



# A Neo-Nationalist Network: The English Defence League and Europe's Counter-Jihad Movement

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

This report contains quotes from audio lectures as well as online forums and blogs. All of these have been reproduced in their original syntax, including all spelling and grammatical errors.

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# Executive Summary

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## **A New European Movement**

The English Defence League (EDL) and its allies in Europe, henceforth referred to collectively as the European Counter-Jihad Movement (ECJM), constitute an identifiable pan-European far-right movement that has been emerging since the late-2000s. In the last several months this loose international alliance has begun to exhibit a more developed operational structure. This report is among the first studies of the movement based on fieldwork in Europe and interviews with its leading figures.

While the ECJM uses tactics that are reminiscent of traditional incarnations of the European far-right, it also has a message that identifies a new and supposedly existential threat to Europe: Islam and Muslim immigration. Unlike most other far-right organisations, however, the ECJM is a one-issue movement, and has yet to show an interest in expanding its scope to cover other popular concerns.

The ECJM is not a conventional far-right movement. While other far-right strands in Europe are usually defined by their adherence to forms of racial or ethnic nationalism, the ECJM espouses an assertive cultural nationalism. Some of its views and concerns overlap considerably with those voiced by commentators on the left and right of mainstream politics. This means that taken at face-value the movement is less extreme and feels less threatening than the traditional far right, making it harder to categorise, and also allowing it to be more amorphous and transnational.

## **Cultural Nationalism**

The authors of this report have categorised the ECJM's nationalism as a form of cultural nationalism, according to which the nation and its citizens are defined primarily in terms of a shared culture and history. The movement's self-proclaimed mission is to ensure the survival and prosperity of that culture, which might be represented by its fundamental principles such as free speech and equality before the law. It becomes awkward to categorise a group positioning itself in defence of liberal enlightenment values as "far-right" or extreme but this report demonstrates that the ECJM's cultural nationalism does indeed manifest itself as a form of far-right extremism in its portrayal of Muslims as a threat to European culture, an "enemy within", and in its proposed, highly illiberal responses to this perceived threat.

## **Ideology**

The ECJM's activism is inspired by an ideology which presents the current jihadist terrorist threat to the West as part of a centuries-long effort by Muslims to dominate Western civilisation. The ideology also insists on the existence of a conspiracy to "Islamise" Europe through the stealthy implementation of Islamic Sharia, and holds that many of Europe's Muslims are actively engaged in this conspiracy in various ways. The actions of Muslims in the West are viewed almost solely

through this frame, and evidence of “Islamisation” is seen everywhere, in everything from the availability of halal meat in the West, to incidents of rape of non-Muslim Western women by Muslim men.

The other main protagonists in this conspiracy, according to the Islamisation narrative, are found within a European liberal elite that refuses to resist the attack, either through fear or a desire to benefit from the chaos. There is an apparently genuine belief within the movement that, if emergency measures are not immediately taken to stop the Islamisation process Europe will inevitably face a civil war and eventually become part of a new Caliphate under strict Islamic Sharia. Anders Behring Breivik, who killed 77 people in Norway in July 2011, represents a new breed of far-right terrorist mobilised into action, in part, by the ideology of the ECJM.

## **The Threat**

The ECJM poses three serious problems:

- i) Though it does not specifically call for violence, the sensationalist character of the ECJM narrative, which includes a paranoid tendency towards conspiracy-theory, can act as inspiration for violent terrorist attacks like those carried out by Breivik, who emerged from the ECJM’s ideological milieu;
- ii) the movement can serve to incubate, protect and add a veneer of plausibility and acceptability to traditional forms of far-right xenophobia and extremism;
- iii) its amorphous nature and ability to tap into popular concerns about immigration, religion, terrorism and the economy increases the likelihood of violent confrontation and jeopardises Europe’s social fabric.

## **International Alliance**

Since its emergence, the EDL has garnered support from prominent Counter-Jihad figures in the United States. The popular American Counter-Jihad activists Pamela Geller and Robert Spencer, for example, have praised the emergence of the group and are currently assisting in the organisation of a coherent, pan-European movement.

With their help, the EDL has inspired the creation of a number of other “defence leagues” around Europe, with a specific focus on Scandinavia. EDL leader Tommy Robinson now holds almost legendary status within this nascent movement, and is considered the “rock star” of the ECJM.<sup>1</sup> In the last year, the EDL has made a concerted effort to spread the defence league concept throughout Europe, using both online networking and organised, on-the-ground demonstrations.

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<sup>1</sup> This view of Robinson was expressed by a number of defence league leaders from Scandinavia during both the Århus and Stockholm demonstrations.

## Organisation

The ECJM is a loosely-organised, decentralised network of sympathetic groups and political parties that have used the internet to coalesce into a more effective and international anti-Islam movement. Recently its leading members have established international umbrella organisations, such as Stop the Islamisation of Nations (SION), which include all of the new defence leagues and their allies in America.

These new umbrella groups have organised a number of gatherings in European cities in an effort to shift more of the movement's activism from the virtual into the physical world. Some of the national defence leagues that attended these events had either not physically gathered together before or were only just moving into this phase. Unlike the EDL, which began as a street movement, groups like the Finnish Defence League (FDL) and Norwegian Defence League (NDL) had existed primarily as websites and Facebook groups. Despite low attendance, these first actual meetings demonstrated the movement's desire to branch out from online activism and establish a physical presence throughout Europe, and inaugurated a union among likeminded Counter-Jihad groups in Europe and America that would now attempt to act strategically as a coordinated body.



# Contents

<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
<hr/>	
<b>2 The EDL's History and the International Network</b>	<b>9</b>
The EDL: A Turbulent and Murky History	9
The British Freedom Party and the EDL's Political Aspirations	15
The International Alliance	17
Meetings in Åarhus and Stockholm	20
A Decentralised Distributed Network in Europe	22
<b>3 Finding a Place for the Movement</b>	<b>25</b>
<hr/>	
Nationalism, Fascism, Populism and the Far Right	25
Cultural Nationalism?	34
Cultural Nationalism and the New Far-Right	35
<b>4 The Islamisation Conspiracy</b>	<b>41</b>
<hr/>	
What do they mean by "Islamisation"?	41
Sharia and Taqiyya	42
The Coming Civil War in Europe	43
The Origins of the Islamisation Conspiracy Theory	45
Pamela Geller and Robert Spencer	52
Non-Extremist Muslims	53
<b>5 Mobilisation Themes</b>	<b>59</b>
<hr/>	
Halal Meat	59
Rape and "Sex-Grooming"	61
Mosque Construction	63
<b>6 Conclusion</b>	<b>67</b>
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# 1 Introduction

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**W**ith commentators and analysts offering descriptions ranging from populist street movement to racial-nationalists and fascists, it is clear that a great deal of uncertainty remains regarding the true nature of the English Defence League (EDL) and its European affiliates. The rise of this self-described “Counter-Jihad” movement in Europe, which seeks to combat the perceived threat of “Islamisation” through Europe-wide protests and awareness and advocacy campaigns, has added a new and complex element to the study of the far-right in Europe.

The last year has also seen a spread of the defence league concept to the continent, and Scandinavia in particular, where Norwegian, Swedish, Danish and Finnish defence leagues have emerged. As the original root of this new, strident Counter-Jihad movement in Europe, it is important to understand the history and origins of the EDL. This is comprehensively dealt with in the first section of the report.

Drawing on field-work in Europe and interviews with senior European defence league members, the first section also looks at how the movement has spread and how relationships have developed between the different defence leagues. For ease of reference, the authors have labelled this Europe-wide movement the European Counter-Jihad Movement (ECJM).<sup>2</sup>

The second section of the report is devoted to evaluating a number of the different categories into which analysts have hitherto placed the ECJM, and arguing for the use of a previously ignored categorisation: cultural nationalism. This section will also explain how and why the ECJM can justifiably be referred to as “far-right”, even as it claims to fight for liberal enlightenment values and many of its core concerns overlap with those of mainstream political parties.

The third and fourth sections of the report look at how the movement is driven by a set of beliefs concerning a threat posed by the presence of the Islamic faith in European countries. Despite their irrationality, these beliefs have begun to coalesce into an identifiable “Islamisation ideology”, which holds that the current terrorist threat from extremist Islamists is not a modern political phenomenon but merely the latest manifestation of a centuries-long and ongoing effort by Muslims to conquer Western civilisation. Understanding this new ideology and its power to mobilise is especially urgent in the wake of Anders Behring Breivik's August 2012 conviction in Norway for terrorism and premeditated murder, which found that his crimes were motivated by this very ideology and not brought on by mental illness. This report will therefore provide an in-depth analysis of the Islamisation ideology, its history and how Europeans have been mobilised in its cause.

By its very nature, the ECJM does not have a formal membership structure, and relies instead on the internet and social media to organise protests and campaigns and attract individuals who

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<sup>2</sup> Although the focus is on European activists, this term also encompasses American Counter-Jihad figures who have played a significant role in the formation and organisation of the European movement. The authors have chosen to refer to the movement as Counter-Jihad for the sake of simplicity. It should not be taken as any particular endorsement of this term, which was coined within the movement itself.

sympathise with and support its anti-Islam message and its confrontational stance against what it defines as radical Islam. The primary research goal of this study is to provide an insight into the thinking of the movement's core leadership by focusing on its history, tactics and intellectual background. As such, the report does not claim to analyse the views or inspirations of rank-and-file followers and supporters.<sup>3</sup>

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**3** Due to the lack of anything beyond anecdotal data on followers of ECJM groups it has been very difficult to reach any firm conclusions about their inspirations and motivations. Efforts to address this gap in the literature includes Jamie Bartlett and Mark Littler, 'Inside the EDL', *Demos*, November 2011.

## 2 The EDL's History and the International Network

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*This section will provide a brief history of the EDL, from its origins as a one-man blog to its current role as the leading group within the ECJM. Here the authors will also provide a detailed look at the network of various defence leagues that have been inspired by the example of the EDL, and analyse the current networked strategy to increase their influence across Europe.*

### The EDL: A Turbulent and Murky History

In order to understand the EDL in its current form as a national, and, in a sense, international, force, it is first useful to briefly explore its earliest beginnings a local protest group. It appears that the origins of the British Counter-Jihad movement came in the form of a blog called *Lionheart* run by a British National Party (BNP) supporter named Paul Ray.<sup>4</sup> A native of the town of Luton – one of the epicentres of conflict between far-right and Muslim extremists in the country – he is now roundly derided as an ineffective self-promoter, described by anti-fascist monitoring and activist group Hope Not Hate as ‘little more than [a] fantasist and publicity seeker.’<sup>5</sup>

Ray began blogging in 2007 with a strong anti-Islam focus that was inspired by the growing Counter-Jihad movement in the United States.<sup>6</sup> As Ray began to emerge as the UK's standard bearer for the Counter-Jihad movement, he appears to have been taking his cue from a blog called *Jihad Watch*, describing it early on as ‘a very good reliable news source’.<sup>7</sup>

In an early post, he sets out his political position and inspirations. Claiming that the threat of radical Islam led to his political awakening, he admitted to being a supporter of the BNP ‘because they are Anglo-Saxon British citizens exactly the same as me whose country this is, whose forefathers fought and died for this country and who want to preserve the British way of life.’<sup>8</sup> He denied being a Nazi or having any racist views, and was drawn to the BNP's message of protecting British culture and identity. The BNP was undergoing something of a rebranding at the time, with Nick Griffin trying to move away from the BNP's racist, neo-Nazi past in order to make the party electable. It appears that Ray, along with many other British voters at the time, was taken in by what was a cynical election ploy by Griffin.<sup>9</sup> He writes that he too had thought the party was a neo-Nazi organisation until he began to do his own research and became convinced that it had changed direction under its new leader:

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<sup>4</sup> *Lionheart*, available at: <http://lionheartuk.blogspot.co.uk/> [accessed 2/7/2012]

<sup>5</sup> Paul Ray entry in Hope Not Hate's *Counter-Jihad Report*, available at: <http://www.hopenohate.org.uk/counter-jihad/country/UK> [accessed 28/8/2012]

<sup>6</sup> This is led by Robert Spencer, who runs the popular anti-Islam blog *Jihad Watch*, and Pamela Geller, who rose to prominence as the head of a campaign to stop the building of an Islamic centre near the site of the 11 September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center

<sup>7</sup> Paul Ray, ‘Jihadwatch disclaimer’, *Lionheart*, 19 January 2008, available at: <http://lionheartuk.blogspot.co.uk/2008/01/jihad-watch-disclaimer.html> [accessed 2/7/2012]

<sup>8</sup> Paul Ray, ‘My Political Stance’, *Lionheart*, 15 June 2007, available at: <http://lionheartuk.blogspot.co.uk/2007/06/my-political-stance.html> [accessed 2/7/2012]

<sup>9</sup> See p. 28

*[The BNP] has evolved and is evolving into a political party for the British people reflecting modern life in Britain in the 21st Century and the serious issues facing our communities and country, also realising that our society is now a multi-ethnic society.*<sup>10</sup>

He also expressed a sort of aggressive and uncompromising integrationism that was to become the hallmark of the EDL's ideology, whereby he apparently accepts immigration and a multi-ethnic Britain, while also demanding that all citizens and residents conform to British values:

*We should never be forced to change that under any circumstances. If people have been invited into our country they should live by our way of life and if they do not like it they should leave and go find a country that fits the way of life they are seeking.*<sup>11</sup>

However, immigration (legal and illegal) was still a central issue for him, and a recent study claims that this remains the case among EDL supporters<sup>12</sup>: 'We have legal and illegal immigrants from all across Europe taking the jobs from the British population and taking from our tax-paying welfare state.'<sup>13</sup>

He then set out what would become some of the key themes of the EDL's discourse, which remain the same to this day and which, of course, revolve around Islam:<sup>14</sup>

#### **Pan-Islamic war against the West:**

*We are paying for the growth of Islam and its war against our country*

#### **Muslim demographics, Islamisation and the decline of Great Britain:**

*At this moment in time, Great Britain is slowly but surely sinking into the abyss of destruction... the most scary thing about what is happening is that the alien Islamic Kingdom is growing upon our destruction, seeking to take over our land. The longer this destruction continues the closer we get to them achieving their aims especially when they will be a majority in 2025.*

#### **State/media-complicity in Islamisation:**

*The state controlled media manipulation forces people to say nothing and accept the complete degradation of our country by illegal immigrants and our Moslem neighbours under the banner of 'multi cultural' society.*

#### **Muslim immigration:**

*All the main services of the tax paying welfare system being crippled. Not by the hard working British tax payer who pays for it, but the Moslem's and the illegal immigrants who have flocked*

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<sup>10</sup> Paul Ray, 'My Political Stance', *Lionheart*, 15 June 2007, available at: <http://lionheartuk.blogspot.co.uk/2007/06/my-political-stance.html> [accessed 2/7/2012]

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Jamie Bartlett and Mark Littler, 'Inside the EDL', *Demos*, November 2011

<sup>13</sup> Paul Ray, 'My Political Stance', *Lionheart*, 15 June 2007, available at: <http://lionheartuk.blogspot.co.uk/2007/06/my-political-stance.html> [accessed 2/7/2012]

<sup>14</sup> The following excerpts from Ray's blog have been divided under subheadings according to topic by the authors, for purposes of clarity.

*to our country to receive hand outs from the good honest hard working people of Britain.*<sup>15</sup>

As Ray's case demonstrates, the rise of this movement is intertwined with growing concerns about immigration, terrorism and British identity. It is no surprise that it initially sprung from a section of the BNP-supporting far-right that was beginning to look beyond race-based politics.

Ray's work soon caught the attention of a central figure in the nascent Counter-Jihad movement in the United States, Pamela Geller. So excited was she by the advent of an anti-Islam movement in the UK, she interviewed him in January 2007 to help promote the *Lionheart* blog. When Ray was arrested in April 2008 for inciting racial hatred,<sup>16</sup> he became a *cause célèbre* on Geller's own blog, which depicted him as a patriot who was being persecuted for his views by a British government cowed by Islam.<sup>17</sup>

Ray's first involvement in the anti-Islam street protest movement began on 13 April 2009, when he, along with his then ally and future EDL leader Tommy Robinson, organised a group calling itself the United Peoples of Luton (UPL) to march, without prior Police permission, through Luton. The UPL was essentially an alliance between Casuals United (itself a coalition of football hooligan "firms") and far-right activists, headed by Ray and Robinson. According to Ray, he was inspired by March for England, another far-right anti-immigration street protest movement founded in 2007. The UPL march was purposed as a response to a demonstration organised in Luton some weeks earlier by extremist Islamist group Islam4UK, in which participants had held up placards and shouted slogans insulting British soldiers returning from service in Afghanistan.<sup>18</sup> The UPL website, set up at the time, read:

*The whole country witnessed the hate-filled scum that crashed the soldiers homecoming.*<sup>19</sup>

This first foray by Ray and his allies was short-lived as the police quickly shut it down, but this was the beginning of what would become the EDL.

Angry that the police had denied them permission to protest in April, this new alliance organised another march for 24 May 2009. The core message of the protest, under the slogan 'Ban the terrorists', was a call for the police to act against the organisers of the Islam4UK protest, asking them to issue Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBO) banning them from Luton town centre. It is worth noting that, even at this early stage in the group's evolution, there was at least an acknowledgement that the majority of Muslims are not extremists, and an apparent disavowal of racist politics:

*We must stress that this is a very small number of Muslim fanatics and not the wider Muslim community so people of Luton lets unite against these people who hate everything our country stands*

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<sup>15</sup> Paul Ray, 'My Political Stance', *Lionheart*, 15 June 2007, available at: <http://lionheartuk.blogspot.co.uk/2007/06/my-political-stance.html> [accessed 2/7/2012]

<sup>16</sup> 'Racial hatred arrest for internet blogger', *Luton and Dunstable Express*, 13 April 2009

<sup>17</sup> Pamela Geller, 'UK: Indicting Bloggers', *Atlas Shrugs*, 5 January 2008, available at: [http://atlasshrugs2000.typepad.com/atlas\\_shrugs/2008/01/uk-indicting-bl.html](http://atlasshrugs2000.typepad.com/atlas_shrugs/2008/01/uk-indicting-bl.html) [accessed 5/7/2012]

<sup>18</sup> Islam4UK is an offshoot of extremist Islamist group al-Muhajiroun, headed by Anjem Choudhry

<sup>19</sup> UPL website, available at: <http://saveluton.awardspace.co.uk/> [accessed 28/8/2012]

*for and turn out in our numbers be that Muslim, Hindu, Catholic, Christian, Jewish, White, Black or Asian.*<sup>20</sup>

Despite the language used on the UPL website, it soon became clear that the group was a magnet for elements of the far-right it claimed to disavow. The 24 May march ended in acrimony with running street battles between protesters and the police, as well as reports of racially aggravated assaults against South-Asians.<sup>21</sup> This led to many of the organisers being convicted of public order offences, and effectively shut down this first attempt at a mass anti-Islam street movement. It was shortly after this, in late June 2009, that Ray and Robinson formed the EDL as a coalition between UPL and the football hooligan firms it had been working with.

Casting further doubt over the original UPL statement opposing only an extremist minority of Muslims, Ray gave an interview to *TalkSport* radio in July 2009 in which he agreed that the newly-formed EDL were, in fact, 'against all devout Muslims'.<sup>22</sup> The *TalkSport* interview became a widely used reference point, as it was among the first independent media interviews with a representative of the group, and Ray's views were at their most explicit:

*Interviewer: in your view then, every devout Muslim who follows the teachings of the Koran is...someone seeking to undermine this country and... is an Islamic extremist? So when you have a demonstration...really it's a demonstration against all devout Muslims in this country?*

*Ray: yes, you could say that, yes. Basically, let's not beat about the bush, yes.*<sup>23</sup>

In the months that followed, schisms formed in the group and this eventually led to Paul Ray leaving in the run-up to an 8 August 2009 rally in Birmingham. Among his chief concerns was the growing presence of BNP members and other assorted neo-Nazis – the date of the event, 8 August, or 8/8, was seen by some as a nod to the neo-Nazi "88" symbol, standing for "Heil Hitler", "H" being the eighth letter in the alphabet. For Ray, the Birmingham demonstration was a watershed moment which heralded the group's takeover by fascist neo-Nazi elements.<sup>24</sup> Ray also released a video at that time that drew attention to the involvement in the EDL of Chris Renton, a known BNP activist.<sup>25</sup> Ray was unhappy at what he saw as a takeover of the group by the BNP and its neo-Nazi street allies after Casuals United, along with Chris Renton, had announced they were running the Birmingham protest.

Considering the EDL's combination of an overarching nationalist message with street activism, it is not surprising that members of neo-Nazi groups like Combat 18, the National Front, the BNP and Racial Volunteer Force have at various times appeared at its rallies. Whether it wanted to or not, the EDL's tactics and message were bound to attract race nationalists, and there is plenty of evidence

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> 'Nine rioters arrested after "Luton protest turned violent"', *Daily Telegraph*, 25 May 2009

<sup>22</sup> Paul Ray interview with *TalkSport's* Adrian Goldberg, 6 July 2009, audio in authors' possession

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Ray, 'The infiltration of the EDL', *Lionheart*, 4 March 2010, available at: <http://lionheartuk.blogspot.co.uk/2010/03/infiltration-of-edl.html> [accessed 5/7/2012]

<sup>25</sup> Video in authors' possession

that it has.<sup>26</sup> As this report demonstrates, the EDL and its affiliates are fluid movements and organisations with an often incoherent strategy and message. The core message of the group, separate from the different personalities involved, is best classified as a fluid cultural nationalism, which will be discussed in greater detail below.

After the Birmingham protest the EDL leadership began to streamline itself ideologically, seeking to remove overtly fascist and neo-Nazi elements and replace them with a simple and enduring narrative: that it represented the downtrodden working class Briton whose concerns about Islam and immigration had for years been ignored by the liberal, multi-culturalist elite. It was also at this time that Tommy Robinson also came to public prominence as the face of the group, joined shortly afterwards by his cousin, Kevin Carroll.

The anti-fascist group Searchlight has questioned the latter's anti-Nazi credentials. Its investigation into the early EDL leadership showed that in 2007 Carroll signed the nomination papers in a Luton council election for Robert Sherratt, a BNP candidate and an activist in a neo-Nazi group called the November 9th Society.<sup>27</sup>

Robinson is now widely recognised as the head of the EDL, and is something of a leading light in the ECJM. Before his ascent, he was, like others, a member of Luton's white working class who by his own admission had in the past gravitated towards the BNP. This fact, along with Carroll's background, and Ray's open support for the BNP, and numerous recorded examples of racist chanting at EDL rallies, has cast doubt over the EDL's claims to have made every effort to eradicate racism from its ranks, and given weight to claims that the group is a front for crypto-fascism.

In one of his first interviews as the authoritative voice of the group in November 2009, Robinson was confronted with his past as a member of the BNP. He responded by claiming that it was the only party that appeared to share his own concerns, and that he was unaware of its racist, neo-Nazi roots:

*I can admit that seven years ago I looked into the BNP when I felt that I had no one else I could turn to in my hometown...[the BNP not] letting non-white people join - I wasn't aware of that [at the time].<sup>28</sup>*

If this is true, Robinson would certainly not be the only British person to have voted for or sympathised with the BNP, having been taken in by Nick Griffin's modernity drive. On the subject of the BNP's white-only membership policy, he claimed:

*I don't believe that the BNP could be a political voice for the country because they only represent the white people, and only the British whites at that...If they change that then they'll appeal to a lot more people, but I still don't like it.<sup>29</sup>*

He also dealt with Ray's accusation that Chris Renton was attempting to engineer a BNP takeover of the EDL, claiming that Renton had resigned from the BNP, was not a racist, and was, like him, only

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<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Hope Not Hate's documenting of EDL links with neo-Nazi groups, available at: <http://www.hopenothate.org.uk/hate-groups/edl/ideology> [accessed 10/7/2012]

<sup>27</sup> Simon Cressy, 'The Extremist Defence League', *Searchlight Magazine*, 26 October 2010

<sup>28</sup> Louis Arnis, 'In league with the extreme right?', *Standpoint*, November 2009

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

concerned with the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Britain.<sup>30</sup> It is worth noting here that Robinson's defence of Chris Renton closely matches Paul Ray's defence of the BNP itself as a misunderstood and reformed ex-racist party.

Under Robinson and Carroll there has been a clear and mostly effective drive to remove the lingering street-fighting and neo-Nazi elements from the group's street demonstrations. To take a recent example, after a June 2012 demonstration in Rochdale decrying Asian "sex-grooming" gangs, the Chief Superintendent of the Greater Manchester Police, John O'Hare, appeared to commend the EDL for its efforts in avoiding violence, stating, 'it is testament to the organisers themselves who worked with us to ensure the event passed off as peacefully as possible.'<sup>31</sup>

In addition, at a defence league gathering attended by the authors in Århus, Denmark, there was clear evidence of the group co-operating with the local Danish police, who gave an announcement before the event thanking them for their co-operation. There were also British police liaison officers present, apparently seconded to help the Danish police deal with the EDL. This contingent was in regular touch with Robinson and Carroll, and relations appeared genial.<sup>32</sup>

The removal and alienation of the neo-Nazis and many of the street fighters has also resulted in a decline in the numbers of people that EDL rallies can attract. Nonetheless, the potential for violence at EDL rallies does still exist, as was noted by the Minister for Communities and Local Government, Don Foster MP, in January 2013.<sup>33</sup>

Robinson and the EDL leadership have also made a concerted effort to focus and clarify the group's messaging in an attempt to fend off accusations of Nazism and racism. This has been done through the creation of an official website, [www.englishdefenceleague.org](http://www.englishdefenceleague.org), and the transformation of Robinson into a media personality. Through numerous interviews with mainstream media outlets, he has attempted to present a clear, non-violent and ostensibly moderate message concerning the threat of radical Islam. In an early interview with the BBC in September 2009, he justified the existence of his group on the following grounds:

*There are women who don't want to go shopping because there are 20 men in long Islamic dress [reference to al-Muhajiroun/Islam4UK] shouting anti-British stuff and calling for a jihad and stirring up religious and racial hatred. Those are our town centres, and we want them back.*

*We want them back, not from the Muslims, but from the jihadist extremists that are operating in the Muslim communities. And the Muslim communities need to deal with their extremists.*

*They need to drive them out - we have had enough of it.*<sup>34</sup>

In order to distance itself from Nazism in particular, the EDL has established an LGBT "division", which claims to stand up to the

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> 'Eleven arrested at Rochdale EDL protest', *BBC News*, 9 June 2012, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-18380299> [accessed 22/7/2012]

<sup>32</sup> This was observed by both authors at the meeting.

<sup>33</sup> Don Foster MP speech at Local Government House, London, 7 January 2013

<sup>34</sup> Dominic Casciani, 'Who are the English Defence League', *BBC News*, 11 September 2009, available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8250017.stm> [accessed 20/7/2012]



homophobia and anti-gay violence of extremist Islamists.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, it has tried to answer accusations of racism by creating Jewish and Sikh “divisions” which appear to exist primarily as a Facebook pages expressing solidarity with the wider ECJM and with the EDL in particular.<sup>36</sup> However, the Jewish division was left in disarray after its leader, Roberta Moore, stood down in protest at what she perceived to be neo-Nazi and anti-Semitic elements in the EDL. Although still supportive of Robinson and the leadership, she wished to see more effort on their part ‘to squash the Nazis within.’<sup>37</sup>

The EDL has suffered setbacks in recent months, with an increase in splinter organisations such as the Infidels and the imprisonment of Tommy Robinson in January 2013 after he was found to have travelled to the United States on a passport belonging to friend of his.<sup>38</sup> This may lead to a reduction in the core group’s ability to mobilise followers and organise well-attended rallies.

## **The British Freedom Party and the EDL’s Political Aspirations**

With Robinson and Carroll firmly in place as the group’s leaders, and much of the overtly violent and neo-Nazi elements now largely cleared from the street-marching ranks, the EDL has sought to evolve further and enter the world of politics.

In April 2012, the EDL announced an alliance with the political party British Freedom (BF), a move that placed Carroll and Robinson as joint vice-chairmen of the party under chairman Paul Weston. An offshoot of the BNP, the party was formed by disgruntled BNP members unhappy with Nick Griffin’s leadership. Though it was originally meant to represent a racial nationalism similar to that of the BNP, under its current leader, Paul Weston, the party has recently placed itself in the cultural nationalist camp. Describing itself as a British cultural nationalist party, it defines this as:

*...a form of nationalism whereby British citizenship is defined by a shared inherited indigenous British culture into which all British citizens are required to fully integrate, as opposed to British citizenship being defined solely by race or ethnicity or by naturalised citizenship status.*<sup>39</sup>

This new direction made the party a natural home for the EDL, which had been seeking to enter politics since early 2012, and was equally eager to have its political stance understood as something new and divorced from any racism.

Tommy Robinson expressed his desire to put himself and the EDL on the political map in an interview with the authors of this report in April 2012, saying: ‘we want to channel, harness and direct the frustration of our members and followers...we want to give them the opportunity to

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<sup>35</sup> ‘EDL LGBT Division Comment On The Bristol Demonstration’, EDL official website, available at: <http://englishdefenceleague.org/edl-lgbt-division-comment-on-the-bristol-demonstration/> [accessed 28/8/2012]

<sup>36</sup> English Defence League Jewish Division Facebook page available at: [http://www.facebook.com/pages/English-Defence-League-Jewish-Division-EDL/273631225982472?skip\\_nax\\_wizard=true](http://www.facebook.com/pages/English-Defence-League-Jewish-Division-EDL/273631225982472?skip_nax_wizard=true) [accessed 29/8/2012]; Sikh Defence League Facebook page available at: <http://www.facebook.com/sikhdefenceleague> [accessed 29/8/2012]

<sup>37</sup> ‘EDL Jewish Division Leader Roberta Moore Quits’, *The Jewish Chronicle*, 29 June 2011

<sup>38</sup> ‘English Defence League leader jailed for using false passport’, *Hope not Hate*, 7 January 2013, available at: <http://www.hopenothate.org.uk/news/article/2529/english-defence-league-leader-jailed-for-usin> [accessed 20/1/2013]

<sup>39</sup> ‘What is British Cultural Nationalism?’, BF official website, available at: <http://britishfreedom.org/what-is-british-cultural-nationalism> [accessed 5/7/2012]

vote now.<sup>40</sup> He also confirmed that the BF's 'ideology and what's going to push it and the agenda behind is going to be exactly the same as we have for the English Defence League, it's going to be identical.'<sup>41</sup>

Joining BF may also make the EDL a more plausible funding option for private donors, giving it a more sophisticated veneer and helping it shed the image of a violent street movement. 'We've had meetings with multi-billionaires in America, but no one's giving over any money', according to Robinson, who also confirmed that the group is funded primarily by the revenue from its online merchandise shop, together with small private donations, which comes to approximately £2000 per month. 'That's why we're with the Freedom Party [BF], we are looking at it as something that's respectable and we'll be able to get money through that. I am portrayed as a thug, no one's going to fund me.'<sup>42</sup>

The EDL was not welcomed by everyone at BF. Soon after the announcement of the merger, the party's South-West organiser, Roger Bennett, tendered his resignation. His public announcement provides an interesting insight into how the EDL is viewed by other far-right nationalists. Criticising the move as a shallow attempt by Weston to boost membership numbers, Bennett expressed concern that the party's nationalism was now compromised by the new arrivals: 'The EDL are not nationalists and openly state that. There is no secret in what they are this is published and shown on their website.'<sup>43</sup> He does not elaborate on this, though his primary concern is likely to have been the lack of any racial component to the EDL's ideology or rhetoric. Part of the deal between BF and the EDL included a provision which bans ex-BNP members from joining the party's Executive Council, and this too was problematic for Bennett, who saw BF as a refuge for BNP race nationalists who no longer backed Griffin's management of the party.

Weston, the architect of BF's shift away from racial-nationalism, is also a regular contributor to the *Gates of Vienna* blog, one of the leading websites of the ECJM and home to well-known ECJM blogger Fjordman (whose real name is Peder Nøstvold Jensen). Under Weston's stewardship, the Islamisation issue was placed at the top of the BF agenda.

Despite these initial efforts, Robinson stood down from BF in October 2012, leaving Carroll in joint charge of the party with Weston.<sup>44</sup> This was shortly followed by Weston's resignation in January 2013, and Carroll is now the sole leader of the party.<sup>45</sup> According to the EDL and BF, Robinson stood down in order to concentrate on organising on-going EDL street demonstrations, and it appears that, of the two, it is Carroll who harbours the political aspirations. As well as remaining in charge of BF, he also ran for the post of Police Commissioner for Bedfordshire in November 2012, where he came in fourth place with just over ten percent of the vote.

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<sup>40</sup> In-person interview with Tommy Robinson, Luton, 16 April 2012

<sup>41</sup> In-person interview with Tommy Robinson, Luton, 16 April 2012

<sup>42</sup> In-person interview with Tommy Robinson, Luton, 16 April 2012

<sup>43</sup> His full resignation was originally released on the *Southwest Nationalists* blog and is available at: <http://southwestnationalists.blogspot.co.uk/2012/04/brent-group-chairman-quits-british.html> [accessed 10/8/2012]

<sup>44</sup> 'Tommy Robinson Steps Down from Party to Devote all His Energy to EDL', British Freedom official website, 11 October 2012, available at: <http://britishfreedom.org/tommy-robinson-steps-down-from-party-to-devote-all-his-energy-to-edl/> [accessed 4/1/2013]

<sup>45</sup> 'Kevin Carroll Becomes BF Chairman', BF official website, 3 January 2013, available at: <http://britishfreedom.org/kev-carroll-becomes-british-freedom-chairman/> [accessed 4/1/2013]

## The ECJM's International Alliance

Since its creation, the EDL has garnered support from sections of the Counter-Jihad movement in the United States. The popular Counter-Jihad bloggers Pamela Geller and Robert Spencer have praised the emergence of a group of 'patriots' who are standing up to the 'Islamisation of Europe'.<sup>46</sup> Although in mid-2011 Geller disavowed the EDL due to the neo-Nazi presence in its ranks, she has since restored her seal of approval and appeared alongside Robinson at international gatherings in Europe.

With the help of strong support from Geller and Spencer in the United States, the EDL has also been the catalyst, initially through online networking and then with organised gatherings and marches, for the creation of a number of other "defence leagues" across Europe. Tommy Robinson now holds an almost legendary status within this nascent movement; he is considered a "rock star" of the ECJM, along with Spencer and Geller.<sup>47</sup>

On its official website the EDL takes credit for inspiring 'people from all over the world to join together and create their own Defence Leagues based on the EDL model,' and claims to have helped create groups in Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Italy and Finland.<sup>48</sup> The official website also features a 'European links' section that sets out a memorandum of understanding for anyone wishing to set up an affiliated national or regional defence league.<sup>49</sup>

These alliances are being officially consolidated online through a defence league umbrella group called the European Freedom Initiative (EFI), founded by Robinson and former EDL media head Steve Simmons. According to Robinson, 'through the EFI, all the defence leagues stay in touch, and talk every day'.<sup>50</sup> The Norwegian Defence League (NDL) site, for example, which is registered in Manchester to a Steve Simmons and provides the EFI email as a contact, carries the following message at the top of its website:

*This is the official NDL website. This site is fully supported by the English Defence League and is the only affiliated NDL.*<sup>51</sup>

An almost identical message is found at the top of the official page of the Danish Defence League (DDL) and the Swedish Defence League (SDL), which both share the same design of the NDL site and are also registered in Manchester to a Steve Simmons.<sup>52</sup>

The EFI and the European defence leagues were not in fact the first European Counter-Jihad network; rather, they have joined on to and to a large extent co-opted a pre-existing movement. An earlier attempt to create such a network was made in 2006 in the form of the 910

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<sup>46</sup> Pamela Geller, 'UK Violence Erupts: Fascists (UAF) and Muslims Descend on Patriots (EDL) and Police', *Atlas Shrugs*, 20 March 2010, available at: [http://atlasshrugs2000.typepad.com/atlas\\_shrugs/2010/03/uk-violence-erupts-fascists-uaf-and-muslims-descend-on-patriots-edl-and-police.html](http://atlasshrugs2000.typepad.com/atlas_shrugs/2010/03/uk-violence-erupts-fascists-uaf-and-muslims-descend-on-patriots-edl-and-police.html) [accessed 12/8/2012]; Robert Spencer, 'EDL standing for freedom, staging rooftop protest on mosque site', *Jihad Watch*, 2 May 2010, available at: <http://www.jihadwatch.org/2010/05/edl-standing-for-freedom-staging-rooftop-protest-on-mosque-site.html> [accessed 12/8/2012]

<sup>47</sup> This view of Robinson was expressed by a number of defence league leaders from Scandinavia during both the Aarhus and Stockholm demonstrations

<sup>48</sup> 'EDL: Making Connections', EDL official website, available at: <http://englishdefenceleague.org/edl-making-connections/> [accessed 29/8/2012]

<sup>49</sup> 'European Defence Leagues', EDL official website, available at: <http://englishdefenceleague.org/european-defence-leagues> [accessed 29/8/2012]

<sup>50</sup> In-person interview with Tommy Robinson, Luton, 16 April 2012

<sup>51</sup> NDL official website, available at: <http://norwegiandl.info/> [accessed 7/8/2012]

<sup>52</sup> DDL official website, available at: <http://danishdl.info/> [accessed 15/1/2013]; SDL official website, available at [www.swedishdl.info](http://www.swedishdl.info) [accessed 7/2/2013]

Group which began with an article posted on 26 September 2006 on the *Gates of Vienna* blog by an individual using the pseudonym Baron Bodissey (later revealed to be Edward S. May, one of the operators of the blog). The author argued that the internet, and particularly the blogosphere, was a potential source of 'enormous power,' while also complaining that one major weakness of other existing Counter-Jihad blogs was their solely reactive character.<sup>53</sup> He therefore suggested a change of direction: the creation of a web-based anti-Islam activist group that was able to organise physical gatherings and events in order to apply pressure on governments to act against the perceived Islamisation threat.<sup>54</sup> Blogs and other forms of new media were becoming weapons with which the movement could fight its cultural civil war within Europe:

*I've said repeatedly that, if we want to win this war, we need to take back the culture. In order for that to happen, the organs of mass communication will have to change. The new media — of which this blog is a microscopic piece — will eventually supplant the old ones.*<sup>55</sup>

This posting generated much discussion in its comments section, which ultimately led to the creation of the 910 Group.<sup>56</sup> In its mission statement, the group presented itself as part of the Western 'resistance' against an encroaching Islam, stating:

*We are faced with massive Islamic infiltration and intimidation, a campaign of disinformation and subterfuge masterminded by the Muslim Brotherhood, and the determination of our governments, our media, and our educational institutions to stop us from doing what we do. A process of conscious, continuous, active resistance is required if we are to overcome the pressure from institutions demanding that we submit to Islamization.*<sup>57</sup>

A year later, in 2007, the 910 Group renamed itself the Centre for Vigilant Freedom (CVF) and under the directorship of Edward S. May sought to build international partnerships. It claimed to have a presence in seven countries, including the UK, US, Thailand and Australia.<sup>58</sup> It also began to organise international meetings and conferences, with the first of these taking place in Copenhagen on 14 April, 2007. Reports claim that activists from Norway (including the aforementioned Fjordman), Denmark, the UK, the US, and Sweden were present, as well as 'members of a Swedish political party,' which, though unnamed, is likely to be the Swedish Democrats, a far-right nationalist anti-Islam and anti-immigration party.<sup>59</sup>

Months later, on 18 October, a second more expansive conference took place in Brussels organised under the auspices of Belgium's Vlaams Belang, a Flemish far-right nationalist party with strong anti-Islam views. The event's profile was raised by keynote speakers such

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<sup>53</sup> Baron Bodissey, 'The Emperor Is Naked', *Gates of Vienna*, 26 September 2006, available at: [http://gatesofvienna.blogspot.se/2006\\_09\\_01\\_archive.html](http://gatesofvienna.blogspot.se/2006_09_01_archive.html) [accessed 1/10/2012]

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Baron Bodissey, 'Rebirth and Resistance', *Gates of Vienna*, 30 September 2011, available at: <http://gatesofvienna.blogspot.se/2011/09/rebirth-and-resistance.html> [accessed 1/10/2012]

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Taken from the now defunct CVF homepage, archived copies of which are in the authors' possession

<sup>59</sup> 'The UK and Scandinavia Counterjihad Summit', *Gates of Vienna*, 14 April 2007, available at: <http://gatesofvienna.blogspot.co.uk/2007/04/uk-and-scandinavia-counterjihad-summit.html> [accessed 3/10/2012]

as Bat Ye'or and Robert Spencer, and part of it was held in the Flemish Parliament.<sup>60</sup>

Closely involved in organising both of these conferences was a Dane named Anders Gravers, who in 2007 founded Stop the Islamisation of Denmark (SIOD) in his native country. Gravers helped to establish a more formal Europe-wide online anti-Islam network called Stop the Islamisation of Europe (SIOE), with websites all sharing the same format created in French, Swedish, German, Norwegian, Romanian, Danish, Polish and Russian.<sup>61</sup> These sites were used in an attempt to mobilise protesters to march in opposition to the idea of creeping Sharia and increasing numbers of mosques, although none have been updated since 2008. Gravers also encouraged Pamela Geller and Robert Spencer to form an American wing of the group, Stop the Islamization of America (SIOA), which they did in April 2010.<sup>62</sup>

Although Gravers' SIOE movement failed to gain a large real-world following, rarely managing to mobilise more than two dozen people for its European marches, SIOA has become a political force. Soon after its foundation, Geller and Spencer's "Ground Zero Mosque" activism helped establish it as the country's principal Counter-Jihad group.

SIOA and SIOE have now fused into Stop the Islamisation of Nations (SION) which boasts a 'President's Council' made up of: Anders Gravers, Tommy Robinson, Kevin Carroll, Robert Spencer, and Pamela Geller.<sup>63</sup>

According to Geller, the founding of this group was 'a momentous beginning to what I am confident will become a powerful force for defending freedom worldwide.'<sup>64</sup> In the words of the official press release, SION stands for:

- 'The freedom of speech – as opposed to Islamic prohibitions of "blasphemy" and "slander," which are used effectively to quash honest discussion of jihad and Islamic supremacism;
- The freedom of conscience – as opposed to the Islamic death penalty for apostasy;
- The equality of rights of all people before the law – as opposed to Sharia's institutionalized discrimination against women and non-Muslims.'<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Baron Bodissey, 'A Brief History of the Transatlantic Counterjihad, Part II', *Gates of Vienna*, 25 November 2011, available at: [http://gatesofvienna.blogspot.co.uk/2011/11/brief-history-of-transatlantic\\_25.html](http://gatesofvienna.blogspot.co.uk/2011/11/brief-history-of-transatlantic_25.html) [accessed 3/10/2012]

<sup>61</sup> SIOE Denmark, available at: <http://sioedanmark.wordpress.com/>; SIOE Russia, available at: <http://sioeru.wordpress.com/>; SIOE France, available at: <http://www.stopislamisationdesesprits.blogspot.co.uk/>; SIOE Germany, available at: <http://sioede.wordpress.com/>; SIOE Norway, available at: <http://sioenorge.wordpress.com/>; SIOE Poland, available at: <http://sioepolska.wordpress.com/>; SIOE Romania, available at: <http://antikafirphobia.wordpress.com/>; SIOE Sweden, available at: <http://sioesverige.wordpress.com/> [all accessed 2/10/2012]

<sup>62</sup> Pamela Geller, 'New Leadership of Stop Islamization of America', *Atlas Shrugs*, 2 April 2010, available at: [http://atlashrugs2000.typepad.com/atlas\\_shrugs/2010/04/new-leadership-of-stop-islamization-of-america.html](http://atlashrugs2000.typepad.com/atlas_shrugs/2010/04/new-leadership-of-stop-islamization-of-america.html) [accessed 3/10/2012]

<sup>63</sup> 'Stop Islamization of Nations Forms International Activist Leadership Team, the SION President's Council', SION Press Release, 7 August 2012, available at: <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/sion-stop-islamization-of-nations-forms-international-activist-leadership-team-the-sion-presidents-council-165247186.html> [accessed 10/8/2012]

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

## Meetings in Åarhus and Stockholm

*I'd like to say how blessed I am to share a stage with Pamela [Geller] and Robert [Spencer], and the backing they've given and support. There's been a media campaign against us, we are slandered, we are smeared, and they've seen through it and they've supported us since day one.*

– Tommy Robinson, Stockholm, 4 August 2012

Though officially founded in August 2012, SION's first appearance was a few months earlier in March of the same year when it was involved in organising an event in Åarhus, Denmark that ushered in a new phase of the ECJM's development. Made up of defence league members from Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, England and Germany, it was a statement of unity which, according to Tommy Robinson, would 'give birth to a new era of standing up against the Islamisation of Europe.'<sup>66</sup> He also later claimed in an interview that the meeting was his first opportunity to meet European defence league members and 'make sure that these people are not neo-Nazis, are not lunatics, do support Israel, do have the same agenda as us, so we went over there to concrete these relationships.'<sup>67</sup> The event was also one of the first public appearances alongside the defence leagues of the event's co-organiser, the EFI, which was represented by Alain Wagner of L'Alliance (a French group also known as Alliance to Stop Sharia).<sup>68</sup>

With an attendance of no more than 50-60 supporters, the event was derided in the media as a failure, yet this ignored its strategic intent. Despite low attendance, the gathering signalled the start of a coherent strategy to create a decentralised network and unite likeminded Counter-Jihad groups in Europe and America. Some of the national defence leagues had only publically gathered together once or twice before and Åarhus marked the beginning of a move away from relying on online activism, and towards establishing a physical presence in their countries.

On 4 August 2012, a similar event took place in Stockholm, Sweden. A venue was chosen near the spot where Islamist suicide bomber Taimour Abdulwahab al-Abdaly had been killed while attempting to detonate his bomb among Christmas shoppers on 11 December 2010.<sup>69</sup> The speakers came from several different European countries (including Great Britain, Germany, Finland, Denmark and Norway), as well as the United States, and Australia, and their speeches represented the current direction of the ECJM. These views included:

- Speaking the truth that the ECJM wishes to tell about the supposed evils of Islam is now considered to be 'the new hate speech'. The public has been abandoned by a political elite unwilling or unable to see the gradual destruction of Western society by Islam. The followers of the ECJM are the vanguard who know the real truth and therefore must prepare themselves to be patient and have the stamina to 'fight a long war,' primarily against the media who are at war with the public and have 'abdicated' their traditional role.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Tommy Robinson speaking at Åarhus demonstration, Åarhus, Denmark, 31 March 2012

<sup>67</sup> In-person interview with Tommy Robinson, Luton, 16 April 2012

<sup>68</sup> Wagner confirmed his involvement with the group to the authors in Åarhus, Denmark, 31 March 2012

<sup>69</sup> 'Stockholm bomber "aimed to kill many people"', *BBC News*, 13 December 2010

<sup>70</sup> Pamela Geller addressing Stockholm meeting, 4 August 2012, Stockholm, Sweden

- The political elite and media in the West (Denmark and Sweden are singled out as being particularly affected by this phenomenon) are politically correct and exercise a 'self-censorship' that effectively shuts down any serious and honest discussion of Islam. By acting in such a manner, the political elite and the media suppress 'freedom of speech, one of the most fundamental rights that is securing democracy.'<sup>71</sup>
- The ECJM activists are 'fighting for the vision of a free society.' They argue for the protection of freedom of speech, freedom of association, and the right to criticise government without fear of retribution. Examples of forces they are fighting against include the radical left-wing activists who arrange counter-demonstrations and try to storm their meetings. The radical left is totalitarian in nature and cooperates with 'Islamic supremacists' in order to destroy Western society and democracy.<sup>72</sup>
- The ECJM activists are under threat from militant Islamists and other extremists. Even though they have succeeded in assassinating activists such as the Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn, and have attempted to carry out large-scale attacks against EDL meetings in Great Britain, these acts of violence are counterproductive. Violent acts committed against the ECJM will help inspire more people to join in the fight, 'as we saw with Bloody Sunday in Northern Ireland.'<sup>73</sup>
- Women have a right to dress as they wish, choose any partner they want, and live with whom they wish. Islam in its more extreme forms does not allow this, or even any discussion of these issues. If a woman exercised any of these freedoms in countries controlled by Muslims, she would 'get gang-raped, tortured and finally stoned to death' for doing so.<sup>74</sup>
- Islamisation is a reality and this is proven by several examples, including the banning of pork in Danish schools. It is also argued that 'books have been rewritten because of the fear of violent Muslims....'<sup>75</sup> Another speaker mentions the creation of no-go areas, or neighbourhoods in which non-Muslims and outsiders are not welcome. To illustrate this, the speaker mentions how he was stopped by men in traditional Muslim dress when he tried to take photos in Rosengård, a part of Malmö, Sweden, known for its high proportion of Muslim immigrants.<sup>76</sup>
- The Koran is 'the most dangerous book in the world' because it advocates violence and the conquering of non-Muslim cultures and countries. Islam must be modernised and secularised if peaceful coexistence between Muslims and people of other cultures and religions is to have a chance.<sup>77</sup>

The meetings are also an opportunity for budding defence leagues and other anti-Islam groups to receive strategic advice from more experienced campaigners. Among the latter is Pamela Geller, who told the audience that, because the 'media is at war with you, and at war

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<sup>71</sup> Anders Gravers addressing Stockholm meeting, 4 August 2012, Stockholm, Sweden

<sup>72</sup> Robert Spencer addressing Stockholm meeting, 4 August 2012, Stockholm, Sweden

<sup>73</sup> Tommy Robinson addressing Stockholm meeting, 4 August 2012, Stockholm, Sweden

<sup>74</sup> FDL leader Mimosa Koiranen addressing Stockholm meeting, 4 August 2012, Stockholm, Sweden

<sup>75</sup> Anders Gravers addressing Stockholm meeting, 4 August 2012, Stockholm, Sweden

<sup>76</sup> Michael Stürzenburger of Germany's anti-Islam Freedom Party addressing Stockholm meeting, 4 August 2012, Stockholm, Sweden

<sup>77</sup> Michael Stürzenburger of Germany's anti-Islam Freedom Party addressing Stockholm meeting, 4 August 2012, Stockholm, Sweden

with freedom,' ECJM members must use the internet to become 'one-man media organisations.' Through email and websites, they must 'talk to people and educate people' so as to 'fight-back in the information battle space.'<sup>78</sup>

The make-up of the international gatherings is notably different from those organised by the EDL in the UK. There is little to no evidence of any street-hooligan elements, and the crowds are, on average, older and from a wider spectrum of political backgrounds. On both occasions, the meetings had to be protected by large numbers of police in riot gear. These were set up mainly to control the significantly larger counter-demonstrations taking place. Within these counter-demonstrations were radical left-wing activists and violent, anarchist elements that tried to storm and disrupt both meetings. Several policemen were injured in Århus, and one in Sweden. A number of counterdemonstrators were arrested on both occasions.

Differences of opinion exist within the fledgling international movement, but these have not yet been significant enough to produce any real infighting. During interviews with defence league leaders in Århus, the authors found that the EDL, NDL and others, for example, claim to accept the premise that most Muslims are not extremists, whereas SIOE reject the notion of a moderate Muslim entirely. Some, like the FDL, are not expressly against Muslim immigration, whereas the EDL and others have a stated desire for a ban on Muslim immigration into their countries. The head of the small Swedish Defence League (SDL), Isak Nygren (who is also involved with the Swedish Democrats party), does not see the threat of radical Islam as a centuries long historical struggle and, as a student of Islamic studies, insists that 'Islam has only been radical since the Iranian revolution in 1979.'<sup>79</sup> Nygren has, however, been accused of racism by the Swedish anti-fascist group Expo, which quoted him as saying that he is against racial mixing.<sup>80</sup>

## **A Decentralised Distributed Network in Europe**

The creation of the above mentioned defence leagues in Europe is part of the EDL's strategy, with assistance from its allies in America, to internationalise the Counter-Jihad movement and the defence league framework in particular. It appears that they are helping to create a decentralised network of groups based upon a model provided by an entry on the *Gates of Vienna* blog (an important information and analysis hub for the ECJM) in June 2009, which called for the implementation of a form of the distributed network model to ensure the survival and prosperity of the ECJM.

For the purpose of avoiding accusations of incitement to violence, the article does not use the term "leaderless resistance", and the author instead opts for the term 'distributed network',<sup>81</sup> a term usually applied to computer and telephone networks. The major benefit of this type of network is that without a set command and control hierarchy, no single node is indispensable and thus the network has no single point

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<sup>78</sup> Pamela Geller addressing Stockholm meeting, 4 August 2012, Stockholm, Sweden

<sup>79</sup> In-person interview, Århus, Denmark, 31 March 2012

<sup>80</sup> 'SD politicians opposed "miscegenation"', Expo, 12 February 2011, available at: [http://expo.se/2011/sd-politikermotsatter-sig-rasblandning\\_3714.html](http://expo.se/2011/sd-politikermotsatter-sig-rasblandning_3714.html) [accessed 31/10/12]

<sup>81</sup> Baron Bodissey, 'Building a Distributed Counterjihad Network', *Gates of Vienna*, 1 June 2009, available at: <http://gatesofvienna.blogspot.co.uk/2009/06/building-distributed-counterjihad.html> [accessed 19/10/2012]



of failure.<sup>82</sup> As envisaged by ECJM strategists, such a model can be applied to multiple Counter-Jihad groups and individuals in different countries and regions, allowing them to act relatively independently of one another while pursuing the same overarching strategy and agenda.

These groups and individuals act as the nodes in the network, the author explains, with certain nodes acting as gateways to country- or region-specific networks which are also connected to the wider international movement. Each of these nodes can fulfil specialised functions such as event-organising or multimedia creation, or simply offer general support to the movement. According to the author, the most specialised function is that of the 'idea man'; individuals who 'contribute components of the ideological framework that guides the entire network.'<sup>83</sup>

The internet also plays a crucial role in this model, allowing for the rapid spread of ideas, and the planning of gatherings and protests at short notice. Indeed, it is the internet which is the primary connector for the multiple nodes of the network throughout Europe, and as demonstrated above some of the defence leagues have identically designed websites created and managed by the same people.

The article gives three reasons for the importance of a Counter-Jihad distributed network model, claiming that:

- i) The political elite and the governments in the Western world are repressive of Counter-Jihad organisations;
- ii) a number of left-wing groups exercise unofficial repression, violently attacking Counter-Jihad followers with tacit government support;
- iii) there is a substantial risk of being attacked by militant Muslims.<sup>84</sup>

As well as offering advantages such as ideological flexibility, the author claims that this model offers a solution to problems such as a rigid, dictatorial leadership, and members leaving the group or changing allegiances. It allows for consensus decisions to be made and offers fail-safes against for the loss of individual members and even constituent groups by developing 'multiple ways of accomplishing the same task, and multiple channels through which information travels.'<sup>85</sup>

The use of distributed networks is also analysed and discussed in a number of related postings.<sup>86</sup> In one article an activist describes in some detail how the network can be used for spreading knowledge

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<sup>82</sup> The ideas behind distributed networks can be found in research conducted by the RAND Corporation in the beginning of the 1960s, when the group was conducting research on military communications and how to design communication systems that could survive a nuclear attack. See for example: Paul Baran, *On Distributed Networks* (RAND, 1962). There is also an interesting lecture given by Paul Baran on distributed networks that can be found on RAND's website. See 'Forerunner of the Internet: Early RAND Work in Distributed Networks and Packet Switching (1960–1965)', available at [http://www.rand.org/multimedia/video/2009/10/06/distributed\\_communications\\_and\\_packet\\_switching.html](http://www.rand.org/multimedia/video/2009/10/06/distributed_communications_and_packet_switching.html) [accessed: 15/10/2012]

<sup>83</sup> Baron Bodissey, 'Building a Distributed Counterjihad Network', *Gates of Vienna*, 1 June 2009, available at: <http://gatesofvienna.blogspot.co.uk/2009/06/building-distributed-counterjihad.html> [accessed 19/10/2012]

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> See for example: Graham Dawson, 'Cathedrals, Bazaars, and the Counterjihad', *Gates of Vienna*, 10 July 2011, available at: <http://gatesofvienna.blogspot.co.uk/2011/07/cathedrals-bazaars-and-counterjihad.html>; Baron Bodissey, 'A Model of Limited Perception', *Gates of Vienna*, 28 January 2008, available at: <http://gatesofvienna.blogspot.co.uk/2008/01/model-of-limited-perception.html>; Baron Bodissey, 'Distributed Emergence: Networking the Counterjihad', *Gates of Vienna*, 8 May 2008, available at: <http://gatesofvienna.blogspot.co.uk/2008/05/distributed-emergence-networking.html>; Baron Bodissey, 'All Information Warfare is Local', *Gates of Vienna*, 29 December 2007, available at: <http://gatesofvienna.blogspot.co.uk/2007/12/all-information-warfare-is-local.html> [all accessed 20/10/2012]

about firearms and about which countries to travel to in order to get hands-on training and experience with such weapons.<sup>87</sup>

The ECJM has begun to implement this model in its European operations. Defence leagues inspired by the EDL have emerged throughout Scandinavia and are organising joint rallies and conferences, helped on by so-called 'ideas people', including Robert Spencer, who provides much of the ideological fuel, and Pamela Geller, whose organisational skills the ECJM has employed to some effect.

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<sup>87</sup> Baron Bodissey, 'A Network of Arms', *Gates of Vienna*, 19 January 2008, available at: <http://gatesofvienna.blogspot.de/search?q=a+network+of+arms> [accessed 20/10/2012]

## 3 Finding a Place for the Movement

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*This section will assess a number of the terms that have been used to describe the ECJM, and determine which, if any, are most applicable and accurate. The authors also put forward an argument for a new categorisation of the movement: cultural nationalism.*

### **Nationalism, Fascism, Populism and the Far Right**

These terms have been used, sometimes interchangeably, to describe the EDL in particular and also the wider ECJM. This section will first provide brief overviews of these terms and then determine which, if any, of these definitions are most applicable to this report's subject.

#### *Nationalism and Fascism*

While researchers and commentators must avoid falling into the trap of always equating nationalism with fascism, it must be acknowledged that nationalism almost invariably forms a key part of any fascist ideology. The confrontational, xenophobic and, at times, violent or threatening form of ultra-nationalism espoused by the ECJM has led many commentators to reasonably assume that the movement fits well into the tradition of European far-right, ultra-nationalist fascism.

The ECJM's apparent obsession with preserving European culture is not, on its own, sufficient reason to define the movement as ultra-nationalist, and therefore far-right. The desire to preserve elements of culture and language are part of any national concerns, and as Beiner warns, 'one should be careful not to oppose nationalist myths by positing the counter myth of a liberal state that achieves a state of pure abstinence in relation to national concerns.'<sup>88</sup> Thus, national pride does not always have to translate to far-right fascism, and Davis and Lynch argue that nationalism becomes fascistic when it is married to the 'glorification of force, disdain for the systematic consequences of their actions and a racial hatred based on their own supposed superiority over others.'<sup>89</sup>

In his essay on fascism Roger Eatwell writes: 'The nation is seen as the "natural" unit of state organisation by fascists, and is central to fascist ideology'.<sup>90</sup> There is no doubt that, within almost any fascist ideology, the concepts of the nation and nationhood are a central element. For this reason, it has often been notoriously difficult for historians and political analysts to distinguish between strident, activist nationalism and fascism as these are so often the key components of European fascist groups. For example, Hayes notes that 'the influence of nationalism upon fascist doctrine and practice has been so strong that fascist and nationalist have on occasion been regarded as virtually interchangeable terms'.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Ronald Beiner, *Theorizing Nationalism* (State University of New York Press, 1999)

<sup>89</sup> Peter Davies and Derek Lynch, *The Routledge Companion to Fascism and the Far-Right* (Routledge, 2002)

<sup>90</sup> Roger Eatwell, 'Fascism', in Roger Eatwell and Anthony Wright, *Contemporary Political Ideologies* (Pinter, 1994)

<sup>91</sup> Paul Hayes, *Fascism* (Allen and Unwin, 1973)

However, national pride does not always have to translate to far-right fascism, and Davis and Lynch argue that nationalism becomes fascistic when it is married to the 'glorification of force, disdain for the systematic consequences of their actions and a racial hatred based on their own supposed superiority over others.'<sup>92</sup>

According to Roger Griffin's concise definition of fascism, it is 'a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism' which seeks to provide a bridge between a nation's apparently glorious (and often ancient) past and its future.<sup>93</sup>

However, within this genus there are various different species. Due to multiple past incarnations, most notably in mid-20th-century Italy, Spain, Germany and Japan, fascism can manifest itself differently depending on where inspiration is drawn from. Upon analysing the academic literature on the subject, however, it is possible to provide a loose set of identifiers of fascist ideology.

Griffin, for example, demonstrates that, although fascist groups can differ in many ways, the common denominator among all of them is nationalist fervour. He then goes on to list more of fascism's key traits, which include:

- As well as in writings and speeches, the fascist worldview is expressed 'in the semiotic language of rallies, symbols, [and] uniforms';
- the fascist goal is to create (or re-create) a utopian society, often based on ancient civilisations or races that previously existed in the given nation;
- fascism has a revolutionary desire to transform society which is driven by irrationality and political myths.<sup>94</sup>

The term palingenesis as applied by Griffin translates from Greek as "re-birth" and in this context refers to fascistic desires to "reset" or regenerate society (often through revolution) after a period of perceived decline due to a variety of different factors, often associated with an "enemy within".

Naturally, such desires are often concerned with the concept of race, with the fascist group defining the "ideal" nation in ethnic or racial terms and harking back to an "original" state of society that existed before the ethnic make-up was altered (by any number of historical waves of transmigration). Davis and Lynch thus point out that 'within the many variants of fascism there is an implicit assumption that the terms "nation" and "race" are synonymous.'<sup>95</sup>

Thus, in their quest for national palingenesis, Mussolini's National Fascist Party used the imagery of ancient Rome, and the Nazis emphasised the Germanic people's historic links with the Vikings and Nordic mythology.

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<sup>92</sup> Peter Davies and Derek Lynch, *The Routledge Companion to Fascism and the Far-Right* (Routledge, 2002)

<sup>93</sup> Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (Routledge, 1993)

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Peter Davies and Derek Lynch, *The Routledge Companion to Fascism and the Far-Right* (Routledge, 2002)

On its own, however, the desire for palingenesis is not inherently fascist, and Griffin argues that it becomes so when combined with what he describes as 'populist ultra-nationalism'.<sup>96</sup> His use of the term populist here refers to 'a generic term for political forces which... depend on "people power" as the basis of their legitimacy.'<sup>97</sup>

Ultra-nationalism, as opposed to mere nationalism, refers specifically to 'forms of nationalism which "go beyond" and hence reject, anything compatible with liberal institutions or with the tradition of Enlightenment humanism which underpins them.'<sup>98</sup> As a result, ultra-nationalists believe that the questions of a collective national identity, language and culture trump all other social and political concerns. It is, according to historian Miroslav Hroch, an 'outlook which gives *an absolute priority to the values of the nation over all other values and interests* [his emphasis].'<sup>99</sup>

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**96** Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (Routledge, 1993)

**97** *Ibid.*

**98** *Ibid.*

**99** Miroslav Hroch, 'From National Movement to the Fully-Former Nation: The Nation-Building Process in Europe', in Geoff Eley and Ronald G. Suny (ed.), *Becoming National* (Oxford University Press, 1996)

## The BNP and Fascist Racial-Nationalism

In the UK, the BNP has long been associated with using iconography which harks back to the Crusades and a time when the region was racially “pure” or homogeneous, and has a long history of fascist and racial-nationalist activism and policies.

The BNP is considered a fascist party mainly due to the ideology of its founding member John Tyndall, one of Britain's leading 20th century fascists. As a neo-Nazi racial-nationalist, Tyndall was a great admirer of Hitler's Third Reich and sought to use it as a model to establish National Socialism in Britain. Tyndall's conception of nationalism was a form of white-nationalism centred on race and ethnicity, and this is enshrined in the BNP's constitution. It states that the party defines a “true” Briton as ‘indigenous Caucasian’, and that it ‘stands for the preservation of the national and ethnic character of the British people and is wholly opposed to any form of racial integration between British and non-European peoples.’<sup>100</sup> This is a clear rejection of multi-racial societies, and a classic racial-nationalist position. Using the kind of folkish terminology usually associated with ethnic-nationalist fascists, this constitution explains that it represents

*the collective National, Environmental, Political, Racial, Folkish, Social, Cultural, Religious and Economic interests of the indigenous Anglo-Saxon, Celtic and Norse folk communities of Britain and those we regard as closely related and ethnically assimilated or assimilable aboriginal members of the European race also resident in Britain.*<sup>101</sup>

Since becoming leader of the BNP in 1999, Nick Griffin has engaged in a process of modernising the party, seeking to change its image from an organisation firmly in line with the ideology of the Third Reich to a part of the political mainstream in Britain.

In April 2000, Griffin shared a platform with former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke. Addressing a crowd of American racial-nationalists, he laid out his plans for the future of the movement. Claiming that ‘there is a difference between selling out your ideas, and selling your ideas,’ he argued that the racial-nationalist movement had to adjust its language in order to conceal an ideology that no longer had any real political traction.<sup>102</sup>

When contrasted with older versions, the BNP's 12th constitution, written during the BNP's rebranding drive, has no mention of British people defined as ‘indigenous Caucasian’ and the authors have removed references to ‘indigenous Anglo-Saxon, Celtic and Norse folk communities’.<sup>103</sup>

There are few better examples of a planned and centrally-organised attempt by a white-nationalist party to alter its public image for the sake of its own survival. In the case of the EDL, even since Robinson's re-focusing of its messaging, the group has struggled to maintain a coherent message, though the evidence of attempts to conceal a more sinister agenda is not as stark as in the case of the BNP.

<sup>100</sup> The Constitution of the British National Party, Eleventh Edition, August 2009

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Video of speech in possession of authors

<sup>103</sup> The Constitution of the British National Party, 12.3 Edition, 15 July 2011

## Populism

A number of recent analyses of the EDL and ECJM refer to them primarily as populist or as a populist street movement.<sup>104</sup> Though not an inaccurate definition, it has been used to describe a host of wide-ranging and wholly different street movements and political parties, from Occupy Wall Street to Greece's neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party. As such, it does little to indicate to the reader what sort of ideology or nationalism the group represents.

Put simply, populism refers to an approach to politics that focuses on appealing to the average citizen by 'casting them in a favourable light relative to wealthy, educated or influential elites.'<sup>105</sup> It is based, according to Peter Wiles, on the following premise: 'virtue resides in the simple people, who are the overwhelming majority, and in their collective traditions.'<sup>106</sup> Often loosely organised, ideologically disjointed and lacking in real discipline, populism relies heavily on the charisma of the movement leader.

The term has been used to describe many of the major political movements of the 20th century, including Marxism, Nazism and Maoism, and this is the problem with relying on it. As a word used to refer to such different movements, it is insufficiently precise as it only describes the mobilisation tactics and style of a given group, and offers little for the student of the far-right seeking to navigate the minefield of European extremist politics. Populism, as Peter Worsley puts it, is 'only an element, not the dominant feature' of a far-right and/or fascist movement.<sup>107</sup>

## The Far-Right

This is perhaps the epithet most often used to describe the EDL/ECJM, and one strenuously rejected by the movement itself. Speaking to BBC Radio 5 in January 2010, Tommy Robinson protested:

*Everyone is calling us far-right – what's far-right about opposing Sharia law? What's far-right about protecting women's rights? What's far-right about [opposing] Islamic extremists who are preaching hatred in our town and cities?<sup>108</sup>*

BF has also rejected this description of its policies, and in Paul Weston's 20-point platform he is at pains to deny any far-right character to the party's policy recommendations. In, for example, his defence of a policy to 'halt any further non-Western immigration [into the UK] for a period of five years,' he argues:

*The liberal-left promoters of mass immigration are anti-white racists and extremists and resisting their warped ideology of incremental genocide is neither right-wing nor extremist. It is politically central and it is basic common sense.<sup>109</sup>*

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<sup>104</sup> See for example, Jamie Bartlett and Mark Littler, 'Inside the EDL: Populist Politics in a Digital Age', Demos, 28 October 2011

<sup>105</sup> Definition of populism in Peter Davies and Derek Lynch, *The Routledge Companion to Fascism and the Far-Right* (Routledge, 2002)

<sup>106</sup> Peter Wiles, 'A Syndrome, Not a Doctrine: Some Elementary Theses on Populism', in Ghita Ionescu and Ernest Gellner (ed.), *Populism: Its Meanings and National Characteristics* (The Garden City Press, 1969)

<sup>107</sup> Peter Worsley, 'The Concept of Populism', in Ghita Ionescu and Ernest Gellner (ed.), *Populism: Its Meanings and National Characteristics* (The Garden City Press, 1969)

<sup>108</sup> Tommy Robinson interview, BBC Radio 5 live, 4 January 2010, available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j2uiP1EIZy0> [accessed 5/7/2012]

<sup>109</sup> Paul Weston, 'British Freedom's 20 Point Plan', video available at: <http://gatesofvienna.blogspot.co.uk/2012/06/paul-weston-british-freedoms-20-point.html> [accessed 10/7/2012]

Unlike fascism, the term far-right signifies not an ideology, but an overall political orientation. Thus, a far-right party does not necessarily have to be fascist, though as Davies and Lynch remind us, 'fascism is seen as a quintessential movement of the far-right.'<sup>110</sup>

The term, at its most general, describes a set of political opinions which, when aggregated, amount to a hostility to liberal democratic values. It is also often the case that the far-right will be willing to use any means to achieve their goals, including violence, intimidation and, in the most extreme cases, dictatorial government.<sup>111</sup> The Dutch political scientist, Cas Mudde, identifies three main pillars to modern far-right groups: authoritarianism; ethnic nationalism and xenophobia.<sup>112</sup>

The authoritarianism often found in far-right groups revolves around a reactionary desire to "preserve" society through the imposition of arbitrary and highly restrictive laws incompatible with individual rights that underpin liberal democracies.<sup>113</sup>

Ethnic nationalism defines a nation in terms of birth and bloodlines, often traced back to ancient settlers whose history is glorified. Individuals who are not members of the required ethnic group would be denied citizenship and even the right to reside in the nation by an ethnic nationalist. Ethnic nationalism can overlap with racial nationalism, which defines nationality on the basis of race and colour. In most cases, ethnic nationalism is a form of racial nationalism that contains a strong historical dimension that includes an awareness, glorification and mythologising of the past.

Xenophobia (Greek for "fear of the foreigner/stranger") refers to a strong, usually irrational belief that an exogenous or otherwise new social group is a serious threat to the society it has entered. A xenophobic ideology seeks to create a form of national chauvinism around which followers can rally, and it is most often associated with anti-immigration political parties and movements.<sup>114</sup> In many sections of the ECJM, and particularly visible in its very active online community, there is a clear trend towards demonising Islam and Muslims, and presenting them as the source of the West's ills.

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110 Peter Davies and Derek Lynch, *The Routledge Companion to Fascism and the Far-Right* (Routledge, 2002)

111 Ibid.

112 Cas Mudde, *The Ideology of the Extreme Right* (Manchester University Press, 2000)

113 It should be noted here that authoritarianism is often incorrectly used interchangeably with totalitarianism, which differs from authoritarianism primarily in how it deals with the daily life of individuals living under it. The totalitarian, unlike the authoritarian, desires to exert control and influence over every aspect of private life, making sure it is in line with the totalitarian regime's over-arching ideology. As such, totalitarianism is also often a strong feature of fascism.

114 Peter Davies and Derek Lynch, *The Routledge Companion to Fascism and the Far-Right* (Routledge, 2002)



## Race, Islam and the EDL Case Study: EDL March, Luton, February 2011

At a February 2011 EDL march in Luton, a significant number of non-white people were among the approximately 2000 supporters.<sup>115</sup> Although some declined to be interviewed, one young mixed-race man, who shall be named here as Mr. X, was asked how a non-white person could attend a rally apparently organised by BNP-supporters and racial-nationalists. He said, 'look around you, I'm not the only one,' and pointed to a number of black and South-Asian attendees. Asked why exactly he was in attendance, he said:

*You've got these Muslims who marched against our soldiers in Luton, and then marched again in Wooten Bassett. We need to stand up against it. And they are running their own [Sharia] courts and ignoring British justice.*

A small sample of other ethnic-minority EDL supporters all agreed that they did not feel they were in the company of racists or the far right, and though this is only anecdotal evidence, it is significant that the group can attract any minorities at all considering the press and sections of the British left's characterisations of the group as racist and violent. This demonstrates how the ECJM message and Islamisation ideology is able to transcend race and ethnicity, and there is evidence of this throughout the West.

Mr. X's reference to Wooten Bassett is interesting as it refers to an event which never actually took place but nonetheless had its desired effect. In early 2010, Islam4UK (the name assumed by al-Muhajiroun after they were banned by the Home Office) announced that it would be marching in Wooten Bassett, where the repatriated bodies of British soldiers killed in action enter the UK, in protest of the war in Afghanistan. The plan caused a frenzy in the British tabloid press, and uproar within the ranks of the EDL, with Robinson threatening to protest outside the houses of the group's leader Anjem Choudhry, and his deputy, Saiful Islam, if the march went ahead.<sup>116</sup> In a February 2011 interview with BBC Radio 5, Robinson also went on to give his view on Choudhry and his status within the British Muslim community (a view echoed by a number of the EDL marchers<sup>117</sup>):

*A lot of moderate Muslims are coming out saying that Anjem Choudhry is bringing their religion into disrepute....If Anjem Choudhry really is bringing their religion into disrepute as they all keep saying, why is he given the freedom of every Islamic community in this country? Why is he touring the country doing Islamic road shows?<sup>118</sup>*

The opinion that British Muslims are not doing enough to protest Choudhry's extremism and therefore must be sympathetic to the group is a common one within the EDL. For some EDL supporters, Choudhry and his group are a fair representation of the majority

<sup>115</sup> Based on authors' observations, interviews and discussions with march attendees

<sup>116</sup> Tommy Robinson interview, *BBC Radio 5*, 4 January 2010, available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j2uIP1EiZy0> [accessed 5/7/2012]

<sup>117</sup> Based on authors' interviews and discussions with march attendees

<sup>118</sup> Tommy Robinson interview, *BBC Radio 5*, 4 January 2010, available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j2uIP1EiZy0> [accessed 5/7/2012]

of Muslims in Britain. Much of the EDL's written material and the rhetoric of its leadership use examples of extremist behaviour from the group and its members to demonstrate what they see as the imminent threat of Islamisation.

Massively overrating the relevance of Anjem Choudhry and his followers is either an honest mistake on the part of Robinson and the EDL, or a calculated ploy to spread fear and increase support for the movement. Either way the misinformation is dangerous. Much of the blame may rest with un-balanced media coverage. In November 2009 the Quilliam Foundation, an anti-extremist think-tank founded and run by Muslims, wrote an open letter to the *Daily Express* paper outlining their concerns regarding the paper's coverage of Choudhry. Pointing to headlines such as "Now Muslims Demand Full Sharia Law," Quilliam demonstrated how the paper had presented Choudhry as a representative figure, not specifying that the group is an extremist fringe of the UK Islamic scene:

*More concerning is your paper's failure to identify this group as being entirely unrepresentative of British Muslims, a failure which risks fanning the flames of right-wing extremism. For example, on 15th October you used the headline 'Now Muslims Demand Full Sharia Law' whilst your article on the day of the protest, 31st October, 'Uproar as Fanatics Go On March For Sharia Law in UK' opened referring to "A Muslim march to promote sharia law" and repeated Choudary's claim to be "Britain's chief sharia law judge". This could easily give the impression to your readers that British Muslims respect and follow Anjem Choudary and share his desire to turn Britain into his medieval vision of an Islamic state.<sup>119</sup>*

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**119** Ed Husain and Maajid Nawas, 'Letter to Daily Express About Islamist Rally Coverage', available at: <http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/in-the-media/letter-to-daily-express-about-islamist-rally/> [accessed 7/7/2012]

At first glance, it would appear that the ECJM exhibits elements of at least three of the aforementioned identifiers for fascism:

- the inflammatory and divisive nature of ECJM marches and speeches suggests little concern for the societal consequences of their actions and a glorification of force associated with fascism;
- it has an irrational view of Muslims in Europe as an “enemy within”;
- its devotion to cultural nationalism contains an authoritarianism which calls for actions that are in direct conflict with Europe's liberal institutions and can be defined as a form of populist ultra-nationalism.

Furthermore, although it does not express any desire for a large-scale national palingenesis, the ECJM's conspiratorial view of Islam in Europe means that it desires a return to a time before immigration allowed a mass-influx of Muslims, when Islam had no influence or impact upon politics or culture.

While these fascist tendencies cannot be ignored it would still be difficult to classify the movement as such. It has not expressed any real desire for a revolutionary overthrow of the current government, and rejects 20th century-style racial-nationalism. In addition, it is a one-issue movement concerned almost exclusively with Islam and has therefore not developed ideas or policies that look beyond dealing with this perceived threat. The EDL and ECJM do not intend to transform multiple aspects of society through revolution, but rather to preserve and protect existing aspects of it that they see as under threat through the implementation of illiberal and xenophobic laws.

Critics often also accuse the EDL of what Davies and Lynch describe as ‘crypto-fascism’, which refers to ‘a concealed allegiance to a more sinister agenda or belief system,’<sup>120</sup> The links in personnel between the EDL and BNP cannot be ignored, but can also be explained by looking at where the concerns of these two parties overlap, rather than where their ideologies meet. Much of the BNP's relative popularity is down to its stance on Europe and immigration, and many BNP voters would perhaps have been moved by the EDL's similar, yet more Islam-centric, message while being able to do away with the racial-nationalism of BNP founders and leading members.

In truth, it is impossible to know for sure and, as Davies and Lynch put it, ‘by its very nature, a concealed fascist identity can be difficult to prove in a conclusive manner, leaving critics to rely on lurid speculation or conspiracy theories.’<sup>121</sup> As the authors would like to avoid the latter, we can only base our research on what reliable information exists about the group and its leadership and, to some extent, on their own words.

Although there is little evidence of traditional racism in the group's ideology, there is certainly evidence of essentialist views of Islam and Muslims.<sup>122</sup> Beyond the ECJM ideology, however, there is also evidence that leading members of defence league groups in Europe have close ties to racist neo-Nazi movements. In January 2012, for example, a leading member of the DDL, Philip Traulsen, was accused by the Danish media of having links with the violent neo-Nazi movement Blood

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<sup>120</sup> Peter Davies and Derek Lynch, *The Routledge Companion to Fascism and the Far-Right* (Routledge, 2002)

<sup>121</sup> Peter Davies and Derek Lynch, *The Routledge Companion to Fascism and the Far-Right* (Routledge, 2002)

<sup>122</sup> See Section 3

& Honour.<sup>123</sup> The FDL has also struggled to shake its racist image and a number of members have been revealed as having close ties with Finnish neo-Nazi movements.<sup>124</sup>

This therefore brings us to Cas Mudde's three pillars of the modern far-right. As this section will demonstrate, there is indeed a clear authoritarian streak in the measures called for by the ECJM in response to what they regard as the Islamic threat. This is also linked with a xenophobia that argues that the importation of Islam into Europe through mass immigration has created an "enemy within" that is the largest threat facing the continent. The ECJM does not espouse the type of racial and ethnic-nationalism that is laid out by Mudde, but its focus on culture can often lead to what Robert Ford describes as 'cultural racism' which has elements in common with ethnic-nationalism.<sup>125</sup>

## Cultural Nationalism?

The nationalism of the ECJM is characterised by an aggressive integrationism that requires immigrants and any other foreigners to conform to a set of cultural and political values including, but not limited to women's rights, human rights, freedom of speech, and democracy. Indeed, the movement couches many of its activities in such liberal terms in order to counter accusations of far-right extremism. Garland and Treadwell, among others, are wary of this tactic and argue that, by embracing liberal causes such as freedom of speech and women's rights, the EDL is attempting to convince the media and public to 'cast them in a moderate light and, in turn, Islam in a bad, extremist light.'<sup>126</sup>

What classification then, should be applied to the ECJM's form of nationalism? In order to determine this, it is useful to analyse the EDL's mission statement, which sets out their view of integration and nationalism. The centrality of this document to this study means it is worth reproducing it at length here:

*The EDL believes that English Culture has the right to exist and prosper in England. We recognise that culture is not static, that over time changes take place naturally, and that other cultures make contributions that make our shared culture stronger and more vibrant. However, this does not give license to policy-makers to deliberately undermine our culture and impose non-English cultures on the English people in their own land.*

*If people migrate to this country then they should be expected to respect our culture, its laws, and its traditions, and not expect their own cultures to be promoted by agencies of the state. The best of their cultures will be absorbed naturally and we will all be united by the enhanced culture that results. The onus should always be on foreign cultures to adapt and integrate. If said cultures promote anti-democratic ideas and refuse to accept the authority of our nation's laws, then the host nation should not be bowing to these ideas in*

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<sup>123</sup> 'Danish anti-Muslim meeting placed under foreign control', *Modkraft*, 10 January 2012, available at: <http://sppi.modkraft.dk/nyheder/article/danske-anti-muslim-er-sat-under> [accessed 1/2/2013]

<sup>124</sup> Ann-Catherin Jungar, 'Finland', in Vidhya Ramalingam, Alex Glennie and Sebastien Feve (eds.) 'Preventing and Countering Far-Right Extremism', Institute for Strategic Dialogue and Ministry of Justice Sweden, 2012

<sup>125</sup> See: Robert Ford, 'Who might vote for the BNP?', in Matthew Goodwin and Roger Eatwell, *The New Extremism in 21st Century Britain* (Routledge, 2010)

<sup>126</sup> Jon Garland and James Treadwell, 'No Surrender to the Taliban: Football Hooliganism, Islamophobia and the Rise of the English Defence League', *Papers from the British Criminology Conference*, Vol. 10, pp. 19-35 (2010)

*the name of 'cultural sensitivity'. Law enforcement personnel must be able to enforce the rule of law thoroughly without prejudice or fear. Everyone, after all, is supposed to be equal in the eyes of the law.*

The EDL is therefore keen to draw its support from people of all races, all faiths, all political persuasions, and all lifestyle choices. Under its umbrella, all people in England, whatever their background, or origin, can stand united in a desire to stop the imposition of the rules of Islam on non-believers. In order to ensure the continuity of our culture and its institutions, the EDL stands opposed to the creeping Islamisation of our country, because intimately related to the spread of Islamic religion is the political desire to implement an undemocratic alternative to our cherished way of life: the sharia.<sup>127</sup>

The EDL has also recently adopted the motto 'Protecting our Culture'. Similarly, its ally BF describes itself as a British cultural nationalist party. The authors will argue here that the ECJM's nationalism is a form of cultural nationalism which is endemic to the current political climate in Europe.

It should be noted here that the desire to protect and promote certain values, whether they be thought of as specifically British cultural imperatives or "shared values" is not the preserve of the far-right. Since the 7 July 2005 London bombings, which were carried out by British-born Muslims, a debate has raged within mainstream European politics about how to ensure that European citizens are never again driven to attack their own countries in the cause of global jihad. Indeed, future British Prime Minister, then the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Labour's Gordon Brown, wrote a paper in 2007 entitled "The Governance of Britain", in which he argued that, unlike France and America, 'there is a less clear sense among British citizens of the values that bind the groups and communities who make up the body of the British people.'<sup>128</sup> Liberal principles such as free speech, pluralism and civic duty, though widely felt, were not well enough articulated, according to Brown, who wished to see a more robust definition of what it meant to be British. A clearer understanding of British culture and identity must also be accompanied, he wrote, by 'a set of values which have not just to be shared but also accepted.'<sup>129</sup> While he wished to see all identities and cultures celebrated and respected, he warned that 'none of these identities should take precedence over the core democratic values that define what it means to be British.' 'A British citizen,' he concluded, 'must act in accordance with these values.'<sup>130</sup> When compared with the above EDL mission statement, the similarities between the two are surprisingly numerous.

As will be demonstrated in Section 3, the extremist element of the ECJM ideology rests not in the perception of the home nation, but in the perception of the threat facing it and the proposed response to this threat.

## **Cultural Nationalism and the New Far-Right**

Perhaps the ECJM's political stance could be described most accurately as a new form of cultural nationalism, one that calls for

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<sup>127</sup> EDL mission statement, available at: <http://englishdefenceleague.org/about-us/mission-statement/> [accessed 10/8/2012]

<sup>128</sup> Gordon Brown, 'The Governance of Britain', Parliamentary Green Paper, July 2007

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

the protection of European culture through the implementation of policies that would severely limit (if not stop entirely) Muslim immigration, and empower the state to crack down on Islamic extremism (as defined by the ECJM).

According to the *Routledge Companion to Fascism and the Far-Right*, cultural nationalism is a 'form of nationalism in which the nation is defined in terms of culture, language, race and history.'<sup>131</sup> Hutchinson describes the primary aim of cultural nationalists as 'to revive what they regard as a distinctive and primordial collective personality which has a name, unique origins, history, culture, homeland, and social and political practices.'<sup>132</sup> In essence, it defines the nation primarily in terms of a shared culture, and its adherents' mission is to ensure the survival and prosperity of that culture. While race is often a factor, it is not considered by many cultural nationalists to be the defining feature of a nation.

Arising in the late 1800s as a reaction to modernisation, cultural nationalism was an attempt to preserve (or create) nationhood by reinforcing cultural and historical roots. It was especially important to German nationalists in the late-19th and early-20th centuries when philosophers such as Johann Gottfried Herder sought to rapidly put forward a concept of identity that could bind a budding nation together.<sup>133</sup> Herder, who is credited with developing the very concept of the German nation, achieved this by glorifying ancient Germanic history and providing historical reference points for the German people to draw upon in order to conceptualise their own nation. 'Governments,' he wrote nearly 90 years before German unification, 'are established regulations among men, chiefly founded on hereditary tradition.'<sup>134</sup>

Cultural nationalism is often confused with civic nationalism, which by its very nature also has a cultural component.<sup>135</sup> Unlike cultural nationalism, civic nationalism defines membership to a nation as a voluntary agreement with the state, which in turn derives its legitimacy directly from its citizens.<sup>136</sup> Cultural aspects of this type of nationalism can be found, for example, in the requirements for gaining American citizenship. Candidates for US citizenship are legally required to learn English and study American history so that they might be assimilated in a common culture. Many historians and political theorists also agree on the importance of preserving a shared experience and culture of a nation if it is to survive and prosper. Ernest Renan, for example, who espoused a liberal civic nationalism, argues that while race, language, religion, ethnicity and geography do not alone define a nation, a common cultural legacy does:

*[a nation] is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories...present day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form.*<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Peter Davies and Derek Lynch, *The Routledge Companion to Fascism and the Far-Right* (Routledge, 2002)

<sup>132</sup> John Hutchinson, 'Re-Interpreting Cultural Nationalism', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 45, Issue 3, 1999, pp. 392-407

<sup>133</sup> Johann Gottfried Herder, *Ideen zur geschichte der menschheit (Outlines of the Philosophy of a History of Man)*, translated by Thomas Churchill, (Bergman, 1800). For more on Herder see: Royal J. Schmidt, 'Cultural Nationalism in Herder', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 17, No. 3, 1956, pp. 407-417; Carlton Hayes, 'Contributions of Herder to the Doctrine of Nationalism', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 32, No. 4, 1927, pp. 719-736

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> Kai Nielsen, 'Cultural Nationalism, Neither Ethnic nor Civic', in Ronald Beiner, *Theorizing Nationalism* (State University of New York Press, 1999)

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> Ernest Renan, 'What is a Nation?', in Geoff Eley and Ronald G. Suny (ed.), *Becoming National* (Oxford University Press, 1996)

Historian Miroslav Hroch identifies the three irreplaceable traits of a nation as:

*A "memory" of some common past, treated as a "destiny" of the group...a density of linguistic or cultural ties enabling a higher degree of social communication within the group... [and] a conception of the equality of all members of the group organized as a civil society.*<sup>138</sup>

Under certain expressions of cultural nationalism, then, any ethnic group, race or religion can – and in many cases must – become part of the national project.

However, cultural nationalism is more than capable of illiberal expressions, and can lead to the xenophobia associated with the far-right. There is ample evidence that this is the case within the ECJM, which is pursuing an unyielding ultra-nationalism along the lines described by Griffin and Hroch and cited above. The concerns that ECJM groups have about the threat of Islam to their national and civilisational culture do indeed supersede all other political and societal concerns, and they have shown a willingness to advocate illiberal policies in response. Their desire to restrict or stop Muslim immigration into their countries, which will be discussed in further detail below, is but one example of this.

As Hutchinson notes, cultural nationalism can also often exhibit 'denunciations of a threatening "other"',<sup>139</sup> and there is an element of this in the EDL statement. While it uses liberal terminology in its claim that 'other cultures make contributions that that make our shared culture stronger and more vibrant', there is a sense that Islamic culture has no place at all, and should be regarded as threatening and hostile:

*[The EDL] stand united in a desire to stop the imposition of the rules of Islam on non-believers. In order to ensure the continuity of our culture and its institutions, the EDL stands opposed to the creeping Islamisation of our country, because intimately related to the spread of Islamic religion is the political desire to implement an undemocratic alternative to our cherished way of life: the sharia.*<sup>140</sup>

This passage typifies the rhetoric of the ECJM. It is a stance based on the assumption that Islam is not a religion, but a supremacist political ideology. Perhaps the most infamous expression of this view came from the Dutch politician Geert Wilders in 2007, who demanded that the Koran itself be banned as a document which, in his view, effectively calls for the violent overthrow of Western liberal democracies:

*The core of the problem is fascist Islam, the sick ideology of Allah and Mohammed as laid down in the Islamic Mein Kampf: the Koran.*<sup>141</sup>

Wilders states what is usually only implied by the ECJM: that those who follow the religion in Europe are, by definition, a threat to the nations and culture in which they live.

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<sup>138</sup> Miroslav Hroch, 'From National Movement to the Fully-Former Nation: The Nation-Building Process in Europe', in Geoff Eley and Ronald G. Suny (ed.), *Becoming National* (Oxford University Press, 1996)

<sup>139</sup> John Hutchinson, 'Re-Interpreting Cultural Nationalism', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 45, Issue 3, 1999, pp. 392-407

<sup>140</sup> EDL mission statement, available at: <http://englishdefenceleague.org/about-us/mission-statement/> [accessed 10/8/2012]

<sup>141</sup> Geert Wilders, 'Genoeg is genoeg: verbied de Koran' (Enough is Enough: Ban the Koran), *de Volkskrant*, 8 August 2007

The EDL often counters accusations of extremism and prejudice by highlighting earlier sections of its mission statement that acknowledge that most Muslims are not ideological extremists. However, even this argument is based on the suggestion that these Muslims are not in fact observing the requirements of their faith properly. The possibility that Muslims as individuals can choose their own, liberal interpretations of their faith is often disregarded.

Hans-Georg Betz has demonstrated that an Islam-focused form of cultural nationalism has begun to define a number of far-right political parties in Europe. According to him, it 'represents a cultural, ideological instrument of radical right-wing populist strategy' that has been used cynically in order to present the parties or groups as defenders of their culture and the liberal, democratic values on which it rests.<sup>142</sup>

Paul Jackson, who notes that the EDL unofficially refers to itself as "culturalist", warns that although the group (and wider movement) is not racist, it uses notions of cultural nationalism to develop anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim themes which 'embrace anti-Muslim discrimination based on cultural "otherness"'.<sup>143</sup>

Nigel Copsey is not certain that the EDL's cultural nationalism is entirely bereft of racism, and claims that within their desire to preserve an indigenous culture is a 'visceral urge to restore white ethno-national dominance that positions the EDL on the far right of the political spectrum.'<sup>144</sup> This could be the case, but the EDL's outreach to anti-Islam Sikhs and Hindus, and the presence, albeit small one, of non-white supporters at its marches should constitute some evidence to the contrary. However, Copsey is not alone in his views of this emerging form of cultural nationalism. Betz, for example, has argued that, despite not being explicitly concerned with race, the nationalism displayed by the new far-right should be seen as 'nativist' cultural racism.<sup>145</sup>

The problems with this form of cultural nationalism tend to be found when one analyses the perception of the threat to the culture, and the proposed response to it. When asked how he and the EDL/BF would like to preserve the liberal institutions of the UK, Tommy Robinson put forward three overarching policy suggestions:

- Banning the building of mosques in the UK;
- stopping all Muslim immigration into the UK;
- helping to encourage a reformation of Islam.<sup>146</sup>

These goals also match those of the wider ECJM, and were expressed in both the Aarhus and Stockholm gatherings.<sup>147</sup>

The EDL/ECJM views of Islam will be dealt with later in more detail later, but these proposed policies, which apply to the ECJM as a whole, are

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<sup>142</sup> Hans Georg Betz, 'Against the "Green Totalitarianism": Anti-Islamic Nativism in Contemporary Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe', in Christina Schori-Lang (ed.), *Europe for the Europeans: The Foreign and Security Policy of the Populist Radical Right* (Ashgate, 2007)

<sup>143</sup> Paul Jackson, 'The English Defence League's 'New Far Right' Rhetoric and the New Media', in Paul Jackson (ed.), *The EDL: Britain's Far Right Social Movement*, University of Northampton, September 2011

<sup>144</sup> Nigel Copsey quoted in 'The Views of Professionals and Practitioners', in Paul Jackson (ed.), *The EDL: Britain's Far Right Social Movement*, University of Northampton, September 2011

<sup>145</sup> Hans Georg Betz, 'The New Politics of Resentment: Radical Right Wing Populist Parties in Western Europe', *Comparative Politics* Vol. 25, No. 4, 1993 pp. 413-427

<sup>146</sup> In-person interview, Luton, 16 April 2012

<sup>147</sup> Authors were present for both of these events



very useful for the researcher who wants an accurate categorisation of the movement's political views.

The desire to ban a certain group of people from entering Europe as immigrants purely on the basis of their religion, and the denial of their place in a European country on this basis is inarguably xenophobic. The idea of restricting freedom of worship by banning mosque construction is clearly authoritarian. Finally, the assumption that Western Muslims are unable to properly follow their faith without becoming a threat to their host societies suggests an essentialist view of Islam and Muslims that, while not focused on ethnicity, can produce bigotry and intolerance identical to that of the far-right in its traditional forms.

The ECJM can, therefore, be broadly described as a far-right cultural nationalist movement which uses populist themes and tactics to latch on to growing concerns in Europe about Islamic extremism. The broad range of views within the movement, however, make it difficult to offer one single categorisation, and this must be kept in mind when analysing and describing it. The matter is further complicated by the fact some of the movement's concerns about Islam and Muslims are shared by mainstream conservative and liberal commentators and politicians, with the differences often lying only in how they view the extent of the threat and how they believe European governments should respond.

It is important that the true nature of the movement is properly understood, and the application of terms such as racist and fascist to describe the ECJM should generally be avoided. Although there may still be elements within the movement that deserve such descriptions, they are not representative of the ideology. It is also unhelpful, as the general public and the policy makers wishing to better understand, and respond to, this problem require accurate and unbiased analysis.



## 4 The Islamisation Conspiracy

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*This section will analyse the set of beliefs concerning the threat of Islam in Europe that drives the ECJM and review some of its core themes. As has been comprehensively dealt with elsewhere, Norwegian terrorist Anders Breivik was mobilised to act violently on the basis of the ideas he absorbed while immersing himself in the online counter-jihad scene.<sup>148</sup> It is becoming clear that despite the lack of any prominent voices calling for acts of violence against Muslims, the Islamisation narrative can, because of its urgent, almost apocalyptic tone, inspire some Europeans to 'take matters into their own hands'. To understand this threat, and work towards combating it, analysis of this ideology's power to mobilise must therefore be a central concern for analysts and policy makers.*

### What do they mean by "Islamisation"?

"Islamisation" is the dominant theme of the ECJM's rhetoric. The website of Anders Gravers' SIOE defines the problem as follows:

*Islamisation is the process by which the supremacy of islam is taking place by whatever means Muslims and their allies use.*

*Unfortunately, Muslims have many allies in the European establishment, in politics, religion and the judiciary.*

*Muslim leaders use our own virtues of tolerance and freedom against us to establish Islam's own intolerance and oppression.*

*Together with our own establishment they suppress our free speech and stealthily introduce Sharia law.<sup>149</sup>*

In an article on the *Gates of Vienna* blog entitled "What is Islamization?" the author, Nicolai Sennels, offers:

*The word "Islamization" was originally coined by Muslims to describe the conversion of a kufr (infidel) society to an "enlightened" (Islamic) society. Islamization is a phenomenon that has existed since the Muslim prophet Mohammed lived 1,400 years ago.<sup>150</sup>*

The article posits that there are three forms of Islamisation currently in progress in the West:

- The removal of Christian or Jewish symbols from the public sphere so as to avoid offending the Muslim population;
- the imposition of Islamic traditions on non-Islamic societies;
- the creation of "no-go" areas in Western cities, which are predominantly made up of Muslims and enforce forms of sharia law.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> See for example: Jacob A. Ravndal, 'A Post-Trial Profile of Anders Behring Breivik', *CTC Sentinel*, 29 October 2012

<sup>149</sup> 'About SIOE', SIOE official website, available at: <http://sioeu.wordpress.com/about/> [accessed 5/8/2012]

<sup>150</sup> Nicolai Sennels, 'What is Islamization?', *Gates of Vienna*, 26 March 2011, available at: <http://gatesofvienna.blogspot.co.uk/2011/03/what-is-islamization.html> [accessed 8/8/2012]

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

The article concludes that Islamisation is carried out through the 'elimination of the indigenous culture, introduction of Islamic traditions [and] immigration.'<sup>152</sup> The Islamisation narrative is thus formulated through the ECJM's own use of terminology and references from the history of Islam. According to this narrative, the current jihadist terrorist threat is part of a centuries-long effort by Islam and Muslims to dominate Western civilisation.

The other main agents of the conspiracy, along with Muslims, are supposedly found among a European liberal elite that dominates governments and the media and refuses to resist the attack, either through fear or a desire to benefit from the chaos. There is an apparently genuine belief within the movement that if this process of Islamisation is not stopped immediately it will be too late, and Europe will become part of a new Caliphate run by strict Islamic Sharia.

## Sharia and Taqiyya

According to the ideology the process of Islamisation will culminate in the imposition of Sharia. The ECJM argues that the strict Sharia imposed in countries such as Saudi Arabia, or by extremist groups like the Taliban in Afghanistan, is integral to Islam, and that Muslims are duty-bound to live by it and impose it wherever they reside.

Robert Spencer's blog, *Jihad Watch*, which has provided much intellectual guidance for the ECJM, argues that Islam is unique among religions in that it 'includes a mandatory and highly specific legal and political plan for society called Sharia.'<sup>153</sup> Thus, the rigid and intolerant interpretation of Sharia implemented in countries like Saudi Arabia – which includes stoning adulterers and executing apostates – is presented as the only "true" Islam. Due to its origins in the Koran (which according to Islamic belief is the unadulterated word of God) and the Sunnah (the sayings of the Prophet Mohammed), the ECJM argues, any practicing Western Muslim must strive to implement it, superseding Western legal systems in the process. This essentialist view of Islam, Muslims and Sharia, does not allow for more liberal interpretations of the religion, and despite supposedly endorsing an Islamic reformation, the ECJM rejects any attempts to achieve this either as misinterpretation or a deliberate and sinister masking of the truth designed to further the Islamisation agenda.

The project of imposing Sharia on the West gradually, by a surreptitious step-by-step process, is often referred to by the ECJM as "creeping Sharia" or "stealth jihad". A Muslim's dissembling his or her true beliefs in patient deference to such a process – a widespread habit according to ECJM theory – is referred to as *taqiyya*, which is an ancient Islamic term roughly translating to "religious dissimulation", whereby a Muslim can deny all or parts of their faith if it is to the overall benefit of Islam. The concept was first developed and employed in the early 8th century by Shiite Muslims who were being persecuted by the Sunni Abbasid Caliph, al-Mansur. Shiites at the time received religious authorisation to deny their true Shiite beliefs if their life was under threat.<sup>154</sup> Despite this being a predominantly Shiite doctrine, the term is applied constantly by the ECJM to dismiss claims of Sunni Muslim moderation.

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Gregory M. Davis, 'Islam 101', *Jihad Watch*, available at: <http://www.jihadwatch.org/islam-101.html> [accessed 9/8/2012]

<sup>154</sup> See: Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shiite Islam* (Yale University Press, 1985)

Sharia is therefore seen as an attack on liberal Enlightenment values, and this allows the ECJM to present itself as the protector of values such as freedom of speech and democracy. The problem is always presented as more significant and more widespread than the mainstream media reports, and flash-points such as the controversy over the Danish Mohammed cartoons are portrayed as the latest skirmishes in a wider shadow-war.

The “creeping Sharia” theme was prevalent at the ECJM meeting in Århus, Denmark that brought together defence leagues from Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland, England and Germany. In her speech, Mimosa Koiranen of the FDL warned:

*In a democracy, Sharia teaching should be an offence. We must stop Sharia before it is too late. Soon non-Muslims will be killed in Europe, our children will be killed. Sharia is the start, this will then lead to jihad.*<sup>155</sup>

Concessions to Muslims in Europe, such as allowing Sharia courts to settle civil disputes, are seen as the thin end of the wedge. The ECJM believe that all efforts to bring the status of Islam closer to that of Christianity and Judaism (where in the UK and other parts of Europe the latter are also allowed their own form of religious arbitration through the Beth Din system) are part of the Islamisation conspiracy.

On 21 May 2012, the Norwegian government passed a law that separated the Norwegian state from the church, officially establishing the country's secular credentials.<sup>156</sup> The move was also seen as a way of granting equal status to all religions, Islam included. In Stavanger, Norway on 22 June 2012, the NDL held one of its first public rallies ‘to protest against the Norwegian government changing the constitution to make Islam equal to Christianity in Norway and to protest against the Islamization of Norway and Europe.’<sup>157</sup> The event was peaceful and attended by 40-50 NDL members according to the group's own reports.<sup>158</sup> Rune Hauge, one of the group's leaders, had earlier explained in an interview with Norway's *Aftenbladet* that he organised the rally and joined the NDL because:

*I want my descendants to grow up where we still have a democracy, with freedom of expression, and can escape being forcibly converted to Islam to avoid being persecuted – and ultimately killed – due to the fact that Muslims have become a majority.*<sup>159</sup>

The NDL interpreted the government's decision to officially secularise the state through the lens of its Islamisation conspiracy ideology as yet another example of a European government capitulating to Islam and Sharia.

## The Coming Civil War in Europe

Another central theme concerns the prediction of an imminent civil war in Europe, to be fought between indigenous Europeans and the

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<sup>155</sup> Mimosa Koiranen, speaking at Århus demonstration, Århus, Denmark, 31 March 2012

<sup>156</sup> ‘Norway Separates Church and State’, *The Local*, 21 May, 2012

<sup>157</sup> Facebook event page for NDL demonstration in Stavanger, available at: <http://www.facebook.com/events/458177274197107/> [accessed 10/8/2012]

<sup>158</sup> ‘Vi er fornøyd tross alt’ (We are happy after all), NDL official webpage, 26 June, 2012, available at: [http://norwegiandl.info/modules/nyheter\\_norsk/item.php?itemid=23](http://norwegiandl.info/modules/nyheter_norsk/item.php?itemid=23) [accessed 30/6/2012]

<sup>159</sup> ‘NDL frykter bråk fra voldelige antirasister’ (NDL fear trouble from violent anti-racists), *Aftenbladet*, 19 June 2012

descendants of Muslim immigrants.<sup>160</sup> Civil war is held to be the only logical outcome of the following three articles of ECJM belief:

- i) Europe has been betrayed by the political elite;
- ii) Muslim birth-rates are outstripping those of non-Muslims in Europe;
- iii) Islam is an aggressive religion that is immune to reform and secularisation.

According to Tommy Robinson:

*It's only going to get worse, when you look at the statistics, demographics, birth-rates...there's going to be real problems here. You need to try and sort these problems out while there are three percent Muslims [in Britain], instead of 20-30 percent Muslim.*

[...]

*In the next 50-100 years in Europe when there are massive, massive problems with Islam, people will look back to our time and say, 'they were right'...I am 100 percent certain that there will be civil wars within Europe between Muslims and non-Muslims.*<sup>161</sup>

This sentiment was echoed by several speakers at the two recent ECJM international meetings in Århus and Stockholm. An unnamed NDL member who addressed the crowds in Århus, for example, predicted that neighbouring Sweden was on the verge of civil war, pointing out that this would come from the growth of Muslim ghettos in the country, in which Muslims run their own social welfare projects and reject government institutions.<sup>162</sup>

This belief in a coming civil war is a familiar feature of traditional far-right, fascist and racial-nationalist thought. Many racial-nationalists hold a strong belief in a future "race war", in which whites will be forced to take up arms against increasingly aggressive and powerful racial minorities seeking to "take" their country from them. The most extreme racial-nationalists are not only preparing themselves for this conflict, but are actively seeking to initiate it.

Anders Breivik's compendium, *2083: A European Declaration of Independence*, is replete with references to this war. He writes that 'the West is becoming so overwhelmed by immigration that this may trigger civil wars in several Western nations in the near future.' Indeed, he believes that in some countries, such as France and England, this war is already under way.<sup>163</sup> He thus saw his attacks as a legitimate action during a civil war, in which his enemies were not only Muslim immigrants but the liberal-left elite he believed to be complicit in the destruction of his culture. Clearly, the concept of an actual military war is always one that by its very nature encourages violence. This type of rhetoric from the ECJM is likely to play some role in inspiring others like

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<sup>160</sup> Samuel P. Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations: The Remaking of the World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996) is a well-known work on geopolitics and conflicts between contemporary dominating cultures. In many respects, *The Clash of Civilizations* was a comment on Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man*, published in 1992. Due to this and the fact that Dr. Huntington never had any involvement with the ECJM nor gave it any vocal support, his work will not be discussed here in detail, even though activists sometimes refer to his works.

<sup>161</sup> In-person interview with Tommy Robinson, Luton, 16 April 2012

<sup>162</sup> NDL leading member addressing Århus meeting, 31 March 2012

<sup>163</sup> Anders Behring Breivik, *2083: A European Declaration of Independence*, 2011

Breivik, who will cast themselves as soldiers in this war and attempt violent acts in its name.

## The Origins of the Islamisation Conspiracy Theory

Here follows a brief discussion of the work of a selection of thinkers, writers and activists who have helped to create and popularise the Islamisation conspiracy ideology. Although many of the individuals mentioned here cannot be categorised as far-right, their ideas have become the intellectual basis of a growing far-right movement in Europe. None of them have ever put forward violence as an acceptable response to Islamisation. Nonetheless some of them have hailed the advent of groups like the EDL and EFI, and even become intimately involved in their international conferences and events.<sup>164</sup>

### *Eurabia*

The title of a 2005 book by a Switzerland-based academic working under the pseudonym of Bat Ye'or, 'Eurabia' refers to a conspiracy theory concerning the impending Islamisation of Europe. According to Ye'or, the story began in 1973, at the height of the OPEC oil embargo, when the Euro-Arab Dialogue (EAD) programme was established in an attempt to create closer links and co-operation between the European Economic Community (EEC) and the Arab world. Ye'or claims that more sinister objectives lay behind this deal, and that prime among them was the fulfilment of the Arab/Muslim desire to eliminate Israel and begin a cultural conquest of Europe. She also claims that European leaders, for their part, acquiesced to this out of a fear of terrorism as well as a desire to tap into the Arab oil-economy. This, she argues, explains why many European governments have allowed un-checked, mass-immigration into their countries of Muslims, who have thus been able to set up bases within the Western world from which to destroy its culture and civilisation.<sup>165</sup>

She finds evidence for this theory in the history of Islam, which under her interpretation is defined by the religion's desire to eliminate Jews and conquer the world. Modern day European Muslims can thus be cast as simply the current torch-bearers in a tradition of anti-Semitism and imperialism dating back to the dawn of Islam. In order to demonstrate the modern Muslim desire to conquer Europe, Ye'or offers a revised history of the Islamic concept of the *dhimma*, which describes non-Muslims living under Muslim rule in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>166</sup> Coining the term 'dhimmitude', Ye'or argues that history has been whitewashed to conceal the terrible truth about the status of non-Muslims living under Muslim rule, and applies the term ironically to the modern European governments and commentators whom she sees as capitulating to the Islamic threat. Robert Spencer has adopted this term as a personal favourite, and on his website explains that:

*Spearheaded by dhimmi academics and self-serving advocacy groups, that same attitude of chastened subservience has*

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<sup>164</sup> The best example of this is Pamela Geller and Robert Spencer's involvement in a Counter-Jihad conference on 4 August 2012. They were keynote speakers at the conference, which was organised by a coalition of defence leagues from Britain and Scandinavia. For more, see Section 2.

<sup>165</sup> Bat Ye'or, *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005)

<sup>166</sup> Bat Ye'or, *Islam and Dhimmitude: Where Civilizations Collide* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2002)

*entered into Western academic study of Islam, and from there into journalism, school textbooks, and the popular discourse.*<sup>167</sup>

The dhimmitude concept therefore serves as the ideal construct for the ECJM, one that brings together the overlapping themes of the modern-day extension of Islam's historic attempts to destroy Western civilisation and Western complicity therein.

Ye'or gives numerous examples of supposed Western participation in the plot, including a perceived anti-Israel bias among European governments that she attributes to a desire to honour the deal made with Arab regimes under the guise of the EAD programme. In an interview in 2006, she warned of an 'Islamization of the [European] culture' set to take place in the near future:

*Europe will become a vassal, a satellite of the Arab world, which is larger in terms of numbers. Demographically, we are already losing. The vacuum that has been created in Europe will be filled by the children of immigrants.*<sup>168</sup>

More recently, she has written that the Western reaction to the Arab uprisings of 2011, whereby presidents and prime ministers condemned the killing of Arab civilians and, in the case of Libya, intervened to protect them, is further evidence of the Eurabia conspiracy. She notes that the rights of Arabs which the West has sought to protect 'are applied selectively, because they are never invoked to protect Christians against persecution in Egypt, Iraq, Turkey, Algeria, Sudan, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Indonesia or Pakistan.'<sup>169</sup>

The two main ideas upon which her theory is based – that European elites are engaged in this conspiracy, and the essentialist view of Muslims and Islam as a single, uniform block – are also prevalent within the ECJM. Yet, despite claims to the contrary,<sup>170</sup> Ye'or does appear to accept the existence of moderate Muslims, though she does not believe they are as ubiquitous as has been assumed, and has little confidence that they will ever gain any ground.<sup>171</sup>

Ye'or's works are among the most influential within the ECJM. Though she is not always directly referred to, her views on the status of Europe and its Muslims echo throughout the writings and pronouncements of the movement. In the United States, she receives regular praise from Geller and Spencer, and her work has had a marked impact on the Scandinavian Defence Leagues.<sup>172</sup>

One EDL member who contributes to the group's official blog under the name "Brian of London", wrote in the EDL online forums that Ye'or's arguments 'define the problems we face',<sup>173</sup> Stating that 'in the field of the counter-Jihad she is the grandmother of us all', he links to a 2011 article in which she reiterates much of the Eurabia thesis. He

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<sup>167</sup> Robert Spencer, 'Why Jihad Watch?', *Jihad Watch* (undated), available at: <http://www.jihadwatch.org/why-jihad-watch.html> [accessed 10/8/2012]

<sup>168</sup> Avi Schwartz, 'The Protocols of the Elders of Brussels', *Haaretz*, 20 June 2006, available at: <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/features/the-protocols-of-the-elders-of-brussels-1.190865> [accessed 11/8/2012]

<sup>169</sup> Bat Ye'or, 'The Palestinization of UNESCO', *New English Review*, November 2011, available at: [http://www.newenglishreview.org/custpage.cfm?frm/101486/sec\\_id/101486](http://www.newenglishreview.org/custpage.cfm?frm/101486/sec_id/101486) [accessed 10/8/2012]

<sup>170</sup> Matt Carr, 'You are now entering Eurabia', *Race and Class*, Vol. 48, No. 1, 2006, pp 1-22

<sup>171</sup> Bat Ye'or, *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005); Bat Ye'or speaking at the Ethics and Public Policy Centre, Washington DC, 2 April 1998, available at: <http://www.dhimmi.org/LectureE4.html> [accessed 11/8/2012]

<sup>172</sup> Based on authors' interviews with members of the SDL, NDL and DDL at Aarhus meeting, Aarhus, Denmark, 31 March 2012

<sup>173</sup> Comment in EDL forum, available at: <http://englishdefenceleague.org/forum/edl-chat/bat-yeor-speaks-and-tells-you-why-you-need-to-fight-against-jihad-91784/> [accessed 11/8/2012]



also explains how he has been convinced by her arguments about the Muslim takeover:

*If you choose to live in Tower Hamlets, perhaps in the house your grandfather left you, you're an alien settler occupying a piece of Muslim land. Your history is worthless, your ancestors are guilty of numerous colonial sins and your right to live in your own city, in your own home is forfeit.*<sup>174</sup>

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets has the highest proportion of Muslims of any borough in England and Wales, and is therefore an area of special interest for the EDL/ECJM. For EDL members like Brian, Tower Hamlets falls squarely within the "Islamised" category: it is a section of the country that has been ceded to conquering Muslims as part of the Eurabia plot.

The dhimmitude theme is popular throughout the movement. In October 2011 the EDL website carried an article about a planned demonstration in Birmingham that had been cancelled at the last minute. The article claims that after the West Midlands Police had agreed upon the date and venue of the protest, it was vetoed by Birmingham City Council. Both the police and the council are described in now familiar terms, and suspected of being cowed by threats from Muslim members of the council: 'They didn't have a little word in the ear of the dhimmi West Muslim Police...by any chance?'<sup>175</sup> The article also refers to the Birmingham Council, which 'appears to be run by Muslims and its dhimmi supporters in the Labour party.'<sup>176</sup> The article is typical of EDL rhetoric in depicting a fight to preserve liberal ideals, beginning with a plea for the government to uphold 'the right of assembly and the right to peaceful protest enshrined not just in the Magna Carta, but in the European Charter on Human Rights.'<sup>177</sup> After explaining the injustice done to the EDL by the authorities in Birmingham, the author presents the group as defenders of these values:

*[Birmingham Council] have laid down a challenge to the rule of law, the rights of free Englishmen and the people of Great Britain... The EDL will pick up the torch of Freedom and Free speech*<sup>178</sup>

The Eurabia theory has been criticised by academics as well as conservative and liberal commentators.<sup>179</sup> Walter Lacquer, for example, has questioned the essentialist view of Muslims in Europe which is the premise of Ye'or's book. He notes that:

*The great majority of Muslims in Britain are not Arab but Pakistani or Bangladeshi in origin. In Germany, the Turks greatly outnumber all other Muslims. In France, the majority is North and West African. In Belgium, Turkish and Moroccan, and so on. These are not minor, pedantic issues because traditions, culture, language and even the forms of Islam practised differ considerably in Europe.*<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> 'Betrayed by Birmingham City Council', EDL official website, 25 October 2011, available at: [http://englishdefenceleague.org/birmingham\\_betrayed/](http://englishdefenceleague.org/birmingham_betrayed/) [accessed 5/8/2012]

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Robert Irwin, Review of Bat Ye'or, 'Islam and Dhimmitude: Where Civilizations Collide', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (October 2002), pp. 213-215

<sup>180</sup> Walter Lacquer, 'Europe's Long Road to the Mosque', *Standpoint*, July/August 2010

## Historical context

An important component of the ECJM's ideology is a sense that Islamisation is a sweeping geo-historical phenomenon; that the current problem of radical Islam the world now confronts in the form of al-Qaeda, the Taliban and others is just the latest symptom of a wider problem that has existed since the foundation of the religion. The very name of the *Gates of Vienna* blog is a good indication of this.<sup>181</sup> The blog's motto reads:

*At the siege of Vienna in 1683 Islam seemed poised to overrun Christian Europe. We are now in a phase of a very old war*<sup>182</sup>

In an article discussing the blog's view of the post 11 September 2001 American-led "War on Terror", the author of states that he and his fellow contributors reject terms such as "Global War on Terror" and opt instead for 'GIJ3W: The Great Islamic Jihad, Third Wave'.<sup>183</sup> For them, the struggle with Islamist terrorism is a 'conflict of cultures' that has 'endured for more than a millennium':<sup>184</sup>

*The thesis of this blog is that, like it or not, we are in a religious war. We do not define the terms but we should take careful note of them. We are mistaken if we think the Enemy wants merely to kill us. Once again, Jihad offers two choices to the West: conversion or death. Jihad exists in order to annihilate unbelief. Christians, Jews, Hindus, atheists, or Wiccans, it is all the same to him.*<sup>185</sup>

This theme was also prevalent in Århus, with many of the speakers alluding to an historic battle with Islam. Michael Mannheimer,<sup>186</sup> a German journalist and associate of the EFI, focused on this in his speech:

*Europe faces the biggest threat in its history. Theocracy is not at the gates as it was in Constantinople or Vienna, they are now with us, in our countries. This religion is not peaceful at all, they want to rule the whole world – this is the duty of all faithful believers.*<sup>187</sup>

<sup>181</sup> The reference to Vienna alludes to a battle that took place there in 1683 between the Holy Roman Empire and the Ottoman's, who were attempting to take control of the city as part of a strategic expansion.

<sup>182</sup> *Gates of Vienna* homepage, available at: <http://gatesofvienna.blogspot.co.uk/> [accessed 10/10/2012]

<sup>183</sup> Baron Bodissey, 'The Newest Phase of a Very Old War', *Gates of Vienna*, 9 October 2004, available at: <http://gatesofvienna.blogspot.co.uk/2004/10/newest-phase-of-very-old-war.html> [accessed 10/10/2012]

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> This is the pseudonym he uses when involved with the ECJM. His real name is Karl Michael-Merkle.

<sup>187</sup> Mannheimer speaking at Århus demonstration, Århus, Denmark, 31 March 2012

## *The Demographic Threat*

The idea that all Muslims operate together as a uniform block, unanimously planning their conquest of Europe, is the foundation of another of the ECJM's central concerns: demographics.

A strong mobilising message, the “demographic time-bomb” argument has been taken up by the Counter-Jihad movement since Canadian author Mark Steyn's *America Alone* predicted that higher Muslim birth-rates compared to those of non-Muslim Europeans would make the population of Europe majority-Muslim in the near future. Steyn depicts high birth-rates among Muslims as a facet of the Islamisation programme for Europe, which he predicts will fall under the rule of Sharia even before its population is majority-Muslim.<sup>188</sup>

Steyn believes that demography ‘is the most obvious symptom of civilisational exhaustion and the clearest indicator of where we're headed,’ and much of his book is devoted to analysing demographic trends.<sup>189</sup> Bat Ye'or's Eurabia is an imminent reality for Steyn, who also sees a conspiracy among the European elite to cede to the demands of radical Islam.

According to Steyn, fears of overpopulation have led to an average birth-rate of less than two children per family in Europe, and indigenous populations are therefore dwindling. In order to prevent ‘societal suicide’, the West has chosen to ‘outsource its breeding’ to Islam by allowing the mass-immigration of Muslims. This was a fatal move, he warns, on the part of the European liberal elite: Muslim immigration differs from previous influxes of races and nationalities because now a religion is being imported, and a political ideology to boot.<sup>190</sup>

This religion is now ‘the principal supplier of new Europeans’ who, unlike previous waves of immigration that added to the melting pot, will usher in a ‘conversion’ from Western liberalism to Islam. This is due, Steyn argues, to the nature of Islam which demands that host countries adapt themselves to it, rather than the other way around. Steyn relies heavily on anecdotal references – such as French public swimming pools introducing gender-segregation – to prove that Western Muslims intend to reshape Western society in their own image.<sup>191</sup>

Like many of the other authors analysed here, Steyn has little patience for arguments that point to the interpretive diversity within Islam. He argues that, though moderate views may exist, they have little to no influence among the majority of Western Muslims. When he does broach the subject, his disdain for this notion is clear:

*Yes, yes, I know Islam is very varied, and Riyadh has a vibrant gay scene and the Khartoum Feminist Publishing Collective now has so many members they've rented lavish new offices above the clitorectomy clinic.*<sup>192</sup>

Citing a number of polls – one of which, from 2006, found that 83 percent of British Muslims did not believe that Arabs were involved in the 11 September attacks – Steyn concludes that this new and growing population will be unable to integrate into European society. He uses

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<sup>188</sup> Mark Steyn, *America Alone* (Regnery, 2006)

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

examples from Islamic history to warn that, even before Muslims become a statistical majority in Europe they may begin to exercise power as a unit:

*At the height of its power in the eight century, the "Islamic world" stretched from Spain to India yet its population was only Minority Muslim.*<sup>193</sup>

Sentences such as 'this is Islam's demographic moment, and they have to make the most of it,' certainly suggest an essentialist presentation of Islam and Muslims. Muslims are thought to operate as a homogeneous block; as that block expands in Europe, more and more of their demands will be met until they have succeeded in Islamising the entire continent.<sup>194</sup>

Steyn believes that in light of the steady increase of its Muslim population, Europe should be very concerned about what percentage of that population supports violent jihad. Aware that he will face accusations of bigotry in his presentation of Muslims, he is careful to acknowledge that 'of course most Western Muslims aren't terrorists.'<sup>195</sup> However, even here he suggests that the best type of Muslim is a former Muslim:

*Aside from a few brave but marginalized men...one can't help noticing that the most prominent "moderate Muslims" would seem to be more accurately designated as apostate ex-Muslims*<sup>196</sup>

Though studies have shown that birth rates are likely to fall among coming generations of European Muslims,<sup>197</sup> Muslim families in Europe do currently have more children than non-Muslims, on average.<sup>198</sup> Are Muslims intentionally having more children in order to fulfil the Islamisation conspiracy? On this point, Steyn cites fringe extremists such as Muammar Gaddafi, who he quotes saying: 'Allah will grant Islam victory in Europe – without swords, without guns, without conquests. The fifty million Muslims of Europe will turn it into a Muslim continent within a few decades.'<sup>199</sup> He also relies on the words of the Norway-based Kurdish jihadist preacher Mullah Krekar in 2006:

*we're the ones who will change you...just look at the development within Europe, where the number of Muslims is expanding like mosquitoes. Every western woman in the EU is producing an average of 1.4 children. Every Muslim woman in the same countries is producing 3.5 children.*

This is presented almost as a confirmation of Steyn's demographic warnings, and strongly suggests a Muslim breeding conspiracy. There is no mention of the scant following Krekar has, and no effort to entertain the idea that he represents a fringe movement. Indeed, there is an ambiguity throughout the work as to whether Steyn at any given moment is talking about all Muslims, the majority of Muslims, or specifically about a fringe of extremists. This same ambiguity characterises most of the literature that has contributed to the ECJM ideology, and much of the movement's own rhetoric.

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**193** Ibid.

**194** Ibid.

**195** Ibid.

**196** Ibid.

**197** Charles Westroff and Tomas Fejka, 'Religiousness and Fertility among European Muslims', *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 3, No.4, 2007, pp. 785-809

**198** 'The Future of the Global Muslim Population', Pew Research Center, January 2011

**199** Mark Steyn, *America Alone* (Regnery, 2006)

Steyn also touches on the idea of the coming civil war between Muslims and non-Muslims in Europe. Events such as the Madrid bombings of 2004; demands made by some Austrian Muslims that all female teachers wear headscarves; and the murder of Dutch film-maker Theo van Gogh, all point, according to Steyn, to 'the early stages of an undeclared civil war.'<sup>200</sup>

Steyn, like many in the Counter-Jihad movement and beyond, holds that although there are moderate Muslims, there is no moderate Islam. The four main schools of Islamic thought cannot accommodate, he argues, Muslims who wish to follow liberal values and reject violence.

The demographic threat is among the biggest concerns of the ECJM. On the websites of all three of the main Scandinavian defence leagues – the DDL, SDL and NDL – are included warnings about the rapid growth of Muslim populations in their respective countries. The SDL website, for example, warns:

*In 1970, the number of Muslims in Sweden was 1000. According to the prestigious Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, there were 147,000 Muslims in Sweden in 1990. In 2010, the number increased to 451,000.*<sup>201</sup>

Muslim demographics was also a recurrent theme at the Åarhus demonstration. Michael Mannheimer warned: 'there were 600,000 Muslims [in Europe] in the 1900s, now that number is 52 million. Islam did not come to integrate, they came to conquer our continent. Islam must be put out of Europe and this is our mission.'<sup>202</sup>

Voices in ECJM also argue that the emigration of non-Muslim Europeans will become a serious problem once the Muslim proportion of the European population reaches a critical mass, anything over three per cent of the overall population according to some. In 2007, BF's then leader Paul Weston wrote:

*[once] the Muslim population climbs over three percent of the population in Western countries, native Europeans start to emigrate. The Dutch, French, Germans and British are leaving in unprecedented numbers.*<sup>203</sup>

For the FDL's Mimosa Korainen, this watershed is even lower, as she told the audience in Stockholm:

*History has proven that Islam is considered peaceful and in fact acts peacefully, as long as Muslims make up less than two per cent of the population. As soon as the number of Muslims exceeds two per cent...it begins to change its nature. First Muslims start converting people to Islam...then when the population exceeds 5 per cent, Muslims start to demand special rights such as Halal meat in schools and recognition of Muslim holidays by law.*<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Homepage of the SDL official website, available at: [www.swedishdl.info](http://www.swedishdl.info) [accessed 2/2/2013]

<sup>202</sup> Michael Mannheimer speaking at Åarhus demonstration, Åarhus, Denmark, 31 March 2012

<sup>203</sup> Paul Weston, 'Is European Civil War Inevitable by 2025? Part I, *Gates of Vienna*, 31 March 2007, available at: <http://gatesofvienna.blogspot.de/2007/03/is-european-civil-war-inevitable-by.html> [accessed 2/10/2012]. See also Daniel Pipes, 'Europeans Fleeing Eurabia', 10 October 2004 updated 17 January 2012, available at: <http://www.danielpipes.org/blog/2004/10/europeans-fleeing-eurabia> [accessed 9/10/2012]

<sup>204</sup> Mimosa Korainen speaking at the meeting in Stockholm, 4 August 2012, Stockholm, Sweden

The notion of rapidly changing European demographics has fundamental importance for the ECJM with reference to the commonly-held belief in a coming civil war. According to Weston:

*By 2025 the combination of factors mentioned above will lead to such a massive transformation in Europe's demographic makeup that Islam may well have sufficient numbers to confront us.*<sup>205</sup>

## **Pamela Geller and Robert Spencer**

Above all others, two names in particular are legend within the ECJM: Robert Spencer and Pamela Geller. Through their respective blogs, *Jihad Watch* and *Atlas Shrugs*, they have helped inspire the Counter-Jihad movement in Europe. Rather than analysing specific Islamic-extremist movements, they have focused their activism on criticising the theological tenets of Islam itself. For them, al-Qaeda and its sympathisers and affiliates are the only true expression of Islam, and any tolerant and peaceful interpretation of the religion is dismissed.

In his book, *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam*, Spencer argues that all of the violence, repression and intolerance found in theocracies such as the Saudi monarchy or in Afghanistan under the Taliban, is mandated by Islam as represented by the Koran and Hadith. The problem, he says, is not extremist Islam, but Islam itself. 'Traditional Islam,' he writes, 'is not moderate or peaceful... It is the only major world religion with a developed doctrine and tradition of warfare against unbelievers.'<sup>206</sup> According to this reading of Islam the ultra-violence and terrorism of al-Qaeda is an ideal expression of the religion and the views of many of its adherents. Spencer often uses examples from the history of Islam to make his case that modern Islamist terrorism is simply a continuation of a centuries-old war against the West.

Spencer's protégé, Pamela Geller, believes that 'Islam is the most antisemitic, genocidal ideology in the world.'<sup>207</sup> This reference to Islam as an ideology instead of a religion is a very common rhetorical device used by the ECJM. On her blog, which is linked to on almost every defence league homepage in Europe, she organises protests and other forms of Counter-Jihad activism in America. She is the founder, along with Spencer, of Stop the Islamization of America (SIOA), and became one of the internationally recognised faces of the Counter-Jihad movement in the summer of 2010 when she organised protests against the building of the infamous "Ground-zero mosque". The plan for the Islamic centre was presented by her as an attempt by Muslims to celebrate the "success" of the 11 September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center.

Geller and Spencer have also taken a specific interest in Europe, which they believe is already unstoppable on its path to full Islamisation. According to Spencer, through mass-immigration and the 'official dhimmitude' of European leaders, 'Muslims are accomplishing today what they have tried but failed to do for over a millennium: conquer Europe.'<sup>208</sup> He is also an advocate of the Steynian demographics

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<sup>205</sup> Paul Weston, 'Is European Civil War Inevitable by 2025? Part One', *Gates of Vienna*, 31 March 2007, available at: <http://gatesofvienna.blogspot.de/2007/03/is-european-civil-war-inevitable-by.html> [accessed 22/8/2012]

<sup>206</sup> Robert Spencer, 'What is a moderate Muslim?', *Jihad Watch*, 14 January 2006, available at: <http://www.jihadwatch.org/2006/01/what-is-a-moderate-muslim.html> [accessed 22/8/2012]

<sup>207</sup> Pamela Geller, 'NY Times Con Job: Daisy Khan had never seen so many Jews in her life', *Atlas Shrugs*, available at: [http://atlashrugs2000.typepad.com/atlas\\_shrugs/2010/11/new-york-times-con-job-daisy-khan-had-never-seen-so-many-jews-in-her-life.html](http://atlashrugs2000.typepad.com/atlas_shrugs/2010/11/new-york-times-con-job-daisy-khan-had-never-seen-so-many-jews-in-her-life.html) [accessed 21/8/12]

<sup>208</sup> Robert Spencer, *Stealth Jihad* (Regnery, 2008)

thesis, and claims that once Muslims become a majority in Europe, 'they will attempt to impose Islamic law in its entirety upon the states of Europe.'<sup>209</sup>

The work of Geller and Spencer has played a significant part in the development of the EDL and its growing number of offshoots across Europe, particularly in Scandinavia. They are among the main organisers of the European gatherings, and help steer the focus of the movement.

## **Non-Extremist Muslims**

One of the crucial questions to ask when analysing the Islamisation ideology is whether or not its adherents recognise the existence of a majority of non-Jihadist, non-extremist Muslims, both in the West and worldwide. Indeed, the very nature of this ideology hinges on the acceptance or rejection of that premise. Rejecting the existence of a non-extremist majority of Muslims amounts to a bigoted, xenophobic and irrational position that can only be categorised as far-right and treated as a potentially dangerous ingredient in European and American society.

At first glance it appears that some sections of the ECJM and its American allies have made the critical distinction between a minority of extremists, and the wider Western Muslim population. Even when they deny the existence of a moderate Islam, they tend to acknowledge that moderate Muslims, as individuals, do exist. To take a few examples:

EDL/EFI:

*...we must always be careful to distinguish fair-minded criticism from simple prejudice. But that does not mean that we should equate disdain for Islam as an ideology (both political and theological) with hatred of individual Muslims. It is certainly true that there are many decent Muslims – no one is questioning that. But that does not mean that the problems that give root to Islamic extremists can be understood in isolation from mainstream Islamic thought or practice.<sup>210</sup>*

Swedish Defence League

*Secular, liberal Muslims certainly do exist, although they are not active enough and too silent.<sup>211</sup>*

Pamela Geller

*Stop Islamization of America is dedicated to stopping that stealth jihad, exposing the Islamic supremacists, and preserving the freedom of speech, the freedom of conscience, and the equality of rights of all people before the law. We are not against Islam or Muslims as such...<sup>212</sup>*

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Tommy Robinson's official statement promoting a 4 August 2012 Counter-Jihad conference in Stockholm, Sweden. Available at: [http://www.european-freedom-initiative.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=347:worldwide-counter-jihad-alliance-to-launch-with-stockholm-demonstration-on-august-4&catid=44:eu-news-sweden&Itemid=68](http://www.european-freedom-initiative.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=347:worldwide-counter-jihad-alliance-to-launch-with-stockholm-demonstration-on-august-4&catid=44:eu-news-sweden&Itemid=68)

<sup>211</sup> In-person interview with Isak Nygren of the Swedish Defence League, Århus, Denmark, 31 March 2012

<sup>212</sup> Pamela Geller, *Stop the Islamization of America* (WND Books, 2011)

Robert Spencer:

*While there are moderate Muslims, moderate Islam is something else again. There are Muslims who are very peaceful people, who would never wage jihad, and who don't approve of those waging jihad in the name of Islam today.<sup>213</sup>*

There are exceptions to this – some groups within the ECJM could not be accused of diluting their rhetoric to avoid mainstream criticism. One of these is SIOE which offers this view on moderate Muslims on its official website:

*SIOE does not accept the notion of moderate Muslims.*

*This makes SIOE different to all other anti-Islamist groups who only oppose Islamist "extremists" [Their emphasis]<sup>214</sup>*

The SIOE statement aside, the pronouncements of the main protagonists suggest some degree of nuanced opinion, something the movement is often criticised for lacking. However, further investigation suggests that the attitude of the ECJM towards the majority of Muslims in the West remains problematic.

Spencer, for example, despite the above reference to peaceful Muslims, appears to doubt that they are in the majority. Among numerous examples is a 2005 blog post on *Jihad Watch* about a case of two American Muslims in Florida, in which he questions claims that most American Muslims reject the violence of al-Qaeda:

*there is no distinction in the American Muslim community between peaceful Muslims and jihadists. While Americans prefer to imagine that the vast majority of American Muslims are civic-minded patriots who accept wholeheartedly the parameters of American pluralism, this proposition has actually never been proven.<sup>215</sup>*

In the case of the EDL, Robinson's public pronouncements since he became leader have remained largely consistent in drawing a distinction between the majority of Muslims in Britain and the fringe of Islamist extremists. However, there remains the suspicion that Robinson is attempting to maintain a more politically acceptable 'front stage', while many in the group engage in 'back stage' discussions online that reveal the true, even less tolerant, face of the EDL.<sup>216</sup>

Paul Jackson, among others, has demonstrated how EDL sympathisers and affiliates have formed an online network that maintains a much more robust anti-Muslim message. Among these is the blog for the aforementioned Casuals United group, which appears to still function. Here, the messages are less carefully constructed and there is less effort to maintain the division between extremists and normal Muslim citizens.<sup>217</sup>

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**213** 'An interview with Robert Spencer', *Right Wing News*, 3 February 2012, available at: <http://www.rightwingnews.com/interviews/an-interview-with-robert-spencer-2/> [accessed 22/10/2012]

**214** 'Clarification of anti-Islamist groups in England', SIOE official website, 16 September 2009, available at: <http://sioeengland.wordpress.com/2009/09/16/clarification-of-anti-islamist-goups-in-england/> [accessed 22/10/2012]

**215** Robert Spencer, '2 Men, in New York and Florida, Charged in Qaeda Conspiracy', *Jihad Watch*, 30 May 2005, available at: <http://www.jihadwatch.org/2005/05/2-men-in-new-york-and-florida-charged-in-qaeda-conspiracy.html> [accessed 22/10/2012]

**216** Paul Jackson, 'The English Defence League's 'New Far Right' Rhetoric and the New Media', in Paul Jackson (ed.), *The EDL: Britain's Far Right Social Movement*, University of Northampton, September 2011

**217** Ibid.



Since Robinson's ascent in late 2009, this EDL back stage has sometimes spilled into the public domain and been picked up by mainstream media and anti-EDL blogs. One of the first instances of this was a speech given by the then head of the EDL's Sikh Division, Gumarit Singh, in March 2010. Speaking to a large audience in Westminster, he concluded by saying:

*God bless every single person in the country, and you know what, even God bless the Muslims, they'll need it when they're burning in fucking hell.*<sup>218</sup>

This is but one example of a number of inflammatory anti-Muslim statements made by Singh, who has lately faded into the background. It is possible that the EDL withdrew him from the spotlight because his views were damaging the group's image. He may also have disengaged from the EDL under pressure from a Sikh community worried about its own image. He nonetheless remains very popular among EDL supporters.

In late-October 2010, the EDL invited the controversial Israeli Rabbi and West Bank settler, Nachum Shifren, to address a rally in London. The distinction between extremists and ordinary Muslims was notably absent from his speech:

*In those so-called freedom centres, they [Muslims] plot to destroy and kill us. We're still waiting for the Muslims to make peace with each other. They eat each other alive, like the dogs that they are.*

*I will not stand by and watch the destruction of both of our countries from within...*

In late-May 2012, a self-identifying EDL member, Ryan Wardle, was removed from Twitter after launching a racist and menacing attack on a critic. Arguing with a young Muslim girl on the micro-blogging site, he soon lost his patience:

*Grow up you silly Paki Muslim tramp, go blow yourself up in a mosque*

*Muslims are scum...don't even deserve to be alive*<sup>219</sup>

There are numerous examples of this type of language and sentiment among the online EDL community and many of those who join its marches.

Although the overarching ECJM ideology is not racist in the traditional sense, the xenophobia contained in it means that it remains a magnet for a very wide range of opinions, from genuine concern about Islamic extremism, to racist and essentialist bigotry. This back stage is not under any sort of ideological or operational control and examples such as the above offer only a glimpse into a murky world.

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<sup>218</sup> Video in authors' possession

<sup>219</sup> This Twitter user was swiftly suspended after this exchange, though screenshots of the account are in the authors' possession.

## Islam and Islamism

When defending themselves against accusations of bigotry against all Muslims, or from complaints that their rhetoric is inflammatory and divisive, Geller and Spencer often claim to be talking specifically about a conspiracy to Islamise the West that is being conducted by front-groups set up by members or sympathisers of the Muslim Brotherhood. Spencer writes that, given the demonstrable existence of such front-groups, he is wary of the term “moderate”, which is often used to describe political Islamists who reject terrorism but nevertheless share some of the key ideological beliefs of the global jihadist movement.

However, there have been efforts to deal with this issue much more delicately and with the crucial nuances required, and when these are compared to the work of Spencer or to much of the Counter-Jihad movement's rhetoric, the difference is obvious. In *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West*, for example, Lorenzo Vidino provides an extensive analysis of how Muslim Brotherhood-linked groups in Europe and the United States have sought to take control of Western Islam in order to suit their own political goals, while also attempting to influence government policy in their host countries. However, Vidino is careful to stress the many nuances that exist within the Western Islamist movement, discussing the contrasting goals, ideologies and attitudes to liberal democracy that can exist within it. In contrast to the work of Spencer and Geller, Vidino's analysis clearly differentiates between the majority of Muslims in the West, and their Islamist counterparts when he refers to studies showing ‘the vast majority of Western Muslims are connected with no organization.’<sup>220</sup> Vidino also argues that most Muslims in the West regard religion much in the same way as their non-Muslim counterparts, claiming that, ‘they interpret their faith much as do most contemporary Westerners...as purely cultural, a family tradition and a source of identity, but not as the centre of their lives’.<sup>221</sup>

In 2009 the British centre-right think-tank, Policy Exchange, published a study on Islamist influence in government counter-terrorism policy. In “Choosing our Friends Wisely”, authors Shiraz Maher and Martyn Frampton are critical of a number of Islamist-inspired pressure groups who had succeeded in leading government counter-terrorism policy astray. But in doing so, they also avoid the essentialist pit-falls so often seen in the Counter-Jihad literature. They make it clear that the groups in question represented a tiny proportion of Britain's Muslims, and make a distinction between Islam and Islamism as well as between Muslims and Islamists. In the report, Maher and Frampton note:

*[Islamists] presume to constitute the whole of the faith, rather than just a faction within it. Yet, it is of paramount importance to distinguish between the two – Islam and Islamism – particularly when far-right political parties such as the BNP seek to deny this distinction and conflate all Muslims with Islamists, stoking the fears of an apprehensive population.*<sup>222</sup>

<sup>220</sup> Lorenzo Vidino, *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West* (Columbia University Press, 2010)

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Shiraz Maher and Martyn Frampton, ‘Choosing our friends wisely: Criteria for engagement with Muslim groups’, Policy Exchange, 2009

This effort to provide a clear understanding of the issue is notably absent from much of the Counter-Jihad literature, and the Islam/Islamism divide is rejected entirely as an attempt by cowed liberals to avoid direct criticism of Islam. Despite the term Islamism being widely recognised by scholars as describing a rigid, religio-political ideology, Spencer argues against the distinction on the basis that 'it is a way of implying that Islam itself has no political or supremacist elements, and that those Muslims who do hold political and supremacist aspirations constitute a tiny minority of extremists who have twisted and hijacked the religion.'<sup>223</sup> For Spencer, both of these statements are false, and those who use the term Islamism to describe extremist Islam are either deliberately misleading their audience, or terribly misinformed.

Spencer's above quote comes from an article that was written in response to a piece by another Counter-Jihad figure, Andrew McCarthy, a former Assistant United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, in which McCarthy criticised Spencer's rejection of the Islam/Islamism distinction. He warned his ally that 'there are too many non-supremacist Muslims to write off Islam; our target must be the supremacists. "Islamist" is a label suitable to the essential task of distinguishing our Muslim enemies from our Muslim allies — declared and potential.'<sup>224</sup>

What McCarthy omits from his critique is that Spencer's stance is based on false assumptions; the crux of Spencer's argument is that the term "Islamist" is a distinction imposed externally, rather than made among Muslims themselves. This is readily debatable, because many leading members of the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groupings regularly refer to themselves using the term.

Daniel Pipes, an academic who is also considered by some to be part of the more moderate wing of the Counter-Jihad movement, has also criticised the rejection of the Islam/Islamism distinction, describing it as 'an intellectual error'.<sup>225</sup> At the height of the "Ground Zero Mosque" controversy, he wrote an article that warned other leaders in the movement to re-assess their approach to this issue. His main concern was the 'increasing anti-Islamic tone' of some within the movement who had been 'misled by the Islamists' insistence that there is no such thing as "moderate Islam".<sup>226</sup> 'My allies,' he complained, 'often fail to distinguish between Islam (a faith) and Islamism (a radical utopian ideology aiming to implement Islamic law in its totality).'<sup>227</sup> Pipes' response to Islamic extremism, which has remained consistent since he first began writing on the issue, is to nurture Muslim moderates. For him, the Counter-Jihad movement ignores the 'inescapable fact that Muslims alone can offer an antidote to Islamism.'<sup>228</sup>

Here, then, lies one of the key schisms in the movement, and it is as yet unclear which side will prevail.

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<sup>223</sup> Robert Spencer, 'The Truth About Islam', *National Review Online*, 1 November 2011

<sup>224</sup> Andrew McCarthy, 'Islam or Islamist?', *National Review Online*, 29 October 2011

<sup>225</sup> Daniel Pipes, 'Lion's Den: Americans wake up to Islamism', *The Jerusalem Post*, 6 September 2010

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*



## 5 Mobilisation Themes

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*For those in thrall to the Islamisation narrative almost any Islam-related public initiative or news-story is framed as part of the conspiracy. Analysed below are three of the movement's most effective mobilisation themes, issues that seem to constitute tangible proof that the conspiracy is real, and as such are a particularly effective focus for propaganda. These mobilisation themes are especially pertinent to this study because they are among the areas of the ECJM ideology that manifest most clearly its far-right character.*

### Halal Meat

The availability of ritually-slaughtered halal meat in Western countries is one of the ECJM's largest rallying platforms because it encapsulates a number of the themes that make up the ECJM narrative, namely: Islamisation and supposed state complicity under the noses of the European public. In its mission statement, the EDL places the availability of halal meat as one of its main priorities in dealing with 'creeping' Islamisation. Referring to the 'stealthy incursion' of halal meat, its advent across UK supermarkets is framed as part of the Islamisation conspiracy:

*the stealthy incursion of halal meat into the food industry... demonstrate[s] that sharia is already creeping into our lives.<sup>229</sup>*

In an EDL article about the use of halal meat in a leading fast-food chain, the author writes:

*One of the principal vehicles for Islamisation is the pushing of halal foods onto an unsuspecting and unknowing British populace.<sup>230</sup>*

The stated goal of the ECJM is not, as it first appears, a full ban on halal meat, but rather to force butchers to clearly mark meat as having been slaughtered to halal specifications.<sup>231</sup> As well as decrying a conspiracy to have all Britons eating halal food, the EDL also claims a concern for the well-being of the animals involved due to the (sometimes disputed) requirement of halal preparation that the animal cannot be stunned before slaughter.<sup>232</sup>

The main article on halal from the EDL's official website discusses at length the animal welfare issues that arise from religious slaughtering of animals, drawing on examples from mainstream sources such as the RSPCA, which it also cites to show that halal meat is more prevalent than kosher, a practice that uses similar methods.<sup>233</sup> These numbers are then used to demonstrate that the amount of halal meat available in the UK exceeds the requirements of the country's Muslim population. The article asks: 'why is it that, per person, the Muslim community

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<sup>229</sup> 'Mission Statement', EDL official website, available at: <http://englishdefenceleague.org/mission-statement> [accessed 10/8/2012]

<sup>230</sup> 'KFC Finger Lickin' Halal Food', EDL official website, 4 January 2012, available at: <http://englishdefenceleague.org/kfc-finger-lickin-Halal-food/>

<sup>231</sup> In-person interview with Tommy Robinson, Luton, 16 April 2012

<sup>232</sup> 'KFC Finger Lickin' Halal Food', EDL official website, 4 January 2012, available at: <http://englishdefenceleague.org/kfc-finger-lickin-Halal-food/> [accessed 8/8/2012]; 'Halal campaign', EDL official website, available at: <http://englishdefenceleague.org/edl-news-2/84-halal-campaign> [accessed 8/8/2012]

<sup>233</sup> 'Halal Campaign', EDL official website, 20 July 2011, available at: <http://englishdefenceleague.org/edl-news-2/84-halal-campaign> [accessed 8/8/2012]

seems to require at least eight times as much ritually slaughtered meat? The simple answer is – they don't.... the simple truth is that we [non-Muslims] are sold halal meat each and every day without knowing about it.'<sup>234</sup> There follows a number of insinuations of government complicity, including:

*As recently as April of this year (2011) a recommendation was made once again for the compulsory labelling of all religiously slaughtered meat, this was once again rejected by the current Coalition Government... Why would such a decision be rejected so many times over?*<sup>235</sup>

In order to make a typical complaint about the 'double standards' that are perceived relating to Muslim and non-Muslim concerns, this apparent intransigence on the part of the government is then contrasted with an unsubstantiated example of a young Muslim boy who received help from his local MP after eating a food that was not marked as containing pork.<sup>236</sup>

The EDL has also produced leaflets entitled "Do You Know What you are Eating?" that include information about the non-labelling of halal meat and the animal rights issues surrounding the practice. The leaflet "names and shames" prominent British supermarket chains for 'not informing customers' of the way in which their meat is slaughtered.<sup>237</sup> The text is accompanied by headlines from UK tabloid newspapers, including "Brit kids forced to eat halal dinners", from a story in *The Daily Star* about primary schools using halal meat for their students' lunch.<sup>238</sup>

The EFI also follows this trend, and on its website places the halal meat issue near the top of its agenda. However, the EFI calls for an outright ban of halal (as well as kosher) slaughter in Europe, as well as insisting on the labelling of meat that has not been stunned before slaughter.<sup>239</sup> The EFI website's article on halal is accompanied by a video made by the Belgian animal rights group, Global Action in the Interest of Animals (GAIA), which contains graphic images of animals being slaughtered using halal methods.

Pamela Geller has championed this issue, which she discusses in her book, *Stop the Islamisation of America*. She, too, takes issue with the non-labelling of 'secret Halal meat', referring to it as a form of 'Islamic supremacism' and yet more evidence of the West's 'latest submission to Islam.'<sup>240</sup> Like the EDL campaign (which appears to have been inspired by her activism), Geller presents halal meat as an animal rights problem: 'we are being forced into consuming meat slaughtered by means of a barbaric, tortuous and inhuman method: Islamic slaughter.'<sup>241</sup>

Concerns about the welfare of ritually slaughtered animals have been voiced by mainstream groups, including the RSPCA which, along with the European Union, has also called for clearer labelling of ritually

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<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> EDL Halal Meat campaign leaflet in authors' possession

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Halal section of EFI official website, available at: [http://www.european-freedom-initiative.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=section&layout=blog&id=8&Itemid=57](http://www.european-freedom-initiative.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=section&layout=blog&id=8&Itemid=57) [accessed 10/10/2012]

<sup>240</sup> Pamela Geller, *Stop the Islamization of America* (WND Books, 2011)

<sup>241</sup> Pamela Geller, *Stop the Islamization of America* (WND Books, 2011)

slaughtered meat.<sup>242</sup> The ECJM, on the other hand, is opportunistically co-opting the animal-rights argument in order to broaden its appeal, framing halal as another part of the conspiracy to Islamise Western society.

## Rape and “Sex-grooming”

At the ECJM gathering in Århus, Denmark, in March 2012, one speaker devoted a significant portion of his address to the topic of rape committed by Muslim men in Scandinavia:

*Our daughters and sisters in Norway and Sweden – 100 percent of all the rape cases in Oslo were done by Muslim immigrants.*<sup>243</sup>

Sexual assaults perpetrated by Muslims against Western females are seen by many within the ECJM as an inevitable by-product of Muslim immigration and resultant Islamisation, and evidence of the barbarity of Islam and Muslim disdain for Western culture and values. A number of defence leagues in Europe have used cases, or merely the concept of the rape of indigenous women by Muslim immigrants, as a powerful mobilising message, often presenting it as a deliberate and co-ordinated tactic within the wider conspiracy. In a 2005 article by Fjordman entitled “Muslim Rape Wave in Sweden”, the author suggests that recent rape statistics are proof of this:

*The number of rapes committed by Muslim immigrants in Western nations are so extremely high that it is difficult to view them only as random acts of individuals. It resembles warfare.*<sup>244</sup>

The article refers to official statistics released in 2005 that showed that around half of all rapes in the country were committed by men with at least one parent born abroad. The rapes are connected, Fjordman claims, and can be explained simply by looking at the history and texts of Islam. He compares Mohammed's practice of taking concubines from the defeated populace after battles to the treatment of Western women today by Muslim immigrants. Claiming that the rape of non-Muslim women is ‘perfectly allowed in the Koran and Sunna,’ he argues that present-day Muslims view themselves as conquerors of the West, and therefore see its women as legitimate targets for sexual assault:

*If you postulate that many of the Muslims in Europe view themselves as a conquering army and that European women are simply war booty, it all makes perfect sense and is in full accordance with Islamic law.*<sup>245</sup>

Notably, Fjordman does not distinguish the rapists from the wider immigrant community, but treats them as representatives of Europe's Muslims:

*This [rape] is not mere crime, but ideologically-justified crime or rather, in Muslim eyes, attacks on Infidels scarcely qualify as crime. Western women are cheap and offensive. We Muslims are here, here to stay, and we have a right to take advantage of this situation.*

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<sup>242</sup> ‘New EU rules require compulsory labelling of Halal meat’, *The Independent*, 21 June 2010

<sup>243</sup> The speaker was a member of the German Defence League, and his speech was attended by both authors in Århus, Denmark, 31 March 2012

<sup>244</sup> Fjordman, ‘Muslim Rape Wave in Sweden’, *FrontPage Magazine*, 15 December, 2005, available at: <http://archive.frontpagemag.com/Articles/ReadArticle.asp?ID=20552> [accessed 11/10/2012]

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*

*It is our view of the matter that should prevail. Western goods, like the land on which we now live...belong to us. No wonder there is a deep and increasing suspicion against Muslims in the Swedish and European public.*<sup>246</sup>

As with other instances of supposed Islamic barbarity, the mainstream media is seen to be carefully avoiding making reference to the rapists as Muslims, according to the customary 'informal censorship' of any news that could be seen as disparaging Islam or Muslims:

*Sweden's largest newspaper has presented the perpetrators as "two men from Sweden, one from Finland and one from Somalia", a testimony as to how bad the informal censorship is in stories related to immigration in Sweden.*<sup>247</sup>

Similarly, in *Jihad Watch*, Robert Spencer has also sought to make the connection between modern day rape and ancient Islamic beliefs about taking the women of conquered peoples as sex-slaves. Commenting on a British news story about Asian-Muslim men raping young girls who were in the care of the state, he uses quotes from the Koran to point out that:

*While the savage exploitation of girls and young women is an unfortunately cross-cultural phenomenon, only in Islamic law does it carry anything approaching divine sanction.*<sup>248</sup>

Like Fjordman, he sees perceived government inaction on this 'as yet another human rights scandal occasioned by Islamic law that the international human rights community cravenly ignores.'<sup>249</sup>

This "rape jihad", as it has become known, is a significant concern for the EDL. Interest has risen since revelations in the British media about the existence of sex-grooming gangs made up of Muslim men of South-Asian origin.<sup>250</sup>

In June 2012, the EDL staged a demonstration in Rochdale in the north of England where one of the gangs had operated. The main aim, according to the official promotional video, was to pressure the police and the media to refer specifically to the gang members as "Muslim", so that a causal link between the religion and the crime could be inferred. The text accompanying the video proclaims that 'they have to stop this pathetic labelling of these paedophilic gangs as "asian males", these men are MUSLIMS.'<sup>251</sup>

One of the EDL website's main articles on the subject of the gangs also criticised mainstream reporting of the cases for referring to the offenders as "Asians". This term is 'both unfair and offensive' according to the author who identifies himself as a Tamil, as it 'risks branding all Asians as potential offenders.'<sup>252</sup>

The main grievance, however, is found a few lines further down: 'why is the word "Muslim" so conspicuously absent?'<sup>253</sup> Muslims, he argues,

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<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> Robert Spencer, 'UK: Muslim gangs raped underage girls in care homes', *Jihad Watch*, 6 November 2012, available at: <http://www.jihadwatch.org/2012/11/uk-muslim-gangs-raped-underage-girls-in-care-homes.html> [accessed 14/1/2013]

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> 'Investigation into grooming of teenagers for sex', *The Times*, 9 January 2011

<sup>251</sup> Promotional video in authors' possession

<sup>252</sup> "It is unfair to call grooming gangs 'Asians'", EDL official website, 13 May, 2012, accessed at: <http://englishdefenceleague.org/it-is-unfair-to-call-grooming-gangs-asians/> [accessed 5/8/2012]

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.



who hold a 'religiously inspired cultural perspective that is incompatible with British society,' must be kept in a separate category of their own and not be confused with other South-Asians.<sup>254</sup> Similar to Fjordman and Robert Spencer's Muslim rape-wave articles, the core message is that sexual attacks on Western women and girls that are carried out by Muslims are a specifically Islamic phenomenon, characteristic of a culture that has no place in the West.

In a follow-up article, "Grooming Gangs: The Islamic Connection", the author tries to show that rape and other sexual offences carried out by Muslims are directly associated with Islamic scripture. The piece argues that there is a link between the grooming gangs, which targeted under-age white British girls, and Mohammed's marriage to nine-year-old Aisha. This, according to the author, is the primary explanation for the actions of the grooming gangs, demonstrating once again the fundamental incompatibility of Islam with Western civilisation. The age of consent in Britain is 16, creating 'a clear conflict between the law of Islam...and the law of the land.'<sup>255</sup> The article is also able to incorporate the dhimmitude concept, claiming that Muslim men are 'encouraged to see Muslim women as dhimmi who deserve little to no rights of protection.'<sup>256</sup>

The EDL has also used this theme to build alliances and rebuff accusations of racism. In May 2012 EDL supporters attended a Sikh-led protest outside Bedfordshire police station. The Guru Nanak Gurdwara Sikh temple in Luton had been informed that a young Sikh girl had been sexually assaulted by a Muslim man, and had decided to complain to the local police. Elders from the temple were joined by around 300 local Sikhs unhappy at what they perceived as police inaction. According to Tommy Robinson, the EDL was invited to a meeting at the temple, 'then everyone went to the police station to protest about Muslims abusing our women/girls and the Police failure to deal with it.'<sup>257</sup> Although an elder at the temple told a reporter at the time that he was unhappy about the EDL's presence at the protest, he also admitted that the group had come at the invitation of some of the younger, angrier, members of the congregation.<sup>258</sup>

## Mosque Construction

The ECJM generally seeks a freeze or ban on all mosque construction in Europe, identifying the buildings as breeding grounds for terrorism and terrorist recruitment. The stated basis of this concern is the fact that a large percentage of mosques in Europe are funded by Saudi Arabia and consequently promote the intolerant Wahhabi interpretation of Islam that often warns followers against integrating into Western societies. According to Tommy Robinson, 'we want no more building of mosques and madrassas [Islamic schools] for the next five years, otherwise, when will it stop?'<sup>259</sup>

Like certain other facets of the Islamisation narrative, Saudi-Wahhabi control of European mosques is a real issue that many in the mainstream of media and politics have highlighted. The BBC, for

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<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> 'Grooming Gangs: The Islamic Connection', EDL official website, 17 May, 2012, available at: <http://englishdefenceleague.org/home/edl-news/388-grooming-gangs-the-islamic-connection> [accessed 6/7/2012]

<sup>256</sup> Ibid

<sup>257</sup> Authors' text message conversation with Tommy Robinson, 30 May, 2012

<sup>258</sup> 'Sikh Protest in Luton', *BBC Asian Network* (radio), 29 May 2012

<sup>259</sup> In-person interview with Tommy Robinson, Luton, 16 April 2012

example, has aired a number of investigative programmes on the subject, most recently showing that Saudi-run mosques and Islamic schools in Britain were using anti-Semitic and homophobic materials from the Saudi Education Ministry in their classrooms.<sup>260</sup>

However, the BBC is careful to point out that Saudi Wahhabism is still only followed by a minority of British Muslims. Rather than calling for a ban on mosque construction, the programme suggested more robust oversight from the government, and from school inspectors in particular. The ECJM does not appear to differentiate between Saudi-financed mosques and numerous independently-financed mosques that exist all over Europe.

A favourite reference point for the ECJM on this subject is Turkish Prime Minister Reccip Tayyip Erdogan's quoting the following line from a famous Islamic poem while he was an opposition figure in the 1990s:

*The mosques are our barracks, the domes our helmets, the minarets our bayonets, and the faithful our soldiers.*<sup>261</sup>

The line, an unremarkable piece of aggressive bluster from a politician seeking to shore up his Islamist support-base, is read within the ECJM as representative of the views of the majority of Muslims. Among the earliest references to this by the ECJM was in the promotional literature for an anti-mosque building-demonstration organised by SIOE in December 2009:<sup>262</sup>

*Many of the Mosques have been shown to be little more than vehicles for the indoctrination of Muslims into a global jihad, and these Muslims either express their loyalty to the cause by fighting in wars against us in Afghanistan, and Iraq, or on our streets.*<sup>263</sup>

More recently, the controversy over the so-called "Ground Zero Mosque" served as a rallying point for the entire Counter-Jihad movement. The campaign against the proposed construction was spearheaded by Pamela Geller's SIOA, and the group's march against it in June 2010 in New York city received backing and was attended by members of the EDL and SIOE. Anders Gravers of SIOE was a keynote speaker, and had this to say about the construction of a mosque in New York:

*The last words [heard by] those poor innocent people [aboard the planes that hit the World Trade Center] were almost certainly allah hu akbar [God is great]... these same words will be said at the mosque planned for construction...*<sup>264</sup>

The planned Islamic centre itself had no proven extremist links. For Gravers and the rest of the movement, it was the notion of a mosque of any kind that was objectionable. The 11 September attacks were not acts of extremism, they were simply Islamic acts, sanctioned by and representative of the faith generally, and therefore the construction

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<sup>260</sup> 'British Schools, Islamic Rules', *BBC Panorama*, 27 November, 2010

<sup>261</sup> This quote appears in numerous ECJM websites, and was also used during the Aarhus demonstration, Aarhus, Denmark, 31 March 2012

<sup>262</sup> 'Harrow stop mosque building demo 13th December', SIOE official website, 8 October 2009, available at: <http://sioeengland.wordpress.com/2009/10/08/harrow-stop-mosque-building-demo-13th-december/> [accessed 22/6/2012]

<sup>263</sup> 'The Trinity of Evil', SIOE official website, 16 May 2010, available at: <http://sioeengland.wordpress.com/2010/05/16/the-trinity-of-evil/> [accessed 22/6/2012]

<sup>264</sup> Anders Gravers addressing SIOA rally in New York, 6 June 2010

of a mosque, any mosque, would be an affront – a ‘calculated insult’, according to Gravers.

Robert Spencer, who also spoke at the SIOA event, continued in the same vein:

*We are here...to stand for the people we lost on that day in an act of war by the same ideology that will be taught in that mosque. Make no mistake, they say it will be different, but they will be reading the same Koran and teaching the same Islamic law that lead those 19 hijackers to destroy the World Trade Center.*<sup>265</sup>

If the core message of the “Ground Zero Mosque” protest was that it would be an insult to build a mosque so near the site of the World Trade Center, the implication throughout was that the plan was in fact an act of Islamic triumphalism, the attempted erection of a monument to the first blow in Islam’s takeover of the West. In an article earlier in 2010, Spencer had placed the “Ground Zero Mosque” in a spurious historical context:

*The placement of mosques throughout Islamic history has been an expression of conquest and superiority over non-Muslims. Muslims built the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock on the site of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem in order to proclaim Islam’s superiority to Judaism. The Umayyad Mosque in Damascus was built over the Church of St. John the Baptist, and the Hagia Sophia Cathedral in Constantinople was converted into a mosque, to express the superiority of Islam over Christianity. Historian Sita Ram Goel has estimated that over 2,000 mosques in India were built on the sites of Hindu temples for the same reason.*<sup>266</sup>

This reading of the historical role of mosque-building clearly indicts all mosques as imperialist instruments, not just the “Ground Zero mosque”, which is for followers of the ECJM only the most egregious example.

Pamela Geller has also sought to place this issue in historical context, identifying the project, using ancient Islamic terminology, as a *rabat*. This term refers to military staging posts used in foreign lands where Islamic caliphs waged jihad. According to Geller, who also references Erdogan’s quote, September 11 was the Islamic jihadists’ largest-scale raid thus far on the United States of America. And after it comes the *rabat*: Ground Zero mosque.<sup>267</sup> Such ‘beachheads’, she claims, are proliferating across America as ‘deliberate structures that are designed to expedite the advance of Islam into unsuspecting communities.’

Members of the EDL were also present at the SIOA march at Geller’s invitation, and were inspired there to protest against mosques in the UK. In April and July 2010, the EDL held protests against the construction of a mosque in Dudley, which they claimed was going ‘to dominate the skyline and ensure dhimmi status for the non-Muslims of the area.’<sup>268</sup> The familiar theme of government collusion in the Islamisation conspiracy was also drawn upon, with protesters holding placards reading ‘Labour forcing mosques on Britain.’<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> Robert Spencer addressing SIOA rally in New York, 6 June, 2010

<sup>266</sup> Robert Spencer, ‘Why there should be no mosques at Ground Zero’, *Human Events*, 25 May 2010

<sup>267</sup> Pamela Geller, *Stop the Islamization of America* (WND Books, 2011)

<sup>268</sup> ‘Dudley Mosque Defeat’, EDL official website, 23 September 2011, available at: <http://englishdefenceleague.org/dudley-mosque-defeat/> [accessed 5/8/2012]

<sup>269</sup> Video of Dudley protest in possession of authors

## Case study: British Muslims for Secular Democracy versus SIOE

In November 2009, a liberal British-Muslim activist group called British Muslims for Secular Democracy (BMSD), which had previously demonstrated against Islamic extremism, addressed an open letter to SIOE requesting the cancellation a planned protest outside the Harrow Central Mosque, in North London. Affirming that BMSD too, was 'extremely concerned about the rise of extremism and political Islam in Britain,' the letter also acknowledged that mosques in Britain have, at times, 'been involved in anti-democratic activities and extremism.'<sup>270</sup> However, BMSD requested that the march on the mosque in Harrow be cancelled on the grounds that it would stoke community tensions and that the members of the mosque committee were not themselves extremists.

Shortly after the publication of the letter, Shaaz Mahboob, then vice-chairman of BMSD, also wrote an article for the *Guardian's* "Comment is Free" blog in which he reiterated the letter's main points.<sup>271</sup> This sparked a fierce debate in the comments thread, in which the then leader of SIOE's British wing, Stephen Gash, took part. Here, he repeated his organisation's position, declaring that 'we do not believe in moderate Muslims,' and claiming that Mahboob and BMSD were 'practising: Taqiyya - lying to further Islam.'<sup>272</sup> By accusing an avowedly liberal and secular Muslim group of taqiyya, and suggesting that they, too, were part of the Islamisation conspiracy, Gash exhibited the intractable position against all Muslims that is held by the more extreme elements of the ECJM.

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<sup>270</sup> Shaaz Mahboob, 'BMSD's letter to Stop the Islamisation of Europe', 20 November 2009, available at: <http://www.bmsd.org.uk/pdfs/islamification.pdf> [accessed 15/8/2012]

<sup>271</sup> Shaaz Mahboob, 'We'll defend freedom in Harrow', *Comment is Free*, 21 November 2009, available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2009/nov/21/sioe-harrow-mosque-protest> [accessed 10/8/2012]

<sup>272</sup> Shaaz Mahboob, 'We'll defend freedom in Harrow', *Comment is Free*, 21 November 2009, available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2009/nov/21/sioe-harrow-mosque-protest> [accessed 10/8/2012]

## 6 Conclusion

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**T**he ECJM is, without doubt, a far-right, populist movement that is gathering momentum in Europe. As this report has demonstrated, however, this description alone does little to explain the movement's motivations or ideological positions. Although it continues to attract people from across the far-right spectrum, including racial nationalists, its ideology is not concerned with race.

Recasting the movement as representing an extreme form of cultural nationalism should contribute to a clearer, more nuanced and concise understanding of this issue and helps to accurately place groups like the EDL within the ranks of Europe's far-right.

Whether the movement will continue to grow remains to be seen, and much depends on whether or not the European political parties that to some extent share its views on Islam and Muslims continue to gain popular support as they have over the last few years. Recently there has been a marked increase in the movement's organisational capacity, and this looks likely to continue as alliances are created and reinforced. Much of the success has been down to the involvement of American Counter-Jihad celebrities such as Robert Spencer and Pamela Geller, who have lent their status and large following to the movement, helping it to establish itself and grow in Europe.

The splintering of the EDL may well lead to its eventual collapse as a street movement, but its online presence remains strong, with regular ideological and strategic output on its official website. It will thus remain, at the very least, a guiding light for individuals and organisations that share its view of Islam in Europe. The future of nascent defence leagues in Europe also remains to be seen, but they too will continue in some form, and will act as reference points for regional sympathisers.

As the movement grows, its ideology will likely gain traction. Although the leading members and organisations rarely, if ever, directly call for violence in response to Islamisation, they are unable to control how their fellow-travellers will decide to act upon the information they provide. The attacks in Norway were the first example of an individual inspired to pursue terrorism in direct response to perceived Islamisation, and they are unlikely to be the last. In August 2012, for example, police in the Czech Republic charged a man who they believe was inspired by Breivik with planning terrorist attacks similar to his.<sup>273</sup>

The ECJM's application of terms like dhimmi to refer to cultural "traitors" signals the creation of a dangerous terminology which is reminiscent of neo-Nazi references to "race traitors" (people who either marry outside of their race or are believed to have otherwise allowed non-whites and Jews to take control of their societies). Similarly, the use of the term *taqiyya* to dismiss evidence of Muslim moderation also demonstrates a desire to develop a specific set of terms that allow the movement to demonise its perceived

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<sup>273</sup> 'Breivik "supporter" accused of plotting copycat attacks in Czech Republic', *The Independent*, 20 August 2012

enemies. This demonstrates an increasing level of sophistication and refinement of the ideology, which is likely to continue as it spreads throughout Europe.



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