

Islamophobia, Euro-Islam, Islamism, and Post-Islamism: Changing Patterns of Secularism in Europe

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Abstract

Modern secularism, as theorized by such prominent liberal philosophers as John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas, prescribes that the state should treat all religions equally on the condition that they and their adherents relinquish their theocratic aspirations and recognize the political sovereignty and superiority of man-made law. Convinced that the secular bargain undermines the moral virtue of society and its members, a small, fragmented, but nevertheless conspicuous number of Islamists in Europe prefer to observe Islamic law in all walks of life, private and public. Alarmed by Islamists and informed by Orientalist readings of Islam, an increasingly vehement and vociferous contingent of Islamophobes avers that Islam is inherently incompatible with democracy and urges European governments to treat neither Islam nor Muslims equally, but rather suspiciously as real or potential threats to the wellbeing of European societies. In contrast, advocates of Euro-Islam insist that Islam can be reformed, like Christianity, to meet the requirements of modern secularism. This article contends that elements of all three of these vying ideological positions have found their way into policymaking targeting Muslims in several European lands. The resulting inconsistency and contradiction – what I call policy “messiness” – corroborate the process of “mutual fragilization” theorized by Charles Taylor, in which actors facing radical value pluralism develop solicitude regarding their

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own principles as well as greater tolerance for ambivalence. The latter, in particular, creates what Homi Bhabha terms a “third space” from which actors confronting cultural pluralism can freely and constructively explore cross-fertilizations and hybrid combinations with the potential to yield yet unimagined approaches and solutions to the problems of “super-diversity.” I identify just such a creative hybridity among a younger generation of European Muslims whom many observers dub “post-Islamists.”

Introduction

Intensified efforts since 9/11 to incorporate Muslims and Islam into the European secular order have generated considerable resistance and controversy. Though church-state relations institutionally vary from one European land to the next, they supposedly converge normatively around a liberal understanding of secularism.¹ Liberal secularism prescribes that believers depoliticize their religious convictions in exchange for equal treatment before the law. Depoliticization does not have to mean that religious persons and beliefs disappear from politics altogether. After all, Christian political parties, pressure groups, politicians, and activists abound in Europe. However, liberal secularism does demand that religions and their adherents jettison theocratic aspirations and recognize the political sovereignty and superiority of secular (that is, man-made, ideally democratic) law and government that treat all faiths and all citizens equally.²

This minimal requirement is what John Rawls means by an “overlapping consensus” despite “the fact of a plurality of reasonable yet incompatible comprehensive doctrines – the fact of reasonable pluralism.”³ Jürgen Habermas similarly theorizes “a consensus on the process of legitimate legislation and exercise of power” by a “cizenry [that] can no longer be bound together by a substantive consensus of values.”⁴ A small, fragmented, but nevertheless conspicuous number of Islamists in Europe reject this requirement, though not always for the same reasons or in the same manner.⁵ Contending that western secularism has shown itself to be spiritually vapid and ruinous, they prefer to observe Islamic law in all walks of life, private and public.

At the same time, an increasingly vehement and vociferous contingent of Islamophobes avers that Islam is inherently incompatible with liberal secular democracy and urges European governments to treat neither Islam nor Muslims equally, but rather suspiciously as real or potential threats to the wellbeing of European societies.⁶ Expressed differently, while liberalism in theory aspires to eliminate prejudice, Islamism endorses prejudice in favor of Islam and Islamophobia urges prejudice against Islam. Long considered politically

taboo in post-Holocaust Europe, prejudice based on (anti-)religious conviction is back in vogue and spawning intensified value pluralism regarding the proper place of religion in politics.⁷

Religious and ideological diversity can and does produce discord; however, it can also occasion “mutual fragilization.” Charles Taylor invented this term in his *A Secular Age* to describe “certainly one of the main features of the world of 2000, in contrast to that of 1500.”⁸ The Canadian philosopher has in mind a widespread softening of individual convictions in the face of a heightened awareness of opposing views.

We live in a condition where we cannot help but be aware that there are a number of different construals, views which intelligent, reasonably undeluded people, of good will, can and do disagree on. We cannot help looking over our shoulder from time to time, looking sideways, living our faith also in condition and uncertainty.⁹

In an atmosphere of radical moral pluralism – what Zygmunt Bauman has termed a “heterophilic age,”¹⁰ Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens, and Scott Lash “reflexive modernization”¹¹ – humans become bombarded with clashing normative outlooks. As Jock Young cleverly puts it, “the deviant other is everywhere” but “everyone is a potential deviant.”¹² Although exposure to radical moral pluralism leads some to harden their views, most “fragilize,” that is, they develop conscious or unconscious solicitude regarding the moral stances they prefer. While fragilization can be unsettling and bewildering, it can also create what Taylor calls a “neutral zone”¹³ and Homi Bhabha terms a “third space,”¹⁴ from which actors confronting cultural pluralism can freely and constructively explore cross-fertilizations and hybrid combinations with the potential to yield yet unimagined approaches and solutions to the problems of “super-diversity.”¹⁵

This article seeks to document mutual fragilization at the level of ideology and policy. As regards the first, I draw attention to political actors who borrow and combine ideas from normative worldviews that, from a purely philosophical perspective, supposedly collide and exclude one another. As regards the latter, I point to policy “messiness,” the tendency to tolerate and enact policies whose intents and consequences run at cross purposes.¹⁶ Both types of fragilization manifest new patterns of European secularism – actually secularisms – in which the prospect of and perhaps even the need for an “overlapping consensus” are abating.

Two preliminary caveats are in order. Since my primary objective here is to reveal changing and overlapping patterns of secularism sanctioned by Eu-

ropean governments, or what I call policy messiness, I deliberately foreground normative positions that wind up informing and influencing policymakers. Just as the latter are hardly perfectly informed, so too are my depictions less than perfectly comprehensive. The persons and positions that I categorize under the (also less than perfect) labels “Islamophobia,” “Euro-Islam,” “Islamism,” and “Post-Islamism” are, of course, far more complex in reality than it is possible to render here in these limited pages. I forewarn readers. Mine is an analysis of policy by a political scientist and not the kind of “thick description” of communities and cultures commonly offered by anthropologists.¹⁷

Furthermore, even as a policy analyst I do not for a moment want to imply that normative pluralism alone shapes policymaking. Analysts have identified a range of non-normative factors that influence immigration policy, among them demographics,¹⁸ health of the economy,¹⁹ political opportunity structures,²⁰ international crises,²¹ media salience,²² level of government,²³ courts,²⁴ institutional and legal heritage,²⁵ political access,²⁶ asymmetry of available resources,²⁷ ethnic origin,²⁸ type of political actor such as (opportunistic, ideological) elected officials versus (pragmatic, problem-solving) administrators,²⁹ cross-national learning,³⁰ and administrative rationality or “governmentality.”³¹ That noted, several studies document the considerable influence of normative arguments and expectations on immigration policy-making.³² These and other studies of normative frames and schemas have tended to exaggerate the degree and extent of normative consensus in any given land, making French policy out to be, for instance, uniformly republican, German policy ethno-nationalist, and British and Dutch policy multiculturalist.³³ By contrast, the concept of fragilization enables us to unpack the normative dimension in such a way as to reveal its polyvalent, dynamic, that is, messy character.

Euro-Islam

Most European governments have since 9/11 adopted a two-pronged approach to homeland security: (1) increase police efforts and powers to detect, thwart, arrest, and convict terrorists and their enablers; and (2) more vigorously encourage the integration of Muslims into society so as to lessen their sense of alienation and presumed susceptibility to political extremism. The latter has entailed the pledge to combat the rampant Islamophobic discrimination that numerous studies have documented in most European lands.³⁴ Prodded by the European Union’s Race Directive of 2000, whose Article Seven denounces discrimination based on religion, member states have established such anti-

discrimination agencies as the Commission for Equality and Human Rights in the United Kingdom (2004), the Haute Autorité de Lutte contre la Discriminations et pour l'Egalité in France (2005, since 2011 Défenseur des Droits), and Die Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes in Germany (2006). Going a step farther, most European governments have sought to counterbalance inherited institutional favoritism by establishing formal, high-profile relations with Islam that seek to parallel and (eventually) emulate those already in place between the state and Christianity (and often Judaism). While some states, such as Austria, Belgium, Sweden and the Netherlands, had close ties with Islamic representatives long before 9/11, others deliberately moved to form them thereafter. Thus did France found the Conseil Français du Culte Musulman in 2003, Britain the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board in 2005, and Germany the Deutsche Islam Konferenz in 2006.

The following official mission statement of Italy's Consulta per l'Islam Italiano, set up in 2005, is typical. It is to be

a consultative body of the Interior Ministry that conducts research which formulates positions and proposals for the purpose of encouraging institutional dialogue with the Islamic communities in order to identify the most adequate solutions for a harmonious inclusion of Islam within the national community with respect to the laws of the Italian Republic.³⁵

These and other efforts to embrace Muslims have been endorsed at the highest levels of government. As early as 1993, French interior minister Charles Pasqua posited: "It is no longer enough to talk of Islam in France. There has to be a French Islam. The French Republic is ready for this."³⁶ In 2009 in an editorial in *Le Monde* (9 December), French president Nicolas Sarkozy voiced his desire to "put the Muslim religion on an equal footing with all other great religions." German interior minister Wolfgang Schäuble has also maintained that his society and government must endeavor to transform the "Muslims in Germany" into "German Muslims."³⁷ Tony Blair first visited a mosque at the outset of Ramadan in 1999, Her Majesty ordered a prayer room built at Windsor Castle for her lone Muslim servant in 2004, and Prince Charles has voiced his wish to be crowned "Defender of Faiths" rather than "Defender of the Faith." Pope Benedict XVI twice invited members of the Consulta per l'Islam Italiano for ecumenical dialogues in 2007 and 2008.

The desired end of such outreach is "Euro-Islam," a neologism as telling as it is popular. It is telling because Euro-Islam is not only conceived of as an Islam befitting life in Europe, but also as a Europeanized Islam, that is, an Islam that has been subjected to similar self-scrutiny and self-reform as the

Christian denominations are alleged to have undergone in the modern age (even if with formidable resistance at times, such as within Roman Catholicism prior to Vatican II).³⁸ Advocates of Euro-Islam, such reformists as Naser Khader (Denmark), Baroness Kishwer Falkner (UK), Malek Cheleb (France), and Bassam Tibi (Germany), tend to start from the assumption that over the centuries the conventional practice of Islam in the sending countries has taken on myriad cultural and ethnic accretions that are not integral to the pristine faith. As envisaged by its proponents, Euro-Islam would relinquish, for example, any theocratic ambitions and embrace democracy. It would tolerate all other creeds, including atheism, and recognize the right of each individual to choose or craft his or her own faith. Freedom of religion further means that the prohibition of apostasy would have to be excised from Islamic doctrine.

Furthermore, Euro-Islam would purge from conventional Islamic practice all precepts and rituals that offend modern democratic sensibilities, such as the subordination of women to men or eye-for-eye justice. Likewise, this “enlightened Islam [which] is compatible with world civilization, with Europe, and with the spirit of the Republic”³⁹ would systematically disavow Qur’anic interpretations of nature belied by modern science and underscore the many passages in congruence with current science. Most importantly, it would entail subjecting the Qur’an to the same kind of rational scrutiny applied in biblical criticism since the nineteenth century. The sacred text would be read not as the inerrant and literal word of God, but as the words of specific men formulated in specific times – indeed, times very different from our own. French reformer Bassam Tahhan writes: “The tradition regards the Koran as one-dimensional and fixed. This approach is not rationalist. To be a rationalist is to accept that each era, with its [particular] methods and discoveries, presents its own reading of the Koran, and this is the way it will be until the end of days.”⁴⁰

Once European Muslims are made to understand that there exists no real alternative to interpreting the Qur’an, it is believed that they will become more comfortable with customizing the creed to better jibe with modern rationalism, including democracy and pluralism. An Islam based on independent judgment (*ijtihad*) rather than on slavish obedience to authority, claim the proponents of Euro-Islam, is not only compatible with the Qur’an but likelier to survive and thrive in a culture, such as Europe’s, that celebrates free choice.⁴¹ Euro-Islam represents, then, a largely depoliticized Islam that seeks to reinforce and accommodate rather than question or disrupt the perceived European secular order. The self-acknowledged Habermasian and Euro-Muslim Tibi summarizes:

By acknowledging cultural and religious pluralism, Euro-Islam would give up the claim of Islamic dominance. Thus defined, Euro-Islam would be compatible with liberal democracy, individual human rights, and the requirements of a civil society. It would also contrast sharply with the communitarian politics that result in ghettoization. To be sure, the politics of Euro-Islam would not allow complete assimilation of Muslims. Yet it could enable the adoption of forms of civil society leading to an enlightened, open-minded Islamic identity compatible with European civic culture.⁴²

Mainstream European politicians officially pronounce that they will have no truck with any Islam except Euro-Islam. Indeed, they often opportunistically exploit relations with Islam to spotlight their unequivocally democratic credentials. For instance, a then-still interior minister Sarkozy said of the Conseil Français du Culte Musulman in 2003: "It is precisely because we recognize the right of Islam to sit at the table of the republic that we will not accept any deviation. Any prayer leader whose views run contrary to the values of the republic will be expelled."⁴³ Tony Blair, while averring that the only sure strategy for defeating Islamist extremism was to embrace Islam, nonetheless emphatically added: "There has to be a shared acceptance that some things we believe in and we do together: obedience to certain values like democracy, rule of law, equality between men and women ... This common space cannot be left to chance or individual decision. It has to be accepted as mandatory."⁴⁴ And in an unmistakable allusion to Muslims, Angela Merkel insisted that "anyone coming here must respect our constitution and tolerate our Western and Christian roots."⁴⁵ Indeed, at one meeting of the German Islam Conference, the Muslim participants were asked to strike from their Qur'ans verses at odds with gender equality as a show of sincere commitment to democracy.⁴⁶

Islamophobia

Such hardline stances manifest fragilization toward Islamophobic prejudice. They hold Islam in greater suspicion and therefore to a higher standard than Christianity or Judaism. It is hard to imagine, for instance, a European politician (save perhaps a communist) seeking to score popularity points by demanding that Christian clerics strike passages from their holy scripture. Invitees to such state-sponsored "dialogues" often include, in addition to imams, Muslim apostates and even atheists who have in one way or another made a name for themselves by telling of the oppression they suffered as "Muslims," that is, as "insider experts" of a sort.⁴⁷ As some indignant Muslim

clerics who took part in the first German Islam Conference in 2006 sardonically complained regarding the invitees, the rough counterpart would be inviting “the Pope and pop star Madonna” to a purportedly serious meeting regarding relations between the state and the Roman Catholic Church.⁴⁸

Indeed, it has been practicing, as opposed to lapsed, Muslims who have frequently been expelled from such commissions (typically on suspicion of ties to the Muslim Brotherhood).⁴⁹ The (Bernard) Stasi Commission convened by Jacques Chirac in 2003, which recommended the ban on veils in French schools that became law in 2004, excluded testimony from veiled women on grounds that their views could not be trusted as their own.⁵⁰ Bans of various kinds of Islamic clothing (not to mention mosques and minarets) exist or are being considered in many other European lands.⁵¹

Equally prejudiced against or suspicious of Islam in particular are the numerous integration and civics courses and loyalty pledges that, for all intents and purposes, only Muslims are required to take in order to obtain citizenship or a visa. The Dutch course introduced in 1998, which has served as something of a model for the various types of loyalty tests that have subsequently sprung up in many European lands, subjects “students” to footage of gay men kissing and topless women sunbathing to teach and test the appropriate response, which, needless to say, is toleration rather than indignation.⁵² Nor should we overlook the fact that racial and ethnic profiling of Muslims by police has proliferated across Europe, as have deport-first-prove-later measures for dealing with suspected criminals of Muslim heritage.⁵³ Sadly, the preoccupation with Muslims may have contributed to the free reign exploited by “Christian” terrorists such as Norway’s Anders Behring Breivik or Germany’s National Socialist Underground Zwickau Cell.

The extra scrutiny is necessary, claim Islamophobes, because Islam is inherently antidemocratic and expansionist. European Islamophobia tends to manifest itself in two often overlapping, but nonetheless distinguishable strands. Mostly from the progressive Left stem concerns that the large presence of Muslims imperils the slow but steady progress of Reason and Democracy in Europe since the Enlightenment against the benighted forces of obscurantism and tyranny. The Qur’an is said to preach theocracy – “the dictatorship of the mullahs”⁵⁴ – and commands of its followers “submission” to divine law (Shari‘ah) rather than self-determination through democracy. Particularly threatened are the most recent achievements of the ongoing Enlightenment project, such as equal rights for women and homosexuals. Islam treats the former as virtual slaves whose place in heaven can be secured only through obsequious obedience to men; the latter as base sinners whose destiny is eter-

nal damnation. Typical of this common essentializing trope is Thierry Chervel's lament, versions of which could be quoted from any number of a chorus of prominent Islam-naysayers such as André Glucksmann, Emmanuell Todd, Fadela Amara, Herman Philipse, Alice Schwarzer, Necla Kelek, Ralph Giordano, and Farrukh Dhondy:

In the confrontation with Islamism, the Left has abandoned its principles. In the past it stood for cutting the ties to convention and tradition, but in the case of Islam it reinstates them in the name of multiculturalism. It is proud to have fought for women's rights, but in Islam it tolerates head scarves, arranged marriages, and wife-beating. It once stood for equal rights, now it preaches a right to difference – and thus different rights. It proclaims freedom of speech, but when it comes to Islam it coughs in embarrassment. It once supported gay rights, but now keeps silent about Islam's taboo on homosexuality. The West's long-due process of self-relativisation at the end of the colonial era, which was promoted by postmodernist and structuralist ideas, has led to cultural relativism and the loss of standards.⁵⁵

So convinced of Islam's inherent inclination toward dictatorship is prominent French intellectual Bernhard Henri Lévy that he refuses to refer to Islamists with anything but the neologism "fascislamist." Former German foreign minister Joschka Fischer prefers "the new totalitarianism."⁵⁶ It seems an obvious conclusion that "one cannot consider Islam a religion among others, a religion that might have a right to exist under the big roof of European tolerance."⁵⁷

From the right side of the political spectrum, one more often encounters grave concern regarding the purported adulteration of Europe's "Judeo-Christian character." Large-scale postwar immigration combined with higher birth rates among Muslims is said to have occasioned the "Islamization" of Europe to a point where natives feel like "strangers in their own country."⁵⁸ While soberer observers raise concerns about the dilution of the ethnic and linguistic homogeneity or "social glue" that any society supposedly requires to function well,⁵⁹ other more alarmist Cassandras discern an Islamic conspiracy to transform Europe into "Eurabia" using Muslim migrants as the foot soldiers. Thus wrote Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci in her second bestselling diatribe against Islam, *The Force of Reason*: "Europe becomes more and more a province of Islam, a colony of Islam. In each of our cities lies a second city: a Muslim city, a city run by the Koran. A stage in the Islamic expansionism."⁶⁰

Indeed, purporting to expose such a plot has become one of the surest ways since 9/11 to catapult oneself onto the bestseller list.⁶¹ Like Fallaci's, the

paranoid arguments typically contend that Islam harbors a built-in urge toward militant expansionism that stems back to its very founder, Muhammad, who established an Islamic theocracy in Makkah with the sword. Following the Prophet's lead, subsequent Islamic empires are said to have all deployed military might to spread the faith, including into Europe during the Middle Ages. Islamists and jihadists will not stop until they have conquered Europe as their stepping stone to subduing the entire West. Tolerating their presence represents Europe's twentieth-century counterpart to Munich of 1938.⁶²

Both left and right Islamophobia draw from and reinforce (neo)Orientalist discourse. Edward Said, of course, penned the classic study of *Orientalism* as a discourse that not only stigmatized the Orient but also legitimized its domination by western powers. The discourse, created and conveyed by an interlocking network of artists, experts, administrators, journalists, and politicians, represents Islam as a monolithic and static religion and culture; indeed, an entire civilization that resists not only change but, in particular, rational persuasion. The discourse is furthermore reductionist and essentialist in that it portrays all Muslims as fully determined by an all-encompassing Islamic ethos. Orientalism thereby denies Muslims the free agency and reason to adapt, alter, or reject their faith.

This supposition, moreover, conveniently dismisses Muslims' self-representation as the nonsensical utterances of persons intellectually imprisoned by a benighted creed and culture. In the Orientalist discourse, Muslims are represented rather than heard, suspected rather than trusted, and governed rather than empowered. Finally, by creating the proverbial "Negative Other," the discourse self-servingly projects a positive counter-image of the West and westerners as utterly "other" and therefore superior to unenlightened Orientals. "The Orient," writes Said, "has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience ... European culture gained its strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self."⁶³

There now exists a plethora of studies documenting both the prevalence and sway of this type of neo-Orientalist discourse in European politics and media.⁶⁴ Justin Gest's assessment is representative:

Interpretations of Islam that portray it as irreducible, impenetrable, undifferentiated and immune to processes of change have long obscured the complexities of the historical experience of Muslims across different societies. Today, these perceptions persist, overlooking the complicated process of acculturation and mutual adaptation by Muslims and institutions of Western Europe. They ignore Islam's plasticity and diversity, and instead allow ex-

aggerated misimages – stemming from exotica or invented in a narrow historical context and augmented by selective episodic details – to constitute Muslim history and tradition. And by considering Islam as an undifferentiated whole, essentialist discourse is able to broad-brush Muslims as a threat to the equally undifferentiated “good” societies of the West.⁶⁵

The power of Islamophobia lies in transforming prejudice into prudence. The “Muslims” that vast numbers of non-Muslim Europeans “know” are for the most part virtual or fully “mediatized”⁶⁶; and these fictionalized Muslims are indeed sinister and threatening, for their imputed Islamic piety makes them immutably anti-democratic, regressive, misogynistic, militaristic, and, most worrisomely, irrational.⁶⁷ Small wonder, then, that the 2011 *Pew Global Attitudes Survey* found that 36% of those polled in Britain and France, 55% in Germany, and 63% in Spain have an “unfavorable” attitude toward Muslims in general.⁶⁸ European Muslims have become the victim (before but even more so after 9/11) of what Stanley Cohen has diagnosed as “moral panic.” Moral panic obtains when opportunistic political agents manage to stigmatize a targeted group in such a way that its purported moral deviance becomes convincingly portrayed as an existential threat to society as a whole.⁶⁹ Furthermore, moral panic is all the likelier in the “risk society” of late modernity, where persons become more preoccupied with potential than with actual dangers.⁷⁰

Moral panic feeds off exaggeration as much as distortion. Needless to say, neither European secularism nor Christianity lies imperiled, at least not from Muslims. Theocratic parties and politicians remain rare and largely unelectable. The schools, both private and public, overwhelmingly teach and socialize pupils in the core secularist tenet that democratic law is supreme. Indeed, studies reveal that the vast majority of European Muslims lead typically “secular” lifestyles that for the most part relegate religious belief and practice to the private sphere.⁷¹ At the same time, European lands remain fully saturated in Christian lore, ritual, and symbolism, from hourly ringing church bells to crucifixes in classrooms to religious-oriented holidays, all of which Muslims must suffer. The (Gregorian) calendar itself is of Christian origin!

Laborde labels such favoritism “soft rules,” a mostly unorchestrated, unofficial, and yet pervasive favoring of Christian norms, expectations, and presuppositions as “normal,” and Muslim ones as “abnormal.”⁷² And yet, much Christian favoritism is deliberately state-sponsored. Take the case of private but nonetheless state-subsidized religious schools. Germany has thousands of Christian schools compared to two Islamic schools; the Netherlands has 5,000 compared to 50; Britain has 7,000 compared to seven (despite the fact that more Muslims weekly attend mosque than Anglicans weekly attend

church).⁷³ Even in *laïque* France, roughly one-fifth of French pupils attend religious (mostly Christian) schools, 85 percent of whose costs are covered by the state.⁷⁴ In contrast, only a few dozen Muslim pupils attend a handful of Muslim schools.⁷⁵ As Grace Davie incisively observes, “in European society, the religious playing field is not level, nor is it likely to become so in the foreseeable future.”⁷⁶ Not a single European country currently comes close to fulfilling Rainer Bauböck’s elegant vision of genuine secular neutrality and fairness:

the state can live up to its obligation of equal concern and respect for all citizens by, on the one hand, extending whatever historical privileges the dominant religion has enjoyed to the minority congregations and, on the other hand, abolishing those that involuntarily subject non-believers to some religious authority.⁷⁷

Islamism and Europobia

Both secular and Christian favoritism roil Islamists. I employ the admittedly imperfect term “Islamism” loosely and broadly to envelop the beliefs of all those who strive toward a society in which Islamic precepts and laws – typically understood as those enunciated in the Qur’an and Sunnah – predominate. Among those I label “Islamists,” the general idea tends to prevail that God revealed through Prophet Muhammad (and by some accounts certain subsequent hadiths as well) sufficient guidelines for leading a morally upstanding life as an individual and as a community for all times and places. One saying attributed to Muhammad, for example, that is oft-recited by Islamists observes: “The best people are those living in my generation, then those coming after them, and then those coming after.”⁷⁸

Islamists tend to see Islam as integral rather than antithetical to modern life and believe that the latter needs to conform to the former rather than vice versa. Due to limited space, I gloss over the significant differences in strategy for achieving the Islamist goal – differences ranging from pietist personal conversion stressed by such groups as Tablighi Jamaat and Jamaat un Nur, to non-violent political action practiced by the Muslim Brotherhood and its European affiliate the Union of Islamic Organizations in Europe, to violent jihadi militant organizations such as Hizb ut-Tahrir, Supporters of Shariah, and Groupe Islamique Armé.⁷⁹ In the context of this article, it makes sense to lump these differing groups and beliefs together under a single category because they, like Christian and Jewish fundamentalists (who, by the way, outnumber Islamists in Europe), pose a challenge to the secular European state’s demand,

in theory at least, that all its citizens eschew theocracy and submit to man-made law.

For Islamists, resisting European-style secularism means far more than simply maintaining a particular identity; it is about defending their access to eternal salvation. They resolutely believe that the majority of European Christian and Jewish denominations have made a tragic mistake with grave consequences for all of humanity in submitting to the conditions of western secularism. By subordinating themselves to man-made law, they have forfeited the role of moral leadership, thereby opening the way for unbuttoned hedonism to become the ersatz religion for the masses, and left morally unguided and unchecked an economic and political elite that has ravaged the globe and its peoples through their wanton pursuit of this-worldly profit and power. Secularism, for Islamists, is synonymous with the triumph of sin over morality, evil over good. They resolve to resist it, which they believe they do best by endeavoring to live by Islamic precepts as much as possible in all aspects of their lives. One Copenhagen imam, for example, averred in 2004 that “secularism is a disgusting form of oppression. . . . No Muslim can accept secularism, freedom, and democracy. It is for Allah alone to legislate how our society shall be regulated. Muslims wish and long for Allah’s law to replace the law of man.”⁸⁰ A zealous cybnaut at *oumma.com*, likewise, announces: “Laws made by men are made for them and therefore are always unjust, only Quranic law is good because it is impartial.”⁸¹

Though anecdotal to be sure, such individual utterances nevertheless do broadly reflect the tenet of the Muslim Brotherhood that “The Qur’an is our constitution.” Indeed, these very words fell from the lips of the leader of the Union of Islamic Organizations in France during an interview, although he later denied saying them.⁸² This theocratic philosophy was profoundly inspired by Sayyid Qutb’s *Milestones*, still a widely read and praised book among Islamists, in which the venerated martyr denounces all man-made laws as the product of ignorance (*jāhiliyah*) and calls upon his brethren to defy, depose, and replace them with Islamic law wherever possible.⁸³ The organization Hizb ut-Tahrir, for example, claims that “Islam is a complete way of life that provides guidance for man in all aspects of life. It is not defined in contradistinction to other ideologies or religions, but by being the truth revealed by the creator of man, life and the universe.”⁸⁴

Islamists tend to practice “inverted othering.” This concept parallels what others identify as a “duplication” or “mirror” effect, whereby marginalized Muslims recast the stigma of themselves as Europe’s negative Other to produce an equally reductionist counter-stereotype in which the West and west-

erners appear evil and Islam and “true” Muslims appear good.⁸⁵ Inverted othering also reveals fragilization. From postcolonial and postmodern studies, Islamist activists shrewdly borrow influential readings of the West in late modernity and customize them to undergird their Islamist agenda. The conventional image of Islamists as proverbial ostriches with their heads sunk deep in the sand of a medieval worldview misses the mark. I concur with Olivier Roy, who contends that Islamist activists are best understood as fully integrated into a single global political discourse whose successful ideas and tactics they keenly study and dexterously employ.⁸⁶

Islamists, for instance, deftly exploit the postmodern argument that Muslims are Europe’s latest Other, the newest group Europeans love to hate. As intimated above, this postmodern argument that interprets Muslims as something akin to Europe’s new Jews, whose stigmatized popular image reinforces European superciliousness, has become a staple of European migration studies, particularly on the Left.⁸⁷ Like postmodernists, Islamists contend that the stigmatization of Muslims is not merely hypocritical, a double standard, but rather constitutive of European identity itself. Postmodernists, of course, offer up a wide variety of reasons, ranging from sublimated impulses and needs à la Sigmund Freud to simple force of habit, for why westerners engage in negative othering. Islamists, by contrast, contend that westerners stigmatize Muslims because they have nothing to be proud of in their own civilization, having completely befouled it through rampant turpitude. Rotterdam-based imam Khalil el-Moumni, for example, declares that “Western civilization is a civilization without morals,” while the Islamic Party of Britain contends that “there is nothing in Western societies that remotely resembles good behaviour.”⁸⁸

According to the Muslim Parliament UK, Europe is “beginning to develop disorders of the mind, body and soul as a direct consequence of unmitigated secularism.”⁸⁹ Thankfully, claims Kalim Siddiqui, Islam “possesses moral precepts such as collective responsibility and moderation that liberate man from western-like materialism, egoism and money-grabbing corruption and overriding selfish individualism of the West.”⁹⁰ Westerners are said not to want to face this disturbing fact. The Swedish journal *Salaam* charges: “The ones who are behind this negative propaganda hate the message that Islam has brought, i.e. that all men are equal before Allah and that the best of us is the most devout.” They aim to “make Islam look like a weird, horrible and strange faith so that no one ever should come to think of taking an interest in or convert to that faith.”⁹¹

A second trope commonly employed by Islamists contends that Europe and Europeans have long been – and remain – bent on subjugating Muslims.

With arguments unmistakably reminiscent of postcolonial luminaries from Frantz Fanon to Said, Islamists contend that the West has long harbored and often realized (neo)imperialist designs on the Orient. From the Crusades through the colonialism of the “White Man’s Burden” to the current “war on terror,” this urge to dominate Muslims has purportedly figured prominently in the western psyche. Needless to say, the United States and Israel lead the “Crusaders and Zionists” of today; however, Europe incurs vitriolic recrimination for supporting this ongoing injustice and subjugation.⁹² For example, in the wake of the Boston Marathon bombing of 2013, Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain posted on its website:

the context behind political violence, where Muslims are involved, is often casually ignored... Just in the past decade, in a highly charged post 9-11 world, the USA and its allies have committed numerous heinous crimes against Muslims. Whether one looks at the Guantanamo Bay, the deaths of Iraqis on false pretences (sic), the systematic destruction of Afghanistan since 2002, the drone attacks in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia, the attack and intervention in Mali, overt support for Israel’s crimes in Palestine, tacit support for India’s crimes in Kashmir, silence and complicity over Russian thuggery in the North Caucasus, the backing of vicious dictators in the Muslim world or the tacit support for Bashar Al-Assad in Syria until recently, one will see genuine causes for grief, anger and emotion.⁹³

Within Europe, Europeans are said to perpetuate the imperialist tradition and mindset through a combined demonization and domination of Muslims that marginalize and exploit them as second-class citizens. Britain’s Islam-channel, for instance, advertises itself as the “Voice of the Voiceless, Voice of the Oppressed.” Siddiqui charges that “post-Christian secular society,” including “the British Government,” seeks “to destroy our values,” while Abdul Wahid (chairman, Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain) claims “the government’s long-term objective is to manufacture a compliant, subdued, secular Muslim community in Britain.”⁹⁴ Such remarks are unmistakably informed by the postcolonial interpretation of immigration in Europe that discerns an ongoing attitude of “coloniality,” that is, “a logic of governmentality that not only supports specific forms of historical colonialism but continues to structure a planetary hierarchy in terms of a distinction between West and the non-West ... beyond the formal institutionalization of colonialism.”⁹⁵

By stressing Islamists’ fragilization toward postmodern and postcolonial analysis, I do not mean to dismiss their capacity for independent thought. I seek instead to proffer an interpretation of “multiculturalism” that reads it as

an outgrowth of mutual fragilization rather than creeping Islamization. Policies of official or “de facto multiculturalism”⁹⁶ have doubtless opened up spaces across Europe in which Islamists can preach and practice their anti-western and anti-secular worldview. Scores of studies document the existence of transnational enclaves in which migrants live by norms and values that are significantly different from the majority population.⁹⁷ These are not exclusively Islamist enclaves, but Islamists do figure prominently in many of them, in which they carve out what some have called “protection zones”⁹⁸ or domains of “Islamic ambiance.”⁹⁹

However, two caveats need to be interjected here immediately. First, such Islamist zones of *de facto* autonomy represent tiny islands in a surrounding sea of both irreligious and Christian favoritism of the kinds discussed above. Second, and more importantly, Islamist “apartism”¹⁰⁰ does not reflect anything remotely resembling the Islamization of the policymaking process itself. European governments continue to be staffed by precious few elected or appointed Muslims with enough influence to shape policy and even fewer seeking to legitimize multicultural measures with reference to theocratic passages in the Qur’an or hadiths. Rather, through fragilizing exposure to widely circulated postmodern and postcolonial ideas, many non-Muslim officials have come to doubt the morality or the feasibility of insisting that Muslims conform to European secular norms and values.

I am not suggesting that postmodernists and postcolonialists have usurped positions of power, though this presumably has occurred in some places. Far likelier is that officials who generally prefer what we are calling “liberal secular values” consider plausible the postmodern nihilist notion that those same values are historically and culturally contingent rather than universal and, particularly in relation to some Muslims, imposed rather than desired.¹⁰¹ The resulting solicitude generates sympathy, conscious or unconscious, for the core multicultural tenet that migrants should not have to relinquish their particular culture as a condition of migrating to European lands. In my reading, then, multiculturalism does indeed represent a certain softening toward Islamism, but not toward those elements that stem directly from Islamic doctrine per se, but rather toward those elements that Islamists, being insightful observers of current political discourse, have shrewdly, if not disingenuously, adopted from postmodern discourse precisely because they do cast doubt on liberal secular assimilationism.

We can broadly distinguish between two types of multiculturalist policies: direct and indirect support of Islamist organizations. Since the 1970s, European governments at various levels have regularly funded a variety of immi-

grant organizations dedicated to nurturing and preserving immigrants' language and culture in the receiving country. Thus public monies have flowed to hundreds of Islamic organizations to erect mosques, establish community centers, found female support groups, fund private or public Islamic education, provide imams to undertake pastoral work with prisoners or patients, operate public access radio or television stations, or open sports clubs.¹⁰² Typically such multiculturalist funding has been provided with minimal strings attached. Officials identify a small number of prominent community leaders to decide how to distribute and spend public funds. These "elders" of sorts may pay lip service to liberal democratic values, but in reality are left to run their organizations with virtually no governmental oversight.¹⁰³

It is important to note that such support for multicultural measures has persisted and expanded over the past three decades not merely in countries with an official multicultural policy, such as the Netherlands, Sweden, Belgium, or Britain, but in practically every European nation.¹⁰⁴ Sometimes, multicultural policies were rationalized to the public under the rubric of "reintegration," that is, preparing migrants to return to their homelands when, in fact, officials knew few planned to do so.¹⁰⁵ More often, those officials tasked with dealing with immigrants implemented multicultural measures underneath the political and media radar.¹⁰⁶ Thus did the erstwhile Italian prime minister Giulio Andreotti explain: "All the mosques the Saudis have built around the world became elements of propaganda. I am not naïve. But the important thing is to try to have a relationship with them."¹⁰⁷

The Multiculturalism Policy Index at Queens University finds that despite the great deal of recent political rhetoric denouncing multiculturalism as "failed," multiculturalist policies in fact increased not only from 1980 to 2000, but also from 2000 to 2010 across Europe and "more than offset" the high-profile rescinding of such policies in places like the Netherlands since 9/11.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, much research shows that Islamists, employing their legendary social organizing skills, have proven adept at penetrating immigrant organizations and steering them to support an Islamist agenda. Many of them spew Europhobic rhetoric, discourage or forbid their members to interact with "Europeans," preach the superiority of Islamic to secular law, and instruct adherents to follow the former even if it means transgressing the latter. There is, of course, much Islamophobic fear-mongering and sensationalism in reporting that exposes such organizations, but it would nevertheless be naïve to think that state funding is not reaching Islamists.¹⁰⁹

Second, indirect support for Islamism in Europe occurs through the toleration of Islamist organizations and mosques that have no relationship with

the government. All European constitutions guarantee religious freedom. As a result, Islamist organizations find far more congenial grounds for organizing than they do in most sending countries, whose governments often repress them (especially before the Arab Spring) – a reason why so many Islamist exiles from Ruhollah Khomeini to Necmettin Erbakan to Ali Sadreddin al-Bayanouni took or take safe haven in Europe and organize their efforts from there. They are, by and large, left free to organize as they wish and to raise money from all manner of sources, such as the Muslim World League bankrolled by Saudi Arabia.¹¹⁰

As mentioned in the introduction, modern European secularism implicitly demands that religious organizations eschew theocracy as a condition for exercising religious freedom. However, many Islamist groups quite openly espouse it.¹¹¹ To be sure, their strivings are often directed toward establishing Islamic regimes in the sending countries. However, their efforts can and do apply to European soil. Naturally, there are extreme voices like Omar Bakri, who prophesizes imminent victory in Europe when “the black flag of Islam flies over Downing Street.”¹¹² But the lion’s share of Islamist organizations works less flamboyantly, but nevertheless assiduously, to increase step by step and person by person the number of believers who value Islamic over secular law. They aspire, often successfully, to carve out “zones of exclusion.”¹¹³ Within these areas of “self-imposed apartheid,” ranging in size from the four walls of a flat or mosque to entire neighborhoods, “Islamic” law prevails, including when it transgresses secular law (for instance, polygamy or coerced confinement). Here, those who violate the Shari‘ah rather than state law are the ones punished or harassed.¹¹⁴

Islamist organizations tend to spurn cooperation with western governments. Indeed, they warn their adherents against “Westoxification” (*Gharbzadegi*), Iranian Jalal al-e Ahmad’s widely influential concept that any contact with westerners is *kufir* (impious) and, as such, can initiate a contagion that leads the pious Muslim into sin and, worse, into apostasy. The Europhobes quote the Prophet as having warned: “Beware of who [*sic*] you keep as your friends, for you will take the Deen [religion] of your friends.”¹¹⁵

Islamist organizations often thwart the efforts of European governments to reach out to Muslims. In Germany, Spain, Britain, and France, Islamist associations have refused or withdrawn support for the high-profile national councils alluded to above.¹¹⁶ Within European Muslim communities, where Islamist organizations are often well organized and well respected, such disapprobation tends to undermine the legitimacy of governmental efforts. Programs sponsored by European governments are viewed with suspicion as

potentially repressive and, more often than not, simply avoided or ignored. The proportion of Islamic organizations that eschew contact with European governments is estimated at between one-fourth and one-third.¹¹⁷ As Roy perspicaciously observes, so long as “Muslim identity is tinged with a strongly anti-imperialist hue,” enthusiastic support from a European government can often “amount to giving them [the sponsored Muslim organizations] the kiss of death.”¹¹⁸

I do not highlight Islamism with the intention of fueling the flames of Islamophobic hysteria. I seek instead to underscore the complex, polyvalent nature of European secularism. In theory, European secular states are supposed to be neutral toward religion. In reality, despite important institutional differences,¹¹⁹ they simultaneously preach the supremacy of secular law that treats all believers and non-believers equally, oversee extensive Christian (and sometimes Jewish) favoritism, endeavor to combat discrimination against Muslims, reach out to Euro-Muslims, and support or tolerate Islamists who thwart efforts to strengthen Euro-Islam. In this vein, it is interesting to note Veit Bader’s observation in his major study of European secularism:

States are not monolithic. Aims and strategies vary, and the legislative, judicial and executive branches often follow contradictory policies. The differentiation only increases when comparing federal, state and local levels. Every state thus shows a variety of partly inconsistent institutional arrangements; and actual policies diverge from legal norms.¹²⁰

In reality, most European governments do not practice secularism, rather secularisms – a complex, dynamic intermingling and over-layering of policies whose intent and consequences often run deeply at odds with one another.¹²¹ Such policy messiness reflects widening mutual fragilization, whereby policy-makers and citizens alike become increasingly accustomed to, if not necessarily comfortable with, the co-existence of rival outlooks and approaches to religion in contemporary life and society. As mutual fragilization expands, both the prospect of and perhaps need for an “overlapping consensus,” let alone coherent policy, dwindle.

Post-Islamism

Make no mistake. Mutual fragilization can prompt mutual demonization but it need not, as the example of post-Islamism attests. As conscious or unconscious apprehension regarding the persuasiveness of one’s preferred outlook intensifies, the temptation to demonize one’s perceived adversaries can strengthen. If

the arguments for one's position seem less able to persuade adversaries on the basis of merit alone, then assailing one's opponents can present itself as an increasingly tempting strategy. Demonization can prove highly alluring, for it distracts attention away from one's own vulnerabilities, exaggerates the foes' shortcomings, and often garners considerable attention.

As political actors follow the lead of media producers who know that bad news sells better than good news, the politics of immigration in Europe has increasingly degenerated into a politics of slighting, fear-mongering, and scapegoating.¹²² Indeed, the hate promoters tend not only to prey but also to depend on one another. Thus Islamophobes' outlandish distortions of Islam and Muslims become the Europhobes' evidence that the entire West is evil and sadistic, and vice versa. The opposing camps become locked in a self-referencing and self-reinforcing war of manipulated words and images that becomes virtually hermetically sealed off from other more nuanced discussion and analysis.¹²³

Rather than flee from fragilization into essentialist and binary stereotypes, post-Islamists embrace its ambivalence as an opportunity to discover new insights. The latter unpredictably emerge through the hybrid combination of worldviews presumed to be mutually exclusive: liberalism and Islamism. I apply the less-than-perfect label "post-Islamists"¹²⁴ to refer to a younger generation of activists keen to re-shape Islamism to make it less Europhobic, and thereby more effective, in Europe.¹²⁵ While their critique of many aspects of modern western societies is unmistakably informed by the thought of earlier Islamists, such as Qutb or Abul A'la Maududi, post-Islamists eschew the wholesale rejection of western society associated with both the Islamist pioneers as well as their contemporary orthodox adherents. "I don't deny my Muslim roots," claims Tariq Ramadan, "but I don't vilify Europe either."¹²⁶

The proponents of this newer idiom of Islamism tend to reside in Europe, to stem from the middle class, and to be highly and mostly western educated.¹²⁷ They tend to adopt and become comfortable with many of the styles and rhythms of modern western life regarding, for instance, education, professionalism, consumerism, and individualism.¹²⁸ That said, they operate in a fully "transnational religious discourse"¹²⁹ that is profoundly in touch with and deeply colored by prominent reformist thinkers in the Middle East, such as Abdolkarim Soroush, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, Rachid al-Ghannouchi, and Yusuf al-Qaradawi. These mavericks in Europe are at once cooperating and contesting for leadership with an older, more strictly anti-western guard in such Islamist associations as the Union of Islamic Organisations in Europe (OIOE), Islamische Gemeinde Milli Görüş (IGMG), or the UK Islamic Mission. They publish their ideas in journals and magazines such as *Q-News*, *The*

Muslim News, *La Medina*, and *Die Islamische Zeitung* or on websites such as Islam21.net, oumma.com, and huda.de.¹³⁰

In contrast to Euro-Muslims, post-Islamists resist a wholesale endorsement of the modern West. To be sure, the latter recognize and value certain aspects of western society, chief among them democratic rights and liberties, particularly religious freedom. Thus does Ramadan remind his readers that it is precisely the separation of church and state that can “protect the total independence of Muslims in France.”¹³¹ The erstwhile leader of IGMG, Mehmet Erdogan, contends that European Muslims live in far superior conditions for freely exercising their religion than do the 90 percent of their fellow Muslims in the so-called “Islamic world,” where authoritarian regimes have traditionally quashed religious freedom. Such authoritarian rule, even when done in the name of Islamic law, he maintains “is not a fulfillment of God’s will rather its perversion.”¹³²

Tunisian exile (until 2011) al-Ghannouchi famously changed Europe’s designation from the conventional *dār al-ḥarb* (abode of war) to *dār al-Islām* (abode of Islam).¹³³ Ramadan endorsed this re-categorization, but augmented it to *dār al-shahādah* (abode of testimony).¹³⁴ The Swiss activist and grandson of Muslim Brotherhood founder Hassan al-Banna implores European Muslims to take advantage of the great opportunities and rights available there – to abandon their “Pakistani, Turkish, or Arab ‘ghettos’” (both “social and intellectual”) and “integrate themselves into European culture”¹³⁵ – and thereby craft a “more self-critical” Islam¹³⁶ as well as a model of “Islamic citizenship” that will stand as an example (testimony) to the rest of the Islamic world to emulate in the twenty-first century.¹³⁷

Post-Islamists simply do not discern the incompatibility between Islam and “western” values postulated by Islamophobes and Europhobic Islamists alike. The Union of Islamic Organizations of France (UOIF), the IGMG, and the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), despite their Islamist links, publicly proclaim their fidelity to the constitution of France, Germany, and Britain respectively.¹³⁸ MCB, for example, officially “encourag[es] individual Muslims and Muslim organisations to play a full and participatory role in public life.”¹³⁹ Granted, European constitutions permit some things, such as usury and alcohol consumption, that Islam forbids. However, the critical point is that none of the constitutions *obliges* Muslims to engage in such activities.¹⁴⁰ Hassan Safoui (media manager, UOIF) sees, for instance, no reason why persons of different “beliefs or references” cannot “agree on shared values” that build a “mutual ethics between Islam and the West to fight social diseases in the European communities.”¹⁴¹

As intimated in the previous quotation, post-Islamists discern grave shortcomings in European societies. Moreover, they believe themselves to be particularly well situated both to recognize and remedy such profound problems. This more critical predisposition distinguishes them from advocates of Euro-Islam, who, generally speaking, interpret the achievements of western society since the Enlightenment as progressive and exemplary. In the eyes of post-Islamists, Muslims, as victims of European imperialism, are well suited to expose the darker side of European “greatness.” They possess firsthand experience with the injustice and inequality that go hand in hand with European prosperity and power not only in the Third World, from where most European Muslims hail, but also in Europe itself, where they are exploited and discriminated against.¹⁴² Muslims can also help to correct the lopsided interpretation proffered by Eurocentrism, which views western civilization as the lone font of the world’s greatest and lasting achievements. Ramadan chastises this supercilious combination of ignorance and arrogance with which Eurocentric secularists dismiss all but their own ideas:

Convinced that they are progressive, they give themselves the arbitrary right to proclaim the definitively reactionary nature of religions ... In the end, only a handful of “Muslims-who-think-like-us” are accepted, while the others are denied the possibility of being genuinely progressive fighters armed with their own set of values. By doing this, the dialogue with Islam is transformed into an interactive monologue which massages “our ideological certainties” just as Huntington wanted to ensure “our strategic interests.”¹⁴³

Proud, educated, outspoken Muslims can shed light not only on the great accomplishments of Islamic civilization, but on the latter’s profound contribution to so-called “western civilization” itself.¹⁴⁴ A genuinely open dialogue that includes Muslims and Islam as part of Europe’s past and present, one that undermines rather than perpetuates binary stereotypes, can lead to a fuller if admittedly less self-congratulatory comprehension of Europeanness.¹⁴⁵

Post-Islamists desire more, however, than being considered insiders rather than outsiders to Europe. They want to improve Europe; and they want to do so *qua* Muslims. They refuse to relegate their religion to the private sphere (like, say, a hobby) as the cost of fully participating in public life. Thus did the founding members of the Union des Jeunes Musulmans announce in 1987 their goal to “live our spirituality in the open and not in a reclusive way in the private sphere.”¹⁴⁶ IGMG maintains that “Islam is a social and individual way of living, the influence of which certainly does not end at a mosque’s doorstep.”¹⁴⁷ Likewise, MCB strives for “a multi-faith,

pluralist society with a conscious policy of recognizing that people's cultural and faith identities are not merely a private matter but have public implications."¹⁴⁸ Each organization echoes the words of al-Qaradawi, the influential leader of the London-based European Council for Fatwa and Research, who asserts: "No Muslim who believes that Islam is the word of God can conceive that this great religion will ever accept being a mere appendix to socialism or any other ideology."¹⁴⁹

In contrast to Islamophobia, Islamism, and Euro-Islam, each of which views Europe essentially as a finished product, post-Islamism sees it as a work in progress, indeed, one in need of considerable work and progress. For post-Islamists, Islam represents a wellspring of universal values such as the fundamental equality of all humans before God, humility and respect for God's creation (environment), individual responsibility and industry, but also sympathy, as well as aid and justice for the downtrodden and unfortunate, that if adapted and applied to modern life could greatly improve it.¹⁵⁰ The spiritual, and thereby the ethical, dimension of life is said to be neglected by Europeans, who have become mesmerized by the admittedly impressive physical accomplishments and comforts of modernization. "We do not want modernization without soul or values; we want ethical reform. We want to transform the world in the name of the justice and human dignity that, sadly, are often forgotten in the current inhumane global (dis)order."¹⁵¹ For Ramadan, national modern identity represents a jejune substitute for a genuinely religious identity. The former teaches humans "how" to exist but not, like Islam, "why" they exist. It leaves them lacking a deeper meaning and purpose with which to assess rather than merely accept the latest trends and fashions of modern life. It does no less than rob humanity of its proper and proportionate relationship to the rest of the universe by anthropomorphically and mistakenly placing man at the center of that universe.¹⁵²

Post-Islamists do not pretend to have all the answers. They underscore dialogue. The UOIF's commitment to open dialogue is typical of other organizations with post-Islamist leanings: "Diversity is inherent in human nature. The UOIF believes that dialogue is the best way to achieve mutual recognition among members of a common society. The UOIF opposes a rupturing discourse based on the hatred and rejection of others... The only acceptable approach to dealing with the emergence of problems of misunderstanding is dialogue, explanation and education."¹⁵³ Post-Islamists do not seek to Islamize Europe, but they do demand a prominent place for Islam at the dialogue table and therefore in public life. They also insist on the need to formulate through dialogue what Ramadan calls a "new 'We.'"¹⁵⁴ This is a new understanding

of what it means to be European that includes, rather than excludes, Islam; that views “Muslims – with their spirituality, ethics and creativity” – as a “contribution” rather than a threat. This will demand recognition that

European societies have been changing, and the presence of Muslims has forced them to experience an even greater diversity of cultures. As a result, a European identity has evolved that is open, plural and constantly in motion, thanks to the cross-fertilisation between reclaimed cultures of origin and the European cultures that now include new (Muslim) citizens.¹⁵⁵

Conclusion

Social scientists tend to prefer order to messiness. They are wont to design models and typologies that endeavor to make sense of a complicated reality. In the comparative study of both immigration and secularism, the prevailing paradigm underscores national models and path dependency. As noted above, the French are said to follow a republican model of immigrant incorporation, the British a multicultural model, and the Germans an ethno-national model.¹⁵⁶ As far as secularism is concerned, France purportedly practices strict separation, Britain weak establishment, and Germany institutionalized neutrality.¹⁵⁷

Despite admitted advantages, however, such modeling with the nation-state as the central unit of analysis has at least two drawbacks.¹⁵⁸ By accentuating differences, it glosses over similarities across nation-states. As demonstrated above, most governments of Europe oversee multiple forms of secularism at once. Bias in favor of Christianity and against Islam exists everywhere, attempts to encourage Euro-Islam can be found in most lands, and both Islamism and post-Islamism are Europe-wide phenomena. The nation-state model’s paradigm also exaggerates the extent of normative consensus within each nation-state. Yet in this article we have encountered vehement debate in each country regarding how best to incorporate Islam and Muslims – a debate, moreover, that tends to take on similar expressions from one country to the next. Islamophobes are no more confined to, say, France than Islamists are to the United Kingdom or the Netherlands.

Furthermore, this pan-European discourse over the proper form secularism should take has a fragilizing effect. The diversity of avidly but plausibly defended stances weakens conviction and confidence. The resulting solicitude regarding one’s preferred stance occasions philosophically inconsistent but politically pragmatic combinations of vying points of view. Official sponsors of Euro-Islam nevertheless adopt an Islamophobic suspicion of Muslims. Europhobic Islamists employ tropes stemming from postmodern analysis rooted

in Nietzschean nihilism. Post-Islamists combine approval with criticism of modern European life. Fragilization facilitates policy messiness as the prospect of and perhaps need for an overarching consensus fade. Once considered largely settled, secularism in Europe today represents a complex, contested, and protean sociopolitical phenomenon that, through ongoing transformation, is profoundly altering the way Europeans view and experience religion in the twenty-first century.

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