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RADICALIZATION PROCESSES AMONG MUSLIM COMMUNITIES IN EUROPE- CAUSES, CHARACTERISTICS, THE PALESTINIAN DIMENSION, AND THE IMPACT OF OCTOBER 7 ON EMERGING TRENDS

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Executive Summary

This report examines the dynamics of Islamist radicalization among Muslim communities in the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, and the Netherlands, analyzing how radicalization processes interact with European political and social environments between 2010 and 2025. Using a multi-level framework that connects individual grievances, social networks, and broader political conditions, the study argues that while pathways to radicalization are similar across extremist movements, Islamist radicalization in Europe develops within specific contexts shaped by social marginalization, identity tensions, transnational religious narratives, and integration challenges. The report shows how fragmented governance, delayed political responses, and competing public narratives contributed to the growth and visibility of radicalization pressures across European societies. Particular attention is given to the impact of the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack, which intensified threat perceptions and accelerated the securitization of Islamism across Europe, linking domestic security concerns with global conflicts and the Palestinian issue. The study concludes that securitization functions both as a response to radicalization and as a process that may reinforce identity-based tensions, creating an ongoing cycle that challenges democratic stability and social cohesion in contemporary Europe.

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank Strategy International (SI) Ltd for the opportunity to contribute this report and share my analysis on the evolving dynamics of Islamist radicalization in Europe, the securitization of Muslim communities, and the broader political and security implications of these developments in the aftermath of the October 7, 2023, attacks.

I would also like to personally thank Strategy International CEO Dr. Marios P. Efthymiopoulos for his support and guidance.

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Introduction

Over recent decades, Europe has experienced significant migration from Muslim-majority countries, leading to the formation of large and internally diverse Muslim communities, particularly within major urban centers. These communities often confront structural disadvantages, including social exclusion, economic marginalization, and residential segregation. In response, many have developed parallel religious, cultural, and educational infrastructures that function as sources of identity preservation and social support but may also remain partially disconnected from broader societal institutions. While the majority of European Muslims reject political violence and participate constructively in civic life, such segregated environments can, under certain conditions, facilitate ideological radicalizationת especially when experiences of discrimination, perceived injustice, and narratives of moral decline in the host society intersect.[1]

In several European cities, this dynamic of disconnection has, in some districts, deepened to the point where state authorities and law-enforcement agencies maintain only an intermittent presence, and where regulators and intelligence services themselves have struggled to map the non-violent Islamist networks operating within them. Recurring with varying intensity across several of the case studies examined below, this combination of territorial and institutional retreat is increasingly read by analysts and policy reports as a marker of the depth and magnitude of the underlying social rupture between segments of these communities and the surrounding state order.

Europe's demographic context in the 2010s was shaped not only by Muslim immigration and higher Muslim population growth, but also by a wider transformation of religious affiliation. Pew Research Center estimates that between 2010 and 2020, the share of Europeans identifying as Christian declined from 74.6% to 67.1%, while the religiously unaffiliated rose from 18.7% to 25.3%; Muslims increased more

[1] Sarah Lyons-Padilla et al., "Belonging Nowhere: Marginalization & Radicalization Risk among Muslim Immigrants", *Behavioral Science & Policy*, Vol. 1 no. 2 (2015), pp. 1-12.

modestly at the continental level from 5.3% to 6.0%. This combination of secularization and religious pluralization matters analytically because public anxieties and political "identity talk" are often triggered less by Muslim numbers alone than by the perception that long-standing national-cultural majorities are weakening, creating an interpretive environment in which Islam is more readily framed as a threat to societal cohesion and the "core" identity of the state.[2]

Beyond domestic socio-economic dynamics, transnational ideological currents play a growing role in shaping political and religious discourse within Europe's Muslim communities. These currents often circulate through religious networks, educational frameworks, and digital platforms, reinforcing interpretations associated with political Islam and challenging prevailing integration models. At the same time, a notable development is the emergence of the so-called *"red-green alliance":* a convergence between elements of radical Islamist movements ("green") and segments of the progressive or far-left ("red"). Despite their ideological differences, these actors frequently converge around shared anti-capitalist, anti-Western (associated with colonialism), and often anti-Zionist narratives. This alignment complicates traditional policy responses to radicalization by blurring ideological boundaries, as forms of activism that appear progressive or rights-based in certain contexts may also function as vehicles for Islamist mobilization or radical discourse.[3]

The study focuses on the years 2010-2025, a period that captures the essential evolution of Islamist radicalization in Europe and the ways it has been framed by political actors. During these years, states such as Britain, France, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, and the Netherlands confronted successive waves of Islamist mobilization: from the rise of ISIS and the foreign-fighter departures, to the refugee crisis of 2015–2016, to cycles of lone-actor attacks, mosque-centered radical milieus, and intensifying debates over political Islam. These countries are mentioned, and our case

[2] Pew Research Center, How the Global Religious Landscape Changed From 2010 to 2020 (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2025), pp. 180-200.

[3]Emmanuel Karagiannis and Clark McCauley, "The Emerging Red-Green Alliance: Where Political Islam Meets the Radical Left", Terrorism and Political Violence, Vol. 25 no. 2 (2013), pp. 167-182.

studies were selected from there because they represent six distinct but comparable models of migration history, integration policy, and securitization, making them ideal for a structured comparison over a shared fifteen-year time frame.

Examining 2010–2025 allows us to follow how the chosen states interpreted and responded to Islamist radicalization under changing conditions: moments of high terrorist activity, phases of policy recalibration, and periods of social polarization. The timeframe also provides the necessary historical depth to understand how the October 7, 2023, attack was absorbed into pre-existing national debates. Britain, France, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, and the Netherlands all experienced a visible shift after October 7, but the meaning of that shift becomes clear only against the background of the patterns established since 2010. This approach enables us to show how external shocks reactivate older anxieties and securitizing narratives that have evolved differently across the six countries we chose as case studies.

This study seeks to examine the distinctive dynamics of radicalization among Muslim communities in Western Europe and how these processes differ from other forms of extremism. By analyzing developments between 2010 and 2025, the study follows the evolution of Islamist radicalization in Western Europe from the rise of ISIS and the foreign-fighter phenomenon to the changes in European security policies and public discourse following the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack. To guide this inquiry, the paper addresses three core research questions:

1) Characteristics and Drivers: What are the main characteristics of Islamic radicalization in Europe, and what mechanisms, networks, and contexts drive this process across key case studies? And what is the scale or actual manifestation of this phenomenon?
2) The Radicalization Distinction: What is the difference between general radicalization and Islamic radicalization, and how do transnational, religious, and sociological factors shape the latter?
3) The Impact of October 7: How has the October 7, 2023, attack reactivated "red-green" alliances and intensified the use of Palestinian symbols to justify domestic social polarization?

This paper proceeds in three main stages.

1) **Theoretical Framework and Literature Review**

The paper first establishes the theoretical and conceptual foundations of the study. It defines radicalization using the Balzacq and Settoul tripartite model, distinguishing between cognitive radicalization (ideological dissent), behavioral escalation, and violent mobilization. This section also reviews the academic literature on radicalization and Islamist extremism, examining debates about the drivers of radicalization, the distinction between ideological dissent and violent extremism, and the role of social networks, identity conflicts, and political environments in shaping radicalization processes. Particular attention is given to the distinctive characteristics of Islamist radicalization compared to other forms of extremism, including its transnational ideological framework, the concept of the *ummah*, and the fusion of religious narratives with political objectives.

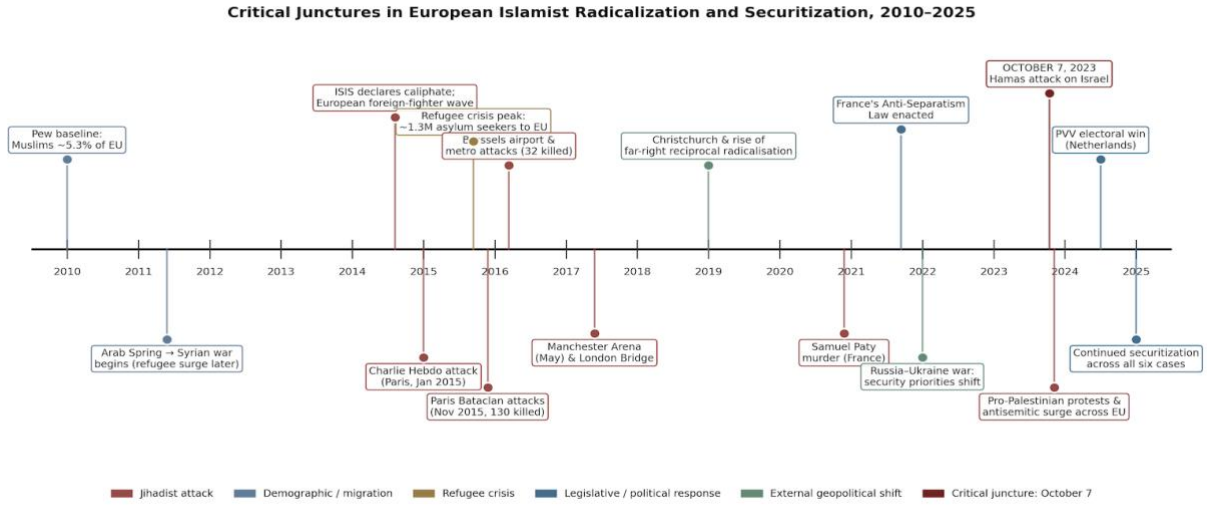
2) **Empirical Findings: Demographics, Migration, Radicalization, and Securitization**

The paper then turns to an empirical examination of radicalization dynamics across six European case studies: the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, and the Netherlands. Each case begins with an overview of demographic change and migration patterns, followed by an analysis of manifestations of Islamist radicalization and the political and institutional responses that emerged in each national context. By integrating demographic developments, migration debates, radicalization patterns, and securitization processes within each case study, this section allows for a systematic comparison of how similar structural trends are interpreted and governed differently across European states.

3) **Comparative Political Consequences and the Impact of October 7**

The final section examines the broader political and societal consequences of these developments across the European cases. Particular attention is given to the role of Palestinian narratives and symbols within political mobilization and public discourse, as well as to the impact of the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack in

intensifying threat perceptions and accelerating securitization processes across European societies. The analysis highlights how the framing of Islamist radicalization as a security threat (securitization) has shaped government policy, political competition, and public debate, with significant implications for democratic governance and social cohesion.



Main Argument:

This paper argues that Islamist radicalization in Europe threatens the essence of the European countries' identity, culture, and existence as free democratic Western countries and therefore must be understood and treated as an existential security issue that requires a unique and severe response, rather than as a conventional problem of integration or social marginalization. Although radicalization pathways share features with other extremist ideologies, Islamist radicalization operates within a distinctive European context shaped by large-scale Muslim migration, transnational ideological networks, and political Islam. These conditions allow radical actors to exploit liberal legal frameworks, protected religious spaces, and open political systems to build long-term influence from within, often below the threshold of overt violence.

The comparative analysis demonstrates that these characteristics give Islamist radicalization a level of security salience that justifies its framing as a threat to societal cohesion, political order, and internal stability. The October 7, 2023, attacks

functioned as a critical accelerator by revealing how external Islamist violence can quickly translate into domestic mobilization, polarization, and antisemitic escalation across European societies.

This paper, therefore, argues that only by securitizing Islamist radicalization, taking immediate radical and unprecedented measures, Western European countries will succeed in preserving their liberal and national identity as Western civilization and heritage.

Methodology:

This study focuses on the period 2010–2025 because these years capture the substantial contemporary cycle of Islamist radicalization in Europe: the rise of ISIS and the foreign-fighter wave (2012–2016), the refugee crisis (mainly the Syrian one) and politicization of Muslim migration (2015–2016), the shift to lone-actor jihadist attacks (2016–2020), growing debates over political Islam and communal separatism (2020–2023), and finally, triggered by the October 7, 2023 attack, the broad vocal and violent protest orchestrated by the Red-Green alliance. This fifteen-year window allows the research to trace how radicalization patterns evolved across different phases, while also identifying turning points that reshaped European perceptions of Islamist threat.

The study centers on the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, and the Netherlands because each combines a large Muslim population with a distinct yet comparable trajectory of Islamist radicalization during 2010–2025. The United Kingdom faced the development of home-grown jihadist networks and extensive online radical milieus; France confronted persistent jihadist violence alongside deep debates over secularism, identity, and state authority; Belgium experienced concentrated radicalization within specific urban areas and a disproportionate number of foreign-fighter departures; Germany dealt with large Salafi mobilization and tensions linked to refugee inflows; Sweden grappled with rising polarization, foreign-fighter recruitment, and escalating communal conflict; and the Netherlands developed one of Europe's most structured policy debates on political Islam and security responses. Examining these states across the same fifteen-year period provides a coherent comparative base and highlights how external shocks, including

the October 7 attacks, interacted with long-standing national debates and political discourses.

This study employs a mixed-methods research design that combines qualitative case-study analysis with quantitative contextual data. Qualitatively, the paper analyzes official state documents, parliamentary debates, policy strategies, and public statements by political and security elites in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Sweden, Belgium, and the Netherlands, alongside academic research, investigative journalism, and secondary scholarly literature. In addition, the authors conducted original qualitative research by systematically identifying and reviewing public speeches, interviews, parliamentary interventions, and social media posts by senior political figures and security officials between 2010 and 2025 that explicitly framed Islamist radicalization as a threat to national or societal security. Quantitatively, the analysis draws on demographic reports on Muslim population size and migration patterns, public-opinion surveys, and available statistics on terrorist attacks, arrests, foreign-fighter mobilization, and other observable manifestations of radicalization. These quantitative sources are used to contextualize national trajectories and to situate political discourse within broader structural and demographic trends.[4]

Operationalization of radicalization follows the analytical framework developed by Balzacq and Settoul, which distinguishes between non-violent cognitive or ideological radicalization and violent extremism.[5] Cognitive radicalization is identified through observable indicators such as the explicit rejection of liberal democratic norms, advocacy of Sharia-based governance as a political alternative, the framing of local grievances through transnational Islamist narratives (particularly the ummah), and the use of religious or community institutions for ideological mobilization and social reinforcement. Violent radicalization is coded separately and refers to participation in, support for, or facilitation of terrorist violence, including recruitment, financing, or

[4]Asif Mohiuddin, "Muslims in Europe: Citizenship, Multiculturalism and Integration", Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs, Vol. 37 no. 4 (2017), pp. 393-412.

[5] Thierry Balzacq and Elyamine Settoul, Radicalization in Theory and Practice: Understanding Religious Violence in Western Europe (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2022), pp. 1-30.

foreign-fighter activity. This distinction allows the study to capture radicalization processes that operate below the threshold of violence while still generating long-term security implications.[6]

Finally, the study applies Securitization Theory as developed by Buzan, Wæver[7], and de Wilde to analyze how Islamist radicalization is framed as a security issue. Rather than assuming securitization as a given outcome, the paper examines how securitizing moves are produced through elite discourse and political signaling, particularly following critical external shocks, most notably the October 7, 2023, attacks. This approach enables systematic comparison across cases and clarifies the relationship between demographic change, radicalization dynamics, and evolving state responses.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review on Radicalization

Radicalization, in its broadest sense, refers to the process through which individuals or groups adopt beliefs that justify or necessitate violence in pursuit of political, ideological, or religious goals. Contemporary scholarship increasingly rejects simplistic or linear models of radicalization and instead emphasizes the complexity of the phenomenon. As Thierry Balzacq and Elyamine Settoul argue, radicalization should be understood as a "family of processes" rather than a single pathway, varying across individuals, social contexts, and networks. Crucially, they distinguish between cognitive radicalization, the adoption of radical beliefs, and violent radicalization, which involves the transition to violence. The movement from ideological dissent to violent action does not occur automatically; rather, it depends on relational dynamics, situational triggers, and enabling environments.[8]

[6] Randy Borum, "Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories", Journal of Strategic Security, Vol. 4 no. 4 (2011), pp. 7-36.

[7] Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, Security: A New Framework for Analysis (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998), pp. 23-26.

[8] Thierry Balzacq and Elyamine Settoul, "Introduction", in Thierry Balzacq and Elyamine Settoul (eds.), Radicalization in Theory and Practice: Understanding Religious Violence in Western Europe (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2022), pp. 4-7.

This distinction is particularly important in the European context, where radicalization processes rarely follow predictable or uniform trajectories. Across history and ideological spectra, radical movements have emerged from diverse political environments, ranging from anarchist organizations of the late nineteenth century to contemporary ethno-nationalist and far-right groups. In many cases, radicalization unfolds gradually through several stages: the development of grievance-based worldviews, exposure to legitimizing ideological frameworks, immersion in reinforcing social networks, and, in some circumstances, the eventual adoption of violent methods.[9]

Within this broader conceptual framework, radicalism can be understood as a set of doctrines or movements advocating fundamental transformations of political, economic, or social structures. Such movements often challenge existing institutions and norms while promoting alternative visions of societal organization.[10] Islamic radicalism represents a more specific subset of this broader category, in which the demand for systemic transformation is grounded in interpretations of Islam and often articulated through militant or ideological organizations that seek to impose a particular vision of Islamic governance.[11] While Islamic radicalism constitutes one form of radicalism, radical movements may also emerge from secular, left-wing, or right-wing ideologies.[12]

Scholars emphasize that radicalization processes across ideological categories often share similar mechanisms. Grievances, whether rooted in perceived injustice, identity crises, or social marginalization, may open the door to radical thinking but rarely serve as sufficient explanations on their own. Martha Crenshaw's work highlights that individuals drawn to radical movements frequently come from varied socio-economic

[9] Borum, "Radicalization into Violent Extremism", pp. 7-36.

[10] Imke van Schoonhoven and Philipp Melfried, Measuring Political Radicalism and Extremism in Surveys: Three New Dimensions (PMC, 2023), pp. 3-4.

[11] Zaheer Kazmi, "Radical Islam in the Western Academy", Review of International Studies, Vol. 48 no. 4 (October 2022), pp. 725-747.

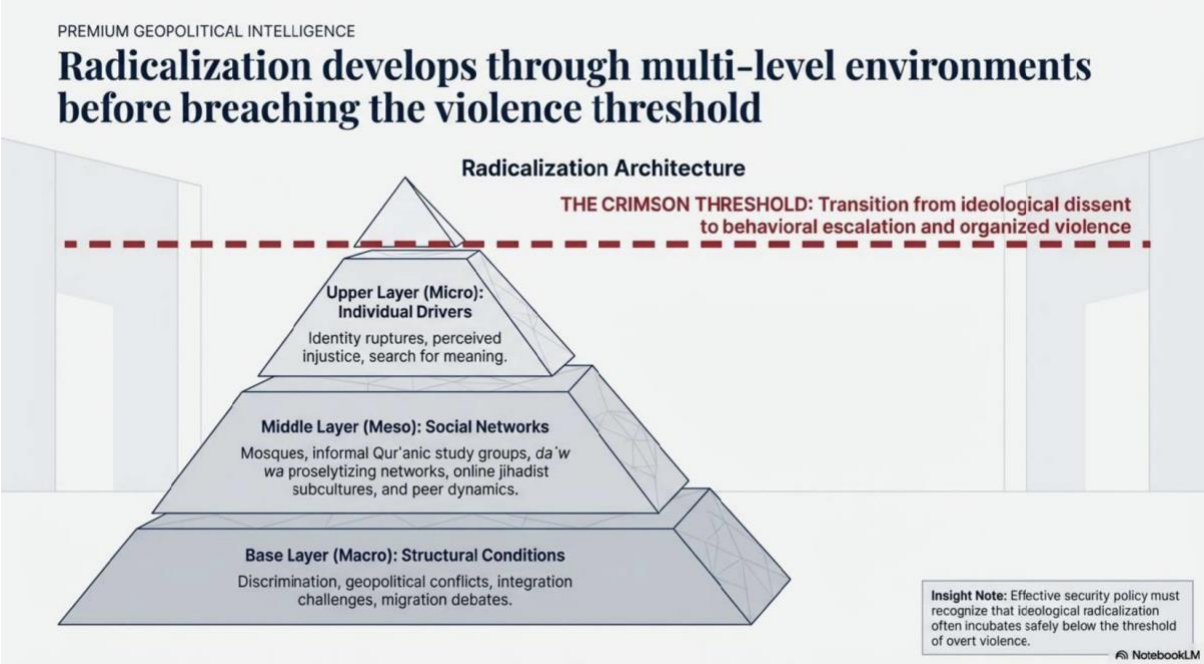
[12] E. Leszek, "The Islamic State as a Source of Terrorist Threat", Wiedza Obronna (2022), pp. 6-7.

backgrounds and are not necessarily socially deprived.[13] Instead, ideological conviction, combined with aspirations to transform the existing political or social order, frequently serves as the primary motivating force. Peer networks, charismatic leaders, and online communities can reinforce these convictions, while escalation toward violence tends to occur when state institutions are perceived as hostile, illegitimate, or incapable of addressing grievances.

Balzacq and Settoul therefore propose a useful analytical model for understanding radicalization through the interaction of three elements: drivers, facilitating conditions, and mechanisms. Drivers include grievances, identity ruptures, and ideological exposure. Facilitating conditions encompass structural factors such as political opportunities, foreign conflicts, and digital communication environments. Mechanisms operate at the micro and meso levels, including peer influence, emotional mobilization, and charismatic authority.[14] This tripartite framework provides a structured lens for analyzing Islamist radicalization in Europe and serves as the theoretical foundation for examining radicalization patterns across different national contexts.

[13] Martha Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism", Comparative Politics, Vol. 13 no. 4 (1981), pp. 379-399.

[14] Balzacq and Settoul, "Introduction", pp. 7-10.



Building on this theoretical framework, a substantial body of literature examines radicalization in Europe through multiple disciplinary perspectives. Rather than conceptualizing radicalization as a linear or inevitable process, scholars increasingly emphasize the complex interaction between individual grievances, social networks, ideological narratives, and state responses. The literature generally revolves around three major themes: the distinction between radical belief and violent extremism, the sociological and ideological drivers of Islamic radicalization, and the effects of securitization policies on Muslim communities.[15]

First, a central debate in the academic literature concerns the definition of radicalization and the boundaries between ideological dissent and violent action. Balzacq and Settoul challenge the so-called “conveyor belt” theory, which assumes that radical ideas inevitably lead to violent extremism. Instead, they argue for a clear distinction between cognitive radicalism and behavioral violence, warning that conflating the two contributes to essentialist narratives that portray Islamic belief as inherently linked to terrorism. Their argument is supported by broader analytical frameworks, including the macro–meso–micro model of radicalization, which situates

[15]Filip Bieber, "Muslim Identity in the Balkans before the Establishment of Nation-States", Nationalities Papers, Vol. 28 no. 1 (2000), pp. 1-23.

individual pathways within wider social environments and group dynamics.[16] Empirical research reinforces this distinction. Studies by Democracy Reporting International highlight a persistent "empirical disconnect" between security narratives and measurable threats, demonstrating that the overwhelming majority of European Muslim communities reject violence and extremist ideology.[17]

Second, scholarship addressing Islamic radicalization specifically often focuses on the tension between structural marginalization and ideological mobilization. Some scholars emphasize the structural roots of radicalization, including socio-economic exclusion, policing practices, and prison systems that may intensify alienation among marginalized populations. According to this perspective, radicalization emerges less from theological doctrine than from experiences of injustice and perceived discrimination.[18] At the same time, other studies highlight the role of ideological and organizational networks. Policy reports examining movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood describe decentralized transnational structures operating through civil society organizations and advocacy groups, sometimes framed as pursuing gradual forms of ideological influence within European societies.[19] However, scholars caution against treating European Islam as a monolithic phenomenon. Researchers such as Thomas Schmidinger emphasize the diversity of Muslim communities across Europe, including Bosniak, Tatar, and Shia populations with distinct historical trajectories and social experiences.[20]

Before turning to the empirical dimensions of this debate, it is necessary to anchor the concept of securitization in its theoretical foundations. The framework originates in

[16] Balzacq and Settoul, "Introduction", pp. 7-9.

[17] Democracy Reporting International, Muslims and Extremism (Berlin: Democracy Reporting International, 2020), pp. 1-30.

[18] Mouhanad Khorchide et al., The Dynamics of Islamic Radicalization in Europe (Münster: Waxmann Verlag, 2021), pp. 1-20.

[19] European Conservatives and Reformists Group, Network of Networks: The Muslim Brotherhood in Europe (Brussels: ECR Group, 2021), pp. 1-40

[20] Thomas Schmidinger, "Islam, Migration, and the Muslim Communities in Europe", in Looming Shadows: Migration and Integration at a Time of Upheaval, pp. 1-20.

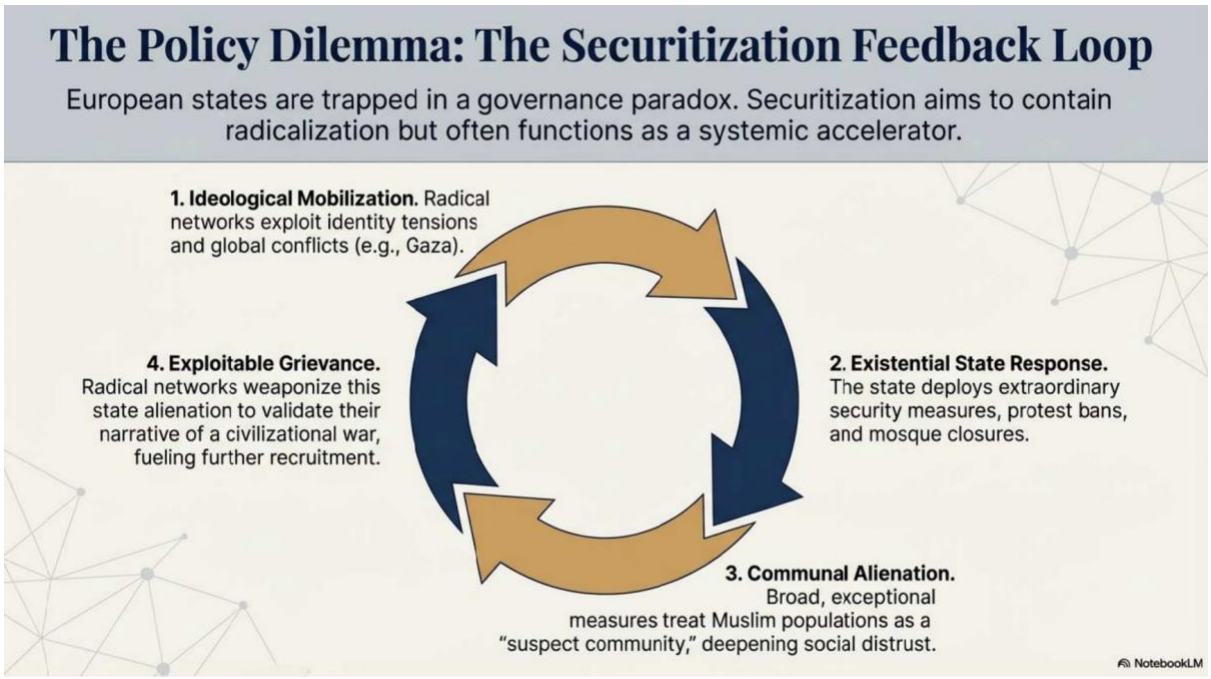
the Copenhagen School of security studies, developed in the 1990s by Barry Buzan (a leading theorist of international relations at the London School of Economics) and Ole Wæver (a Danish political scientist who coined the term "securitization"), together with Jaap de Wilde. Their work is the canonical theoretical reference for any study using the concept. In their formulation, security is not an objective condition but a discursive process: an issue becomes a security matter when an authoritative actor designates it an existential threat to a referent object, and a relevant audience accepts that designation, thereby legitimizing extraordinary measures that lie outside the bounds of normal politics.[21] This "speech-act" model shifted security studies away from objectivist accounts of threat and opened the field to the analysis of how communities, identities, and cultural practices come to be governed through security logic.

Within this framework, Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde identify three constitutive components that must be present for a securitizing move to succeed. The first is the securitizing actor, the messenger who articulates the threat, typically a political leader, security official, intelligence agency, or other figure with the institutional standing to make a credible securitizing claim – Kobi Michael defines it as an epistemic authority (Michael 2009).[22] The second is the content of the message, the rhetorical move that frames an issue as an existential threat to a valued referent object (the state, the nation, society, identity, the constitutional order) and thereby legitimizes the adoption of extraordinary measures that lie outside ordinary democratic, legal, or procedural constraints. The third is the audience, the public or relevant constituency, whose acceptance of the threat framing is required for the move to succeed. A securitizing move becomes successful securitization only when the audience grants the actor permission to operate beyond the bounds of normal politics. These three

[21] Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde, Security, pp. 23-26.

[22] Michael, Kobi. 2009. “Who Really Dictates What an Existential Threat Is? The Israeli Experience.” Journal of Strategic Studies 32 (5): 687–713. doi:10.1080/01402390903189360.

components, actor, message, and audience, provide the analytical scaffolding through which each of the empirical case studies in this paper is examined.[23]

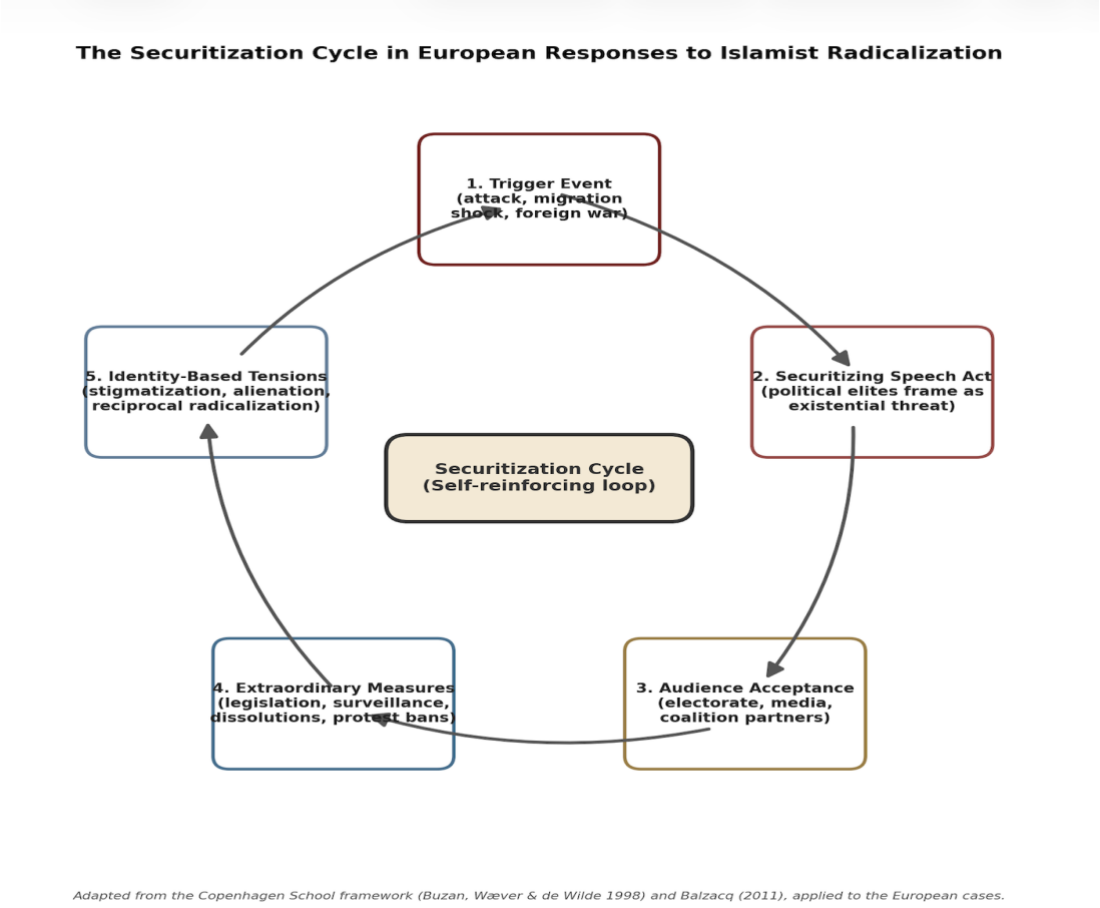


A subsequent generation of scholarship has refined this framework by emphasizing its sociological and contextual dimensions. Thierry Balzacq, a Belgian political scientist and a leading figure of the so-called 'second generation' of securitization theory, has directly challenged the original speech-act model and grounded securitization in institutional and bureaucratic practice. On his account, securitization cannot be reduced to a single performative utterance; it depends on audience reception, the prior dispositions of institutional contexts, and the routine practices of security professionals.[24] Building on these theoretical foundations, an extensive literature has applied securitization theory directly to the position of Muslims in Europe. Jocelyne Cesari, a French political scientist of contemporary Islam affiliated with Harvard's Center for Middle Eastern Studies and the University of Birmingham, is the most influential author bridging Copenhagen School theory and the empirical case of Muslim communities in Western democracies. She argues that European political and

[23] Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde, Security, pp. 23-26.

[24] Thierry Balzacq (ed.), Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve, PRIO New Security Studies (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 1-30.

policy discourse increasingly construes Islam as an existential threat to secular liberal order, generating responses, restrictions on religious visibility, intensified surveillance of mosques and Muslim associations, and exceptional counterterrorism powers that depart from ordinary democratic governance.[25]



Within this theoretical frame, the third major theme in the literature concerns the empirical securitization of Islam in Europe. In several European countries, particularly France and the United Kingdom, debates surrounding Islamist radicalization have led to policy initiatives targeting religious organizations, political movements, and visible religious symbols.[26] Critics argue that such policies may inadvertently deepen mistrust between Muslim communities and state institutions. Amin El-Yousfi highlights the

[25] Jocelyne Cesari, "Securitization of Islam in Europe: The Embodiment of Islam as an Exception", in Why the West Fears Islam: An Exploration of Muslims in Liberal Democracies (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 83-105.

[26] Weronika Strzyżyńska, "Why Is the French Government so Worried About the Muslim Brotherhood?", Hyphen (2025), https://www.academia.edu/129758212.

paradox of France's "Islam de France" policy, which attempts to create a domestically integrated form of Islam while simultaneously relying on foreign-sponsored religious authorities and security-centered governance structures.[27] Comparative research suggests that different policy approaches yield varying outcomes: the United Kingdom has experimented with dialogue-based engagement strategies, while Germany emphasizes civic integration programs. In contrast, more coercive approaches have sometimes produced unintended consequences, reinforcing feelings of exclusion and alienation among Muslim citizens.[28]

These debates highlight the broader implications of securitization for democratic governance. Contributors to the volume *Muslims in Europe* argue that treating Muslim citizens primarily as security subjects rather than equal participants in democratic societies risks undermining pluralism and civic trust.[29] Understanding these dynamics is therefore essential for analyzing the evolving landscape of radicalization and counter-radicalization policies in Europe.

While radicalization follows similar psychological and social mechanisms across ideologies, its manifestations vary widely in form and intensity. Radical behavior can range from ideological dissent to organized violence, encompassing a spectrum of actions that differ in visibility, legality, and destructive potential. Understanding this gradation helps distinguish between non-violent radicalism, which may remain within democratic boundaries, and violent extremism, which seeks to coerce or destroy them. The following table summarizes the main forms of radical expression observed in Europe, arranged by their level of intensity. Balzacq and Settoul caution that Islamic radicalization should not be treated as an entirely separate or exceptional category; rather, it operates through the same multi-level mechanisms that underpin other radicalization processes. What distinguishes Islamic radicalization in the European

[27] Amin El-Yousfi, "The Paradoxes of Institutionalizing Islam in France" (Policy Center for the New South, 2020), pp. 1-15.

[28] Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen et al., Radicalization in Europe: Processes, Policy and Practice (Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies, 2021), pp. 1-30.

[29] Asmaa El-Mohammad and Peter Mandaville (eds.), Muslims in Europe: Citizenship, Multiculturalism and Radicalization (Berlin: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2022), pp. 1-40.

context is not its psychology but its mobilizing environments: transnational ideological flows, online jihadist subcultures, and the specific grievances produced by European integration regimes and post-colonial histories. In this sense, Islamist radicalization emerges at the intersection of general mechanisms, identity crises, emotional shocks, peer dynamics, and context-specific factors such as foreign policy, discrimination, and the securitization of Muslim communities. This aligns with the book's central argument that Islamic radicalization is best understood as a variant of broader radicalization patterns, shaped by religious framing but driven by mechanisms common to other forms of political extremism.[30]

Table 1: Radicalization Forms in Europe: A Comparative View

Type of Radical Expression	Description	Comparative Stream A: European Far-Right/ Nationalist	Comparative Stream B: Islamic Radicalism	Intensity
Ideational Radicalism	Adoption of absolutist ideologies rejecting pluralism and liberal norms.	Online forums promoting white nationalism (e.g., Stormfront Europe).	Islamist *da'wa* websites rejecting secular democracy and promoting Theocracy.	Low
Discursive Radicalism	Hate speech, delegitimization of institutions, framed as free expression.	Rhetoric blaming migrants for social decline; "Great Replacement" theory.	Preachers condemning "Western decadence", calling for a boycott of elections.	Low-Moderate

[30] Thierry Balzacq and Elyamine Settoul, "Radicalization and Religious Violence", in Radicalization in Theory and Practice (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2022), pp. 10-13.

Symbolic Radicalism	Non-violent but confrontational displays signaling rejection of the social order.	PEGIDA marches in Germany; Anti-Islam demonstrations.	Salafi street *da'wa* campaigns ("Sharia Patrols"); Pro-Palestinian demos with an anti-Jewish tone.	Moderate
Behavioral Radicalism	Organized activism aiming to coerce policy or challenge legitimacy.	Occupation of government buildings by far-right or Identitarian collectives.	Islamist student groups are imposing gender segregation on campuses.	Moderate-High
Type of Radical Expression	Description	Comparative Stream A: European Far-Right/ Nationalist	Comparative Stream B: Islamic Radicalism	Intensity
Criminal Radicalism	Property damage or symbolic attacks against perceived enemies.	Arson of refugee centers; Desecration of mosques.	Desecration of synagogues; Attacks on Western cultural symbols/art.	High
Violent Radicalism	Physical aggression against individuals or state agents.	Street clashes with Anti-fascist groups; Assaults on minorities.	Assaults on police during riots; Stabbing of political opponents (e.g., Theo van Gogh).	Very High
Terroristic Radicalism	Premeditated attacks targeting civilians to achieve	Breivik massacre in Norway (2011); Hanau shootings (2020).	Madrid (2004), London (2005), Paris/Brussels (2015-2016) terror attacks.	Extreme

	ideological aims.			

The contemporary period has further sharpened these dynamics. The rise of the Islamic State significantly amplified global attention to Islamic radicalization. The organization's territorial expansion in Iraq and Syria and its sophisticated propaganda campaigns generated transnational mobilization networks, inspiring foreign fighters, homegrown extremists, and lone-actor attacks throughout Europe.[31] More recently, events such as the October 7 attacks and the subsequent geopolitical and social responses have intensified debates around identity, securitization, and anti-Muslim sentiment in Western societies. These developments have broadened the pathways through which ideological radicalization may translate into political or violent mobilization, further highlighting the importance of distinguishing between ideological dissent and violent extremism.[32] At the geopolitical level, the influence of state actors has also shaped the dynamics of radicalization. Iran's strategy of exporting revolutionary ideology and supporting militant organizations represents one dimension of this phenomenon. Through financial support, ideological guidance, and transnational networks, such actors contribute to the diffusion of radical ideological currents across both Middle Eastern conflict zones and diaspora communities in Western societies.[33]

Within this wider framework, Islamic radicalization in Europe exhibits distinctive features that set it apart from radicalization as it is generally defined. A first key distinction is its transnational ideological framework. Whereas many far-right or far-left movements focus primarily on domestic political struggles, Islamist radicalization often situates local grievances within a global narrative, the notion of the *ummah*, or worldwide Muslim community. This framing links the experience of discrimination or

[31] Yoram Schweitzer and Omer Einav, "The Islamic State Challenge: How Severe Is It?", in The Islamic State: Rich Organisation, Poor State (Tel Aviv: INSS, 2018), pp. 75-90.

[32] Hira Amin, Linda Hyökki and Umme Salma, "The European Muslim Crisis and the Post-October 7 Escalation", Religions, Vol. 15 no. 10 (2024), pp. 1185-1202.

[33] Shmuel Bar, "Iranian Terrorist Policy and 'Export of Revolution'" (Reichman University, 2009), pp. 11-12.

marginalization in Paris, Berlin, or London to conflicts in Gaza, Syria, or Afghanistan, and casts these struggles as interconnected fronts in a civilizational confrontation.[34]

Religious doctrine plays a second distinctive role. In some Islamist milieus, theological interpretations are mobilized to frame violence not just as politically justified but as a religious duty. Certain Salafi-jihadi strands, for instance, invoke concepts such as *farḍ ʿayn* (an individual obligation) to legitimize fighting in defense of Muslims worldwide. This religiously grounded imperative can accelerate the radicalization process by collapsing the moral distance between belief and violent action, a dynamic less common in secular extremist contexts.[35]

Third, the micro-social environments in which Islamist radicalization often unfolds differ from those of other forms of extremism. Mosques, informal Qurʾanic study groups, and daʿwa (proselytizing) networks can serve as recruitment or reinforcement spaces. While far-right groups may rely on sports clubs, music scenes, or political rallies, Islamist networks can embed radical discourse within religious instruction, lending it an added layer of perceived legitimacy. This structural difference has implications for detection and prevention, since religious gatherings are generally protected spaces in liberal democracies.[36]

A further distinctive layer of Islamist radicalization in Europe concerns the social ecology of communal separation and the Islamization of everyday practices. Scholars have shown how identity-driven "re-Islamization" among segments of Europe's Muslims can manifest in the formation of self-contained social spaces and norms, dietary codes, dress, schooling, marriage practices, and local religious governance that

[34] Mark LeVine, review of Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah by Olivier Roy, and Globalization and the Muslim World: Culture, Religion and Modernity, edited by Birgit Schaebler and Leif Stenberg, International Journal of Middle East Studies, Vol. 38 no. 4 (2006), pp. 581-584.

[35] Thomas Hegghammer, "The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters: Islam and the Globalization of Jihad", International Security, Vol. 35 no. 3 (2010), pp. 53-94.

[36] Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Joining the Cause: Al-Muhajiroun and Radical Islam", in The Roots of Radical Islam (2004), pp. 1-29.

symbolically mark distance from the surrounding public-cultural-national sphere.[37] This does not imply that such practices are violent, but they can create enclaves of authority in which some actors promote fundamentalist boundary-drawing and exclusivist worldviews, making a subset of adherents more reachable by radical entrepreneurs.[38]

Within these milieus, mosques, imams, and associated daʿwa networks sometimes function not only as religious institutions but also as frames for social mobilization. In a small number of contexts, doctrinal currents especially Salafi-jihadi or revivalist groups advance sharia-normative projects in family law and community dispute resolution, and propagate narratives that sacralize political objectives.[39] Reviews of sharia councils in England and Wales, for example, document how these bodies operate as parallel forums of authority in personal-status matters, raising integration, gender-equality, and rule-of-law questions that European governments must manage carefully.[40]

A related political dynamic is the "red–green" alliance, whereby Islamist organizations forge tactical coalitions with progressive/left movements around anti-racism, civil liberties, anti-imperial, and mostly, antisemitism, anti-Israel, and pro-Palestinian frames. These coalitions can legitimate Islamist actors in mainstream arenas, extend their mobilization capacity, and at times radicalize contentious politics, especially when global conflicts (e.g., Gaza) are narrated as civilizational struggles that license intimidation or violence against Jewish communities, Israel-related targets, or Western institutions.[41] As several studies of the Muslim Brotherhood's networks in

[37] Olivier Roy, Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 31-36.

[38] Ruud Koopmans, "Religious Fundamentalism and Out-Group Hostility among Muslims and Christians in Western Europe" (WZB Discussion Paper, 2014), pp. 2-5.

[39] Quintan Wiktorowicz, Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), pp. 19-27.

[40] Mona Siddiqui et al., Applying Sharia Law in England and Wales: Independent Review (London: Home Office, 2018), pp. 13-18.

[41] Lorenzo Vidino, "The Emerging Red-Green Alliance: Where Political Islam Meets the Radical Left" (START, University of Maryland, 2011), pp. 3-6.

Europe note, this alliance politics is strategic: it seeks influence over public discourse and policy while normalizing sharia-centric or Islamist agendas within broader social movements.[42]

Moreover, certain Islamist leaders in Europe have articulated not merely communal autonomy but the ambition to Islamize the wider society, calling for the application of sharia principles at the national level and framing Europe itself as a field of daʿwa. Organizations such as Hizb al-Tahrir have openly promoted such goals, and Muslim Brotherhood-inspired networks have repeatedly invoked the need for a gradual societal transformation along Islamic lines.[43] These discourses often link domestic activism with hostility toward Israel and the West, portraying confrontation with governments and foreign policy as religiously mandated.[44]

Taken together, communal self-separation, religious micro-institutions, and cross-ideological alliances help explain why Islamist radicalization in Europe acquires a public salience different from other extremisms. They create densely networked spaces of authority and meaning that can, in some cases, facilitate recruitment, shield radical discourse, and amplify it through mainstream political channels without negating the universal mechanisms of radicalization described earlier.

Demographic visibility and migration history further distinguish the European context. Rostan and Rostan highlight that Europe's Muslim population, currently about five percent, is projected to grow due to higher fertility rates and sustained migration. Between 2010 and 2016, they note, 86% of refugees arriving from the ten largest origin countries were Muslim. This demographic trend, they argue, has heightened public and political sensitivity to Islamic radicalization, regardless of actual rates of extremist activity. The perception of a rapidly growing, culturally distinct minority can

[42] Lorenzo Vidino, The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), pp. 11-20.

[43] Emmanuel Karagiannis, The New Political Islam: Human Rights, Democracy, and Justice, 1st ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), pp. 133-139.

[44] Vidino, New Muslim Brotherhood, pp. 72-77.

feed into securitization narratives, framing Muslim communities as both socially and politically "different" in a way that other radicalized groups are not.[45]

Finally, external linkages play a prominent role. European Islamist movements often have ideological, financial, or operational connections to actors abroad, from Gulf-based charities to militant organizations in conflict zones. These ties reinforce transnational identity narratives and can provide material support or training. By contrast, most far-right or far-left extremist groups in Europe remain primarily domestically oriented, even when they borrow symbols or rhetoric from foreign counterparts.[46]

The distinctions outlined above are summarized in the following table, which compares general radicalization and Islamist radicalization in the European context.

Table 2: Distinguishing Features of General Radicalization and Islamist Radicalization in the European Context

Feature	General Radicalization	Islamist Radicalization
Grievance as an entry point (political, social, or identity-based)	✓	✓
Exposure to legitimizing ideology	✓	✓
Reinforcement through peer networks	✓	✓
Transition from belief to violent action	✓	✓

[45] Pierre Rostan and Alexandra Rostan, "When Will European Muslim Population Be Majority and in Which Country?", PSU Research Review, Vol. 3 no. 2 (2020), pp. 123-144.

[46] Vidino, New Muslim Brotherhood, pp. 26-27.

Framed mainly in a domestic/national context	✓	✖
Framed as part of a global/transnational struggle (ummah, jihad)	✖	✓
Justification rooted in secular or political ideologies	✓	✖
Justification rooted in religious duty (e.g., farḍʿayn)	✖	✓
Recruitment in political/social spaces (clubs, rallies, subcultures)	✓	✓
Recruitment in religious spaces (mosques, Qurʾanic study groups, daʿwa)	✖	✓
External linkages abroad (funding, training, ideological support)	✓	✓
Perceived by policymakers as a law-and-order severe challenge	✓	✖
Perceived by policymakers as an existential security threat	✖	✓

Empirical Findings: Demographics, Migration, Radicalization, and Securitization in Europe

Any empirical examination of Muslim communities in Europe must begin with a methodological clarification regarding the limits of demographic data collection. Most European states do not record religious affiliation in official censuses, compelling researchers to rely on indirect indicators such as country of origin, migration flows, and survey-based estimates. As Mohiuddin emphasizes, demographic data on

Muslims in Europe are therefore approximations, shaped by divergent national statistical practices, legal constraints, and political sensitivities rather than uniform measurement standards.[47] These constraints complicate cross-national comparison and require caution when linking demographic change to political or security outcomes.

At the same time, changes in the Muslim share should be interpreted within the full religious composition of each society. Pew's 2010–2020 estimates show that in several Western European states, Muslim growth occurred alongside, and was at times politically interpreted through, a sharp decline in Christian identification and a rise in religious non-affiliation. This broader shift is important for securitization analysis: when majority religious identity erodes, political actors often reframe debates over immigration, integration, and communal visibility as disputes over the survival of national culture, making "Islam" a highly available symbol through which wider anxieties about social change are narrated.[48]

The most recent and methodologically authoritative assessment of Muslim demographic change in Europe is provided by the Pew Research Center's *How the Global Religious Landscape Changed From 2010 to 2020* (2025), which reconstructs religious populations using harmonized census and demographic data across European states. According to Pew's revised estimates, Muslims constituted approximately 5.3 percent of Europe's population in 2010, increasing to 6.0 percent by 2020, representing growth from roughly 39.3 million to 45.5 million individuals over the decade. During the same period, Europe's overall population grew only modestly, meaning that the Muslim population growth significantly outpaced general demographic change while Muslims nevertheless remained a numerical minority across all European countries.[49]

[47] Mohiuddin, "Muslims in Europe", pp. 393-394.

[48] Pew Research Center, Global Religious Landscape, pp. 180-200.

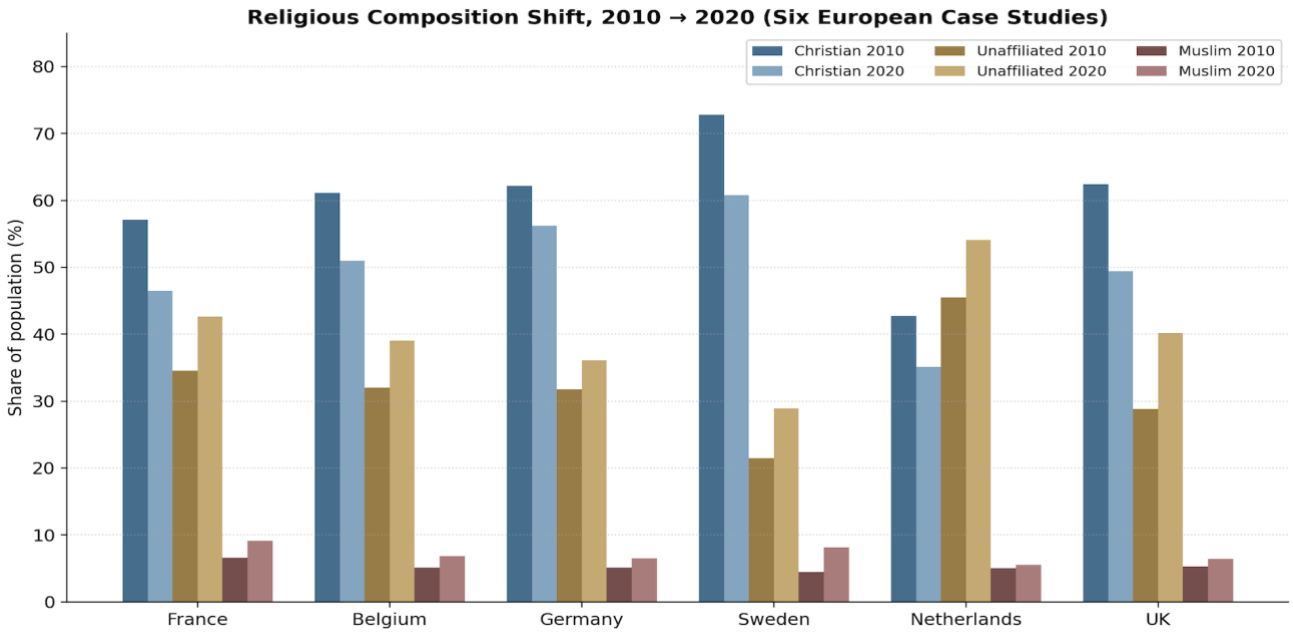
[49] Pew Research Center, *Global Religious Landscape*, pp. 180-200.

Pew attributes this increase primarily to migration alongside demographic age structure, as Muslim populations in Europe are, on average, younger than the broader European population. As a result, natural population increase combined with immigration contributed steadily to demographic growth throughout the 2010–2020 period. Although continent-wide demographic change remained gradual, population growth was unevenly distributed and concentrated primarily in large metropolitan areas and specific national contexts, increasing the public visibility of Muslim communities across Europe. Taken together, Pew's findings indicate that Muslim demographic change in Europe during this period reflects incremental but structurally meaningful growth rather than sudden demographic transformation. The political significance of these trends derives less from numerical scale than from their interaction with urban concentration, migration debates, and broader concerns surrounding integration, identity, and social cohesion within contemporary European societies.[50]

A critical structural finding emerges from these data: in three of the six countries examined, Christians no longer constitute a majority of the population by 2020. In France (46.5%) and the United Kingdom (49.4%), Christian identification has fallen below 50 percent, leaving no religious majority. In the Netherlands, the religiously unaffiliated (54.1%) have become the actual majority, with Christians reduced to 35.1%. Belgium hovers at the threshold (51.0%), while only Germany (56.2%) and Sweden (60.8%) retain a clear Christian majority. This loss of majority status is politically consequential: it reshapes the symbolic backdrop against which Muslim demographic growth is interpreted, transforming debates over integration into broader contests over national identity, cultural continuity, and the meaning of secularism.[51]

[50] Pew Research Center, Global Religious Landscape, pp. 96-98.

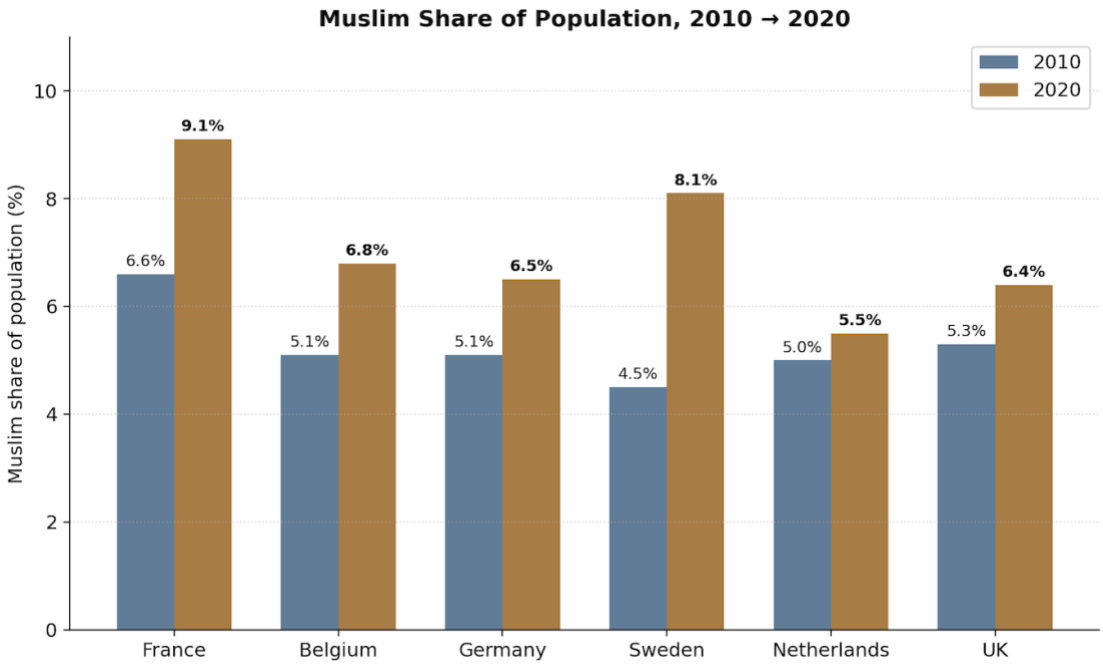
[51] Pew Research Center, Global Religious Landscape, Appendix B.



This chapter examines six European case studies: Germany, France, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Sweden, and the Netherlands. Each case is organized around three analytical dimensions: demography, Islam in the public sphere, and manifestations of Islamist radicalization. This structure makes it possible to compare more systematically how demographic realities, public visibility, radicalization patterns, and governmental responses are translated into security narratives and political and policy responses.

The Pew Research Center's June 2025 publication, How the Global Religious Landscape Changed From 2010 to 2020, provides the most recent comprehensive data on these trends and serves as the source for the figures cited throughout this chapter. No post-2020 Pew data are currently available, as the next decadal update is expected to cover the period from 2020 to 2030. According to Pew, the Muslim population in Europe increased from approximately 39.3 million in 2010 to 45.5 million in 2020, raising its share of the continent's population from 5.3% to 6.0%. Immigration was the primary driver of this growth, accounting for an estimated 3.5 million of the 6.2 million additional Muslims recorded during the decade, while natural increase also contributed to demographic expansion. Muslims also remained younger than the

overall European population, with a median age of 34.1 compared to a continental median age of 42.5.[52]



Germany

Demography

Germany's Muslim population is historically rooted in labor migration from Turkey during the 1960s and 1970s, resulting in the country's largest Muslim community being of Turkish origin. By the early 2010s, Germany was home to approximately three to four million Muslims, representing around 4 percent of the population. This demographic profile shifted dramatically during the 2015–2016 refugee crisis, when Germany admitted approximately 1.1 million asylum seekers in 2015 alone, the majority from Muslim-majority countries, with Syrians constituting the largest single group.[53]

According to the 2025 estimates, Germany remains one of the primary centers of Muslim life in Europe, with its Muslim population reaching approximately 5.8 million by 2020. Within the broader European context, the Muslim share of Germany's population grew by approximately 1.4 percentage points over the decade, from 5.1% in 2010 to 6.5% in

[52] Pew Research Center, Global Religious Landscape, pp. 97–100.

[53] Didem Doganyilmaz Duman, "Islam's Increased Visibility in the European Public Sphere: A Real Crisis?", Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis, Vol. 28 (2018), pp. 68-91.

2020, according to Pew. German federal estimates (BAMF) place the figure somewhat higher, at roughly 6.6–6.9% (5.5+ million), reflecting different methodologies for counting Muslim populations.[54] Yet the larger structural change was the continued decline of Christian identification (62.2%→56.2%) and the growth of the unaffiliated (31.8%→36.1%), which shaped the political interpretive frame through which Muslim visibility was increasingly discussed. In Germany, Christians decreased from 62.2% to 56.2% while the unaffiliated increased from 31.8% to 36.1%, with Muslims rising from 5.1% to 6.5%.[55]

This growth reflects the same broader pattern identified across Europe: migration combined with demographic age structure produced steady Muslim population growth, while concentration in major metropolitan areas increased the public visibility of Muslim communities. In the German case, these demographic shifts became politically potent not simply because of numbers, but because they interacted with debates over sovereignty, integration, and national cohesion.[56]

Islam in the Public Sphere

In Germany, the expansion of Muslim life became increasingly visible through demographic concentration, migration, and the public presence of mosques, Muslim associations, and debates over integration. This visibility did not emerge in a vacuum. Rather, it became embedded in wider national anxieties surrounding migration, belonging, and the meaning of constitutional order in a changing society. Media discourse and right-wing political actors, most notably the AfD and PEGIDA, frequently linked migration, Islam, and terrorism, contributing to a securitized understanding of Muslim demographics as a security issue rather than a social or integration challenge.[57]

[54] Pew Research Center, Global Religious Landscape, pp. 180-200.

[55] Pew Research Center, Global Religious Landscape, pp. 180-200.

[56] Pew Research Center, Global Religious Landscape, pp. 180-200.

[57] Duman, "Islam's Increased Visibility", pp. 77-79.

Beyond demographic expansion, the visibility of Muslim communities in Germany is reinforced by their socio-religious infrastructure. Mosques function not only as places of worship but also as multifunctional community centers providing religious education, social services, and cultural continuity for migrant and post-migrant populations. As Jocelyne Cesari notes, mosques constitute core institutional spaces through which collective identity, social norms, and civic engagement are negotiated.[58]

Since the 1990s, the expansion and increasing visibility of such institutions, particularly in urban areas, have made them focal points of political debate and state oversight, gradually transforming religious infrastructure into objects of governance and security concern. Imams occupy similarly pivotal roles as religious authorities, community mediators, and intermediaries with state institutions. As Jonathan Laurence demonstrates, European governments increasingly view imams as strategic actors in integration and counter-radicalization efforts, leading to regulatory interventions in their training, accreditation, language use, and foreign funding. This growing politicization of religious leadership has blurred the boundary between religious practice and security policy, contributing to the securitization of everyday religious authority.[59]

A 2026 report by the Brussels-based New Direction Foundation, No-Go Zones: Immigration, Islamisation, and the Rise of Parallel Societies, illustrates how this securitized framing has migrated from political rhetoric into purportedly empirical policy literature. Mapping an estimated 900 to 1,000 districts across the European Union, the report classifies three German neighborhoods, Duisburg-Marxloh, Berlin-Neukölln, and Cologne-Chorweiler as "severe" or "confirmed" no-go zones on the basis of crime indicators, "parallel society" markers, and signs of state withdrawal.[60]

[58] Jocelyne Cesari, When Islam and Democracy Meet: Muslims in Europe and in the United States (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 45-49.

[59] Jonathan Laurence, The Emancipation of Europe's Muslims: The State's Role in Minority Integration (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp. 160-167.

[60] Maxime Hemery-Aymar, No-Go Zones: Immigration, Islamisation, and the Rise of Parallel Societies (Brussels: New Direction – The Foundation for European Reform, 2026), pp. 9-13.

Beyond crime data, the report explicitly links these spaces to the public visibility of Islam, citing federal estimates of more than 11,000 Salafist adherents in Germany by 2017, the surveillance of over ninety mosques for extremist affiliations, and the operation of Muslim Brotherhood– and Millî Görüş–linked associations as vehicles for the diffusion of "rigid" religious-political norms.[61] The growing circulation of this cartography in mainstream media and parliamentary debate demonstrates how mosques, Islamic associations, and majority-Muslim neighborhoods are increasingly inscribed into a spatial imaginary of perceived insecurity. In this sense, the no-go-zone discourse is itself a securitizing move: it translates demographic concentration and visible religiosity into a narrative of state failure that legitimizes intensified policing, surveillance, and restrictions on religious infrastructure.

The German case can be analyzed systematically through the three constitutive components of securitization. The securitizing actors operate at both the political and institutional levels. Within the political sphere, figures associated with the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), including co-leader Alice Weidel, former Member of the European Parliament Marcus Pretzell, and former party chairwoman Frauke Petry, have functioned as prominent securitizing actors by framing migration and aspects of Islam as threats to German security, identity, and social cohesion. At the institutional level, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, BfV) serves as the principal securitizing actor regarding Islamism through its monitoring and classification of Islamist extremism as a threat to Germany's democratic order. Mainstream political leaders have also adopted elements of this security-oriented discourse following major terrorist attacks. After the Mannheim knife attack in June 2024, Chancellor Olaf Scholz called for stricter deportation measures for individuals associated with serious crimes and Islamist

[61] Hemery-Aymar, No-Go Zones, pp. 25-26.

extremism, linking questions of migration and public security within a broader framework of national protection.[62]

The content of the message takes two complementary forms. AfD figures frame asylum policy and Muslim immigration as existential threats to German national identity and social cohesion. Alice Weidel warned that Angela Merkel's asylum policy would "destroy the country through this immigration policy" and called for a "Fortress Europe" to curb Muslim immigration, while in a 2018 Bundestag speech she described a deliberate "strategy of generational replacement through unregulated immigration," charging that "burkas, girls in headscarves, knifemen on subsidies and other good-for-nothings will not secure our prosperity."[63] Marcus Pretzell and Frauke Petry deployed militarized border rhetoric that legitimizes the use of force as a defensive necessity: Pretzell argued that German borders should be defended against refugee "incursion" with armed force as a measure of last resort a remark that led to his expulsion from the party, while Petry told Mannheimer Morgen that border police must "use firearms if necessary" to prevent illegal refugee entry.[64]

The BfV, by contrast, elevates Islamism above ordinary criminal threat by framing it as a long-term existential threat to the "free democratic constitutional order" (freiheitliche demokratische Grundordnung), treating ideological goals themselves as security-relevant rather than as protected political activity. In its 2024 reporting, the agency warned that "Islamists aim to completely or partially abolish the free democratic basic order of the Federal Republic of Germany by invoking their religion,"

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[62] Reuters, "Scholz Vows to Toughen Up German Deportation Rules After Attacks," June 6, 2024, https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/scholz-vows-toughen-up-german-deportation-rules-after-attacks-2024-06-06/.

[63] Alice Weidel, quoted in "AfD-Vorsitzende Weidel warnt vor 'Bevölkerungsaustausch,'" *SWR / Südwestrundfunk*, 2016; Alice Weidel, Bundestag speech, May 2018, reported in "Weidel attackiert Burka, Kopftuch und 'Messermänner,'" *Die Welt*, May 16, 2018, https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article176353058/AfD-Weidel-attackiert-Burkas-Kopftuchmaedchen-und-Messermaenner.html.

[64] Marcus Pretzell, quoted in "AfD's Pretzell suggests use of armed force against refugees," *Europe Online*, 2016; Frauke Petry, interview with *Mannheimer Morgen*, January 30, 2016, reported in "Frauke Petry: German border police 'must use firearms if necessary' against refugees," *The Independent*, January 31, 2016, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/frauke-petry-afd-german-border-police-must-use-firearms-refugees-a6845541.html.

explicitly placing non-violent ideological actors within the scope of state surveillance.[65] Chancellor Scholz's post-attack emphasis on accelerated deportations links migration governance directly to public security and rule-of-law preservation. Following the August 2024 Solingen knife attack by a Syrian refugee, Scholz called for expedited deportation procedures that bypass ordinary asylum review, framing failed asylum seekers as latent threats to public safety.[66]

The audience for these securitizing moves is the German electorate and broader public sphere, where uptake has been substantial: shifting AfD electoral support, polling on asylum policy after major incidents, and the migration of mainstream parties (SPD and CDU/CSU) toward harder migration positions all indicate that significant segments of the audience have accepted the existential framing the empirical signal that distinguishes a successful securitization from a merely attempted one.

Manifestations of Islamist Radicalization

In the wake of these developments, concerns over Islamist radicalization intensified. Germany experienced foreign fighter mobilization, the expansion of Salafi networks, and a series of Islamist-inspired attacks, most notably the December 2016 Berlin Christmas market attack at Breitscheidplatz, in which Tunisian asylum seeker Anis Amri drove a truck into the crowd, killing 12 and injuring more than 50, in an act later claimed by the Islamic State, all involving a small minority of the Muslim population. Nevertheless, these phenomena acquired disproportionate political salience. Government policy increasingly framed Islamist extremism as a national security

[65] Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, "Islamist extremism and Islamist terrorism," 2024, quoted in "Germany's BfV warns Islamists seek to abolish democratic order," *Al Jazeera*, 2024, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/6/18/germany-bfv-warning-islamism.

[66] Olaf Scholz, statement following the Solingen attack, August 2024, reported in "Après l'attaque de Solingen, Olaf Scholz veut accélérer les expulsions," *Le Monde*, August 26, 2024, https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2024/08/26/apres-l-attaque-de-solingen-olaf-scholz-veut-accelerer-les-expulsions.html.

threat, leading to expanded surveillance authorities, mosque monitoring, and the institutionalization of counter-radicalization programs.[67]

Despite these institutional responses, Islam's visibility in Germany continues to expand through a dense and growing infrastructure of mosques, religious associations, and community institutions that play a central role in public and social life. Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) data and figures cited by the Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland indicate that the number of mosques and prayer spaces in Germany rose from roughly 2,200 in the early 2000s to an estimated 2,750 by the mid-2020s, of which approximately 150–200 are purpose-built mosques with classical Islamic architecture (domes, minarets), the remainder being prayer rooms and converted backyard mosques (Hinterhofmoscheen).[68] The largest single network, the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DITIB), operates approximately 900 mosques and employs the majority of state-affiliated imams in Germany; estimates of the total number of active imams across all Muslim associations range between 2,000 and 2,500.[69] In parallel, the German halal economy has expanded significantly, with the Halal Food Market in Germany valued at several billion euros annually and halal-certified shops, butchers, and restaurants concentrated in urban centers such as Berlin-Neukölln, Duisburg-Marxloh, and Cologne-Chorweiler, the very neighborhoods designated by the New Direction Foundation report as "no-go zones."[70]

In Germany, the response has focused on intelligence monitoring of non-violent groups and exemplifies the full architecture of securitization as defined by the Copenhagen School. The securitizing actor is the Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (BfV- Germany's domestic intelligence service), which has explicitly categorized "legalistic Islamist" groups as a threat to the "free democratic basic order." The

[67] Duman, "Islam's Increased Visibility", pp. 77-79.

[68] Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (BAMF), Muslimisches Leben in Deutschland 2020 (Nuremberg: BAMF, 2021).

[69] DITIB, "Über uns / Strukturen", https://www.ditib.de.

[70] Statista, "Halal Food Market Germany", 2024, pp. 9-13.

essence of the message is the framing of non-violent ideological influence as an existential danger: in intelligence reports from 2020–2024, the BfV justifies surveillance of the Muslim Brotherhood, the transnational Sunni Islamist movement founded in Egypt in 1928, and other legal associations by arguing that their long-term goal of societal transformation is "more dangerous than Al-Qaeda."[71] Directed at an audience of policymakers, the legislature, and the broader German public, this framing legitimizes extraordinary measures, intelligence-led monitoring of organizations that have committed no crime, which would normally lie outside the bounds of routine democratic governance. All of these actions illustrate the essence of the securitization of the phenomenon: a domestic ideological threat is reconstructed as a constitutional-order threat, and the state authorizes itself to act against it with instruments reserved for existential dangers.

Yet the German national-security apparatus operates against a contradictory supranational backdrop. While the BfV classifies Muslim Brotherhood activity as a long-term threat to the "free democratic basic order," the European Commission has simultaneously continued to fund and legitimize MB-linked transnational organizations such as the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) and the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (FEMYSO), which operate through national affiliates inside Germany. This generates a structural tension in which Berlin securitizes Brotherhood ideology domestically while Brussels grants it institutional recognition and resources, weakening the coherence of Germany's counter-radicalization framework. [72]

[71] Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, "Islamist Extremism and Islamist Terrorism", 2024.

[72] Robert Williams, "Why Does the European Commission Support the Muslim Brotherhood?", Gatestone Institute, April 17, 2026, https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/22426/european-commission-supports-muslim-brotherhood.

France

Demography

According to the Pew Research Center's June 2025 report (covering 2010–2020 data), the Muslim share of the French population rose from 6.6% in 2010 to 9.1% in 2020, the highest Muslim share among the six European cases examined here.[73] In parallel, Christian identification fell (57.1%→46.5%) while the unaffiliated increased (34.5%→42.6%), reinforcing the sense of an accelerating identity transition in which Islam becomes disproportionately salient in public and political discourse. This represents a total count of approximately 6 million Muslims. Despite having one of the older Muslim populations in Europe, the median age for Muslims in France still contributes significantly to the country's demographic vitality compared to its aging general population.

As elsewhere in Europe, this demographic growth reflected the combined effects of migration and age structure. Although France did not experience demographic transformation on the basis of Muslim population growth alone, the interaction between Muslim growth, secularization, and concentration in highly visible urban settings made these changes politically potent.[74]

Islam in the Public Sphere

In France, the visibility of Islam in the public sphere has long intersected with debates over laïcité (the French constitutional doctrine of strict separation between religion and the state, codified in the 1905 Law on the Separation of Church and State and treated as a foundational pillar of republican identity), republican identity, and the limits of religious expression in public life. As demographic visibility increased, religious symbolism, public Muslim presence, and questions of institutional accommodation became increasingly fused with political discourse about cohesion, sovereignty, and the secular Republic. France has therefore become one of the

[73] Pew Research Center, *Global Religious Landscape*, pp. 180-200.

[74] Pew Research Center, Global Religious Landscape, pp. 180-200

clearest cases in which Islam's public presence has been narrated not merely as a question of pluralism, but as a test of the ideological boundaries of the Republic.[75]

In France, the public visibility of Islam is profoundly shaped by socio-religious institutions and practices that intersect with debates over laïcité, republican identity, and the secular character of the state. Mosques and Islamic associations constitute essential components of Muslim communal life and have often been scrutinized within broader debates about the ideological foundations of the Republic. Visible expressions of Islamic identity, particularly the wearing of the hijab and niqab, have become focal points of political and media controversy.[76]

This communal infrastructure has expanded markedly over the past five decades. According to the Ministère de l'Intérieur and the Bureau Central des Cultes, France hosts approximately 2,500 mosques and Muslim prayer rooms in 2024, up from roughly 150 in 1970 and around 1,500 in the early 2000s, with the densest concentrations in the banlieues of greater Paris, Lyon, and Marseille.[77] Estimates of active imams range from 1,800 to 2,000 nationwide, of whom approximately 300 are trained or accredited under the Forum de l'Islam de France (FORIF) framework intended to replace foreign-state-sponsored detached imams (notably from Algeria, Morocco, and Turkey) with domestically formed religious leadership.[78] In parallel, France hosts the largest halal economy in Europe, with annual market value estimated at €5–7 billion and a dense network of halal butchers, food retailers, and restaurants concentrated in the same neighborhoods identified by the New Direction Foundation report Franc-Moisin in Saint-Denis/Aubervilliers, La Castellane in Marseille, and Mistral in Grenoble where infrastructure visibility has been politically reinterpreted as a marker of socio-spatial separation.[79]

[75] Duman, "Islam's Increased Visibility", pp. 78-80

[76] Cesari, When Islam and Democracy Meet, pp. 45-49.

[77] Ministère de l'Intérieur, Statistiques sur les lieux de culte musulmans, 2024.

[78] Forum de l'Islam de France (FORIF), reports 2022-2024, pp. 2022-2024.

[79] Statista, *Halal Food Market- France*, 2024.

As John R. Bowen, an American anthropologist and scholar specializing in Islam in Europe and French secularism, demonstrates, such practices are frequently interpreted not merely as individual expressions of faith but as symbolic challenges to secularism, social cohesion, and national identity. Legislative initiatives and public debates have therefore reframed visible religiosity as a matter of public order, reinforcing the association between Muslim presence and broader concerns about security, integration, and republican values.[80]

In France, the visibility of Islam is further shaped by socio-religious institutions and practices that have become central to debates over laïcité and national identity. Public expressions of Islamic identity, such as the wearing of the hijab and niqab, are frequently framed as symbolic challenges to secularism and social cohesion. John R. Bowen notes that these debates reflect broader tensions surrounding religion in the public sphere, as legislative responses increasingly classify visible religiosity as a matter of public order.[81]

A 2026 French parliamentary commission further institutionalized this securitizing frame by formally designating Islamism, understood as radical, political Islam, i.e., the ideological project of subordinating state and society to Islamic religious law, as distinct from Islam as a faith, as an 'existential threat' to the Republic. The commission argued that the threat is no longer confined to episodic jihadist violence but also encompasses a non-violent, ideological project aimed at reshaping social norms, influencing local governance, and advancing forms of “Islamist separatism” within French society. According to the report, Islamist networks seek to leverage democratic institutions, civil-society platforms, and coalition-building with segments of the political left and anti-racist movements to expand their influence under the language

[80] John R. Bowen, Why the French Don't Like Headscarves: Islam, the State, and Public Space (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 90-94.

[81] Bowen, Why the French Don't Like Headscarves, pp. 90-94.

of minority rights and social justice, thereby challenging laïcité and republican cohesion from within.[82]

This securitizing register has been reinforced in 2026 by a parallel non-state intervention from the Brussels-based New Direction Foundation, whose report No-Go Zones: Immigration, Islamisation, and the Rise of Parallel Societies identifies France as the European country most affected by what its authors define as "no-go zones."[83] Three French neighborhoods, Franc-Moisin in Saint-Denis/Aubervilliers (rated 10/10 and the only "critical" zone in the sample), La Castellane in Marseille (9.4/10), and Mistral in Grenoble (8.8/10) receive the highest aggregate scores on the report's composite index of crime, "parallel society," and state-withdrawal indicators.[84] Crucially for the public-sphere dimension, the report constructs an explicit causal narrative linking the institutional growth of Islam to spatial dysfunction: it claims a near-perfect statistical correlation ($r \approx 0.99$) between the rise in officially registered mosques in France between 1975 and 2024 and the emergence of districts characterized by socio-spatial isolation, and singles out Muslim Brotherhood–linked associative networks as conduits for "rigid" doctrines incompatible with laïcité.[85] The diffusion of these claims through nationalist political networks and into mainstream debates over the priority neighborhoods and the 2021 Anti-Separatism Law illustrates how mosques, halal economies, and visible Muslim presence are progressively re-coded in French public discourse as territorial markers of a contested "Islamization" rather than as expressions of religious pluralism.

French political discourse provides a strong example of securitization through the language of existential threat and “war.” Drawing on statements collected by the author between 2018 and 2025 from French political leaders’ public speeches and social media posts, Gérald Darmanin frames Islamist separatism as an enemy of the Republic that must be countered through state coercion, declaring that “we are dissolving organizations that are enemies of the Republic and fight Islamist

[82] Jules Gomes, "Parliamentary Panel: Islamism Poses an Existential Threat to France", Middle East Forum, February 12, 2026.

[83] Hemery-Aymar, No-Go Zones, pp. 9-13.

[84] Hemery-Aymar, No-Go Zones, pp. 12-14.

[85]Hemery-Aymar, No-Go Zones, pp. 23-26.

separatism."[86] Valérie Pécresse similarly presents radical Islamism as a security challenge requiring the "rearming" of the state, stating: "I will rearm France against radical Islamism and the terrorist risk."[87] Bruno Retailleau frames radical political Islam as a threat to public order and national security, arguing that "what threatens public order is a radical conception of political Islam,"[88] while Jean Castex explicitly characterizes Islamist terrorism as a form of war against France, describing it as "a bloody fanaticism" that "has declared war on us."[89] Laurent Wauquiez adopts a similar war-like framing, asserting that "in the war against Islamism, there can be neither respite nor weakness."[90] Finally, Marine Le Pen extends the threat framing into a transnational ideological register, describing Islamist terrorism as a "bloody, totalitarian ideology" whose threat remains "urgently relevant."[91]

The French case maps onto the three constitutive components of securitization with unusual clarity. The securitizing actors are simultaneously elite political (Gérald Darmanin, Bruno Retailleau, Jean Castex, Valérie Pécresse, Laurent Wauquiez, Marine Le Pen), institutional (the 2026 parliamentary commission on Islamism), and legislative (the National Assembly through the 2021 Anti-Separatism Law). The content of the message converges on an existential framing: Islamism and increasingly "Islamist separatism" in its non-violent associative form is presented as an enemy of the Republic and a danger to laïcité, justifying extraordinary measures including administrative closures of mosques, schools, and charities outside ordinary judicial oversight (the politique d'entrave), prolonged states of emergency, and the dissolution of associations. The audience is the French electorate and the wider Republican public, whose substantial uptake of this framing is registered in successive

[86] Gérald Darmanin, X (formerly Twitter) post, https://x.com/GDarmanin/status/1318090336384782336.

[87] Emmanuel Macron, Facebook video, https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=3259332324353754.

[88] Bruno Retailleau, X post, https://x.com/BrunoRetailleau/status/983954814148194304.

[89] Jean Castex, X post, https://x.com/JeanCASTEX/status/1388053623691689985.

[90] Laurent Wauquiez, X post, https://x.com/laurentwauquiez/status/1124385989311574024.

[91] Marine Le Pen, Facebook post, https://www.facebook.com/MarineLePen/posts/1060543725440530

electoral cycles, in cross-party convergence on the Anti-Separatism Bill, and in polling consistently showing majority support for restrictions on visible religious practice uptake that distinguishes France as the European case in which securitization has become most fully institutionalized in law and administrative practice.

Manifestations of Islamist Radicalization

France has been the site of some of Europe's most visible jihadist attacks, particularly since 2012, culminating in the attacks of 2015–2016. These events profoundly reshaped state policy, leading to prolonged states of emergency, expanded policing powers, and aggressive regulation of religious institutions.

The Paris attacks of November 2015, which killed 130 people across multiple sites, including the Bataclan theater, cafés, and the Stade de France, marked a decisive escalation in the French case. Most of the attackers were European citizens who had fought in Syria and returned under ISIS's direction, reflecting the fusion of foreign fighter networks, local grievances, and global propaganda. Their ability to coordinate such a complex operation shocked European intelligence services and intensified France's prolonged state of emergency and counterterrorism reforms.[92]

Elyamine Settoul is a French sociologist and researcher specializing in radicalization, jihadist mobilization, and security studies. His analysis suggests that jihadist mobilization in France cannot be explained by ideology alone, but must be situated within a convergence of identity crises, masculine aspirations, precarious social trajectories, and the opportunities offered by jihadist networks. This framework helps contextualize the Paris network, many of whose members had prior criminality, unstable family backgrounds, or failed integration trajectories.[93]

Islamist radicalization was framed as an existential threat to the Republic and its secular order, a framing reinforced by extensive media coverage emphasizing

[92] Hugo Micheron, "Ebb and Flow: The Three Cycles of Jihadism in Europe" (Program on Extremism, George Washington University, October 2022), pp. 14-18.

[93] Elyamine Settoul, "France: Joining Jihad and Joining the Army – A Comparison", in Thierry Balzacq and Elyamine Settoul (eds.), Radicalization in Theory and Practice (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2022), pp. 173-178.

incompatibility between Islam, security, and French laïcité. Demographic visibility, religious symbolism, and counterterrorism became tightly fused in public discourse, exemplifying a mature process of securitization.[94]

France offers the clearest example of securitization through legislation. The 2021 "Law Confirming Respect for the Principles of the Republic" (Anti-Separatism Bill)[95] institutionalized the view that "Islamist separatism" is an existential danger to the Republic. The French government implemented a "Systematic Obstruction" policy (politique d'entrave) which, according to research by the Bridge Initiative at Georgetown University, led to the closure of hundreds of Muslim-run establishments (mosques, schools, charities) between 2018 and 2022. These closures were often administrative, bypassing the standard judicial oversight required for criminal cases. As noted in the U.S. State Department's religious freedom report, these actions often treated religious conservatism itself as a precursor to terrorism, justifying state intervention in the private religious sphere.[96]

These developments must be understood within a broader context in which Islam has become one of the most visible and contested elements of the French public sphere. The regulation of mosques, religious associations, and Islamic symbols reflects not only counterterrorism concerns but also deeper tensions surrounding laïcité and republican identity. Public debates over veiling, religious education, and communal autonomy demonstrate that Islamic visibility is consistently interpreted through a political lens, where expressions of faith are often framed as potential challenges to social cohesion and state authority.[97]

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[94] Duman, "Islam's Increased Visibility", pp. 78-80.

[95] Bridge Initiative Team, "France: State Islamophobia under President Emmanuel Macron", Bridge Initiative, Georgetown University, January 24, 2024.

[96] U.S. Department of State, "2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: France" (Office of International Religious Freedom, 2022).

[97] Conseil d'État, "French Secularism: Banning Abaya-Style Clothing in Schools Is Legal", https://www.conseil-etat.fr/Pages-internationales/english/news/french-secularism-banning-abaya-style-clothing-in-schools-is-legal.

However, despite these extensive state measures, Islamist radicalization has not been eradicated in France. Security assessments indicate that while large-scale coordinated attacks have declined since the peak period of 2015–2016, the threat has evolved toward decentralized and low-tech attacks inspired by jihadist ideology. French intelligence services continue to emphasize the persistence of online radicalization networks, prison-based recruitment, and lone-actor mobilization. This highlights a central contradiction: although government policies have improved disruption and prevention capabilities, they have not eliminated the underlying social and ideological conditions that sustain radicalization processes.[98]

A further obstacle to the French politique d'entrave lies one institutional level above Paris. As Williams documents, the European Commission has continued direct funding and political engagement with MB-linked umbrella organizations, most notably ENAR (which received roughly €23 million between 2007 and 2020) and FEMYSO, even after Commission Vice-President Margaritis Schinas assured Parliament that "the European Commission does not finance extremists." The result is that the same Brotherhood-linked organizational ecosystem that France attempts to dismantle through mosque closures and dissolutions retains legitimacy, funding, and institutional access at the EU level, undermining the long-term effectiveness of France's domestic securitization efforts.[99]

Belgium

Demography

Pew Research Center's June 2025 report (covering 2010–2020) offers a clear demographic baseline. In Belgium, Pew lists the total population as 10,940,000 in 2010 with 5.1% Muslim, and 11,540,000 in 2020 with 6.8% Muslim. Over the same decade, Belgium also saw a decline in Christian identification (61.1%→51.0%) and a rise in non-affiliation (32.0%→39.0%), meaning that Muslim demographic growth occurred within a wider restructuring of religious identity. This demonstrates a measurable increase in the Muslim share over the decade, contextualizing Belgium's demographic weight in

[98] Direction Générale de la Sécurité Intérieure (DGSI), "L'état de la menace terroriste en France", https://www.dgsi.interieur.gouv.fr/dgsi-a-vos-cotes/lutte-contre-terrorisme/letat-de-menace-terroriste-en-france.

[99] Williams, "Why Does the European Commission Support the Muslim Brotherhood?".

broader European trends. In Belgium, Christians declined from 61.1% to 51.0%, and the unaffiliated grew from 32.0% to 39.0%, alongside Muslim growth from 5.1% to 6.8%.[100]

Belgium likewise reflects the broader European pattern in which migration and age structure drove Muslim demographic growth, while population concentration in specific urban areas heightened visibility and political salience. Here too, the political significance of demographic change derived less from numerical scale than from its interaction with integration debates, neighborhood concentration, and broader anxieties about identity and social cohesion.[101]

Islam in the Public Sphere

In Belgium, Islam in the public sphere is closely tied to demographic concentration, especially in urban areas and specific neighborhoods that have become highly visible in both media and political discourse. Rather than being treated primarily as a question of religious pluralism or integration, Muslim communal presence has frequently been interpreted through a governance lens, in which public visibility, neighborhood concentration, and organizational life are connected to security concerns. Government responses emphasized intelligence coordination, expanded policing, and counterterrorism legislation, while media coverage portrayed specific Muslim neighborhoods as radicalization hubs.

The depth of this concentration is further reflected in the partial retreat of state authority from several of these districts. In parts of Brussels and Antwerp, police and other law-enforcement agencies have faced recurring difficulties in maintaining a routine presence, and Belgian security services themselves have been described by Florence Bergeaud-Blackler as exhibiting "impotence" and "significant blind spots" in their handling of the non-violent Islamist networks rooted in these areas. Belgium's dismissal of the May 2025 French government report, which identified Belgium as the "European crossroads" of the Muslim Brotherhood, illustrates that this erosion of state authority is institutional and regulatory as well as territorial. Observed in different intensities across several of the case studies examined below, the phenomenon points to the depth and

[100] Pew Research Center, Global Religious Landscape, pp. 180-200.

[101] Pew Research Center, Global Religious Landscape, pp. 180-200.

magnitude of the rupture between segments of these communities and the surrounding state order.[102]

In Belgium, the visibility of Muslim communities is reinforced by socio-religious infrastructure embedded within urban environments. Mosques serve as multifunctional institutions that provide religious education, social services, and communal cohesion, thereby making Muslim presence more socially legible in the public sphere. As Jocelyne Cesari, a political scientist of Islam in the West, observes, such institutions serve as key arenas through which Muslim communities negotiate identity and civic participation within European societies.[103]

Imams also play pivotal roles as intermediaries between Muslim communities and state institutions. Jonathan Laurence, a political scientist of European Muslim politics, demonstrates[104] that European governments increasingly regulate their training, accreditation, language use, and foreign funding as part of broader integration and counter-radicalization strategies. Furthermore, visible expressions of Islamic identity have been framed in political discourse as matters of public order, reinforcing the association between Muslim presence and security concerns.[105]

Furthermore, visible expressions of Islamic identity have been framed in political discourse as matters of public order rather than as questions of religious freedom. Two legislative landmarks illustrate this securitizing logic: France's 2004 law banning "conspicuous religious symbols" in state schools, which was officially justified on grounds of laïcité but in practice targeted the Muslim headscarf as a threat to republican neutrality and social cohesion;[106] and Belgium's 2011 statute prohibiting

[102] Jules Gomes, "Belgium Shrugs Off Warning of Muslim Brotherhood Influence", Middle East Forum, February 18, 2025, https://www.meforum.org/fwi/fwi-news/belgium-shrugs-off-warning-of-muslim-brotherhood-influence.

[103] Cesari, When Islam and Democracy Meet, pp. 45-49.

[104] Laurence, Emancipation of Europe's Muslims, pp. 160-167.

[105] Bowen, Why the French Don't Like Headscarves, pp. 90-94.

[106] Loi n° 2004-228 du 15 mars 2004 encadrant, en application du principe de laïcité, le port de signes ou de tenues manifestant une appartenance religieuse dans les écoles, Journal officiel de la République française, March 17, 2004.

the wearing of the full-face veil in public spaces, the first such law in Europe, defended by parliament on the dual grounds of public security and vivre ensemble (living together).[107] Both measures were later upheld by the European Court of Human Rights in S.A.S. v. France (2014) and Belcacemi and Oussar v. Belgium (2017), which accepted "living together" as a legitimate aim restricting religious manifestation.[108] Such legislation reinforces the association between Muslim presence and security concerns by transferring religious practice from the domain of individual rights to that of public order regulation. [109]

The growth of Belgian Muslim communal infrastructure parallels demographic expansion. According to the Executive of Muslims of Belgium (Exécutif des Musulmans de Belgique, EMB) and federal religious-affairs data, Belgium hosts approximately 330 mosques, of which roughly 80 are formally recognized by the federal government and approximately a third are concentrated in the Brussels-Capital Region, particularly in the communes of Molenbeek, Schaerbeek, and Anderlecht, with significant additional clusters in Antwerp (Borgerhout, Deurne), Charleroi, and Liège.[110] Belgium has roughly 700 active imams, of whom only a minority have completed Belgian-recognized accreditation programs; reform efforts launched after the 2016 Brussels attacks have sought to expand domestic imam training and reduce reliance on foreign-funded religious leadership.[111] The Belgian halal sector, while smaller than the French equivalent, sustains an estimated annual market value exceeding €1 billion, with halal certification bodies operating across hundreds of butchers, food shops, and restaurants concentrated in the same Brussels and Antwerp districts where the New Direction Foundation report locates its "no-go zones.[112]

[107] Loi du 1er juin 2011 visant à interdire le port de tout vêtement cachant totalement ou de manière principale le visage, Moniteur belge, July 13, 2011.

[108] S.A.S. v. France, App. No. 43835/11, European Court of Human Rights (Grand Chamber), July 1, 2014, https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/fre?i=001-145466.

[109] Bowen, Why the French Don't Like Headscarves, pp. 90-94.

[110] Exécutif des Musulmans de Belgique, Rapport annuel, 2023.

[111] Federal Public Service Justice, "Reconnaissance des cultes", reports 2018-2024, pp. 2018-2024.

[112] Halal Food Council of Europe (HFCE), industry reports, 2024.

The spatial dimension of this association has been crystallized in the 2026 New Direction report No-Go Zones: Immigration, Islamisation, and the Rise of Parallel Societies, which classifies Brussels-Molenbeek as a "critical no-go zone" (9.4/10) and Antwerp-Borgerhout as a "severe" zone (7.1/10), placing Belgium alongside France and Sweden among the EU member states with the highest density of such districts.[113] The report frames Belgian Muslim public space mosques, cultural associations, and informal community networks not primarily as sites of religious life but as infrastructures of an emergent "parallel society," citing the documented activity of Salafist preachers in Belgian neighborhoods who have openly advocated for the application of Sharia law and the rejection of national legal authority.[114] It further situates these claims within a continent-wide pattern in which the average Muslim share of population reaches 29 percent in identified no-go zones, against an EU-wide mean of 4.9 percent.[115] This statistical "demographic clustering" narrative has become a key rhetorical resource for Belgian elite securitization: figures such as Alain Destexhe and Georges-Louis Bouchez have extended securitizing language beyond violent terrorism to non-violent organizational infrastructure precisely on the grounds that visible Muslim institutions in Brussels and Antwerp may function as enablers of radicalization clustering.

Manifestations of Islamist Radicalization

This combination of demographic concentration, radicalization cases, and media framing transformed Muslim communities into objects of security governance, reinforcing securitized interpretations of integration failures.

Beyond this securitized framing, Islam's position in the Belgian public sphere is anchored in a dense and highly visible socio-religious infrastructure concentrated in urban areas such as Brussels and Antwerp. Mosques, Islamic cultural associations, and informal community networks function not only as religious spaces but also as institutional arenas through which identity, belonging, and social norms are negotiated. In neighborhoods such as Molenbeek, a working-class commune in western Brussels

[113] Hemery-Aymar, No-Go Zones, pp. 12-14.

[114] Hemery-Aymar, No-Go Zones, pp. 9-13.

[115] Hemery-Aymar, No-Go Zones, pp. 9-13.

that became internationally emblematic of jihadist recruitment and logistical networks after several of the perpetrators of the November 2015 Paris and March 2016 Brussels attacks were found to have resided or operated there, this visibility has been amplified through media and political discourse that frames these spaces as emblematic sites of governance failure and radicalization risk. As a result, Islamic presence becomes politically coded not merely as a marker of diversity but as a potential indicator of security vulnerability, linking everyday religious life to broader debates over integration, cohesion, and national identity.[116] This same environment also shapes the conditions in which radicalization processes develop.

Within this same environment, Belgium continues to exhibit concrete manifestations of Islamist radicalization that extend beyond isolated incidents. The country has produced one of the highest per capita contingents of foreign fighters in Europe, with networks rooted in local friendship groups, kinship ties, and pre-existing delinquent subcultures.[117] These pathways demonstrate that radicalization is not solely the product of ideological indoctrination but often emerges from hybrid environments combining social marginalization, identity crises, and exposure to transnational jihadist narratives. The evolution of these dynamics is particularly evident in the shift from structured organizations such as *Sharia4Belgium, a Salafi-jihadist movement founded in Antwerp in 2010 by Fouad Belkacem and dissolved after a 2015 terrorism trial,* toward more decentralized and fluid networks, including online ecosystems that facilitate recruitment, propaganda dissemination, and self-radicalization. These developments are closely tied to the social and spatial patterns described above.[118]

In response to these developments, despite extensive state intervention, including strengthened counterterrorism legislation, intelligence coordination, and EU-level information sharing, the Belgian case reveals a persistent contradiction between apparent policy effectiveness and the continued reproduction of radicalization dynamics. Europol data indicates that while the number of completed jihadist attacks

[116] Pieter Van Ostaeyen, "Belgian Radical Networks and the Road to the Brussels Attacks", CTC Sentinel, Vol. 9 no. 6 (June 2016), pp. 7-9.

[117] Rik Coolsaet, Facing the Fourth Foreign Fighters Wave: What Drives Europeans to Syria, and to Islamic State? Insights from the Belgian Case (Brussels: Egmont Institute, March 2016), pp. 9-10.

[118] Paul Cruickshank and Tim Lister, "Belgian Radical Networks and the Road to the Brussels Attacks", CTC Sentinel, Vol. 9 no. 6 (2016), pp. 7-8.

has declined and numerous plots have been disrupted, jihadist terrorism remains the most prominent threat category across the European Union, with Belgium continuing to register arrests and ongoing investigations.[119] Moreover, the contemporary threat environment is increasingly characterized by decentralization, online radicalization, and lone-actor mobilization, all of which complicate detection and prevention efforts. This gap becomes clearer when examining concrete cases.

This tension highlights a structural limitation of securitization-based approaches. While Belgian authorities have achieved measurable success in disrupting organized networks and preventing large-scale attacks, radicalization has not disappeared; rather, it has adapted. It persists in less visible, more fragmented forms embedded within digital platforms, localized social networks, and transnational ideological flows.[120] Consequently, the Belgian case demonstrates that policy effectiveness in terms of immediate security outcomes does not equate to the eradication of radicalization processes. Instead, it reveals a transformation of the phenomenon, in which visible threats are reduced while underlying drivers and adaptive mechanisms remain intact.

This is clearly illustrated in Belgium. In Brussels, the March 2016 coordinated bombings at Zaventem airport and Maelbeek metro station killed 32 civilians and underscored the operational significance of densely interconnected local radical networks. The attackers belonged to the same network responsible for the Paris attacks and operated from Molenbeek, a marginalized Brussels district that became emblematic of radical clustering, logistical support, and concealment even under heightened surveillance. The Brussels case, therefore, illustrates how localized enclave dynamics could facilitate not only ideological radicalization but also operational coordination, safe haven, and cross-border connectivity. It also intensified

[119] Europol, European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2023 (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2023), pp. 9-10.

[120] Thomas Renard, "Overblown: Exploring the Gap Between the Fear of Terrorist Recidivism and the Evidence", CTC Sentinel, Vol. 13 no. 4 (2020), pp. 1-9.

EU-wide efforts in intelligence sharing and counter-radicalization policy, reinforcing Belgium's role as a central case in the study of Islamist networks in Europe.[121]

These dynamics are also reflected at the political level. The Belgian case also illustrates the growing European concern with what security agencies increasingly describe as "legalist Islamism," ideological movements that reject liberal democratic norms while avoiding direct involvement in terrorism. Public debate intensified after Belgian analysts and policymakers warned that Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated actors were embedding themselves within local associations, educational initiatives, and municipal-level activism. According to these assessments, such networks sought gradual societal influence through democratic participation, community mobilization, and institutional engagement rather than overt violence. This distinction between violent jihadism and non-violent Islamist activism became central to Belgian securitization discourse, as policymakers increasingly framed ideological Islamism itself as a potential long-term security concern. [122]

Based on original research conducted by the author on Belgian political discourse and securitization between 2010 and 2026, Belgian elite discourse frames Islamism both as violent terrorism and as subversive organizational influence. Didier Reynders, the Belgian liberal politician (MR) who served as Foreign and later Justice Minister before becoming EU Commissioner for Justice, describes terrorism linked to radical Islamist networks as a direct national security threat.[123] Theo Francken, a Flemish nationalist politician (N-VA) who served as State Secretary for Asylum and Migration, connects Islamist extremism to mass-casualty attacks, reinforcing counterterrorism securitization.[124] Jan Jambon, a senior N-VA figure who served as Belgium's Interior Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, frames Salafist extremist influence as a security

[121] Van Ostaeyen, "Belgian Radical Networks", pp. 7-12.

[122] Gomes, "Belgium Shrugs Off Warning" and .

[123] Didier Reynders, statement following the Brussels attacks, March 22, 2016, quoted in "Belgians Hunt Islamic State Suspect After Blasts Kill 30", Reuters, March 22, 2016.

[124] Theo Francken, X post commemorating the March 22, 2016 Brussels attacks, March 22, 2025, https://x.com/FranckenTheo/status/1903359971959386537.

risk requiring state action.[125]Alain Destexhe, a Belgian francophone liberal senator and physician, and Georges-Louis Bouchez, president of the Mouvement Réformateur (MR), extend securitization to non-violent organizational infrastructure, portraying Islamist-linked networks and associations as threats to democratic resilience that justify institutional crackdowns.[126]

Read through the three Copenhagen-School components, and the Belgian case reveals a clear securitization architecture. The securitizing actors operate at both ministerial and party-political levels: Didier Reynders, Theo Francken, and Jan Jambon function as principal institutional securitizing actors framing terrorism and Salafist influence as direct national-security threats, while Alain Destexhe and Georges-Louis Bouchez extend the securitizing register to non-violent organizational infrastructure, treating Muslim Brotherhood-linked associations as threats to democratic resilience. The content of the message combines two registers: a counterterrorism framing tied to the operational legacy of the 2016 Brussels attacks and the Molenbeek networks, and a parallel-society framing in which the institutional density of Belgian Muslim public life is reinterpreted as an enabling environment for radicalization, clustering together legitimizing intelligence-led monitoring, association dissolutions, and tightened oversight of religious organizations beyond ordinary administrative norms. The audience is the Belgian electorate and policy community in a politically fragmented federal system; uptake is registered both in cross-party convergence on counterterrorism legislation following 2016 and in the electoral consolidation of nationalist and Flemish-conservative parties (N-VA, Vlaams Belang, MR) that have made the Islamist threat a central component of their political offer.

The Belgian case is particularly illustrative because Brussels hosts both the EU institutions and one of the clearest documented links between European officialdom and the Brotherhood. ENAR's director from 2010 to 2021, the Belgian convert Michaël Privot, publicly acknowledged his Muslim Brotherhood affiliation in Le Soir in 2008,

[125] Jan Jambon, X post, March 16, 2018, https://x.com/JanJambon/status/974598895773855745.

[126] Alain Destexhe, X post on Muslim Brotherhood networks in Belgium, May 21, 2025, https://x.com/Destexhe/status/1925157525084577901.

yet ENAR continued to receive substantial Commission funding throughout his tenure. This convergence of a Belgian-led, Brussels-based, EU-funded MB-linked network operating in the political heart of the country, whose elites (Destexhe, Bouchez, Francken) call for crackdowns on Islamist organizational infrastructure, exposes the gap between Belgian securitization rhetoric and the supranational reality of Brotherhood institutional embedding.[127]

United Kingdom

Demography

By 2020, the United Kingdom's Muslim population had grown to approximately 4.3 million people. As a share of the total national population, Muslims increased from 5.3% in 2010 to 6.4% in 2020. This demographic change occurred alongside a broader transformation in the religious composition of British society. Christian identification declined significantly, falling to approximately 49.4% of the population, while the number of religiously unaffiliated individuals and members of other minority religious groups increased steadily. These shifts reflected wider processes of secularization and demographic diversification that have reshaped the religious landscape of the United Kingdom in recent decades.[128]

As in other European cases, this growth reflected the combined role of migration and demographic age structure. Although the chapter's comparative opening did not provide the same Christian/unaffiliated percentage sequence for the United Kingdom as for the five continental cases, the UK followed the same broader pattern of gradual Muslim growth, secular diversification, and increased visibility in major metropolitan settings.[129]

Islam in the Public Sphere

[127] Williams, "Why Does the European Commission Support the Muslim Brotherhood?".

[128] Pew Research Center, Global Religious Landscape, pp. 180-200.

[129] Pew Research Center, Global Religious Landscape, pp. 180-200.

In the British case, Islam in the public sphere has been shaped by the interaction between multiculturalism, demographic diversification, and increasingly contentious debates over immigration and national identity. Media debates surrounding multiculturalism, "parallel societies," and Islamist extremism contributed to a securitized environment in which demographic concentration became linked to national security concerns.[130] Government discourse increasingly framed Muslim communities as both partners in counter-extremism and potential security risks.

This dual framing reflects the deeply embedded yet contested role of Islam in the British public sphere. Muslim communities are highly visible through mosques, schools, and civic organizations, particularly in urban centers, yet this visibility is often interpreted through debates on integration, multiculturalism, and national identity. State engagement with Muslim institutions simultaneously promotes inclusion and reinforces security-oriented oversight, shaping a complex environment in which religious expression is both normalized and politically scrutinized.[131]

Despite the United Kingdom's extensive counter-radicalization infrastructure, Islamist radicalization continues to persist. Official data indicates ongoing referrals related to Islamist extremism, alongside continued concern over self-radicalized individuals and online mobilization. While programs such as Prevent have enhanced early detection and disruption capabilities, radicalization processes have adapted to new environments, particularly digital platforms. This underscores the gap between policy effectiveness in prevention and the continued existence of radicalization pathways.[132]

In the United Kingdom, the visibility of Muslim communities is reinforced through socio-religious institutions embedded within urban life. Mosques serve as central hubs of religious practice, community organization, and civic engagement. As Jocelyne Cesari, a political scientist specializing in Islam in the West, explains, such institutions

[130] Mohiuddin, "Muslims in Europe", pp. 397-398.

[131] Office for National Statistics, *Census 2021*, https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/bulletins/religionenglandandwales/census2021.

[132] UK Home Office, Prevent statistics, https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/individuals-referred-to-prevent-to-march-2024.

constitute key spaces through which Muslim communities negotiate identity and participation within European societies. [133]

Religious consumption also plays an important role in reinforcing public visibility. The rapid expansion of halal markets, butcher shops, and restaurants reflects both demographic growth and the institutionalization of religious observance in everyday life. Johan Fischer, an anthropologist of Muslim consumer culture and halal economies, argues that halal economies operate simultaneously as religious infrastructures and urban markers, often clustering in specific neighborhoods and becoming associated in political discourse with cultural separation and "parallel societies."[134]

The scale of British Muslim communal infrastructure significantly exceeds most continental cases. According to the Naqshbandi Mosque Database and the Muslim Council of Britain, the United Kingdom contains approximately 1,800 mosques and over 3,000 Islamic institutions including madrasas, Islamic schools, registered charities, and Sharia Councils with around 250 purpose-built mosques featuring classical Islamic architecture and major concentrations in the West Midlands (Birmingham, Wolverhampton), West Yorkshire (Bradford, Leeds), East London (Tower Hamlets, Newham), and Greater Manchester.[135] The UK is home to an estimated 3,000 active imams, the majority trained in the South Asian Deobandi and Barelvi traditions, with a smaller proportion graduating from domestically established UK Dar al-Ulum seminaries.[136] The British halal economy is the second-largest in Europe after France, valued at approximately £4–5 billion annually, with halal certification firmly mainstreamed across major supermarket chains and concentrated commercially in the same urban neighborhoods that feature most prominently in British political debate over "parallel societies" and "two-tier policing."[137]

[133] Cesari, When Islam and Democracy Meet, pp. 45-49.

[134] Johan Fischer, Halal Matters: Islam, Politics and Markets in Global Perspective (London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 98-104.

[135] Mehmood Naqshbandi, MuslimsInBritain.org Mosque Database, 2024.

[136] Philip Lewis and Sadek Hamid, British Muslims: New Directions in Islamic Thought, Creativity, and Activism (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), pp. 1-30.

[137] Statista, Halal Food Market- United Kingdom, 2024.

Although the United Kingdom falls outside the seven-country quantitative sample of the 2026 New Direction report No-Go Zones: Immigration, Islamisation, and the Rise of Parallel Societies, British cases occupy a prominent place in its qualitative framing of "parallel societies." The report devotes a dedicated focus to the Pakistani grooming-gang scandal in Rotherham, Rochdale, and Oldham, referencing the 2014 Jay Report's finding of approximately 1,400 abused children in Rotherham alone and the 2025 Casey Review's confirmation that authorities had downplayed the ethnic dimension of the offences to argue that institutional silence in majority-Muslim districts amounts to a de facto withdrawal of state authority.[138] It further treats the operation of Britain's Islamic Sharia Councils, most notably the London Islamic Sharia Council established in 1982, which it cites as handling more than 1,000 family-law cases per year, as evidence of "parallel normative systems" coexisting with civil law in close-knit Muslim communities.[139] The migration of this vocabulary into UK political discourse, as visible in Conservative and Reform-aligned rhetoric on "no-go" areas, "two-tier policing," and Prevent-style preemptive surveillance, has had concrete effects on the regulation of mosques, halal economies, and Muslim civic visibility, transforming everyday public-sphere expressions of British Islam into objects of pre-emptive security governance.

These developments unfolded alongside significant political changes in British politics during the 2010s. Debates surrounding immigration, national identity, and security increasingly became central to political competition. The UK Independence Party (UKIP), under the leadership of Nigel Farage, experienced a rapid rise by mobilizing concerns about immigration and cultural change. UKIP achieved a major electoral breakthrough in the 2014 European Parliament elections, where it won the largest share of the British vote with 27.5 percent, marking the first time since 1906 that a party other than Labour or the Conservatives had topped a nationwide election in Britain.[140] Political scientists Matthew Goodwin and Caitlin Milazzo, scholars of British

[138] Hemery-Aymar, No-Go Zones, pp. 47-48.

[139] Hemery-Aymar, No-Go Zones, pp. 9-13.

[140] European Parliament, 2014 European Parliament Election Results – United Kingdom.

populism and the Brexit realignment, argue that UKIP's electoral success reflected growing dissatisfaction with mainstream political parties and the increasing political salience of immigration in British public debate. Their research shows that UKIP was able to mobilize voters by emphasizing immigration, national sovereignty, and cultural change, positioning itself as the primary political actor advocating stricter immigration controls during the 2010s.[141]

UKIP leader Nigel Farage frequently framed immigration as a challenge to social cohesion and national identity. In speeches and campaign messaging, most notably his February 2014 claim that parts of Britain had become "like a foreign land," citing the everyday use of languages other than English on London public transport as evidence of cultural displacement, he argued that political elites had failed to respond adequately to public concerns about immigration levels and cultural integration.[142] Scholars of populism, such as Cas Mudde, a leading political scientist of the European far right, note that this form of rhetoric reflects a broader pattern in European politics in which demographic change and immigration are framed through narratives emphasizing cultural threat and national decline.[143] Within this political environment, debates about radicalization and Islamist extremism increasingly intersected with wider political discussions about immigration policy, multiculturalism, and the future of British national identity.

A salient illustration of these dynamics emerged in the July 2024 UK general election, in which four independent candidates running explicitly on a pro-Gaza, anti-Labour platform defeated Labour incumbents in Muslim-majority constituencies. Shock at Adam unseated shadow paymaster general Jonathan Ashworth in Leicester South; Adnan Hussain won Blackburn; Ayoub Khan took Birmingham Perry Barr; and Iqbal

[141] Matthew J. Goodwin and Caitlin Milazzo, UKIP: Inside the Campaign to Redraw the Map of British Politics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 45-49.

[142] Andrew Sparrow, "Nigel Farage: Parts of Britain Are 'Like a Foreign Land'", The Guardian, February 28, 2014.

[143] Cas Mudde, The Far Right Today (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019), pp. 94-96.

Mohamed prevailed in Dewsbury and Batley.[144] Several months earlier, George Galloway's victory in the February 2024 Rochdale by-election on a similar platform and Labour's significant loss of vote share in Muslim-majority wards during the May 2024 local elections had already signalled the political consolidation of a distinct Muslim electoral bloc organized around the Israel–Palestine question.[145] These results mark a structural shift in British electoral politics: for the first time since the integration of large Muslim minorities into British public life, an external geopolitical conflict has produced an organized, cross-constituency mobilization of Muslim voters capable of unseating established parliamentary representatives, illustrating how the post–October 7 critical juncture has been internalized within domestic democratic competition.[146]

Manifestations of Islamist Radicalization

Concerns about Islamist radicalization became particularly prominent following the 2005 London bombings, which marked a turning point in British counterterrorism policy and public debate about integration and security.[147] In response, the British government introduced expanded counter-extremism measures, most notably the Prevent strategy, which sought to identify and intervene in early stages of radicalization and became a central pillar of British counterterrorism policy.[148]

On 7 July 2005, four suicide bombers struck London's transport system, killing 52 civilians. The attackers were British citizens radicalized in local Leeds networks while also cultivating ties in Pakistan, demonstrating how transnational jihadist ideology could converge with localized micro-networks in the British context. Their martyrdom videos invoked religious duty and global jihadist themes, while the attacks themselves

[144] What does the success of pro-Gaza independents say about Labour's victory?" Al Jazeera, July 5, 2024, https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2024/7/5/what-does-the-success-of-pro-gaza-independents-say-about-labours-victory

[145] George Galloway, Who Campaigned Against Gaza War, Wins UK By-Election," Al Jazeera, March 1, 2024, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/3/1/uk-politician-galloway-who-campaigned-against-gaza-war-wins-by-election;

[146] Islamist-Linked Lobby Scores Big Wins in England's Local Council Elections," Middle East Forum-Focus on Western Islamism, May 2026, https://www.meforum.org/fwi/fwi-news/islamist-linked-lobby-scores-big-wins-in-englands-local-council-elections.

[147] Mohiuddin, "Muslims in Europe", pp. 397-398.

[148] UK Home Office, Prevent Strategy (London: HM Government, 2011), pp. 7-9.

triggered sweeping counterterrorism reforms, including the revised Prevent strategy, which increasingly targeted not only violence but also extremist narratives.[149]

As Tahir Abbas argues, the sociological environment surrounding Islamist radicalization in Britain was shaped by spatial segregation, deindustrialization, and the reciprocal dynamic between far-right hostility and Islamist counter-mobilization. This framework helps explain how localized grievances, racial tensions, and identity conflicts in cities such as Leeds and Birmingham contributed to the radicalization trajectories that culminated in the 7/7 bombings.[150]

UK political discourse repeatedly frames Islamism, radicalized citizens, and immigration governance through a security lens. Nigel Farage frames UK nationals who join ISIS as internal enemies and opposes their return, presenting jihadist returnees as direct national security threats. As early as August 2014, Farage publicly declared that "UK nationals who are fighting with Islamic State militants should be stripped of British citizenship," and that it was "unforgivable and unacceptable for UK nationals who have decided to fight for Islamic State militants to be permitted to return to the UK," characterizing the organization as engaging in "sheer barbarism … without precedent in the modern era."[151]

Conservative leaders frame uncontrolled migration as undermining sovereignty and public confidence, calling for the regaining of control of borders and tightening enforcement. Theresa May insisted that "we can't let free movement continue as it has until now. We need to bring control to EU immigration," while Boris Johnson argued that one can "be pro immigration but also pro control" and demanded that the UK "take back control." Priti Patel similarly framed Brexit as "a unique chance to return control of our borders & have an immigration system that genuinely fulfils the needs

[149] House of Commons, Report of the Official Account of the Bombings in London on 7th July 2005 (London: The Stationery Office, 2006), pp. 3-5.

[150] Tahir Abbas, "United Kingdom: Islamist Radicalization in a Spatial Context", in Thierry Balzacq and Elyamine Settoul (eds.), Radicalization in Theory and Practice (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2022), pp. 241-246.

[151] Nigel Farage, X post, August 21, 2014, https://x.com/Nigel_Farage/status/502062685144756224; Nigel Farage, X post, August 21, 2014, https://x.com/Nigel_Farage/status/502064087921336320; Nigel Farage, X post, August 21, 2014, https://x.com/Nigel_Farage/status/502063400751726592.

of our nation," promising an "Australian-style, points-based immigration system," a framing later reinforced by Suella Braverman, who insisted that "controlling immigration so that our government has the final say on who works and lives in the U.K. isn't racist. It's a reasonable and responsible way to run a country."[152]

Legal and institutional barriers, including human rights law and immigration courts, are framed by senior politicians as obstacles to security governance. Jacob Rees-Mogg argued that "as long as we have the Human Rights Act and are subscribers to the European Convention on Human Rights we will never solve our immigration problem," while Chris Philp called for the repeal of "the human rights farce that allows dangerous criminals to stay in the UK" and demanded that the Human Rights Act be repealed "in relation to immigration matters" so that "foreign criminals and others with no right to be in the UK [can] be removed." Andrea Jenkyns extended the critique to the judiciary itself, attacking immigration judges as "out-of-touch" actors who "want Brexit reversed" and "back calls to DECRIMINALISE illegal entry."[153]

Far-right actors depict mass immigration as demographic replacement and civilizational decline, reinforcing existential threat narratives. Paul Golding, leader of Britain First, has repeatedly declared that "Enoch Powell was 100% right. Stop immigration, start Remigration!" and that "England has become an outpost of the Third World." He has framed the demographic shift in explicit replacement terms, claiming that "in less than a century, native British people have been made a minority in London because of mass immigration" and characterizes Islam and the West as

[152] Theresa May, X post, July 3, 2016, https://x.com/theresa_may/status/749530807367266304; Boris Johnson, X post, June 3, 2016, https://x.com/BorisJohnson/status/738816417563348992; Priti Patel, X post, April 7, 2018, https://x.com/pritipatel/status/982926136010248194; Priti Patel, X post, December 2, 2019, https://x.com/pritipatel/status/1201477328007782401; Suella Braverman, X post, November 8, 2019, https://x.com/SuellaBraverman/status/1192852671952277504.

[153] Jacob Rees-Mogg, X post, April 30, 2025, https://x.com/Jacob_Rees_Mogg/status/1917568633028440184; Chris Philp, X post, March 9, 2025, https://x.com/CPhilpOfficial/status/1899041487335113131; Chris Philp, X post, March 17, 2025, https://x.com/CPhilpOfficial/status/1901596499999375416; Chris Philp, X post, April 30, 2025, https://x.com/CPhilpOfficial/status/1917503167199154490; Andrea Jenkyns, X post, April 11, 2025, https://x.com/andreajenkyns/status/1910795073710854500.

"totally incompatible," warning that "endless uncontrolled mass immigration is going to end in tears."[154]

At the state level, policy discourse frames illegal immigration as a security crisis requiring extraordinary legislative measures. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak presented anti-immigration legislation as "the toughest ever anti-illegal immigration legislation" and argued that "to stop the boats, we need to back this bill." Foreign Secretary James Cleverly warned that "if sensible politicians don't grip immigration, extremism will rise," linking migration governance directly to the prevention of political radicalization. Nigel Farage went further, declaring that "illegal immigration is a national security emergency," while Prime Minister Keir Starmer himself acknowledged that "too many people are able to come to the UK and work illegally," illustrating that the securitizing framing now spans the Labour-Conservative divide.[155]

Mapped onto the three Copenhagen-School components, the British case combines a permissive multicultural inheritance with one of the most comprehensive securitization architectures in Europe. The securitizing actors include political party leaders (Nigel Farage, successive Conservative Home Secretaries, Reform UK figures), state institutions (the Home Office, MI5, the Prevent strategy and Channel referral system), and a substantial commentariat that frames Islamist extremism, illegal migration, and “parallel societies” as overlapping threats. The content of the message has progressively expanded from violent jihadism toward non-violent ideology: legal definitions of “extremism” have widened to include views deemed incompatible with “British values,” the Prevent Duty has placed teachers, doctors, and university staff under statutory reporting obligations, and grooming-gang and Sharia Council debates have been folded into a broader narrative of state withdrawal from majority-Muslim

[154] Paul Golding, X post, April 21, 2025, https://x.com/GoldingBF/status/1914220192625758366; Paul Golding, X post, January 28, 2025, https://x.com/GoldingBF/status/1883854988927017285; Paul Golding, X post, February 11, 2025, https://x.com/GoldingBF/status/1889041915598778650; Paul Golding, X post, December 28, 2024, https://x.com/GoldingBF/status/1872930525763019186; Paul Golding, X post, December 21, 2024, https://x.com/GoldingBF/status/1870454234392711419.

[155] Rishi Sunak, X post, December 13, 2023, https://x.com/RishiSunak/status/1734524703371415620; James Cleverly, X post, August 11, 2024, https://x.com/JamesCleverly/status/1822325789381042212; Nigel Farage, X post, March 9, 2025, https://x.com/Nigel_Farage/status/1898691053735002460; Keir Starmer, X post, February 10, 2025, https://x.com/Keir_Starmer/status/1888860515734003765.

districts together legitimizing pre-emptive surveillance, detention powers, and migration-control measures beyond ordinary criminal-procedural norms. The audience is the British public, where uptake is registered in the political mainstreaming of UKIP and Reform's migration framing, in the Brexit vote's entanglement with sovereignty-and-borders rhetoric, and in successive Conservative manifestos converging on a security-first reading of Islam in the public sphere.

In the UK, the practical application of securitization is most visible in the Prevent strategy. Originally part of a counter-terrorism mandate, it effectively turned public sector workers, including doctors and teachers, into extensions of the security state. The policy legally mandates the reporting of “radicalization risks” even in non-violent contexts. In 2023, Amnesty International presented evidence that this has created a “pre-crime” environment where legitimate religious or political expression, such as support for Palestine, is flagged as a security threat.[156] By expanding the definition of “extremism” to include non-violent ideology, the state reframed the ideas of the Muslim community, not just violent actions, as a threat to British values.[157]

Although the United Kingdom is no longer an EU member state, British Brotherhood-linked civil society remains tied to the same transnational networks that operate across the Channel. Research commissioned by the European Conservatives and Reformists Group, including the foundational work of UK-based scholar Paul Stott, identified ENAR and FEMYSO as central nodes of an MB-linked European architecture, and the Commission's continued funding of these structures sustains their legitimacy and reach into UK affiliates. This indicates that the Prevent strategy's domestic redefinition of "extremism" cannot insulate Britain from Brotherhood ideological infrastructure that is reinforced supranationally.[158]

Sweden

[156] Amnesty International UK, This Is the Thought Police: The Prevent Duty and Its Chilling Effect on Human Rights, November 2, 2023.

[157] Prevent Watch, "Amnesty Calls for Prevent Strategy to Be Abolished", November 2, 2023.

[158] Williams, "Why Does the European Commission Support the Muslim Brotherhood?".

Demography

Sweden's Muslim population expanded markedly through refugee migration, particularly from Somalia, Iraq, and Syria, a shift that is empirically reflected in the Pew Research Center's June 2025 data (covering 2010–2020) showing a 3.6-percentage-point increase in the Muslim share of the population between 2010 and 2020, rising from 4.5% to 8.1% by 2020, nearly doubling within a decade and amounting to approximately 840,000 people, one of the most significant proportional increases in Europe. This occurred alongside a steep decline in Christian identification (72.8%→60.8%) and growth in non-affiliation (21.5%→28.9%), amplifying the perception of rapid cultural change and identity transformation. .[159]

The Swedish case exemplifies the broader European pattern especially clearly: growth was driven by migration and age structure, while concentration in urban settings increased visibility and sharpened the perceived political significance of demographic change.

Islam in the Public Sphere

In Sweden, the increased visibility of Muslim communities has been closely linked to refugee migration and to broader debates over segregation, welfare, national cohesion, and the limits of multicultural accommodation. Political and media discourse increasingly linked migration policy to security risks, prompting stricter asylum regulations and expanded counter-radicalization efforts. This shift marked a transition from a welfare-oriented integration model toward a securitized governance framework. The visibility of Islam in the public sphere was thus increasingly narrated through concerns over democratic order, social fragmentation, and national identity rather than solely through questions of diversity or inclusion.[160]

In Sweden, the public visibility of Muslim communities has been shaped less by absolute demographic size than by the rapid post-1990s consolidation of a socio-religious infrastructure that emerged within one of Europe's most secular societies. As

[159] Pew Research Center, Global Religious Landscape, pp. 180-200.

[160] Duman, "Islam's Increased Visibility", pp. 73-74.

Borell and Gerdner's nationwide survey of 105 Swedish Muslim congregations demonstrates, mosques and Islamic associations function not only as sites of worship and religious education but also as social welfare hubs providing outreach to recent immigrants, youth, and family services, and mediation activities at the intersection between the congregation and the wider community.[161]

In Sweden, the public visibility of Muslim communities has been shaped less by absolute demographic size than by the rapid post-1990s consolidation of a socio-religious infrastructure that emerged within one of Europe's most secular societies. Mosques, study circles, and Islamic civil-society associations function not only as sites of worship and religious education but also as politically legible markers of cultural and demographic change, a dynamic Larsson and Sander analyze specifically in the Swedish context, where late-twentieth-century refugee migration outpaced the institutional capacity of the welfare-integration model and forced communal infrastructure to develop largely from below.[162]

The expansion of halal markets and religious consumption further reinforces Muslim presence in public space. As Lever and Fischer document in their comparative ethnography of Manchester and Copenhagen, halal availability in urban European areas has "vastly expanded over the last decade,"[163] with an "ever-expanding market for halal"[164] and a "growth of an increasing range of halal-certified products" extending well beyond meat into care products, cosmetics, and tourism.[165] In Denmark, for example, almost all domestically produced chicken is now halal-certified by the ICCOS (Islamic Cultural Centre Slaughterhouse).[166] This trajectory leads the

[161] Klas Borell and Arne Gerdner, "Hidden Voluntary Social Work: A Nationally Representative Survey of Muslim Congregations in Sweden", British Journal of Social Wor,,k, Vol. 41 no. 5 (2011), pp. 972-974.

[162] Cesari, When Islam and Democracy Meet, pp. 45-49.

[163] John Lever and Johan Fischer, "Halal Consumers", in Religion, Regulation, Consumption: Globalising Kosher and Halal Markets (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), p. 167.

[164] Lever and Fischer, "Halal Consumers", p. 167.

[165] Lever and Fischer, "Halal Consumers", p. 158.

[166] Lever and Fischer, "Halal Consumers", p.167.

authors to conclude that "the development of the halal market to a large extent emulates what has happened to the kosher market."[167] These developments transform demographic change into socially tangible forms that shape public debates on integration, national identity, and social cohesion.

Although smaller in absolute terms than the French, British, or German cases, Swedish Muslim communal infrastructure has grown rapidly alongside refugee migration. The Myndigheten för stöd till trossamfund (Swedish Agency for Support to Faith Communities, SST) registers approximately 250 mosques and prayer spaces nationwide, of which around 12 are purpose-built mosques, most prominently the Stockholm Grand Mosque (opened 2000), the Malmö Grand Mosque, and the Gothenburg Mosque, with the remainder operating from converted commercial premises and community buildings concentrated in the urban peripheries of Stockholm (Rinkeby, Tensta, Husby), Gothenburg (Angered, Hjällbo), and Malmö (Rosengård).[168] Estimates of active imams across Sweden range from approximately 200 to 350, the majority trained outside Sweden and operating without formal Swedish accreditation; SST and several Swedish universities have begun developing domestic imam-training pathways since 2017.[169] The Swedish halal sector, though modest in continental comparison, is concentrated in the same million program peripheries identified by the New Direction Foundation report and has expanded into mainstream Swedish supermarket chains over the past decade.[170]

Sweden occupies a particularly prominent place in the 2026 New Direction report No-Go Zones: Immigration, Islamisation, and the Rise of Parallel Societies, which selects it as its single national case study and ranks Malmö-Rosengård (9.4/10) as one of only four "critical no-go zones" in Europe, alongside Gothenburg-Angered (7.5/10) as a

[167] Lever and Fischer, "Halal Consumers", p.168.

[168] Myndigheten för stöd till trossamfund (SST), Årsredovisning, 2023.

[169] Pia Karlsson Minganti, Muslima: Islamic Revival and Young Women's Negotiations on Gender (Stockholm: Stockholm University, 2007), pp. 2017-2024.

[170] Swedish halal certification associations, industry market reports.

"severe" zone.[171] The report grounds these classifications in the Swedish Police Authority's own designation of fifty-nine utsatta områden ("vulnerable areas") in 2023 and in studies correlating immigration with violent crime over the period 2005–2023.[172] Its core public-sphere claim is that Muslim demographic clustering in the miljonprogram peripheries combined with the institutional density of mosques, Islamic associations, and welfare-linked community structures in Rinkeby and Rosengård has fostered an environment of de facto state withdrawal, registered politically by the emergence in 2019 of the explicitly Muslim-oriented Nuance Party (Partiet Nyans), which obtained roughly 28 percent of the vote in Rosengård in 2022.[173] The diffusion of these classifications has reinforced the broader political shift away from Sweden's earlier welfare-and-integration model toward a framework in which Muslim public-sphere visibility, particularly in segregated urban peripheries, is interpreted through the lens of social fragmentation and governance failure.

In Sweden, senior political figures increasingly frame Islamism as a threat to social cohesion, democratic governance, and national security. Ebba Busch, leader of the Christian Democrats and Deputy Prime Minister, has described “political Islam” as a threat to Sweden’s fundamental existence, portraying it as incompatible with democratic order and linked to broader processes of social fragmentation.[174] Similarly, Tobias Billström, Sweden’s Minister for Foreign Affairs, has emphasized the need to confront terrorism and threats to national security, reinforcing a security framing of Islamist actors within Sweden’s broader counterterrorism policy.[175] At the European level, Charlie Weimers, a Member of the European Parliament from the Sweden Democrats, has called for scrutiny and restriction of EU funding to organizations linked

[171] Hemery-Aymar, No-Go Zones, pp. 9-13.

[172] Hemery-Aymar, No-Go Zones, pp. 27-29.

[173] Hemery-Aymar, No-Go Zones, pp. 36-38.

[174] "Busch: Politisk islam ett hot mot Sveriges existens", Omni, March 2026.

[175] Tobias Billström, quoted in "Sweden Fully Supports Türkiye against All Threats to Its National Security: Swedish Foreign Minister", Anadolu Agency, June 27, 2023.

to Islamism, framing it as an ideological and security threat sustained through institutional and financial support structures.[176]

These securitized narratives also intersect with debates surrounding segregated urban areas and the erosion of state authority in parts of Sweden, particularly Malmö. Academic and policy discussions on “vulnerable areas” and “no-go zones” describe neighborhoods where criminal networks, social exclusion, distrust of authorities, and difficulties faced by emergency services and law enforcement have raised concerns regarding governance and social cohesion.[177] At the same time, the growth of Islamist activism and the departure of Swedish foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq further reinforced perceptions among political elites that radicalization and failed integration constituted interconnected security challenges.[178] In this context, Malmö increasingly emerged within Swedish political discourse not only as a symbol of socio-economic marginalization but also as an example of the perceived weakening of state authority and the emergence of parallel social structures.

Mapped onto the three constitutive components of securitization, the Swedish case captures a striking shift from a welfare-and-integration paradigm to an explicit security paradigm. The securitizing actors include senior cabinet figures (Deputy Prime Minister Ebba Busch, former Foreign Minister Tobias Billström), MEPs (Charlie Weimers of the Sweden Democrats), and state agencies (the Swedish Security Service Säpo, the Swedish Police Authority through its utsatta områden classifications). The content of the message frames “political Islam” as an existential threat to Sweden's fundamental order, incompatible with democratic governance and inseparable from broader processes of social fragmentation in the miljonprogram peripheries, thereby legitimizing extraordinary measures including stricter asylum rules, expanded intelligence powers, the introduction of new counterterrorism legislation, and the contraction of historically permissive civil-society funding for organizations deemed

[176] Charlie Weimers, Dick Erixon and Beatrice Timgren, "EU Funding for Islamic Relief", European Parliament, Parliamentary Question E-000644/2026, February 13, 2026.

[177] Duman, "Islam's Increased Visibility", pp. 73-74.

[178] Magnus Ranstorp and Linus Gustafsson, Swedish Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq: An Analysis of Open-Source Intelligence and Statistical Data (Stockholm: Swedish Defence University, 2017), pp. 5-6.

Islamist-adjacent. The audience is the Swedish electorate, whose uptake is registered in the Sweden Democrats' rise to become the second-largest party, in the cooperation agreement underpinning the Tidö government, and in the cross-bloc convergence on a security framing of integration that would have been politically unthinkable a decade earlier.

Manifestations of Islamist Radicalization

Although Sweden experienced fewer large-scale terrorist attacks than other cases, concerns over radicalization, foreign fighters, and segregated urban areas intensified. Political and media discourse increasingly linked these developments to migration policy and to the governance of urban peripheries.[179] The Swedish case is therefore significant not because of the sheer scale of attacks, but because it demonstrates how radicalization concerns, foreign fighter mobilization, and the discourse of "parallel societies" can contribute to a broader security reframing of Muslim visibility and integration.

Within this framework, Islam's visibility in Sweden's public sphere is closely tied to the spatial concentration of Muslim communities and the institutionalization of religious life through mosques, associations, and welfare-linked community structures. In major urban peripheries such as Rinkeby and Rosengård, Islamic institutions function as central nodes of social organization, reinforcing communal identity while simultaneously becoming focal points of political and media scrutiny.[180] Public discourse increasingly frames these spaces not merely as sites of cultural diversity but as arenas of contested integration, where debates over segregation, welfare dependency, and national identity converge. This has led to the emergence of a securitized narrative in which Islamic visibility is interpreted through the lens of social fragmentation and governance failure.

Manifestations of Islamist radicalization in Sweden further reinforce this dynamic, particularly through patterns of foreign fighter mobilization and decentralized

[179] Duman, "Islam's Increased Visibility", pp. 73-74.

[180] Ranstorp and Gustafsson, Swedish Foreign Fighters, pp. 5-6.

recruitment. Sweden has been identified as one of the European countries with a disproportionately high number of individuals who traveled to join ISIS, often emerging from tightly knit local networks combined with online radicalization pathways.[181] While large-scale attacks have been relatively limited, Swedish authorities continue to report ongoing risks associated with returnees, prison radicalization, and self-radicalized individuals influenced by digital propaganda ecosystems. These forms of radicalization are characterized by their low visibility and high adaptability, complicating traditional counterterrorism responses.[182]

The Swedish state has responded with increasingly robust measures, including stricter migration policies, expanded intelligence powers, and intensified counter-radicalization programs.[183] These policies suggest a high degree of institutional effectiveness, particularly in terms of prevention, surveillance, and disruption. However, the persistence of radicalization pathways indicates that these measures have not fundamentally altered the structural conditions that facilitate radicalization, including segregation, identity marginalization, and transnational ideological exposure.

This reveals a core contradiction: while Sweden's policy framework appears effective in reducing overt manifestations of terrorism, it has not eliminated the underlying processes that sustain radicalization. Instead, radicalization has shifted toward less visible forms, embedded in digital spaces and localized social networks. The Swedish case thus illustrates how securitization can produce an appearance of control while leaving intact the deeper socio-political dynamics that continue to generate radicalization risks over time.

The Swedish paradox is sharpened at the EU level. While successive Swedish governments have tightened migration policy and intelligence powers domestically, Swedish MEP Charlie Weimers has repeatedly documented that the European

[181] Säkerhetspolisen, Yearbook 2023 (Stockholm: Säpo, 2024), pp. 18-22.

[182] Ranstorp and Gustafsson, Swedish Foreign Fighters, pp. 5-6.

[183] Europol, TE-SAT 2023, pp. 32-33.

Commission continues to fund and legitimize Brotherhood-linked organizations such as ENAR and FEMYSO, in what he describes as a "vicious cycle of ever-growing legitimacy and funding." Weimers further argues that EU monitoring frameworks are structurally incapable of catching deviations, since "denying funding for failing to align with [European] values requires ironclad evidence." Sweden's national securitization is therefore continually offset by a supranational dynamic that re-legitimizes the very networks Stockholm seeks to contain.[184]

The Netherlands

Demography

By 2020, the Muslim count in the Netherlands reached 970,000. While their share of the total population grew from 5.0% to 5.5%, the broader religious landscape of the country shifted radically, with the religiously unaffiliated reaching a majority of 54.1%. Over the same period, Christian identification declined from 42.7% in 2010 to 35.1% in 2020, reinforcing the Netherlands as one of Europe's most rapidly secularizing societies.[185]

This demographic change fits the broader European pattern described by Pew: gradual Muslim growth driven by migration and age structure, combined with concentration in visible urban spaces and political debate shaped by broader concerns over cohesion, identity, and state authority.

Islam in the Public Sphere

Historically associated with multicultural accommodation, Dutch policy shifted markedly following high-profile political assassinations and growing concerns over Islamist extremism. Radicalization debates became central to Dutch politics, with government policy increasingly emphasizing surveillance, ideological monitoring, and loyalty to democratic norms. Media narratives frequently framed Islam as both a

[184] Williams, "Why Does the European Commission Support the Muslim Brotherhood?".

[185] Pew Research Center, Global Religious Landscape, pp. 180-200.

cultural and security challenge, accelerating the securitization of Muslim presence within Dutch society.

Within this discursive environment, Dutch politicians across the right and center-right have explicitly framed "islamisering" (Islamization) as a governance and security problem rather than as a question of religious freedom or cultural pluralism. BBB leader Caroline van der Plas argued that Dutch society requires "grip op migratie, bescherming van onze samenleving en beteugelen van de islamisering" "control over migration, protection of our society, and curbing Islamization" placing Islamization alongside migration control and societal protection as a coordinated security agenda.[186] Forum voor Democratie leader Thierry Baudet similarly framed Islamization as a strategic political danger enabled by government inaction, charging that "Afrikanisering en islamisering" had been prioritized by the cabinet over Dutch interests, while JA21 senator Annabel Nanninga called for a firm political stand against what she described as "vrouwenhaat in islam" (misogyny in Islam), treating illiberal religious ideology as a direct threat to women's rights and liberal-democratic norms.[187]

Geert Wilders, leader of the Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV), has gone furthest in framing Islam itself as a source of physical violence and lethal threat. In August 2018, he declared that "Islam showed its true face once again with death threats and violence," and in May 2023, he reported that he was personally "under serious threat because of several Islamic death threats." A month later, Wilders directly linked Islamic religious authority to organized intimidation, stating that "the result of their fatwas is hundreds of death threats a week. This is criminal behavior," thereby framing clerical

[186] Caroline van der Plas, X post, January 1, 2025, https://x.com/lientje1967/status/1929189409163014345.

[187] Thierry Baudet, X post, June 18, 2020, https://x.com/thierrybaudet/status/1273645909226766343; Annabel Nanninga, X post, May 20, 2024, https://x.com, he/ANanninga/status/1792498544886088168.

rulings as drivers of coercion that warrant a state-security rather than a freedom-of-religion response.[188]

In the Netherlands, socio-religious infrastructure has played a central role in shaping the public visibility of Muslim communities and the political debates surrounding integration and national identity. Mosques and Islamic cultural organizations have become embedded within urban landscapes, reflecting both demographic change and the institutionalization of religious observance. Religious consumption, including halal markets and businesses, further reinforces Muslim presence in public space.[189]

Fischer notes that halal economies function as both religious infrastructures and urban markers.[190] Visible expressions of Islamic identity, including religious dress such as the hijab and niqab, have frequently been at the center of legislative and societal debates. As John R. Bowen, an anthropologist of Islam and laïcité in France, observes, such controversies often reflect broader anxieties about secularism, gender equality, and the place of religion within European societies.[191]

Dutch Muslim communal infrastructure has expanded steadily within the country's historically pluralist verzuiling (pillarization) tradition. According to data compiled by Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS) and the SPIOR research network, the Netherlands hosts approximately 475 mosques, of which roughly 50 are purpose-built, most prominently the Westermoskee in Amsterdam, the Mevlana Mosque and the Essalam Mosque in Rotterdam, with the densest concentrations in the Randstad cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht.[192] The Netherlands has roughly 450–600 active imams, predominantly trained in Turkey or Morocco; a domestic

[188] Geert Wilders, X post, August 30, 2018, https://x.com/geertwilderspvv/status/1035249136331890688; Geert Wilders, X post, May 22, 2023, https://x.com/geertwilderspvv/status/1660614394118651917; Geert Wilders, X post, June 16, 2023, https://x.com/geertwilderspvv/status/1669669744788602881.

[189] Cesari, When Islam and Democracy Meet, pp. 45-49.

[190] Fischer, Halal Matters, pp. 98-104.

[191] Bowen, Why the French Don't Like Headscarves, pp. 90-94.

[192] Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS), Religieuze betrokkenheid in Nederland, 2024.

imam-training program at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam was established in 2005, but uptake among Dutch mosque associations has remained limited.[193] The Dutch halal economy is mature and integrated into mainstream supermarket chains (Albert Heijn, Jumbo) as well as specialized neighborhood retail concentrated in the very Rotterdam and Hague districts Feijenoord and Schilderswijk that the New Direction Foundation report classifies as “confirmed no-go zones.[194]

This securitizing reframing of Dutch Muslim visibility has been reinforced by transnational policy literature, most notably the 2026 New Direction report No-Go Zones: Immigration, Islamisation, and the Rise of Parallel Societies, which classifies Rotterdam-Feijenoord and The Hague-Schilderswijk as "confirmed" no-go zones (each scored 5.2/10) on the basis of crime, "parallel society," and state-withdrawal indicators.[195] The report's specific Dutch evidence centers on Salafi-affiliated Quran schools, drawing on a 2019 Nieuwsuur and NRC investigation that documented teaching materials promoting intolerance of homosexuality, the rejection of civic symbols, and active separation from non-Muslim society, which the report treats as paradigmatic of how socio-religious infrastructure can produce normative parallelism even within the Netherlands' historically pluralist verzuiling tradition.[196] At the same time, it highlights the rise of explicitly Muslim-oriented Dutch parties DENK (founded 2015), NIDA (2013), and the Islamitische Democraten (2006) as evidence of a politicized communal vote concentrated in cities such as Rotterdam, Amsterdam, and The Hague.[197] The vocabulary of this report has demonstrably entered mainstream Dutch political discourse, where figures such as Caroline van der Plas, leader of the Farmer–Citizen Movement (BBB), a Dutch right-populist party that grew out of rural protests against environmental regulation and Annabel Nanninga, co-founder of JA21, a Dutch conservative-right party that split from Forum voor Democratie and maintains

[193] Welmoet Boender, Imam in Nederland: Opvattingen over zijn religieuze rol in de samenleving (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2007).

[194] Statista, Halal Food Market- Netherlands, 2024.

[195] Hemery-Aymar, No-Go Zones, pp. 9-13.

[196] Hemery-Aymar, No-Go Zones, pp. 9-13.

[197] Hemery-Aymar, No-Go Zones, pp. 36-37.

a hardline migration stance increasingly mobilize spatialized images of "loss of control" over migration, neighborhoods, and Islamic visibility, a discursive shift that helps explain the country's trajectory from multicultural accommodation toward overt securitization.

In the Netherlands, political rhetoric increasingly frames “Islamization” as a threat requiring containment in order to protect society and national identity. Caroline van der Plas has emphasized the need to regain control over migration and its social consequences, casting the issue in terms of restoring order and stability.[198] Annabel Nanninga, similarly, presents Dutch politics as confronting illiberal ideological pressures associated with immigration and Islam, framing them as incompatible with liberal-democratic norms.[199]

The Dutch case fits the three-component framework precisely, while illustrating the most pronounced policy reversal in the comparative sample. The securitizing actors include populist and right-conservative party leaders (Geert Wilders of the PVV, Caroline van der Plas of BBB, Annabel Nanninga of JA21), the AIVD as the lead intelligence institution, and a recurring cycle of political assassinations and high-profile terror plots that successive cabinets have used to justify policy escalation. The content of the message frames “Islamization” as a containable but ongoing threat to the Dutch liberal-democratic order, fusing concerns about Salafi-affiliated Quran schools, mosque foreign funding, and the political consolidation of explicitly Muslim-oriented parties (DENK, NIDA, Islamitische Democraten) into a single narrative of erosion that legitimizes extraordinary measures including ideological monitoring, transparency-of-foreign-funding legislation, and the curtailment of multicultural-accommodation policies that defined Dutch governance through the 1990s. The audience is the Dutch electorate, whose uptake is registered most clearly in the PVV's emergence as the largest party in the 2023 elections, in the formation of the Schoof cabinet on the basis of an explicitly migration-restrictionist coalition agreement, and

[198] "Dutch Farmer Party Wins Big in Shock Provincial Election Result", BBC News, March 16, 2023.

[199] Annabel Nanninga, "JA21 blijft hopen op coalitie met PVV", X, September 26, 2025.

in the durable cross-party normalization of language about “loss of control” over migration and Muslim public-sphere visibility.

Manifestations of Islamist Radicalization

Radicalization in the Netherlands is not understood solely through the lens of violent incidents, but is embedded within a broader political and societal discourse that links Islamist extremism, immigration, and the public presence of Islam. This securitized framing is particularly visible in political rhetoric, where concerns about security are closely intertwined with debates over national identity, integration, and social cohesion. As a result, Islam is not only discussed as a religion or cultural identity, but increasingly as a category of potential risk, shaping both public perception and policy responses.

This fusion is sustained by the highly visible role of Islam in the Dutch public sphere, where mosques, Islamic schools, and community organizations are deeply embedded within urban environments while simultaneously subjected to intense political scrutiny. In cities such as Rotterdam and Amsterdam, Islamic institutions function as central components of social infrastructure, yet they are frequently framed within political discourse as markers of cultural separation or “parallel societies.”[200] Public debates over religious symbols, halal economies, and foreign funding have transformed everyday religious practices into politically charged issues, reinforcing the perception that Islamic visibility is inherently linked to questions of national identity and social cohesion.

At the level of radicalization, the Netherlands has experienced both high-profile incidents and more diffuse forms of extremist mobilization. The legacy of events such as the murder of Theo van Gogh continues to shape national security discourse, while contemporary concerns focus on smaller, decentralized networks and individuals radicalized through online platforms.[201] Dutch security services emphasize that

[200] Ruud Koopmans, Research Unit: Migration, Integration, Transnationalization – Research Report 2011-2015 (Berlin: WZB, 2016), pp. 3-4.

[201] Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst (AIVD), Annual Report 2023 (The Hague: AIVD, 2024), pp. 8-10.

jihadist threats are increasingly driven by small groups and lone actors, often inspired by global developments and online propaganda rather than directed by formal organizations. This shift toward individualized and networked radicalization complicates detection and prevention, as it largely operates outside traditional institutional frameworks.

Despite these developments, the Dutch state has implemented extensive counter-radicalization measures, including surveillance programs, preventive interventions, and intelligence-led disruption strategies.[202] These policies contribute to a perception of strong institutional control, particularly as multiple attack plots have been identified and prevented. However, the continued presence of radicalization pathways suggests that these measures have primarily mitigated immediate threats rather than addressing underlying drivers such as identity polarization, social fragmentation, and transnational ideological influence.

The resulting contradiction is therefore pronounced: while the Netherlands appears to maintain a highly developed and proactive security apparatus, radicalization persists in more fragmented and less visible forms. This demonstrates that securitization, while effective in producing short-term control and preventing attacks, does not eliminate the underlying processes that sustain radicalization. Instead, these processes adapt, shifting into decentralized and digital environments that remain difficult to monitor and regulate over time.

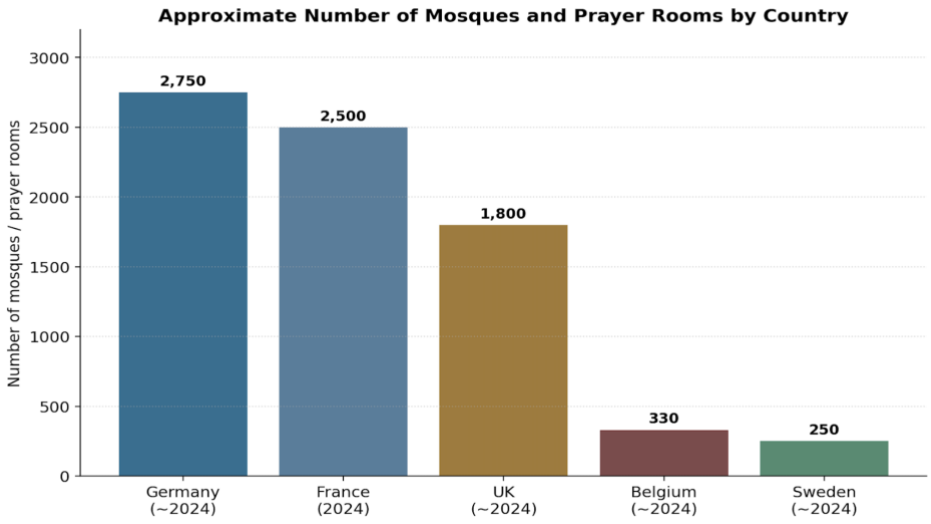
Beyond the decentralized and digital dimensions, the Dutch case is also shaped by an institutional layer that the AIVD cannot regulate. Dutch Muslim youth and student associations have historically operated within FEMYSO's pan-European architecture, and as Williams documents, EU institutions, including the Fundamental Rights Agency and Commissioner Helena Dalli, have continued to engage with and publicly amplify FEMYSO's campaigns even after acknowledging the broader Brotherhood-linked context. The Netherlands thus illustrates how supranational legitimization of MB-

[202] Nationaal Coördinator Terrorismebestrijding en Veiligheid (NCTV), Dreigingsbeeld Terrorisme Nederland 59 (December 2023), pp. 3-7.

aligned organizations can sustain ideological infrastructure inside member states regardless of the depth or sophistication of national counter-radicalization measures.[203]

Comparative Escalation and Political Consequences

The empirical evidence across these cases shows how political elites in multiple Western European countries consistently framed Islamism, and in many cases Muslim-linked migration or "Islamization," as a security problem rather than a conventional integration or social-policy issue. Across the cases, political actors repeatedly use a securitizing vocabulary: threat, war, enemies, terror, parallel societies, and the need for extraordinary state action, including surveillance, bans, dissolutions, deportations, and defunding.[204]



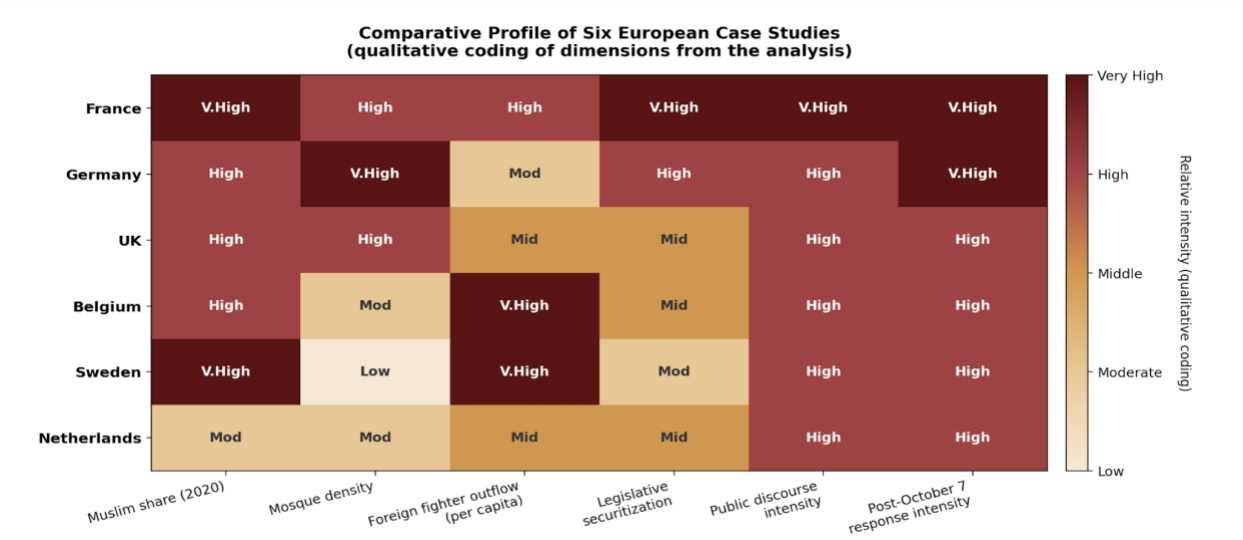
The post–October 7 escalation in European governmental responses to the attacks serves as a "critical juncture" that validated the three-component securitization framework set out earlier in this study.[205] Authoritative actors, heads of government, interior ministers, and intelligence chiefs designated the Israel–Gaza conflict an

[203] Williams, "Why Does the European Commission Support the Muslim Brotherhood?".

[204] Shai Kerem, Political Opinions Toward Securitization Between 2010-2026 (original dataset compiled by the author).

[205] Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde, Security, pp. 23-26.

existential threat to domestic public order and Jewish communal life; the message fused foreign conflict with domestic Muslim presence; and European publics, primed by a decade of prior securitizing discourse, accepted the framing, licensing measures that would otherwise lie outside ordinary politics.[206] The empirical pattern that follows is precisely what Cesari predicts when Copenhagen School theory is applied to Islam in Europe: cross-domain spillover from foreign-conflict response into restrictions on assembly, speech, and religious expression.[207]. In the immediate aftermath, at least 12 EU nations implemented bans on pro-Palestinian protests.[208] In Germany, this extended to the prohibition of symbols like the keffiyeh in some schools and strict policing of slogans. These measures confirm that the security framework is now the default response mechanism. The speed with which authorities linked foreign conflict (Gaza) to domestic control (protest bans) demonstrates how thoroughly the Muslim population has been constructed as a "suspect community."[209]



[206] Balzacq, Securitization Theory, pp. 1-30.

[207] Cesari, "Securitization of Islam in Europe", pp. 83-105.

[208] Solidar, "Solidarity Protests with Palestinian People Banned in at Least 12 EU Countries", April 10, 2024.

[209] Christina Pantazis and Simon Pemberton, "From the 'Old' to the 'New' Suspect Community: Examining the Impacts of Recent UK Counter-Terrorist Legislation", British Journal of Criminology, Vol. 49 no. 5 (2009), pp. 648-649.

Beyond its legal and administrative dimensions, the securitization of migration has generated profound political effects across European democracies. By redefining migration and related social phenomena as threats to public order and societal stability, political actors have increasingly shifted political competition from debates over social policy toward questions of identity, security, and belonging. This shift has altered electoral dynamics by legitimizing narratives that portray migration and cultural diversity as dangers to national identity and domestic stability. In this context, securitization has reinforced perceptions of civilizational conflict, intensified political polarization, and contributed to the normalization of exclusionary political agendas. As a result, securitization operates not only as a security strategy but also as a broader political mechanism that reshapes party competition, public discourse, and the boundaries of democratic legitimacy.

To consolidate the case-study evidence into the analytical framework introduced earlier in this paper, Table 3 deconstructs each of the six cases into the three constitutive components of a securitizing move: actor, message, and audience, and traces the institutional consequences they produced. The table is organized around the Copenhagen-School distinction articulated by Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde (1998) and refined by Thierry Balzacq (2011), and reads vertically across the six European democracies examined in this paper.

Table 3: The Three Components of Securitization Across the Six European Case Studies (and their Consequences)

Country	Securitizing Actor (who speaks)	Message (existential framing)	Audience (acceptance)	Consequences of Securitization
Germany	AfD figures (Alice Weidel, Marcus Pretzell, Frauke Petry); Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV); Chancellor Olaf Scholz after major attacks	Muslim immigration as "generational replacement" and existential threat to identity; Islamism as a long-term existential threat to the "free democratic basic order."	German electorate; mainstream parties (SPD, CDU/CSU) migrate toward harder migration positions; rising AfD support after major incidents	BfV surveillance extended to non-violent "legalistic Islamism"; accelerated post-Solingen deportations; bans on Samidoun and Hamas-related activity; restrictions on pro-

				Palestinian symbols and assemblies
France	Cabinet (Darmanin, Retailleau, Castex); party leaders (Pécresse, Wauquiez, Le Pen); the 2026 parliamentary commission on Islamism; the National Assembly through the 2021 Anti-Separatism Law	"Islamist separatism" and laïcité are framed as existentially at stake; terrorism is a "war" against the Republic	French electorate and Republican public; cross-party convergence on Anti-Separatism Bill; polling majorities support restrictions on visible religious practice	Administrative closure of mosques, schools, and charities under the politique d'entrave; prolonged states of emergency; dissolution of associations; the 2004 and 2010 bans on religious symbols and the full-face veil
Belgium	Ministerial figures (Didier Reynders, Theo Francken, Jan Jambon); party leaders (Alain Destexhe, Georges-Louis Bouchez of MR); OCAM/VSSE intelligence services	Counterterrorism framing tied to the 2016 Brussels attacks and Molenbeek networks; parallel-society framing in which Muslim institutional density enables radicalization	Belgian electorate within a fragmented federal system; cross-party convergence on counterterrorism legislation; rise of N-VA, Vlaams Belang, and MR	Intelligence-led monitoring; raised OCAM threat levels; association dissolutions; tightened oversight of religious organizations; renewed surveillance of Salafi-jihadist networks after the October 2023 Brussels attack
United Kingdom	Party leaders (Nigel Farage, successive Conservative Home Secretaries, Reform UK figures); state institutions (Home Office, MI5, Prevent strategy, Channel referral system); commentariat	Progressive expansion from violent jihadism to non-violent "extremism"; views deemed incompatible with "British values" treated as security-relevant; "parallel societies" narrative	British public; political mainstreaming of UKIP and Reform; Brexit vote's entanglement with sovereignty rhetoric; cross-party Labour–Conservative convergence	Prevent Duty places teachers, doctors, and university staff under statutory reporting; "pre-crime" environment; widened legal definitions of extremism; enhanced protections for Jewish institutions post-October 7
Sweden	Senior cabinet (Deputy PM Ebba Busch, former FM Tobias Billström); MEPs (Charlie Weimers,	"Political Islam" as an existential threat to Sweden's fundamental order, incompatible with	Swedish electorate; shift from welfare/integration paradigm; rise of Sweden Democrats	Säpo threat level raised to "high" (Aug 2023); stricter asylum and counter-radicalization

	Sweden Democrats); state agencies (Säpo, Swedish Police via utsatta områden classifications)	democratic governance; segregation and "parallel societies" framed as governance failure	and Tidö-Agreement coalition; uptake registered in 2022 Rosengård vote for Nuance Party (~28%)	legislation; police designation of 59 utsatta områden (2023); restrictions on demonstrations after October 7
Netherlands	PVV (Geert Wilders); JA21; BBB; AIVD intelligence service; NCTV (National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security)	"Islamization" as a containable but ongoing threat to liberal-democratic order; Salafi-affiliated Quran schools, mosque foreign funding, and Muslim parties (DENK, NIDA) are framed as eroding national cohesion.	Dutch electorate; PVV's emergence as the largest party (Nov 2023 election); formation of Schoof cabinet on migration-restrictionist coalition agreement; cross-party normalization of "loss of control" language	Ideological monitoring; transparency-of-foreign-funding legislation; curtailment of multicultural-accommodation policies; NCTV threat level raised to "substantial" (level 4 of 5) after October 7

Whereas Table 3 reconstructs the discursive structure of securitization, Table 4 below traces its concrete policy manifestations: the specific measures, political effects, and outcomes that flowed from each national configuration of actor, message, and audience.

Table 4: Political Manifestations of the Securitization of Islamist Radicalization in Europe

Country	Securitizing Measure	Political Manifestation	Outcome
United Kingdom	Prevent strategy; expansion of counter-extremism into non-violent ideology	Security framing embedded in schools, healthcare, and public services; public sector workers incorporated into counter-radicalization monitoring	Creation of a “pre-crime” environment; politicization of religious and political expression; broader suspicion toward Muslim communities

France	Anti-Separatism Law (2021); administrative closures of mosques, schools, and charities	Executive power expanded over religious and civic institutions; Islamism was framed as an existential threat to the Republic and *laïcité*	Closure of Muslim establishments; institutionalization of "Islamist separatism" as a core national security issue
Germany	BfV surveillance of "legalistic Islamism"; intensified post-2015 migration-security nexus	Intelligence discourse extends to non-violent Islamic associations; migration and Islam are increasingly framed as threats to sovereignty and constitutional order	Monitoring of non-violent Muslim groups; stronger fusion of migration governance and national security
Belgium	Expanded counterterrorism legislation; intelligence coordination targeting radical networks and associations	Specific neighborhoods and Muslim-linked organizations are framed as hubs of radicalization and security concern	Security-centered governance of concentrated Muslim communities; reinforcement of integration failure as a security issue
Sweden	Stricter asylum and migration measures; expanded counter-radicalization efforts	Shift from welfare/integration framing toward a security framing of segregation, foreign fighters, and "parallel societies."	Migration and radicalization are increasingly governed through securitized policy; Muslim visibility is linked to democratic and social cohesion concerns
Netherlands	Surveillance and ideological monitoring; emphasis on democratic loyalty and anti-"Islamization" discourse	Islam is framed as both a cultural and a security challenge; public debate links migration and Islamist extremism to national decline.	Normalization of ideological monitoring; securitization of Muslim presence within a highly secularized society

In conclusion, across all six cases, a consistent pattern emerges: demographic change, the increasing visibility of Islam in the public sphere, and manifestations of Islamist

radicalization do not operate independently, but are systematically integrated into securitized political narratives. While empirical data demonstrate that Muslim population growth in Europe remains gradual and that radicalization involves only a small minority, political and institutional responses frequently construct these phenomena as broad security threats. This produces a structural contradiction at the core of European governance: states have significantly improved their capacity to prevent attacks and disrupt networks, yet radicalization persists in adaptive, decentralized, and often less visible forms. At the same time, securitization extends beyond counterterrorism into the regulation of religious life, migration policy, and public expression, reshaping the boundaries between security, integration, and civil society. As a result, the significance of radicalization in Europe lies not only in its security implications, but in its broader political effects reconfiguring public discourse, legitimizing exceptional measures, and redefining the relationship between Muslim communities and the European state.

The Palestinian Dimension- The impact of October 7

On October 7, 2023, Hamas orchestrated a surprise, large-scale assault on southern Israel, signaling a dramatic escalation in the Israel-Gaza conflict and reverberating far beyond the region. In Europe, this event prompted renewed anxiety about Islamist radicalization and triggered a wave of responses: increased surveillance, bans on pro-Palestinian demonstrations, and political discourses treating the attack not simply as a foreign war but as a signal of domestic vulnerability. These developments highlight how external conflicts can become internalized within European security frameworks, reinforcing perceptions that Islamist radicalization remains both transnational and intimately linked to the "home front."[210]

These cases show Islamist radicalization in Europe remains adaptive: combining transnational ideology, local enclaves, and digital recruitment pipelines, surviving even after central groups like ISIS lost territorial control. They also shape how European policymakers interpret violence abroad. In the aftermath of October 7,

[210] Amin, Hyökki and Salma, "European Muslim Crisis", p. 1185.

2023, European leaders explicitly linked Hamas's assault on Israel to their own experiences of jihadist terrorism, reinforcing the perception that Islamist radicalization constitutes not only a Middle Eastern challenge but also a domestic security concern with global resonance.[211]

The events of October 7, 2023, have further reinforced this perception. Hamas's assault on Israel was not only viewed as a Middle Eastern crisis but was also interpreted by European leaders through the prism of their own experiences with jihadist terrorism. This linkage highlights how external conflicts can reactivate domestic fears and accelerate securitization, deepening the sense that Islamist radicalization constitutes both a local and transnational threat.

In line with the comparative design of this study, the impact of 7 October 2023 is examined not only at an abstract, European level but through six concrete national cases: Britain, France, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, and the Netherlands, over the period 2010–2025. After outlining the general logic of securitization and the way external shocks, such as the Hamas attack, are framed as indicators of "domestic vulnerability," the chapter turns to each of these states and reconstructs key moments in which Islamist radicalization and Muslim migration were discussed as security problems. In each case, we focus on salient events and debates: terrorist attacks, waves of foreign fighters, the 2015–2016 refugee crisis, controversies over pro-Palestinian demonstrations, and, finally, reactions to the Gaza war after 7 October, to show how the boundary between "external conflict" and "internal threat" is repeatedly redrawn.

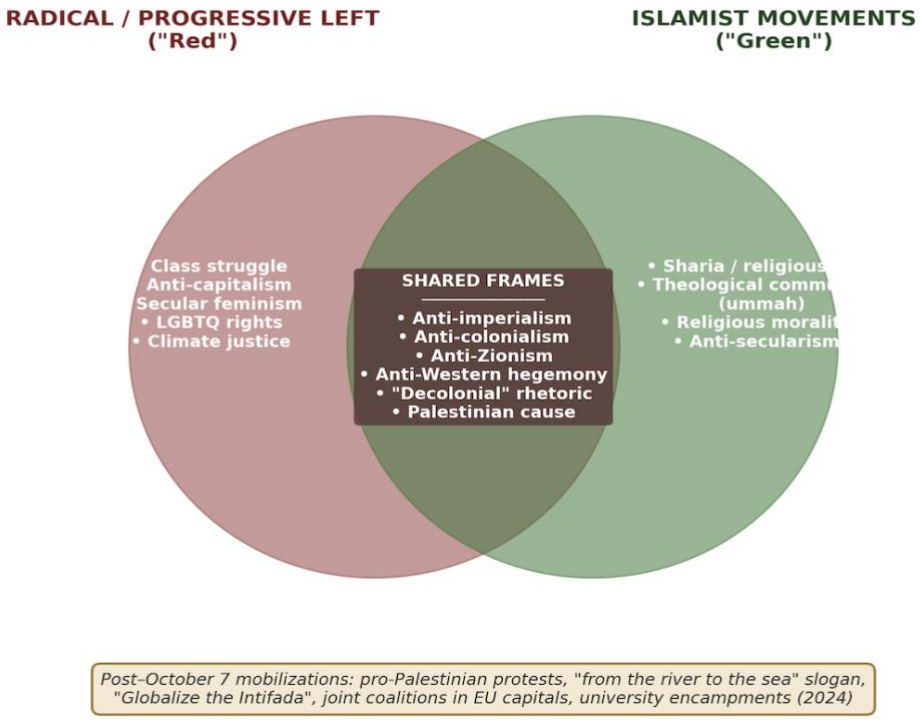
Protests, Alliances, and the Surge in Antisemitism post-October 7

The 7 October juncture triggered a domestic crisis manifested through mass protest waves that radicalized the European public sphere. These demonstrations were frequently characterized by a *"red-green alliance,"* a convergence between radical

[211] European Council, "Conclusions – Special European Council Meeting, 26 October 2023", https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2023/10/26 , pp. 6-7.

Islamist groups ("green") and segments of the progressive far-left ("red").[212] This alliance utilized anti-imperialist and "decolonial" frames to portray the conflict as a struggle against "apartheid" and "genocide" (attributed mostly to Israel), effectively legitimizing radical Islamist discourse within mainstream activist spaces.[213] Within these milieus, slogans such as "from the river to the sea" and calls to "globalize the Intifada" became ubiquitous, signaling a shift toward the rejection of liberal democratic order and the adoption of a transnational revolutionary narrative.[214]

The "Red-Green Alliance": Convergence Between the Progressive Left and Islamist Movements



Post-October 7 mobilizations: pro-Palestinian protests, "from the river to the sea" slogan, "Globalize the Intifada", joint coalitions in EU capitals, university encampments (2024)

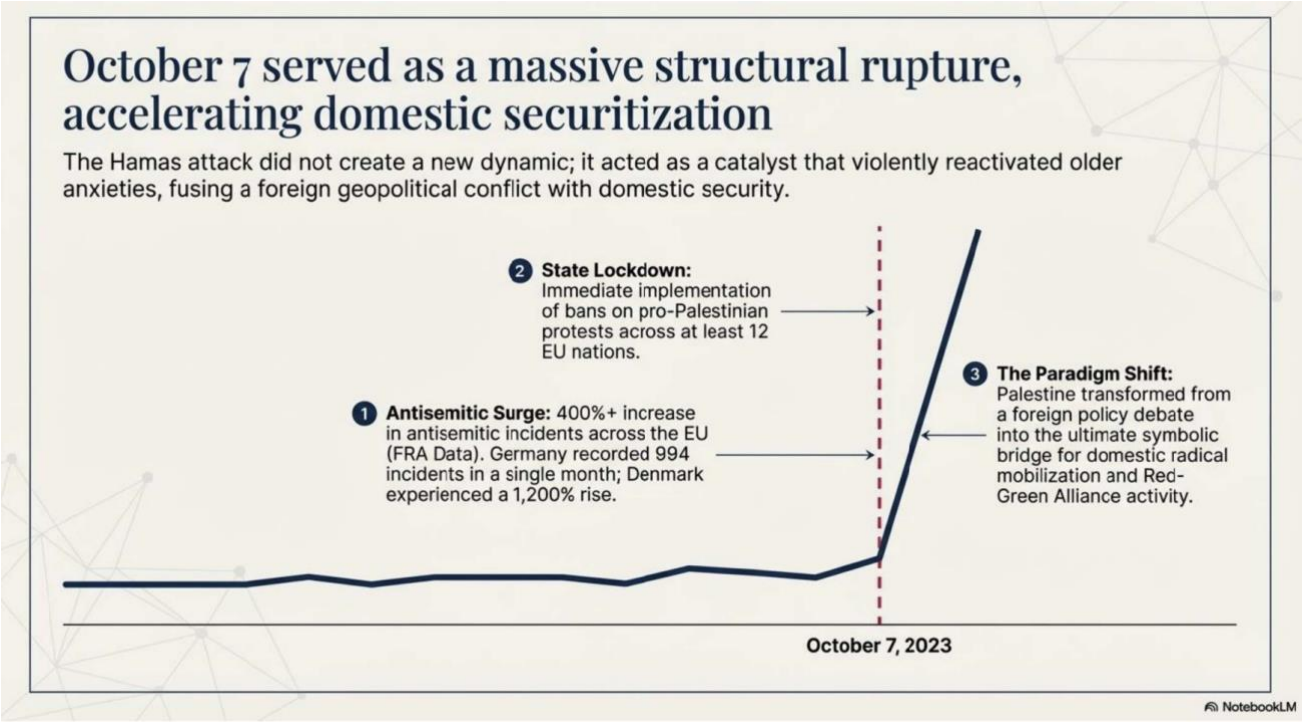
This mobilization coincided with a violent escalation in antisemitism, reinforcing the perception of Islamist radicalization as an existential domestic threat. According to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), Jewish organizations reported

[212] Vidino, "Emerging Red-Green Alliance", pp. 3-6.

[213] Amin, Hyökki and Salma, "European Muslim Crisis", p. 1185.

[214] European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), Jewish People's Experiences and Perceptions of Antisemitism (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2024), p. 4.

surges of 400% or more in antisemitic incidents following October 7, including physical assaults and the targeting of communal institutions.[215] Specifically, in the final quarter of 2023, Austria reported a 400% increase in incidents, Denmark a 1,200% rise, and Germany recorded 994 incidents in just one month, averaging 29 incidents per day.[216] These developments, ranging from the marking of Jewish homes to accusations of war crimes and "genocide" against Israel, have deepened the sense that the "Palestinian dimension" is no longer an external foreign policy issue but a central driver of domestic insecurity.[217]



Empirically, the analysis relies on a systematic reading of elite political discourse: parliamentary speeches, government statements, interviews, and social-media posts by central political entrepreneurs. The British material, for example, traces how figures such as David Cameron, Theresa May, Nigel Farage, Suella Braverman, Kemi Badenoch, and others gradually linked Islamist ideology, Muslim immigration, and domestic security, framing them as existential or civilizational threats and justifying

[215] FRA, Jewish People's Experiences, p. 4.

[216] FRA, Jewish People's Experiences, p. 4.

[217] Balzacq and Settoul, Radicalization in Theory and Practice, pp. 1-30.

extraordinary measures. Parallel datasets for Germany, Sweden, and the Netherlands map similar patterns of securitization, albeit with different emphases and party constellations. Read together, these cases show how 7 October functions less as a completely new starting point and more as a critical juncture that reactivates and intensifies pre-existing securitizing narratives about Islamist radicalization in Europe.

The attacks of October 7, 2023, constituted a critical juncture in Europe, intensifying debates surrounding Islamist radicalization, social cohesion, and national security. Across the continent, the events triggered mass demonstrations, heightened political polarization, and renewed securitization processes. European governments increasingly perceived the conflict not merely as an external geopolitical crisis but as a domestic security concern with implications for radicalization within Muslim communities and broader societal tensions.[218]

Empirical evidence underscores the magnitude of this shift. According to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), Jewish communities across Europe reported a dramatic increase in antisemitic incidents following October 7, reflecting the profound domestic repercussions of the conflict.[219] National authorities similarly documented significant surges in hate crimes and extremist rhetoric, reinforcing perceptions among policymakers that imported conflicts could exacerbate radicalization and threaten societal stability.

The United Kingdom provides a prominent case study. In the weeks following October 7, London witnessed large-scale pro-Palestinian demonstrations, prompting intense political debate over extremism, public order, and national security. British authorities reported a sharp rise in hate crimes and implemented enhanced protective measures

[218] Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde, Security, pp. 23-26.

[219] FRA, Jewish People's Experiences, p. 4.

for Jewish institutions.[220] These developments highlighted the extent to which geopolitical crises can reverberate within European societies, influencing domestic security agendas and shaping perceptions of Islamist radicalization.

Parallel dynamics were observed across continental Europe. In France, authorities initially imposed restrictions on pro-Palestinian demonstrations due to concerns over public order and antisemitic incitement. Although France's highest administrative court later ruled that blanket bans were unlawful and required case-by-case assessments, the episode underscored the tension between civil liberties and national security in the aftermath of October 7.[221]

Beyond the protest-restriction question, the French government accelerated its pre-existing anti-separatism agenda after October 7. Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin instructed prefects in mid-October 2023 to expel all foreign nationals participating in antisemitic acts, and ordered the dissolution of several organizations the government characterized as supportive of Hamas.[222]

In Belgium, the post–October 7 environment was conditioned by the October 16, 2023, jihadist attack in Brussels, in which a Tunisian national affiliated with the Islamic State shot and killed two Swedish football supporters near the Sainte-Catherine metro station ⟨FN⟩ an attack Belgian authorities treated as evidence that the regional conflict had immediate domestic security implications. Federal authorities reinforced surveillance of

[220] Metropolitan Police, "Update: Met Response to Terror Attacks in Israel and Ongoing Military Action in Gaza", October 20, 2023, https://news.met.police.uk/news/update-met-response-to-terror-attacks-in-israel-and-ongoing-military-action-in-gaza-474080.

[221] Conseil d'État, "Manifestations de soutien à la cause palestinienne: il revient aux préfets d'apprécier, au cas par cas, si le risque de troubles à l'ordre public justifie une interdiction", October 18, 2023.

[222] Ministère de l'Intérieur, "Lutte contre les actes antisémites: instruction du ministre de l'Intérieur aux préfets", October 12, 2023, https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/actualites/actu-du-ministere.

Salafi-jihadist networks and raised the OCAM threat level to 4 in the immediate aftermath.[223]

In Germany, the federal and Länder governments responded to October 7 with the most expansive restrictions on pro-Palestinian expression in Western Europe. Berlin police banned the planned al-Quds-Tag demonstration on October 10, 2023, and several Länder followed with blanket prohibitions on public assemblies in the immediate aftermath. On November 2, 2023, Federal Interior Minister Nancy Faeser banned the Samidoun network nationwide and prohibited all Hamas-related activity in Germany.[224]

In Sweden, October 7 intersected with an already-elevated threat environment. The Säkerhetspolisen (Säpo) had raised the national terror threat assessment to level 4 ("high") in August 2023 and, after October 7, identified Hamas's attack as a galvanizing event for Sunni-jihadist mobilization with potential domestic resonance.[225] Senior figures, including Deputy Prime Minister Ebba Busch, framed the post–October 7 environment as evidence of the security risks posed by political Islam to Swedish democratic order.

In the Netherlands, the post–October 7 period coincided with the November 22, 2023, general election, which produced the largest electoral victory of Geert Wilders's Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV) in the party's history. In December 2023, the Nationaal Coördinator Terrorismebestrijding en Veiligheid (NCTV) raised the national threat

[223] "Brussels Attack: Two Swedes Killed in Shooting Claimed by Islamic State", Reuters, October 17, 2023, https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/two-killed-shooting-attack-brussels-2023-10-16/.

[224] Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat, "Bundesinnenministerin Faeser verbietet Betätigung der Hamas in Deutschland und das Netzwerk 'Samidoun'", press release, November 2, 2023.

[225] Säpo, Yearbook 2023, pp. 18-22.

level to "substantial" (level 4 of 5), citing the October 7 attacks and subsequent radicalization dynamics as central drivers.[226]

These measures reflected broader securitization dynamics, as political leaders framed the repercussions of the attacks as a domestic security challenge requiring extraordinary responses.

Furthermore, the post–October 7 period witnessed the resurgence of what scholars describe as a "Red-Green alliance," a convergence between Islamist actors and segments of the radical or progressive left. Drawing on framing theory, this cooperation is rooted in shared narratives of anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism, and resistance to perceived Western hegemony.[227] By mobilizing support around the Palestinian cause, these ideological frameworks have elevated the conflict to the center of European political discourse. Such alliances, while often framed as expressions of solidarity and human rights advocacy, have also contributed to ideological polarization and intensified concerns among policymakers regarding radicalization and social cohesion.

Karagiannis and McCauley argue that both Islamists and radical leftists employ common "master frames," particularly anti-imperialism and anti-globalization, to mobilize supporters and legitimize collective action. These frames provide a shared ideological platform that facilitates cooperation between otherwise divergent movements. In the European context, the aftermath of October 7 revitalized these narratives, reinforcing the transnational resonance of the Palestinian cause and highlighting its capacity to shape political mobilization across the continent.[228]

[226] NCTV, Dreigingsbeeld 59, pp. 3-7.

[227] Conseil d'État, "Manifestations de soutien".

[228] Karagiannis and McCauley, "Emerging Red-Green Alliance", pp. 168-171.

Taken together, these developments demonstrate that October 7 served as a catalyst for renewed securitization across Europe. By intensifying fears of Islamist radicalization, escalating antisemitism, and amplifying political polarization, the attacks reshaped the European security landscape. Consequently, the European response to October 7 illustrates how external conflicts can generate internal tensions, reinforcing the perception of Islamist extremism as a central domestic security challenge requiring extraordinary policy measures.

In sum, the events of October 7, 2023, constituted a transformative critical juncture that reshaped the European security and political landscape. As demonstrated throughout this chapter, the attacks triggered mass mobilization, intensified ideological polarization, and catalyzed renewed securitization across the continent. The convergence of radical Islamist actors with segments of the progressive far-left, manifested in the so-called "Red-Green alliance," amplified the Palestinian cause within European public discourse while simultaneously legitimizing narratives that challenged liberal democratic norms. Concurrently, the dramatic surge in antisemitic incidents and the proliferation of extremist rhetoric underscored the domestic repercussions of external conflicts, reinforcing policymakers' perceptions of Islamist radicalization as a significant security concern. The evidence assembled across the six national cases the United Kingdom's policing of mass pro-Palestinian demonstrations and protective measures for Jewish institutions; France's combination of protest restrictions and an accelerated anti-separatism agenda under Interior Minister Darmanin; Belgium's response to the October 16, 2023 Brussels attack and elevated OCAM threat posture; Germany's nationwide ban on Samidoun and Hamas-related activity together with the most expansive restrictions on pro-Palestinian expression in Western Europe; Sweden's elevated Säpo threat assessment and the framing of political Islam as an existential challenge by senior figures including Deputy Prime Minister Busch; and the Netherlands' raised NCTV threat level alongside the electoral breakthrough of the PVV illustrates how governments responded through heightened surveillance, legal restrictions, dissolutions, and enhanced protective measures. Taken

together, these developments reveal that October 7 did not create new patterns of radicalization but rather intensified and reactivated pre-existing dynamics within European societies. Consequently, the attacks served as a catalyst that deepened societal divisions, strengthened securitizing narratives, and reaffirmed the perception of Islamist extremism as a central challenge to European stability and social cohesion.

Discussion and Summary

Any discussion of Islamist radicalization in Europe must begin with the demographic dimension, because the political and security salience of the phenomenon cannot be understood independently of the broader structural transformations outlined in the empirical findings. As demonstrated above, Muslim population growth in Europe between 2010 and 2020 remained gradual, increasing from approximately 5.3 percent to 6.0 percent of the population, while Christian identification declined significantly and the religiously unaffiliated expanded. This combination of demographic change and secularization is analytically important because the political significance of Islam in Europe derives less from absolute numbers than from its position within a shifting religious and cultural landscape. As traditional majority identities weaken, Islam acquires heightened symbolic visibility, becoming a central reference point through which broader societal anxieties about identity, cohesion, and continuity are expressed.[229]

This broader pattern was reflected across the six case studies examined in this research: Britain, France, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, and the Netherlands. In all of these contexts, Muslim communities remained a numerical minority, yet their demographic growth, urban concentration, and expanding socio-religious infrastructure significantly increased their public visibility. Mosques, religious associations, and communal institutions became not only sites of religious life but also focal points of political and social debate. At the same time, the interaction between migration patterns, generational change, and spatial concentration in metropolitan

[229] Pew Research Center, Global Religious Landscape, pp. 180-200.

areas intensified the perception of Islam as a socially and politically salient presence. These dynamics did not operate in isolation but intersected with national debates over integration, sovereignty, and the boundaries of liberal democratic order, thereby amplifying the political resonance of demographic change beyond its quantitative scale.

Within this context, Islamist radicalization acquired a level of visibility and political significance that exceeded its empirical scope. As the empirical findings demonstrated, radicalization processes were typically confined to a small minority; however, their interpretation was shaped by the broader demographic and cultural environment in which they emerged. The visibility of Muslim communities, combined with anxieties surrounding identity transformation and social cohesion, contributed to a framing in which Islamist radicalization was increasingly perceived not only as a security threat linked to violence, but also as part of a wider structural challenge to political stability and national identity. This helps explain why, across European states, radicalization became embedded within broader narratives of societal transformation, reinforcing its salience in political discourse and policy responses.[230]

This demographic and political framing provides the broader structural context within which the mechanisms of radicalization must be understood. The comparative perspective across the European cases reveals both convergence and divergence in the dynamics that structure Islamist radicalization. At a foundational level, the pathways into extremist grievances, ideological framing, peer networks, and the availability of opportunity are broadly consistent across ideologies. Yet in Europe, Islamist radicalization operates within distinctive environments that amplify its visibility and political resonance. As Balzacq and Settoul argue, radicalization is often nurtured within marginalized urban enclaves, where social exclusion, securitization pressures, and perceptions of Islamophobia generate a defensive collective identity

[230] Pew Research Center, Global Religious Landscape, pp. 180-200.

and deepen distrust toward state institutions.[231] These social settings create micro-contexts in which ideological narratives gain traction, and where religious idioms can fuse with community grievances to produce radical worldviews. Effective analysis, therefore, requires distinguishing between ideological dissent and political violence, and situating Islamist radicalization within broader identity struggles, integration failures, and community–state tensions.

The multi-level analytical approach proposed by Balzacq and Settoul offers a coherent explanation for why these cases, despite occurring in different countries and political environments, exhibit similar radicalization dynamics. Their framework emphasizes that radicalization unfolds through the interaction of micro-level psychological mechanisms, meso-level network structures, and macro-level political contexts. Applied to the European setting, this means that personal grievances and identity ruptures (micro) gain traction within peer groups, neighborhoods, prisons, or online communities (meso), which themselves are shaped by broader structural factors such as discrimination, counterterrorism policy, and transnational conflicts (macro). This layered model helps explain both the similarities across Madrid, London, Paris, Brussels, and Vienna, and the distinct local patterns observed in each case, showing that European jihadist radicalization is neither uniform nor random, but shaped by how these levels intersect, [232] inspired by religious sentiment, where in the case of the Islamic faith, the religious sentiment is global and refers to all Islam as a global religion and civilization that should control and lead the entire world (the rational of the Umma).

While this framework explains how radicalization develops, it does not by itself explain why European states struggled to respond effectively. Beyond institutional fragmentation, the European cases reveal a deeper failure of political and cultural leadership that has shaped both the trajectory of Islamist radicalization and the instability of democratic governance itself. Progressive political elites and major media institutions have frequently framed Islamist radicalization primarily through the lenses

[231] Balzacq and Settoul, Radicalization in Theory and Practice, pp. 1-30.

[232] Balzacq and Settoul, "Radicalization and Religious Violence", pp. 16-18.

of social exclusion, discrimination, or foreign policy grievance, an expression of white colonial oppression, while systematically downplaying its ideological, religious, and transnational dimensions. This interpretive bias has not merely misdiagnosed the problem; it has constrained the range of legitimate policy responses by casting firm intervention as illiberal, stigmatizing, or politically taboo. As a result, early warning signs, such as ideological radicalization below the threshold of violence, communal separatism, and Islamist influence networks operating within legal gray zones, were often ignored, relativized, or normalized until they escalated into overt security crises.

In many countries, counter-radicalization policies operate within fragmented institutional frameworks, divided between national security agencies, local authorities, judicial constraints, and competing political considerations. Rather than being implemented through a single centralized authority, these policies often involve a wide range of institutional actors, including local administrations, community programs, and national counter-terrorism strategies, producing complex and sometimes inconsistent governance structures. This fragmentation has limited the ability of European governments to intervene early and consistently in environments where radicalization incubates, such as marginalized urban neighborhoods, religious institutions, and online ecosystems. As a result, securitization often emerges not as a proactive strategy but as a belated and unstable substitute for sustained political authority, arriving only after years of elite hesitation, regulatory constraints, and narrative misframing have allowed radicalization pressures to accumulate.[233]

The consequences of these structural and institutional dynamics became most visible in the wave of major terrorist attacks across Europe. The major European attacks of the past two decades demonstrate how these micro- and macro-processes converge. The Madrid (2004) and London (2005) attacks illustrated how local grievances could be reframed within a global Islamic jihadist narrative tied to the ummah, while Paris, Brussels, Nice, and Vienna showed how Islamic jihadist networks adapted even after

[233] Charlotte Heath-Kelly, "Counter-Terrorism and the Counterfactual: Producing the 'Radicalisation' Discourse and the UK Prevent Strategy", The British Journal of Politics and International Relations, Vol. 15 no. 3 (2013), p. 403.

ISIS's territorial collapse. These attacks not only revealed the operational fluidity of transnational Islamic jihadist movements but also exposed vulnerabilities associated with local micro-networks, diasporic ties, and digital mobilization. The breadth of these linkages, combined with the demographic visibility of Muslim minorities in European public life, helps explain why policymakers increasingly perceive Islamist radicalization as a civilizational or existential threat, rather than a conventional law-and-order challenge.

Taken together, these developments extend beyond episodic security failures and point toward a deeper structural challenge. The cumulative effect of these dynamics is that Islamist radicalization increasingly challenges not only public security but the foundational principles of European democratic states and their national, cultural, and Western identity. At stake is the capacity of liberal societies to defend their normative order, secular law, equal citizenship, freedom of expression, and the monopoly of legitimate authority against ideological movements that explicitly reject these principles while operating within their protections. Unlike conventional criminal threats, Islamist radicalization contests the moral and institutional legitimacy of the state itself, seeking to replace civic loyalty with religious authority and to redefine political obligation along transnational lines.[234] In this sense, the threat is not episodic but structural, targeting the very coherence of European political communities.

This shift in perception is best understood through the lens of securitization theory. This interpretive shift is central to understanding the securitization of Islamist radicalization in contemporary Europe. Drawing on the framework developed by Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, securitization occurs when political elites reframe an issue as an existential threat that demands extraordinary, non-routine measures, thereby moving it out of the sphere of normal politics and into the realm of emergency discourse.[235] Across Britain, France, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, and the Netherlands, political leaders have repeatedly constructed Islamist radicalization as a threat to national survival, linking it to uncontrolled migration, communal separatism, foreign

[234] Heath-Kelly, "Counter-Terrorism and the Counterfactual", p. 403.

[235] Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde, Security, pp. 23-26.

influence networks, and challenges to liberal norms. This securitized framing legitimizes expanded policing powers, tighter surveillance, restrictions on protests, and interventions into religious life policies that would be harder to justify without the existential narrative constructed around Islamism.

This dynamic reached a critical turning point with the events of October 7, 2023. The events of October 7, 2023, constituted more than an external shock or symbolic escalation; they functioned as a structural rupture in European threat perception. For many European policymakers, the Hamas attack and its aftermath crystallized long-standing anxieties regarding the intersection of transnational Islamist violence, domestic Muslim populations, and Europe's own normative vulnerabilities. The speed with which European governments moved to restrict protests, expand policing powers, and reframe the Palestinian issue as a domestic security concern indicates that October 7 was interpreted not merely as a regional conflict but as part of a broader civilizational confrontation with direct implications for European social order and political cohesion.[236]

Central to this post–October 7 dynamic is the role of the Palestinian cause as a transnational mobilizing frame. In European contexts, Palestine functions not only as a geopolitical issue but as a symbolic bridge linking local grievances, identity politics, and global Islamist narratives. Protest movements, public discourse, and online mobilization after October 7 demonstrate how the Palestinian issue provides moral legitimization and emotional resonance that extends beyond formal jihadist networks, enabling radical ideas to circulate within broader activist and communal spaces. This diffusion complicates state responses, as it blurs the boundary between protected political expression and ideological ecosystems that can normalize or indirectly legitimize violence.

The reluctance of mainstream elites to confront Islamist radicalization directly has also produced profound political consequences. Across Europe, the perception that

[236] Brendan Ciarán Browne, Elian Weizman and Jennifer Matchain, "Unpacking the Crackdown on Palestine Solidarity Activism in the UK in a Post-7 October Reality", Third World Quarterly (2025), p. 7.

governing parties and media institutions are unwilling or unable to name the problem has fueled a legitimacy vacuum that nationalist and populist movements have successfully exploited. Right-wing parties increasingly frame themselves as the only actors willing to defend national identity, public order, and cultural continuity, transforming security anxiety into electoral mobilization. This dynamic does not merely reflect a shift to the right; it signals a breakdown in centrist authority, whereby unresolved radicalization pressures translate into polarization, democratic erosion, and the normalization of illiberal counter-responses.

The aftermath of October 7, 2023, intensified this dynamic. European leaders interpreted Hamas's attack not merely as a Middle Eastern conflict but as evidence of vulnerabilities within their own borders, associating global jihadist violence with domestic Muslim communities. This produced a renewed wave of securitization: bans on pro-Palestinian demonstrations, expanded policing around synagogues and Jewish schools, investigations into mosques and Islamic NGOs, and intensified political rhetoric linking Islamism to national security. At the same time, the crisis catalyzed unprecedented political mobilization around the Palestinian cause, both among Palestinian diaspora communities in Europe and among their allies within progressive left-wing movements.

In many European capitals, mass demonstrations, university protests, and media campaigns elevated the Palestinian issue to the center of political and social discourse, amplifying its visibility in the public sphere. Critics argued that, in certain contexts, this mobilization contributed to a reframing of the October 7 attacks, sometimes downplaying their brutality or contextualizing them as a reaction to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, thereby fueling intense polarization across political, academic, and media arenas. These developments generated a contested discursive environment in which competing narratives over victimhood, legitimacy, and resistance clashed, reinforcing identity-based tensions throughout European societies.

For policymakers and security analysts, the episode underscored how transnational conflicts can reshape domestic political debates, radicalize segments of public opinion,

and exacerbate ideological polarization. In many states, official responses were framed as necessary to defend social order; however, they also deepened the perception within Muslim communities that they were collectively under suspicion, in a pattern that Balzacq and Settoul identify as reinforcing the identity-based tensions that can feed radicalization. Moreover, the events of October 7 served as a catalyst for both securitization and counter-mobilization, illustrating how geopolitical crises can intensify Islamist radicalization alongside broader ideological polarization within European societies.

Taken together, the elements identified in the case studies' global ideological framing, religious legitimization of violence, embeddedness in protected communal and religious spaces, demographic visibility, and cross-border linkages produce a form of radicalization that acquires heightened security salience within European politics. While the underlying psychological and sociological mechanisms mirror those found in other extremist currents, Islamist radicalization is uniquely positioned to be securitized because it intersects with three sensitive domains simultaneously: religion, demography, and geopolitics. Its transnational framing, theological vocabulary, and perceived foreign affinities allow policymakers to cast it not merely as a domestic security challenge but as a global confrontation with implications for identity, sovereignty, and social cohesion.

These developments heighten elite sensitivity to social unrest and political backlash, often producing a governance dilemma in which states oscillate between accommodation and repression. In this context, Islamist radicalization becomes securitized not solely because of its violent potential, but because it intersects with fears regarding long-term social cohesion, political stability, and the future of European identity.

This securitized framing in turn shapes the policy landscape: it legitimizes exceptional policing, strengthens state authority over religious life, and intensifies debates about citizenship, loyalty, and integration. It also reveals a circular dynamic: securitization aims to contain radicalization, yet excessive securitization, especially when tied to Islamophobia or discriminatory enforcement, can itself function as a radicalizing

pressure within marginalized communities. Understanding this duality is essential for interpreting radicalization trends after October 7 and for analyzing how European states navigate the tension between protecting democratic order and safeguarding pluralism.

Taken together, these dynamics indicate that securitization should be understood not as the primary cause of Islamist radicalization in Europe, but as both a symptom of deeper governance weaknesses and an accelerator of existing tensions. European states thus confront a moment of strategic truth. Continued reluctance to address Islamist radicalization as a systemic ideological challenge, rather than a marginal social pathology, risks accelerating a dual collapse: the erosion of internal security on one hand, and the delegitimization of liberal democratic governance on the other. Moreover, it fuels perceptions of a broader threat to national-cultural identity and social cohesion across European societies. When governments hesitate to enforce legal norms, regulate ideological actors, or articulate clear red lines, they invite both radical challengers and authoritarian counter-movements. The danger, therefore, lies not only in Islamist radicalization itself, but in the paralysis of democratic authority that allows it to expand while hollowing out the political center.

While securitization can temporarily restore state authority and signal resolve, it also risks reinforcing perceptions of collective suspicion and exclusion among Muslim communities, thereby feeding the very identity-based grievances that contribute to radicalization. The post–October 7 period thus exposes a circular relationship between governance failure, demographic anxiety, transnational mobilization, and securitized response, one that poses profound challenges for European democratic systems.

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