Global Insecurity and Citizenship Strategies: Young Muslims in the West

Catarina Kinnvall
Paul W Nesbitt-Larking

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/paul_nesbitt-larking/9/
Global insecurity and citizenship strategies: Young Muslims in the West

Catarina Kinnvall\textsuperscript{a*} and Paul Nesbitt-Larking\textsuperscript{b}

\textsuperscript{a}Department of Political Science, Lund University, Lund, Sweden; \textsuperscript{b}Department of Political Science, Huron University College, London, Ontario, Canada

This article is set in the contemporary context of global challenges: economic crises, state deformations, and rapidly accelerating flows of people, ideas, and ideals. It has two main aims. One is to establish theoretical and empirical links between securitization studies and analyses of citizenship in the light of globalization, multiculturalism and discourses on terror. The second is to illustrate how macro events play out at the collective and individual level in terms of socio-psychological (in)securities that condition different citizenship strategies. The empirical basis for the article includes our studies of Western Muslims in the Netherlands, France, the UK, Sweden, Denmark, and Canada. The article proposes and develops three maps of citizenship strategies in three major sections: retreatism, essentialism, and engagement. Each section elaborates psycho-spatial ways of being in the world that characterize both majority populations and Muslim minorities as they attempt to adapt to the rapidly changing and challenging nature of a globalizing world. The first is the Westphalian version of retreatism that is grounded in an orientalist world of metropolis and distant colony. The other two citizenship strategies are motivated by a world in which territory and space are increasingly in question. In response to a shrinking global experience, the second citizenship strategy, that of essentialism, builds upon and reinforces the binary opposition between East and West in the panic establishment of psycho-social distance, separateness, and rigid distinctiveness. The third citizenship strategy is that of engagement. A strategy of engagement affirms and works with the plurilocational, multiple, and hybrid experiences of the postcolonial and increasingly cosmopolitical world in practices of dialogical openness and deep multiculturalism.

\textbf{Keywords:} citizenship strategies; cosmopolitics; dialogism; diaspora; globalization; insecurity; multiculturalism; Muslims

\section*{Introduction}

In the context of the contemporary global (dis)order of economic crises, eruptions in civil societies, rapid cyber and physical mobility, and state deformations, borders and boundaries are becoming increasingly porous and contested (e.g. Giddens 1991; Rumford 2006). Given such patterns of radical deterritorialization, quests for security, stability and rootedness have emerged everywhere. In Europe, there has been an intensification of nationalist, far right-wing discourses. In their search for a mythologized notion of lost nationhood, such discourses amplify and rework general
fears of the unknown, notably: globalization, the European Union, strangers, foreigners, Islam and Muslims. These exclusionary anti-Muslim discourses have been contested and repeatedly resisted by second- and third-generation Muslims, who refuse to be categorized as potential threats to the majority population. These young men and women not only reject stereotypical notions of difference, but increasingly call into question the resistances they encounter in attempting to become fully integrated members of the societies in which they live, and in which for most parts they are legal citizens. Exclusionary discourses are also part of a search for identification in an increasingly diffuse world of ungovernable borders (Mohammad 2008).

In this article, we are concerned with these bordering processes and how they are related to issues of security and citizenship. The article draws on our previous theoretical and empirical work on young Muslims and citizenship strategies across five European societies (France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Denmark and Sweden) and Canada (Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking 2010a, 2010b, 2011). These countries were selected due to their contrastive colonial history, patterns of immigration and citizenship regimes with respect to multiculturalism, and because of the growing relevance of Scandinavian countries and Canada to the debates on citizenship in contemporary Europe and North America. In our previous work we have made a systematic comparison among the six countries based on secondary material and over 100 in-depth interviews with young Muslims between 2005 and 2008, as well as a number of focus groups in selected cities. We make use of a fraction of these analyses and interview extracts as illustrations of our theoretical arguments.

This article has two main aims. One is to establish theoretical and empirical links between securitization studies and analyses of citizenship in the light of globalization, multiculturalism and discourses on terror. The second is to illustrate how macro events play out at the collective and individual level in terms of socio-psychological (in)securities that condition different citizenship strategies. Our focus is predominantly on second- and subsequent-generation Muslims in the contemporary west, who we refer to as ‘post-diasporic’, and the particular citizenship strategies these young people have been developing. The concept of ‘securitization’, theorized by the Copenhagen School of International Relations, brings together the structural analyses of global forces and relations with phenomenological analyses of the circumstances under which such forces and relations come to be portrayed as threats by political and other leaders, and the consequent political projects they establish to counter such putative threats (Buzan, Waever and Wilde 1998). Our analyses seek to build upon arguments of studies in securitization in two critical directions. Firstly, our focus of enquiry is that of the political psychology of actors in civil society, rather than the state, the regime, and the realm of structure per se. Hence, we discuss how both majority and minority community members are affected by global challenges related to increased social, cultural, economic and political insecurities. Second, our research centres on securitization as a mundane practice, what we, adapting Billig (1995), refer to as ‘banal securitization’, rather than securitization as a matter of exceptionality. We extend the Copenhagen School’s definition of securitization and suggest that the securitization of issues, such as migration, religion, Islam, and gender, is not only a tool in the hands of successful leaders but occurs in the broader political culture on an everyday basis and is closely linked to psychological frames and to various citizenship strategies.
Our article elaborates three typical citizenship strategies, those of retreatism, essentialism, and engagement that we have discerned through our empirical analyses. We thereby demonstrate three psycho-spatial ways of being in the world that characterize both majority populations and Muslim minorities. Each of these citizenship strategies is the basis of a major section in the article below. The first section on citizenship strategies theorizes and describes the Westphalian version of retreatism that is grounded in an orientalist world of the nation-state, metropolises and distant colonies. Retreatism is a relatively safe, quiescent, and dignified strategy for first-generation immigrants and host societies, notably those associated with stronger postcolonial bonds and legitimized extensions of imperial citizenship in France, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. While retreatism is characteristic of first-generation immigrants and European political societies experiencing the first large waves of postcolonial immigration, it has not entirely disappeared. It lives on both in the consciousnesses of older and/or first generation Muslim immigrants and as a citizenship strategy often attributed to them by post-diasporic Muslims as they reflect on the orientations of their parents and grandparents.

The other two sections on citizenship strategies describe a world motivated by an order in which territory and space are increasingly in question. In response to a shrinking global experience, the second citizenship strategy, that of essentialism, builds upon and reinforces the binary opposition between East and West in the panic establishment of psycho-social distance, separateness, and rigid distinctiveness. Essentialist notions of self and identity emerge when individuals and societies are forced to deal with the stranger within. This continually involves attempts to ‘securitize subjectivity’ through images of home, hearth, belief and belonging. This section looks at the political psychology of unsicherheit, risk society, moral panic and postcolonial melancholia in terms of ideal types of response. We develop the work of Luhmann, Giddens, Beck, and others on existential anxiety and ontological insecurity in a global world.

The third citizenship strategy we present is that of engagement. In broad historical terms, if the period of retreatism characterizes the immediate postcolonial setting, and that of essentialism the period of struggles over integration and assimilation – struggles that remain prominent today – engagement refers to an emerging identity strategy that is in tension with both retreatism and essentialism. A strategy of engagement affirms and works with the plurilocational, multiple, and hybrid experiences of the postcolonial world in practices of dialogical openness and deep multiculturalism. Dialogical openness is grounded in mutual recognition, respect, and a politics of care. Deep multiculturalism stresses the need for communities to communicate, co-operate and contribute toward a shared political community in ways that exceed the limitations of occasional exchanges between ‘parallel societies’. We elaborate these concepts below. As the politics of engagement is an emerging, and largely normative citizenship strategy and in many ways remains an ideal, we argue in favor of a ‘cosmopolitical’ approach to majority-minority relations which takes seriously both redistribution and recognition. In contrast to a liberal approach toward majority-minority relations, the cosmopolitical approach integrates emerging norms and values in a broader and more open context than that established by the liberal modernist assumptions of possessive individualism, the Eurocentric cultural order, Christianity, and the dominance of the Western nation-state form. Grounded in the emerging reality of an increasingly global and transnational economic, demographic, environmental, strategic, and...
The cultural order, the cosmopolitical approach identifies and advocates for democratic development on a global scale. In the context of a set of co-ordinated multi-level institutional structures and democratic practices, the goal is: ‘to enable the voice of individuals to be heard in global affairs, irrespective of their resonance at home’ (Archibugi 2000, 144).

In light of certain existing schema and models in sociology and psychology, the fact that our data and research has led us to these three ideal types of citizenship strategies is not unexpected. They share something in common both with Hirshman’s (1970) ‘Exit, Voice and Loyalty’ model as well as with Parkin’s (1971) class-based meaning systems, the ‘Dominant, Negotiated and Oppositional’ categories of class consciousness. Our ideal types further overlap with Singla’s categories of response toward discrimination, ‘Constructive, Destructive, and Passive’ (Singla 2005). In essence, when confronted with a hegemonic structure or discourse, three fundamental options are in play: accept the dominant order, accommodate/evade it in some way, or stand against it. The work of Hirshman, Parkin, and Singla establishes the broad parameters of these options. Our ideal types extend but also complicate these earlier schemas. Most important, as ideal types, agents, structures, practices, and situations may simultaneously exhibit aspects of more than one of them.

Before we explore each of the three citizenship strategies below, the next section develops our theoretical elaboration of security, insecurity and securitization in the light of globalization, multiculturalism and discourses on terror. A subsequent section expands upon the impact of global change on citizenship strategies. Throughout these sections the discourses of securitization and desecuritization as well as the contrasting globalist and nationalist identity strategies prefigure and serve as context for the three citizenship strategies that we develop in the body of the article.

Security, securitization and citizenship practices

Minority rights have become more acute as Western nations have attempted first to assimilate and later to integrate new citizens. As Benhabib says: ‘The negotiation of complex cultural dialogues in a global civilization is now our lot’ (2002, 186). The outcome of these processes has depended on attempts to balance largely individual rights of civic citizenship against collective rights articulated in terms of group identities of a nationalist, religious or ethnic character. Globalization, migration and multicultural policies together with more recent tendencies to define the world in terms of danger, insecurity and terror have accelerated this process (Bauman 2001; Huysmans 2006; Kivisto 2002). Given the far-reaching impact of September 11 and its aftermath, including the Madrid, Bali, and London bombings, the constitution of social groups such as nations, classes, communities, races, ethnic groups and religions has been radically problematized. September 11 accelerated the already imploding world of globalization and made various aspects of societal and existential security central to many people’s self-perceptions. This is also reflected in international relations theory which is no longer limited to state security but elaborates a broad variety of threats (Booth 2004; Burke 2007; Manners 2006; Weiss 2005). Within this emerging body of research is a renewed focus on securitization and desecuritization.

These concepts were originally developed by the Copenhagen School (Buzan, Waever and Wilde 1998) to refer to a process in which an issue is constructed as an
existential threat by leaders in order to justify actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure. To securitize an issue challenges society to promote its value by committing greater resources to solve the related problems through confrontation and compulsion, while desecuritization means removing an issue from the realm of politics of existential survival thus making it easier to resolve through cooperative means (Buzan, Waever and Wilde 1998; Sheehan 2005). In Buzan, Waever, and Wilde’s definition of securitization has largely to do with exceptionality; i.e. politics beyond normal procedures and it is often reduced to particular speech acts defined by political or other leaders. Current academic discourses on securitization have been concerned with understanding advanced systems for overseeing the exercise of freedoms (Amoore 2009; Bigo 2001, 2002; Huysmans 2009), but focus has also been on sites of resistance to such deployments of apparatuses of security (Edkins and Pin-Fat 2005; Salter 2004; Vaughan-Williams 2008). Everyday practices of debordering and desecuritization thus include resistance beyond mass mobilization involving for instance dis-identification from state practices (Aradau 2004).

This focus on resistance comes close to our own understanding of security and securitization. Securitization is not only to do with exceptional circumstances or discourses. Billig (1995) describes how ‘banal nationalism’ occurs as people engage in mundane symbolic identifications with the nation in terms of flags, monuments, myths and discourses of otherness. Securitization is also an everyday phenomenon and ‘banal securitization’ refers to the everyday practices in which issues or people are categorized in stereotypical terms in response to macrological events with local ramifications – be it the worker in a small municipality in Sweden who increasingly grumbles about ‘too many foreigners’ in the nearby city and casts a vote for the far-right that has repercussions far beyond the city itself, or the young Muslim man who one day joins a militant movement in Southern Denmark in response to combined frustration, boredom or plain glorification of becoming a soldier of a distant cause. In these processes it is not only phenomena, objects or identifications that become securitized, but also subjectivities. The securitization of subjectivity refers to the essentialist and monological closure of meaning and interpretation in which categorical notions of self and other predominate in everyday interactions (Bakhtin 2001; Kinnvall 2004, 2006; Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking 2010a, 2011; Marková 2003). Securitizing subjectivities, issues or events all involve definitional closure in which insiders and outsiders, inclusion and exclusion, us and them emerge. By focusing on securitization, the entire discourse and reality of citizenship, denizenship and re/de-citizenship practices (Walters 2006) are here being brought to the forefront.

**Global change and citizenship strategies**

Events occurring on a global scale have local repercussions, not least in terms of citizenship strategies. On the one hand there are those who contend that key characteristics of citizenship, such as right-claims and political participation, have become decoupled from nationality in an increasingly globalized world: that a post-national citizenship is emerging (Soysal 1994, 2000). When Pakistani immigrants in Britain make demands for the teaching of Islam in state schools, they mobilize around a Muslim identity (Soysal 2000), increasingly globalized through the cybernet of the online *ummah* and through return visits to Pakistan. However, they also appeal to a universalistic language of ‘human rights’ to justify
their claims. Not only have they mobilized to influence the local school authorities, but they have also pressured the national government, and taken their case to the European Court of Human Rights, invoking global rights. These examples, as Soysal notes, tend to undermine predominant models of citizenship, which are normatively predicated upon the integrity of national communities and their boundaries. They also call into question analytic distinctions between states and the international system.

On the other hand, there are those who insist that in a post-9/11 world defined by security and terror discourses, what we are witnessing is not a decoupling of citizenship from nationality but a recoupling of citizenship and nationality (Kofman 2005; Lister 2008). In such readings the national is repeatedly inserted in terms of adherence to liberal values and ideas, such as reason, rationality and secularism, as a substantial way of life to recreate inclusion into and exclusion from the national body. This, Joppke (2008) argues, is especially the case in Europe as many European states have reacted against politicized Islam. As Scuzzarello (2010) notes, certain scholars are increasingly joining popular moves to promote individual rather than group rights (Barry 2002; Joppke 1996). In the face of a number of real or constructed events, such as the Mohammed cartoon crisis in Denmark, the Mohammed as a dog in Sweden, the opera incident in Berlin, honor killings, female circumcision, arranged marriages and similar contested practices, the demand is for more liberal individualism rather than less. Such demands range from populist versions of ‘muscular liberalism’, in the recent words of David Cameron, to academic discourses on the limits of tolerance framed in terms of cultural vs. legal rights. On a policy level, several countries, including Britain, Sweden and the Netherlands, that have long regarded themselves as ‘multicultural’ have introduced citizenship rituals, designed to ensure the conformity of new immigrants to the core principles of liberal democracy. Other countries, notably Denmark and Britain, have made naturalization contingent on passing language and culture tests (Scuzzarello 2010). This, we argue, signifies a deeply problematic political development.

Koopmans et al. (2005) argue that globalization, migration and worldwide pressures towards cultural blending and homogenization have challenged three core elements underpinning the idea of the nation-state: sovereign control over external borders, regulation of access to citizenship, and the self-understanding of cultural identity as national identity. ‘Our age of globalization is therefore also a time of nationalism, of ethnic mobilization, of the rise of xenophobic movements and a proliferation of new nation-states with newly invented national histories, anthems, flags, and languages’ (Koopmans et al. 2005). The spatial relationships of citizenship are, in other words, both moving away from nationality and reasserting nationality in non-linear and non-additive ways, sometimes resulting in a weakening and at other times in a strengthening of these relationships. Consequently, anti-immigrant discourse has become the norm among politicians who wish to mobilize opinion in favor of their own policies. The very word ‘Islamist’ is itself a signifier that lends itself to essentialist closure (Milton-Edwards 2004, 20). While the concept might refer to a breadth and diversity of political projects grounded in Islam, it has come to be attached to a narrow conception that is tantamount to ‘fundamentalist terror’. Identity projects and citizenship contestation are not of course restricted to majority populations. Minority communities have also reacted to discourses of globalization, faith and terror and they have mobilized and been mobilized in response to recent events. There is compelling evidence in the contemporary world of fearful retreats to
the familiar, the local and the sacred, and of a radical need to re-assert the tribe and the faith.

In the next three sections of the article, we make use of our empirical data to illustrate those dominant citizenship strategies that have emerged in the context of discourses of securitization/desecuritization and their regime and cultural effects. Our focus is on the construction of contested citizenship strategies rather than the making (or limits) of citizenship per se (Soysal 1994). We report everyday struggles in which citizenship is defined beyond and below but also within the (imagined) boundaries of the nation-state. Our conception of citizenship is less concerned with formal rights as it is with social practices where citizenship is constructed as much from social and political practices as it is from legal processes (Benhabib 2004; Diez and Squire 2008).

Employing broad socio-economic and political concepts of global forces in combination with critical political psychology, we explore the concept of citizenship by addressing how events on the global stage interact with the local and particular. It is at the local level – the arena of subjectivity and intersubjectivity – that issues of multiculturalism, migration, diaspora and post-diaspora politics, national identity, and not least, citizenship come into focus. We orient our focus on diasporic and post-diasporic Muslims living in the west, whose consciousnesses and identities are evolving in the context of a global order in which rapid mobility and instant communication confronts them with challenges and opens up possibilities as they navigate between the ethnic, religious, and other worlds that are simultaneously available to them, and as they enter the complex fields of discourses designed to shape and condition their experiences.

**Citizenship regimes and the making of contested citizenship strategies: Retreatism**

The political salience of Muslim minorities in the west, which has become so critical within the past decade, has its origins in a series of three interconnected stages. The first was the era of economic expansion, decolonization and postcolonial patriation that emerged at the end of the Second World War. In this era, hundreds of thousands and eventually millions of migrants from former colonies were admitted into France, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom to work in the rapidly expanding post-War economy. Citizenship strategies in this era were predominantly defensive and quiescent. In the postcolonial era of the 1950s, Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Caribbeans, many of them Muslims, came to Britain while France received Muslim migrants from Algeria, Morocco and other North African countries. In the Netherlands, small pockets of postcolonial Muslim migrants came from Indonesia and the Moluccans and some more from Surinam. As postcolonial subjects, they were eligible for British, French and Dutch citizenship, even as they were to be inserted as ethnic outsiders, only grudgingly accepted, or even rejected as fellow nationals by indigenous majorities. Whether guest workers or postcolonial citizens, the first generation of immigrants experienced their arrival in Europe very much as denizens, as ‘resident aliens’, whose presence was accepted on sufferance, on the understanding that new arrivals would keep their heads down. Hegde (in Bhatia and Ram 2001, 13) argues: ‘the theme of being other continually echoes in the lives of immigrants, displacing and deferring their sense of coherence about self’. Kaya (2009, 85) notes that ‘the Islamic parallel societies manifest in Western countries [. . .] are not the result of the
conservatism of the Muslims, but their reaction to the structural and political mechanisms of exclusion’.

The predominant citizenship strategy at this time was to remain undefined in often-uneasy *retreatism* from the world of tension and conflict and to stay under the definitional radar. To retreat and distance oneself from the modern polity is a citizenship strategy that seeks to avoid any commitment at all. Retreatists are by definition neither ‘for us nor against us’. They may be covert essentialists, fearful of a broader political community or society in which essentialisms are rejected, or they could be those secretly favoring a politics of open engagement in a climate of mutually hostile and irreconcilable essentialisms.

One way in which early French Muslim immigrants blended in, for instance, was to suppress their own religious needs in order to accommodate to the dominant culture. For example, many Muslims requested their annual vacations during Ramadan (Leveau 1988, 109). A 52-year-old Turk, who had migrated to France in the 1960s said that ‘French nationality is good for work, for the [citizenship] papers, but not the customs’ (Leveau 1988, 112). His chosen strategy was to hold his way of life distinct from the French way, but in a manner that did not cause disruption. In a similar manner, a 40-year-old Moroccan in the same survey said:

When I’m working, God does not require me to practice my religion formally. Because I’m under the order of my employer, he comes first. That means that if I want to practice my religion, it must be with the consent of my employer […] This is why you have to make all the prayers when you are free. You can do them before going to bed […]. (Leveau 1988, 115)

However, retreatism as a citizenship strategy is not only a response of the past. As one young woman of our Bradford focus group described it as she spoke of a three-day trip to London by a group of herself and about six other hijab-wearing students from Bradford. Each had purchased a week-long London transport pass, which still had some days remaining as they arrived to take the train back to Bradford. As is the custom among young people, they stood in the station concourse offering their still-valid tickets to passers-by. In the words of the young woman:

[…] and we’re like ‘do you want this, do you want?’ and they were really afraid of us you know [she exhibits mock fear] ‘we don’t want it, don’t want it, we don’t want it’. You know they just turned around as if they thought that we were going to give them something, but leaving evidence like they were going to get into trouble for it. But they were all shaking their heads and everyone was walking off and we thought ‘fine’, you know?

The word ‘fine’ condenses a politics of retreatism, which might also encourage essentialism. It is another way of saying that when young Muslim women attempt to engage in normal social interaction in a public place, they lack the credit to earn the minimal levels of interpersonal trust. They are looked upon as alien and potentially hostile, even though their gesture is conventionally altruistic. They are shunned and dismissed. Under such circumstances, the young Muslim women believe that they have little option but to retreat into their own community and to assume that further attempts at outreach would be futile. ‘Fine’ means ‘if you reject our attempts to reach out and engage, then it is you who have preferred and promoted parallel societies. We Muslims might not favor that option, but you leave us little choice’.
A similar, but yet slightly different example is taken from our Danish interviews. Ani, originally from Malaysia, but Danish resident in an affluent Copenhagen area for twenty years commented:

I have no problems living in Denmark. Actually I feel like I’m in Malaysia. All my friends are Malays or Indonesians. The food I eat is Malay. If it hadn’t been for the Danish winters, I might as well have been in Malaysia.

This points to another interesting observation in terms of how racism and exclusion are perceived by those targeted by such practices, which is the propensity to live psychologically in a parallel society even while being structurally excluded. The question remains how far such social insertion reflects retreatism and how far it speaks to engagement. Ani has ‘no problem’ living in Denmark because Denmark does not really exist as a daily reality. For those who speak fluent Danish and sit next to Danish school mates and work mates, social exclusion and racial or ethno-religious discrimination is more readily apparent and harder to accept.

A study focusing on young Muslims’ perceptions of Danish de-radicalization policies conducted by political scientist Lasse Lindekille (2009) confirms such tendencies. These policies comprise a series of inter-related initiatives devised by the Danish state to diminish violent extremism. Not many of those interviewed had any knowledge of these policies or saw the relevance such policies could have for their everyday lives. Ahmed, a construction worker of Palestinian background said:

I don’t think young people have heard about these policies, and I don’t think that’s anything they care about or speak of. They care about other things. They are busy being good Muslims and being worried about the conflicts in Iraq, Palestine or Afghanistan, for example’. (Lindekille 2009, 128)

This refusal to get involved is also noticeable among some of our Canadian interviewees. While its lack of a colonial past, competitive immigration points system, and relatively few refugees has resulted in a more highly-educated cohort of Muslim immigrants than those entering Europe, Canada has not been immune from either orientalist or racist discourses or from structural segregation and exclusion. Not surprisingly, first-generation Muslim immigrants into Canada have tended to adhere to close and somewhat enclosed communities. A seasoned male local politician and lawyer of Lebanese background refers to the fact that when the Muslim community settled in Canada, ‘they wanted to keep almost to themselves’. Manifesting the style of surplus good will, flexibility, and forbearance displayed by many of his generation, the politician refers to a situation in which his university-age daughter had been publicly provoked and ridiculed. He says: ‘I instructed my daughter that there are simply people in our community and in our society that you know are bankrupt in courtesy and decency and common knowledge and you don’t want to deal with these people’. In general, his orientation toward integration is one of demonstrating an exemplary lifestyle of community service, hard work, and moral correctness.

These interviews demonstrate that the retreatist citizenship strategy has remained the most viable option for many first generation migrants. In both temporal and spatial terms they were confined to an outsider position, someone with loyalties elsewhere (in the society of origin). Such navigational distanitation between metropole and colony is in the minds of new Muslim immigrants too. Moreover,
our interviews also show how the retreatist option is a viable citizenship strategy for some post-diasporic Muslims today, who are more concerned with their everyday existence than with essentialist readings of their religion, and who wish for a more inclusive existence where religion can remain a private, perhaps retreatist strategy. Politicization and securitization of the immigration issue in general and of young Muslims in particular, with associated exclusionism and racism, promotes such reluctant retreatism.

Citizenship regimes and the making of contested citizenship strategies: Essentialism

As the post-War immigrants settled and started families, so the politics of class- and gender-conditioned ethno-racial politics emerged. States promoted citizenship strategies of integration and assimilation, often grounded in ethno-racial differences. At this stage, struggles over racist discrimination, national belonging and ethnocultural exclusion were taking place and the dominant categorizations of insider and outsider and ‘us and them’ were in play. The predominant citizenship strategies to emerge in this era were group-based, community-centered and essentialist. It was in the second stage that Canada, Denmark and Sweden began to receive substantial numbers of immigrants from the global South. Each European government has related to its local version of Islam in different ways depending on legal matters on immigration and citizenship, attitudes towards foreigners and minorities, and the special circumstances of the local Muslim population (Geddes 2003; Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking 2011; Koopmans et al. 2005). And yet, despite these distinctions, there are continuities in the way European states have adapted to the emerging Muslim presence. For instance, each of them has adopted mechanisms for the promotion of representative Muslim councils in which the emphasis is on a constructed notion of a ‘moderate’ Islam (Silvestri 2006).

Such public policy initiatives have eventuated from a series of deep political challenges associated with the emergence of Islam in the European imaginary. Given the historical legacy of colonialism and associated patterns of racism and xenophobia, the integration of new immigrants has been vexed. As opposed to Canada, multiculturalism has not come easily to most European societies. This is particularly the case with those host societies that had been self-defined as monocultural or politically acultural in their transitions to statehood. Within the past 60 years European states have by default experienced the development of ethno-religious enclaves. The development of minority neighborhoods, themselves geographies of racist exclusionism and the class insertion of new immigrants at the devalued bottom of the status ladder, contributed toward a vicious circle of racialization where the fear of Indo-Pakistani ghettos in Britain, of Arab quarters in France, or Turkish districts in Germany, became flashpoints in the campaigns against immigration (Castles and Davidson 2000).

Yet those excluded have remained involved in defining, claiming and contesting particular forms of citizenship practices beyond legal entitlement. In such instances, essentialist citizenship strategies have emerged and reasserted boundaries between us and them, thus becoming a necessary if not always sufficient precursor to action. To assert an essentialist citizenship strategy is to enter into a banal securitization of issues, such as Islam, in response to everyday exclusions and dislocations. But it is also a securitization of subjectivities as it secures coherence and psychological comfort in a world that is otherwise fragmented and threatening.
In France, the laïcist insistence that religion is a minor feature of mainstream French society ignores how Christian religion has been institutionalized through centuries of entrenched customs, rituals, and habits. Muslims cannot but be aware of the secondary status of their religion. Muslims are not perceived as fully responsible autonomous beings as declared by the French universalist state. Citizenship strategies in France thus exist within a state of tension between a postcolonial narrative of monocultural national unity and the reality of globalization and multicultural diversity. By virtue of being institutionally excluded and made into the ‘deviant’ other many young Muslims contest French secular definitions of citizenship by redefining their sense of self and others to reflect the postcolonial insecurities they are experiencing (Keaton 1999).

In the Netherlands, as in France, a pervasive lack of trust in the legitimacy of the government has also become increasingly visible. This can partly be traced to the reactions of the majority community to the murder of van Gogh and the response among Dutch politicians who competed in anti-Islamic statements and measures. After the van Gogh murder, one poll reported that 40% of the Dutch people surveyed wished that Muslims ‘no longer feel at home here’. And a study of Rotterdam youth found that of Moroccans and Turks, 50% reported experiencing discrimination ‘sometimes’ and 15% regularly or frequently (Kelley and Morgenstern 2006). Soon after the murder, the Dutch Parliament demanded that the government investigate the possibilities of prohibiting the Muslim community from recruiting imams from abroad, and potentially banning the reception of certain Arabic television stations. These essentialisms of the Dutch political culture and citizenship regime, Kelley, Morgenstern, and Naji (2006) argue, have reinforced everyday feelings of exclusion and humiliation among many Moroccan and Turkish youth, playing an important role in the radicalization of certain Muslim youngsters and the emergence of essentialist citizenship discourses among them.

A research project commissioned by the Dutch Minister for Immigration and Integration in 2004 on the radicalization of young Muslims pointed to three important dimensions likely to have conditioned essentialist citizenship strategies (Demant, Maussen and Rath 2007). The first socio-cultural dimension emphasizes how many post-diaspora Muslims in the Netherlands feel uprooted from their parents’ Moroccan past but are denied entrance into a Dutch identity. In dire need of bonding, they find the warmth and subculture they are looking for in orthodox and radical Islamic groups. The second dimension is religious and relates to how many adolescent people are searching for existential answers to questions of who they are and the meaning of life – answers which some of them find in the Islamic radical ideology. Finally, there is the political-activist dimension as a result of perceived exclusion and alienation. This often involves an active identification with Islam and a sense of bonding with ‘oppressed Muslim brothers’ in the rest of the world. The wars in Chechnya, Palestine and Afghanistan all merge together in these young people’s minds, strengthening the idea that Muslims are oppressed worldwide.

Britain displays a number of similar tendencies. In Britain, the influx of commonwealth migrants created and shaped postcolonial anxieties among segments of the British majority population as these migrants were seen to hollow out the authenticity of Britishness from within. Paul Gilroy argues (2005, 434) ‘the country found itself hard to adjust to the presence of semi-strangers who, disarmingly, knew British culture intimately as a result of their colonial education’. This made Britain
develop a melancholic essentialist attachment to its vanished pre-eminence – a melancholy characterized by a mixture of guilt and longing for the past.

Post-imperial melancholia is a neurotic development. It blocks the vitality of culture, diverting it instead into the arid pleasures of morbid militia and other dead ends for which culture and identity supply the watchwords. (Gilroy 2005, 434)

After September 11, Muslims were pressed to condemn the attacks louder than other citizens as anything else would have been considered as hidden support for the murder of innocent civilians. Hostility to Muslims also intensified after this tragic event; from abuse and discriminatory treatment to physical violence, including assault on individuals, the desecration of graves, and attacks on mosques and other Muslim community buildings. Rejected, isolated, and displaced, British Muslims, similar to many other religious groups, draw solace from their religious identities. When attacked, even many non-practicing or lapsed Muslims were moved to rally around their religious roots (Modood, Triandafyllidou and Zapata-Barrero 2006). One former member of the radical Islamist group Hizb-ut-Tahir (HT) in Britain expressed it this way:

HT filled a void for the young intellectually frustrated youth who had been told that Islam is the truth and they must pray and fast by people who couldn’t explain why. By HT ‘proving’ that Freedom, Democracy and Capitalism are defective, and that we Muslims are better than those kaffirs, it restored some of the loss of faith in the relevance of the religion. Muslims believe in Islam but needed to know that their belief was the superior belief, which made them feel superior again. Constant harping back to the glory days of the Caliphate and emphasising its restoration as the solution to all things seemed very alluring. (Hamid 2007)

In this respect, citizenship practices become not only contested in the relationship between majority and minority populations or through the new nationalists’ appropriation of nationalist terminology, such as the BNP in Britain or the Swedish Democrats in Sweden, but also within the various minority communities themselves and not least within families, between generations and across gender. In this regard, the categorization of groups almost always has an essentialist bias and commonly attributed categories often become securitized at a subconscious level. They become part of a normalization of discourse that can make essentialism a powerful citizenship strategy among majorities and minorities alike.

**Engagement as contested citizenship strategy: Structural cosmopolitics**

Instances of essentialism among the Canadian interviewees are few and far between, and they are gestural and mild rather than bold and declarative. The Canadian case introduces this concluding part of this article which deals with desecuritizing moves in relation to everyday contested citizenship practices and discourses. Engagement is the third citizenship strategy. Rejecting both the hostility and mistrust of essentialism and the evasiveness of retreatism, engagement as a strategy implies a willingness and a determination to open self to Other, both psychologically and sociologically, and to move from a monological to a dialogical citizenship strategy (Bakhtin 2001).

In the case of Canada, Triadafilopoulos (2006) argues that multiculturalism is of central importance to the life chances of all Canadians, including Muslims. Not only
is it institutionally entrenched and culturally legitimated, but there is powerful
evidence that new Canadians value their citizenship rights. First, given the
opportunity, Canadian Muslim immigrants acquire their citizenship at a higher
rate than those in other countries. Second, in terms of general political participation
rates, immigrant rates are on a par with Canadian-born voters. Finally, a range of
survey data supports the contention that Canadians – notably young Canadians –
are strong supporters of multiculturalism. Expressing the high degree of civic and
political entitlement that is pervasive across the Canadian interviewees, a male
lawyer and politician of Lebanese descent says for instance that:

[…] we’re part of this community […]. You know I have children that were born in
London, Ontario. They’re Canadian […]. When you say to my son ‘go back to your
own country’, he just sort of looks at them like ‘what the hell are you talking about?
This is my country’. (Canadian male lawyer and politician of Lebanese descent)

A 23-year-old Canadian female student of Syrian origin recalls the powerful impact
of her Civics teacher and where it has taken her sense of political engagement:

I gave you the example of what my high school teacher said to me and my Civics class,
when you give people positive reinforcement and make them feel like what they have to
say matters, that will only bring them closer to you, and will only make them more
active and […] more positively engaged […] I think that we all have a responsibility to
strive towards creating […] a system of equality and justice for everyone […] and I think
that – I honestly believe if you don’t feel the need to speak out and to – and to become
involved, then you have no right to complain.

While there have been acts of anti-Muslim discrimination in Canada and while
ignorance of Muslims and stereotypes abound, it is apparent that for these Muslims
and those known to them, integration into Canadian political society has been
successful for the most part.

Throughout Europe too, there are a number of factors that continues to work in
favor of dialogue and compromise. It the Netherlands it is certainly true that
populist discourse has increased the pressure on young Muslims to take a stand in
the perceived conflict between “Dutchness” and “Islam,” but at the same time there
is still an institutional structure that seems to work to guarantee important rights for
individual and community members, including Muslims. As Loubna el Morabet, a
young Muslim woman, argued in response to the Dutch Member of Parliament,
Geert Wilders’, increasingly populist rhetoric:

‘Of course I feel threatened when I hear Wilders speaking’, said Loubna el Morabet.
‘But if I take a step back, I realize he will never be able to carry out his ideas. Taxing
headscarves is nonsense and halting immigration from Islamic countries is discrimina-
tion. The principle of equality is deeply embedded in Dutch law’. (Radio Netherlands
Worldwide 2010)

In this regard it is interesting to note how the release of the anti-Islam movie Fitna by
Wilders in 2008 did not create the anticipated reactions of demonstrations, boycotts
and aggressive responses as happened in the Mohammed cartoon crisis in Denmark.
In contrast, there were no noticeable incidents at all. Rather, eloquent Muslims
stepped forward as representatives for their communities and of Islam, explicitly
distancing themselves from radical or violent action by Muslims in response to the
film (Veldhuis and Bakker 2009). A number of young Muslims see no contradictions
Some young people also react to discrimination by confronting it head on. Kanta, a young Muslim woman with Pakistani background in Denmark, describes it (in Koefoed and Simonsen 2009, 98, our translation):

I used to work in my younger brother’s bakery. I stood there and then a woman says, ‘God, we hate these headscarves’. And then I said, ‘Can I just ask you what I have done? What have we done wrong?’ ‘There is nothing wrong, we just don’t like it’. Well then there is no point. If that’s all you can say. So then I said, ‘get out of here, you should not come back to the bakery, as you don’t like it’ [...]. And then she came every day. Regardless. And she was grumpy. She walked out, but she came back regardless.

The politics of engagement is both the consequence and the further cause of cycles of dialogue, affirmation, and recognition that take place in a political society that values both individual freedom and group/community expressivity to the extent that such a collective voice is freely articulated by citizens in voluntary association. The basis of an effective politics of engagement is dialogue: the everyday practice of open and effective communication both among citizens and within the ‘dialogical self’ (Hermans 2001, 2002; Kinnvall and Linde´n 2010). The capacity to develop a voice, to construct narratives in the context of discursive choice, and to construct one’s own free agency is the basis of an immersion into an effective political existence. These are what we refer to as desecuritizing moves in order to establish a politics of engagement. While the politics of engagement can emerge anywhere, on a macrological basis it is rendered more feasible to the extent that the regime and the political culture promotes deep multiculturalism and a cosmopolitical approach to political choice. Put simply, citizens want to feel that they have a voice, that their voice is attended to, that their citizenship is recognized and validated, and that they can make a difference. Muslim minorities have often lacked such a sense of external political efficacy and political trust. Where they do believe that their perspective matters, they will be more prepared to engage and will do so in the belief that they are going to be able to influence the distribution of valued goods and the making of binding decisions.

For increasing numbers of post-diasporic Muslims in Europe and North America, a powerful self-reflexivity has conditioned citizenship strategies grounded in the deconstruction and contestation of master narratives of race, ethnicity, territory, and religion. In this regard a politics of positive and assertive engagement has been rendered possible. If we believe that contestation is of value, something on which a dialogical notion of citizenship can be built, we need to move away from bordered notions of cultures and nationalities towards a deep multiculturalism in which engagement and dialogue is the norm. While not all dialogue is liberating, liberation of any kind is hard to conceive without dialogue. Whether through the critical practice of deconstruction or through the more muddied terrain of dialogue, the sheer act of prizing open the authoritarian space between signifier and signified privileges agentive equality in the collaborative process of constructing reality and possibility. In the postcolonial setting, this is what Spivak (1990) refers to as the ‘unlearning of our privileges as our loss’. To unlearn our privilege means not only understanding the historical context in which this privileging was formed, but also to work hard at gaining some knowledge of the others and attempt to speak to them in
such ways that makes it possible for them to answer back. This is a task for everyone and there is no excuse for keeping silent, Spivak argues (1990, 63):

I will have in an under-graduate class, let’s say, a young, white male student, politically-correct, who will say: ‘I am only a bourgeois white male, I can’t speak’. […] I say to them: ‘why not develop a certain degree of rage against the history that has written such an abject script for you that you are silenced?’ (Spivak 1990, 63)

Spivak’s comment is particularly instructive for understanding the role of religion in Western societies and how religion itself needs to be both deconstructed and desecuritized. When it comes to the question of religious rights and liberalism, the Protestant foundations of the liberal enlightenment are for instance often glossed over or ignored. In this manner, modern Western states have been able to construct themselves as secular and devoid of religious content. In fact, the liberal state is always already Protestant and for there to be a genuine and open dialogue among religions in the public sphere, such valences must be acknowledged and contested. Taking Spivak seriously means delving into a colonial past whose ramifications continue to resonate in multiple ways. In her work on ethno-cultural diversity in Canada, Frances Henry explains how deep multiculturalism necessitates this kind of collective exploration and requires us to investigate:

empowerment and resistance to forms of subjugation; the politicization and mobilization of marginalized groups; the transformation of social, cultural, and economic institutions, and the dismantling of dominant cultural hierarchies, structures, and systems of representation. (Henry 2002, 238)

Our theoretical and normative deliberations lead us to adopt a structural cosmopolitical politics of engagement that stands in opposition to essentialisms and seeks to transform through dialogue the politics of retreatism and essentialism. For cosmopolitics to become effective, however, historically vulnerable group members must acquire the tools, knowledge and resources needed to exercise greater leverage within the group as well as within the greater community. Only if equal access to resources and power is provided to the group members can they be expected to become less preoccupied with the search for security through essentialism or retreat (Shakhar 2001). Too often superficial multiculturalism merely adopts the mainstream cultural norms as embedded values and then expects all newcomers – and their offspring – to adapt. Such a position is expressed in the popular demand made by essentialist majorities that ‘if you come to this country, you must do things our way’. The orientalist appositions of metropolis and colony and civilization versus barbarism stand in the way of an effective politics of engagement. Forced to choose between assimilation or the internal exile of the Other, both majorities and minorities are prompted toward essentialism and retreat. This is why we advocate a structural cosmopolitical polity in which the potentialities of creative and hybrid identities can sustain a range of viable and equitable encounters.

To the extent that the public sphere is open and that the political incorporates the full range of voices in a political society, then the politics of engagement can flourish. Certain commentators mistakenly assume that the engagement – which by its nature is procedurally civil and dignified – represents a capitulation on the part of minorities, whose values are undermined and compromised by the seductions of inclusivity. Such a result is of course possible, but it does not mean that adopting
democracy means abandoning Islam. In her work on Muslims in Denmark, Sweden, and the United States, Schmidt says:

[...] young Muslim [sic] in Western countries claim that the Islam that they practice is in absolute accordance with the same ethical ideals that Western liberal democracies appraise. Arguments are frequently made with references to the Qur’an, not least the three Surahs: 2:256, 9:112, and 49:13. (Schmidt 2004, 40)

Political engagement also does not necessarily mean meekness and quiescence, and is often in truth challenging, assertive, and robust. In fact, citizens being nice to each other in a superficial manner can conceal unresolved essentialisms and latent retreatism. Engagement is often robust, fraught, conflictual and contested, and is all the more so to the extent that the stakes are high. Political choices necessarily carry with them high stakes and so the politics of engagement entails the assertive presentation of one’s view in a bargaining context that is tough and agonistic.

Conclusion
The Canadian landscape is definitely one of engagement, even if forms of essentialism and retreatism exist in a minor key. They always threaten to become dominant should circumstances change and there is a pervasive fear that the multicultural ground is not as solid as it might at first appear. There are of course ongoing challenges, and more will arise in the future. Canada has not yet experienced a major act of terrorism or political crisis associated with Islam or Muslims. Only if and when such an eventuality occurs will Canada really be put to the test. Until then, the hard daily work of communication, dialogue, education, political compromise and mutual support is likely to sustain the Canadian polity. Integral to these practices is the social ease with which a broad diversity of multiple, hybrid, incomplete, and ambivalent identities is honored and welcomed in the public arena. As the first postmodern state, Canada has long been a country with ‘no fixed address’, a political society with no central ethnocultural or national myths, and therefore encouraging of multiplicity.

In our European cases, however, the picture is more diverse. While there is certainly evidence of dialogical experiences on behalf of both majority and Muslim minority communities, the European setting is much more mixed in terms of engagement and desecuritizing moves. In all cases we see evidence of some form of transnationally-inspired reformulation of Islam in which young post-diasporic Muslims are negotiating their identities and often do so through political involvement and contested citizenship claims. The daily securitization of them as subjects from outside forces and from internal insecurities, have structural and psychological consequences for how they conceive of and contest various citizenship strategies. Hence, it is difficult to get away from the impression that a climate of mutual stereotyping exists alongside cosmopolitical and dialogical experiences. In their attempts to be involved in the recreation of what it means to be French, Dutch, British, Danish or Swedish, young Muslims’ demands on the majority society are often interpreted in negative terms and political involvement is not always encouraged. For those young Muslims who remain excluded, the imperialist and racist binaries continue to impose patterns of response. Retreatism is a citizenship strategy of exit in which injuries remain hidden and citizenship claims remain unvoiced. Resort to an essentialist strategy fosters a parallel set of citizenship claims,
grounded in a mythologized place of origin or religious beliefs, often inadequately understood. Political loyalties under such circumstances are restricted and cut off from each other, expressed in a series of parallel societies.

However, at the same time it is important to emphasize that also in Europe there is a strong tendency to respond to discrimination actively through organizing and taking part in various desecuritizing moves, such as dialogues, discussions and debates, as highlighted in our French, Dutch, British and Scandinavian examples. The politics of engagement requires both Muslim and non-Muslim majorities to be active participants and to reciprocate in open dialogue for there to be a genuine deep multicultural politics of engagement. It is not only Muslim minorities that need to engage in desecuritizing moves, of equal importance is that majority populations question their own values and norms and participate in dialogue, reform and institutional restructuring. Much of this necessitates the daily routines and hard work of mundane encounters, shared rituals and practices in neighborhoods and other communities. In this sense, structural cosmopolitics consists of self-reflective culturalism combined with equal access to resources and power, globally and locally. As an approach, cosmopolitics thus promotes marginalized groups and members of those groups in their bids for structural power, but it also pays attention to distinctions within these groups to support particular members in search of power beyond (and perhaps in defiance of) the membership group itself. A deep multicultural cosmopolitical practice entails the openness of dialogue within and between individuals and communities. The evolving political society becomes an arena of openness and possibility in which the traditional boundaries and borders are of decreasing relevance as a multiplicity of alternative forms of human solidarity emerge, and in which the politics of agonism ensures that even the most challenging political disagreements are engaged by an inclusive range of citizens as artists of the possible.

Note
1. The cancellation of an opera performance in 2006 set to depict the prophet Mohammed on stage which resulted in accusations of self-censorship.

Notes on contributors

Catarina Kinnvall is Professor of Political Science at Lund University, Sweden. She is also a former Vice-president of the International Society of Political Psychology. She is the co-author of The political psychology of globalization: Muslims in the West (2011, Oxford UP), the author of Globalization and religious nationalism in India: The search for ontological security (2006, Routledge); co-editor of On behalf of others: The psychology of care in a global world (2009, Oxford UP) and Globalization and democratization in Asia (2002, Routledge), and author of numerous articles and book chapters.

Paul Nesbitt-Larking is Professor of Political Science at Huron University College in Canada. He is currently Vice-President of the International Society of Political Psychology. His work on power, discourse, and identity is situated within the research tradition of critical theory, political psychology, and political sociology. His publications include The political psychology of globalization: Muslims in the West (2011, Oxford UP); Politics, society, and the media (university of Toronto Press), and over fifty scholarly articles and book chapters.

References


