoniously with the fabric of societies. Thus, as Ramadan suggests, "Muslim identity is one that gives direction" (2007, p. 455), a direction towards social and economic integration. Islam contains progressive elements that support integration into a multicultural society. Those elements that define Muslim identity are characterized by openness and a constant interaction with society. They help Muslims to acclimatize successfully into different cultural contexts while remaining faithful to their religious values. Ramadan suggests that: A return to the scriptural sources allows us to establish a distinction between the religious principles that define the identity of Muslims and the cultural trappings that these principles necessarily take on according to the societies in which individuals live… the elements of Muslim identity that are based on religious principles allow Muslims to live in any environment (2004, p. 78).

As long as Muslims utilize and reflect upon the religious texts and sources, they will have no problem in remaining faithful to their religious values and at the same time integrating in host societies no matter what kind of an environment and what historical era they lived or currently live in. Islamic teachings encourage acceptance of other cultures as long as they do not harm Muslims and their beliefs. Tariq Ramadan (2004) thus supports the idea of integration in all matters that are "good" (or *halal*) in nature. Islamic identity rests on an *attitude of intellect that marries an understanding of the Texts and of the context* in which the texts are practiced. Muslims cannot truly live as Muslims if they are ignorant of the marriage between their core religious texts and the environment in which they live. An open and active expression of faith makes it possible to hand down the teaching of Islam to children and to pass on the message of Islam to the broader community. An outward expression of faith takes place through *positive action and participation* in the way one treats oneself, others, and all of creation (pp. 79-82). That is to say, Muslim identity is about being a good individual and a good citizen in equal measures, and is about being useful to everyone around you.

The Prophet Muhammad once said, "The best people are those who benefit others" (Daud, p.12). In this Hadith, the Prophet Muhammad did not qualify "people" as being only

Muslims or believers, but he used the simple and inclusive term, "people", referring to everyone – Muslims and non-Muslims. It becomes apparent from such reasoning, then, that to be Muslim is to act according to the teachings of Islam in harmony with the adopted society and *not* in contradiction with it. There is nothing in Islam that commands Muslims to withdraw from society, or to become ghettoized, in order to be closer to God. On the contrary, in order to be in full harmony with their religious identity, Muslims need to exercise vigorously the choice and freedom to practice Islamic teachings in a Canadian context. At the same time, they must consciously develop a Canadian image and pattern of their identity.

The true nature of Muslim identity, according to Ramadan, can be achieved only as an open and dynamic spirit or attitude in constant interaction with the environment (2004, pp. 83, 85). This identity results from internal subjective perceptions and self-reflection, while being receptive to external influences. Hence, identity today is an evolving process of "becoming" rather than simply "being" (Dillon, 1999, p. 250). It changes over time and under different social changes (Haddad, 1994; McMullan 2000; Nagel 1995). Hence, there is no contradiction for Muslims in taking up full citizenship and embracing Canada as their country. This is what I mean by the path of constructive integration of Muslims as compared to the less constructive choices of assimilation and exclusion.

## 6. CONSTRUCTIVE INTEGRATION

In my endeavour to analyse Muslim integration in Canadian society, I reflect on Islamic formative principles, interpreted by Muslim intellectuals who are citizens of western societies. I am also analyzing here this approach within the dynamics of Canadian cultural and social realities. By following this approach I am being faithful to the sources of Islam and guided by reformist ideas (see Al-Faruqi 1982, 1987, Fazlur Rahman 1984 and Ramadan 2004). The combination of traditional and modern approaches has helped me in reading primary Islamic sources in light of the Canadian reality that came to know. I claim here that Canadian Muslims' understanding of faith and life remains incomplete if a he or she does not supplement this life with considerable understanding of Canadian culture. The marriage of personal faith and multiculturalism is a relevant and possible choice open to Muslims in Canada.

Canadian Muslims need to focus on the foundations of their faith and how it interplays with other faiths in a liberal democratic society. Ramadan (2004, p. 9) suggests that they need to delineate what they have gained spiritually and what they have lost by living in a western context. The contact with mainstream Canadian culture has triggered a challenge for Muslims of how to reconcile Islam as a worldview to a multicultural Canada where Muslims constitute a small minority. The alternatives and approaches may not be a novelty to Muslim kids who are born and raised in Canada, but the task would be simpler for those kids who have the advantage of inheriting their parents' heritage and at the same time learning new approaches to life.

I argue that to be successful, integration should be constructive – not just passive – to avoid any reluctance on both sides. I am also saying that Canada's multicultural model is the preferred model for constructive integration for Muslims. Its natural development in Canada started in the late 1960s, when minorities were seen as part of a national strategy for nation-building (Apap, 2006, p. 30). It accepts the maintenance of cultural or religious differences and it tolerates differences and encourages diversity. Integration as an element of multiculturalism is a healthy alternative to "assimilation."

Muslims in Canada are familiar with the public policies of integration that have been in place for the past 50 years. Research evidence on early Muslim adaptive experience in Canada is rather limited and much of it tends to focus on acculturation or assimilation of Muslims into Canadian society (Abu Laban, 1980, p. 98). Later reports (Hamdani, 1997; Environics Research, 2007) suggest that Muslims in recent decades have been quite involved in Canadian life, participating in civic activities and expressed the sentiment of being happy.

The experience of a new society could instil in the hearts of newcomers the rejection of any degree of assimilation and fear of loss of religiosity and cultural identity. Hence, some individuals may segregate themselves into small "safe zones", or ethnic enclaves, and hinder the process of integration into the new society. Elmasry explains:

> The choice between assimilation and isolation is a problem experienced by all minorities, especially those singled out within their own countries by negative media stereotyping, and who suffer from resulting discrimination in the workplace, in the educational system, and in virtually all contacts with government services. They become the "others"— people who are disliked and ridiculed because their accent, religion, skin colour, hair, clothing, or mannerisms are different from the norm (2005, p. 3).

Constructive integration – or *integration by selective choice* – is an alternative that helps Muslims live their faith within the context of modern Canadian liberal democracy. Integration by selective choice is the most efficient, proactive and useful option because of its reformist attitude and outcome (Ramadan, 2004). Selective adoption of western cultural norms has been gradually developed by a progressive-minded cross-section of Muslim academics. Elmasry (2005), for example, urges a happy medium for Canadian Muslims called "smart integration." Constructive integration, when adopted by the mainstream society, signals respect and that a minority is considered an asset (Elmasry, 2005, p. 4). Once the sense of trust, respect and appreciation sinks in, Muslims would be eager to contribute to the well-being of the country.

> The smart (constructive) integration model is optimal, as it requires overall less effort in terms of maximum benefits to the individual, the community and the country. It allows individuals to be proud of their heritage – all essential ingredients to foster a sense of purpose and direction. Smartly (constructively) integrated

> individuals would not try to hide their ethnicity or religion, nor would they feel inferior as compared to their fellow citizens. In sum, they would not feel restricted or handicapped by their identity (Elmasry, 2005, p. 4).

I argue that Muslims can adapt individually and as a group within the framework of an Islamic worldview and within a nurturing Canadian reality. This process of adapting involves staying faithful to Islam as a religion while embracing Canadian culture within one's daily life. Reformist thinking holds the principle of not changing today's Muslims into an image of Muslims of yesterday. Faithful to their principles, they must find out how to live within their own time (Ramadan, 2004, p 222).

Therefore, for Ramadan and other Muslim academics in the west, being Muslim in Canada means staying faithful to core values while being adapted to the time and place. Canadian Muslims will adapt while retaining their religious identity. This approach respects the past by learning from it, but not depending on it or attempting to emulate it. The Canadian multiculturalism policy not only accepts this approach, but also makes it into law in the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act.* Dib (2006) stresses, "Not only does Canadian democracy mean that government treat its citizens as individuals first, but it also designates policies to encourage all Canadians to be proud of their heritage and share it with other Canadians" (p. 42).

According to contemporary Muslim writers, some ideas circulating among Muslim groups in western societies do not reflect the core logic of Islam. They lack the internal coherence found in primary Islamic texts. Muslim community leaders in western societies sometimes think and behave within social models that have been copied verbatim from countries of origin into a context of modern western Muslim communities, without consideration for the different context.

When discussing educational systems in Muslim societies, Al-Attas (1974) blames imported educational systems into Muslim societies for what he calls "captive minds." Muslims who receive higher education in western universities return to their countries and apply what they have learnt in education and public policy without regard for local conditions, cultures, economies and politics. Al-Attas explains that this is not about "a simple adaptation of techniques and methodologies but of the conceptual apparatus, systems of analysis, and selection of problems. The captive mind does not consider another possible alternative, that is, methodological non-alignment. One can, after all, choose one's own problems independently; develop methodology according to local needs, without being dictated by external forces" (Al-Attas, 1974, p. 695).

This is also true of individual Muslims who made Canada or other western countries their home but still suffer from the "captive mind" syndrome, bringing along the thought process of their country of origin. In my view, the "captive mind" of some of the Muslims who made Canada their home is uncreative and incapable of formulating original ideas and solutions; it is incapable of devising an analytical method independent of current stereotypes; it is fragmented in outlook; it is alienated from the major issues of Canadian society; and is tragically unconscious of its own captivity by the value and approaches of the country of origin and the conditioning factors that have made it that way (p. 691). As citizens of Canadian society, some Muslims do not address emerging problems nor offer solutions. Rather, they see the world as either white or black, with no middle ground.

It is this attitude, more than anything else, which explains why it has been so difficult for some Muslims to reconcile the internal and external conflict between their cultures of origin and the Canadian society to which they have immigrated. And it is this attitude that is in urgent need for change so that new aspirations and progress can be brought into the Canadian Muslim population. This could be achieved through increased education and public participation and engagement, motivating Muslims to claim their rightful place in the current history of the liberal, democratic and multicultural Canadian society.

## 7. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: CANADA, BOSNIA, FRANCE

The Canadian model of inclusion is fairly stable and inter-group relations in Canada are relatively peaceful. The major difference with France and the Balkans is that Canada *consciously* and officially defines itself as a multicultural state in the sense that it not only tolerates but also welcomes multiple ethnic origins, respects minority religions and cultures and provides constitutional commitments to this end. Genuine inter-group cohesion and harmony in diverse societies do not occur spontaneously. In its own way Canada devotes considerable attention to the management of all types of diversities through its immigration policies/practices, multiculturalism and integration. Subsequently, multiculturalism is recognized as part of Canadian national identity (Vasta, 2007, p. 17).

Research on Muslim integration in France, Bosnia and Canada, reveals some peculiarities. These three different models of dealing with Muslims result in three approaches by which Muslims express their religious identity. Differences in the models are shaped by historical events in each country, the attitudinal approaches of Muslims, the policies in dealing with minorities, and how diversity and integration are defined in each country. Placing the responsibility of integration squarely on the shoulders of minority groups is an unfair approach that does not provide a realistic and positive solution. The majority in a society and the minority groups must seek mutual integration. Minorities and majorities have to adapt to each other for everyone to benefit and for the society to grow.

Integration happens when public institutions facilitate the right conditions for smooth interactions between all parties. Members of different cultures and religions would coexist, accept and respect each other and interact through those institutions. Benting, Courchene and Seidle (2007) describe the multicultural twin agenda of recognition and community as "shared citizenship." For them, the predominant definition of the integration agenda in Canada focuses on "the need to build a sense of belonging and attachment to a country that incorporates distinct identities" (p. 652).

The history of Canada is an evolving acceptance of diversity. The Aboriginal Peoples in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had to learn to live under the French and British colonial administrations. In the twentieth century, Canada accommodated and accepted successive waves of immigration (Kymlicka, 2007, p. 39). At each step along the way, Canada's stability and prosperity have depended on its ability to respond constructively to new forms of diversity, and to develop new relationships of coexistence and cooperation, without undermining the (often fragile) accommodations of older forms of diversity, which are themselves continually being contested and renegotiated. "Canadian multiculturalism recognizes the importance of pluralism and diversity in social cohesion by constantly building common spaces and wide avenues of voluntary integration.

This approach is not about a multiculturalism of separateness and divisiveness, but about respect for differences and inclusion of all Canadians, from colour and dress to customs and religion" (Dib, 2006, p. 41). Not all Canadians are comfortable with religious diversity. Some opt to be against such a model of multiculturalism and they advocate, as Dib (2006) articulates "for ending multiculturalism and diversity policies and 'assimilating' immigrants, who are already here" (p. 41). He cautions, "Such attitudes may contribute to a narrowing of the acceptable boundaries for difference at a time when Canada is becoming more diverse, hence more in need of multiculturalism policy" (Dib, 2006, p. 41).

Different from the experience of France and Bosnia, the Canadian approach to pluralism and diversity is one that allows Muslims and others to be proud of their backgrounds. Canada, unlike France, does not have serious issues of social segregation. The poor socio-economic conditions of religious and visible minorities in France make the political leadership of France worry about how minorities react to segregation. In Canada, many of the traditional indicators of social integration of Muslims into the Canadian context remain relatively reassuring for this multicultural society (Environics, 2007). Language is another issue. While France worries about minorities not learning the French language, Canada does not face this challenge, at least not at the level of basic language proficiencies (Keith et al., 2007, p. 660). In a survey of immigrants who arrived in Canada in 2000-01, 82% of respondents reported they were able to converse well in at least one of Canada's two official languages when they first arrived to Canada (Statistics Canada, 2003; Keith, 2007).

## 8. BEING CANADIAN AND MUSLIM: NO DICHOTOMY IN PRAXIS

Canada is my example of a leading and successful multicultural society. This country is listening to its citizens, including Muslim citizens. Here, citizens are encouraged to speak up about issues that concern them, especially those related to their integration into mainstream Canadian life.

I argue that constructive integration is the best stepping-stone for Muslims toward full participation in Canadian society. I am also recognizing and respecting the choice of some Muslims – for various cultural or personal reasons – to limit their engagement and contribution in Canadian society. However, no attitude is cast in stone, and everyone, Muslim and non-Muslim in Canada, is encouraged to increase participation and contribution to Canada's multicultural society. This involves more inter-ethnic and inter-faith sharing of knowledge and experience around the issues of multiculturalism and the history of Islamic religion and the various Muslim countries. It is also important that Canadian policy makers in the fields of education, political participation, social services, and other areas understand the religious and cultural perspectives of Islam. Encouraging Muslims, especially young people to participate entails engaging and including them into new societal context. Canadian Muslims need not fear for their religious identity being undermined or lost.

### Multiculturalism as a principle in the Qur'an

For Muslims in Canada – even for those who are not born here – multiculturalism is hardly a new concept since the core of Islamic faith and lifestyle is inherently and historically multicultural. The Qur'an frequently addresses this reality in many verses such as: "O humanity! We [God] have created you from a male (Adam) and a female (Eve), and made you into nations and tribes, that you may [make effort to] know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you in the sight of God is one who is the most righteous. Verily, God knows and is aware of all" (*The Qur'an*, 49: 13).

This verse emphasizes that all people have natural ability to "know each other," which suggests a universal tendency towards multiculturalism by stressing its importance to all peoples. The phrase "made you into nations and tribes," affirms the essence of multicultural society as it has developed today in Canada. And in the best of situations, multiculturalism can achieve its potential to deliver information and knowledge to diverse citizens in a manner that is sensitive to their religious and cultural backgrounds, while sharing the attributes of others.

The message of the verse I have quoted aptly captures this notion of knowing others and understanding them as a foundation for engagement and consequently the growth and progress of individuals and society. Addressing the fact of diverse religions, the verse also points out that by first understanding, appreciating, and respecting our similarities, we can grow naturally to embrace one another's differences as well. The verse also suggests that the most honourable citizens are Muslims who are the most righteous, not the citizen who are the most Muslim.

Being a Canadian Muslim citizen involves rights and responsibilities. More importantly, Canadian citizenship is about being a truly engaged participant in the well-being of this country. The saying that "Citizens are made, not born," by seventh-century philosopher Spinoza is especially applicable to Canada. We are blessed to live in a country that actively seeks to treat all of its citizens fairly and allows them ample opportunities to become more engaged within society at large. In this way, Canada encourages minorities to integrate well, participate in social and political activities and contribute to the country's present and future health. Despite obvious differences and periodic tensions and challenges, Canada's state-sanctioned policy of conscientious respect for all ethno-cultural and religious communities is a model for its own citizens and the world.

As Husaini (1990) states: Canada is a unique country … where preservation and advancement of multiculturalism is an official governmental policy. It is Canada's ingenuity and inner security that could allow freedom of cultures and their enhancement" (p. 98).

Participation is not just a social obligation, but is encouraged by religion as well as centuries of international Muslim history. Wherever Muslims settle and live, they tend to participate in their adopted environments and contribute to individual and communal life. At the same time, with their cultural attributes, they would add a distinctively Muslim flavour to their new environments and create a Canadian expression of Islam. I tell myself, then, that if Islam is a great world cultural tradition, it would make sense that a unique European, Australian, American or Canadian expression of Islam develop in these countries.

A recent Environics survey (2007) clearly indicates that a majority of Muslims in Canada (about 81%), are satisfied with their lives as Canadians, and are well integrated and happy with what they have achieved, despite experiencing some degree of discrimination. About 17% of respondents sense threatening hostility to their faith from other citizens. Despite all the negative representations of Muslims and Islam (largely in mainstream media) after September 11, 2001, the survey numbers do not suggest that Muslims in Canada feel isolated or besieged. In fact, they love Canada and, according to Environics (2007), their biggest complaint is the cold weather.

Survey results do demonstrate a need for more public education on the issue of religious rights and accommodation. We often forget that the history of the Canadian Muslim community stretches back for some 150 years. Much of that history is negated if Canadian Muslims are viewed solely from the perspective of recent immigrants. Muslims, since the late 19th century, began a process of establishing roots in Canada. As of the 2001 Census, 10 percent of Canadian Muslims are born in Canada.

Muslims in Canada do not have specific constitutional rights like the two founding nations or the Aboriginal peoples or the Roman Catholics. Canadian Muslims, like other Canadians however, are protected by general rights and freedoms of religion and the right not to suffer discrimination on the basis of religion in section 2 and 15 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom*. Section 27 of the *Charter* also provides that the *Charter* should be interpreted "in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canada" (*Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, 4th ed., 2005).

Unlike Bosnian and French Muslims, Canadian Muslims do not have a historical baggage with Canada as it is the case with Bosnian Muslims who, for centuries, lived in conflict with their neighbours and French Muslims whose country of origin was once under French occupation and dominance. Thirdly, unlike Bosnian and French Muslims, who were subject to exclusion or assimilation, Canadian Muslims enjoy full rights as citizens and the multicultural policies in Canada which are focused on social integration, inclusion through participation and shared citizenship. Thus, there are considerable differences among the three countries, but obviously I can infer that there are solid and positive foundations in Canada that can help Muslims achieve constructive integration.

It is a universal human tendency to be socially engaged as a full citizen in one's society and to belong to it. However, as Malik argues, there are a number of reasons why people do not engage successfully. This is evidenced by poor participation in local, provincial or national politics (2004, p. 169). There are obstacles that impede the participation of Muslims, and the situation has been exacerbated by the tragedy of September 11, 2001. In the years following this event, there has been a marked increase in reported incidents of racism, discrimination and Islamophobia directed against Muslims due to an external societal backlash. Western Muslim communities have also had to contend with internal obstacles related to differing interpretations of Islamic sources around engagement with non-Muslim society and culture.

Canadian Muslims need to focus on the foundations of their faith and how it interplays with other faiths in a liberal democratic society.

Canadian Muslims, due to Islamophobia and discrimination, are not fully embraced into Canadian society as full citizens. This is a legitimate concern since it is difficult to belong to a place if there is a perception of not being accepted. It is important that the reciprocal nature of the relationship between belonging and acceptance/respect is highlighted in policy discussions that are gravitated towards citizenship tests and other measures to encourage people to integrate. As Hussain (2004) asserts, "If people are constantly reminded that they do not belong, whether on the crude level of the rhetoric of far-right discourse or media or the day-to-day discrimination, subtle or otherwise, that they may face, or when the government fails to listen to their concerns and request for needs, it is only a matter of time before they will feel alienated and lose the desire to belong" (p. 112), as in the case of French assimilation mentality or Balkan exclusion politics.

The climate of public indifference to one's religion in Canada has had an effect on Muslims in general and young Muslims of the first or second generation in particular. Canadian Muslims are re-examining their identity and the way they interpret their religious practices and beliefs. They are creating a new expression of Islam more reflective of the Canadian context. Narrow interpretations of Islam are challenged by globalization as well as by the majority of Muslims who grew comfortable in the Canadian environment. They establish Islamic organizations to discover Islam without being contaminated by inherited traditions.

These new developments have generated debates among Muslims, particularly among community leaders and

scholars in Canada. Conferences on the topic of Islamic identity, Canada and integration are organized and do involve Muslim participants. One such conference was organized by a national Muslim organization in Canada called the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA). The conference was held in Ottawa in May 2007. The topic of the conference was "Shaping a Canadian Muslim Identity" and the scholars who discussed the topic came from Europe, the USA and Canada. Scholars at the conference stressed that Canada needs to be accepted as a domain of social contract, the place of testimony or the domain of treaty or unity, because Muslims here are not "others" – they are Canadian.

Analogically to this view, Ramadan (1998) holds that a European expression of Islam is inevitable. I believe that Muslims in Canada are more prepared to embrace this view. To be a Canadian Muslim means to interact with the whole society. The question for Ramadan is then how to be fully Muslim while fully being a Westerner. While he advocates that Muslims integrate into and learn from the west, he also believes that the west must work to accept Muslims in its midst. For him, "loyalty to one's faith and conscience requires firm and honest loyalty to one's country: *Sharia* Law requires honest citizenship" (1998). Why then do Muslims in Canada lack full participation in the civic and political arenas?

There are several domestic reasons for the lack of full participation of Canadian Muslims in Canada. Besides being divided into ethnic and cultural groups by virtue of their places of origins, Muslims in Canada are divided in how they express and practice their beliefs. Secondly, many Canadian Muslim associations focus on a single city or region rather than being national in scope. Sometimes these institutions are not accustomed to the Canadian democratic standards of association, but rather follow a particular culture of membership and executive. Often these institutions are ineffective because of the scope of activities they are involved in. They try to do too much, from the basic educational activities for children and adults to political advocacy in municipal and national elections. While some Muslim organizations such as the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA), Muslim Association of Canada (MAC), Canadian Council of American Islamic Relations (CAIR-CAN), Muslim Student Association (MSA) or Canadian Islamic Congress (CIC) are trying to overcome divisions among Canadian Muslims on ethnic, national or sectarian lines, they acknowledge that such a fragmentation has made it difficult for Canadian Muslims to project a single recognizable public voice.

## 9. CONCLUSIONS

This article adds to the previous Canadian research regarding means to foster a positive integration of Muslims in Canada and a better understanding and cooperation between all Canadians. I have focused on Muslim inclusion in Canadian society and urged Muslim leaders/scholars to reread religious texts as they apply to the Canadian context. I also urged policy makers in Canada to interpret policies on Multiculturalism and citizenship in the spirit of the current Canadian reality.

A deep understanding of the mechanisms promoting Muslim integration and the obstacles hindering it in the three different contexts of Bosnia, France and Canada contributes to social and public discourses on multi-culturalism, integration, citizenship, religious pluralism, and democracy. It should be noted that there is nothing in Islam that commands Muslims to withdraw from society, or even to become visibly ghettoized, in order to be closer to God. On the contrary, to fully be in harmony with their identity, Muslims need to be able to choose and vigorously exercise their freedom to practice Islamic teachings in a Canadian context. At the same time, they must consciously develop a Canadian image of their identity for both the present and future. This is not only their social but an Islamic religious responsibility as well.

Overcoming the obstacles to integration and inclusion and expanding the opportunities for the engagement of Canadian Muslims in Canada's civic, economic, social and political life should be a major national undertaking. A majority of Canadian Muslims feel at ease and comfortable in Canada (CBC News and Environics study 2007), recognize Canada as their homeland and are proud to be called Canadians (CBC News 2007). It is therefore critical that the Canadian Muslim leadership and policy makers in government realize that more engagement of Muslims in Canada should be made a priority. The living conditions of Muslims in Canada are far better than those in other democratic societies, but there are still areas for improvement. Steps could be taken to facilitate Muslim participation in society and consequently integration. Muslim leadership, scholars and institutions in Canada as well as non-Muslim leaders and institutions should find ways to assist Canadian citizens of the Muslim faith to fully participate in Canadian society, consequently achieving full integration/inclusion.

The following are ideas that can facilitate full Muslim inclusion in Canada:

1) **Recognition:** Canadians of Muslim faith are citizens of Canada who have contributed greatly to Canada's well-being in all aspects of life since their arrival here in the middle of the 19th century. The government of Canada could do more to help combat misconceptions and facilitate communication and cooperation with citizens of the Muslim faith. This would lessen public misunderstanding and promote Muslim contribution to the well-being of Canada. Encouragement must come from senior politicians in government since they are scarcely made. Public statements can present an opportunity to strengthen public acceptance of Canadian Muslims and further recognize the contributions they make.
2) **Public perception and media coverage:** Several newspapers and broadcast media have improved the quality of their coverage of Islam and Muslims since September 11, 2001. Some media outlets present Islam in a negative light, confirming stereotypes and lending credence to the "us-versus-them" discourse. The task of educating the public about Muslims and Islam has been greatly complicated by the insecurity and instability across the world as well as the individuals

who do violence claiming that they do it in the name of Islam. The negative attitude toward Muslims in Canada mostly springs from the limited knowledge that most Canadians have of Islam (Environics, 2007). Opinion polls suggest that those Canadians who are familiar with Islam and who personally know Muslims are more likely to see them as being just like other Canadians. Media and Muslim associations can discuss and jointly sponsor seminars and devise solutions that address Muslim sensitivity and journalistic principles and practices.

3) **Canadian content of community associations:** It is of great importance that Muslims build institutions that would reflect their needs in Canada and not elsewhere, with a focus on developing resources that meet their needs. Muslims in Canada were not well equipped at the time of the tragic event of September 11, 2001, to defend their civic rights and to respond effectively to challenges that came from the public at large, the media and from the government of Canada. This should be a priority for Muslim leaders in Canada. There is also need for the development of local Muslim leadership and scholarship in order to serve community members and help integrate Muslims in Canada and build bridges of understanding between other faith groups, the media and government institutions. Muslims in Canada need leaders and institutions that are in tune with the local Canadian context, not a context transplanted from other countries which often have quite different cultural, political, economic and social norms.
4) **Educational democratic organizations:** Muslim institutions in Canada should be inclusive and democratic and open to members of any culture or faith who wish to enrich their personal experiences within a Muslim association. Canadian Muslims are in a need to build organizations that are inclusive and expressive of the diversity within the Islamic tradition. These institutions should offer regular educational seminars to the public about Islam and Muslim cultures without stressing a particular expression of Islam. They should provide information on the rich Islamic civilization and heritage in activities through a *Muslim History Month Canada*, sponsored by the Canadian Islamic Congress, in line with similar activities of other major national, regional and local organizations. This would help Canadian Muslims to improve dialogue, not only with other faith groups, but also with groups dealing with issues related to politics, culture, education, etc.
5) **Civic engagement:** Canada's greatness depends on its ability to accept diversity of faith, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. However, unless this diversity is actively expressed through civic and political participation, Canada will not be able to fully benefit from it. The fact is that not all Muslims are fully engaged or fully participate in the larger Canadian context as they should. By engaging themselves into the larger Canadian society, Muslims could gain a better sense of themselves as stakeholders and partners in building Canadian society. Whenever any group increases its civic participation, the larger society will view it in a more positive light.
6) **Second generation youth:** Young, educated, professional Muslims in Canada, like their elders, should be included in the integration picture. It is vital that Muslim organizations and leaders, and other institutions and their leaders, build programs for the next generation of Canadian Muslim youth. The majority of these young Canadians have a strong interest in engaging themselves into the activities of the mainstream society. This engagement should promote integration and diminish the potential of alienation and vulnerability. It also provides a needed talent pool and brings young Muslims into jobs, think-tanks and the media, helps in building bridges between Canadian Muslims and the broader public and facilitates the emergence of leaders with whom younger Canadian Muslims can easily identify.

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## Notes

[1] The law forbids businesses from asking for such information on job applications or to run a self-identification campaign amongst the workforce of companies for equal opportunity policies (Gallis 2005, p. 22).