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'Anti-Islamization of Europe' Activism or the Phenomenon of an Allegedly 'Non-racist' Islamophobia: A Case Study of a Problematic Advocacy Coalition

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In the first chapter in this second Part, this time dedicated to the non-migrant and anti-Islam interactions/identifications, we present research that is based on the observation of a series of actors in Western Europe grappling – directly or indirectly – with a growing cultural and religious diversity, with Islam as a new religion asserting itself at the forefront, in an area which is traditionally mainly Christian and secular. More specifically the first section presents a synthesis of 'anti-islamization of Europe' activism, setting out the context, the actors and main features of the phenomenon. The second section is an original case-study based on participative observation, informal exchanges of views and data collected at meetings[1] of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)[2] organized by its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODHIR) in Vienna and Warsaw in 2009. In this setting I observe two types of organizations in a tentative form of what Paul A. Sabatier has conceptualized as an 'advocacy coalition' in the dialogue process around the issues of Western civilization, Islam and Christianity in Europe: on the one hand Christian or Christian-inspired (Roman-Catholic and Protestant) organizations; on the other hand what I call 'Defence of Western civilization' organizations.

As we will see, this process related to intertwined issues pertaining to current dynamics of identity change in Habermassian *post-secular* Western Europe (as defined in the General Introduction to the present book and implicitly referred to in the introduction to this chapter) is not without tensions expressed by clashes between several clusters of values, rights and reference points, such as freedom

of religion, freedom of expression and hate speech legislation. Christian actors are caught up in a paradox of asking for a Christian-faith margin for manoeuvre in the prevailing secular order while at the same time being uncomfortable about sharing this principle with believers of another faith, Muslims. On their part, 'Defence of Western civilization' actors claim that they 'put the facts on the table' and deliver information about the 'real Islam', which would threaten both Europe's secular liberal democratic order *and* Christianity, which would be challenged – in their view – not so much as Faith but as culture and identity, echoing the renewed role played by religion in Western societies as identified by Casanova and Göle (cf. General Introduction to the book).

'Anti-islamization of Europe' activism

'Racism is the lowest form of human stupidity, but Islamophobia is the height of common sense', so asserts the slogan of the *Stop Islamization of Europe (*SIOE*)* movement. SIOE is a transnational network of 18 national associations, based mainly in Europe. It started with a meeting between the Danish political party *Stop Islamificering Af Danmark (SIAD – Stop the Islamization of Denmark)*, founded by Anders Gravers following the Mohammad Cartoons Controversy in 2005, and the English association *No Sharia Here*, which became the English branch of the SIOE headed by Stephen Gash. They were then joined by the German *Pax Europa* organization. In 2010 SIOE joined the *European Freedom Initiative*, which is composed of a series of national *Defence Leagues* (18 at the moment, also mainly based in European countries and following the model of the initial *English Defence League*, created in 2009).

The focus here is on civil society organizations – national and transnational associations and networks – thus not including political parties sharing the same agenda such as Geert Wilders' *Partij voor de Vrijheid* in the Netherlands – even if there are some links between some of these organizations and political parties, whether recognized or denied, or if some of them may form embryos of new political parties (Weis, 2011: 51-64) or themselves emanate from former political groups, as in the case of SIAD.

From SIOE's slogan we can see that it endorses Islamophobia, proclaiming itself to be non-racist. The SIOE clearly distances itself from extreme right-wing and xenophobic movements and parties and claims that it defends the values of the European liberal democracy: it equates Islam with a form of totalitarianism

exactly like Nazism and Communism, one that would, by its very nature, be incompatible with democracy ('Islamofascism').

So, is this indeed a non-racist phenomenon? Or is it a new form of racism: xenophobia in 'new clothes'? If it is not racist, extreme right-wing, neither Nazi nor fascist, has it some connections with such currents? And whatever the case, does it nevertheless contribute to a xenophobia which targets Muslims?

In order to answer these questions, I will first address the context in which this phenomenon emerged as well as its main features. I rely here on (too) few major secondary sources (Fekete 2011; Carr 2006) as well as on complementary materials collected by me (Legrand 2007).

In the short term we can see the emergence of such a phenomenon in the context of different events in the course of which Western audiences have felt themselves under attack from 'Islam': the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 in the United States, those of Madrid (2004) and London (2005), the assassination of the film-maker Theo Van Gogh in the Netherlands (2004) and the Danish Cartoon Controversy (2005). In the long term let us just mention here the crucial evolution that in recent decades in Western Europe transformed the issue of migrants, *Gastarbeiter*, into an issue of North-Africans and Turks before being transformed into one of Muslims and Islam (for more details about the long term see Fekete 2011).

For anti-islamization activists the immigration of Muslims to Europe is perceived as massive and depicted in terms of a demographic conquest. As the German president of *Die Freiheit* party René Stadtkewitz (2011: 165) says, 'what we see today is not Muslim fighters at the gates of Vienna. The fighters are now in the very midst of our countries. Today they use our schools, banks, social system and most of all our tolerance and our weakness to fight against us'. It is assumed that Muslims will become the majority in Europe, and when they are, they will impose their religion and introduce *sharia* (Islamic law). In this perspective Muslim minorities will be about to or will already have set up 'Islamic enclaves' through *sharia* courts (Doc. 6). In their eyes Islam is in essence a warlike and criminal religion, which is "unable and unwilling to adapt to different historical and cultural settings" (Fekete 2011: 36). In their view, Islam is also in essence political, and as such is equated with a totalitarian violent political ideology termed 'Islamofascism'. Not only is Islam essentialized, Muslims are too: they are assumed to be violent people unwilling to live at peace with non-Muslims and fundamentalist in their literalist interpretation of the Koran. A 'nuanced' synthesis has been formulated by René Marchand (2011: 149), an orientalist

journalist active in the French organization *Riposte laïque*: "There are Muslims who are moderate by their nature or by reason; there is no moderate Islam." This last point is linked to the general suspicion that is directed at all Muslims, who are assumed to be masters of 'double speak' and '*taqiyya*' (dissimulation) (Fekete 2011: 35). In the final analysis, the 'non-racist' perspective puts it in the following way: Muslims are the first victims of their own religion and they should leave Islam because, formulated in a radical way, the only good Muslim is an ex-Muslim.

Now comes the second part of the picture. The main threat is not from Muslims themselves, who have migrated and settled in Europe; rather the responsibility lies with those who made this migration possible, and are still doing so: the 'indigenous' people of Europe, in particular, the 'political establishment', who permissively and naïvely supports pro-migrant and multicultural policies, either by omission, guilty surrendering or by multiculturalist sensitivity. Most politicians have become "apathetic. (...) They have become blind, they have become accommodating and are not aware of the extent to which our Liberty is threatened" (Stadtkewitz 2011: 164); also, politicians are accused of 'collaborating' with Muslims "in order to avoid any problems or tension" (Gravers 2011: 108).

We can easily see here Anders Breivik's worldview that motivated his attacks in Oslo and on the island of Utoya in July 2011. He did not attack migrants, but rather his country's government (targeting official buildings) and fellow citizens of the Workers' Youth League, a political youth organization affiliated to the Norwegian Labour Party, which commits the 'crime' of multiculturalism and – in so doing – allegedly contributes to the decline of civilization in Europe (for a broader view of the political context in which these attacks took place see Harry's essay in the present book on the issues of nationalism, religion, secularism and multicultural politics in present-day Norway).

Concerning actors sharing this worldview – or part if it – Liz Fekete (2011: 30, 31 & 38) makes the correct distinction between those who support the notion of a deliberate conspiracy to Islamicize Europe (in extreme right, neo-Nazi and counter-jihadist circles) and those who claim to observe and deplore the Islamization of Europe, but without attributing it to a deliberate conspiracy (in neo-conservative and cultural conservative intellectual and political circles). In this regard the best-known benchmark conspiracy theory is called '*Eurabia*' after counter-jihadist Bat Ye'or's title for a book in which the author defends the thesis of a secret project between European politicians and the Arab world for the 'Islamization of Europe', the purpose of which is "to destroy America and Israel, with Europe a doomed continent on the brink of cultural extinction in

the face of a relentless and co-ordinated campaign of domination of Muslims to transform it into an Islamic colony called Eurabia", where Europeans would become *dhimmi* people (Fekete 2011: 43; Carr 2006).

Conspiracy or not, what is at stake for anti-islamization activists is nothing less than the decline of civilization in Europe – a strong existential threat at the core of identity and in the *transmission* of identity. This strong existential threat is so acute that it is an alarmist, catastrophist, kind of apocalyptic vision and framed in terms of a 'demographic time bomb' (an element to which I will critically come back later) (Carr 2006).

Case-study: a problematic advocacy coalition between Christian faith-based and 'Defence of Western civilization' actors at OSCE, Vienna, July 2009

As stated above, the present case-study is based on participative observation, informal exchanges of views and data collected at meetings of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) organized by its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODHIR) in Vienna and Warsaw in 2009, in particular the '*Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Freedom of Religion or Belief*' held in Vienna on 9-10 July.

This meeting tackled issues related to the status of religious communities and places of worship, concerning, among others, religious minorities, in terms of the problematic formulated as "from commitments to implementation" (Legrand 2009a). It was attended by most of the Organization's 56 Member States (covering countries outside Europe, stretching across the Northern Hemisphere from Vancouver to Vladivostok) together with about a hundred people representing 'civil society', NGOs, churches, religious organizations, philosophical non-confessional bodies and academic institutions.

In terms of minority rights the OSCE, among others, used to work in the fight against anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. But a few months before the meeting being studied the OSCE had also started – with a Round Table organized on 4 March in Vienna – to work on '*Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians*', also in Christian majority contexts and areas, on the basis of a newly constructed agenda: not only minority but also majority religions may be the object of violations of religious freedom, and this happens as much 'west of Vienna' (the former Cold War's 'Free World') as 'east of Vienna' (Legrand 2009a).

With this as a background and in this context I was able to observe at the Vienna meeting of July 2009 two types of organizations in a tentative form of 'advocacy coalition' (Paul A. Sabatier's concept) in the dialogue process around the issues of Western civilization, Islam and Christianity in Europe. This was not however without tensions, as we will see: on the one hand, Christian organizations –*Observatorio para la libertad religiosa y de consciencia* (Madrid), *Alliance Defence Fund* (USA), *Paneuropa Union (Paneuropabewegung)*, the Vienna-based *Platform Christianophobia in Europe* (also called *Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians*) and *Evangelischer Aufbruch in Deutschland* (EAD); on the other hand, what I call 'Defence of Western civilization' organizations (liberal/secular-oriented and referring to the Judeo-Christian heritage in cultural terms): *Bürgerbewegung Pax Europa* (BPE), *International Civil Liberties Alliance* (ICLA, USA), *Mission Europa – Netzwerk Karl Martell* and the *Wiener Akademikerbund*.

I will elaborate later on on the profile of this second type of organization, but it is worth mentioning here straightaway another type of actor present at the meeting under study and sharing a secular-oriented profile but who should not be confused with them. This other type of actor is classically defined and defines itself as 'secular humanist', like the European Humanist Federation (EHF) and the Belgian *Centre d'Action laïque* (CAL) and shares some features: secularism (State-Church separation, rule of (secular) law), emphasis on religion *and* belief seen as a *private* matter, freedom of religion and freedom *from* religion (rights of non-believers). Even if it is concerned about some tendencies in Muslim communities (such as the refusal to countenance mixed-gender swimming pools), the focus remains – at least in this setting – on the traditional religion present in Europe: Christianity, in particular the Roman Catholic Church, with its clerical structure and source of political influence in public affairs. As such it is not 'obsessional' about Islam in particular. All religions that would be uncomfortable with the emancipatory humanist achievements of the Enlightenment are a matter of concern. I did not observe in this setting any connections with 'Defence of Western civilization' organizations.

In order to investigate this, I take as a basis the *Joint Statement of NGOs to OSCE and to participating States* at the Vienna ODHIR meeting of July 2009, which was signed by the above-mentioned *Christian* organizations (Doc. 1). On their part the 'Defence of Western civilization' organizations were approached to sign up, but did not rally to the cause.

Before going through their recommendations, let us first mention a general remark made in the Statement concerning the context as described above: "[i]t should ... be noted that the infringement of religious freedom affects both, minority as well as majority religions". In this regard, we read elsewhere that 'prejudice against Christians seems to be the last socially acceptable prejudice in Europe' (Doc. 3). Of nine recommendations (Rs), four concern religion in general, three concern religion in general and (implicitly) the Christian faith in particular, and two concern Christian relations with *minority religions and (among others or implicitly) Islam in a Christian majority context.*

Religion in general. To act against harm, disrespect or contempt toward religion (R1). In the Statement we read in this regard:

> the State might influence negatively and indirectly on individuals and communities, through a public and official message, or subtle actions, according to which religion appears a "remnant of ancient times", an "old-fashioned behaviour", something "inconsistent with progress and freedom" or the equivalent of "intolerance and violence".

R2: To recognise freedom of religion as an essential dimension of humankind. The Statement reads in this regard: '[f]reedom of religion deals with the utmost profound and meaningful dimension of the human being. It presupposes transcendence. Therefore freedom of religion should occupy a preferred position among human rights and freedoms and not be considered as inferior.' R3: To recognize the specific aspects of freedom of religion in comparison to related but different freedoms, like freedom of thought, speech, association or assembly.

Religion in general, (implicitly) based on specific consequences for the Christian faith in particular. Some light can be shed on the three recommendations concerned by the following passage in the Statement:

> [Freedom of religion] deals with duties and relationships in human interrelations. That is why religious freedom involves an immunity sphere in which the State is not competent at all in order to dictate or govern citizens' options and decisions, as long as the religion respects the public order and the principles of the constitutional framework.

In this regard, "States must recognise religious conscientious objection in delicate fields, like bioethics (abortion, euthanasia, stem cell research, etc.), education, military service, etc." Following this, R6 reads: "to pay specific attention to the right of religious conscientious objection in all social and public spheres" and also advocates "the right of parents or tutors to the moral education of children in public education".

Expressed in the same 'package' R8 reads: "[t]o recognise and protect the use and display in private and public of religious symbols". More precisely, in this regard we read in Doc. 2 (*Platform Christianophobia in Europe*): "we urge for a wide protection of religious symbols and traditions including Christmas trees and the wearing of religious symbols, such as crosses on necklaces (…)". Finally R9 reads: "To recognise and protect freedom of speech on moral issues affecting public life".

As we will see later, this is related to the issue of hate speech legislation concerning homophobia, as was illustrated by the cases reported by the Alliance Defence Fund during the debates (pastors prosecuted in Sweden for homophobic hate speech following sermons during Mass addressing the issue of homosexual orientation as a sin).

Relation to minority religions and (among others or implicitly) Islam in a Christian majority context. R4 reads:

> to guarantee the availability of places of worship taking into account urban planning considerations, and the artistic, cultural, religious, architectural and environmental characteristics of the territory. A dialogue should be established with the local community and religions traditionally present in the area. Legislative regulations should distinguish between places used for worship only and places of worship used for activities beyond purpose of worship (R4).

We can find complementary elements to this recommendation in the Statement, although not specifically about places of worship, but concerning growing religious diversity:

> many (…) countries face a new challenge in which the complexities of religious pluralism have increased enormously. For these countries OSCE Commitments always offer a plain and general source for dealing with new problems and issues. It is important in this vein to be open-minded to peoples and cultures coming from other geographical areas, to grant

full enjoyment of freedom of religion to those citizens who belong to new religious minorities and to trust in the centrality of the human person without surrendering their legal systems and politics to possible tension between cultures and civilisations.

This is an implicit – but clear – reference to Islam and *Sharia* law. Another issue is: 'to respect, with regard to anti-discrimination laws, the right to autonomy of religious communities and religiously inspired institutions' (R7). In this regard we read in the Statement: "States cannot apply anti-discrimination law to religious communities and religiously-inspired institutions as if they were secular entities or part of State agencies." In the debates the case of Catholic adoption agencies which had to close because of their refusal to entrust children to homosexual couples was raised, as well as the case of a Christian organization legally obliged not to refuse to recruit non-Christian (in this case Muslim) personnel.

As stated above, the above-mentioned 'Defence of Western civilization' organizations were invited to sign up to the Statement, but abstained from doing so, for the reasons that we will review below. How do these organizations present themselves?

The *Citizens' Movement Pax Europa* (*Bürgerbewegung Pax Europa* – hereafter BPE) is based in Austria and has local chapters in several German *Länder* such as Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Hesse, NorthRhine-Westphalia and Rhineland Palatinate. It defines itself in its leaflet (Doc. 8) as a 'Human Rights Organization for Freedom and Democracy Against Islamisation' – an 'independent, non-partisan movement', whose objectives "are to protect not only the democratic, free and secular rule of law in our country but also to struggle for European culture based on the Judeo-Christian traditions and – especially – on the values of the Enlightenment". Like the SIOE movement, this organization emphasizes that it "clearly distances itself from all right-wing or left-wing extremists and all xenophobic movements".

The organization puts forward some contextual elements regarding the *'host society'* part of the issue (Doc. 8): "[d]ue to the rising threats being imposed by the Islamisation of Europe, we clearly explain and express these threats which are a given. We keep people informed about how Islamisation challenges, threatens and undermines our free and democratic order." In particular, "politicians, lawyers, clerics and journalists have to acquire authentic knowledge about Islam, about the Koran and the Sunna. They should be ready for free and politically incorrect public discussions about Islam – and about what Islam really means:

SUBMISSION – rather than finding excuses or glossing over. Appeasement has never been a good idea."

The sense of SIOE-like duty with regard to future generations is reflected in BPE's recommendations which are addressed to the OSCE "in order to leave behind to our children and grandchildren a world in peace" (Doc. 4) In the report written by BPE's representative (Doc. 5), we also read this line: "[o]ne day in a distant future we might perhaps say: The OSCE brought Communism to an end; the OSCE also brought to an end the Islamic claim to domination."

The organization also supplies some contextual elements regarding the *'migrant'* part of the issue: '[a]pproximately ten percent of Muslims in Germany are members of one of the four largest organizations (DITIB, ZMD, Islamrat, VIKZ)', whose objectives are said to be the implementation of 'a theocratic Islamic state in Germany'.

BPE's leaflet (Doc. 8) also says some words about *Mission Europa – Netzwerk Karl Martell* (a clear reference to the battle of Poitiers, 732), which was founded in 2007 "in order to coordinate organizations working against Islamisation". It is a Vienna-based organization whose objective is to make public – at international level – "what Austrians experience with the extensive Muslim presence". On the one hand, its populist-sounding slogan is 'Giving the silent majority a loud voice'. On the other hand, once again, here the public still would not know 'about the real Islam' and the organization's aim is "to put the facts on the table". It warns against Muslim groups' propaganda about Austria's law on Islam as "the ideal way to integrate Islam into a country" (this law was the first in Western Europe to recognize Islam as a religion with an official status alongside the traditional Christian denominations; it was adopted on the heels of the Austro-Hungarian Empire's annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina). It opposes Turkey's accession to the EU on the grounds of the "incompatibility of Turkey with western standards and life style". Also the two Ottoman sieges of 1529 and 1683 against Vienna are depicted as proof of Turkey's aggressive intention. *Mission Europa* is affiliated with the *Wiener Akademikerbund* (Vienna Association of Academics).

The *Wiener Akademikerbund* shares sensitivities close to those of the Christian organizations (e.g. the fight against attempts to abolish the technical terms of the Gregorian Calendar BC and AD, which would be "a severe and totally unacceptable form of persecution of Christians and Christian belief"; see Doc. 2). This organization also seems to share a common element with the 'Defence of Western civilization' organizations concerning the general suspicion affecting Muslims as mentioned before, as it recommends "to the OSCE member states

and OSCE institutions to protect the freedom of belief of only those religious groups that have made public all elements of their creed" (Doc. 2).

The *International Civil Liberties Alliance* (ICLA) presents itself as "an international alliance defending democracy and freedom". During the meeting the ICLA's representative circulated a document entitled '*A Proposed Charter of Muslim Understanding*', written by ex-Muslim Islamic scientist Sam Solomon (Doc. 7). This document which ICLA recommends the OSCE to adopt 'in [its] entirety' (Doc. 6), invites Muslims, in particular Muslim leaders and representatives of organizations representing the Islamic faith, to adhere to a series of principles and attitudes: the rejection of violence in the name of religion; the recognition of equality between all human beings, including between man and woman; the right to religious freedom including the right to change religion; the precedence of national law over *Sharia;* full co-operation with the police and intelligence services in the fight against terrorism; the revision or reinterpretation of Koranic verses calling for violence against enemies of Islam, unbelievers or non-Muslim believers (17 specific Koranic verses are referred to as examples); adhesion to the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) – ten articles followed by a form that can be signed on a named individual basis or in the name of an organization representing the Islamic faith and sent to a postal address in London. "This Charter, signed and adhered to, would guarantee the compatibility of Islamic organisations with secular democracy", says the ICLA (Doc. 6), mirroring the general suspicion affecting Muslims as mentioned before.

Let us now expound on why these organizations did not rally behind the *Joint Statement*. "There are in it some acceptable points; but also some passages that fully contradict our point of view, are therefore highly problematic, even if well intended", reports BPE's delegate Elisabeth Sabaditsch-Wolff. She mentions the following passage of the Statement, which "is totally unacceptable":

> Governments must admit religious attire even in public places, except when paramount interests such as safety, public order or health compel to rule otherwise. Governments must recognise the wide extent and implications of the right of parents to the moral and religious upbringing of children, without any interference from political power and from official ideology leading to indoctrination. In sum, States must recognise religion as a vital source of moral behaviour which is beyond and superior to secular legal systems.

Concerning first what BPE's representative sees as the 'unlimited right of parents to the moral and religious upbringing of their children', this would:

> open the door to Islamic Madrassas, that are generally well known to prepare the ground for brainwashing and religious indoctrination. The intention that only parents should determine their children's moral education may be honourable in itself, but Muslim parents should first of all take some distance from the problematic verses and suras present in the Koran. [and a reference is made to the '*Charter for Muslim Understanding*' (Doc. 5)]

A second objection concerns *national* (also meaning *secular*) law (cf. Doc. 4) and is in line with BPE's recommendations addressed to the OSCE meeting: "no religious laws of any sort be implemented into any national legislation" (Doc. 2), which is more specifically oriented towards Islam in its leaflet (Doc. 8): "No introduction of any parts of Sharia law into German (European) law which explicitly refer to Allah, Mohammed, and Islamic traditions".

We have here a rejoinder by the ICLA, that, referring to 85 operational *Sharia* courts in Great Britain, indicates "the possible misuse of religious autonomy to establish parallel societies where national law does not apply" – a misuse of religious autonomy which would threaten fundamental rights, in particular women's rights (cf. Doc. 6, entitled '*The problem of granting autonomy to Islamic enclaves in the West*').

Conversely, BPE's representative mentions that the passage of the Joint Statement of (Christian) NGOs concerning places of worship for minority religions might have been supported (Doc. 5). This is in line with BPE's own recommendations addressed to the OSCE meeting (presumably linking with the suggestion referred to in the NGOs' Statement of a dialogue between "the local community and religions traditionally present in the area"): "We recommend that religious building projects not be enforced against the residents' appeals." Also probably in line with this, see the following position of the BPE (Doc. 8): 'abandonment of Islamic symbols of power or Islamic predominance' – a probable reference to minarets.

Before elaborating on some perspectives of understanding of the dynamics of the case under study, a complementary issue which is not addressed in the *Joint Statement of NGOs* but which is present in other documents related to the Vienna meeting and in the debates held on that occasion is worth mentioning: hate speech legislation and freedom of expression. In BPE's recommendations

addressed to the OSCE meeting (Doc. 4) we read: "since criticism of religion is part of free speech, any effort to ban free speech, in name of religious interests on the pretext of 'Islamophobia' or racism must be prevented". In this line its delegate also said during the meeting: "hate speech is punishable, but criticism of religion is not hate speech and should be legal; there is a misuse of hate speech law to forbid criticism of religion". An element of observation worth noting in this regard is the clashes that occurred during the Vienna meeting between these organizations (ICLA in particular) and the anti-racist organization *Conseil de la Jeunesse pluriculturelle (COJEP) International* (originally founded by French youngsters of Turkish origin), which considered that the '*Charter of Muslim Understanding*' that was circulated was an unacceptable manifestation of Islamophobia.

How is it from the perspective of Christian organizations? In *Platform Christianophobia in Europe*'s recommendations (Doc. 2) we read:

Radical political correctness and hate speech legislation may lead to a restriction of the freedom of religion as well as the freedom of expression. We urge not to promote a claimed right not to feel offended which ends up in restricting the freedom of expression of individuals and groups, including religious individuals and groups.

One cannot but read the second part of the position expressed here as obviously referring to Islamophobia; if this were not the case, how could we understand this organization's adoption of recommendation No 1 (Doc. 1) calling for action against harm, disrespect or contempt to religion?

Some perspectives of understanding

The phenomenon under scrutiny proceeds from a deep identity crisis for the actors concerned and can be understood – from their points of view – as a cultural and/or religious defence mechanism. While it claims to be non-racist, one cannot but question its perhaps unintentional xenophobic dimension. This issue is related to that of misinformation vs. manipulation, among others, in terms of demographic 'threat'. Let us go through these points before concluding our case-study as an example of a problematic advocacy coalition and saying some words about the extent of the phenomenon.

Identity crisis

The two types of actors observed experience identity crises. The Christian organizations face a strongly secularized Europe, a decline in Christianity (at least in its traditional patterns – practice, relation to clerical authorities …) and, at the same time, stronger religious and cultural diversity – with Islam at the forefront. They see themselves as an oppressed majority and have at the same time the feeling of becoming a minority, not only by comparison with communities of foreign origin, but also within the 'host part' of society. These Christians, as practising believers of conservative orientation, see new legislation (such as on abortion, euthanasia, same-sex marriage …) harming their religious convictions in a mainstream secularized society that is at ease with – or even in favour of – these changes. The call for the fight against attacks on majority religion in fact concerns majority religion as the religion *traditionally present* on the territory, not necessarily the *effective* majority religion as it has evolved.

They face the following paradox: a more secularized context tends to sideline the Christian religion (symbols, names of religious feasts …) in the public space, while, at the same time, anti-discrimination laws made for minorities may provide for a certain protection and allow for more expression in this regard. So, for instance, the case of a Christian employee of *British Airways* asked to hide her crucifix necklace, while Muslim colleagues may wear a veil and Sikh colleagues may wear a Kara bangle (The Christian Institute 2009: 49). So while minorities may in some instances enjoy some protection (in other instances they of course also suffer from discrimination), the 'majority' lacks safeguards because of its status as the traditional majority religion. In this context Christian actors have succeeded in putting Christianophobia on the political agenda next to anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. Furthermore, in a situation where one cannot oppose the prevailing democratically adopted legislation, the only way is to live with 'conscientious objection' on an individual basis or try to obtain exemptions at a community level.

The 'Defence of Western civilization' actors are mostly motivated to protect the secular liberal democratic order, which would be threatened by Islamization. They also share the concern of Christian organizations for Christianity mainly as *culture* at the *collective* level, and not so much as *faith* at the individual and community level; religion as faith is in their view mostly a private issue (see Harry's essay in this book on the case of the Norwegian Progress Party (FrP)'s process of ideological repositioning in terms of both secular *and* Christian values). Both types of actors face a 'cultural relativism' that has its origins in the

challenges resulting from the growing diversity of 'outsiders' or 'newcomers' in today's plural and pluralist societies. Some Christian actors face a secondary 'cultural relativism' that comes from 'within' – a phenomenon of unprecedented changes in values and moral standards within the inner culture itself, which are difficult for conservative people to accept.

Girardet (1986) puts forward the proposition that times of crises – I would add: in particular *identity* crises – are conducive to conspiracy theories. Matt Carr (2006: 11) states that 'the fear of cultural and racial extinction has a long pedigree in European history', and evokes a parallel between between the '*Eurabia*' conspiracy and the alleged Jewish conspiracy at the end of the 19th century in Victorian Britain. Schiffer and Wagner (2011) also compare Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in terms of 'new enemies, old patterns'. Looking for a scapegoat is a classical social phenomenon aimed at identifying the 'guilty one' who is at the root of the crisis and thus allows us to recover our sense of control in the world. At the same time, as we have seen, for some actors there is no deliberate conspiracy; they nevertheless share the same uncomfortable feeling of change in societies marked by growing diversity, relativism and the lack of points of reference.

Racist or non-racist? Misinformed or manipulative?

As we have seen, our actors claim to be non-racist. I see two possibilities here. Some actors may be sincere in this, but my considered view is nevertheless that both their monolithic and essentialized representation of Islam and Muslims and their alarmist, catastrophist, apocalyptic representation of European Muslim demography are not scientifically grounded (cf. infra). The same applies to issues like *sharia* courts (see Legrand 2008) in a Western context – an issue that Nimni tackles in this book from a contrasting, stimulating and sophisticated academic perspective. Other actors are more manipulative and their mobilization is nothing more than a more sophisticated form of xenophobia: a re-definition of an anti-migrant position in non-racist terms (Roy 2005). So, there is the example of a member of the French *Bloc identitaire*, who explains that campaigns targeting Islam are mainly for 'publicity purposes' for the movement:

> There is no islamization of Europe, there are not millions of white people converting to islam either; it is still very much an immigrant phenomenon. (…) There is no phenomenon of islamization, but, on the contrary, there is a phenomenon of population replacement (Fourest 2012).

I relate the two possibilities (racist vs. 'non-racist') to the distinction I make between first-level *'primary'* Islamophobia and second-level *political* Islamophobia (Legrand 2010). The 'primary' psycho(-socio)logical meaning of Islamophobia is fear of 'Islam', nurtured by a series of empirical facts at both local and international levels; the media presentation of which is open to criticism. While the facts presented are indeed true (for example, reprehensible intolerant or hate speech – or speech advocating conquest – as made by some imams), their selectiveness leads to a confusing mixture and misleading generalizations about Muslims and 'Islam' 'as a whole'. Islamophobia – *political* Islamophobia this time – then steps in and exploits this fear around the presence and affirmation of 'Islam' in formulating an ideological agenda for the defence of Christian or Western civilization, which is supposedly under threat (Christianity in the strict sense, or secularized Christendom in more overtly political and cultural terms). The step from phobia as *fear* to phobia as *hatred* is not far.

Here now comes the delicate issue of criticism of Islam, freedom of expression and hate speech. Can religion be criticized whilst respecting religious beliefs? Where do you draw the line between legitimate criticism of a religion and hate speech directed at a community of faith or a group of individuals that belong to it? While the Danish cartoons targeted Islam, many Muslims on their part felt that they were stigmatized, and that they were all lumped together with terrorists in the aftermath of 11 September. There are no easy answers to this question. As Prof. Ombretta Fumagalli Carulli (Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan) said as a keynote speaker at the opening session of the OSCE meeting in Vienna of July 2009, if 'a supposed right "not to feel offended"' ought not to be promoted, 'conversely – the freedom of expression' ought not to be 'abused to offend and vilify the religions, their representatives, symbols and teachings'.

The demographic 'threat'

In some localities in Europe (some towns or parts of towns), the concentration of the Muslim population nourishes fears of Muslims becoming a majority. The problem is that some *local* situations, which are real, are then – without any grounds – pointed to as a prefiguration of future situations at the *national* or *European* level, some activists putting forward the view that Europe will have a Muslim majority in a few decades. If we take the capital of Belgium as an example, Muslims are estimated to be 17% (Torrekens 2007: 2) or around 25% (Dassetto, 2011: 21-25) of the total population, but they are only 4% at the national level. If we go into even more detail, 75% of Brussels' Muslim population is concentrated

in only 5 of the 19 municipalities composing the capital (Torrekens 2007: 3). In Schaerbeek, the Muslim population (people originating from Muslim majority countries as well as their descendants having obtained Belgian nationality) comprise 29% of the total population (Torrekens 2009: 17). Scientific studies like the one published by the Pew Research Centre's Forum on Religion & Public Life (2011) show that at *national* level in 2030 only two countries in Western Europe (Belgium and France) will have Muslims as little more than 10% of their population (all the other countries remaining below 10%, most between 5 and 10% at national level).

The case of a problematic advocacy coalition

The situation that I have observed can be described by the following triangle. We could add other actors such as, for instance, feminist or Zionist/Jewish/Israeli actors. As Liz Fekete (2011: 30 & 42) rightly puts it, some (not all) Islamophobic actors who are, ironically, 'linked to anti-Semitic traditions have now, because of their fear of Islam and Arab countries, become staunch defenders of Israel and Zionism'.

Secularist / 'Defence of Western civilisation' actors

Muslim actors   Christian actors
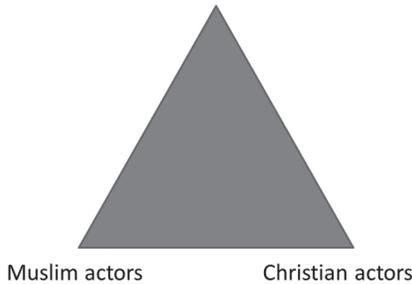
Let us observe dyadic relations within this triangle. Interaction between Muslim actors and secularist/'Western defence civilization' actors against Christians is improbable and was not observed. A Christian-Muslim dyadic alliance against 'Defence of Western civilization' actors was not observed (from observation in other settings I can state that this kind of configuration can take place to a certain degree, vis-à-vis secularist actors of the other type mentioned above – secular humanists). The observed dyadic alliance in our Vienna OSCE setting is that between Christian actors and 'Defence of Western civilization' actors around the issue of Islam and Muslims. This (tentative) advocacy coalition is, as we have seen, not without its tensions. The 'anti-islamization' activists who declare themselves

to be non-racist then claim the right to criticize Islam without being accused of Islamophobia (conceived as racism directed against Muslims). For them it is not hatred, and there cannot be such a 'right not to be offended' which would open the door to muzzling free speech, which is part of secular liberal values. Here 'anti-islamization' Christian actors may not feel comfortable, because of their sensitivity to blasphemy or to the critique of religion in general: if doors are more open to a critique of religion, this could be of concern not only to Islam, but also to Christianity. Now one last word on the extent of the phenomenon.

Conclusion: some insights on the extent of the phenomenon

Is 'anti-islamization' activism a social movement? It has the ambition to be one. What we have is activists and groups of activists in national and transnational networks that are sufficiently structured, widespread and with a critical mass to qualify – at the very least – as an emerging social movement. Some are linked to parties, emanate from a party or are embryos of future parties. Their worldviews may spread, in particular through right-wing populist and 'nativist' parties (Weis 2011: 52-58), which are potentially more popular than extreme right-wing parties, and become more and more mainstream. All this in a general context marked by a less overtly Islamophobic secular liberalist public discourse that is far more likely to go unnoticed or unrecognized in comparison to its far-right 'version', as Allen argues in his essay on *Islamophobia and the crises of Europe's multiculturalism* in this book – as well, I would add, as to its right-wing populist and 'nativist' 'versions'. On the Christian side the Roman Catholic Church is herself well aware of the dangers present in her own ranks (Legrand and Vella Gauci 2011). Contrary to 'Defence of Western civilization' organizations, the actions of Christian organizations observed in this study cannot be qualified as a social movement; they remain at the stage of advocacy groups.

In the final analysis I would say that it is the 'anti-islamization of Europe' phenomenon being studied – and more generally the prevailing Islamophobic climate prevailing in today's Western Europe – which may well be the real danger, and not the alleged and so-called 'islamization of Europe'.

Notes

1   I attended these meetings in my former capacity as adviser on interreligious affairs at the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE), which is the liaising body of the Roman Catholic Church at EU level. The meetings concerned are the 'Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting – Freedom of religion or belief' (Vienna, 09-10 July 2009) (cf. Legrand 2009a) and the 'Human Dimension Implementation Meeting' (Warsaw, 28 Sep.-09 Oct. 2009) (cf. Legrand 2009b).

2   The OSCE was created on 1 January 1995 to replace the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which resulted from the signing of the Helsinki Final Act (1975), which, during the Cold War, defined security not only in politico-military and economic-environmental terms, but also in terms relating to the human dimension – especially in terms of democracy, human rights and minority rights.

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1- Joint Statement of NGOs – Observatory for Religious Freedom (Spain), Observatorio para la libertad religiosa y de consciencia (Madrid), Alliance Defence Fund (USA), Paneuropa Union (Austria), Human Rights Platform www.christianophobia.eu (Europe) & Evangelischer Aufbruch (Germany), OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting, Vienna, 9-10 July 2009

2- Civil Society Recommendations (listed by NGO), OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Roundtable for Civil Society

3- Side Event www.christianophobia.eu, HDIM 2009, 5 October 2009

4- Citizens' Movement Pax Europa (BPE) Statement & Recommendations, OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Vienna, 9-10 July 2009

5- Bericht vom Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Wien, 9-10 July 2009, by BPE-Delegierte E.S.W.

6- International Civil Liberties Alliance (ICLA) (2009) 'The problem of granting autonomy to Islamic enclaves in the West,' Paper presented to the OSCE Supplementary Meeting on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Vienna, July 9-10

7- 'A Proposed Charter of Muslim Understanding' (2007) Sam Solomon, Revised ed. (1st ed., December 2006), April, London: www.pilcrowpress.com/charter

8- BPE *Bürgerbewegung Pax Europa* – Citizens' Movement Pax Europa (leaflet)

9- ESW & HF (sin anno), 'Freedom of Expression in Austria – Freedom of Speech in Austria,' Working Paper. S.l.: s.e.