

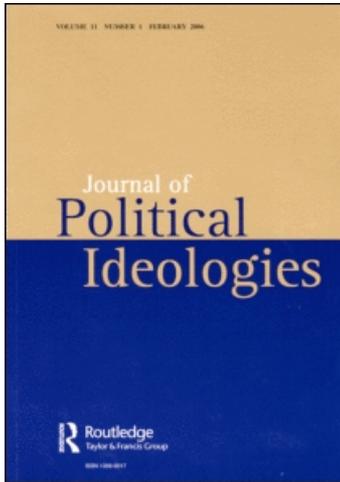
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The European extreme-right and Islam: New directions?

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ABSTRACT *In particular since the turn of the millennium, social scientists have identified anti-Muslim sentiment as a key feature of the European extreme-right. This article will discuss the history and validity of the term ‘Islamophobia’, and will probe into the development of the theme of ‘Eurabia’ in extreme-right wing ideology. The author will analyze the manner in which visions of a Muslim settlement and ‘takeover’ of Europe have the potential to create a cross-national reconfiguration of extreme-right ideology, a thematic shift, and a movement toward convergence between different sides of the ideological spectrum. The author argues that this ideology is not static, and that its potential new direction challenges significant assumptions of the current literature on the extreme-right.*

Introduction

Islamophobia is a word that is practically ubiquitous in today’s discourse on Islam. The situation of Muslim minorities in the West is frequently framed both by academics and by pundits in terms of the ‘need’ to combat the ‘evils’ of Islamophobia. The United Nations has organized seminars on ‘Confronting Islamophobia: Education for Tolerance and Understanding’,¹ and such websites as *Islamophobia Watch* were created to denounce ‘opinion columns and news items that we believe advocate Islamophobia and those writers and organizations taking a stand against Islamophobia’.² The Vienna-based European Union agency European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC—since March 2007 it became the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights—FRA), with a specific focus on Europe, released a much-publicized, cross-national report on ‘discrimination and manifestations of Islamophobia’ since 2001.³

Yet the widespread mention of Islamophobia is a recent development. The 1997 document that officially established the EUMC includes no reference to Islamophobia, but rather specifies the ‘phenomena of racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism’.⁴ Literature on the European extreme right has mirrored the increasing

ubiquitousness of the term Islamophobia in the public sphere. Though there is an ongoing debate on the definition of ‘extreme right’ and its shortcomings,⁵ the consensus has been to ascribe the label to highly nationalist, anti-system, and exclusionary (often racist) parties. In this light, Jean-Yves Camus, for example, has pointed out the emergence in the extreme right imagination of Islam as the ‘new enemy’,⁶ and has noted that ‘racist rhetoric today [has] an undeniable Islamophobic dimension’.⁷ In academia, however, Islamophobia was not until recently seen as a *basic* feature of the extreme right’s ideological and value system. The term itself was absent in early literature. It is true that Islam has been a target of some extreme-right parties for a considerable time. For instance, *Identité*, a *Front National* (National Front) magazine, dedicated a 1990 issue to the ‘awakening’ of Islam, and stressed both its ‘incompatibility’ with European culture and that it constituted once again in history ‘a danger for Europe’.⁸ The scholarly tendency, however, has been to consider ‘Islamophobia’ as primarily a dimension of xenophobia,⁹ and ‘anti-Muslim’ narratives as part of a broader anti-immigration outlook of extreme-right parties,¹⁰ or as a consequence of aggressive foreign policy visions in post-communist Russia.¹¹

However, in the early 21st century, and particularly in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, the threat that the Crescent will rise over the continent and the spectre of a Muslim Europe have become *basic* ideological features and themes of the European extreme right. Thus, the concept of ‘Islam’ galvanizes group action: as the group rallies a ‘defence’ against Islamization, new issues emerge, existent issues heighten or decline in prominence, party objectives become reconsidered, and new alliances form against the ‘threat’ of this ‘common enemy’.

I thus accept the premise that extreme right ideology is not static but, within some limits, evolves and is shaped by the surrounding environment.¹² This study focuses on a variety of parties across Europe, from Austria, Belgium, Britain, Denmark, France, and Italy. The reason behind the choice of parties with different electoral fortunes and each emerging from diverse national traditions is to show how, despite their differences, they display commonalities in their approach to Islam. Because this paper’s goal is to capture the overall narrative towards Islam, a primary focus on the parties’ literature (such as manifestos, press releases, official party publications, speeches) as well as interviews of leaders and members both to the media and to the author, seems appropriate. Additionally, secondary sources (from mainstream newspapers, websites and outside groups) that yield insight into the parties’ worldview are also incorporated.

In the pages that follow, and in the light of the increased weight that the issue of Islam has gained, I will pose a number of key questions, seek to analyze ideological developments of the extreme right, and probe into the challenges that these potential shifts and re-alignments offer to the literature on the subject. Bearing in mind that each development by itself could form the basis for a new article and invite further scrutiny, this paper aims to provide an overview of trends that, in my view, open new avenues of research into the ideology of the extreme-right party family.

Islamophobia or anti-Islamic?

As a preliminary note, it is necessary to point out not only that the term 'Islamophobia' is present both in and outside academia, as I mentioned in the introduction, but also that there is a growing alarmism regarding the issue. This perception of imminent danger is epitomized by the following words of the vice president of the American Humanist Association: 'It's like the beginning of a thunderstorm; you can sense the electricity in the air. Islamophobia is raising its ugly head in the United States as in Europe . . . We are teetering on the brink of a kind of mass hysteria—Islamophobia—that can set us back a generation or more in our quest for a world at peace'.¹³ Yet this perceived 'hysteria' seems to be over a term about which there is a lack of agreement regarding its meaning or to what exactly it refers. The last European Union report on 'Discrimination and Islamophobia' specifically states that the definition, application, and use of the term 'remains a contested issue'.¹⁴ The introduction to a cross-national report on 'Secularization and Religious Divides in Europe' notes that 'we therefore intend to use the term "Islamophobia" as a starting point' of analysis, but 'will not take the term for granted'.¹⁵ Regardless of these caveats, the fact of the matter is that the term shows staying power and has increasingly become the norm in the discussion of the situation of Muslims in Europe. Thus, Islamophobia designates the stigmatization of all Muslims, and is defined as a widespread mindset and fear-laden discourse in which people make blanket judgments of Islam as the enemy, as the 'other', as a dangerous and unchanged, monolithic bloc that it is the natural subject of well-deserved hostility from Westerners.¹⁶

Owing to a 'failure' in explaining what Islamophobia is, there have been calls for a new definition of Islamophobia, either broader or more constrained than the current one.¹⁷ There are, however, important reasons to rethink such widespread use of the term. Several criticisms have been levelled against it, some more compelling than others. For instance, Césari has mentioned the fact that 'the term can be misleading' because it may subsume other forms of discrimination (such as racial or class) under religious discrimination.¹⁸ In my view there are two compelling reasons that the employment by social scientists of the term 'Islamophobia' should be restrained. The first stems from the term's *indistinctiveness*: It places under the broad umbrella of 'fear or hatred of Islam', discourses and criticisms that have different sources, motivations, and goals. Vincent Geisser, for example, accuses pundits and social scientists who criticize Islam in the name of liberal values, of being driven essentially by a 'fear' that manifests in symptoms of a somewhat undefined 'latent islamophobia'.¹⁹ Against this 'catch-all' dynamic, I adopt an approach similar to that of Marcel Maussen, who calls for an urgent need to distinguish between 'academic discussions on the relations between Islam and modernity, public discussions on whether Islam recognizes the principle of separation of church and state, public outcries about Islam as a "backward religion" or as a "violent religion"', and hate speech.²⁰ Certainly a sizeable number of those who pose questions regarding Islam are not necessarily motivated by an illogical attitude, biased mindset, pure fear, or blind hate.

This aspect is linked with a second point of concern regarding the prevalent mention of 'Islamophobia'. John Bowen argues that the term is more polemical than it is analytical: It is 'far from neutral'.²¹ In this recognition, parallels can be established with the widespread use of the label 'xenophobia' that has long been attached to those who questioned the impact of immigration or the problems arising from specific models of integration (or lack thereof) of immigrants. This issue is connected with what Chantal Mouffe has described as one of the greatest flaws of contemporary European democracies: the imposition of a 'moral framework' on a number of issues, legitimating the reign of *good*, 'acceptable discourse' (and sometimes *cordon sanitaires*) over discourse deemed *evil* and out-of-bounds. There is, of course, no denial of the existence of 'extreme' positions or xenophobic attitudes, for example. Yet, in the wake of fairly recent developments in Europe, one is hard-pressed not to support her denunciation of 'the danger of using this category [extreme-right] to demonize all the parties who defend positions that are seen as a challenge to the well-meaning establishment'.²² The indiscriminate use of such labels as 'Islamophobia', that have an unmistakably *moralistic* dimension, has the potential to stigmatize *generally* and relegate to the 'Islamophobic' periphery of public debate, those who criticize or even attempt to understand, in a non-monolithic fashion, some aspects of Islam. The conflation (sometimes open, often implicit) of legitimate criticism or valid points of view with demonization, has the consequence of ending any sort of truly democratic and open debate on any sort of issue, silencing voices afraid of stigmatization, and in practice facilitating the emergence and actions of those who indeed demonize. This rings especially true in the light of increasing recognition, in academia for example, that there has been in recent decades a lack of public debate and interaction between those who govern and the governed, about crucial issues (like immigration), which has in turn increased the appeal of those parties that profess to represent the people and call for 'true' democracies.²³ In this light, 'anti-Islamic' seems a more suitable analytical category to apply to some discourses on Islam, particularly those coming from the extreme-right, because it at least starts a necessary (and long overdue) process of *distinguishing* between discourses about Islam: those who show irrational fears and treat Islam as a monolithic bloc from those who may be critical of some aspects yet are not *ipso facto* 'anti' Islam because of their criticism.²⁴

A greater focus on Christianity?

The authors of a 1998 research paper to the European Commission argued that it was no longer possible to discuss political futures 'without also discussing questions of meaning, spirituality, and cultural identity'.²⁵ A decade later these words ring truer than ever, particularly in regard to the European 'political future'. One of the developments of notice in the last years has been the growing relevance of Christian motifs and themes in the narratives set forth by a substantial number of European extreme-right parties.²⁶ The increased perception of Muslims, and Islam in general, as an ominous threat to the native communities is in no small part

responsible for this evolution. In a few cases, such as that of the National Front, the attention paid to Christianity is an intensified *continuation* of a previous ideological stance. Thus, when Le Pen defends outlawing large mosques on the grounds that they constitute ‘buildings of political-religious conquest’ and ‘threaten the Christian identity of our country’, he is by and large reiterating a familiar theme.²⁷

In some cases this ‘turn to Christianity’ has been novel and dramatic, and has implied a rejection of previous positions. This has been the case, for instance, with the Northern League. During an initial phase—which lasted until the late 1990s—the Catholic Church was defined as a natural enemy of the freedom of the North, because of the Church’s ‘collusion’ with the oppressive centralist forces since the unification of the Italian state. The Vatican, and its ecclesiastical hierarchy in particular, were denounced as a reactionary force and enemy of Northern liberation. The outbreak of the Kosovo war (which the party saw as part of an American-led project to ‘Islamicize’ Europe), coupled with an increasing emphasis by the party on ‘traditional’ values and principles (as a response to the disruptive forces of liberalization and globalization), triggered a shift in its discourse toward a pro-Christian, pro-Vatican direction. Pope John Paul II went from being a ‘Polish enemy’ of the besieged community to, in the words of Umberto Bossi, ‘a great [man] . . . the first [pope] for one hundred years who does not retreat in front of the Masonic and anti-Christian doctrines . . . the Church is starting to wake up’.²⁸ Thus, the League led the opposition against the construction of Islamic places of worship,²⁹ and increasingly stressed the ‘millenarian struggle’ between Christianity and Islam.

This anti-Islamic reorientation of the party received a major boost after the terrorist attacks of September 11. If the anti-Islamic focus had previously been fixed on the consequences for the indigenous community identity of Muslim settlement in Italy, ‘Islam’ soon became in the narrative of the party the synonym for terrorism, violence, and death. The party increased its activism on the ground against policies and practices that seemed to facilitate what the party called the ‘Islamization’ of the country.³⁰ A European MP for the Northern League declared at a street protest against the *burqa* that ‘Islam is a dangerous virus, and we must stop it from spreading, because Padania must remain Christian’.³¹ Historical battles are reinterpreted in the light of the steady influx of Muslim immigration to Europe. When the Italian parliament decided to remove a painting of the 1571 naval battle of Lepanto (in which the Ottoman fleet was defeated by Christian forces) from parliament Mario Borghezio, a top Northern League official, reacted angrily, saying that the decision ‘was an attack against the Christian identity of the country [because Lepanto] signalled the victory of a Christian Europe against Muslim invasion’.³² In this new context it come as no surprise that the party daily was one of the strongest supporters of Pope Benedict XVI when he made comments about the constitutive role of violence in Islam that triggered worldwide Muslim protests.³³ Northern League officials also praise Benedict for his focus on the need to ‘re-Christianize’ Europe. ‘We need to thank Ratzinger’, declared one League member. ‘Because of him the Church has

remembered its origins [and] what the deep meaning of belonging to a Christian community is'.³⁴

A similar emphasis on 'Christian roots' has become a feature of the discourse of the British National Party (BNP), particularly since 2001 and in reaction to the Islam-as-a-threat framing of the debate. Nick Griffin, leader of the BNP, has proclaimed the party to be the 'vanguard of the resistance to Islamification', which he deems to be 'the most pressing problem of the first half of our young century'.³⁵ As in the case of the Italian Northern League, the BNP has actively opposed the construction of mosques, each of which it describes as a step toward the 'Islamic colonization' of the country (as, for example, the large mosque planned for the 2012 London Olympics).³⁶ Even a symbol of traditional English nationalism such as Saint George has been described as a 'fiery and powerful symbol of opposition to Islam'.³⁷ Further the BNP has defended Pope Benedict XVI, and praised his 'courage to speak against the perils of Islam',³⁸ while heavily criticizing the Anglican Church of England for lacking the resolve to address 'the very real threat of Britain becoming an Islamic state in the next few decades'.³⁹ In this context, in which the Church of England is accused of having resigned itself to irrelevance and extinction, with 'hand wringing ministers kneel[ing] before the advancing waves carrying aloft the mighty sword of Islam',⁴⁰ it is no wonder that the party has been linked to the creation of a new Christian organization, the Christian Council, whose mission statement reads: 'At this time of moral crisis and faced with the very real prospect of the spiritual void being filled with dangerous creeds and cults, now more than ever, is a strong voice needed to reconnect the church with the lost congregations'.⁴¹ When the head of the Church of England noted that the incorporation of some aspects of Sharia law into the British legal system was 'unavoidable', the BNP reacted by stating that these declarations were part of a larger disposition of the Establishment toward 'betraying Britain's Christian heritage in order to appease Islam'.⁴² In the party's magazine *Identity*, a writer suggested that the BNP should commit itself to the defence of 'civilisational Christianity', because 'the alternative to a Christian Britain is chaos' and could lead *inter alia* to 'the surrender to the aggressiveness of a certain foreigner religion'.⁴³

This renewed emphasis on the 'Christian identity' of the 'original communities', who are now endangered by the advance of Islam in Europe, can be seen across the spectrum of parties on the extreme right. The short-lived political group of the European Parliament, 'Identity, Tradition and Sovereignty' (ITS), a coalition of extreme right parties from six member states that lasted from January to November 2007, had as a founding principle the 'commitment to Christian values, heritage, culture'. Chairman Bruno Gollnisch stated that one of the goals of the group was to go beyond a narrow euroscepticism (limited to attacking a European superstate) that does not 'properly defend Christian values'.⁴⁴ During the Austrian parliamentary elections of October 2006, the Freedom Party campaigned with a specifically anti-Islamic platform and released a political advertisement in which the cross atop Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna, the oldest church in the country, was replaced with an Islamic crescent. The

caption read: ‘This is the true hidden desire of Muslims’.⁴⁵ Amidst warnings against the impending ‘Islamization’ of the country, the Flemish party Vlaams Belang proclaims to be the real guardian of Christianity. As stated by Filip Dewinter, ‘In political disputes about abortion, euthanasia, same-sex-marriage, adoption for homosexual couples, family values, subsidies for Christian or Jewish schools, we have always defended the Christian viewpoint. On those topics, we were better Christians than the so-called Christian-Democrats’. He added, ‘Many of us are not “believers” in the religious meaning of the word, but we share the moral values of Christianity. They are the foundation of European civilization’.⁴⁶

This idea of an embattled ‘Christian Europe’ weakened by secularism and threatened with disappearance under the continuous migratory flow and settlement of Muslim populations, has found support in the warnings of Pope Benedict XVI against the spiritual void into which Europe fell due to the triumph of a Godless rationality that denies its peoples the role of faith and spiritual guidance.⁴⁷ As the Pope declared in an address regarding the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, Europe has ‘an identity comprised of a set of universal values that Christianity helped forge, thus giving Christianity not only a historical but [also] a foundational role *vis-à-vis* Europe. These values, which make up the soul of the Continent, must remain in the Europe of the third millennium as a “ferment” of civilization’. If Europe stays the course of radical secularism, in a context of the steady decline of birth rates, it is ‘following a path that could lead to its departure from history’.⁴⁸ This theme of an impending collapse of a Christian Europe is not exclusive to the Catholic hierarchy but also comes from Protestant environs. Although some of these voices specifically denounce the ongoing ‘Islamization of Europe’,⁴⁹ the emerging consensus seems to focus on the need for a more assertive and aggressive defence of ‘Christian’ values that would bring about the ‘re-Christianization’ of Europe. In this scenario it is not surprising that many nationalist parties find in the appeals of the Church, notably the Vatican, a confirmation of their *own* message and an ally in the need for urgent action against the decadence and the collapse of a Christian Europe that looms on the horizon. Eric Kaufmann has written that the growth of a European Islam may lead to an indigenous nationalist response (in the form of stronger nationalist parties) or ‘may lead to a renewed emphasis on Christian identity’.⁵⁰ Those variables, however, are not necessarily opposed and need not to exclude each other. The latest developments in European nationalist groups indicate that, particularly in opposition to visions of a Muslim takeover, a more Christian direction within these parties is already under way.

Toward philo-Semitism?

While anti-Semitism has been absent from the narrative of some parties (the Northern League, for example), distrust of Jews—perceived as alien, rootless, and engaged in international conspiracies against the unity of the nation—has long been a trait of European extreme-right parties (for instance, the National Front in France).

In more recent times, however, there has been a discursive shift in many of these parties to a decidedly pro-Jewish direction. This trend has been uneven, and some parties, like Germany's National Democratic Party (NPD), remain decidedly loyal to their anti-Semitic origins.⁵¹ A case in point is the Flemish *Vlaams Belang* that went from hardly taking any notice of Jews⁵² to—in an increasingly anti-Islamic context—the staunch support of Judaism and Zionism.⁵³ Filip Dewinter has often professed his support of and admiration for Jews, both in Jewish and in mainstream media. He repeatedly mentions the 'Judeo-Christian',⁵⁴ foundations of Europe and the West. 'Jewish values are European values', he stated in an interview, 'and Jewish civilization is one of the roots of Western civilization'.⁵⁵ The party has vowed to defend the Jewish communities against attacks from Muslims, which Dewinter described as 'the first pogroms in Belgium since World War II'.⁵⁶ Israel is also praised as a 'natural ally' of Europe because it is 'the only nation with freedom of speech, freedom of religion, rule of law [in the Middle East]. It's a paradox, but even the Arabs in Israel have more political rights and more freedom than their brothers in the Arab countries. Israel struggles for survival and security in a region that's ruled by bloody dictators'.⁵⁷ An interesting case is the British National Party that has recently been trying to distance itself from anti-Semitism, one of the driving forces of the party since its origins. The party leader has criticized the rabid 'blame-the-Jew' mentality,⁵⁸ and stated that for the BNP the idea 'that "the Jew is the enemy" is simply over for us now' because the party wants to 'get on with the real struggles'.⁵⁹ The party has given space to voices that openly profess admiration for Israel. A BNP member announced that the party 'has moved on in recent years, casting off the leg-irons of conspiracy theories and the thinly veiled anti-Semitism which has held this party back for two decades'. Instead the party identified as 'the real enemies of the British people' two groups: 'home grown Anglo-Saxon Celtic liberal leftists' and 'the Crescent Horde, the endless wave of Islamists who are flocking to our shores to bring our island nations into the embrace of their barbaric desert religion'. Thus, the anti-Semitic 'lunatic fringe of the Nationalist movement' should be rejected and Israel's 'nationalist' stance praised. After all, 'the 21st century is the Islamic century. Unless we start to resist the threat of Islamic extremism then within 100 years the West will have become Eurabia'.⁶⁰ In France Marine Le Pen, who vowed to 'de-demonize' the image of the party, has made overtures to the French Jewish community and, as a member of the European parliament, has registered with the Delegation for Relations with Israel. She was behind the decision to send National Front members to a demonstration in memory of a French Jew killed in a hate-crime, and told the media that she wanted to put an end to a 'number of misunderstandings' between the party and the Jewish community who, Marine Le Pen said, 'have nothing to fear from the National Front'.⁶¹ 'The French community, who are increasingly victims of attacks by Islamic radicals', she said on one occasion, 'should be able to turn to us for support'.⁶² For this show of solidarity with Jews, more traditional voices close to the party have accused her of trying to create, together with the Flemish *Vlaams Belang*, an 'axis' of rapprochement with the Jewish community in order to confront Muslims.⁶³ Guillaume Faye, one of France's New Right main theorists, advocates

that those who defend European identity should get rid of an obsessive and ‘chronic anti-Judaism’ because the real danger is colonization from ‘the third world and Islam’.⁶⁴

Recently a few voices in academia have argued that ‘Muslims’ have replaced ‘Jews’ as the new transnational Other in exclusionary discourses in the European Union. ‘Welcome to the new Europe, in which the Jews are no longer persecuted but revered as cosmopolitan ancestors’, observed Dominic Boyer.⁶⁵ For Matti Bunzl, the modern form of anti-Semitism has run its historical course and ‘there simply is no debate on the legitimacy of the Jewish presence in Europe’. Whereas anti-Semitism is a thing of the past, ‘designed to protect the purity of the ethnic nation-state, Islamophobia is marshalled to safeguard the future of European civilization’.⁶⁶ To other scholars anti-Semitism provides an accurate model regarding how Muslims are increasingly perceived as perpetual aliens to the indigenous culture.⁶⁷ Some remarkable differences between the treatment and status of Jews in the past and the situation of Muslims in today’s Europe should not be underestimated, however, and the fact remains that traditional anti-Semitism can resurge in other forms—in a ferocious form of anti-Zionism, for example—and can even manifest itself in anti-Jewish violence perpetrated by Muslim youths (visible during the second Palestinian Intifada 2000–2006).⁶⁸ Yet, an increasing number of acknowledgments by some extreme-right parties of the Jewish contribution to European culture, and support of Israel, *may* serve as evidence that the traditional demonization of Jews is taking a backseat to a new, fierce stigmatization of Muslims in narratives of belonging and exclusion in Europe.

Beyond nationalism?

Nationalism has long been identified as a core, and perhaps as *the* most-important, feature of extreme right-wing parties.⁶⁹ Further, these parties proudly declare themselves to be the only ‘authentic’ national forces of the country, and a majority of them feature variations of ‘nation’ in their own names. It has been observed that in some intellectual circles, such as those around the European New Right, nationalism was running out of fashion, replaced by an allegiance to a wider source of cultural identity, such as Europe. I believe that this development is not restricted to these rather small circles. I argue here that although conceding that nationalism may have more than one centre of control,⁷⁰ the height to which the notions of ‘Europe’ and ‘West’ have reached in the narratives of the European extreme-right warrants a closer look at the hypothesis that the ‘defence’ of the original communities by these groups has been increasingly extended to a European level and does not limit itself to the borders or territories of the country. This trajectory can be seen across the spectrum of extreme-right parties and has become more intense in recent years. In some respect this post-national discourse, the greater focus on European and Western borders and traditions, complements the nationalist stance, but has also the potential to compete with it. The emphasis on a broader entity—Europe or the West—emanates both from the need collectively to defend indigenous Europeans from the ‘New World Order’ and its

globalist ethos (which erases traditions and roots),⁷¹ and from fears of, and struggle against, Islamization.

A recurring theme of transformation of Europe into a new geo-political entity dominated by Muslims called *Eurabia* emerges in many of the discourses. The work of Jewish historian Bat Ye'or,⁷² is becoming a reference, and such concepts as *Eurabia* and *Dhimmitude* (referring to the subjected status of Christians and Jews under Islamic governance) have entered the vocabulary of the extreme-right (and, one might add, some sectors of the mainstream right as well). Asked to define his party, Flemish Party leader Filip Dewinter replied, 'We are the defenders of Western civilization, with its two pillars: Judeo-Christianity and the heritage of the ancient Greece'. Bat Ye'or is hailed as someone who was able both to unveil the 'shameful political shift' that led European elites and Arab leaders to concoct together the formation of Eurabia, and to point out 'how European politicians are kowtowing to Islam'. Bat Ye'or sheds light on dynamics that were previously in the dark. Dewinter explains it thus: 'I never understood how European politicians could be so short sighted. It seems so absurd. Again, Bat Ye'or explains how this fits into a larger pattern of creating a new political entity called Eurabia. It's not just weakness or ill judgement. It's part of a plan'. Dewinter adds, 'These Eurabian-minded politicians think they can consolidate their political power by making an alliance with the Muslim world. By selling out Europe to its worst enemies. They hope a strong Eurabia will be able to counterbalance the power of the United States'. This Eurabia path is thus leading Europe to a catastrophe: 'It puts at stake the physical survival of our European nations. We could go down the road of Lebanon'.⁷³ The focus here is on the survival of Europe, and potentially the entire West, with the threat to the Flemish community as *part* of a broader Europe-wide struggle. The Eurabian narrative is also gaining strength in the discourse of the British National Party. When Italian journalist and polemicist Oriana Fallaci passed away, the party praised her as someone who 'defied the civilizational transformation of Europe into Eurabia'.⁷⁴ According to Nick Griffin, the BNP leader, 'We are deeply concerned about the mainly—though not exclusively—French elite project to morph the EU, Turkey and the Mahgreb into "Eurabia". Bat Ye'or is 100% right about this'.⁷⁵ In an article about the November 2005 riots in France Griffin described his party as 'the vanguard' in the 'struggle between the West and Islam', for if the party fails in its mission, 'Europe will be no more, and our grandchildren will curse us in their *dhimmi* status as they pay endless tribute and suffer ceaseless oppression, injustice, humiliation and rape in the lands that once belonged to their free forebears'.⁷⁶ As written by a BNP columnist, 'This is in fact the start of World War 4, with its roots in the victory of Charles Martel over Islam in the Battle of Tours in 732 AD. Islam is once again awakening, and the West must awaken as well'.⁷⁷

The Northern League in Italy shares an analogous view regarding the need to defend Europe and the West in the face of the 'imperialist' designs of Islam. Northern League senior member Roberto Calderoli, decrying the West's abjuration of 'our Christian roots, identity and culture', argued in the party's newspaper for the launch of 'crusades of Western peoples, who still remember the battle of

Lepanto', against Islam.⁷⁸ When the Islamic threat—both in terms of 'colonization' and terrorism—is discussed in the party literature, it is typically framed as a danger not merely to the community but to the peoples of Europe and the West. The party claims to itself the role of supreme protector of the West against Islam; after all, 'We were the first to ring the alarm about the danger that Islam represents, about their inherent hostility toward the West'.⁷⁹ 'As preached by Oriana Fallaci', commented a party official, 'we need to show the pride of being Westerners, Christians and Padani'.⁸⁰ Mogens Camre, member of the European Parliament with the Danish People's Party, also mentions the need to combat the 'real danger of an Islamization of Europe' as a top priority of its party. He explicitly frames the discourse in terms of a collective European identity, saying, 'We think the Muslim countries belong in the Middle Ages and we will not see our democratic countries being destroyed by people who think they should rule the world according to a book written in the Middle East in the 7th and 8th centuries'.⁸¹ Regarding the threat of 'Islamization', an Austrian Freedom Party official observes that there is a real 'threat regarding the cultural integrity of the European nations and peoples with its cultures and traditions ... when Islamization threatens our laws, rules, habits and traditions it needs to be rolled back'. He added, 'Islamic countries must grant equal rights to Christians in their countries as Europe grants to Muslims who integrate into our society'.⁸² At the same time the new 'pan-European party' envisioned by four right-wing nationalist leaders (from Austria, France, Belgium, and Bulgaria) aims at rescuing Europe from the twin evils of 'globalization and Islamization'. 'Patriots of all the countries of Europe, unite!' exhorted the leader of Austria's Freedom Party at the conference where such plans were announced.⁸³ At the heart of political parties commonly described as 'extreme-right', nationalism is still the dominant force. Yet it is difficult to deny the emergence—and the examples presented here reinforce this perception—of a growing turn toward post-nationalist dynamics and arguments in the discourse of many of such parties. It is as if there is a direct relationship between their concerns *vis-à-vis* an Islamic community or *umma* united by faith and mores, *and* the need of these parties to present themselves as representatives and first line of defence of a wider European (and Western) transnational community *also* bound by a common (Christian) faith and values. This dynamic emerges clearly in the way, for example, that a potential (and increasingly unlikely) EU membership of Turkey is depicted by the European extreme-right. Many anti-Turkey membership propaganda materials, from a different number of parties, portray a threatening Crescent over the map of Europe with the headline, 'Turkey No!' One of the ways that, in the last general elections, the Austrian Freedom Party promoted its anti-system image was to state repeatedly that, unlike mainstream parties, it rejected Turkey's membership in the EU.⁸⁴ The alternative 'European project' promoted by leader of the French National Front Jean-Marie Le Pen, is based on a 'coherent group of peoples belonging to a Christian civilization [and] sharing a common culture',⁸⁵ which effectively excludes any Muslim countries (like Turkey). Raising the spectre of a 'true Islamic invasion of Europe' in the eventuality of Turkey's membership in the European Union, the Northern League has been continually campaigning for

a popular referendum that ‘will allow all citizens to have their say on a historical issue that will seal the destiny of our peoples’.⁸⁶ It has been argued that the debate on Turkish membership transformed Turkey into the “‘other” for self-definition of what it was to be defined as a European’.⁸⁷ More to the point, Casanova wrote that after 30 years of immigration from territories outside of Europe, the Turkish question is part of a broader issue in which ‘Islam’ is identified as the ‘utterly other’. Yet, the rejection of Islam by European extreme-right parties is dismissed by the same author as merely ‘nativist’ and ‘nationalist’.⁸⁸ As I have attempted to show in this section, a third ‘Europeanist’ dimension could be added, regardless of how different this ‘Europe’ is from the one currently promoted by Brussels. An increased ‘European identity’—going beyond a mere attachment to the original homelands—in these parties is certainly associated with the prominent role that Islam plays as the ‘other’ in contemporary discourses about ‘what it means’ to be an European in the 21st century.⁸⁹

From the periphery to the centre?

The question of the adoption by the mainstream right of themes and issues previously ‘owned’ by extreme-right parties (such as those dealing with law and order or immigration, for instance) has been addressed with some regularity by the literature on the extreme right.⁹⁰ Hainsworth has edited a volume on these parties, containing the telling subtitle ‘From the Margins to the Mainstream’, in which he concludes by stating that ‘in a variety of situations, they have influenced the agendas, policies and discourses of major political parties and governments’.⁹¹ In this section I will address the ways in which the increasing importance of the issue of ‘Islam’ has led to a *de facto* mainstreaming of opinions and policies previously deemed too ‘extreme’ and relegated to the periphery of the political spectrum by centrist parties.

But before illustrating and discussing this point, I will focus on another crucial consequence that this emphasis on Islam has had for the extreme right. In fact, recent years have witnessed a growing assimilation by these parties of a number of issues that are ‘respectable’, that are morally compelling for a substantial majority of public opinion and rooted in relatively consensual attitudes and inclinations. In short, the extreme right has co-opted issues that a large number of mainstream politicians, both on the mainstream Right and Left, find hard to disagree with, if not fully support. This development has rendered the distinction between what is ‘mainstream’ and what should be categorized as ‘extreme’ difficult and, at times, hopelessly muddled. For example, the situation of women in Muslim communities—and the issue of women’s rights in general—illustrate this point well. When the situation of women in Islam is discussed, the European extreme right puts forward arguments that, in a not-so-distant past, were considered to be positions exclusive to progressive and feminist groups in the West. The extreme right has been visibly active in its rejection of several cultural practices associated with Islam—ranging from the use of the headscarf and forced marriages, to honour-killings and female genital mutilation—by using arguments similar to

those employed by mainstream groups that denounce inequalities and discrimination against women. This development can be seen across the continent. Danish People's Party MEP Mogens Camre stated that 'headscarves and burkhas are a discrimination of women. The real effect is to keep women apart from society and prevent them from obtaining freedom and equality. No society can develop without equality and freedom for women'.⁹² One of the most popular books in Denmark, *Islamists and Naivists*, was co-written by two figures of the country's political mainstream (both Social Democrats, one a feminist) and denounces the 'totalitarian' impulses of Islam and its claim to control every single aspect of the lives of its adherents, and especially of women. As one of the writers observed, 'If a woman doesn't wear a headscarf, the Islamists will exert maximum pressure and use the threat of violence to make sure that she does. It is that zealous attempt to apply Islamist principles that is as authoritarian as Nazism or communism'.⁹³

In recent years the theme of 'oppression of women' under Islam has become a major theme of the literature of the Italian Northern League. According to League writers, the condition of Muslim women is a tell-tale sign of Islam's 'backwardness', and is incompatible with the mores of a superior Western civilization that strives for gender equality. A party MP commented that the Western way of life 'is based on civilized [notions of] democracy and respect for others ... rooted in the DNA of each citizen', while Islam's way of life 'is based on uncivilized traditions such as *sharia*, the death penalty, *lex talionis* ... infibulation, polygamy, the idea that inside families men are superior to women. These are all uncivilized traditions'.⁹⁴ When the Italian parliament refused to decide on a motion submitted by the Northern League coalition regarding 'violations against women's freedom in the name of religion', a party MP showed her outrage by declaring that 'in order to not offend Islamic susceptibilities', the parliament decided to ignore the fact that 'that in our country there are women and girls who are "slaves" or subjected to personal restrictions or forced [to accept] polygamy in the name of a religious faith that does not recognize the principle of equality between men and women'.⁹⁵ The British National Party has also intervened in favour of women's rights, specifically in the context of media reports about the establishment of Sharia courts and a two-tier legal system in Britain.⁹⁶ The BNP accused the media, and particularly the BBC, of ignorance about 'the abuse women and minorities suffer under Sharia laws the world over'. It continued: 'Women are beaten, raped, murdered, mutilated and oppressed by Muslim "culture" and English law should never turn its back on these vulnerable members of their society'. Like the Northern League, the BNP stresses gender equality in their denunciations of Islam. The party warns that the government's failure to stop Islamic law from taking hold, 'would be a travesty and a direct refutation of western morals that posit that all people are created equal and stand the same in the eyes of the law'.⁹⁷

The debate about the use of the headscarf in French public schools provides an example of an issue that conflates the questions of separation of Church and State and of gender equality, and has mobilized on the same front different forces of the

political spectrum from the extreme right to feminists and progressives. For example, one of the strongest supporters of banning the *hijab* was a prominent feminist, Elisabeth Badinter, who denounced the scarf as the ‘oppression of a sex’ and at odds with the Western tradition of women’s emancipation.⁹⁸ A Socialist and former president of SOS Racisme defended a left-wing policy of immigration quotas, and of setting as a precondition for potential immigrants the respect for both ‘*laïcité* [secularism] and gender equality’.⁹⁹ One should not be surprised, then, that Le Pen repeatedly raised in his speeches the need to enforce the principle of separation of Church and State while decrying the measures taken by the French government,¹⁰⁰ to ‘institutionalize’ Islam in the country. These efforts, Le Pen said, marked the end of the principle of *laïcité* and the first stage of the official financing of Islam in France under the pressure of its burgeoning ‘migrant and demographic force’.¹⁰¹ The necessity of maintaining religious and cultural neutrality in public schools has also been invoked by the Freedom Party in Austria as a reason to ban the use of the headscarves by both teachers and students.¹⁰² Denmark’s People’s Party was behind a proposal to ban ‘culturally specific’ headgear, except for those cultural manifestations that reflected a Christian-Jewish background.¹⁰³ On this issue the Italian Northern League leads the fight against any attempt to remove Christian symbols from schools, and has even argued that in order to prevent a Muslim ‘takeover’ of public institutions, the Italian Constitution should explicitly strengthen the ‘Christian identity’ of the country.¹⁰⁴

The increased political focus on Islam has also made a fierce opposition to the ritual slaughter of animals—particularly the production of *halal* meat, the only one permissible according to Sharia law—a major theme of extreme-right narratives. In this opposition these movements have often joined animal rights groups in protesting against halal food on the basis that it promotes an inhumane and barbaric method of slaughter. The British National Party has been active on this front, and even broke the news story that halal meat was served in many schools across the country because of an increasing number of Muslim students. The party quoted from a report by an animal rights group arguing that the practice caused considerable animal suffering. A BNP official added that ‘we really don’t like the way these animals are killed’.¹⁰⁵ The party affirmed not only that ‘this is an issue of animal welfare’, but that ‘parents have a right to know if their sons and daughters are unknowingly being fed on ritually slaughtered meat’.¹⁰⁶ The Danish People’s Party has launched a campaign to ban *halal* slaughter because ‘consideration of religious minorities should not be prioritized over consideration of animals’.¹⁰⁷ Similar accusations of cruelty to animals and calls by both the extreme right and animal welfare organizations to ban ritual slaughter have been reported in Austria,¹⁰⁸ France,¹⁰⁹ and Italy.¹¹⁰

At the same time, in no small part because of the pressure the ‘Islamic question’ places on contemporary European societies, ‘governing parties’ and politicians have shifted public policies and discourses toward positions that previous observers in academia have dismissed as extreme and exclusionary. A case in point is the growing relevance that cultural norms and values play in discussions of immigration, national identities, and national belongings across Europe. For the last 20 years, scholars have

argued that contemporary extreme-right parties no longer held ‘classic’ racist positions in their discriminatory and exclusionist positions *vis-à-vis* other individuals and communities. Pierre-André Taguieff describes this transformation from ‘biological racism’ (based on inequality and hierarchy of races) to a new, ‘differentialist’ form of racism in which exclusion was based on cultural differences. This new cultural racism advocates the ‘right to difference’ in which different cultures, viewed as incommensurable ‘totalities’, needed to be preserved and separated in order not to corrupt the ‘authenticity’ and ‘integrity’ of each culture. Such a perspective views culturally distinct groups as aliens whose absorption into the prevalent culture provides mainstream society with a fruitless and potentially disastrous task.¹¹¹ This distinction introduced by Taguieff, since its first formulation, has been widely used in the study of the extreme right in Europe and beyond Europe.¹¹² Stolcke, in a similar manner, added the notion of ‘cultural fundamentalism’ to the debate over anti-immigrant and racist groups. This form of exclusion was thus based on the assumption that cultures are incommensurable, with the caveat that, contrasting with racist theories, cultural fundamentalism ‘has a certain openness which leaves room for requiring immigrants, if they wish to live in our midst, to assimilate culturally’.¹¹³

Yet, as we progress toward the end of the first decade of the new century, even a detached observer cannot fail to notice that a great cultural revival has been taking hold of mainstream European politics. Though an emphasis on cultural aspects has of course existed before (see for example Germany’s long-term reluctance to give citizenship to *gastarbeiter*, many of whom are Muslim Turks), particularly since the late nineties, the emphasis on culture in regard to immigration, both in mainstream discourse and policies, has become conspicuous. In a 1997 article, political scientist Giovanni Sartori warned about the challenges posed to pluralistic European communities by massive immigration, particularly that from Islamic countries. Referring to the danger that ‘cultural strangers’ represented, Sartori wrote that ‘strangers who are unwilling to give in exchange for what they get, who wish to remain “alien” to the point of challenging the very laws of the land that hosts them, are bound to elicit fear, rejection, and hostility’.¹¹⁴ These arguments have been reinforced after the terrorist attacks of Muslim extremists both in America and Europe. Models of immigrant integration—from the multicultural (as in Britain or the Netherlands) to those focused on assimilation (as with the case of France)—have been questioned and revamped due to the unavoidable reality of the increased growth of separated communities that do not engage with and many times refuse, if are not downright hostile to, the norms and values of the broader society. The growing awareness of the danger that Islamic extremism represents for Europe’s civil societies created a political need for intervention, for the sake of national security. Thus, underlying this cultural revival are not only worries about Europe’s cultural demise but, importantly, an urgent need to address the real issue of radical Islamist activity on European soil. This is the starting point from which a wave of new policies toward immigrants and newcomers have sprung to life across Europe, and not only has urged the need for but has often imposed *as*

a condition for entering or remaining within the country ‘integration’ and acceptance of ‘indigenous’ norms and values. These policies are intimately linked with a more pronounced emphasis on ‘national’ identity and values to which immigrants must demonstrate allegiance. This urged reassertion of national identity and liberal values not only emerges from conservatives,¹¹⁵ but cuts across the ideological spectrum. David Goodhart, a progressive, argues that the left must discard ‘the fallacy that nationalism and national feeling is only and necessarily a belligerent and xenophobic force’.¹¹⁶

In this sense, it is true that civic integration policies have acquired an obligatory (and coercive) character.¹¹⁷ The Netherlands set the pace in revising an existent integration law and warning newcomers to ‘be aware of Dutch values and keep the country’s norms’. Immigrants are now required to pass an immigration test that includes a DVD showing gay and topless women.¹¹⁸ Such citizenship tests, for a long time unknown in Europe, are becoming the norm. In Denmark, the ministry of integration website instructs potential citizens ‘to work, pay tax, don’t hit your children, and show respect for equal rights between sexes’.¹¹⁹ Britain introduced an American-style citizenship ceremony, and has launched citizenship tests. These measures were preceded by a vigorous debate in which mainstream politicians, both from the left and the right, argued for a more active assertion of ‘core’ national values. Former Home Secretary David Blunkett vowed to ‘protect the rights and duties of all citizens and confront practices and beliefs that hold them back, particularly women. The left has to be consistent about defending core values, rather than retreating into moral relativism when its commitments are tested’.¹²⁰ In an op-ed piece David Davis, the shadow home secretary (from 2003 to June 2008), asked, ‘Are we going to find the compromises to preserve the freedoms, the tolerance, the give-and-take, that characterize the most open, vital and creative society in history? Or are we going to allow the splintering of loyalties, the division of communities, that will corrode the foundations of that society?’¹²¹ There has been a growing public discussion about practices that are not part of British culture, for example forced marriages (particularly Muslim first-cousin marriages), and a cabinet minister warned about the ‘genetic’ dangers associated with inbreeding.¹²²

France, under the initiative of then Interior minister Nicolas Sarkozy, adopted an obligatory ‘social integration contract’ (targeted at combating ethnic endogamy) for all new entrants. Further, before applying for permanent residence, immigrants to France must prove that they are ‘well-integrated’ into French society, meaning, among other things, that the applicant complies with the principles of the French Republic.¹²³ As a sign that the times—and the boundaries of what is acceptable to propose—have indeed changed regarding integration policies for immigrants in Europe, Sarkozy vowed during the presidential campaign to create a Ministry for Immigration and National Identity, which led Jean-Marie Le Pen to accuse him of ‘soliciting’ in the National Front’s territory.¹²⁴ The first bill presented by the new Ministry targeted foreigners who wanted to join their families, and introduced tests to ascertain would-be immigrants’ knowledge of French language, history, and ‘Republican values’.¹²⁵

Taken as a whole these examples, which are far from exhaustive, illustrate how in recent years there has been a clear shift in the discourse and policies regarding immigration. This shift has been driven by the relevance that the frame Islam-as-a-threat- to-European-security-and-values has gained in public opinion. Further, the discussion and the launch of new models of integration of immigrants has been linked with cultural narratives (a fact that is not often acknowledged and is sometimes denied by public officials), and the need for communities with cultural practices at odds with the indigenous majority to adjust and conform. There is an underlying cultural justification running through the new citizenship reforms and 'integration contracts' imposed on newcomers. In truth, the emphasis is on 'integration', and these new official measures reveal *per se* the belief in the possibility of integration of immigrants from different cultures, as with the case of Muslims. This optimism is close to non-existent in extreme-right narratives that promote instead the impossibility of such integration and the need for separation. Nevertheless, the trend toward cultural justifications in order to decide or determine a sense of belonging to the community—long considered a feature of the extreme-right—seems clear. This realization arguably raises the question of whether the concept 'extreme' is indeed malleable, varying according to circumstances and the politicians behind the discourses and-or policies. It depends on the messenger, not the message.¹²⁶ With respect to this a note of caution is necessary. While mainstream discourse on Muslim immigration tends to be nuanced both in terms of the diagnosis and proposed solutions, the extreme-right view is framed both on an either-or scenario (assimilation or expulsion) and in an apocalyptic tone (the coming of Eurabia, the extinction of European peoples, etc.). Also, it could be argued that in championing Western and democratic values as a way of countering Islam, the extreme right is essentially striving for legitimacy by inoculating itself from accusations of racism and xenophobia, while pursuing in its ultimate quest for ethnic homogeneity.¹²⁷ In any case, the extent or degree to which, particularly after September 11, 2001, the extreme right has influenced the establishment (mainstreaming of its positions) and/or was influenced by a favourable anti-Muslim environment (co-option of issues) certainly deserves further qualitative and quantitative investigation.

The 'spirit of decadence' goes mainstream?

Another point, however, merits reflection. Scholars, or even non-specialists, who have followed the extreme-right are aware that one of the driving forces of its ideology is the idea of *decline*, either of the nation or, increasingly, of Europe.¹²⁸ In a context in which signs of irreversible 'decadence' are perceived to be everywhere, extreme-right leaders portray their groups as the 'last defenders' of their beleaguered communities, whose cultural identity, authenticity, and independence are threatened by national and global forces. The 'disappearance' or 'death' of the community is, in these narratives, a real possibility looming on the near horizon. The patriarch of the European extreme-right, Jean-Marie Le Pen, has repeatedly warned that France and Europe, due to massive immigration and

demographic decline, were living on borrowed time. His daughter (and in line to become his successor at the head of the party) Marine Le Pen argues that ‘if we go on like this, Europe will no longer be Europe, [but] will turn into an Islamic Republic’. Thus, she says, ‘We are at a turning point, and if we don’t protect our civilization it will disappear’.¹²⁹ For the British National Party’s leader, what is at stake is Europe’s survival because of ‘continued mass immigration and the high Muslim birthrate, coupled with our own suicidally low one’.¹³⁰

Yet, in this regard, particularly since the last decade, the idea of an encroaching decadence, once viewed as fringe and ‘marginal’ has moved to the centre and is increasingly being adopted by conservative mainstream voices. Established scholars and many commentators, on both sides of the Atlantic, have in recent years written the script for the last days of Europe in which because of a demographic collapse, self-defeating multicultural policies and unfettered immigration, mostly from Muslim countries, Europe will undergo drastic changes that will transform it forever. Historian Bernard Lewis argued that because of Europe’s unwillingness to battle for cultural and religious control, the only question remaining regarding its future would be, ‘Will it be an Islamized Europe or Europeanized Islam?’¹³¹ Walter Laqueur delivered the ‘epitaph for an old continent’: Because of uncontrolled immigration, misguided multicultural policies that created parallel societies, aggravated by self-imposed ghettoization of Muslim immigrants and a severe demographic problem, Europe has reached the ‘belated realization that the continent faced enormous problems with which it had not yet come to terms: that the issue at stake was not its emergence as the leading superpower but survival’.¹³² This theme of European decadence is also present in the work of Niall Ferguson who argues that due to demographic reasons Islam has a long-term advantage *vis-à-vis* Europe (and the West), ‘a youthful society to the south and east of the Mediterranean is quietly colonizing, in the original sense of the word, a senescent and secularized continent to the north and west of it’.¹³³ Significantly, the work of Edward Gibbon on *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776) is often cited as an ominous warning to the ongoing ‘decline and fall’ of Europe and the West.¹³⁴

Other conservative voices that are part of the public debate are more dramatic and envision a future of warfare for Europe, with widespread violence triggered by an ‘indigenous backlash’ against Muslims. ‘It is difficult to imagine any other future scenario for Western Europe than its becoming Islamicized or having a civil war’, wrote a commentator.¹³⁵ Steyn thinks likely in Europe’s future a scenario of ‘War—the decline into bloody civil unrest that these economic and demographic factors will bring; and Conquest—the recolonization of Europe by Islam’.¹³⁶ Ralph Peters has warned that ‘far from enjoying the prospect of taking over Europe by having babies, Europe’s Muslims are living on borrowed time ... I have no difficulty imagining a scenario in which U.S. navy ships are at anchor and U.S. marines have gone ashore at Brest, Bremerhaven or Bari to guarantee the safe evacuation of Europe’s Muslims’.¹³⁷ This grim scenario for Muslims in Europe is shared by voices on the left, such as the *New Statesman*, which had a cover story on ‘The Next Holocaust’ (of Europe’s Muslims), with the rhetorical question,

'Do new pogroms beckon?'¹³⁸ In all fairness, these prophecies of doom are also countered in the public sphere by those who see the new Europe as more of a paradise than an inferno.¹³⁹

The noteworthy adoption by the extreme right of issues that have a relatively large consensus in the West (women's emancipation, for example), and the cultural shift of mainstream policies toward immigrants and newcomers lend tentative support to the hypothesis that the boundaries between extreme and reasonable or sound discourse have become increasingly indistinct. Matters are further complicated both because the extreme right uses Christianity as a sort of ideological shield, and mainstream conservative voices are also disseminating the catastrophic theme of 'decline and fall' of European nations under dual immigrant and demographic pressures.

Conclusion

In an attempt to anticipate what the future holds, Peter Jay and Michael Stewart wrote in 1987 of a post-millennium scenario in which the cross-national *Europe First Movement*, longing for a inward-looking Europe free of 'alien influences and undesirable immigrants', and proposing European-wide solutions, *inter alia*, to the erosion of European civilization and values, was able to supersede parochial nationalist parties and, in a period of economic breakdown, get hold by democratic means of the European Parliament and change in a isolationist, repressive, and exclusionist direction the European destiny.¹⁴⁰ In this 'forecast' the issue of Islam was absent but, nevertheless, there are ongoing and systemic trends on the European ground that, if they do not confirm the 'apocalypse' pictured by the authors, give a fair amount of credibility to scenarios in which extremist European-wide groups claiming to be the last hope of a doomed culture and declining civilization could emerge and become a significant force. Across Europe, though recognizing the unevenness of the process, we are witnessing in different movements on the extreme-right the increase in post-national dynamics, the beckoning of an assertive Christian identity, the shedding of anti-Semitic origins, and the growing respectability of some of its positions in the public debate about the role of Islam in Europe. The aim of this article, obviously, is not to make sweeping claims but rather to reflect on the changes (and their significance) that have been occurring in the worldview of the extreme right, emanating in large part from the omnipresence of the theme of Islam, that point to new directions and, at the same time, pose new challenges to established consensus, both in academia and society in general.

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67. See P. A. Silverstein, 'Immigrant Racialization and the New Savage Slot: Race, Migration, and Immigration in the New Europe', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 34 (2005), p. 366; A. Kundnani, 'Integrationism: The Politics of anti-Muslim Racism', *Race & Class*, 48(4) (2007), p. 30.
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69. See, for instance, Mudde, *op. cit.*, Ref. 9, p. 171.
70. See Eatwell, *op. cit.*, Ref. 5, p. 9.
71. There are some voices that advocate a rapprochement between nationalism and Islamism, precisely because both nationalists and Islamists share the same enemy in 'soulless' and 'disruptive' globalism. According to one such proponent, 'Both groups stand in antithesis to the globalist, in their insistence that man is *homo sapiens*, not *homo economicus*, and therefore materialism is not and ought not to be at the center of life'. In A. Fear, 'Anti-globalist Mussulmen', *Right NOW!*, No. 26 (January–March 2000), p. 6.
72. Bat Ye'Or, *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005).
73. Dewinter, *op. cit.*, Ref. 46.
74. 'The passing of a great lady' (BNP, British National Party), September 18, 2006. <http://www.bnp.org.uk>
75. Griffin, *op. cit.*, Ref. 59. The BNP also promotes the anti-Islamic views of South-African writer Arthur Kemp. To him, 'Either Europe will submit to Islam, and become the "Eurabia" which some have mentioned as a possible new name, or it will take steps to ensure that the islamification process is not only halted, but reversed'. In A. Kemp, *Jihad: Islam's 1,300 Year War on Western Civilisation* (Burlington, IA: Ostara Publications, 2008), p. 60.
76. Griffin, *op. cit.*, Ref. 35.
77. Barnes, *op. cit.*, Ref. 60.
78. *La Padania*, July 8, 2005.
79. *La Padania*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 33.
80. *Ibid.* Oriana Fallaci is a major reference for the Northern League. For example, in a Northern town governed by a party member, a building used by Muslims for prayer has been razed to make way for Public Square 'Oriana Fallaci'. See *La Repubblica*, May 18, 2008.
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86. *La Padania*, March 1, 2005.
87. N. Göle, 'Europe's Encounter with Islam: What Future?' *Constellations*, 13(2) (2006), p. 255. Some observers argue that the future of Turkey is in the European Union regardless of current hostility by Europeans to the idea. Robert Kaplan, for example, asked in an article, 'Does Europe want that many Muslims within its community? The answer should be that Europe has no choice. It is becoming Muslim anyway, in a demographic equivalent of the Islamic conquest of the early Middle Ages, when the Ottoman Empire reached the gates of Vienna. More to the point, Turkey is not only contiguous to Europe but also is already economically intertwined with it'. In R. Kaplan, 'At the Gates of Brussels', *The Atlantic*, 294(5), (December 2004), p. 48.
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89. One should note that Europe has witnessed in recent years the formation of pan-European associations and groups that reject any association with the extreme-right, and proclaim as their goal the 'defence' across Europe of the continent's Judeo-Christian roots, and stopping the 'islamization of Europe'. One such organization is *Pax Europa*, which has as its main figure a German journalist and writer, Udo Ulfkotte. Ulfkotte is also behind the creation in Germany of a new political party, describing itself as 'centrist', whose potential members must have a 'Judeo-Christian orientation', and which vows to 'regulate' the special benefits acquired by Muslims in Europe. See, '11 de Septiembre en Bruselas, contra la islamización

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