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ASSIMILATION – A WORN THEORY? MUSLIMS IN WARSAW¹

INTRODUCTION

Assimilation is the oldest term describing the process of adaptation of immigrants in the host society. In the twenty-first century it is still the subject of numerous studies, although Chicago school researchers dealt with it throughout the twentieth century, starting from 1901 and ending in 1993. Currently assimilation arouses much controversy and is the subject of many media discourses. They are the result of an old dispute in sociology on the relevance of assimilation and its definition. Due to numerous modifications introduced throughout the twentieth century this term is still ambiguous and difficult to define. Equipped with a pejorative label, developed on the ground of the Chicago School, even in the late nineties of the twentieth century it was doomed to failure. Currently in the approach of American researchers²

¹ The article is the result of a research project aimed at the development of young scientists, funded by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, implemented at the Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Science in the years 2015/2016.

² The pioneering conceptual apparatus and the basics of the theory aimed to explain the mechanisms of inclusion of immigrants in the host society were developed by researchers from the Chicago School, among others, Sarah E. Simons, Robert Park, Milton Gordon, Ernest Burgess, Rogers Brubaker. Throughout the twentieth century they were developed and modified by their successors. European researchers contributed little new to their achievements. In European migration research this term is less often used due to the associated negative connotations, such as lack of tolerance for otherness of immigrants. Thus, in Europe, the term ‘integration’ is usually used. In countries such as the United States, Canada or Australia, where nations have immigrant origins, it is natural to use the concept of assimilation to describe interactions occurring on the line the immigrant – the host society. Adaptation of newcomers and their relations with the host society are perceived in them as phenomena taking

assimilation has gained a new meaning, or even a new life. Recognised by Nathan Glazer in 1993 as a ‘threadbare, and consequently dead’³ theory, nearly 10 years later it was restored to life by Rogers Brubaker. Defined as ‘having nothing to do with the old, discredited analytically and politically infamous assimilation’⁴ it is again used to describe the wider adaptation of immigrants to the host group, otherwise known as the dominant one.

place largely in a natural and spontaneous way. In terms of European researchers – Adrian Favell, Stephen Castles and Steven Vertovec, assimilation is a long process that requires immigrants’ work and effort in order to fully absorb values and culture of the dominant group. American researchers’ attempt to unify the definitions of the terms ‘assimilation’ and ‘integration’ is not applicable in the study of the process of assimilation in Europe, both in theoretical and empirical dimensions. Even the term assimilation means something different in French, English, German or Dutch policy. Assimilation of immigrants in France proceeds differently than e.g. in the UK and in Germany differently than e.g. in the Netherlands. It results from the concepts of models of inclusion of immigrants into the dominant group, based on different or even opposing logics of each of these countries. Apart from this, the shapes of assimilation models in these countries have been also affected, among others, by the concept of nation and nationality and previous experience in managing social diversity, including the colonial experience, attitudes to the indigenous ethnic, linguistic or religious minorities and models of relations between the state and the Church. Rogers Brubaker in the article ‘The return of assimilation? The changing perspectives on assimilation and its sequels in France, Germany and the United State’ published in *Ethnic and Radical Studies* [vol. 24, no. 4, 2001, p. 533] states that in Germany the word ‘assimilation’ has been ‘contaminated’ and ‘disqualified’ as a result of forced Germanisation, just like in France it has been tainted by the association with the Jacobins’ violent homogenisation aspirations and practices. Assimilation cannot be equalled with integration. Assimilation is different from integration because it is always a unidirectional process. To confirm this, I will add that in 2003, the European Commission defined integration as a ‘two-way process based on mutual rights and accompanying obligations of legal residents and the host society. The responsibility of the society is to ensure formal rights of immigrants in such a way that they are given the opportunity to participate in economic, social, cultural and civil life. In contrast, immigrants should respect the fundamental norms and values of the host society and participate actively in the integration process, without forgoing their own identity’ [Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on Access to European Union Citizenship. Own Initiative opinion, European and Social Council, 2003, Brussels, pp. 17–18].

³ Glazer, N. 1993. Is assimilation dead? *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 530, pp. 122–136.

⁴ Brubaker, R. 2001. The return of assimilation? The changing perspectives on assimilation and its sequels in France, Germany and the United State. *Ethnic and Radical Studies*, vol. 24, no. 4, p. 531–548.

The subject of the article is the analysis of the process of assimilation of the Muslim community in Poland on the example of the capital city of Warsaw. The research problem was to determine the degree of assimilation of the Muslim community with the residents of Warsaw and an attempt to find out if assimilation is the right term to describe the current interaction that takes place between the Muslim community and Christian inhabitants of Warsaw. Such an approach required defining the barriers and difficulties and showing the cause and effect relationships hindering the process of assimilation. It was possible to define these problems thanks to the use of the quantitative method – carrying out a survey in order to scientifically analyse the subject specified in the study, that is the Muslim community living in Warsaw. Answers of the respondents, on the one hand, became the key to solve the research problem, on the other hand, they made it possible to create something similar to the *curriculum vitae* of the Muslim community in Poland.

Examination of the Muslim community in Warsaw is difficult for many reasons – for instance due to the specificity of the subjects themselves and the character of the city, and therefore the application of only a quantitative approach would be insufficient. Firstly, by means of the quantitative method – the questionnaire – the researcher does not receive the ready set of variables, and he/she has yet to develop them. The possibility of collecting appropriate material depends on this stage of the research procedure. Secondly, the anonymity of the persons participating in the quantitative study does not give you a chance to include the emotional element, which is added value in gaining knowledge about the specifics of that community. Thirdly, when we conduct a survey only, there is a risk of receiving a blank survey page, which effectively hinders the process of the study. It was assumed that the increase in the value and reliability of the study can be obtained also through the use of a qualitative method⁵, consisting in this case in interviews with employees of institutions acting in support of immigrants. In the case of the study in which unforeseen events and phenomena may occur, a lot can be gained from the combination of both methods.

In this case, the turning point of the research turned out to be the terrorist attacks carried out by militants of the Islamic State on 13 November 2015 in Paris. These events led to the reluctance of Muslims to participate in the study, although previously they had declared their readiness. As a result, the

⁵ More on the quantitative and qualitative method in: Podemski, K. 2009. *Metody badań jakościowych. [Qualitative research methods.]* vol. 1, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, p. 34–36. On the qualitative method: ibidem, vol. 2, p. 325, pp. 351–353.

research covered a group of 63 people, not a hundred as envisaged in the initial phase of the study. It seems, however, that despite these difficulties the presented material both shows a picture of the Muslim community in Warsaw, and encourages further research and analyses in this area.

THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY IN POLAND, ANNO DOMINI 2016

What have I found out about the Muslim community from the analysis of the survey results? The majority of respondents are determined and want, despite difficulties encountered in Poland, a homogeneous country where public knowledge of Islam and Muslims is minimal, and prejudices are substantial, to make a life for themselves in the new country. Not much and often only in the form of contributions has been written about Muslims living in Poland, with the exception of Tatars. The uncontrolled influx of Muslims into Europe since 2010 and the attitude of Poles related to this unprecedented event have become an impetus to undertake interdisciplinary research on the Polish scientific ground⁶.

The social situation of the Muslim community in Poland is unusual, because, first, it is very small, or even negligible, compared with the number of Muslims living in the capitals of Western Europe (among others, in Berlin, Paris, London or Rome). It is estimated that in Warsaw the number of Muslims does not exceed ten thousand, and in Poland thirty thousand. The statement that ‘it is possible to live the whole life in Poland and not meet a Muslim’ is no longer so valid today as fifteen or twenty years ago, but it still testifies to a small share of Muslims in Polish society.

The precise estimation of the number of Muslims in Poland is still, however, quite difficult. The question about religion appeared for the first time in a post-war census in the last National Census of Population and Housing con-

⁶ Among others: Stefaniak, A. 2015. *Postrzeżenie muzułmanów w Polsce. Raport z badania sondażowego.* [The perception of Muslims in Poland. The report of the survey.] Warszawa: Centrum Badań nad Uprzedzeniami; Stefaniak, A., Bilewicz, M., Winiewski, M. 2015. *Uprzedzenia w Polsce.* [Prejudices in Poland.] Warszawa: Liberi Libri; Bilewicz, M., et al. 2014. *Mowa nienawiści. Raport z badań sondażowych.* [Hate speech. The report of the survey.] Warszawa: Fundacja Stefana Batorego i Centrum Badań nad Uprzedzeniami; Soral, W. 2013. *Stosunek do imigrantów oraz jego korelaty.* [Attitude to immigrants and its correlates.] Warszawa: Centrum Badań nad Uprzedzeniami; Bilewicz, M. 2012. *Stosunek do uchodźców. Możliwości zmiany.* [Attitude to refugees. The possibility of changes.] Warszawa: Centrum Badań nad Uprzedzeniami.

ducted by the Central Statistical Office in Poland in 2011⁷. In the final report, presenting the demographic and social status and structure of the population, words such as ‘Islam’ or ‘Muslim’ did not even appear – apparently this minority was classified among ‘other’, unidentified denominations. Persons belonging to them constituted then 0.15% of the total Polish population⁸. According to the data of the report prepared for the European Parliament, the number of Muslims in Poland ranges from 5 to 30 thousand, although Polish demographers regarded this calculation as exaggerated⁹. According to Arabist Agata Skowron-Nalborczyk, Muslims in Poland constitute only 0.06–0.08% of the Polish population, less than a 0.1%¹⁰.

Secondly, the Muslim community in Warsaw is heterogeneous. The biggest number of the surveyed persons came from Arabic countries. 36 people from countries of Northern Africa and North-Eastern Africa, including 12 respondents from Tunisia, 8 from Morocco, 7 from Algeria, 6 from Egypt and 3 from Libya. 16 people came from the Middle East, that is 5 from Syria, 4 from Lebanon, 5 from Iran and 2 from Saudi Arabia. In addition, 15 people participating in the study were Turks. 2 people were from Afghanistan and 2 from Pakistan. The study covered also 4 Chechens.

Thirdly, in the case of immigration of Muslims to Poland it hard to talk about the typical Muslim divisions into the old and new Muslim immigration, which is encountered in post-colonial countries, e.g. France, Britain or the Netherlands. Poland has never been a coloniser of any Arab state, so in the case of Poland the division of immigrants into the old, post-war immigration and the new, postcolonial one is not applicable. Three events were turning points in the history of immigration to Poland: (1) the opening of the Polish borders after 1989, (2) Polish accession to the European Union on 4 May 2004, and (3) the accession to the Schengen zone on 21 December 2007.

⁷ The National Census of Population and Housing was conducted on 1 April – 30 June 2011.

⁸ CSO. 2013. *Ludność. Stan i struktura demograficzno-społeczna. Narodowy Spis Powszechny Ludności i Mieszkań 2011.* [Population. The demographic and social status and structure. The National Census of Population and Housing 2011.] Warszawa; 2012. *Raport z wyników.* [The report of the results.] Warszawa: The National Census of Population and Housing, p. 105.

⁹ Dassetto, F., Ferrari, S., Maréchat, B. 2007. *Islam in the European Union: What's at stake in the future.* Brussels: European Parliament, p. 147.

¹⁰ Kim są muzułmanie w Polsce? [Who are Muslims in Poland?] Wojciech Tymowski's interview with Agata Skowron-Nalborczyk. Available at: http://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/1,34889,7653076,Kim_sa_muzulmanie_w_Polsce_.html [Accessed: 22 February 2016].

This does not mean, however, that each of them is connected exclusively with the increased influx of Muslim immigrants into Poland. The increased influx of Muslims into the country occurred mainly after 1989¹¹. In turn, the Polish membership in the European Union and the resulting presence in the Schengen area, just like pull and push factors – on the one hand, has attracted Muslims to Poland, on the other hand, has facilitated the outflow to Western Europe. As is clear from the survey, an increase in the inflow of Muslims to Poland took place in the nineties of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century. As many as 52 respondents arrived in Poland at the end of the twentieth century. Only 2 surveyed persons came to Poland in 2000, and 9 people after 2000, including 6 after 2004 and 3 in 2013.

Fourthly, the migration decisions of Muslims are affected by different variables, and therefore considering them solely on the basis of typical pull and push migration factors is a mistake. According to the study of the Centre of Migration Research, economic considerations are the main reason for the arrival of immigrants to Poland particularly after 2004. The answers to the question included in the survey, ‘What was the reason for your arrival in Poland’ showed that economic issues were not always the main motivating factor. 25 people indicated in the survey that they had come to Poland in order to ‘attend to business matters’. Also, educational and cultural considerations proved to be strong pull factors. As many as 18 respondents came to Poland to study at one of Polish universities, and for 12 of them visiting family or friends was the reason for the arrival in Poland. Personal reasons are another motive for the influx of Muslims to Poland. The survey clearly shows that as long as the arrival of the first family member, usually a man, has a purely economic ground, then after achieving at least a partial economic and housing stabilisation in the country of destination, he brings subsequent members of the family who come mainly for personal reasons. Family reunification or chain immigration also appeared in answers of the respondents.

As emphasised by employees of Polish institutions dealing with immigrants, decisions of Muslim immigrants to come to Poland should be considered in terms of ‘difficult’ and ‘untraditional’. Studies have confirmed

¹¹ Rynkowski, M. 2006. *Churches and religious communities in Poland with particular focus on the situation of Muslim communities*. State and Religion in Europe. Legal System, Religious Education, Religious Affairs. Istanbul: Center for Islamic Studies, pp. 259–260; Nalborczyk, A. S. 2005. Status prawny muzułmanów w Polsce i jego wpływ na organizację ich życia religijnego. [The legal status of Muslims in Poland and its impact on the organization of religious life.] In: Parzymies, A. *Muzułmanie w Europie*. [Muslims in Europe.] Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog, p. 229.

the widespread thesis that knowledge of the language of the host country is crucial in the process of assimilation. The most important factors influencing the difficulty of adapting to a new location, apart from economic issues, include the lack of knowledge of the language of the host country. The results of the survey showed that the Polish language is very difficult for 40 people, difficult for 10, moderately difficult for 9, and only for 3 it is easy to learn, especially at the conversational level. 2/3 of the people answered that lack of fluency in speaking Polish affects their quality of life in Warsaw. Learning the Polish language is a challenge for foreigners, many times impossible to realise. The responses indicate that very often the knowledge of the Polish language is limited to the assimilation of several basic words or simple sentences. The answers clearly indicate that lack of time, life among compatriots, universal access to the Internet and the ability to speak the English language at the conversational level (including that of the host society) lead to the fact that the willingness to learn Polish weakens month after month, until in the end it totally disappears. According to the respondents, currently the lack of knowledge of the Polish language is no longer such a problem as 20 years ago. It is still, however, a significant hindrance when they have to attend to matters at a post office, an employment office and so on.

Interestingly, according to the respondents weather conditions and a changing landscape belong to the most important factors influencing the process of assimilation. For 12 people, 'long winter, relatively cool and short summers and lack of sunshine most days of the year', are the real reason for the change of residence. In practice, however, these statements were not reflected in reality, the subjects absorbed by daily life in Poland, from year to year postponed their plans of relocation.

Only 11 respondents who came to Poland in the nineties of the twentieth century confirmed that during their entire stay they took only one trip with their family to their homeland. A trip for a family consisting of a few people to their homeland is a considerable expense. From a few to several thousand PLN must be allocated for buying plane tickets. As the respondents emphasise, this amount exceeds their financial means, therefore very often only one person goes on the journey, the man – the head of household. The main tool for contacting relatives in the homeland are still the Internet and Skype – one of the most popular instant messengers in the world to make phone calls. In the case of the respondents coming from the Middle East, especially Syria¹²

¹² About the situation of Syrians: Bauer, W. 2016. *W. Przez morze. Z Syryjczykami do Europy.* [Crossing the sea: with Syrians on the exodus to Europe.] Wołowiec: Wydawnic-

and Lebanon, travel to their homeland is simply impossible due to the current internal situation in these countries. The effects of the Arab Spring in the countries of the Middle East have enforced a change in life priorities of immigrants coming from that region. For the majority of them the return to their homeland will be probably never possible. Military action in Syria has lasted for more than four years now. As a result of it more than a quarter million citizens of this country are dead, and more than 11 million people have been forced to leave their homes due to the fight between the government forces, the opposition and the so-called Islamic State (ISIS). According to the report of the European Council on Foreign Relations published in 2014, ‘the Syrian economy lies in ruins, assets and infrastructure have been destroyed, half of the population lives below the poverty line and the human development index has fallen back to where it stood 37 years ago. It is estimated that even with an average annual growth rate of 5 percent it would take nearly 30 years to recover Syria’s 2010 GDP value’¹³. Currently, the most important goal of the Syrian respondents is to help to bring their loved ones living in detention centres for refugees to Europe.

FEAR MAKES STRANGERS OF PEOPLE WHO WOULD BE FRIENDS

On 15 September 2015, the Polish government decided to accept 7,000 refugees, mainly from Syria and Eritrea, out of 120,000, which got to the European Union from countries covered by military operations. The government decision divided Polish society into two opposing camps – ‘for’ and ‘against’ taking refugees to Poland. The opposition to taking immigrants by Poland was the main theme of speeches of the organisers of the March of Independence on 11 November 2015. Adam Andruszkiewicz, the leader of the All-Polish Youth and member of the movement Kukiz’15 chanted that we must build a country without any immigrants, which will defend its own borders by itself. ‘We are here hosts and we will decide whom we will admit here,’ informed Tomasz Dorn from the National Radical Camp. Demonstra-

two Czarne, *passim*; Skowron-Nalborczyk, A. 2015. Syria gaśnie. Jak do tego doszło? [Syria is dying. How did this happen?] *Więź*, 4 (662), pp. 26–35.

¹³ Yazigi, J. 2014. *Syria’s war economy*. European Council on Foreign Relation – Policy Brief 97, April 2014, p. 1; Available at: http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR97_SYRIA_BRIEF_AW.pdf [Accessed: 3 March 2016] cited in Skowron-Nalborczyk, A. 2015. Syria gaśnie. Jak do tego doszło? [Syria is dying. How did this happen?] *Więź*, 4 [662], 2015, p. 35.

tors of the independence march carried, amongst others, banners with slogans such as 'We prefer a pork chop to Muhammad' with a photo of a pork chop and shouted 'It is Catholic Poland, not Islamic, not secular'¹⁴.

Poles perceive the influx of foreigners as a threat rather than a potential for the development of the state. Is it correct? Poland, with the population of Muslims amounting to 30 thousand (although these figures are only an estimate and are probably an overestimation) remains a homogeneous European country. The inclusion of 7,000 immigrants of Muslim origin into more than 38 million Polish population does not threaten the country with the loss of national identity. What, then, is responsible for such a spontaneous reaction of the public to the issue of the influx of Muslims to Poland? The interpretation of the study results indicates two main reasons for forming this type of attitude: direct contact, or lack thereof, and the message of the media and opinion leaders involved in media and political discourse. The analysis of the qualitative research shows that direct contact with minority groups and immigrants is the surest way to reduce prejudices of the host country community. People who have direct contact with representatives of minority and immigrant groups not only gain knowledge about these groups, but also experience less fear of them and show higher empathy and compassion for their fate. Increased empathy and smaller fear translate into an overall improvement of attitudes towards these groups¹⁵.

In Poland, according to estimates, Muslims constitute less than 0.1% of the population. Research on assimilation of the Muslim community in Poland confirm that lack of contact is the main factor responsible for fears of an influx of refugees and attitudes towards Muslims in Poland. From year to year more and more Poles declare lack of acceptance for a Muslim as a neighbour¹⁶. The reluctance of Poles towards the Muslim community is also intensified by

¹⁴ See <http://www.polskieradio.pl/5/3/Artykul/1543373,Marsz-Niepodleglosci-krolowaly-antyimigranckie-hasla-ale-obylo-sie-bez-powaznych-incydentow> [Accessed: 12 March 2016].

¹⁵ More on this topic in the study conducted by Pettigrew, T.F., Tropp, L.R. 2008. How does intergroup contact reduce prejudice? Meta-analytic test of three mediators. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, no. 38. John Wiley & Sons, pp. 922–934.

¹⁶ In the study of the Centre for Research on Prejudice conducted in 2014 on the nationwide sample of adult Poles, 20% of respondents declared their lack of acceptance for a Muslim as a neighbour. In the nationwide survey conducted in summer 2015 as many as 32% of the respondents expressed lack of acceptance for a neighbour professing Islam. Bilewicz, M. et al. 2014. *Mowa nienawiści. Raport z badań sondażowych.* [Hate speech. The report of the survey.] Warszawa: Fundacja Stefana Batorego i Centrum Badań nad Uprzedzeniami, *passim*.

the media debate lasting at least since 2015, involving many times so-called pseudo experts in the culture and religion of Islam. Suffice it to say that the knowledge of Poles about the Muslim community is selective and attention is focused mainly on terrorist attacks and violence caused deliberately by Islamic fundamentalists. Due to the events with the participation of Muslim immigrants in Paris on 13 November 2015, in Cologne on 31 December 2015 and on 22 March 2016 in Brussels, Islam is again associated with terrorism, and the cognitive representation of Muslims is dominated by negative elements of reference. In Poland, Islamophobic content and anti-Muslim hate speech are relatively common in the media, mainly in the form of comments on Internet forums. Due to the increasing availability of the Internet and a false sense of impunity of its users, statements about the Muslim community are full of anger, aggression and hatred¹⁷.

WHAT ABOUT THIS ASSIMILATION?

The increase in hostility towards Muslim refugees compels us to reflect on the following issues: is the assimilation of the ‘new wave’ of refugees with heterodox inhabitants of Warsaw possible at all, and with the use of what methods should it be implemented to be effective? The contemporary immigration crisis in Poland shows the crisis of Polish society which to a much greater extent results from fear and stereotyped perception of Muslims than from a rational analysis of facts pertaining to benefits and costs associated with the influx of refugees from the Middle East and Africa. The situation of the Muslim community and their attitudes and behaviour depend largely on the attitude of the host society¹⁸. Poles are accustomed to living in a homogeneous country, to existence in a nationally, culturally and religiously uniform state¹⁹. That is why, integration and education action which can really change attitudes in local communities should be undertaken in advance. In the era

¹⁷ More in: Firlit-Fesnak, G., Łotocki Ł. eds. 2014. *Imigranci w polskim dyskursie publicznym*. [Immigrants in Polish public discourse.] Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza ASPRA-JR, *passim*.

¹⁸ *Academia. Migracje*. [Migrations.] 2015. Special edition, pp. 8–11.

¹⁹ Balcer, A. Polska, Islam, Europa. Pomost czy przedmurze. [Poland, Islam, Europe. A bridge or a bulwark.] Available at: http://www.demoseuropa.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1862%3Apolska-islam-europa-pomost-czy-przedmurze&catid=75%3Aanadchodzce&Itemid=98&lang=pl [Accessed: 16 February 2016].

of the increased influx of refugees to the European Union activities raising awareness of the host society about the culture and religion of Islam and the process of adaptation of newcomers should be carried out systematically and with greater budget support, also in Poland. This can be a counterweight to the media messages and statements of politicians, which rather antagonise than solve problems related to the adaptation of refugees. These activities will also facilitate the adaptation of refugees and protect against political radicalisation.

Each research subject's adaptation process in Poland proceeds in an individual way and depends on factors such as cultural patterns of contacts with foreigners acquired in the country of birth, personal experiences, the reasons for the decision to leave the homeland. In addition these factors include: the length of stay, the status in Poland and economic success. The above factors determine whether the foreigner has already started the process of 'entering' the new culture of the dominant society or is still going through a period of so-called culture shock. The study showed that both settled immigrants and temporary ones, for whom Poland is only a transit country, have experienced this state. According to the study, the process of adaptation is a complex, difficult, and complicated mechanism determined by the willpower and determination of the newcomer.

It consists of four stages which every immigrant goes through upon arrival at the new place of residence. The first step in the process of adaptation is 'reprogramming' of the immigrant's state of mind and consciousness. Due to this 'reprogramming' it will be easier for the newcomer to enter everyday life in the host country. Immediately after arriving in a new country of settlement foreigners feel joy and experience a sense of security. Poland (Warsaw) made a positive impression on the majority of respondents, including all persons who arrived in the country after 2000.

When the state of excitement is gone, newcomers experience the already mentioned culture shock²⁰. It usually causes a feeling of regret, helplessness, and also indifference, and hostility towards the new environment. The degree of hostility equals the degree of the difficulty with disposing of the culture which the newcomer acquired in childhood in the form of the instilled value system, rituals and symbols, which Geert Hofstede calls 'software of the

²⁰ Ząbek, M. ed. 2002. *Między piekłem a rajem. Problemy adaptacji kulturowej uchodźców i imigrantów w Polsce.* [Between hell and heaven. Problems of cultural adaptation of refugees and immigrants in Poland.] Warszawa: Trio i Instytut Etnologii i Antropologii Kulturowej Wydawnictwa Historycznego UW, p. 10.

mind²¹. The study confirms that culture shock is a universal phenomenon, and its scale depends on both subjective and objective factors. Culture shock is experienced by Africans and Chechens, political as well as economic immigrants.

Answers to questions about the place of residence in Warsaw, workplace, frequency and ways of communicating with people outside the Muslim community show that many migrants seek asylum in their own culture group if they can avoid unpleasant confrontation with the new reality. Existing only among their compatriots, both at home and work, they relieve the intensity of the experienced culture shock, which is in a way fully understandable. The problem appears when a group of support, in the form of people from the same cultural background which is to be a kind of a safety valve, fails for whatever reasons. This leads to the so-called double – existential and psychological – alienation in the host country.

The third phase of the immigrant's adaptation in the host country consists in the newcomer's adaptation to the environment²². Immigrants begin to familiarise themselves with the place of residence, to learn, and, what is more, to absorb rules of conduct and local customs predominant in the surrounding reality, and begin to understand basic phrases of the Polish language. They become more self-assured, which in turn helps them to come in contact with new people. The study shows that Muslims of Turkish origin are a group which relatively quickly enters this phase; they decidedly take action leading to the normalisation of life in Poland. They set up businesses – usually small diners and try to achieve as soon as possible what they have come here for – economic success. There are, however, groups such as Africans, for whom it is very difficult to adapt to the reality of life in Poland. The study shows that the reason for this state of affairs are mental determinants and a demanding attitude characterised by a high degree of expectations in relation to the host country. African Muslims' motivation for socio-professional adaptation in Poland is very well illustrated by the carrot and stick method. In this case, the motivation to get out of culture shock and the desire to achieve balance is the proverbial carrot – the Polish system of social assistance which is disproportionate in comparison with France or Nordic countries. Although this method is sometimes necessary, in the long term it is a factor which demotivates from becoming independent in the host country. Of course, we should not gener-

²¹ Hofstede, G. 2007. *Kultury i organizacje. Zaprogramowanie umysłu*. [Cultures and organizations: software of the mind.] Warszawa: Polskie Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne, p. 247.

²² Ząbek, M. ed. *Między piekłem...* [Between hell...], p. 12.

alise and evaluate all African immigrants living in Poland as people who are passive and helpless in life. The analysis of questionnaires lets us conclude that thanks to achieving economic success in Poland, the Africans have finally decided to stay in Poland. The symbol of this success for the Muslim community is now the marketplace in Bakalarska street in Warsaw (and not only for them). In the years 1989-2008, the so-called Europe Fair in the Decade Stadium was such a place, though its area was much larger. The marketplace in Bakalarska street plays an important role not only for Africans. Among other nations, also Chechens, Russians and Ukrainians run their businesses here. Thanks to such places as the Europe Fair and the marketplace in Bakalarska street the majority of immigrants living in Warsaw have managed to achieve the desired success, often even before they have been able to legalise their stay. In addition, for immigrants and refugees these places are a synonym of integration institutions in Poland enabling effective adaptation.

Meta-analyses of studies on adaptation processes of immigrants in the host country show that economic success is a key factor in overcoming culture shock and successful adaptation²³. *Summa summarum*, the achievement of economic success in the host country is eventually the main goal of all immigrants, it enables the realisation of the objectives at the level of everyday existence. In conclusion, immigrants who achieve this economic success, adapt more quickly, integrate, and over time they can even assimilate.

The fourth and final phase of the adaptation process is the achievement of balance²⁴. The number of degrees of interaction varies. It is generally believed that it may in principle take three forms: assimilation, separation and integration. Robert Park, a representative of the Chicago School, enumerates four: accommodation, competition, conflict and assimilation²⁵. Lack of any of them forces migrants to change their place of residence or often condemns them to marginalisation²⁶.

²³ Ząbek, M. ed. 2002. *Między piekłem a rajem. Problemy adaptacji kulturowej uchodźców i imigrantów w Polsce.* [Between hell and heaven. Problems of cultural adaptation of refugees and immigrants in Poland.] Warszawa: Trio i Instytut Etnologii i Antropologii Kulturowej Wydawnictwa Historycznego UW, *passim*.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 14.

²⁵ Park, R. 1921. *Introduction to the science of sociology.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 735.

²⁶ Ząbek, M. *Między piekłem...* [Between hell...], *ibidem*, p. 15. See also Kubiak, H. 1980. Teoria, ideologia, polityka asymilacji. Szkic problemu. [The theory, ideology, policy of assimilation. A sketch of the problem.] In: Kubiak, H., Paluch A.K. eds. *Założenia teorii asymilacji.* [Assumptions of the theory of assimilation.] Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, pp. 15–25.

Relationships between concepts describing cultural transformations are often quite complicated, which is particularly evident in the case of the terms ‘assimilation’ and ‘integration’. According to John W. Berry, integration is the most desired process. In turn, Paul Mecheril claims that assimilation is a state that ensures the most favourable conditions for the development of the immigrant in the host country. Integration as opposed to assimilation produces a ‘stranger’, emphasises the ‘otherness’ of immigrants in the host society. Each form of not equal treatment resulting from the ethnic origin stigmatises people and often makes them dependent on aid. Paradoxically, integration policy instead of facilitating interaction of the newcomers with the dominant society may hinder it unintentionally.

Assimilation is the oldest concept that describes the process of the inclusion of immigrants into the host society. Defined as total assimilation into the culture of the environment in every way, including the physical appearance, was regarded not so long ago in the countries of the West as the most beneficial effect of adaptation of immigrants into the host society. It is true that completely assimilated immigrants usually do not come into any conflict with the host community any more. They become ‘indigenous natives’ or at worst ‘immigrant-neighbours’, but not ‘neighbours-strangers’ as in the case of integration²⁷. Assimilation is both a process and a state consisting in taking over culture of the host society by immigrants, and most importantly the resignation of their own. In theory, people from the majority group can assimilate to the minority group, although currently it is a very rare phenomenon, generally people from minority groups become similar to the majority, immigrants to the majority society²⁸. The above definition of assimilation induces me to pose a hypothesis. Namely, given religious ambivalence, secularism and even atheism of the majority of the population in Western Europe, the contemporary migration crisis, consisting in the arrival of a large number of followers of expansive Islam in Europe, may in the future enforce the adaption of the principles of the religion and culture of the minority group by the majority group.

²⁷ More on the problem of strangeness in: Simmel, G. 2006. *Obcy* [The stranger.] In: Id. *Most i drzwi*. [Bridge and door.] Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa, *passim*.; Bucholc, M. 2010. Dehumanizujący wymiar obcości i jej etyczna niezbędność. Na marginesie Obcego Georga Simmela. [Dehumanising dimension of strangeness and its ethical necessity. On the margins of Georg Simmel’s Stranger.] *Etyka*, no. 43. Warszawa: Instytut Filozofii Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, *passim*.

²⁸ Budyta-Budzyńska, M. 2011. *Integracja czy asymilacja? Polscy imigranci na Islandii*. [Integration or assimilation? Polish immigrants in Iceland.] Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, pp. 47–48.

In practice this will mean the acceptance and complete assimilation of the culture and values of the minority group, in this case Muslims, by the host society.

In the twenty-first century, assimilation is still an equivocal term. The reason for this state of affairs are numerous modifications of the term made by Chicago researchers throughout the last century²⁹. Let me remind you that Sarah E. Simson gave the first scientific definition of assimilation in 1901. According to Simson, it is 'that process of adjustment and accommodation that occurs between the members of different races if their contact is prolonged and if the necessary psychic conditions are present. (...) Figuratively speaking, it is the process by which the aggregation of peoples is changed from a mere mechanical mixture into a chemical compound'³⁰. Robert Park was right, saying already in the twenties of the twentieth century that assimilation is the most complex and sophisticated process of the inclusion of newcomers in the majority society³¹.

Translating the above considerations into the canvas of the analysed case, it should be emphasised that assimilation is a process that requires time. For people who have come to Poland as already mature, fully formed persons, complete assimilation into the host society is very difficult. If we add to this significant cultural differences in terms of basic values set by the religion and differences in physical appearance, assimilation is basically impossible. It is difficult for me to indicate a typical example of successful assimilation in the group of 62 respondents or just people who were inclined to undergo a process of assimilation. For the respondents assimilation still carries negative connotations and has a pejorative label. Conceived, on the one hand, as lack of tolerance for their religious and cultural distinctness, on the other hand, simply as a way of their enslavement, it arouses respondents' opposition to succumbing to this process. The lack of will and determination of the Muslim community to become fully similar to the host society dooms assimilation to failure. It is worth noting that for the majority of the respondents assimilation means the denial of everything that defines their identity, giving them

²⁹ See Grzybek, D. 2013. Współczesne rozumienie asymilacji imigrantów w społeczeństwie amerykańskim. [Modern understanding of assimilation of immigrants in American society.] *Zeszyty Naukowe Towarzystwa Doktorantów Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Nauki Społeczne*, no. 6 (1/2013), pp. 57–58.

³⁰ Hirsch, W. 1943. Assimilation as a concept and as a process. *Social Forces*, vol. 21, no. 1, October 1943, pp. 35–39 cited in: Włoch, R. 2011. *Polityka integracji muzułmanów we Francji i Wielkiej Brytanii. [Policy of integration of Muslims in France and the UK.]* Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, p. 18.

³¹ Park, R. *Introduction...*, op. cit., p. 736.

a ‘new-strange’ life, with which they do not identify themselves and to which they do not give consent. Muslims living in Poland (Warsaw) are connected to the homeland by means of an invisible and unbreakable ‘umbilical cord’ that prevents them from taking emotional, permanent roots in Poland. The more difficult the internal situation of the given country, the stronger commitment to values acquired in childhood.

Is Nathan Glazer’ statement that assimilation is ‘a worn theory that imposes ethnocentric and patronising requests on ethnic minorities, struggling to maintain cultural and ethnic consistency’ correct? ³². The results of the study lead to the conclusion that Glazer’ definition of assimilation is correct and it correctly depicts, on the one hand, the attitude of the respondents, and on the other hand, of the host country. The lack of respondents’ consent to becoming similar to the dominant society, the attitude of Polish society and Poland tell us to seek new adaptive solutions – alternative to the assimilation of the Muslim community in Poland.

SUMMARY

As a result of the immigration crisis, Poland, following Western countries, goes towards fairly restrictive immigration policy, basically opposing the influx of Muslim immigrants. In Poland politicians decide about the fate, existence and security of immigrants, including Muslim ones, and not rational immigration policy which is anyway hard to find. Balanced conversation about whom to accept and whom not, and whether at all has become impossible since the right-wing government in Poland gained strength. The political debate reminds a boxing ring or a street battle fought during the March of Independence on 11 November. The culture of the message on this matter seems to be absolutely meaningless, what matters is the strength of the voice and populism growing in strength.

Arguing that racism and xenophobia are the traits of Polish society would be harmful to all Poles. There is no scientific basis to claim that Polish society as a community is more xenophobic than other populations of the Union. The problem is not the question of whether to accept new refugees, but how to do it with dignity. How to take care of them. Poland will not accept a cohort of immigrants as Italy, Germany or France have done. Several thousand is

³² Glazer, N. *Is assimilation...*, op. cit., p. 128 cited in: Włoch, R. 2011. *Polityka integracji muzułmanów we Francji i Wielkiej Brytanii. [Policy of integration of Muslims in France and the UK.]* Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, p. 21.

a drop in the ocean. Another issue is whether these several thousand people will be able to assimilate with Poles? To answer this question, we should first think about how many of them will remain in Poland (Warsaw) at least for a few years, and how many will disappear before they find out where Poland is on the map. Poland is not an attractive country for Muslim immigrants. In comparison with the post-colonial countries of Western Europe it is still seen as *terra nova* – the land undiscovered and unconquered by Muslims. On the basis of the present situation it is difficult to prove the thesis that Poland is being threatened with the exodus of Muslim refugees. It even seems that these 7 thousand refugees, to which the government agreed, will be ‘strangers-guests’ and therefore migrants for whom Poland will be a transit country only. This does not change the fact that the majority of Poles see ‘strangers-guests’ first of all as enemies, not people on the move seeking to find a new, safe place to life³³.

Following Rogers Brubaker, we can say that assimilation is more than just a process immigrants are subjected to, assimilation is also a state³⁴ and, therefore, fate, location, rationale and existence, living conditions which the immigrants ensure for themselves by the renunciation of their culture, the absorption of values of the host country and becoming similar to the host society. Assimilation is the most capacious term describing the process of ‘entering’ of immigrants into the host society. It is also a one-way mechanism, which in practice means ceding all responsibility for its implementation to immigrants. The participation of the state in the process of assimilation is reduced only to an auxiliary function, the state is not a participant as it is in the case of the integration process – a modern alternative to assimilation.

On the day when I was finishing the work on this article, there were two terrorist attacks in Brussels. The detonation of explosives at the Brussels airport and an underground station next to the buildings of EU institutions carried out by Islamic fundamentalists claimed the lives of dozens of innocent people. In the face of such events the question of what to do next comes to mind. Is it rational to admit more immigrants who as a result of improved weather are heading to the European Union Member States? Who is to blame for the current situation in the EU, and who should bear the responsibility for the lives of hundreds of thousands of refugees accepted on the territory of EU Member States?

³³ See also Balcer, A. Polska... [Poland...], op. cit., *passim*.

³⁴ Walter, H. 1943. Assimilation as a concept and as a process. *Social Forces*, vol. 21, no. 1, *passim*.

The terrorist attacks carried out more and more frequently by Islamic extremists on the streets of Western cities also show a profound crisis of integration. Europe (that is also Poland) is facing a big social problem, which it has previously tried not to notice. It has also forgotten that in undertaking the refugee issue the most important point of reference cannot be only the interest of the state implemented within the framework of *Realpolitik*, but a man.

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ASSIMILATION – A WORN THEORY? MUSLIMS IN WARSAW

Summary

The subject of the article is an analysis of the process of assimilation of the Muslim community in Poland on the example of the capital city of Warsaw. The research problem was to determine the degree of assimilation of the Muslim community with the residents of Warsaw and an attempt to find out if assimilation is the right term to describe the current interaction that takes

place between the Muslim community and heterodox inhabitants of Warsaw. Such an approach required, firstly, the definition of 'assimilation' which in the twenty-first century is still an equivocal term causing much controversy, secondly, the specification of barriers and difficulties and showing the cause and effect relationships hindering the process of assimilation

АСИМИЛАЦИЯ – ЗУЖЫТА ТЕОРИЯ? ВЪЗНАВЦЫ ИСЛАМУ В ВАРШАВЕ

Streszczenie

Предметом artykułu jest analiza procesu асимилacji społeczności мuzułmańskiej в Polsce на przykładzie miasta stołecznego Warszawa. Problemem badawczym było określenie stopnia асимилacji społeczności мuzułmańskiej z mieszkańcami Warszawy oraz próba udzielenia odpowiedzi, czy асимилacja jest tym właściwym terminem określającym obecną interakcję, jaka zachodzi między społecznością мuzułmańską a innowierczymi mieszkańcami Warszawy. Takie ujęcie wymagało po pierwsze zdefiniowania „асимилacji”, która в XXI wieku nadal pozostaje terminem wieloznacznym oraz wzbudzającym liczne kontrowersje, po drugie, określenia barier i trudności oraz ukazania związków przyczynowo-skutkowych utrudniających przebieg асимилacji.

АССИМИЛЯЦИЯ – УТИЛИЗИРОВАННАЯ ТЕОРИЯ? МУСУЛЬМАНЕ В ВАРШАВЕ

Резюме

Предметом статьи является анализ процесса асимилиации мусульманской общности в Польше на примере её столицы Варшавы. Исследовательской проблемой было определение степени асимилиации мусульманской общности с жителями Варшавы, а также попытка ответа на вопрос о том, является ли *асимилиация* подходящим термином, определяющим современные взаимоотношения между мусульманской общностью и представителями других вероисповеданий, живущими в Варшаве. Данный подход нуждался, во-первых, в истолковании термина *асимилиация*, который в XXI веке по-прежнему остаётся многозначным термином, вызывающим многочисленные споры; во-вторых, в определении барьеров и сложностей, а также выявлении причинно-следственных связей, утрудняющих процесс асимилиации.