

Title—The Myth of the Muslim Tide: Do Immigrants Threaten the West?

Author—Doug Saunders

Year—2012

Categories: Islam, Migration, Colonialism, Culture, Politics

Place: Europe/The West

Time: 1945-Present

Argument Synopsis:

Saunders' book aims to show that all the claims about the incoming 'Muslim tide' are demonstrably false and are based on the same mixture of honest misunderstandings and darker fallacies that greeted earlier waves of poor immigrants from different religious cultures. He begins by highlighting how fears of a Muslim 'takeover' of Europe are not relegated to fringe groups. Saunders notes the prevalence of these claims from mainstream academic and politics, naming scholars Bernard Lewis, Niall Ferguson, and Daniel Pipes as actors who have been agitating about the so-called 'Muslim tide.' Saunders argues that it is extremely important to debunk these claims, especially because they have infiltrated the mainstream. His book sets out to use hard data to debunk the claims surrounding the discourse of the 'Muslim tide.' He claims that the conspicuous presence of head and/or face coverings helps feed the 'Muslim tide' agitation.

Saunders sets out to test the claims regarding the narrative of a Muslim takeover; the claims range from migration and fertility rates to attitudes towards sharia, abortion, gay rights, and socio-economic integration. He begins by assessing the percentages of migrants to various European countries, including Britain, France, and Germany, that are Muslim. Saunders concludes that only 28% of British migrants are Muslim. Overall, Eastern European migrant far outnumber Muslims across the continent. Higher birthrates are often used in the 'Muslim tide' rhetoric as evidence of the looming threat of 'replacement.' On the topic of birthrates, Saunders shows how fertility rates across the so-called 'Muslim world' have fallen—Iran's birthrate has fallen to 1.7 per couple, which is lower than both Britain and France. When looking at the data, it is clear that there is no link between higher birthrates and Islam; it usually can be correlated to factors like urbanization, education, and health care. In every Western country surveyed, Muslim migrant fertility rates are dropping towards convergence with the mainstream. He argues that a key reason for the initially high birthrates of these Muslim migrants is that the migrants are overwhelmingly coming from rural areas, where birthrates tend to be higher in general.

On issues such as abortion and gay rights, Saunders points out that European Muslims also tend to converge. The desire to enact sharia-based legislation is another fearmongering piece of rhetoric. Saunders argues that there is no real interest in enacting sharia among Muslim migrants, although there is interest in faith-based arbitration, which has long accommodated Jewish and Christian communities. He argues that in the realm of economic integration, culture and religion are not the cause of Muslim migrants' difficulties, rather it is restrictive laws of naturalization and home ownership. Importantly, he concludes by positing that terrorists and radical religious believers should be seen as distinct categories. The evidence he surveys discloses that something other than religion provides the drive to violence for terrorists. He utilizes hard data to systemically debunk the various claims from the 'Muslim tide' agitators.

Key Themes and Concepts:

- Radical religious believers and terrorists are distinct categories of people
- Islamophobia fits into a historical pattern in which similar bigotry was directed at Catholic and Jewish migrants
- The majority of Muslim migrants in Britain are from the Indian subcontinent, specifically from rural areas