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The Muslim conspiracy theory and the Oslo massacre

LIZ FEKETE

Abstract: Anders Behring Breivik, perpetrator of the Norwegian massacre, was motivated by a belief in a Muslim conspiracy to take over Europe. Extreme and aberrant his actions were, but, explains the author, elements of this conspiracy theory are held and circulated in Europe today across a broad political spectrum, with internet-focused counter-jihadist activists at one end and neoconservative and cultural conservative columnists, commentators and politicians at the other. The political fallout from the circulation of these ideas ranges from test cases over free speech in the courts to agitation on the ground from defence leagues, anti-minaret campaigners and stop Islamisation groups. Although the conspiracy draws on older forms of racism, it also incorporates new frameworks: the clash of civilisations, Islamofascism, the new anti-Semitism and Eurabia. This Muslim conspiracy bears many of the hallmarks of the 'Jewish conspiracy theory', yet, ironically, its adherents, some of whom were formerly linked to anti-Semitic traditions, have now, because of their fear of Islam and Arab countries, become staunch defenders of Israel and Zionism.

Keywords: Breivik, clash of civilisations, Eurabia, freedom of speech, Geert Wilders, Islamofascism, Muslim conspiracy, new anti-Semitism, Oslo massacre

In a closed court hearing on 25 July 2011, 32-year-old Anders Behring Breivik admitted killing seventy-seven people on 22 July in two successive attacks in and around the Norwegian capital – the first on government buildings in central Oslo,

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the second on the tiny island of Utøya, 38km from Oslo. But he denied criminal responsibility on the basis that the shooting spree on the Norwegian Labour party summer youth camp, which claimed sixty-nine lives, was necessary to wipe out the next generation of Labour party leaders in order to stop the further disintegration of Nordic culture from the mass immigration of Muslims and kick-start a revolution to halt the spread of Islam. Even before his court appearance, political analysts and anti-fascist monitors had been investigating Breivik's motives, sifting through numerous online postings and, crucially, analysing his 1,500-page manifesto written in English under the pseudonym Andrew Berwick.¹ Entitled *2083: a European declaration of independence*, he had sent it out to 1,003 counter-jihadist and far-right extremists across Europe ninety minutes before he embarked on his killing spree.

This article identifies the various elements in the Islamic conspiracy theory that Breivik drew on, its discursive frameworks, its key shapers and followers. The extreme-right politicians, counter-jihadists and other political commentators that Breivik cites in *2083* have been anxious to distance themselves from his actions and establish that they do not support violence. They describe him as a loner, a violent psychopath and a freakish aberration. But the myths that Muslims, supported by liberals, cultural relativists and Marxists, are out to Islamicise Europe and that there is a conspiracy to impose multiculturalism on the continent and destroy western civilisation are peddled each day on the internet, in extreme-right, counter-jihadist and neo-Nazi circles. I also examine certain intellectual currents within neoconservatism and cultural conservatism. For, although these intellectual currents do not support the notion of a deliberate conspiracy to Islamicise Europe, they are often used by conspiracy theorists to underline the righteousness of their beliefs and actions.

Shaping a conspiracy

Breivik started out as a member of Norway's anti-immigrant Progress party.² Today, seriously embarrassed by the publication of various videos and photographs believed to be from around 2002, which show Breivik at parties with a number of individuals who are now senior politicians in the party, it appears to have bethought itself and promises that its approach in future election campaigns will be more thoughtful.³ We know that Breivik soon became disillusioned with the Progress party because it was not radical enough. He became a member of the Nazi web forum Nordisk (Nordic), which has more than 22,000 (mainly Scandinavian) members. In his manifesto, he claimed to have adopted the philosophy of the Vienna School of Crusader Nationalism, praising the Stop Islamisation movements of Europe and the US and counter-jihadist websites such as Atlas Shrugs (run by Pamela Geller), Jihad Watch (run by Robert Spencer, whom Breivik cites sixty-four times) and the Gates of Vienna (whose operator goes under the pseudonym Baron Bodissey). Breivik also claimed to be greatly inspired by the defence leagues springing up across Europe. He supported the

Norwegian Defence League and seemed particularly keen on the English Defence League (EDL), which was funded by Christian fundamentalist millionaire Alan Lake,⁴ who, following the murders, wrote on his 4Freedoms website that Breivik, 'did this attack to protest against the way that Islam is taking over large parts of Europe. By attacking the leftist politicians that are enabling this, the chickens have actually come home to roost.'⁵

As the *Guardian's* online religious editor Andrew Brown has pointed out, counter-jihadist websites promote a 'rolling cauldron of stories from all over the world to illustrate the treachery and violence of Muslims, and the criminal weakness of liberals'.⁶ They also provide ammunition for neo-Nazis and violent ultrapatriotic defence leagues (such as the EDL), which, in turn, run thousands of websites. (In Germany alone, far-right groups run some 1,000 websites and thirty-eight online radio stations.⁷) The views promoted by counter-jihadists and neo-Nazis are also nourished by movements such as Stop Islamisation of Europe (SIOE) and Stop Islamization of America (SIOA), run by Pamela Geller and Robert Spencer, which bears the motto 'Racism is the lowest form of human stupidity, but Islamophobia is the height of common sense'. Breivik declared himself in favour of the Stop Islamisation movements and also mentioned in positive terms the True Finns (several of whose members were sent the manifesto by Breivik), the British National Party (BNP) and, in Germany, the National Democratic party, the Deutsche Volksunion and the Republikaner. (Tanguy Veys, a Vlaams Belang MP, was also sent a copy of the manifesto.) The leader of the Dutch Freedom party, Geert Wilders, was cited in Breivik's manifesto on thirty occasions. He commented that Wilders was a possible ally, although Wilders would 'have to condemn us' (at the point of violence), 'which is fine. It is after all essential that they protect their reputational shields.'

Breivik's manifesto was signed AB Justiciar Knight Commander, cell 8 Knights Templar Europe. Throughout the document and in numerous online postings (where he used the pseudonym Sigurd Jorsalfar, a reference to the twelfth-century King of Norway), Breivik revealed his obsessions with the Crusades, the supposed threat to Christian Europe posed by Muslim immigrants and mainstream political leaders and the desire to see not only the deportation of all Muslims from Europe, but also from 'the West Bank and the Gaza Strip'. He described himself as a supporter of 'pro-Zionism/Israeli nationalism', and one of his key intellectual influences was Bat Ye'or, who first coined the term Eurabia and identified the threat of '*Dhimmitude*' or western subjection to Islam. Several neoconservative political commentators and thinktanks also draw, to varying degrees, on the notion of Eurabia, as do the Christian evangelical Pax Europa, which is behind many anti-mosque campaigns.⁸ One of its German founders, René Stadtkewitz, has launched the Freedom party in Berlin to contest the September 2011 elections and to provoke an 'uprising' by people across Europe against 'growing Islamic influence'.⁹

In a 2008 study of counter-jihadism for the Royal United Services Institute, Toby Archer described it as a spectrum:

At one end are the shrillest voices, with their dystopian fantasies of mayhem and civil war enveloping Europe as the continent becomes incorporated into a new Caliphate. They resemble the writers of the American neo-fascist militia movement, forever waiting for the beginning of the race-war and the chance to fight the “New World Order.” At the other end of the scale are mainstream writers and politicians whose views are not dissimilar.¹⁰

Breivik’s views, as outlined in his manifesto, resemble those of the American neo-fascist Militia movement, only with culture and religion replaced by race. He, too, predicted a European civil war in three stages, ending in 2083 with the execution of ‘cultural Marxists’ and the deportation of all Muslims. But, whereas Breivik saw himself as a political soldier in a revolution against Muslims, multiculturalism and civilisational decline, most counter-jihadists, while sharing much of Breivik’s discursive frameworks and vocabulary, stop short of advocating violence as a means of achieving their goals.

At the other end of the spectrum are political commentators who write from a neoconservative or culturally conservative perspective. They do not directly support the idea that there is a deliberate conspiracy theory to Islamicise Europe and impose multiculturalism and they certainly do not advocate violence. Rather, they warn that through omission, through naivety, through an unwillingness to act or even recognise the dangers ahead, liberal elites leave Europe vulnerable to Islamisation. These commentators include, in the UK, Conservative education minister Michael Gove (author of *Celsius 7/7*), Douglas Murray (director of the Centre for Social Cohesion, associate director of the Henry Jackson Society and author of *Neoconservatism: why we need it*), the Christian Zionist, Baroness Caroline Cox (former education adviser to Margaret Thatcher), Melanie Phillips (columnist at the *Daily Mail*, formerly of the *Spectator* and author of *Londonistan: how Britain has created a terror state within*); and, in Germany, the philosopher and cynic Henryk M. Broder (writer at *Der Spiegel*, *Die Welt* and author of *Hurrah We Capitulate: on the desire to cave in*). For such neoconservative writers, combating Islamisation is also part of their duty, as intellectuals, to combat the kind of civilisational decline and sapping of the European creative spirit that the German writer and philosopher Oswald Spengler identified as the key threat to western civilisation in his 1918 text *The Decline of the West*.

These neoconservatives also share the counter-jihadists’ and extreme Right’s fascination with Israel as a muscular nation, uncorrupted by European decadence (that is, cultural relativism and hatred of its colonial past) and, thus, best placed to defend civilisational values in the face of the Islamic onslaught. Indeed, the extreme Right, which is uniting today under the banner of the International Freedom Alliance, has issued the Jerusalem Declaration¹¹ in support of more settlements in the West Bank and greater commitment to Israel as ‘the centre of the fight against Muslims’, on the basis that, ‘if Jerusalem falls, Athens, Rome, Amsterdam and Nashville will fall’.¹² An ardent defence of Israel is also very much part of the DNA

of neoconservative commentators such as Douglas Murray, Baroness Cox, Melanie Phillips and Henryk M. Broder. 'There is no economic blockade [in Gaza]', declares Douglas Murray, adding that '[if] Gaza is a prison camp it's the only one in the world with luxury shopping malls' and 'Olympic style swimming pools'.¹³ Melanie Phillips, meanwhile, sees nothing wrong with settlement-building in the West Bank on the grounds that the settlements 'are built on land to which [Israel] is legally and morally entitled'.¹⁴

The essence of the conspiracy

The first aspect of the 'theory' that Breivik draws upon is that Islam is a backward, warlike and criminal religion and that Muslims, through sheer force of numbers and back-door attempts to introduce Sharia, are bent on Islamising Europe. Under such reasoning, Islam the religion and political Islam are collapsed, and the history of the Crusades is served up as a horror story warning of the conquest to come. The most fanatical of those who fall for the conspiracy theory seriously believe that the circumstances today are exactly the same as during the Crusades, only, at that time, Christian Europe was under threat from war and occupation, whereas today the threat comes from the Muslim demographic and rising Muslim birth rates. Thus, in a footnote to *2083*, Breivik explained the significance of the date 2083, which is 400 years since the last siege of Vienna by the Turks. He then went on to quote Henryk M. Broder, who wrote that: 'After the defeats of Poitiers (732) and Vienna (1683), the Europeans are now defeated with the weapons of demography.'¹⁵ In postings on the Norwegian internet site Dokument.no,¹⁶ Breivik wrote:

Show me a country where Muslims have lived at peace with non-Muslims without waging Jihad against the Kaffir (dhimmitude, systematic slaughter or demographic warfare)? Can you please give me ONE single example where Muslims have been successfully assimilated? How many thousands of Europeans must die, how many hundreds of European women must be raped, millions robbed and bullied before you realise that multiculturalism and Islam cannot work?¹⁷

The anti-mosque and anti-minaret campaigns that have mushroomed in the last five years in every European country often quote the threat posed by the Muslim demographic and the innate desire of an aggressive 'sect' to impose a criminal religion. They argue that, if all Muslims are political Islamists out to Islamicise Europe and introduce the kind of Sharia law practised in the tribal areas of Afghanistan, then all signs of visible Islam (mosques, minarets, veils) must be banned. For instance, the Swiss People's Party (SVP) deputy Oskar Freysinger, secretary of the Stop the Minarets movement in Switzerland, describes minarets as a 'symbol of political and aggressive Islam ... a symbol of Islamic law'. And extreme-right election propaganda across much of the European continent over the last year has replicated the SVP poster in favour of a ban on minarets, which depicted a

woman wearing a burka against a background of a Swiss flag upon which several minarets resembling missiles were depicted.

By linking any sign of being Muslim to a homogeneous and repressive force that is said to be global Islam, the extreme Right portrays Islam as a political and criminal ideology that, in the name of security, must be cordoned off from the body politic. Geert Wilders and his supporters argue that there is an Islamic essence, at odds with modernity, at the heart of which lies the Qur'an. As all Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the literal word of God and will not accept that the Qur'an is open to human interpretation in order to apply it in different times and places, all Muslims are fundamentalists. The only good Muslim is an ex-Muslim, according to this way of thinking.¹⁸

The idea that the Islamic religion immediately transmogrifies into something criminal and dangerous to a country runs right across the spectrum. Hence, the mayoral candidate for Silvio Berlusconi's centre-right party in the recent Milan election opposed the creation of a mosque in central Milan on the grounds that it would 'create a centre of attraction for Islamic groups from all over Italy who would then become uncontrollable'.¹⁹ And British neoconservative Douglas Murray of the Centre for Social Cohesion, speaking at a debate in Athens (sponsored by the British Council and Intelligence Squared) on whether the creation of an official mosque would be a good thing, argued against the motion on the grounds that the history of Muslim migration to the UK had meant that all negative things associated with Islam had landed on London's doorstep.²⁰ (Sadly, there is no central mosque in Athens, and Muslims, forced to pray in makeshift prayer rooms, have been subjected to a number of arson attacks by neo-Nazi sympathisers.)

But those who see an Islamic conspiracy sew up the issue so that Muslims can never win. They suggest that Muslims, who do not signal their Muslimness (for example, by wearing religious clothing), are merely *posing* as modern, progressive and westernised. They are, in fact, camouflaged, and this makes them the more dangerous. (Interestingly, Jean-Marie Le Pen made much the same point when refusing to support the ban on the hijab on the grounds that it made it that much easier to identify Muslims.) The accusation repeated time and time again by anti-mosque campaigners is of 'hidden intentions' or 'double speak'. Hence, Valentin Kusák of the AntiMešita movement in the Czech Republic region of Hradec Králové states that: 'Muslims are lying to us about their intentions, after all, that is what the Koran orders them to do in relationships with "infidels".'²¹ (Another typical example of this genre of argument is the book *Brother Tariq: the doublespeak of Tariq Ramadan* by Catherine Fourest, with a foreword by Denis MacShane.) It should be noted that the idea of being in camouflage – changing appearance to blend in – was a key aspect of the Jewish conspiracy theory.

Defiling the Qur'an and the Prophet

Implicit in the criminalising of the religion is the essentialising of Islam. It is depicted as the same across centuries, backward and barbaric since the time of the Prophet,

unable and unwilling to adapt to different historical and cultural settings. The concrete and the real are discarded in favour of sweeping statements and assaults on fundamentalists (there is no allowance for any other Islamic interpretation), who aim to introduce Taliban-style Islam to Europe. It is, thus, inevitable that Islamophobes will seek to ban not just mosques and minarets, but the Qur'an itself.

For people like Geert Wilders, it contains the same totalitarian power and hateful message as *Mein Kampf*; indeed, it is Wilders more than anyone else who has pieced together the various parts of the Islamophobic jigsaw into one simple and easily understandable anti-Muslim message. His seventeen-minute film *Fitna*, made in 2008, was widely shown on the internet. (It was also shown in 2009 at the House of Lords at a meeting hosted by Baroness Cox and Lord Pearson of Rannoch, chair of the United Kingdom Independence party.) In much the same way as Joseph Goebbels' *The Eternal Jew* sent subliminal messages to Germans about the threat posed by Jews through the juxtaposition of images, *Fitna* juxtaposes images of September 11 and other terrorist acts with verses from the Qur'an in order to get across Wilders' message that it is no different from *Mein Kampf*.

Neo-Nazis and members of groups like the EDL translate such a message into simplistic acts of vandalism and hate against mosques. In Styria, Austria, for instance, graffiti 30m long and 1m high was painted on the outside wall of the Mariazell Basilica in Volkingen, stating that the 'Koran is the bible of the devil' and 'the devil appears on the horizon'. But Wilders' message also has purchase with neoconservative commentators, for whom he is a brave iconic figure. In calling for such solidarity, they (advertently or inadvertently) play up to a Muslim conspiracy theory. Although they *do not* imply that there is a European-wide plot by politicians, judges and the media – in cahoots with Muslims – to censor and condemn all those, including Wilders, who criticise Islam, they *do* imply that liberal elites, through their weakness and misguided liberalism, aid Islamisation through upholding incitement or hate crime laws, for instance. Thus, when Wilders appeared in an Amsterdam court room on charges of incitement to hatred, Douglas Murray wrote an urgent SOS to *Telegraph* readers, warning them that: 'The trial has unparalleled significance for the future of Europe', for, 'it is not just about whether our culture will survive, but whether we are even allowed to state the fact that it is being threatened.'²² And the University of Leiden doctoral student and current darling of conservative forums, Thierry Baudet, wrote in the *Trouw* newspaper that there had been years of intolerance of any criticism of Islam, with sworn opponents of Islam condemned for expressing their views. He concluded by asking rhetorically whether Wilders was not now Europe's Voltaire.²³

Then there is the abuse of the Prophet himself and, therefore, of all his followers. As the argument goes, the Prophet Muhammad took a 9-year-old wife; therefore, the Prophet was a paedophile. As the Prophet was a paedophile and all Muslims follow the Prophet, all Muslims are paedophiles. In the UK, the BNP and the EDL make much of the Muslim paedophile theme. A BNP petition is entitled, 'Take Action Against Muslim Grooming – NOW', while the EDL states on its website that most child sex offenders are Muslim because Muslim men take their

inspiration from the Prophet Muhammad who was a serial murderer, torturer and rapist. 'The UK has a significant problem with Muslim paedophiles who prey upon English girls and contemptuously abuse them', the EDL states, adding that this 'stems directly from the example of their violent paedophile prophet Mohammed'. In an interview with a Lancashire EDL member posted on YouTube, a barely coherent supporter warns that 'Islamic rape camps' are being established across Lancashire, once again echoing Breivik's injunction, 'how many hundreds of European women must be raped ... before you realise that multiculturalism and Islam cannot work?'

It's not so easy now, following Breivik's actions, to dismiss such views as simply ignorant and harmless. Today, such ideas are in danger of travelling from the far Right to the mainstream, thanks to intervention by the extreme Right and those conservatives, liberals and dogmatic secularists who believe that an absolute right to free speech frees them to mock and abuse Muslims without fear of prosecution.²⁴ Murray's *Telegraph* columns and his numerous public speeches are peppered with references to the stupidity of his opponents. Ridiculing an advertising campaign on a Muslim website aimed at promoting the message that Islam is a peaceful religion, Murray tells *Telegraph* readers that:

The site is well worth a visit. It's 'Who was Muhammad?' section is particularly delicious. There are sections on Mohammed 'the orphan', Mohammed 'the shepherd' and Mohammed 'the husband'. There are, sadly, no sections on Mohammed 'the war criminal' or Mohammed 'the close friend of a little girl'.²⁵

But Murray is only one of many radical European conservatives and other freedom of speech absolutists who believe that 'Muslims of Europe have let down Europe'. The way to rectify this is for every Muslim to accept that 'you have no right in this society not to be offended ... you have no right to have more ... hate crime laws, or hate speech laws just to defend Islam' because 'a society in which even your deepest feelings can be trodden upon is the only society worth living in.'²⁶ Geert Wilders led the way in testing anti-incitement laws and, through evading conviction, successfully established his right to say exactly what he wanted. Following his acquittal, in July 2011, on charges of inciting hatred and discrimination, he told the press that it was sometimes necessary to be coarse and denigrating in public debate.²⁷ Another right-winger to court prosecution was Elisabeth Sabaditsch-Wolff, an Austrian lecturer and member of Pax Europa, who was fined for inciting hatred and 'vilification of religious theories' after comments she made in 2009 in Vienna at a meeting hosted by the extreme-right Freedom party.²⁸ There she described the Qur'an as 'evil' and implied that the Prophet was a paedophile. The next to court prosecution was Lars Hedegaard, author of *Muhammad's Girls: violence, murder and rape in the house of Islam*, Chairman of the Danish Free Press Society and a board member of the International Free Press Society. (Other board members include Geert Wilders, Eurabia-ist Bat Ye'or and counter-jihadist Robert Spencer.) In a December 2009 interview, Hedegaard, then a member of the Danish People's Party,²⁹ commented that Muslims 'rape their

own children. It is heard of all the time. Girls in Muslim families are raped by their uncles, their cousins or their fathers.' He also stated that: 'Whenever it is prudent for a Muslim to hide his true intentions by lying or making a false oath in his own or in Islam's service, then it is OK to do it.'³⁰ Another Danish People's Party politician, Jesper Langbale, leapt to Hedegaard's defence and was also prosecuted (and fined, after the lifting of his parliamentary immunity) for saying that: 'Muslims kill their daughters over crimes of honour and then turn a blind eye while they are raped by their uncles.'³¹

These extreme-right campaigners intend to push the boundary of incitement laws in the hope that, if individuals successfully defend themselves against prosecution (as Wilders recently did), freedom of speech will emerge as the absolute freedom under which all other freedoms will be subsumed. But, as A. Sivanandan has warned, 'absolute freedom can lead to absolutism. Hitler used freedom of speech and the democratic process to end democracy. The fascist parties of Europe today have the same strategy.'³²

There is a thin line between legitimate, robust, but offensive criticism and illegal racial or religious incitement – a line of which people like Hedegaard and Wilders appear to be aware. But the neo-conservatives and the free speech absolutists, apparently without compunction, egg them on. For it is they who elevate an issue or story from basic provocation to, on the one hand, the 'noble' cause of free speech, or, on the other hand, the patriotic duty of public intellectuals to stem civilisational decline. As Douglas Murray puts it: 'Europe can only save itself, if it unambiguously stands up for its values and rediscovers absolutism in defence of these values.'³³

In the name of freedom of expression, the extreme Right seeks to wrongfoot the offended, provoke them into a 'violence of the violated',³⁴ which can then be used to justify a further clampdown on civil liberties.³⁵ In this, it is aided by neo-conservatives' contempt for liberalism. It's hard to see anything noble in Hedegaard's claim that Muslim men rape their children, but, true to form, *Spectator* columnist Melanie Phillips rushes to the side of a persecuted 'campaigner for freedom of speech' who is being burned at the 'legal stake for heresy' by the 'Danish thought police', while progressives, in cahoots with radical Islamists, are 'either helping pile up the faggots for their fire or looking the other way'.³⁶ In this way, speaking out provocatively is presented as the work of brave members of the intelligentsia, whose commitment to freedom stands in direct contrast to the wishy-washy behaviour of weak liberals and cultural relativists who practise the 'self-censorship' that emerges from fear of Islam. Themselves deploying a writing style that is both aggressive and confrontational, these 'brave' intellectuals warn us repeatedly that intolerance and aggression are, in fact, associated with Islam.³⁷ Meanwhile, prosecutions of Wilders and Hedegaard are presented as evidence of a totalitarian system wherein a triumvirate of the political, law and order and media classes is appeasing Islamofascists, or, as Elisabeth Sabaditsch-Wolff, describing her prosecution in Austria, put it: 'The political process is more effective than the methods of the Nazis, the fascists or the Communists because it is carried out smoothly and peacefully. No need for the concentration camps, the gulags, the mass graves or the bullet in the neck in the middle of the night.'³⁸

The underpinning of the conspiracy

The conspiracy theory that Muslims are out to Islamicise Europe utilises relatively recent concepts and discourses of the 'clash of civilisations', 'Islamofascism', a 'new anti-Semitism' and 'Eurabia'. But such concepts, in the UK at least, have been grafted onto the anti-anti-racism and anti-cultural relativism frameworks that were established and normalised by the Thatcherite New Right during the 1980s, just as a crude and virulent anti-Arab racism also emerged in the popular press after the oil price hike of the 1970s, followed by local events such as the Iranian embassy siege (1980), the killing of WPC Fletcher outside the Libyan embassy (1984), the Rushdie affair (1989) and the first Gulf war (1991). From the late 1980s, and especially after the Rushdie affair, anti-Arab vitriol was to morph into an overtly anti-Muslim racism.

Breivik's manifesto was replete with attacks on the utopian self-destructive fantasy of multiculturalism, which holds that all cultures are equal and would, in Breivik's words, lead to the 'entire loss of our civilisations' unless 'destroyed and swept into the dustbin of absurdity where it belongs'. Such views are very familiar to a UK audience. It was essentially during the Thatcher government, from 1979 onwards, that key rightwing philosopher-thinkers and ideologically bound think-tanks, to which ministers were linked, began to embrace and promote a new racism based not on biological superiority, but on the dangers of cultural difference.³⁹ Concepts such as the clash of civilisations had their roots in the kinds of critiques being mounted against 'cultural relativism' and the downplaying of British values by a host of rightwing thinkers, collectively described as the New Right.⁴⁰ Some of the same New Right figures are active today in defence of the freedom to denounce Islam. For example, Baroness Cox, co-author of the anti-communist *Rape of Reason* against teaching at the Polytechnic of North London in 1975, adviser on education to Margaret Thatcher and the *Daily Mail*, introducer of a clause on Christian education into the Education Reform Bill, has written and campaigned extensively on behalf of Christian minorities worldwide. It was she who was responsible, in February 2009, for inviting Wilders to show his controversial film *Fitna* in the House of Lords. If Paul Johnson, one of Thatcher's closest advisers, was a key columnist on the *Daily Mail* and *Spectator* in the 1980s, now it is his son, Daniel, who carries the family's rightist flag as editor of the Social Affairs Unit's magazine *Standpoint*.⁴¹ It is worth noting that outlets such as the *Spectator*, the *Sun*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Express*, the *Telegraph* and the *Times*, which gave prominence to New Right thinking in the earlier period, are those providing space to writers who buy into key aspects of the conspiracy theory, particularly the notion of Eurabia.

Yet the fact that, as has been indicated, an explicit anti-Arab and anti-Muslim racism was being constructed in the UK, particularly by papers like the *Sun* for some twenty years, has been largely overlooked by experts researching the rise of counter-jihadist networks and defence leagues today. In the UK, for example, where the EDL (formed in 2009) has targeted the events of tiny extremist Muslim organisations (such as that led by media-hungry fanatics like Anjem Choudary), it has become *de rigueur* for commentators to divorce its emergence from the history of

racism and fascism in the UK. Instead, its rise is attributed solely to 'cumulative extremism' (Islamist extremism sparking off a retaliatory extremism). Such a view is not just ahistorical, but provides a very partial context for understanding the appeal of such groups.

For, the EDL is a pro-war, ultrapatriotic party, the extremism of which has also been shaped by a generalised populist anti-Arab racism. And now, after eleven years of foreign policy interventions in Muslim/ Arab states and successive anti-terrorist laws, there is a much wider popular culture of nationalism and jingoism, with the role of 'our troops' uncritically glorified in the press, on TV and at sporting events.

Clash of civilisations

It was, of course, September 11 and the 'war on terror' that led, at the level of ideas and discourse, to the creation of 'new' frameworks that essentialise Islam and demonise Muslims. First, the 'clash of civilisations' thesis. Counter-jihadists start from a belief in a hierarchy of civilisations, with western European civilisation on the top. They draw on the clash of civilisations thesis, which is associated with a group of American academics (including Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington), who, from the 1990s onwards, wrote a series of essays in support of American and Israeli foreign policy goals in the Middle East.⁴² Bernard Lewis – who went on to develop the 'new anti-Semitism' thesis (see below) – used the term 'Muslim rage' to denote the supposedly essentialist elements of the modern Arab psyche. Using pseudo-psychology as political analysis, Lewis suggested that the backwardness of Arab culture and economy was leading to feelings of enmity and rage directed at American, Israeli and European targets. Lewis's essay 'The roots of Muslim rage' was then taken up by Samuel Huntington, who, in a seminal piece in *Foreign Affairs* (summer 1993), argued that, with the cold war over, world politics had entered a new phase in which the fundamental source of conflict was not primarily ideological or economic, but cultural, with 'the principal conflicts of global politics' occurring between nations and groups from different civilisations. Within this, Huntington gave primary focus to the clash between Islam and the West, concluding that the fault lines between civilisations would be the battle lines of the future. Later, in 'Who are we? The challenges to America's national identity', Huntington warned that 'America's Christian, Anglocentric' identity was threatened by the 'Mexicanization' of the population, arguing that 'the mixing of races and hence culture' represented 'the road to national degeneration'.⁴³

Huntington's essay on national identity echoed the fears of the earlier racial hygienists that interracial marriage would lead to poor racial stock. But Huntington and Lewis also re-established the old binaries of Orient vs Occident, East vs West, them vs us, whereby vast geographical, cultural and political expanses are reduced to two imagined cultural regions. There is no complexity in Huntington's and Lewis's vision, and it is not difficult to see, embedded within their frameworks, a continuation of the old colonial mentality in which the rational and individualistic culture of 'the West' is treated as 'an exception in the history of mankind' at the

same time as 'Islam is treated as a pariah in the history of religions, just as Europe and the West did so well in the past with Judaism'.⁴⁴

Some centre-right European political leaders have embraced the clash of civilisations theme, notably the Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi and the current Danish interior minister Søren Krarup, who described the invasion of Iraq in 2003 as resulting from the 'opposition between Christianity and Islam, between the West and Islam'. Krarup has also compared the fight against Islam with the fight against Nazism in Germany in the 1930s.⁴⁵

Islamofascism

A second, similarly lazy concept doing the rounds is the idea that one can contract fascism and Islamic extremism into one idea.⁴⁶ The proponents of Islamofascism build on Bernard Lewis's notion of Muslim rage to locate Islamism as a 'cult of murderous violence that exalts death and destruction and despises the life of the mind'. Whereas some (but by no means all) proponents of the Islamofascist thesis *do* draw a distinction between Islamism and Islam, thus insulating the Islamofascism discourse 'from straightforward charges of Islamophobia',⁴⁷ others conflate the terms or link them together structurally. In the hands of the extreme Right and of Christian evangelicals, however, the Islamofascist thesis can become a direct assault on followers of Islam, described by Geert Wilders as a 'totalitarian ideology rather than a religion' and by Pax Europa as a 'fascistoid ideology'.

Scottish writer Malise Ruthven was one of the first to use the Islamofascism argument in an essay in the *Independent* on 8 September 1990, in which he drew an analogy between the ideological characteristics of specific Islamist movements from the turn of the twenty-first century onwards and a broad range of European fascist movements of the early twentieth century. The notion that the fight against Islamism was equivalent to the fight against fascism was then popularised by US president George W. Bush – another evangelical Christian – who described the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as 'just' wars in the same way as the second world war had been a 'just war' against fascism.

In 2008, the US Department of Homeland Security dropped the 'Islamic fascist' term, stating also that pejorative terms like Islamofascism should be avoided as they were tending to confuse the 'war on terror' with the 'war on Islam'.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, neoconservatives like Douglas Murray and journalists like Nick Cohen (*Observer*), Martin Bright (*Jewish Chronicle*) and Andrew Gilligan (*Daily Telegraph*) continue to use the misleading term, as do Christopher Hitchens and Glenn Beck (Fox TV) in the US and, in Europe, Bernard-Henri Lévy, Michael Onfray and André Glucksmann.

Because Islamofascism's proponents confuse political Islam with Islam as a religion, they go on to suggest that, in the fight against the religion – transformed in their minds into a totalitarian political system – one must stand up for Israel, as Israel lies at the epicentre of the fight to defend western civilisation. (Israeli methods of maintaining control in the Occupied Territories are applauded, with the Israelis

seen as demonstrating civilisational pride and vigour.) To defend Israel, therefore, is to prevent the spread of Islamofascism.

It is through the idea of Islamofascism that the extreme Right has gained otherwise unlikely allies: dogmatic secularists and identity-bound feminists. Both groups have strong feelings against religion and are sometimes open to simplistic and ahistorical arguments. In Belgium, the journalist Claude Demelenne (editor of *Le Journal de Mardi*), the Liberal MP Alain Destexhe (Mouvement Réformateur) and the feminist Nadia Geerts want to extend the fight against Islamofascists to incorporate the Left's 'Islamogauchistes'. Thus, those who oppose the war in Iraq, defend Palestinian rights or campaign against anti-terror laws are portrayed as leftwing sympathisers of radical Islam who should be subjected to an equivalent of the German *Berufsverbot* (which blacklisted communists and kept them from employment in government service).

New anti-Semitism

Alongside Islamofascism sits the idea of a new anti-Semitism emanating from hostility to Zionism (and Israel) from within the Left and the Arab world. Some of the cruder French-speaking proponents of the new anti-Semitism thesis, like Claude Demelenne in Belgium or Alain Finkielkraut in France, then project this new anti-Semitism thesis onto the deprived *banlieues* of France and inner areas of Brussels. Finkielkraut is author of the 2003 text *Au nom de l'autre: réflexions sur l'antisemitisme qui vient*, published by Gallimard. A frequent theme of his writings is the anti-Semitism of second- and third-generation North African youth, creating the impression that they are the sole carriers of anti-Semitism, thus obscuring the fact that anti-Semitism is a problem for the whole of society. He goes on to link anti-Israeli, anti-American attitudes to the idea of a 'reverse racism' – presenting the majority French white community as the true victims of the racism, arguing that 'Francophobia is spreading like Judeophobia, and cannot be differentiated from it'.⁴⁹

Bernard Lewis's 1986 book *Semites and Anti-Semites* provides scholarly backing for the notion that widespread hatred of Jews in the Arab world predated 1948 and the creation of the state of Israel. It demonises Arab nationalism by asserting that the anti-Zionism that developed in the Arab world at the time of the creation of the state of Israel grew out of an earlier anti-Semitism. He treats anti-Zionism in the Arab world (intensified by the humiliation of Israeli military victories) as though it were a continuation of the anti-Semitism of the Nazis which led to the Holocaust. (Prior to this, the French philosopher Pierre-André Taguieff had also connected 'la nouvelle judéophobie' in the Arab-Muslim world to the 1967 Six-Day war and gone further by linking anti-Semitism to anti-racism and anti-nationalism.)

Fortunately, there is now a growing body of scholarly work that critiques the 'new anti-Semitism thesis' and the work of Taguieff and Lewis for distorting the recent history of the Middle East.⁵⁰ The destructive impact of the thesis on European scholarship of contemporary anti-Semitism has been noted by Antony Lerman, a former director of the Institute for Jewish Policy Research. He points out that as the

new anti-Semitism thesis has emerged, scholarly research on contemporary anti-Semitism has become 'virtually non-existent', ensuring that no material basis upon which to fight anti-Semitism can be created.⁵¹ It is a point that is very pertinent to IRR's current research on the rise of far-right violence across Europe. We find that extreme-right anti-Semitism is increasing, particularly in Hungary and Poland, but also in Greece and some parts of eastern Germany. This is in part because a generalised discourse about 'enemy aliens' is triggering off the classic anti-Semitism of the far Right, resulting in attacks on synagogues and Jewish cultural centres.

Meanwhile, and somewhat ironically, some members of extreme-right organisations with a history of classic anti-Semitism act today as though they were the sole legitimate defenders of Israel! By doing so, they try not only to erase their controversial history, but also to win over new constituencies. These include Europe's Jewish communities, whom they seek to include in their campaigns against mosques and minarets, and their call to stop immigration from the Muslim world on the grounds that 'millions of Muslims, including Arabs, who immigrated to Europe' bring with them 'their hatred of Israel in particular and of Jews in general'.⁵² Both neoconservative political commentator Broder in Germany and populist Wilders in the Netherlands have specific messages for Jewish audiences, even though their tones differ. Broder argues for an end to Muslim immigration to Germany and supports Thilo Sarrazin's thesis outlined in *Deutschland schafft sich ab* (Germany abolishes itself) that a once great nation is now at risk of descending into idiocy, as immigrants (i.e. Turks) are genetically of lower intelligence and have higher fertility rates. But he speaks in classic Spenglerian terms, describing Europe as a doomed continent and implying that the fight is already lost.⁵³ Wilders, on the other hand, exhorts his audience to be 'warriors for good', 'let us no longer be afraid' to heed the 'battle cry' and 'wake up ... Islam is at your gate'. And he encourages young Jews to identify themselves as the victims of Muslims whom, he claims, are over-running the streets of Amsterdam, unleashing hate crimes that force 'Jews to emigrate'. 'But I say: Jews must not leave: violent Muslims must leave.'⁵⁴

Eurabia

In several web postings, Breivik proclaimed his belief in Eurabia. The Eurabia-ist framework, which was analysed in depth in *Race & Class* by the journalist Matt Carr,⁵⁵ embraces the conspiracy theory that Muslims are out to Islamicise Europe and is, hence, much admired by counter-jihadists. Giselle Littman (who writes under the pseudonym Bat Ye'or or Daughter of the Nile) argued in *Eurabia: the Euro-Arab Axis*⁵⁶ that a secret project existed between European politicians and the Arab world for the 'Islamisation of Europe', the purpose of which was 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 by Muslims to transform it into an Islamic colony called Eurabia. In this colony, Europeans would be turned into the slaves of Muslims and forced into a state of subjection – in accordance with the 'dhimmi' or treaty enforced on the 'Peoples of the Book' during

the Islamic caliphate. 'What first began as an outlandish conspiracy theory has since become a dangerous Islamophobic fantasy which has moved ever closer towards mainstream respectability', states Matt Carr. The fact that elements of the Eurabia concept have been adopted by mainstream writers such as Melanie Phillips, Douglas Murray, Mark Steyn and Niall Ferguson in the UK and, in other European countries, by Hirsi Ali, Alain Finkielkraut, Bernard-Henri Lévy, Henryk M. Broder and the late Oriana Fallaci is a cause for concern.

The Eurabia theory, in the hands of Geert Wilders, continues the view, articulated in 1968 by Enoch Powell in his 'Rivers of blood' speech, that aggressive minorities are out to dominate the majority. Hence, Wilders warns of Islamisation via conquest, and conquest through immigration. In many ways, the descriptions of Eurabia parallel classic criticisms of Jews within anti-Semitism – ironic given that the four frameworks identified here are tied up with unqualified support for the state of Israel, the last line of defence against Islamisation.

The parallels with anti-Semitism are underlined forcefully by Matt Carr, who points out that Jews in Victorian Britain were thought to harbour a secret ambition to subvert, dominate and possess. Carr also points out that, 'the fear of cultural and racial extinction has a long pedigree in European history', traceable back to the 'racial Darwinism of the nineteenth century, and articulated by writers such as Count Joseph-Arthur de Gobineau, who argued that only races that maintained their racial purity would survive' – only, today, the Eurabia-ists substitute culture and civilisation for race.

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Special thanks to Sibille Merz for research on Germany and Naba Al-Ahi for information on the Netherlands.

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- 3 Views and News from Norway (8 August 2011).
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- 7 Dodds, op. cit.
- 8 See Claudia Mende, 'Anti-Islamic movements in Germany: "Islamophobic" – and proud of it', *American Muslim* (16 April 2010).
- 9 As quoted in the *National* (7 February 2011). René Stadtkewitz, a founder of Pax Europa, was expelled from the Christian Democrat Union's parliamentary group in Berlin (and now sits as an independent) after he invited Geert Wilders to speak at a conference on Islam. In October 2010, Stadtkewitz founded the Freedom party, inviting Wilders and Eliezer Cohen, a former member of the Israeli Knesset for the Yisrael Beiteinu party, to address its founding conference in Stuttgart. Previously, Stadtkewitz had been the leader of a protest movement against the building of a mosque in the Pankow district of Berlin. The Freedom party has since founded a district branch in Hamburg and a regional chapter in Bavaria, where fifty-four members of the Christian Social Union (CSU) helped form the new group. The CSU in Munich put out a press release stating that if the founders of the Freedom party in Munich did not leave the CSU voluntarily, they would be forcibly expelled. The press release was also critical of Pax Europa as well as Politically Incorrect (*Neues Deutschland*, 6 June 2011).
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- 11 The Swiss-based European Freedom Alliance thinktank officially arranged the delegation to Israel of the extreme-right activists who launched the Jerusalem Declaration. According to *Spiegel Online* (1 June 2011), the delegation's Israeli contact was Ariel Shomer, the head of the cabinet of former president Ezer Weizman. Adar Primor, writing in *Haaretz* (12 December 2010), noted that some of the European parties invited to Israel had strong anti-Semitic roots and that they had come to Israel 'after trading in their Jewish demon-enemy for the Muslim criminal-immigrant model'. Radio Netherlands Worldwide (5 December 2010) reported that Wilders had a 'long and good meeting' in a 'friendly atmosphere' with the Israeli foreign minister Avigdor Lieberman, and went on to give a speech in Tel Aviv on the subject of Jordan, 'the only Palestinian state that will ever be'.
- 12 This is one of Geert Wilders' favourite refrains. In a speech in Tel Aviv, he said, 'Jews need to settle Judea and Samaria [the ancient Hebrew name for the West Bank]. Without Judea and Samaria, Israel cannot protect Jerusalem'; see *New York Times* (22 December 2010).
- 13 See Murray's comments on *Sunday Morning Live* with Susanna Reid, BBC (1 August 2010), available at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=kWNNSUT1Nqk.
- 14 Melanie Phillips, 'Armchair barbarism', *Spectator* (13 March 2010), available at: <http://www.spectator.co.uk/melaniephillips/6779100/armchair-barbarism.thtml>. Phillips wrote her blog, which referred to the 'moral depravity' of Arab 'savages', after an Israeli family was killed in the West Bank Israeli settlement of Itamar near Nablus.
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- 27 *Dutch News* (23 June 2011).
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