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SPECIAL ISSUE

“Islam and the End of European Multiculturalism”

Multiculturalism has been the dominant paradigm for the West since the 1960s influencing a range of policies from international development, immigration to democracy promotion. Over the decade or so since 9/11 and against the background of the Iraq War, terrorist attacks in New York, Washington, Madrid and London, and a number of other critical incidents, Europe has officially turned away from the doctrine of state multiculturalism. In 2010 Angela Merkel declared that multiculturalism in Germany had “failed utterly” and indicated that it was an illusion to think that German and “gastarbeiters” or guest workers could live happily together. Merkel’s stance was repeated by Nicolas Sarkozy in 2011 who commented that “We have been too concerned about the identity of the person who was arriving and not enough about the identity of the country that was receiving him.” Merkel’s and Sarkozy’s comments were quickly supported by former prime ministers for Australia and Spain John Howard and Jose Maria Aznar. On 5th February 2011, the British Prime Minister David Cameron¹ echoed the criticisms of state multiculturalism arguing “Under the doctrine of state multiculturalism, we have encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and the mainstream. We have failed to provide a vision of society to which they feel they want to belong. We have even tolerated these segregated communities behaving in ways that run counter to our values”. Cameron’s talk was aimed at Islamic extremism and the process of radicalization while being careful not to lump all Muslims together. He too focused on the need for identity with core liberal values of host societies: “we need a lot less of the passive tolerance of recent years and a much more active, muscular liberalism”. Partly as a response, in Britain and elsewhere in Europe, there emerged a call for “integration” and for a “community cohesion agenda” comprised of tougher immigration and deportment laws, citizenship tests, compulsory citizenship education, and new employment policies giving preference to British workers. The combined impact of the Iraq war, the Abu-Ghraib and Guantánamo Bay abuses and the “war on terror” have been highly damaging to Muslim minorities leading to claims of social exclusion, discrimination and abrogation of identity rights. At the same time political Islam is in a state of radical transformation with the events of the Arab Spring and a spate of revolutionary protests in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen that have forced traditional rulers from power with other protests throughout the Arab world. This special issue investigates the end of European multiculturalism against this contemporary political backdrop.

Please send expressions of interest in the form of a title and abstract to Michael A. Peters mpeters@waikato.ac.nz by the end of February 2013.

¹ See <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/pmsspeech-at-munich-security-conference/>