

E.MA – EUROPEAN MASTER'S DEGREE IN HUMAN RIGHTS AND
DEMOCRATISATION

The European Dynamics: Islamophobia, Radical Parties and European Values

A critical analysis of current developments in
Western Europe

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***Abstract:** Europe has in the past few decades seen a rise in political parties whose agenda differs quite significantly from other established European political parties. The aim of these relatively new parties is to change aspects in society which they see as problematic, and which threaten the traditional European traditions and values. One such threat often pointed out by the parties is the growth of the Muslim minority in Europe. Anti-Muslim sentiments are frequently used in the political rhetoric of the parties, whose ideas are legitimised through increased hostility towards Muslims among Europeans in general. This paper will analyse the dynamics between the increased intolerance towards Muslims in Europe, the popularity of the parties who use anti-Islamic speech to gain popularity, and the possible effects on the European value system as stated by the European Union and the Council of Europe. The conclusion drawn is that core European values are threatened by increased European intolerance towards the Muslim minority, and if the situation is not taken seriously, the values by which Europe defines itself might be weakened in the future.*

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Chapter I. Introduction

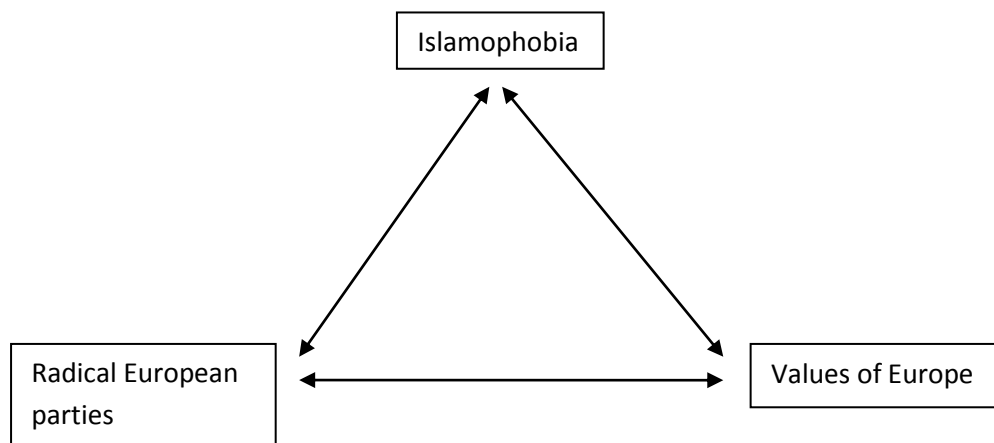
I.1. Background

In the past few decades Europe has seen some changes in its political landscape. Political parties whose agenda differs quite significantly from established European political parties are gaining in popularity throughout the continent, and in many cases also entering into national parliaments. Although these relatively new parties all have their own respective platforms, they nevertheless share some fundamental ideas and values. Generally, their aim is to highlight issues in Europe which they see as problematic, and thus try to change certain aspects of society. Anti-European Union rhetoric is a common feature, as are immigration and integration questions. A heavy emphasis is put on defending values and cultures seen as native to Europe and the various European states, and the issue of *identity* is frequently recurring in their political speech. The label one could put on this kind of party family will be discussed in detail in the subsequent pages, but for the moment one can simply refer to them as new *radical* parties, due to their rejection of the *status quo*. For reasons explained in the next chapters, only radical parties in Western Europe will be discussed.

Although these radical European parties share a concern for many developments in contemporary Europe, one issue in particular has gained heightened attention; Muslims in Europe. The idea that the Islamic culture is too prominent and visible in Europe today has created a fear that Islam will one day dominate the whole continent, and the fight against this *Islamisation* has thus become an important political objective. The growth of general anti-Islamic sentiments among people in Europe has been increasingly incorporated into the rhetoric of the radical parties, which in turn feed the anti-Islamic sentiments already present among many Europeans. This has led to a proliferation of intolerance and discrimination against the Muslim minority in Europe. In this paper the word *Islamophobia* will be used to represent negative feelings towards Muslims, which will be explained in the following chapter.

The increasingly politicised resentments towards Muslims are generally explained by the radical parties as a need to defend core European values. However, one could question whether these developments of increased intolerance are not themselves threatening the core values of Europe. In other words, what is the biggest threat to the European value system, the presence of a minority that might not share the same values, or defending the European values through means that might not always be coherent with these same values?

The result of the developments just described is the formation of new dynamics in Western Europe, where the new radical parties, Islamophobia, and European values are performing a difficult balancing act. The relationships within this European triangle are not static, as a change in one area will create changes in another area, and *vice versa*.



This paper will analyse the dynamics between the new radical parties, Islamophobia, and core values in Europe. The hypothesis is that the proliferation of Islamophobia and the rise of radical parties which base much of their agenda on anti-Islamic sentiments are weakening the European value system. The research question has thus been *how* this is happening, i.e. how Islamophobia and radical parties with an anti-Islamic agenda are weakening European values in a so called “soft radical way,” which in essence undermines these core European values.

I.2. Thesis structure

Chapter two will give an in-depth analysis of the word Islamophobia, its effects, and the controversies surrounding it. This will include a description of Islamophobia provided by the European Union, as well as an explanation to the theory of *Eurabia*. The historical relations between Europe and Islam will also be discussed in order to place the current developments in a historical continuum. The third chapter will put Islamophobia into a political context. First, a comprehensive definition of this relatively new family of radical parties will be provided, which differs from the labels and definitions usually used in academics and media. Secondly, by analysing how five radical parties in Western Europe are using anti-Islamic sentiments in their political rhetoric, it will give an idea of the extent to which Islamophobia has become a politicised concept. The fourth chapter will focus on the discussion on European values, and how they are affected by Islamophobia and the rise of radical parties. Furthermore, this chapter will also address possible responses to the European developments from e.g. the media, national politicians and Europe as a whole. Finally, the last chapter will conclude the findings in the paper, as well as analysing whether the hypothesis of the paper holds true or not.

I.3. State of the art

The factors making up the dynamical European triangle of new radical parties, Islamophobia, and values in Europe, have all been studied in separation. Especially the rise of the new radical party family has received a lot of attention in academia. Scholars such as Cas Mudde, Hans-Georg Betz and Jens Rydgren, among others, have written a number of books and articles on the subject, where they try to answer questions such as why these parties gain popularity, and who their voters are. Books about Islam in Europe have also been published, such as Jocelyne Cesari's *When Islam and Democracy Meet: Muslims in Europe and in the United States*, and Robert J. Pauly's *Islam in Europe: Integration or Marginalization?* The European value system does not seem to have drawn much academic attention, but is inherent in the foundations of e.g. the European Union and the Council of Europe.

However, as to my knowledge, a comprehensive study that combines these three topics does not seem to exist in the current literature. The novelty of this paper is therefore the approach of examining the new dynamics in Europe by analysing relatively unexplored links between the triangle of new radical parties, Islamophobia, and the European value system. Furthermore, some definitions, concepts and thoughts which are often taken for granted in existing literature are questioned in this paper, and instead of following the approaches previously taken, new conclusions will be drawn based on a new set of ideas.

I.4. Methodology and use of sources

The thesis is both of a comparative nature, such as the comparison between five Western European radical parties, as well as a review of existing literature written on the topics. Scholars are used both as a factual base and as starting points for discussions. However, a large part of the paper is based on media, such as articles in newspapers and magazines, as well as *YouTube* videos and radio broadcasts. This is done for a number of reasons.

First, the political landscape in Europe is changing quickly, which makes it difficult for academia to keep the same pace. Media on the other hand reports on events while they are taking place, giving a more comprehensive picture of current developments. The extensive use of media sources has therefore been inevitable when writing the paper. Second, media itself plays a crucial role in the developments in Europe. It has the power to shape the perceptions of what we see around us as it penetrates into nearly every household in Europe. The way media reports on e.g. radical political parties or Muslims in Europe largely shapes the opinions of the readers/viewers/listeners. The large reliance on various types of media in this paper therefore mirrors the enormous interest shown by media with regards to these topics, where they often play a dominating role. The media is thus an important player in the discussions throughout this paper, and its responsibility towards the people of Europe and the way their ideas are shaped cannot be overestimated.

When a new word enters the language, it is often the result of a scientific advance or a diverting fad. But when the world is compelled to coin a new term to take account of increasingly widespread bigotry, that is a sad and troubling development. Such is the case with Islamophobia.¹

Kofi Annan

Chapter II. Islamophobia

The term Islamophobia is frequently used in media and by scholars as a way of defining prejudice against Islam, and by extension Muslims. However, it is a blurry concept with no clear definition. For instance, what did Filip Dewinter, leader for the Flemish party Vlaams Belang, mean when he, at a political meeting in Gelsenkirchen in 2010, said it is everyone's duty to be Islamophobic?² He was probably not talking about the same concept as Kofi Annan when he gave a speech on "confronting Islamophobia."³ This chapter will therefore try to sort out some of the views and definitions of this confusing term. It will solely attempt to confront and analyse the *concept* of Islamophobia in Europe.

It is important to make clear early on that Islamophobia is not a product of the attacks on September 11, even though this event undoubtedly worsened the situation for Muslims worldwide. Instead, the word Islamophobia was first used in the late 80's and early 90's.⁴ This obviously does not mean that there was no hostility towards Muslims previous to the 1980's, but it was a time when there was an apparent need for a word to describe the sentiments of many people, just as the words "racism" and "anti-Semitism" were born out of times that demanded their existence. One could speculate

¹ Secretary- General Office of the Spokesperson, statement on 'Confronting Islamophobia: Education for Tolerance and Understanding,' by Kofi Annan, 2004, available at <http://www.un.org/apps/sg/sgstats.asp?nid=1217> (consulted on 13 March 2011).

² Andersson, 2010, pp. 8-9.

³ Secretary- General Office of the Spokesperson, statement on 'Confronting Islamophobia: Education for Tolerance and Understanding,' by Kofi Annan, 2004, available at <http://www.un.org/apps/sg/sgstats.asp?nid=1217> (consulted on 13 March 2011).

⁴ Ibidem; Rana, 2007, p. 148.

that the Iran hostage crisis in 1979, the Gulf Wars and increased Muslim immigration to the West are possible and likely reasons for the coining of the word Islamophobia.

However, before getting into the discussion on the concept of Islamophobia, it is worth mentioning the relationships and interactions that have existed between Europe and the Muslim world throughout history, as this will help to put the discussion in this paper into a historical continuum.

II.1. Europe and Islam – historical relations

Islam is not a religion foreign to Europe, and Europe has historically not been foreign to Islam. Islamic and Arab influences are evident in e.g. the Spanish language and architecture, and Muslim leaders have historically looked towards Europe for guidance on how to modernise. Today, the Muslim state of Turkey is moving politically closer and closer to Europe, and European Muslims can be found in e.g. Kosovo and Albania, where the lines between what it means to be Muslim and what it means to be European have largely been erased.

The Muslim invasion of the Iberian Peninsula, starting in 711, is a good example of a point in history where Islam and Europe met. The heartland of the area controlled by the Muslim Moors was named al-Andalus, and was under Islamic dominance for about seven hundred years. During this time, “Islamic Spain was a multi-cultural mix of Muslims, Christians and Jews,” and “brought a degree of civilisation to Europe that matched the heights of the Roman Empire and the Italian Renaissance.”⁵ That this was a time of great co-existence between Muslims, Christians and Jews is confirmed by author María Rosa Menocal, who describes a time booming with cultural, artistic and architectural exchanges and advancements, and which created an Islamic Spain which was “materially and intellectually the most advanced in Europe for a very long time.”⁶ The Muslim rule in Spain ended in 1492 with the Spanish conquest of

⁵ ‘Muslim Spain (711-1492),’ 2009, in *BBC*, available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/history/spain_1.shtml (consulted on 27 April 2011).

⁶ Menocal, 2002, p. 317.

Granada. This was followed by forced conversions of Muslims and Jews to Catholicism, and mass expulsion of Muslims between 1609 and 1614.⁷

A few hundred years after the Moorish invasion of the area referred to as al-Andalus, another, far bloodier, chapter of Muslim-European relations began. Today we speak of this time as the crusades, which refer to the Catholic Church's fight to recapture the Holy Land from the Muslims. Pope Urban II is known to have instigated the crusades when he, in 1095, gathered his people and proclaimed the quest to retake the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem from "the wicked race."⁸ All in all the crusades lasted for nearly two hundred years, between 1095 and 1291.⁹ This was obviously a time of great tension between Islam and the Christian West.

One cannot give an historical overview of the relations between Europe and the Muslim world without mentioning the Ottoman Empire. At one point, the Muslim Empire stretched from the Balkans in Europe, to the Arabian Peninsula, to North Africa. With such a large and powerful neighbour bordering in the East, Europe was forced to try to come to terms with the Muslims. Approximately half of its 30 million inhabitants lived in the European provinces.¹⁰ During the six centuries of its existence, from around 1280 to 1923¹¹ the Empire was at the crossroads of intercontinental trade.¹² Much of the Ottoman trade was conducted with European powers such as France, Venice, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.¹³ The Empire was a stable and influential power for many centuries due to a well-organized system of centralization and control from Istanbul over its provinces. However, the decline of Ottoman power which started in the 17th century eventually resulted in the Empire being referred to as "the sick man of Europe."¹⁴ The final death sentence came when the

⁷ Harvey, 2005, p. 16.

⁸ Goldschmidt, 2004, p. 92.

⁹ Paine, 2001, pp. 91-93.

¹⁰ Pamuk, 2004, p. 226.

¹¹ Kamrava, 2004, pp. 23, 28.

¹² Pamuk, 2004, p. 226.

¹³ Faroghi, 2005, pp. 140-150.

¹⁴ Kamrava, 2004, p. 26

Ottomans sided with Germany in WWI, where the defeat resulted in the final disintegration of the Empire in 1923.¹⁵

During the past few centuries, Muslim eyes have been on Europe. However, when looking at the whole historical span of Muslim-European interaction, the Muslim interest in Western Europe awoke remarkably late, not until the 15th and 16th centuries. Acclaimed historian Bernard Lewis describes an iron curtain dividing Islam and Christianity during the Middle Ages, with the small exception of Spain. Lewis' explanation to this stems from a profound feeling of superiority by the Muslims over all other civilizations. Western Europe was not viewed as having much to offer the Muslim world, and the Western European dedication to Christianity only worsened the image of the "barbarians." The Islamic lands were seen as the centre of the universe, and the history of the world was the history of only those people of interest to the Muslims.¹⁶ As is repeatedly emphasised by Lewis, this is not far from the worldview prominent in the West today. World history today is all too often equated with the history of Western Europe, just as "the peoples of Islam continued until the dawn of the modern age to cherish – as we of the West still do to-day – the conviction of the immeasurable and immutable superiority of their own civilization to all others."¹⁷ Pre-conceived perceptions and hasty generalizations seem to still be the norm in 2011.

The decline of the Ottoman Empire brought about an identity crisis for many Muslims and questions regarding the true meaning of Islam began to surface. The economic and military advancements in Europe were felt also in the Empire where it became obvious that Muslims were lagging behind. In the 18th century voices started to be heard telling Islam to modernise, i.e. westernise. A wind of westernisation started blowing through the Arab and Muslim world, which pleased some and worried others.¹⁸ It was clear that Europe, which had only a few centuries earlier been considered inferior to the Muslims, was now needed as a source of knowledge and inspiration to secure the

¹⁵ Kamrava, 2004, p. 28.

¹⁶ Lewis, 1957, pp. 409-416.

¹⁷ Lewis, 1957, p. 415.

¹⁸ Hourani, 1962, pp. 34-45.

survival of the Empire. However, the restructuring of the Empire was not enough to secure its survival.

What is significant about these years of the Ottoman Empire is the creation of a conflicting identity among many Muslims which is still prominent today. The conflict between Islam and modernity has yet to be resolved, in spite of the work put in by both scholars and religious authorities. Walking down the streets of any major Muslim city today illustrates the contradictions surrounding its inhabitants, where Islam and the Western influences seem at best to co-exist as neighbours and at worst to be outright enemies. When the discussion later on turns towards Muslims in Europe, it might be useful to remember these historical contradictions and complex identities.

The fall of the Ottoman Empire resulted in enormous changes for the Middle East as Europe took on a previously unprecedented role in the area.

The period between the end of the Great War in 1918 and the beginning of the Second World War in 1939 was an era of tremendous importance for the Middle East, one whose consequences still reverberate today, more than half a century later. What occurred in these fateful decades transformed the destiny of entire nations, created new countries, brought overt European rule to the region, resulted in the drawing and redrawing of national boundaries, and gave rise to new dynasties.¹⁹

Territories were divided between Britain and France under the rhetoric of establishing mandates, protectorates, and even full out colonies. The Middle East gained in geographically strategic importance, and was used as a crucial player in the fight against the Soviet Union. The founding of Israel in 1948, aided by European powers and the United States, is probably *the* most important point in the history of the Middle East, Islam, and its relationships with the West and is of immense importance still today. In the past decades, oil has been a fundamental link between the Muslim world and the West, contributing both to cooperation as well as divisions, and sometimes even wars. The word “war” took on new dimensions after the attacks in New York on September 11, where the idea of the “war on terror” was coined. Unfortunately, this was interpreted by many as meaning *war on Islam*, creating tensions between Islam and the

¹⁹ Kamrava, 2004, pp. 35-36.

West/Christianity probably not witnessed since the crusades. The Muslim world today is increasingly turning away from Western influences by resorting to traditions and religion. Maybe one even dares to say that the West and Islam have never been so misunderstood by one another as now, and that history has failed to be the compass to direct the future in the right direction. The situation in Europe today illustrates this great divide, as political parties can come to power largely basing their rhetoric on anti-Islamic sentiments, and where words such as Islamophobia have entered our vocabulary.

II.2. A European view of Islam

When reading about the European view of Islam, it soon becomes evident that this view can be summarised in one word; *generalisations*. There seems to be an inability or unwillingness to separate realities, without making an attempt to categorise. We all *know* that Islam is a diverse religion. There are Muslims living in Thailand who have very little in common with those living in Kosovo, a multiple of languages are spoken across the Islamic world, and the histories of Muslim states around the world are very different from one another. Yet, there is a tendency to equate Islam with violence, fundamentalism and oppression of women, regardless of which type of Muslim one is referring to. Harvard Associate and Islam expert Jocelyne Cesari claims that the view of Muslims is more negative in Europe than in the United States, in spite of what happened during 9/11. In her opinion, while the U.S. is trying the conciliatory road, Europe is more hostile and prone to emphasise conflicts.²⁰ Whether this is true or not remains unsaid, but Cesari does point to the failure, both in Europe and the U.S., of distinguishing Islam as a political force from the Muslims living as minorities in the West. She blames this misconception on the media, which creates stereotypes and instils fear in the viewers:

These stereotypes obscure all other aspects of the Muslim world, and the ordinary citizen whose knowledge is limited to the 6 o'clock news has only a dim understanding of events in Algeria, Egypt, Iran, or Afghanistan. In thinking of Islam

²⁰ Cesari, 2006, p. 13.

and the Islamic world, this citizen feels only fear, particularly insofar as the different shades of religious and political belief are treated as one homogenous entity.²¹

The Swedish Government's human rights website also emphasises the role of mass media when shaping people's perception of Islam and says that "It is the most extreme and violent interpretation of political Islam which often gets to represent Islam and Muslims as a whole."²²

A 2011 report from the Council of Europe named "*Living together*": *Combining diversity and freedom in 21st-century Europe*," explains that Muslims in Europe are discriminated against in the labour market and in the educational system, as well as being disproportionately targeted by the police, and that this "is a serious human rights problem."²³ This is partly because

increased immigration of Muslims to Europe in recent decades has resulted in more "visible" Muslim communities and coincided with the growth of political Islam, many Europeans have acquired the conviction that Islam per se is radical, militant and incompatible with European values, and that Muslim immigrants and their descendants therefore cannot be integrated into European societies in the way that earlier waves of migrants have been.²⁴

Others blame the skewed image of Islam on a simple division between "our" culture and customs, especially with regards to religion, and "their" culture and customs. For example, while religion in the West is generally a private matter which one does not impose on others, Islam shows its presence by advocating a special type of dress code and loud calls to prayer:

The modern notion of religion as a system of personal belief makes an Islam that is comprehensive in scope, in which Islam is integral to policy and society, 'abnormal' in

²¹ Cesari, 2006, p. 13.

²² Regeringens Webbplats om Mänskliga Rättigheter, 'Islamofobi,' available at http://www.humanrights.gov.se/extra/pod/?module_instance=2 (consulted on 3 May 2011).

²³ Council of Europe, "*Living together*": *Combining diversity and freedom in 21st-century Europe*, 2011, p. 16, available at <http://www.coe.int/portal/web/coe-portal/event-files/our-events/the-group-of-eminent-persons?dynLink=true&layoutId=581&dlgroupId=10226&fromArticleId=> (consulted on 20 July 2011).

²⁴ Ibidem.

so far as it departs from an accepted 'modern' secular norm. Thus, Islam becomes incomprehensible, irrational, extremist, threatening."²⁵

The generalisations presented above are obviously problematic insofar as they create an image of Muslims as inherently different, scary and fundamentalist. However, it cannot be ignored that there *are* some basic distinctions between Western culture and Islamic culture, and that this is foreign to many Europeans is understandable. This is not to say that Islam *itself* is radically different from Christianity, but that the way the religion has been interpreted and the values that have developed are indeed foreign to the West. For example, some Muslim States have a view of women that is simply unacceptable in Europe. The place of women within Islam is very much related to the “tradition versus modernity dilemma” discussed in the previous section II.1.²⁶ Muslims women have to, probably to a greater extent than Muslim men, adjust to a changing world while also fitting into traditional roles in their societies.²⁷ This clash between modernity and tradition is not as evident in the West, which bridges the gap between “us and them.” For instance, the fact that women are not allowed to drive cars in Saudi Arabia, or that Iranian women can be sentenced to death if they are suspected of infidelity or having been subjected to rape, obviously creates anger and fear in Western societies.

Furthermore, basic human rights in Europe such as the right to define one’s own sexual preference is missing in many Muslim countries, where homosexuality is still often considered a crime.²⁸ Some countries base their legislature on the religious Sharia laws, and in e.g. Iran the political authorities are synonymous to religious authorities. Due to a lack of a clear legal framework in the Koran, it leaves the possibility open for a variety of interpretations. This means that there can be a huge difference between how e.g. Tunisia chooses to interpret the Koran and how Saudi Arabia chooses to do so.²⁹ Some Muslims are deliberately resisting the rights that

²⁵ Quoted in Pauly, 2004, p. 2.

²⁶ See supra p. 11.

²⁷ Yahyaoui Krivenko, 2008, p. 56.

²⁸ Amnesty International, available at <http://www.amnesty.org/>, (consulted on 15 June 2011); Human Rights Watch, available at www.hrw.org, (consulted on 15 June 2011).

²⁹ Yahyaoui Krivenko, 2008, p. 47.

Europeans have fought for during centuries and that we today see as signs of modernity, such as sexual liberation.

Although Europe also had, and still has, its struggles with normative values (abortion is still illegal in some European States³⁰ and women's suffrage in Switzerland became a reality in 1971, later than in many Muslim countries³¹), there is still a general consensus in Europe today on what it means to be modern. Many Muslim states do however not fit into this idea of modernity, and this obviously creates ideological frictions. Although there are of course huge discrepancies from one Muslim country to another and some are much closer to the European view of modernity, Islam has nevertheless, due to practices in some Muslims countries, become a symbol of oppression and backwardness. That many Europeans see Islam as something alien and fearful is therefore quite logical. However, the problem is the failure to distinguish e.g. an oppressive regime from the people living in it, or people who are willing to kill in the name of Islam from those who simply gather to pray on Fridays. This lack of distinctions is what one could refer to as Islamophobia.

II.3. Defining Islamophobia

The term Islamophobia is highly complex and its exact definition is almost impossible to pinpoint. Scholars and journalists have been frequent users of the term, although they often use the word Islamophobia in different ways and sometimes make contradictory claims. This section will first attempt to give a definition of the word Islamophobia, followed by an overview of some of the debates and controversies surrounding it.

In 2007 the British *Runnymede Trust* gave a definition of Islamophobia which one could argue is the most comprehensive classification available when

³⁰ Council of Europe, *Access to safe and legal abortion in Europe*, 2008, available at <http://www.assembly.coe.int/Mainf.asp?link=/Documents/WorkingDocs/Doc08/EDOC11537.htm> (consulted on 16 June 2011).

³¹ Inter-Parliamentary Union, 'Women in Politics,' available at <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/suffrage.htm> (consulted on 16 June 2011).

compared to other existing definitions. In their report *Islamophobia: A Challenge For Us All*, they list eight components of Islamophobia:

- 1) Islam is seen as a monolithic bloc, static and unresponsive to change.
- 2) Islam is seen as separate and 'other'. It does not have values in common with other cultures, is not affected by them and does not influence them.
- 3) Islam is seen as inferior to the West. It is seen as barbaric, irrational, primitive and sexist.
- 4) Islam is seen as violent, aggressive, threatening, supportive of terrorism and engaged in a 'clash of civilisations'.
- 5) Islam is seen as a political ideology and is used for political or military advantage.
- 6) Criticisms made of the West by Islam are rejected out of hand.
- 7) Hostility towards Islam is used to justify discriminatory practices towards Muslims and exclusion of Muslims from mainstream society.
- 8) Anti-Muslim hostility is seen as natural or normal.³²

These eight points give a comprehensive summary of what it means to be Islamophobic. Other definitions are generally shorter and point more to the factor of fear, and the violence many think is inherent to Islam.³³ However, these sentiments are incorporated into the Runnymede Report, illustrating the all-inclusiveness of the Report.

II.4. Controversies regarding the use of the word Islamophobia

Although the word Islamophobia and its definition seems to be generally agreed on by Governments, the European Union and the United Nations, there is a variety of disagreements and debates going on elsewhere. Why, one might wonder, do we need a special word for hostility towards Islam when words such as xenophobia or even racism could cover it? The European Monitoring Centre on Racism and

³² Runnymede, *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All*, 2007, available at <http://www.runnymedetrust.org/publications/17/32.html> (consulted on 3 May 2011).

³³ Sajid, 2004; 'Images of Muslims: Discussing Islamophobia with Peter Gottschalk,' in *Politicalaffairs.net*, 2007, available at <http://web.archive.org/web/20071206034654/http://www.politicalaffairs.net/article/articleview/6181/1/296/> (consulted on 16 May 2011); Regeringens Webbplats om Mänskliga Rättigheter, 'Islamofobi,' available at http://www.humanrights.gov.se/extra/pod/?module_instance=2 (consulted on 3 May 2011).

Xenophobia (EUMC)³⁴ has incorporated Islamophobia into its research, which could therefore indicate that Islamophobia is simply a subdivision of racism and xenophobia. However, is it that simple?

That Islamophobia is an expression of xenophobia, fear of foreigners, is evident. However, is it also racist? Can Islam be considered a race? Imam Dr. Abduljalil Sajid, Chairperson for the Muslim Council for Religious and Racial Harmony in the U.K. and Member of the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, says yes. He claims that

It is a new form of racism whereby Muslims, an ethno-religious group, not a race, are, nevertheless, constructed as a race. A set of negative assumptions are made of the entire group to the detriment of members of that group. During the 1990's many sociologists and cultural analysts observed a shift in racist ideas from ones based on skin colour to ones based on notions of cultural superiority and otherness.³⁵

This opinion gets support from Juanid Rana, Associate Professor at the University of Illinois, who claims that the 1980's and 1990's saw a shift in the definition of racism from one based purely on biology to one based on culture and ethnicity. Islam, often seen as synonymous to a specific Muslim culture, has therefore been "racialised." Rana also points to the war on terror and its need to racialise Muslims in the quest for racial profiling.³⁶

Based on the opinions presented above, there seems to be no necessity for a word to describe racism against Muslims since "racism" already covers anti-Islamic ideas. However, one could argue that this is a great over-simplification. A religion is technically not a race, and although the *consequences* of racism and Islamophobia are often the same (discrimination, hateful speech, violence etc.), the sources are different. The problem is that it is often unclear whether someone is racist or Islamophobic. If a Muslim Arab is discriminated against, is this because he/she is Muslim or Arab, or both? This lack of distinction is probably what some might sum up as racism.

³⁴ Now the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

³⁵ Sajid, 2004.

³⁶ Rana, 2007, p. 149.

However, regardless of how one wants to define Islamophobia, the success of the word indicates that there is a need for it since there are certain types of discrimination that are directed specifically towards Muslims. Also, if one looks at the *Runnymede Trust's* definition of Islamophobia, it is evident that such a categorisation could not be applied to all types of racism or religious discrimination. More specifically, the violence, fundamentalism and sexism that many think are inherent in Islam is quite exclusive to Islamophobia, and would not be true to the same extent when talking about e.g. African Americans. It is also important to remember that the creation of new words often takes time to absorb. In this case, it reflects a relatively new reality (although Islamophobia as an unnamed concept probably existed already during the Muslim invasion of Spain and the times of the Crusades) which some might not see or feel affected by. If someone would have told a white mother in the 1950's that she was racist because she did not let her white child play with black children, she would probably not have understood the accusation. Words are therefore extremely important in making people aware of changing realities. The *Runnymede Trust* explains it like this:

The word "Islamophobia" has been coined because there is a new reality which needs naming – anti Muslim prejudice has grown so considerably and so rapidly in recent years that a new item in the vocabulary is needed so that it can be identified and acted against. In a similar way, there was a time in European history when a new word, anti-Semitism, was needed and coined to highlight the growing dangers of anti-Jewish hostility.³⁷

Other critics mean that Islamophobia is simply a way for Muslims to avoid criticism, and is therefore by extension a limitation to freedom of speech.³⁸ The Muslim outcry over the Mohammed cartoons in *Jyllands Posten* is by now a classical example. Whether the tendency for Muslims to hide behind Islamophobia is indeed true or simply an angle taken by Western media remains unsaid. If true, the discussion on whether this is right or wrong will also not be discussed here. However, if Muslims are indeed using a certain word to shield themselves from negative press, they are certainly not the only ones doing so.

³⁷ Runnymede, *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All*, 2007, available at <http://www.runnymedetrust.org/publications/17/32.html> (consulted on 3 May 2011).

³⁸ Michelle Malkin Blog, "Critics of Islam under fire... again," 2006, available at <http://michellemalkin.com/2006/09/28/critics-of-islam-under-fireagain/> (consulted on 15 May 2011).

American researcher Daniel Pipes discusses on his website two other problem-areas with the use of the word Islamophobia. First, he questions the combination of the words “phobia” and “Islam,” as this literally means an “undue fear of Islam.” He asks:

(...) what exactly constitutes an "undue fear of Islam" when Muslims acting in the name of Islam today make up the premier source of worldwide aggression, both verbal and physical, versus non-Muslims and Muslims alike? What, one wonders, is the proper amount of fear?³⁹

Although the actual correctness in Pipes’ statement can be discussed and maybe refuted (would an American and an Iraqi define “worldwide aggression” the same way?), he nevertheless has a point. Obviously the events taking place in the past decade and before have created fear among people that should not be underestimated or trivialised. Also, as discussed earlier, the difference in fundamental values as perceived from a Western standpoint often instills fear among Europeans. However, Pipe’s explanations of what people are afraid of point to the very core of Islamophobia. It explains a fear of violent, radical, and fundamentalist Islam, and not the Islam that is practiced by the average person on the streets of Cairo or Jakarta. It is exactly this generalization that is at the root of Islamophobia, and what makes it “undue.” Everyone has the right to feel fear, but when every Muslim has to answer to this fear, it inevitably becomes problematic.

The confusion between radical Islam and “everyday Islam” brings us to Pipe’s second point, that “‘Islamophobia’ deceptively conflates two distinct phenomena: fear of Islam and fear of radical Islam.”⁴⁰ He points to the fact that every time he criticises radical Islam he is labelled an Islamophobe, while it is not Islam in itself that he criticises. This is undoubtedly problematic, but it again points to the confusion that exists with regards to Islamophobia. Non-Muslims often do not know exactly what they are criticising, and Muslims themselves are maybe unsure of what

³⁹ Danielpipes.org, ‘Islamophobia?’ 2005, available at <http://www.danielpipes.org/3075/islamophobia> (consulted on 14 May 2011).

⁴⁰ Danielpipes.org, ‘Islamophobia?’ 2005, available at <http://www.danielpipes.org/3075/islamophobia> (consulted on 14 May 2011).

exactly is being criticised. As long as these lines are blurred, Islamophobia is bound to exist. The important point to remember in order not to generalize and thus being labelled Islamophobic is summarised well by Johann Hari from *The Independent*:

The central rule is: never act as though all Muslims are essentially the same. Like all religions, Islam is based on a dense, contradictory and often ludicrous Holy Book that is being constantly reinterpreted. Some Muslims will follow Mohamed's calls to kill Jews and infidels and ignore the passages where he preaches peace; some Muslims will do exactly the opposite. Superstition is elastic, and it can be stretched in almost any direction.⁴¹

Islamophobia in this paper will be used and defined according to the Runnymede Trust's eight points. However, a special weight will be put on *unfounded generalisations* of Islam and Muslims, and the belief that Islam is inherently hostile and dangerous, i.e. the failure to separate violent, radical Islam from Muslims in general. These definitions will serve as an umbrella to cover Islamophobia in Europe, although other points, such as viewing Islam as a political ideology or as a religion inferior to the West, are evident in certain situations. Nevertheless, it is important to know that the definition used in this paper is not an uncontested truth, and that valid points have been raised to question the word and its usage. In any case, the events and opinions that will be discussed later on in this paper prove that Islamophobia is real, and should be dealt with accordingly. Getting tangled up in tricky questions of e.g. race will not change the fact that Muslims are disproportionately targeted as villains in Europe when compared to other groups.

II.5. Islamophobia from a European Union approach

The European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC)⁴² has written and published multiple reports on Islamophobia in Europe. A majority of these reports are based on quantitative data, i.e. statistics, facts and figures. In a EUMC report from 2006 named *Muslims in the European Union: Discrimination and Islamophobia*, it is stated that Muslims in the European Union are on average (results

⁴¹ Hari, 2006.

⁴² See footnote no. 34.

differed from country to country) less likely to find employment than the majority population, or even other immigrant groups. One example is a *BBC* experiment from 2004 where fictitious candidates with names strongly indicating whether they were white British, African or Muslim applied for jobs in 50 different firms in England. 25% of whites, 13% of Africans, and 9% of Muslims were called back for an interview. Similar studies made in France showed the same results.⁴³ This report also points to a lower educational achievements and poorer and more insecure housing conditions for Muslims in the European Union. However, these findings are taken from immigrant groups with a large Muslim population, and do therefore not show the educational and living situation for Muslims in comparison with other immigrant groups.⁴⁴ The report from 2006 also acknowledges the severe lack of data on the social situation of Muslims in Member States and the extent and nature of Islamophobic incidents, which are both underreported and under-documented.⁴⁵

Simultaneously to *Muslims in the European Union: Discrimination and Islamophobia* a complementary report of a more qualitative nature was published, titled *Voices from Members in the Muslim Community in the European Union*. The clear message in this report is the exclusion often felt by Muslims from the majority population, and how e.g. the media perpetuates this feeling of alienation. However, maybe the most important finding in the report is the fact that young European-born second or third generation Muslims feel more secluded and discriminated against than their parents or grandparents born outside of Europe. According to them, the pressures and expectations on them are so high that they are impossible to live up to, resulting in a greater sense of alienation.⁴⁶ One can also speculate that the difficulties for young

⁴³ European Monitoring Centre for Racism and Xenophobia, *Highlights of EUMC Report 'Muslims in the European Union: Discrimination and Islamophobia,'* p. 2, 2006, available at <http://www.fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/material/pub/muslim/EUMC-highlights-EN.pdf> (consulted on 15 March 2011).

⁴⁴ Ibidem.

⁴⁵ European Monitoring Centre for Racism and Xenophobia, *Muslims in the European Union: Discrimination and Islamophobia*, p. 19, 2006, available at http://www.fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/Manifestations_EN.pdf (consulted on 15 March 2011).

⁴⁶ European Monitoring Centre for Racism and Xenophobia, *Perceptions of Discrimination and Islamophobia*, p. 7, 2006, available at http://www.fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/Perceptions_EN.pdf (consulted on 15 March 2011).

people to enter the job market today is especially problematic for Muslims, or for anyone with a non-European background for that matter, since entering the work force is often one of the fastest ways of integrating with the society. The feeling of exclusion due to religion, ethnicity etc. might be perpetuated by also being excluded from contributing to society. In some European countries such as Germany, Muslims (especially from Turkey) were invited to work in the country in the 50's and 60's,⁴⁷ and thus automatically became part of the work force. Their children or grandchildren however, might not find their place as easily as previous generations.

Also interesting in the report is the point that

The respondents feel that, increasingly, acceptance by society is premised on the assumption that they should lose their Muslim identity. They feel that there is an assumption that their values are not compatible with 'European' values. In some instances the fact of having religious values is seen as a source of conflict with the majority European secular values. Respondents feel that Islam is portrayed as undermining key values of European societies, whereas in their view the values of the average Muslim are entirely consistent with European values.⁴⁸

If this last statement is true, it is of outmost importance to the Islamophobia discussion. It means that a Muslim will never be, or will never feel, completely integrated into European society unless the identification with Islam is cut. This essentially means that the essence of "Europeanness" is its non-Muslim nature, and not other factors such as language or citizenship. However, is it fair to say that the fact that there is a difference in the way European Muslims view *themselves* as opposed to how they are viewed by non-Muslim Europeans is a sign of Islamophobia? One could argue that this is not the case. If the majority European values are based on secularism, as is being said in the abovementioned quote, it might not be Islam itself that is the problem, but religiosity in general. If secularism is indeed a core value in Europe today, then it is logical that Islam is undermining these values, no matter if Muslims themselves believe it is not. However, the idea that secularism is the foundation for

⁴⁷ Pauly, 2004, p. 141.

⁴⁸ European Monitoring Centre for Racism and Xenophobia, *Perceptions of Discrimination and Islamophobia*, p. 7, 2006, available at http://www.fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/Perceptions_EN.pdf (consulted on 15 March 2011).

European values can of course be questioned, and will be discussed further in chapter IV. The point is that Islamophobia does not solely stem from the fact that someone views Muslims as different, or that their values are incompatible with one's own. Instead, Islamophobia is rather based on the assumption that all Muslims are the same, i.e. violent and fundamentalist and therefore dangerous in its essence, without trying to find out if this idea has any foundation in reality.

II.6. *Eurabia* as the key for understanding Islamophobia

The reports from the European Monitoring Centre for Racism and Xenophobia have a fairly objective and scientific approach to Islamophobia in Europe, as they try to show anti-Islamic sentiments through statistics and interviews with Muslims. This gives a very good overview of the extent of the problem when it comes to e.g. social integration and alienation. However, Islamophobia cannot only be described in numbers and tables, since this misses a great part of the discussion. Although most Islamophobic sentiments are probably quite hidden in households across Europe, there are some who openly speak out against Islam and sometimes loudly and proudly proclaim themselves Islamophobic. This is partly due to a fear that Islam and Muslims will, in the not too distant future, take over Europe completely, transforming it into *Eurabia*. In this context Islamophobia becomes a goal in itself. This is in general the view of the extreme right of Europe, but it is increasingly seeking its way into other groups as well. Political parties that adhere to the *Eurabia* theory will be talked about in more detail later on, and therefore this section will focus more on the general discussion on this relatively new idea of *Eurabia*.

One can detect three divisions, or definitions, of *Eurabia*. The oldest usage of the word, to a large extent made famous through Egyptian-British-Jewish author Bat Ye'or, was coined in the 70's, and symbolizes a world where the European Union (then the European Community) and the Arab states form an alliance (embodied in the Parliamentary Association for Euro-Arab Cooperation) against the United States and

Israel.⁴⁹ A Christian-Muslim symbiosis working against Zionism is one of the more important points of the theory.⁵⁰ However, since the 1970's the word has undergone a transformation, and is now used to depict the Islamic takeover of Europe. This idea has two apparent divisions, the demographical statistics approach and the conspiracy theory approach.

In 2009 a *YouTube* video called "Muslim Demographics" was widely circulated on the internet (it has been played over 10 million times⁵¹). The video uses numbers and statistics to show that all of Europe and North America will soon be taken over by Islam due to low fertility rates among native Westerners and high fertility rates among immigrated Muslims. Apart from overwhelming statistics, the video uses tricks reminiscent of Hollywood movies to depict a kind of dooms-day scenario, and encourages the viewers to take action.⁵² The idea that Islam will take over Europe is supported by Muammar Qaddafi, who in a speech in Timbuktu said to his listeners that Muslims, after the accession of Turkey to the European Union, will be in majority in Europe within a few decades.⁵³ This view of the future of Europe is also shared by Bernard Lewis, who in an interview with German newspaper *Die Welt* in 2004 stated that Europe will be Islamic by the end of the century.⁵⁴ Although the simple statement that Europe statistically will be dominated by Islam within a few decades is obviously not Islamophobic in itself, it cannot be ignored that these numbers can be misused to serve an anti-Islamic agenda in Europe.

As with any controversial claim, there are counter-opinions that want to correct the facts and point out errors. So also in the Muslim demographics debate. The *BBC* came out with its own *YouTube* video in 2009 named "Muslim Demographics: The

⁴⁹ Glazgov, 2004.

⁵⁰ Bostom, 2005.

⁵¹ Knight, 2009.

⁵² 'Muslim Demographics,' on *YouTube*, 2009, available on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FAf8-oq37yg> (consulted on 2 May 2011).

⁵³ 'Qaddafi: Islam taking over Europe – Victory within a Few Decades,' on *YouTube*, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i7ympF_grrA (consulted on 10 April 2011).

⁵⁴ 'Europa wird islamisch,' in *Die Welt*, 2006, available at http://www.welt.de/print-welt/article211310/Europa_wird_islamisch.html (consulted on 3 April 2011).

Truth,”⁵⁵ where the numbers given in the first video were rejected and corrected. The current Muslim population in Europe has been greatly exaggerated, as has their fertility rate numbers. According to sources such as the *BBC* video and *The Economist*, there are no scientific proofs that Europe will turn into *Eurabia* in the future.⁵⁶ Instead, some point more towards the idea that fertility rates depend on one’s standard of living and not on a specific religion or ethnicity, and as Muslims in Europe climb the income ladder, their birth-rates will also fall just as they have done so far.⁵⁷

The other view of *Eurabia* bases its claim on a conspiracy among Muslims to deliberately take over Europe and make it part of the Islamic world:

In this new land, Christians and Jews will be reduced by the new Muslim majority to the status of "dhimmis" - second-class citizens forced to "walk in the gutter". This will not happen by accident. It is part of a deliberate and "occult" plan, concocted between the Arab League and leading European politicians like Jacques Chirac and Mary Robinson, who secretly love Islam and are deliberately flooding the continent with Muslim immigrants.⁵⁸

Groups such as “Stop Islamisation of Europe” (SIOE) and its American counterpart “Stop Islamisation of America” (SIOA) also follow this rhetoric, and are using “new media” such as facebook to spread the anti-Islamic message.⁵⁹ Their slogan, “Racism is the lowest form of stupidity! Islamophobia is the height of common sense!”⁶⁰ sends a clear message of anti-Islamic sentiments, which they base on the idea that “Islamists plan for islam to take over the world so that everyone will live in the *house of submission*.”⁶¹

⁵⁵ ‘Muslim Demographics: The Truth,’ on *YouTube*, 2009, available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mINChFxRXQs> (consulted 2 May 2011).

⁵⁶ ‘Tales from Eurabia,’ in *The Economist*, 2006, available at <http://www.economist.com/node/7086222> (consulted on 5 April 2011).

⁵⁷ Saunders, 2009.

⁵⁸ Hari, 2006.

⁵⁹ Facebook.com, search: “SIOE,” available for facebook members at <http://www.facebook.com/search.php?q=SIOE&init=quick&tas=0.16856017499230802&type=groups> (consulted on 30 June 2011).

⁶⁰ SIOE England website, available at <http://sioeengland.wordpress.com/> (consulted on 30 June 2011); SIOE Sverige, available at <http://sioesverige.wordpress.com/> (consulted on 30 June 2011).

⁶¹ SIOE England website, “THE PROJECT – the Islamic declaration of war,” available at <http://sioeengland.wordpress.com/the-project-the-islamic-declaration-of-war/> (consulted on 30 June 2011).



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SIOA ~ SIOE
UNITED WE STAND

History will be made this July 2nd when Stop Islamization of America (SIOA) and Stop Islamization of Europe (SIOE) hold a joint demonstration and transatlantic anti-jihad summit conference in Strasbourg, France.

Join us as leaders and freedom fighters come from all over the world to strategize on action plans to defeat Islamic Supremacism and preserve human rights and universal values of freedom.

STRASBOURG JULY 2nd:
SIOA/SIOE DEMONSTRATION: "STOP MOSQUE AND MINARET BUILDING IN EUROPE"
PLACE DE LA REPUBLIQUE AT 1PM
SIOA/SIOE FIRST TRANSATLANTIC CONFERENCE
AT FEC 17 RUE SAINT ETIENNE AT 3PM
"STOP THE ISLAMIZATION OF THE WEST"

**~ THE EUROPEAN PREMIERE OF THE EXPLOSIVE NEW FILM :
THE GROUND ZERO MOSQUE - THE SECOND WAVE OF 911 ATTACKS ~**

ATLASSHRUGS.COM SIOA/FACEBOOK SIOE/FACEBOOK JIHADWATCH.COM

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⁶² Picture from SIOE England website, available at <http://sioengland.wordpress.com/> (consulted on 30 June 2011).

The *Eurabia* message, as we shall see later on, is the base for a strong political agenda in Europe today. However, the fear that Islam will one day deliberately take over is not exclusive to Europe, as the website *Jihad Watch* proves. *Jihad Watch* is affiliated with the highly conservative and anti-Islamic online political newspaper *Frontline Magazine*. According to *Jihad Watch*, Islamic Jihadists have a plan to crush all other civilizations and spread Islam over the whole globe. Since Jihad is a duty for every Muslim, all Muslims are therefore parts of this huge conspiracy to conquer the world.⁶⁴

The word Islamophobia is, as has been highlighted in this chapter, highly controversial and complex. As was previously stated, this paper will use the word Islamophobia in spite of its ambiguity, and will thus be defined through the Runnymede Trust's eight points. More specifically, Islamophobia will here be used to mean situations where Muslims as a *whole* are targeted and criticised without distinctions being made between e.g. Muslims and Islamists, where violence is seen as an inherent characteristic of the religion, and when prejudice and fear becomes the leading role in the relations between Europe and Islam. For this purpose, Islamophobia and anti-Islam can be used synonymously, as they both fail to make the distinctions that could avoid these kinds of generalisations. The concept of *Eurabia* is also an important key in defining and understanding Islamophobic ideas. The *Eurabia* theory is at the core of European fears of Islam, as this indicates a complete Islamic takeover of Europe in the future. Without the fear of losing Europe to the Muslims, it is questionable whether Islamophobic ideas would have become as prominent as they currently are.

The previous pages started with a discussion on the historical relations between Europe and the Islamic world throughout history in order to illustrate that there have been interaction between the two for many centuries. Europe and Islam are hence not foreign to one another. Although some of this history has been framed by wars,

⁶³ Picture from Mestre & Manor Blog, 'Islamophobes de tous les pays... annulez tout!', 2011, In LeMonde.fr blog *Droite(s) Extreme(s)*, available at <http://droites-extremes.blog.lemonde.fr/2011/06/29/islamophobes-de-tous-les-pays-annulez-tout/> (consulted on 30 June 2011).

⁶⁴ Jihad Watch, 'Why Jihad Watch,' available at <http://www.jihadwatch.org/why-jihad-watch.html> (consulted on 3 April 2011).

conquests, and colonialism, there have also been great periods of cultural exchange and mutual understanding and respect. However, in the past few decades a clear shift can be seen, where Islam is no longer solely seen as “the other,” but as a serious threat coming from *within* Europe. The relationship to “the other” has historically been turbulent and full of changes, but it has always been *external*. The fear that Europe is now being attacked from within is a new phenomenon which has resulted in the birth of the word Islamophobia, which is frequently used to depict negative feelings towards Muslims and to make generalisations. *Eurabia* is an important key in understanding anti-Islamic ideas, as it relies on the theory that Europe will sooner or later be taken over by Islam, either through demographics or through a deliberate conspiracy among Muslims. The next chapter will put Islamophobia into a political context in today’s Europe, where new parties are exploiting people’s fear of Islam in order to make political gains. Islamophobia is no longer only an undefined feeling or a vague concept used by scholars and journalists, but has increasingly become a *politicised* idea.

Chapter III. European Populism and Islamophobia

During the past few decades Europe has seen an upsurge in political parties whose agenda differs quite significantly from the historically established parties.⁶⁵ A 2011 report from the Council of Europe named "*Living together*": *Combining diversity and freedom in 21st-century Europe*, states that

(...) election results and polling data in a wide range of European countries have shown an increase in voter support for movements which claim to be defending the interests and culture of the 'indigenous' majority against immigration and the spread of Islam.⁶⁶

In literature and in media, these parties are often referred to as the new extreme right, radical extreme right, right-wing extremists, or (extreme) right-wing populists. These labels generally refer to parties such as the *National Front* in France, the *Danish People's Party*, the *Party for Freedom* in the Netherlands, the *British National Party*, and the Flemish *Vlaams Belang*, only to mention a few. However, these labels are not without controversy. "Extreme right" or "right-wing extremism" generally refer to

the fundamental rejection of the democratic rules of the game, of individual liberty, and of the principle of individual equality and equal rights for all members of the political community, and their replacement by an authoritarian system in which rights are based on ascribed characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, or religion; and the acceptance, if not propagation, of violence as a necessary means to achieve political goals both at home and in foreign policy.⁶⁷

These characteristics can thus be summed up as:

- A complete rejection of democracy as it is understood in Western societies
- A deep disregard for individual rights and freedoms
- Proliferation of violence as a means for achieving their goals

⁶⁵ Betz, 1993, p. 413.

⁶⁶ Council of Europe, "*Living together*": *Combining diversity and freedom in 21st-century Europe*, 2011, p. 18, available at <http://www.coe.int/lportal/web/coe-portal/event-files/our-events/the-group-of-eminent-persons?dynLink=true&layoutId=581&dlgroupId=10226&fromArticleId=> (consulted on 20 July 2011).

⁶⁷ Betz, 1998, p. 3.

Although these characteristics could maybe be applied to some of the *voters* of these parties, the parties *themselves* cannot be put under the “extreme right” label. Hans-Georg Betz, Associate Professor of European Studies at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) at Johns Hopkins University, is one scholar who rejects the use of the label “extreme right” when talking about established parties in Western democracies. Although he says that the use of “*extreme right*” can be useful to put these types of parties into a historical context, i.e. as a continuation of European fascism, no contemporary established European party fully possesses the characteristics mentioned above.⁶⁸ Also Roger Eatwell, Professor of Comparative European Politics at the University of Bath, questions the use of “*extreme right*,” as it is often associated with anti-democratic values. This, he states, shows a bias towards representative democracy, while democracy as a concept can take different forms. What some of the parties discussed sometimes oppose is *representative democracy*, while favoring *direct democracy*.⁶⁹ This, in essence, is not anti-democratic.

As this paper will solely deal with *established political parties* in Western democracies which have come to power through democratic means, using the definition of “a complete rejection of democracy” would be contradictory. No established party today would call itself right-wing extremist,⁷⁰ and in the cases where their actions have crossed the line towards extremism, this has had consequences at the polls.⁷¹ Instigation to violence is also not a characteristic of any established party in Europe today, and can conclusively not define the abovementioned parties. Categorizing these parties under the umbrella of the extreme right is hence misleading. Although the ideas of many of these parties might obviously seem extreme, this needs to be separated from the use of the word “extreme” in the extreme right or right-wing extremism, which is of a more violent nature.

While some scholars try to stay away from using the word “extreme,” most, if not all, define them as right-wing. This is a comfortable label to put as a

⁶⁸ Betz, 1998, p. 3.

⁶⁹ Eatwell, 2004, p. 8.

⁷⁰ Eatwell, 2004, p. 11.

⁷¹ Betz, 1998, p. 3.

majority of these parties are indeed right-wing. However, also this might be an oversimplification. When looking at voting patterns by some of these parties, especially in Scandinavia, it becomes obvious that there is not necessarily a consistent pattern of agreement with centre-right parties. Instead, these types of parties in Scandinavia tend to shift their votes between right and left depending on the issue. There, one can say that they have created their own niche outside of the classical right-left spectrum. In order to incorporate also these parties into the general European trend, the absolute adherence to the right-wing label needs to be questioned or even rejected. So, if these parties cannot be labelled as either extreme or right-wing, what are they? A definition that most seem to agree on is to put them under the political frame of *populism*.

III.1. Populism in context

Populism finds its strength in the people, and the idea that people are rational and wise but that their voices are not listened to by politicians and other authorities. Populists are therefore the ones speaking for the will and opinions of the people, since they claim to know what people in general want.⁷² People, or “the heartland” as some call it, is an unidentified mass which thinks in much the same way and is guided by common sense, but never gets the opportunity to express its opinions and demands.⁷³ In order for the voices of the people to be heard, populists generally propose direct democracy, where frequent referendums will assure the participation of the people in decision-making.⁷⁴ In sharp contrast to the anti-democratic tendencies seen under the label of “extreme right” discussed above, “populists see themselves as true democrats, voicing popular grievances and opinions systematically ignored by governments, mainstream parties and the media.”⁷⁵

However, populists not only *listen* to the ideas of the people, but also try to come up with easy *solutions* to their problems, without always taking the complexity

⁷² Betz, 1998, p. 4; Eatwell, 2004, p. 11.

⁷³ Mudde, 2004, p. 545.

⁷⁴ Eatwell, 2004, p. 12.

⁷⁵ Conovan, 1999, p. 2.

of the problem or situation into account.⁷⁶ They also generally oppose the political structure, where they believe the gap between the elite and the people is too large, and that the elite have corrupted the system.⁷⁷ As a solution, they want to serve as a link between the elite and the people, often by using simple rhetoric that anyone can understand. Finally, populism tends to lend itself to strong and charismatic leaders who are able to speak for the oppressed masses.⁷⁸ Geert Wilders, the leader for the *Party for Freedom* in the Netherlands, and the late Jörg Haider, former leader of *Freedom Party* in Austria, are good examples of populist leaders.

Whereas the historical origins of populism seem difficult to pinpoint,⁷⁹ it is nevertheless a phenomena that can be seen in virtually every continent across the globe, and can originate in either the political left-wing or political right-wing.⁸⁰ American professor and researcher Ron Formisano writes that “in Latin America and North America populist movements historically have been associated more often with progressive reform and social liberation,”⁸¹ while in Europe it is often associated with “right-wing extremism and racism”⁸² and some have described Hitler as an early European populist.⁸³ However, since the 1980’s the label of European *neo-populism* has emerged, which creates a distinction between traditional fascist populism and the populism we see today.⁸⁴ Betz is one of the scholars who divides populism into “traditional” populism and neo-populism. While traditional populism certainly contains the “criteria” mentioned above, neo-populism, starting from the 1980’s and 1990’s, puts a special emphasis on “mobilization of resentment:”

perhaps the most distinct feature of the new populism of the 1980s and 1990s is the degree to which radical right-wing parties and movements have adopted a political strategy that relies primarily on mobilization of resentment (...) the most prominent targets of this campaign have been the established political parties, the “political

⁷⁶ Mudde, 2004, p. 542.

⁷⁷ Ibidem 543.

⁷⁸ Eatwell, 2004, p. 12.

⁷⁹ I could not find any credible source that would indicate where and when “populism” was first used.

⁸⁰ Formisano, 2005, p. 241.

⁸¹ Ibidem.

⁸² Ibidem.

⁸³ Ibidem 242.

⁸⁴ Formisano, 2005, p. 241; Betz, 1998, p. 4.

class,” immigration, refugees, and, to a lesser degree, the resident foreign population.⁸⁵

Neo-populism also, unlike classical fascism, supports free market economics, the capitalist system, and “a strong belief in the value of enterprise and individual initiative and effort.”⁸⁶

As seen above, Betz himself uses “radical right-wing populism” to categorise these kinds of parties, as do many other scholars and journalists. However, as already stated, this paper will try to stay away from using the right-wing label since it does not properly represent all contemporary populist parties in Europe. For the specific purpose of this paper will another label be used which is not invoked in current academia; *soft radical anti-Islamic populism*. The parties discussed in this paper are *soft* because they have all reached political power through legal means, competing in free elections. They are *radical* due to their ambition to change the *status quo* by questioning the current political, social and cultural system. The *anti-Islamic* element will be discussed in great detail later on, but is based on the current trend among these parties to use anti-Islamic rhetoric in order to gain popularity. Finally, the *populist* label will be used as these types of European parties exhibit the “traditional” populist characteristics discussed above, in combination with European neo-populism. This is what distinguishes them from e.g. Latin American populists, which lack many of the “criteria” included in neo-populism. Populist is also a good label to use since the parties mentioned do not seem to oppose to being called populists. Marine Le Pen has for example said that she does not mind being called a populist, “If it’s a choice between extreme right, fascist, Nazi, or just populist, I find that pretty nice.”⁸⁷

However, in spite of what has just been said about the problems of using labels such as “extreme right” to define these parties, it is important to remember that when authors and journalists refer to established political parties in Europe as extreme right or right-wing populist, the meaning is essentially the same. What label one wants

⁸⁵ Betz, 1998, p. 4

⁸⁶ Betz, 1998, p. 5.

⁸⁷ McNicoll, 2011.

to put is a personal question of interpretation, and which specific political parties one is referring to.

Why should there need to be a specific category called soft radical *anti-Islamic* populism one wonders, when the kinds of parties discussed above are generally against *all* immigrants? This is a valid point, but the fact is that Muslims and Islam have increasingly been singled out by the populist parties as *the* largest threat to Europe and the respective nations, and in some cases they are basing much of their party platform on this specific issue.⁸⁸ While the parties also oppose other common issues such as rejection of the European Union, Islam is one of the top priorities. Their arguments are generally a combination of the two divisions of the *Eurabia* theory discussed earlier; demography and conspiracy.⁸⁹ In order to get deeper into this situation, the focus will be on five European countries which all have anti-Islamic populist parties in government; Austria and *The Freedom Party (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, FPÖ)*, France and *The National Front (Front National, FN)*, Denmark and the *Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti, DF)*, and the Netherlands' *Party for Freedom (Partij voor de Vrijheid, PVV)*, with a final, slightly longer, analysis on Sweden and the *Swedish Democrats (Sverigedemokraterna, SD)*. These parties have been chosen both due to their explicitly anti-Islamic rhetoric and their electoral successes achieved through soft, legal means. However, anti-Islamic populism is not restricted to these five countries, but can also be seen in e.g. Germany, Switzerland, Great Britain, and Belgium. Eastern Europe has also seen an upsurge in populist parties, but since their politics is to a large extent based on e.g. anti-Jewish and anti-gay sentiments, issues which are not generally brought up on the Western European populist agenda,⁹⁰ this would be outside the scope of this paper.

It is important to remember that these populist parties are (officially) not promoting an ideology of race superiority, but simply that ethnicities, cultures and

⁸⁸ Zúquete, 2008, p. 322.

⁸⁹ See supra pp. 23-27.

⁹⁰ MacShane, 2010.

religions should not mix. Scholars such as Jens Rydgren from Stockholm University point to a new tendency of speaking of “ethnopluralism” instead of classical racism,

the notion of ‘ethnopluralism’ states that in order to preserve the unique national characters of different peoples, they have to be kept separated. Mixing of different ethnicities only leads to cultural extinction. (...) contrary to the traditional conception of racism, the doctrine of ethnopluralism is not hierarchical: different ethnicities are not necessary superior or inferior, only different and incompatible.⁹¹

By this, Rydgren believes that parties that adhere to the ethnopluralist principle are able to “mobilize on xenophobic and racist public opinions without being stigmatized as racist.” However, when analysing the concept of ethnopluralism, one can sense a contradiction. On the one hand, this idea does not seem to believe in the ability for people to change culturally. It seems inherent in the theory that immigrants coming to Europe will not be able to incorporate European culture and values into their lifestyles, since if they did, there would be no threat of cultural extinction (for the European culture that is). On the other hand, the fear of cultural extinction indicates that cultures are fragile and worryingly prone to change when colliding with other cultures. Hence, ethnopluralism basically states that immigrants in Europe are unable to change due to the strength of their “home” cultures, but the European culture(s) would inevitably become weaker, or even extinct. The question is what it is in European culture that makes it so difficult for people with a non-European background to embrace and become a part of, and also what it is that is weak in European culture. Chapter IV will take a closer look at European identity.

What is also worth noting about contemporary soft radical anti-Islamic populist parties in Europe is the shift from Islamophobic *and* anti-Semitic speech to a rhetoric almost exclusively focused on Islam. In fact, many European populist parties today embrace the Jewish religion⁹² and are strong supporters of Israel, which is part of “the shield against Islam.”⁹³ Being anti-Semitic is not politically correct even among

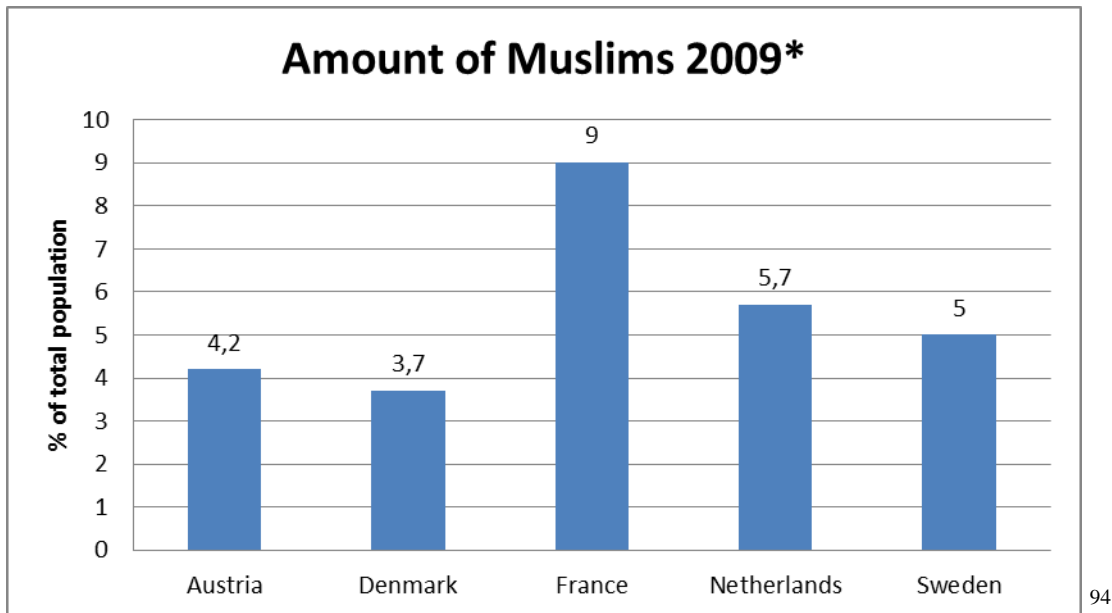
⁹¹ Rydgren, 2005, p. 427.

⁹² Zúquete, 2008, p. 328.

⁹³ Faiola, 2010; Bjurwald 2011, p. 29.

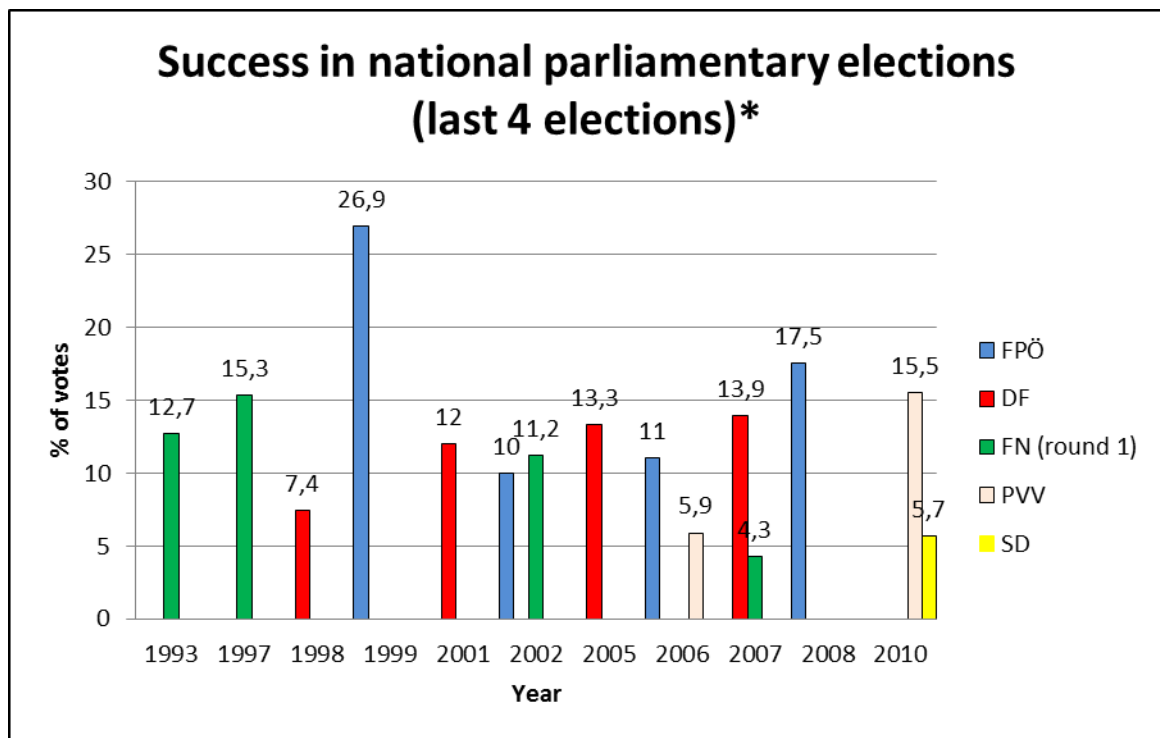
populist parties in Europe today, who want to cut with their all too common dark pasts. Being anti-Islam on the other hand seems to have gone mainstream.

III.2. Anti-Islamic populist parties in Europe



* *The numbers are approximate, as some countries do not have a national census based on religious affiliation. In the countries where there are census statistics, the numbers might be a few years old.*

⁹⁴ U.S. Department of State, *The International Religious Freedom Report*, available at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/c32412.htm> (consulted on 19 May 2011).



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* The PVV has only been voted into parliament in the last two elections, and SD only in the last election.

FPÖ: *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (Austria)

DF: *Dansk Folkeparti* (Denmark)

FN: *Front National* (France)

PVV: *Partij voor de Vrijheid* (The Netherlands)

SD: *Sverigedemokraterna* (Sweden)

Although it is impossible to see any correlation between Muslims in European states and support for populist parties based on only one year (2009), one could hypothesise that a rise in Muslims would produce more anti-Islamic sentiments,

⁹⁵ European Election Database, available at http://eed.nsd.uib.no/webview/index.jsp?study=http://129.177.90.166:80/obj/fStudy/FREP1999_Display&mode=cube&v=2&cube=http://129.177.90.166:80/obj/fCube/FREP1999_Display_C1&top=yes (consulted on 17 May 2011).

which could thus serve as a basis for the *Eurabia* theory. However, since the amount of Muslims in Europe is highly approximate, one cannot draw any clear conclusions.

This rise of anti-Islamic populist parties has not gone unnoticed by the media, neither in Europe nor abroad. For example, *The International Herald Tribune* wrote in 2005:

From Austria's Freedom Party to France's National Front to Germany's National Democratic Party, Europe's far right has made a comeback in recent years largely on the strength of anti-immigration feelings sharpened to a fear of Islam. That fear is fed by threats of terror, rising crime rates among Muslim youth and mounting cultural clashes with the Continent's growing Islamic communities.⁹⁶

The Times of India published an article in 2010 titled “Anti-Islam war cry helps Europe far-right fly high,”⁹⁷ and *The Washington Post*, in an article about the electoral success of the Swedish Democrats in 2010, wrote

“(...) the Swedish Democrats made it into the Rikstag by tapping into a surge of anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiment sweeping across many nations in Western Europe, propelling right-wing and nationalist parties to their biggest gains in years. (...) In many parts of Europe, the debate over immigration and Islam are now the same thing”⁹⁸

The clearest sign of anti-Islamism in the five parties chosen in this paper is the way they specifically target Muslims in party programmes and manifestos, and in election campaigns. This section will give a brief overview of the official rhetoric of the five parties in their relations to Islam.

III.2.1. Austria: *The Freedom Party/Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ)*

Party leader: Heinz-Christian Strache

⁹⁶ Smith, 2005.

⁹⁷ “Anti-Islam war cry helps Europe far-right fly high,” in *The Times of India*, 2010.

⁹⁸ Faiola, 2010.

While the FPÖ only makes a quick reference to Islamisation in their party programme,⁹⁹ their recent election campaigns have been far more explicit. The campaign for the Vienna regional elections in 2010, which resulted in the FPÖ getting 27% of the votes,¹⁰⁰ attracted much attention for its controversial messages and tactics. One example is the comic book “Sagen aus Wien,” published by the FPÖ, which makes specific reference to the Turkish invasion of Vienna in 1683 while drawing parallels to the present-day situation.¹⁰¹ Party leader Heinz-Christian Strache himself also recorded a rap song, “Wiener Blut,” where some of the lyrics talk about the Islamisation of Vienna and the problem of mosques and minarets.¹⁰² That Strache targeted the younger population in his 2010 campaign is evident. Another huge controversy was the 2010 campaign during regional elections in the Federal State of Styria, where the FPÖ featured an online game on their website called “Moschee Baba,” or “Bye Bye Mosque,” where players gained points by shooting towards mosques and minarets. Although the game was soon banned, some believe that it helped the FPÖ double their votes, making them the third largest party in Styria.¹⁰³ According to German newspaper *Spiegel Online*, the video game was recycled from the 2009 campaign in Switzerland to ban minarets.¹⁰⁴ The anti-minaret campaign in Switzerland was obviously very effective, as the country banned the building of all new minarets after a national referendum was held. The reason for the ban was to stop the Islamisation of Switzerland.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹ *Der Freiheitlichen Partei Österreichs* Website, ‘Das Parteiprogramm der Freiheitlichen Partei Österreichs,’ 2005, p. 6-7, available at http://www.fpoe.at/fileadmin/Content/portal/PDFs/2009/fp_parteiprogramm_neu.pdf (consulted on 2 June 2011).

¹⁰⁰ Trainor, 2010.

¹⁰¹ ‘Vienna vote has its battle of the comic books,’ in *Austrian Independent*, 2010, available at http://austrianindependent.com/news/Politics/2010-10-06/4809/Vienna_vote_has_its_battle_of_the_comic_books (consulted on 13 May 2011).

¹⁰² ‘HC-Rap 2010: HC goes “Wiener Blut,”’ on *YouTube*, available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u0510mbtg2c> (consulted on 1 June 2011).

¹⁰³ Stadlober, 2010.

¹⁰⁴ ‘We’d Rather Have Sarrazin than a Muezzin,’ in *Spiegel Online*, 2010, available at <http://www.spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/0,1518,715278,00.html#ref=rss> (consulted on 3 June 2011).

¹⁰⁵ ‘Swiss voters back ban on minarets,’ in *BBC Online*, 2009, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8385069.stm> (consulted on 15 May 2011).



“Bye Bye Mosque” computer game¹⁰⁶

That Strache’s political message about Islam seems to have hit home among many people in Austria can, apart from election results, be seen in a video featured on *The Guardian*’s website.¹⁰⁷ When asked what they thought would become of Austria if the *status quo* remained, people in the street responded “If the social democrats stay in power, women will be forced to wear burka and the St. Stevens cathedral might be turned into a mosque. Christian and Jewish holidays would all disappear, and we would have to pray 5 times a day.”¹⁰⁸ The same video also features an interview with Dr. Gregory Weeks, head of international relations department at Webster University in Vienna, who takes the same approach as this paper by questioning the use of the “far-right” label to describe parties such as the FPÖ. He claims that the voters for the FPÖ come from both sides of the political spectrum, and

¹⁰⁶ Picture from article by Stadlober, 2010.

¹⁰⁷ ‘The rise of Vienna’s far right – video,’ in *The Guardian Online*, 2011, available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/video/2011/feb/11/vienna-far-right-video?intcmp=239> (consulted on 3 June 2011).

¹⁰⁸ Ibidem.

that the FPÖ offers a quick fix to many problems without aligning themselves with a specific right-left ideology. Instead, they are simply populist.¹⁰⁹

Heinz-Christian Strache was also one of the promoters of *The European Patriotic Party*, or *The European Freedom Party* (a clear name was never established), an initiative launched in 2008 to create a unified European front against the Islamisation of Europe.¹¹⁰ Together with the French *Front National*, the Bulgarian *Ataka Party*, and the Belgian *Vlaams Belang*, the idea was to protect Christianity and to “defend Europe against ‘Islamisation’ and immigrants.”¹¹¹ Strache himself manifested his loyalty towards Christian immigrants by showing clear support for Austrian Serbs, and he was frequently seen wearing the Orthodox prayer band, *brojanica*, around his wrist.¹¹² “I can say I am a friend of the Serbs” (...) “the point is to defend the Christian Western World against imminent Islamization,” he told *biber*, a Vienna city magazine, in 2008.¹¹³ According to the United Kingdom-based *Institute of Race Relations*, Strache’s support of the Serbs explicitly “drew a culturally coded distinction between good migrants, especially of Serbian descent and Orthodox Christians, and bad migrants, like Turks, Bosnians and Arabs – in short Muslims.”¹¹⁴ Heinz-Christian Strache and Jörg Haider are/were also vehement critics of Mosques and minarets in Europe, something they have in common with many anti-Islamic populist parties around Europe today.¹¹⁵ Obviously, one does not need to be a populist in order to be anti-Islamic. The fact that Switzerland

¹⁰⁹ ‘The rise of Vienna's far right – video,’ in *The Guardian Online*, 2011, available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/video/2011/feb/11/vienna-far-right-video?intcmp=239> (consulted on 3 June 2011).

¹¹⁰ Institute of Race Relations, *Islamophobia and Progressive Values*, 2011, available at http://www.irr.org.uk/pdf2/seminar_one.pdf (consulted on 16 May 2011).

¹¹¹ ‘EU far-right groups to form party,’ in *BBC News*, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7210036.stm> (consulted on 14 May 2011); ‘Right-Wing Leaders to Form a European "Patriotic" Party,’ in *Deutsche Welle Online*, available at <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,3090759,00.html> (consulted on 2 June 2011).

¹¹² Institute of Race Relations, *Islamophobia and Progressive Values*, 2011, available at http://www.irr.org.uk/pdf2/seminar_one.pdf (consulted on 16 May 2011); ‘Austrian party "wooing" Serbian migrants to help stop "Islamization,"’ in *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, 2008.

¹¹³ ‘Austrian party "wooing" Serbian migrants to help stop "Islamization,"’ in *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, 2008.

¹¹⁴ Institute of Race Relations, *Islamophobia and Progressive Values*, 2011, available at http://www.irr.org.uk/pdf2/seminar_one.pdf (consulted on 16 May 2011).

¹¹⁵ ‘Extreme Right targets mosques and minarets in Austria,’ in *Institute of Race Relations News*, 2007, available at <http://www.irr.org.uk/2007/september/ha000021.html> (consulted on 23 May 2011).

has banned the building of new minarets after a referendum was held does not implicate the Swiss population is also inherently populist, but simply that they see minarets as something that is inconsistent with Swiss identity and is therefore a threat that needs to be contained. The problem is the combination of Islamophobia *and* populism, but this will be dealt with in more detail in chapter four.

III.2.2. Denmark: Danish People's Party/Dansk Folkeparti (DF)

Party leader: Pia Kjaersgaard

While the Danish People's Party does not specifically mention Muslims in their party programme but rather argues against immigration and multiculturalism as a whole, the pictures they use in brochures and posters clearly illustrates where they think the danger lies. When talking about immigration and multiculturalism, there is not a single picture that does not show a Muslim as a symbol for the difficulties facing Denmark:



a)



b)



c)

a) Brochure about integration (2011): “Integration in Danish – now it must have an impact”¹¹⁶
 Election campaign 2007: b) Comply with the customs or leave the country c) Sweden is drowning in foreigners – they do not have a Pia Kjaersgaard.¹¹⁷

Also during the annual meetings of the Danish People’s Party can one sense the focus on Islam above other immigrants. For example, the guest speaker during the 2009 meeting was Farshad Kholgis, an Iranian-born Baha’i who during his speech spoke passionately against Islam based on his experiences after the Islamic revolution 1979,¹¹⁸ and in 2010 the guest speaker was Ayaan Hirsi Alis, a Somalian-Dutch politician and an outspoken critic of Islam and its oppression of women.¹¹⁹

Members of the Danish People’s Party have also attracted media attention by using explicitly derogatory language with regards to Muslims. One example is a

¹¹⁶ Dansk Folkeparti, available at <http://www.danskfolkeparti.dk/Brochurer651.asp> (consulted on 11 April 2011).

¹¹⁷ Dansk Folkeparti Website, available at <http://www.danskfolkeparti.dk/Annoncer.asp> (consulted on 11 april 2011).

¹¹⁸ Dansk Folkeparti Website, available at http://www.danskfolkeparti.dk/%C3%85rsm%C3%B8detaler_tekst_video.asp (consulted on 11 April 2011).

¹¹⁹ Manji, 2005.

comment made by *Danish People's Party* member Soren Krarup in 2007, where he likened the Muslim headscarf to a swastika:

If you can say that the swastika is a symbol of Nazism, the same applies to Islam's headscarf (...) The headscarf symbolizes a totalitarian ideology's demand that anyone who does not share its views and attitudes is an infidel, and that if they refuse to adopt these beliefs, they will be exterminated.¹²⁰

Swedish journalist and author Lisa Bjurwald describes Danish politicians and media as having developed “a sickly fixation with the Muslim minority,” where Muslims are depicted collectively as rapists and terrorists. Bjurwald also quotes Pia Kjaersgaard who in 2005 described Muslims in Denmark as “thousands and thousands of people whose civilization, culture, and spirit obviously still remain in the year 1005 rather than 2005.”¹²¹ Kjaersgaard has also said that “I think the Muslims are a problem. They are as good as you or I, but it's a problem in a Christian country to have too many Muslims.”¹²²

III.2.3. France: *The National Front/Front National* (FN)

Party leader: Marine Le Pen

Since Marine Le Pen took over the position of leader for *Front National* from her father Jean-Marie Le Pen in 2011, she has repeatedly stated that the party has undergone a transformation which aims at cutting the links with many old values associated with the party. Primarily, Marine Le Pen wants to distance herself from the many anti-Semitic statements made by her father.¹²³ However, as the debate on national identity is sweeping through France, Islam remains a target in the FN rhetoric.

Marine Le Pen has been careful to distinguish between Islam and Islamism, and points out that she does not believe Islam to be contradictory to Western

¹²⁰ ‘Danish People's Party spokesman likens Muslim headscarf to swastika,’ in *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, 2007.

¹²¹ Bjurwald, 2011, p. 222.

¹²² Mather, 2002.

¹²³ ‘Le Pen, Mightier than the Sword?’ in *The Economist*, 2011, available at <http://www.economist.com/node/18651184> (consulted on 20 May 2011).

values.¹²⁴ However, she believes it *is* contrary to the secular French identity, and the line between pride in national identity and racism is often unclear. In this blurry area, many see the FN as playing the identity card to critique Islam without having to be openly anti-Islamic.¹²⁵ In 2010, the party engaged in a campaign against the Islamisation of France after the country had embarked on its national identity discourse,¹²⁶ and Marine Le Pen is known to have likened Muslims praying in the streets to the Nazi occupation of France, minus the "tanks and soldiers".¹²⁷ Marine Le Pen and the *National Front* might not make computer games or rap songs like the FPÖ, but the anti-Islamic undertones in their rhetoric of national identity has influenced the political discourse on Islam in France.



a) 2010 FN leaflet “Republic or Islamism – we must choose”¹²⁸ b) Poster from 2010 “No to Islamism” campaign.¹²⁹

¹²⁴ ‘Le Pen, Mightier than the Sword?’ in *The Economist*, 2011, available at <http://www.economist.com/node/18651184> (consulted on 20 May 2011).

¹²⁵ Sachs, 2009; McNicoll, 2011.

¹²⁶ “‘No to Islamism’ campaign boosts France’s National Front in poll,” in *Reuters*, 2010, available at <http://blogs.reuters.com/faithworld/2010/03/15/no-to-islamism-campaign-boosts-frances-national-front-in-poll/> (consulted on 11 May 2011).

¹²⁷ Samuel, 2010.

¹²⁸ *Front National Website*, available at http://www.frontnational.com/?page_id=926 (consulted on 13 May 2011).

¹²⁹ Google search: no to Islamisation campaign France, available at <http://www.google.se/search?q=no%20to%20islamisation%20campaign%20france&um=1&ie=UTF-8&tbn=isch&source=og&sa=N&hl=sv&tab=wi&biw=1366&bih=643> (consulted on 23 May 2011).

III.2.4. The Netherlands: *Party for Freedom/Partij voor de Vrijheid* (PVV)

Party leader: Geert Wilders

The Party for Freedom in the Netherlands, led by Geert Wilders, has attracted a significant amount of media attention due to the party's outspokenness against Islam. In their election programme, "Agenda for Hope and Optimism,"¹³⁰ which spans from 2010 to 2015, the third chapter is almost solely dedicated to Islam. It starts by saying that Islam is "primarily a political ideology, a totalitarian doctrine focused on dominance, violence and oppression," and can therefore not claim to be a religion. Moderate Islam does not exist, and while there might be moderate Muslims, a majority of them are not because of the broad support for Sharia laws, the September 11 attacks, and their dislike for Jews and the West. Due to the trend of cultural relativism:

Europe is rapidly becoming Eurabia. The Netherlands should therefore just like Denmark demand for an immediate opt-out clause, so that the EU has nothing more to say about our immigration policy. All decisions of Brussels in the field of mass immigration should be immediately disregarded by the Netherlands.¹³¹

The PVV party programme then lists a number of solutions to the problem, which include:

- No more mosques
- All Islamic schools should close
- No headscarves in healthcare, education, town or anywhere in the public nor subsidized by any other organization
- EU: Turkey in, the Netherlands out
- Ban the burqa and the Koran, put a fine or something like that on headscarves

¹³⁰ *Partij voor de Vrijheid* Website, 'De agenda van hoop en optimisme,' available at http://www.pvv.nl/images/stories/Webversie_VerkiezingsProgrammaPVV.pdf (consulted on 15 April 2011).

¹³¹ *Partij voor de Vrijheid* Website, 'De agenda van hoop en optimisme,' p. 13, available at http://www.pvv.nl/images/stories/Webversie_VerkiezingsProgrammaPVV.pdf (consulted on 15 April 2011).

- Ban Quran lessons at school

Above all stop immigration for people from Islamic countries¹³²

The list of public anti-Islamic statements made by Geert Wilders is endless, some of which resulted in a trial against Wilders where he was charged with inciting hatred against Muslims and other ethnic minorities.¹³³ However, Wilders was later acquitted.¹³⁴ Some of his most quoted statements regard his comparison of the Koran to *Mein Kampf*, equaling Islam to fascism,¹³⁵ and wanting to “ban the Quran from mosques and homes and would only allow it in universities as a part of academic studies.”¹³⁶ In 2008 he released his short movie “*fitna*”¹³⁷ where he portrays Islam as inherently violent by e.g. showing images of the planes crashing into the twin towers in New York on 9/11 mixed with some of the most violent verses found in the Koran.¹³⁸ In an interview with Swedish news programme *Rapport* in 2009, about a month after his huge success in the European Parliament election in the Netherlands, Wilders was asked what his main political priorities would be if he would become the next prime minister of his country. The very first point he mentioned was to put a stop to the Islamisation of the Netherlands, and stopping all Muslim immigration into the country.¹³⁹ In an interview with *Fox News* in 2008, he shocked the interviewer by openly stating that the Western culture is far better than the “retarded Islamic culture.”¹⁴⁰ Undoubtedly, Wilders’ anti-Islamic message is difficult to miss.

¹³² *Partij voor de Vrijheid* Website, ‘De agenda van hoop en optimisme,’ p. 15, available at http://www.pvv.nl/images/stories/Webversie_VerkiezingsProgrammaPvV.pdf (consulted on 15 April 2011).

¹³³ ‘Freedom of expression on trial: Wilders,’ on *Radio Netherlands Worldwide*, 2011, available at <http://www.rnw.nl/english/bulletin/freedom-expression-trial-wilders-0> (consulted on 9 June 2011).

¹³⁴ See infra pp. 65-66.

¹³⁵ Waterfield, 2009; Stevenson and Gray-Block, 2010; Bjurwald, 2011, p. 29.

¹³⁶ Van Tartwijk, 2010.

¹³⁷ Marquand, 2008.

¹³⁸ ‘Fitna the movie,’ on *YouTube*, available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BgQdZgojOFI&oref=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fresults%3Fsearch_query%3Dfitna%26aq%3Df&has_verified=1&oref=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fverify_age%3Fnext_url%3Dhttp%253A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%253Fv%253DBgQdZgojOFI (consulted on 3 May 2011).

¹³⁹ ‘Geert Wilders intervjuas av sverigefientliga SVT,’ on *YouTube*, available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PMIeuZkuoUc> (consulted on 31 May 2011).

¹⁴⁰ ‘Geert Wilders Speaks: Anti-Koran Film "Fitna,"’ on *YouTube*, available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j0jUuzdfqfc> (consulted on 31 May 2011).

III.2.5. Sweden: *Swedish Democrats/Sverigedemokraterna (SD)*

Party leader: Jimmie Åkesson

The Swedish Democrats, SD, has during the past years tried to change its image from being a group of Nazi-sympathisers in the 1980's to a respected mainstream political party today. Born out of the radical anti-immigration and anti-multiculturalist organisation *Keep Sweden Swedish (Bevara Sverige Svenskt)*, *The Swedish Democrats* created its own party in 1988.¹⁴¹ Since its creation, the party has seen an increase in popularity which led to its entrance into the Swedish Parliament in 2010.

The party has worked hard to wash itself of the Nazi image it previously had by expelling members with Nazi sympathies and creating a party platform that spans far beyond the immigration question. Its shift towards more mainstream politics has angered some party members, many of which have left the party for more radical groups.¹⁴² Today, SD is holding the balance of power between the governing *Alliance* (the Moderates, the People's Party, the Centre Party and the Christian Democrats) on the one side, and the Social Democrats, the Left Party, and the Green Party on the other. By doing so, the *Swedish Democrats* have moved away from typical right-wing politics, and instead ally themselves with parties from left to right depending on the question put on the table. The party is more accurately described as centre-right,¹⁴³ but tend to lean more centre-left in certain questions such as education.¹⁴⁴ This is a reason why the tendency to label all European populist parties as extreme right-wing is a somewhat hasty conclusion to draw. With this introduction to the *Swedish Democrats*, one might wonder what such a party has in common with Wilders and Le Pen. Apart from having

¹⁴¹ Bjurwald, 2011, p. 227.

¹⁴² 'Sverigedemokraterna – från gatan till parlamentet,' in *EXPO*, 2010, available at http://expo.se/2010/sverigedemokraterna---fran-gatan-till-parlamentet_3279.html (consulted on 17 May 2011).

¹⁴³ Ó Erlingsson and Persson, 2010, pp. 229-248.

¹⁴⁴ 'Mer gemensam linje mellan SD och rödgröna,' in *Riksdag och Departement*, no. 16, 2011.

the 1998 election campaign sponsored by Jean-Marie Le Pen,¹⁴⁵ the answer is anti-immigration in general and Islamophobia in particular, as well as populist tactics.

The Swedish Democrats describe themselves as a democratic nationalistic party, whose main question is to reclaim the Swedish identity and create more solidarity among the Swedes,¹⁴⁶ and to speak for the silent Swedish majority. Just as with the other four parties described above, one can examine SD's anti-Islamic message by looking at party programmes and election campaigns. The 2010-2014 party manifesto "99 Suggestions for a Better Sweden" specifically mentions "stopping the Islamisation of Sweden"¹⁴⁷ as a point, and the 2010 election campaign showed clear signs of Islamophobia. An example that stands out was the 2010 election video which, although hindered from being shown on Swedish television, was widely watched on *YouTube*. The video shows an old lady with a walker slowly making her way towards a sign saying "state budget," only to be pushed aside by a group of women in *burqas*, equipped with strollers, running towards the budget.¹⁴⁸ *The Swedish Democrats' Youth Organisation* is on the same line and features a campaign (currently its *only* campaign apart from the 2010 election campaign) called "Cherish freedom – counter Islamisation!"¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ 'Sverigedemokraterna – från gatan till parlamentet,' in *EXPO*, 2010, available at http://expo.se/2010/sverigedemokraterna---fran-gatan-till-parlamentet_3279.html (consulted on 17 May 2011).

¹⁴⁶ *Sverigedemokraterna* Website, 'Invandringspolitiskt program,' available at <http://sverigedemokraterna.se/vara-asikter/invandringspolitisk-program/> (consulted on 17 April 2011).

¹⁴⁷ *Sverigedemokraterna* Website, *99 förslag för ett bättre Sverige*, 2010, available at http://sverigedemokraterna.se/files/2010/09/Valmanifest_2010.pdf (consulted on 10 April 2011).

¹⁴⁸ 'Sverigedemokraternas valfilm 2010,' on *YouTube*, available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XkRRdth8AHc> (consulted on 6 April 2011).

¹⁴⁹ *Sverigedemokratisk Ungdom* Website, 'Värna Friheten – Motverka Islamisering!,' available at <http://sdu.nu/kampanj/> (consulted on 5 June 2011).



*SD Youth: Fight against the one who mistrusts Allah – the Koran 9:29. Not if we get to decide!*¹⁵⁰

Just a quick look at the website of the *Swedish Democrats* shows that although they believe immigration in general is a problem, the largest problem lies in *Muslim* immigration. The singling out of Muslims from other immigrant groups is a pattern very similar to the other populist parties previously mentioned, and the “Islamisation” rhetoric, with its implied fear of *Eurabia*, is evident.

SD has, like the *Danish People’s Party*, also invited critics of Islam as speakers during public meetings. During the political week in Almedalen in 2010, they invited Robert Spencer who is a famous Islam critic, director of the website *Jihad Watch*, and author of books such as *The Truth About Muhammad* and *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam*.¹⁵¹ His speech started with commenting on a headline in the Swedish newspaper *Aftonbladet* which read that an “Islam hater” (Spencer) is speaking for the Swedish Democrats.¹⁵² What is it then that *Aftonbladet* “loves” about Islam he asked in his speech, and continued by listing a series of horrible practices taking place in Muslim countries, and gave examples of terror attacks committed by Muslims.¹⁵³ Following Spencer’s logic, it seems like any criticism of an Islam-critic indicates that

¹⁵⁰ Picture from *Sverigedemokratisk Ungdom*, ‘Värna Friheten – Motverka Islamisering!’, available at <http://sdu.nu/kampanj/> (consulted on 5 June 2011).

¹⁵¹ *Jihad Watch*, ‘About Robert Spencer,’ available at <http://www.jihadwatch.org/about-robert-spencer.html> (consulted on 1 May 2011).

¹⁵² Buskas, 2010.

¹⁵³ ‘Robert Spencer – Almedalsveckan,’ on *YouTube*, available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQ1br0GsqT8> (consulted on 11 May 2011).

one supports terrorism and honour killings. These generalisations are typical for the anti-Islamic populist rhetoric, and can be found in the speech of SD as well.

Jimmie Åkesson himself wrote a much criticised debate article for *Aftonbladet* in 2009, where he explains exactly why we should be afraid of Islam. By claiming e.g. that Muslim men are over-represented as rape perpetrators in Sweden, that Islam has no message of love such as Christianity has, and that many European cities will have an Islamic majority within the not too distant future, he draws the conclusion that “the Muslims are our biggest foreign threat.”¹⁵⁴ Åkesson did however later on acknowledge that some of the statistics were incorrect.¹⁵⁵ Since Åkesson is the leader of a party which tries to rid itself of accusation of racism and even Nazism, he is generally quite careful and discreet regarding his opinions of Muslims. This, however, is not the case with Kent Ekeröth, politician for the *Swedish Democrats* and since the 2010 election also Member of Parliament.

Ekeröth could maybe be described as the Geert Wilders of Sweden. While being an open supporter of Israel and completely opposed to anti-Semitism, he has profiled himself as an anti-Islamist. Like so many other anti-Islamic populist politicians, he makes no distinction whatsoever between radical Islamists and Muslims in general. His website¹⁵⁶ features a whole section on the problems with Islam, a majority of his twitter comments are related to Islam, and most links on his website lead to other anti-Islamic websites.

In an interview with *Swedish National Radio* in 2009, during a conference initiated by Ekeröth on the Islamisation in Europe, he told the reporter that Islam is an *ideology* (using the same rhetoric as Wilders), and that he does not believe all religions to have equal worth. Muslims countries have never prospered he said, and the ideology has been based on violence and war since the beginning.¹⁵⁷ He is also known to have

¹⁵⁴ Åkesson, 2009.

¹⁵⁵ Edblom, 2009.

¹⁵⁶ Kent Ekeröth Blog, available at <http://kentekeroth.se/> (consulted on 4 May 2011).

¹⁵⁷ 'Sverigedemokraternas möte om smygislamisering,' *Människor och Tro* on *Sveriges Radio*, 2009, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/gruppsida.aspx?programid=416&grupp=9142> (consulted on 6 May 2011).

drawn parallels between Islam and Nazi Germany, and wants himself and his party to be like Winston Churchill. Ekeroth and the *Swedish Democrats* dare, just like Churchill, to speak up against the dangers facing Europe.¹⁵⁸ By letting someone like Ekeroth be part of the *Swedish Democrats* and thus indirectly giving their consent to his ideas, the truthfulness of SD's anti-racist message could be seriously questioned.



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*Election poster 2010: Kent Ekeroth for Parliament. Your voice against Islamisation!*¹⁶⁰

Jimmie Åkesson has told Swedish media that there is now zero tolerance for racism within the party, and that what is said officially has to match what is said in

¹⁵⁸ Bjurwald, 2011, pp. 236-237.

¹⁵⁹ Picture from Kent Ekeroth Blog, available at <http://kentekeroth.se/about/> (consulted on 4 May 2011).

¹⁶⁰ Picture from Kent Ekeroth Blog, available at <http://kentekeroth.se/material/> (consulted on 4 May 2011).

private meetings. *Swedish National Radio* therefore let three reporters change their identities during six months in 2009 and join the *Swedish Democrats*, and what they found was an informal language based on explicitly racist ideas.¹⁶¹ Moreover, the Swedish magazine *EXPO* (founded by late “Millenium trilogy” author Stieg Larsson), published an article in 2010 where it revealed that 41 out of the SD election candidates had connections to white power groups.¹⁶² The identity of SD thus seems to be somewhat unclear. Since their entrance into the Swedish Parliament in 2010, the *Swedish Democrats* has not specifically pushed its main question, immigration, very much, which could indicate that their new political status has made them more moderate. However, what is worrying is the stated goal of the *Swedish Democrats* to become like the *Danish People’s Party*,¹⁶³ which is influential in national politics and still stands for an openly anti-Islamic agenda. However, it is still too early to determine the future behaviour of the *Swedish Democrats* in Parliament.

III.3. Soft Radical Anti-Islamic Populism in Europe

The five parties discussed in this chapter all use anti-Islamic rhetoric to reach political success, but the ways in which they choose to spread their message differ greatly. Geert Wilders’ *Party for Freedom* and Heinz-Christian Strache’s *Freedom Party* try to reach young voters by making movies and rap songs, while openly preaching their Islamophobic ideas. Marine Le Pen of the *National Front* and Jimmie Åkesson from the *Swedish Democrats* try to rid their parties of their controversial pasts and often use a language that is considered more “politically correct,” and *The Danish People’s Party* and Pia Kjaersgaard is maybe positioned somewhere in between. However, they all have in common that they want to preserve their nation’s identity, and that Islam is a threat to this identity. With this in mind, it makes no great difference which type of Muslim one is referring to as it is Islam *itself* that is the threat. One’s traditions, language, religion, in essence one’s identity, is in danger due to the Islamic threat, which expresses itself in everything from veiled girls and *halal* meat to honour

¹⁶¹ ””Det dubbla ansiktet” – Sverigedemokraterna granskas’, *Kaliber* on *Sveriges Radio*, 2009, available at <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=1316&artikel=2728776> (consulted on 3 May 2011).

¹⁶² Poohl, 2010.

¹⁶³ Olsson, 2010.

killings and terror attacks. All five parties have a tendency to bring out the very worst examples of Islam in their speech, and giving a very one-sided image. By building on peoples' existing fears and then perpetuating these fears in their political speech, a circle of Islamophobia is created where the people and the parties feed off each other.

Whereas the previous chapter gave a theoretical overview of the Islamophobia theory and the debate surrounding it, this chapter has tried to put the phenomenon of Islamophobia into a political context, and has given examples of how it is used in European politics today. It shows that the definitions of Islamophobia presented earlier¹⁶⁴ can be applied to many aspects of the rhetoric of the parties discussed in this chapter, such as the tendency to generalise and see Muslims as a threat. Some parties are more careful in their speech, while others openly refer to Islam as a violent ideology, as well as preaching the *Eurabia* theory. The following chapter will analyse how soft radical anti-Islamic populism and the fear of *Eurabia* fits into contemporary Europe and its value system. What is the relationship between Europe, populism, and Islamophobia?

¹⁶⁴ See supra chapter II.

Chapter IV. The European Dynamics

So far this paper has given theoretical explanations and definitions of the phenomena of Islamophobia and populism, followed by a more practical section which illustrated how anti-Islamic sentiments are used by populist parties in Europe today. However, this does not place the existence of soft radical anti-Islamic populist parties into a general European context. What can the situation described in this paper tell us about Europe today, is there a need to worry, and if so, what can be done about it?

The rise of populism, or more specifically neo-populism, in Europe since the 1980's has given rise to a large amount of scholars trying to explain this phenomenon. However, there is generally very little consensus regarding the reasons for the success of European neo-populism. Some scholars believe that populism gains popularity when there are large structural transformations in society, such as “the transition from the postwar system of ‘organized capitalism’ to a system of individualized capitalism,”¹⁶⁵ or the more recent shift to an increasingly globalised society.¹⁶⁶ Others do not put such emphasis on large structural and societal changes, but focus more on the situation of the individual, such as employment ¹⁶⁷ or level of education.¹⁶⁸ There is generally more consensus among scholars regarding the effect of immigration on populist success,¹⁶⁹ and many also argue that the rise of populism in Europe is a sign that the liberal democracies of Europe are flawed. Voters’ trust for politicians has declined as they feel like their voices are not getting heard, and are thus sometimes turning to populist parties as an alternative.¹⁷⁰

However, when looking at the various possible reasons for the rise of populist parties in Europe one can argue that populism itself does not have to be inherently negative. Instead, the populism now seen in Europe is simply a sign that there are issues in society that need to be addressed, making populist success a

¹⁶⁵ Betz, 1998, p. 8.

¹⁶⁶ Mudde, 2004, p. 555.

¹⁶⁷ Arzheimer, 2009, p. 274; Rydgren, 2002, p. 35.

¹⁶⁸ Immerfall, 1998, p. 250; Mudde, 2004, p. 554.

¹⁶⁹ Arzheimer, 2009, p. 273; Betz, 1998, p. 6; Formisano, 2005, p. 248; Rydgren, 2005, p. 422.

¹⁷⁰ Rydgren, 2002, pp. 41-44; Bowler et al. 2007, pp. 351-361; Dalton et al. 2004, pp. 124-137; Mény, 2002, pp. 1-13.

barometer for discontent. The core problem is hence not populism, but the way these parties rally support founded on a dislike for Muslims. This, in essence, has created an institutionalisation of intolerance, which is far more worrying. As journalist Lisa Bjurwald points out, if any political party in Europe today, populist or not, would speak about the “Jewification” of Europe, alarm bells would immediately go off.¹⁷¹ However, the fear of Islamisation as a way of targeting Muslims as villains is still part of an accepted rhetoric. What is it then that is so threatening about Islam, and how would this threat undermine European values? To put it differently, what *are* our European values that need to be defended?

IV.1. Core values of Europe?

That there is a rise in Islamophobic sentiments in Europe today is evident. Not only are populist parties with an anti-Islamic agenda gaining in popularity, but, as stated in the Council of Europe report *"Living together": Combining diversity and freedom in 21st-century Europe*, “there is a drastic growth of hostility to Muslims throughout Europe.”¹⁷² Furthermore,

The increase of negative attitudes to Muslims in Europe is confirmed by opinion polls carried out by the Pew Global Attitudes Project. In some European countries, the percentage of those interviewed who have either a “somewhat unfavourable” or a “very unfavourable” opinion of Muslims has substantially increased between 2004-05 and 2010 or, in specific cases, has remained at a high level, sometimes close to 50%.

Other surveys in Europe confirm the prevalence of negative opinions about Muslim minorities. Islam is even perceived as a major threat to Europe by many Europeans because they feel that the minority is growing and that Islam is incompatible with “modern European life”.¹⁷³

What is then this modern European way of living that is so threatened by Islam? One could argue that the European way of living is founded upon values that are shared across the continent and which define what it is to be European. Although these

¹⁷¹ Bjurwald, 2011, p. 285.

¹⁷² Council of Europe, *"Living together": Combining diversity and freedom in 21st-century Europe*, 2011, p. 15, available at <http://www.coe.int/lportal/web/coe-portal/event-files/our-events/the-group-of-eminent-persons?dynLink=true&layoutId=581&dlgroupId=10226&fromArticleId=> (consulted on 20 July 2011).

¹⁷³ Ibidem.

values are obviously very abstract and differ from person to person and country to country, it is nevertheless possible to loosely define certain principles that are common to Europe as a whole. For example, in the Consolidated Treaty of the European Union, one could get a sense of these values. Even though not all countries in Europe are members of the European Union, it is nevertheless probable that the fundamental values spelled out in the Treaty are in essence *European* and not exclusive to those states party to the Union. The consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union, Article 2, states that

The Union is founded on the values of respect for *human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights*, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which *pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between men and women* prevail.¹⁷⁴ (Emphasis added.)

When reading party manifestoes and looking at election campaigns of neo-populist parties in Europe, Christianity is also often referred to as fundamental to Europe and “Europeanness.” As political science researcher and Harvard scholar José Pedro Zúquete writes, “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.”¹⁷⁵ Hence, although there is no mention of Christianity in any of the treaties of the European Union, one cannot ignore the fact that some Europeans do see Christianity as inherent to European identity.

Islam then, as seen from an Islamophobic standpoint of generalisations, is obviously contradicting these European values. First of all Muslims are obviously not Christians. Instead, some believe it is not even a religion but an ideology. Islam is violent, oppressive, and fundamentalist. Sharia laws allow for violations of human rights, women are systematically oppressed, and freedom and democracy are undermined by political or religious authorities in Muslim states. With this view of

¹⁷⁴ Treaty on European Union (consolidated version), art 2.

¹⁷⁵ Zúquete, 2008, p. 326.

Islam and Muslims, it is perfectly understandable that Europeans feel the need to protect the values that are inherent to Europe. Europe has for example gone through two devastating world wars to reach the point where we are today, and it would be strange if one did not want to protect the rights and values we have achieved. However, one should analyse whether Islamophobia in itself is not more damaging to European values than the presence of Islam. The contradiction seems to be that by wanting to protect core European values, these exact values are often undermined.

The Council of Europe report mentioned above, *"Living together": Combining diversity and freedom in 21st-century Europe*, defines European values as those referred to in the Council of Europe Statute and in The European Convention on Human Rights; specifically peace, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.¹⁷⁶ These values, they argue, are under threat due to a European fear of diversity,¹⁷⁷

Being a European citizen means being a member of a community based on full enjoyment of individual rights – guaranteed by democratically elected governments and protected by an impartial and independent judicial system – as well as tolerance, mutual respect and acceptance of diversity. It also means accepting certain obligations in respect of others, complying with the rules of democracy and contributing to the development of a fair and cohesive society. This “European model” is now under threat because of the resurgence of intolerance and discrimination.¹⁷⁸

The fear of diversity seen through this resurgence of intolerance and discrimination is exacerbated by a variety of factors in contemporary Europe, explained in the report. For the purpose of this paper, the focus will be on two of these factors; rising intolerance and rising support for xenophobic and populist parties. When reading the report it becomes obvious that rising intolerance, where a special emphasis is put on intolerance towards Muslims, is deeply intertwined with the existence of what they refer to as radical populism. What is evident is that European populist parties are using an already existent fear of Islam in order to gain voters, while also perpetuating this fear by

¹⁷⁶ Council of Europe, *"Living together": Combining diversity and freedom in 21st-century Europe*, 2011, p. 11, available at <http://www.coe.int/lportal/web/coe-portal/event-files/our-events/the-group-of-eminent-persons?dynLink=true&layoutId=581&dlgroupId=10226&fromArticleId=> (consulted on 20 July 2011).

¹⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, 9.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, 67.

spreading increasingly anti-Islamic messages. One could argue that the consequences of this is that the respect for human dignity, freedom, equality, and human rights of Muslims in Europe are threatened, as well as the core European principles of pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, and solidarity. This, in essence, threatens to undermine the values of Europe, and the European way of life as we know it.

The situation just described is troubling, and it is therefore important to discuss possible solutions to the issue. The argument in this paper will be that the battle against Islamophobia needs to be fought through a three-dimensional approach; the social basis, legal/political measures, and a higher European moral framework.

IV.2. The social basis – the role of the media

In order to get to the root of any problem in a society, it is important that the society at large participates in changing the situation. Grassroot organisations and NGO's are often good examples of groups of people who try to impact the society, e.g. with regards to xenophobia.¹⁷⁹ However, one wonders how much the general public in Europe is influenced by the work of these organisations. Is the anti-Islamophobic message getting across to households throughout Europe due to the work of NGO's? Maybe to some extent, but the greatest source of knowledge for Europeans about contemporary Europe is obviously the *media*. Newspapers, magazines, television, and radio broadcasts are all examples of types of media that penetrate into most households in Europe, and therefore have an enormous amount of influence and responsibility towards their readers/viewers/listeners. Since the media in many European countries is nowadays more independent than it was a few decades ago, the competition is much higher. Mass media is to a large extent a competition in who can provide the most

¹⁷⁹ Council of Europe, "*Living together*": *Combining diversity and freedom in 21st-century Europe*, 2011, pp. 41-43, available at <http://www.coe.int/lportal/web/coe-portal/event-files/our-events/the-group-of-eminant-persons?dynLink=true&layoutId=581&dlgroupId=10226&fromArticleId=> (consulted on 20 July 2011).

sensationalist news.¹⁸⁰ This, by extension, has consequences for our discussion on Islamophobia and populism.

The mainstream European media has proved to be an excellent forum for soft radical anti-Islamic populist parties to voice their opinions. Not only is there an enormous amount of coverage of these parties, but they also increasingly get to speak their minds through interviews or articles,

Geert Wilders writes for the Wall Street Journal; SD leader Jimmie Åkesson authors a pre-election op-ed for the Swedish tabloid Aftonbladet; Marine Le Pen is winning support on her ‘detoxification’ tour of the globe, granting interviews to Britain’s Daily Telegraph, Israel’s Ha’aretz and the Associated Press – something completely denied to her father.¹⁸¹

The media no longer excludes the opinions of radical political parties as they might have done in the past, but are now providing a space for the opinions of these parties to be heard. The sensationalist aspect of modern day media obviously plays a role, as everyone wants to get the most outrageous statement by e.g. Geert Wilders on their tabloids. One can pose the question whether this is a good forum for populists to voice their opinions. In this discussion, it might be relevant to look at the famous case of *Jersild v. Denmark*,¹⁸² which was decided in the European Court of Human Rights in 1994. In the case, Jersild, a Danish television host, was fined by the Danish Supreme Court for having featured young people with an open racist agenda on his television show. The ECHR found that Denmark had violated the right to freedom of expression granted under Article 10 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. The case of *Jersild v. Denmark* ultimately came down to the discussion whether the measures taken by Denmark was necessary in a democratic society. The Court found that

(...) the offending remarks had the effect of ridiculing their authors rather than promoting their racist views. The overall impression of the programme was that it sought to draw public attention to a matter of great public concern, namely racism and xenophobia. The applicant had deliberately included the offensive statements in

¹⁸⁰ Mudde, 2004, p. 553.

¹⁸¹ Biswas, 2011.

¹⁸² *Jersild v. Denmark* (App. No. 15890/89) ECHR 23 September 1994.

the programme, not with the intention of disseminating racist opinions, but in order to counter them through exposure.¹⁸³

(...) A significant feature of the present case is that the applicant did not make the objectionable statements himself but assisted in their dissemination in his capacity of television journalist responsible for a news programme of Danmarks Radio. (...) Whilst the press must not overstep the bounds set, inter alia, in the interest of "the protection of the reputation or rights of others", it is nevertheless incumbent on it to impart information and ideas of public interest. Not only does the press have the task of imparting such information and ideas: the public also has a right to receive them. Were it otherwise, the press would be unable to play its vital role of "public watchdog."¹⁸⁴

(...) News reporting based on interviews, whether edited or not, constitutes one of the most important means whereby the press is able to play its vital role of "public watchdog." (...) The punishment of a journalist for assisting in the dissemination of statements made by another person in an interview would seriously hamper the contribution of the press to discussion of matters of public interest and should not be envisaged unless there are particularly strong reasons for doing so.¹⁸⁵

The conclusions drawn in *Jersild v. Denmark*, which are relevant to the discussion in this paper, is first that the opinions expressed in the television broadcast were not Jersild's own, and could therefore not be attributed to him. Second, the Court found that a journalist, as a "public watchdog," has the duty to inform the public of matters of general interest to them, and that the use of e.g. unedited interviews is a crucial means to getting the information across to the public. Based on this case, one can therefore draw the conclusion that letting soft radical anti-Islamic populist parties voicing their own opinions in public media is not a problem, as long as the views cannot be attributed to the media itself. However, there are other, more pressing, issues where the media is directly responsible.

Firstly, the *amount of space* given to populist parties and their opinions in the media is sometimes highly disproportionate to the space given to other issues or political parties. The large reliance on media such as newspaper articles, *YouTube* videos, and radio broadcasts in this paper mirrors that fact that there is an immense interest in reporting on these types of parties and their opinions. This can have real

¹⁸³ Ibidem. § 28.

¹⁸⁴ Ibidem. § 31.

¹⁸⁵ Ibidem. § 35.

political implications. For example, Jens Rydgren argues that the enormous media coverage of the *Danish People's Party* in Danish media in the 1990's and after had a direct link to the success of the party. By providing a large amount of media coverage of populist parties, whether in a positive or negative light, there is an increase in the sense of legitimacy for the parties and their voters.¹⁸⁶ This is especially true when talking about questions important to the parties. In Denmark, "after the minister responsible for immigration, the party leader Pia Kjaersgaard was the person most quoted on immigration matters during the second half of the election year of 2001."¹⁸⁷ By letting parties with a populist and anti-immigration agenda comment on immigration issues to a higher degree than other parties or experts, a skewed image is created for which the media is directly responsible. Instead, one could imagine an ideal situation where the media tries to present issues of interest to the public in a balanced manner, where populist parties are not silenced but are also not dominating the media.

Secondly, the media itself contributes to the spreading of anti-Islamic sentiments and xenophobia. The Council of Europe, with regards to various types of mass media, states that

many of these, in different parts of Europe, have taken it upon themselves to demonise immigrants and other minorities, not only reporting the anxieties and myths about such groups circulating in the general population, but actively building them up by highlighting real or alleged "scandals" about crime and welfare abuse, while accusing the authorities of covering these up as well as allowing too many foreigners into the country.

(...)Various studies show that: photographs of visibly "foreign" or minority suspects are much more common in the media than of those who look "native"; crimes committed by immigrants or members of minorities against "natives" get much more media attention than those within the same ethnic group.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ Rydgren, 2005, pp. 424-425.

¹⁸⁷ Rydgren, 2010, p. 64.

¹⁸⁸ Council of Europe, "*Living together*": *Combining diversity and freedom in 21st-century Europe*, 2011, p. 30, available at <http://www.coe.int/portal/web/coe-portal/event-files/our-events/the-group-of-eminent-persons?dynLink=true&layoutId=581&dlgroupId=10226&fromArticleId=> (consulted on 20 July 2011).

The media also often fails to include the voices of Muslims and other immigrants in their coverage.¹⁸⁹ This is probably partly due to the fact that immigrants have lesser access to media due to e.g. language difficulties, but also that the media itself chooses to focus on sensationalist aspects of events without giving a balanced picture. For example, with regards to terrorist attacks carried out by Muslims, the media tends to focus on Muslims in *support* of the attacks, without also reporting on Muslims that take a stand *against* extremism.¹⁹⁰ The problem is that media seems to be more interested in reporting on what people want to hear than giving a balanced view. Writing about “good” Muslims who try to do something fruitful in the societies in which they live is obviously not going to draw as much attention as reporting on e.g. honour killings. Journalists, as “public watchdogs” have an enormous responsibility in how views of Muslims and other immigrants are shaped. Unfortunately, the way in which the media uses this responsibility can be seriously questioned. As Cas Mudde explains it, “*perceptions* seem to be more important than *facts*.”¹⁹¹

IV.3. Legal and political responsibilities

The media is obviously not the only party responsible for the political changes currently taking place in Europe. The discussion also has to be present on judicial and political levels. With regards to legal measures, two cases will be used as examples of how states have handled the spread of populist speech. On the political level, one needs to analyse what responsibility other established parties might have.

IV.3.1 Case-law

The first case, *Féret v. Belgium*¹⁹², regards a verdict by the European Court of Human Rights from 2009. The applicant, Mr Daniel Féret, a Belgian national, was a chairperson for the political party *Front National-Nationaal Front*. Féret was also the editor in chief of the party’s publications and owner of its website, and was a

¹⁸⁹ Bjurwald, 2011, p. 280.

¹⁹⁰ Qureshi & Anthony, 2003, p. 1.

¹⁹¹ Mudde, 2004, p. 553.

¹⁹² *Féret v. Belgium* (App. No. 15615/07) ECHR 16 July 2009.

member of the Belgian House of Representatives. In connection with an election campaign between 1999 and 2001, Féret and his party spread leaflets and posters which received complaints of being incitation of hatred, discrimination and violence. In 2006 Féret was sentenced by the Brussels Court of Appeal to “250 hours of community service related to the integration of immigrants, together with a 10-month suspended prison sentence.” It also “declared him ineligible for ten years,” and “ordered him to pay one euro to each of the civil parties.”¹⁹³

The court found that the offending conduct on the part of Mr Féret had not fallen within his parliamentary activity and that the leaflets contained passages that represented a clear and deliberate incitation of discrimination, segregation or hatred, and even violence, for reasons of race, colour or national or ethnic origin.¹⁹⁴

Mr. Féret then took the case to the European Court of Human Rights, arguing that Belgium had violated his right to freedom of expression under Article 10 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. The Court put a strong emphasis on the fact that Féret was a political figure, and should therefore have avoided “comments that might foster intolerance.” Furthermore,

The Court observed that the leaflets presented the communities in question as criminally-minded and keen to exploit the benefits they derived from living in Belgium, and that they also sought to make fun of the immigrants concerned, with the inevitable risk of arousing, particularly among less knowledgeable members of the public, feelings of distrust, rejection or even hatred towards foreigners.

(...) To recommend solutions to immigration-related problems by advocating racial discrimination was likely to cause social tension and undermine trust in democratic institutions. In the present case there had been a compelling social need to protect the rights of the immigrant community, as the Belgian courts had done.¹⁹⁵

Due to the above reasoning, the Court found that there had been no violation of Article 10.

¹⁹³ *Féret v. Belgium*, (App. No. 15615/07) ECHR Press Release, 2009.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹⁵ *Féret v. Belgium*, (App. No. 15615/07) ECHR Press Release, 2009.

A similar case was decided in the Netherlands on 23 June 2011 in the Amsterdam Court of Appeal. The defendant in the case was Geert Wilders, leader of the *Party for Freedom* in the Netherlands. As has been mentioned earlier in this paper, Wilders is known to have an openly anti-Islamic rhetoric, which is what ultimately ended him up in court. Some of the offences he was charged with include statements about the Koran, such as that the Koran should be prohibited everywhere including in mosques, comparing the Koran to *Mein Kampf*, and that the sons of Allah (Muslims) are practicing the evil derived from the Koran. Furthermore, Wilders has likened Islam to a tumour that needs to be stopped, and his controversial anti-Islamic movie *Fitna* was also mentioned in the charges. Wilders was charged with

- Offence 1: Insulting a group
- Offence 2: Instigating hatred because of religion
- Offence 3: Instigating discrimination because of religion
- Offence 4: Instigating hatred because of race
- Offence 5: Instigating discrimination because of race¹⁹⁶

In the Public Prosecutor closing speech on 12 and 15 October 2010, the prosecutor argued that Wilders should be found not guilty on all charges. For example, with regards to offence 1, the prosecutor concluded that insulting Islam or the Koran did not amount to insults of *people*, and that “hurting someone’s feelings” by comparing the Koran to *Mein Kampf* is not punishable by law. What is more interesting is the fact that the prosecutor, in the beginning of the speech on 12 October stated, similarly to the European Court of Human Rights in the case of *Féret v. Belgium*, that

Political statements which incite hatred constitute a threat to peace in society and political stability in democratic states. Politicians must be very careful, since their goal is to accede to power. It is essential that politicians avoid using words that could propagate intolerance.¹⁹⁷

However, on 15 October, with regards to offence 3 (the accusation of instigating discrimination because of religion) it seems like the role of a politician

¹⁹⁶ Public Prosecutor’s closing speech G. Wilders (part 1) – summary, (13/425046-09) 12 October 2011.

¹⁹⁷ Public Prosecutor’s closing speech G. Wilders (part 1) – summary, (13/425046-09) 12 October 2011.

provides him or her with *more* space for using discriminatory rhetoric. Although the prosecutor finds that some of Wilder's statements were indeed instigating discrimination against people, such as "instigation through advocating potentially discriminatory government measures against Muslims,"¹⁹⁸ the context of the situation, i.e. the political debate, provides that "a politician needs the latitude to make proposals" which "may also include proposals that, if implemented in practice, boil down to discriminating against certain groups."¹⁹⁹ The prosecutor hence did not find Wilders' speech against Islam to incite hatred that constitutes a threat to peace in society and political stability in democratic states, nor that he was using words that could propagate intolerance.

On 23 June when the court announced that Wilders was acquitted, Andre Krouwel, a political scientist at Amsterdam's Free University, told *Reuters* that "This means that his (Wilders) political views are condoned by law, his political rhetoric has been legalized."²⁰⁰ Some speculate that the result of the trial will grant Wilders even more success in national elections, further increasing his influence in national politics.²⁰¹ Does this mean that in the future we could have a Netherlands where the Koran is completely prohibited? This sounds far from the European values spelled out in the Treaty of the European Union.

One would have to wait for more similar cases to see if the difference in the outcome of *Féret v. Belgium* and the Wilders Trial simply points to a difference between Belgium and the Netherlands, or if radical speech by populists is simply more accepted in 2011 than it was in 2009. One will also have to wait and see if the Wilders case will be brought up in an international court, and what that possible outcome would be. The fear is obviously that European courts are being influenced by the general xenophobic (often anti-Islamic) sentiments in Europe, and that minorities will thus feel less protected. The outcome of cases such as Wilders' could possibly have the implication that not only Wilders, but people in general, have now gotten the message

¹⁹⁸ Public Prosecutor's closing speech G. Wilders (part 2) – summary, (13/425046-09) 15 October 2011.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰⁰ Quoted in Kreijger & Gray-Block, 2011.

²⁰¹ Kreijger & Gray-Block, 2011.

that it is perfectly fine to use highly derogatory language towards Islam. The rulings of courts in Europe could thus exacerbate anti-Islamic rhetoric. One cannot reject the theory that Europe in general is indeed becoming more tolerating towards populist speech, partly because this kind of speech obviously rings well with the voters, and because other political parties are adopting some of the same rhetoric.

IV.3.2. Politics as usual?

Mainstream,²⁰² non-populist political parties in Europe today are facing a difficult challenge. How to deal with the rise of radical parties whose ideas are often contradictory to the national and European value system? In some countries, such as Sweden, the populist *Swedish Democrats* have long been excluded from national politics as other parties have refused to cooperate with them.²⁰³ However, with the entry of the *Swedish Democrats* into parliament in 2010, one can detect a change. Other countries in Europe, such as Denmark, have been more generous towards the populists, choosing a cooperative strategy instead of an exclusionary one.²⁰⁴ However, what seems to be a trend in many states in Europe is the inclusion of populist ideas into mainstream politics, often as a way to “steal their votes.”²⁰⁵ Although one could say that this is a logical process in politics as parties are always striving to gain as many votes as possible, it can nevertheless be a dangerous path. Politicians have a responsibility towards the citizens to promote values consistent with the well-being of everyone. Acquiring the populist rhetoric might jeopardise these values.

The Council of Europe’s Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-Racist Society gives some useful guidelines on how political parties should act to be in accordance with a non-racist society policy and good practice

²⁰² “Mainstream” will here be used to categorise parties that have traditionally not been associated with populist speech. Although some populist parties in Europe today can probably be seen as mainstream due to their popularity and influence, this distinction will nevertheless be used in order to simplify the discussion.

²⁰³ Rydgren, 2010, p. 58.

²⁰⁴ Rydgren, 2010, p. 58.

²⁰⁵ McNicoll, 2011; Castle 2002; Stokmans, 2009.

To defend basic human rights and democratic principles and to reject all forms of racist violence, incitement to racial hatred and harassment and any form of racial discrimination.

To refuse to display, to publish or to have published, to distribute or to endorse in any way views and positions which stir up or invite, or may reasonable be expected to stir up or to invite prejudices, hostility or division between people of different ethnic or national origins or religious beliefs, and to deal firmly with any racist sentiments and behaviour within its own ranks.

To deal responsibly and fairly with sensitive topics relating to such groups and to avoid their stigmatization

To refrain from any form of political alliance or cooperation at all levels with any political party which incites or attempts to stir up racial or ethnic prejudices and racial hatred.

To strive for the fair representation of the above mentioned groups at all levels of the parties with a special responsibility for the party leadership to stimulate and support the recruitment of candidates from these groups for political functions as well as membership.²⁰⁶

The ideal would be if these recommendations were incorporated into national politics across Europe. One would think that one of the main goals for established political parties is to deter divisions in society based on e.g. ethnicity, in order to keep national stability. This is maybe especially important when one minority seems to be targeted by xenophobic speech to a greater extent than others, which the focus on Islamophobia in this paper has tried to illustrate. However, this does not mean that mainstream parties should refrain from discussing topics that might seem offensive to some citizens. The lack of a national discussion on e.g. immigration and/or integration policies is often stated as a reason to explain what drives people to vote for the populist alternative, and it is therefore crucial that also other parties take the discussion seriously. This, however, needs to be done carefully and responsibly.

The German *Bertelsmann Stiftung* has outlined some suggestions on how states should deal with the rising popularity of populists in relation to anti-immigrant

²⁰⁶ Council of Europe, *Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-Racist Society*, 1998, available at http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/38-seminar_ankara_2011/Charter.asp (consulted on 25 June 2011).

speech. They say that mainstream politicians have to be prepared to show political responsibility by e.g. creating anti-racist committees at the highest political levels. They should show that discrimination and racism are questions of great political importance, which would send a clear message to the society about the values that underlie democracy. Furthermore, politicians should try to control the debate instead of leaving too much space to populists to dominate, and not forget to show the positive aspects of a diverse society.²⁰⁷

Mainstream politicians should thus take seriously the questions raised by populist parties, without resorting to xenophobic speech. The way established political parties handle the rise of populism sends an important message to the population regarding what should be acceptable in a democratic society. Either they give in to the populist agenda and thus giving legitimacy to their ideas, or they actively try to take a stand against it. For the sake of European values, the latter would be preferable.

IV.4. A European moral framework – from theory to practice

Europe has, at least in theory, a strong moral framework based on common European values. The European Union and Council of Europe aim to promote the values of non-discrimination,²⁰⁸ human dignity, freedom, equality, solidarity,²⁰⁹ and human rights.²¹⁰ Yet at the same time intolerance seems to be increasing in Europe, especially with regards to Muslims. There hence seems to be a gap between what Europe *ought* to be, and what it actually *is*. To put it differently, one can sense a clash between the *inner legitimacy* of European values as opposed to an externally perceived *illegitimacy* of the same values, due to the way intolerance is increasing in Europe. One could therefore discuss whether Europe as a whole should not work harder to promote its core values and make sure that its ideals are adhered to, creating a moral framework that is implemented also in practice.

²⁰⁷ Quoted in Bjurwald, 2011, pp. 262-263.

²⁰⁸ Treaty of European Union (consolidated version) art. 3.3.

²⁰⁹ Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Preamble.

²¹⁰ Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

The European Union is in a complex situation due to the rising amounts of members of populist parties getting representation in the European Parliament. In January 2011 there were 40 neo-populist politicians in the European Parliament,²¹¹ coming from parties such as the Dutch *Party For Freedom*, the Austrian *Freedom Party*, and the French *National Front*.²¹² As this paper has tried to illustrate, these parties are often not in line with what we refer to as fundamental European values. Furthermore, the populist representatives in the European Parliament have in the past few years tried to form alliances at the European level to attract more weight and attention to their concerns, although still without success.²¹³ However, with populist parties gaining in popularity in the European Union's Member States, one could almost expect that their influence will increase also at a European level.

To prevent increased populist influence over the European Union, a close dialogue with the Member States seems crucial. Since populist, often anti-Islamic, sentiments are born on a national level, the European Union should encourage national politicians to further bring the values of the European Union into the national public debate, in addition to fulfilling their international obligations under European Union Treaties. One could further argue that the European Union itself should take a much stronger official stand against ideas incoherent with its founding values. Given the traumatic history of 20th century Europe, one should expect the most powerful organization in Europe to put greater weight on deterring the spread of stigmatization of a minority. The European Union thus has an important responsibility in upholding the moral framework it has created.

The Council of Europe, however, is taking a more concrete approach to the issue. There is for example a special monitoring body, European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, which tries to combat xenophobia in Europe.²¹⁴ In

²¹¹ Bjurwald, 2011, p. 268.

²¹² European Parliament, available at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/members/expert/groupAndCountry.do?language=en> (consulted on 23 June 2011).

²¹³ Phillips, 2009.

²¹⁴ European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance, available at http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/default_EN.asp? (consulted on 20 June 2011).

2009, this monitoring body started a campaign named “Speak out against discrimination” which aimed at informing journalists on how to report on hostilities towards Jewish, Muslim and Roma and traveller communities in particular.²¹⁵ This is a positive initiative, as the media plays a huge role in the way minorities are perceived.

Apart from the previously mentioned report *“Living together:” Combining diversity and freedom in 21st-century Europe*, the Council of Europe has also put great weight on intercultural dialogue in order to combat intolerance. In a publication titled *Culture – the soul of democracy*, it states that

In a world where cultural, ethnic and religious conflicts are a constant threat to peace and development, the Council of Europe promotes an intercultural approach. Its action is based on Europe’s founding values, favouring dialogue based on equality, mutual recognition and non-discrimination.²¹⁶

This publication further resulted in a *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue –Living together as equals in dignity*, which argues that for the common good of all people living in Europe a response to hostilities towards those of other cultures is essential, and that this response should be based on intercultural dialogue.²¹⁷ As xenophobia in general and Islamophobia in particular is often based on fear of the unknown, intercultural dialogues would provide a source of knowledge which could possibly eradicate some of the fears and generalisations and foster an environment of pluralism and tolerance. One could maybe question whether this intercultural dialogue would reach those most in need of it, such as the voters of populist parties. However, the aim of the White Paper is to bring the intercultural dialogue up to national and European levels, which could in essence have an effect on the European community at

²¹⁵ Council of Europe, Speak out Against Discrimination Campaign, available at <http://www.coe.int/t/DG4/ANTI-DISCRIMINATION-CAMPAIGN/> (consulted on 20 June 2011).

²¹⁶ Council of Europe, *Culture – the soul of democracy*, available at http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/About/Culture_soul_EN.pdf (consulted on 20 June 2011).

²¹⁷ Council of Europe, *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue –Living together as equals in dignity*, 2008, available at http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/Source/Pub_White_Paper/White%20Paper_final_revised_EN.pdf (consulted on 20 June 2011).

large. This could indeed be a step in the right direction in promoting a common moral framework for Europe.

The aim of this chapter has been to show that although the existence of populist parties *per se* does not have to be inherently negative, the politicising and legalisation of in particular anti-Islamic sentiments is problematic, as it is fostering an environment of intolerance contrary to European values. The media plays a pivotal role in these developments, but case-law and political actions also prove to be important sources in the spread or deterrence of intolerance. Furthermore, European institutions should emphasise the importance of a clear moral framework for Europe, which needs to be adhered to on both national and supra-national levels. The developments towards higher levels of intolerance and discrimination in Europe today must be taken seriously, or we might see more of the situation described by the American Humanist Association; “Islamophobia is raising its ugly head in the United States and 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,”²¹⁸ or the scenario feared by Eva Smith Asmussen, President of the European Commission Against Racism And Intolerance, “I don't want my grandchildren growing up in a society where their mates are discriminated against for no other reason than their skin colour or religion.”²¹⁹ If this is not the Europe we envisage in the future, the deterrence of hatred and discrimination needs to be a priority today. Europe *has* a good value system, and it should not be corrupted by prejudice and fear.

²¹⁸ Quoted in Zúquete, 2008, p. 323.

²¹⁹ Council of Europe, Profile Eva Smith-Asmussen, 2009, available at http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/anti-discrimination-campaign/ressources/profiles/profile_asmussen_en.asp (consulted on 12 June 2011).

V. Conclusion

Everything that has been examined in the previous chapters is summarised in the following final observations:

1. Although Europe and Islam have historically not been foreign to one another, their relationship has changed in the last century. From viewing Islam as an external “other,” this “other” has now turned into an *internal* threat in Europe. This is often due to a real or perceived incompatibility between European and Muslim values, where Islam is seen as lagging behind the modern European value system. Muslims in Europe are hence viewed as destabilising European rights and freedoms.

2. Muslims are today discriminated against to a larger extent than other minorities in Europe, and increased hostility towards Muslims has ultimately resulted in the coining of the word Islamophobia. Islamophobia in this paper has been used to illustrate unfounded generalisations of Islam and Muslims, and the belief that Islam is inherently hostile, violent and dangerous. Although there are controversies regarding the use of the word Islamophobia, its existence points to a need for defining a new reality.

3. Islamophobia is also based on the theory of *Eurabia*, which claims that Islam will sooner or later take over Europe completely. Although this theory was coined already in the 1970’s, the contemporary view of *Eurabia* and its definition has changed, and today it has two apparent divisions; the demographical statistics approach and the conspiracy theory approach. The demographical statistics approach claims that Muslims will soon be a majority in Europe due to their high fertility rates and the low fertility rates of the native population, which will ultimately result in Muslim domination of Europe. However, this idea and its accuracy have been seriously contested. The other division argues that there is a deliberate conspiracy among Muslims to take over not only Europe but the whole world in the future. European political parties hostile to Islam often base their arguments on the *Eurabia* theory and its two divisions.

4. In the past few decades, Europe has seen an upsurge of political parties whose agenda is quite different from other established parties. The platform of these new parties is often based on the idea of defending the culture and identity of Europe from the influence of minorities, in particular Muslims. The general tendency among scholars and journalists has been to label these parties extreme right-wing, but this paper has questioned both the use of “extreme” and “right-wing” as many of the parties have actively tried to rid themselves of the characteristics associated with the extreme right. However, populist, or neo-populist, is a definition that most people, including some representatives of the parties themselves, agree on. For the sake of this paper, these parties in Europe have thus been referred to as soft radical anti-Islamic populist.

5. In order to illustrate how Islamophobia has largely been politicised, five soft radical anti-Islamic populist parties have been examined in more detail. The parties are all represented in national governments and come from Austria, Denmark, France, the Netherlands and Sweden. Although they often reject the ideas of e.g. race-superiority and anti-Semitism, they all have a highly anti-Islamic rhetoric in common which they emphasise through party manifestoes, posters, brochures, movies, video games or songs.

6. As populists, these parties claim to speak for the people. The trend towards Islamophobic ideas in Europe is thus appropriated by the soft radical anti-Islamic populist parties, who use people’s already existent fear of Islam to gain popularity. This fear is then exacerbated by the parties, who tend to create even more fear and intolerance by using rhetoric of resentment. A circle of Islamophobia is thus created, where people and the parties feed off one another.

7. The sole existence of populist parties in contemporary Europe does not have to be inherently negative, as their popularity simply illustrates that there are dissatisfactions in society that need to be addressed. However, their use of anti-Islamic ideas in order to rally support is worrying. The institutionalisation of intolerance is problematic as it raises fundamental questions of European values and identity.

8. While often claiming to defend core European values against corruption from Islam and other immigrants, the populist parties and their voters contribute to the weakening of these same values. European values such as freedom, equality, non-discrimination, tolerance, solidarity and, to some, Christianity, are often seen as incompatible with Islam and thus need to be protected. However, the stigmatisation and hostility towards Muslims in Europe are clearly contrary to these values. In order to uphold the comprehensive value system created in Europe, it needs to be protected through the media, laws and political action, and the adherence to a moral European framework.

9. The *media* plays a crucial role in the proliferation or deterrence of negative stereotypes. It therefore needs to balance their coverage in a way where populist parties are not being silenced, but where they proportionally share the spotlight with other parties and experts, as well as Muslims or other immigrant groups themselves. European *case-law* might illustrate that Europe in general has become more receptive to speech that stigmatises minorities, and is a possibly development worth paying attention to in the years to come. Mainstream *political parties* should clearly show that they reject intolerance, while at the same time not shy away from responsibly discussing sensitive issues important to the population, such as immigration. Finally, the *moral framework* in Europe needs to be strengthened so that the inner legitimacy of the European values is not perceived as illegitimate due to the rise of intolerance. European institutions such as the European Union and the Council of Europe should therefore do their best in making sure that the moral framework which has been achieved in Europe is adhered to.

10. The hypothesis throughout this paper has been that the proliferation of Islamophobia and the rise of radical parties with an anti-Islamic agenda are weakening the European value system. However, the conclusion to be drawn is rather that the European value system is more *threatened* than weakened. If the developments in Europe are not taken seriously there is a risk that the core values might in fact become weaker, but this is still too early to judge. The historical experiences in Europe have resulted in a legal, political and moral safety net which assures protection to everyone

residing in Europe, including minorities. The question is only how far Europe needs to be pushed in order for the safety net to unfold. One could argue that when a minority is stigmatised due to its religious affiliation, and when parties arise which use this stigmatisation for their own electoral gains, Europe is entering dangerous waters. It is therefore important that the dynamics referred to in the introduction between new radical parties, Islamophobia, and values in Europe, do not become skewed to the detriment of the core European values. However, since the situation is far from static, the outcome of the current European dynamics can go in any direction. Maybe the fundamental strength in core European values will prove to be more attractive than prejudice and intolerance. Maybe the existence of soft radical anti-Islamic populist parties is only a parenthesis in the history of Europe, and that it is a phase that will sooner or later blow over. One can only hope that the ideals upon which Europe is based are prepared to face the current challenge.

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Chapter III

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