

ISRAEL & THE MIDDLE EAST

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Daughter of the Nile

Dismissed by academics but revered on the right, the author of 'Eurabia' sees Muslim migration as the result of a grand conspiracy

BY JUDITH MILLER

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IN LATE JANUARY, I HAD LUNCH AT LE RIVE, A TONY, WOOD-BEAMED restaurant whose tall windows offered a stunning view of Lake Geneva and its snow-capped mountains. The room buzzed with the sound of diners speaking softly in French and German and the clinking of crystal glassware. The tables were covered with heavy, white linen cloths, perfectly pressed. The lake's soft, silvery light filled the immaculate room.

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My companion was a 92-year-old woman who has lived for the past decades in a nearby town in the peaceful Swiss countryside under her pen name, which refers to a country that she left for the last time nearly 70 years ago. As we lunched, it was hard to believe that this tiny woman with piercing blue eyes and impeccably coiffed, short white hair—less than 5 feet tall—has spent the past half-century arousing such gargantuan passion, vitriolic debate, and scathing criticism from

historians, political scientists, journalists, Middle East analysts, and students of Islam, as well as social media commentators from around the globe, who know her only as Bat Ye'or.

It didn't take long, however, to see that her warm smile, impeccable manners, and ingratiating style were deceptive. By the end of our appetizers, I began to grasp why Bat Ye'or—which means “daughter of the Nile” in Hebrew—has created such a series of intellectual firestorms. Though she downplays her own role in the current debate in Europe over its demographic and political destiny, this self-described “pathologically timid” wife and mother is as intense, tough-minded, and unshakable in her views as both her supporters and critics assert.

For nearly 50 years, Bat Ye'or has doggedly explored the historical subordination of Jews and Christians in Muslim-ruled countries as so-called “dhimmis.” For over three decades, she has also been asserting that corrupt, cowardly politicians, Eurocrats, politically correct scholars and the mostly mindless liberal media have championed a mass migration of Muslims that has Islamized the historic cradle of Western civilization, likely leading to its demise. Due to this secret betrayal of its own citizens and history, she writes, Europe has become “Eurabia,” a term she coined in 2005.

Bat Ye'or's views, expressed in 10 books, most of them originally published in French, have made her a deeply polarizing figure, dismissed or attacked by the left, and revered as a prophet by the right. Her supporters—like the esteemed late historian Martin Gilbert, Robert Wistrich, a leading expert on antisemitism, the historian Niall Ferguson and his wife, writer/activist Ayaan Hirsi Ali—have called her an utterly original thinker whose research uncovering and dissecting long-suppressed historical grievances is “courageous” and “taboo-breaking,” a key to unlocking some of the greatest dangers of our time. Her critics, with equal fervor, accuse her of Islamophobia, selective reporting, and the deliberate distortion of history.

Though she claims to be unintimidated by such criticism, the steady stream of invective—including a continuing flood of death threats that for a time required around-the-clock Swiss police protection for her and her family—have deeply shaken her. Such threats increased sharply in 2011 after Anders Breivik, a right-wing Christian fanatic who killed 77 people in a terror attack in Norway, cited her writings 59 times in his 1,500-page manifesto as a basis for his hatred of Muslim immigrants and European liberalism. Though Breivik also cited dozens of other thinkers and writers, including Thomas Jefferson, Mahatma Gandhi, Winston Churchill, and Napoleon Bonaparte, among others, critics accused her of being the likely inspiration not only for Breivik's shocking slaughter, but also for Renaud Camus' "great replacement" theory, the view that European elites are conspiring to replace Europe's white population with nonwhites.

Horrified by Breivik's crime, Bat Ye'or expressed regret that a man she had never met or written to had claimed to have been inspired by her books. But the damage was done. To protect her family as the police recommended, she dramatically lowered her profile.

In-person interviews are now rare. She is cautious about whom she agrees to meet, and where. She granted me access to her home in a Swiss village only after I agreed not to disclose her location or provide information that would enable her many detractors to locate her.

"One must be very careful these days," she told me. "Even in Switzerland?" I asked, known for its low crime rates and protection of its citizens' and foreign residents' privacy. "Even here," she replied. "Everywhere in Europe, unfortunately."

Bat Ye'or began writing about the historical plight of Jews and Christians in Muslim lands more than 50 years ago. Her first, slender, 80-page book, *Les Juifs en Egypte*, published in 1971, contained personal and historical accounts of the

subjugation and fate of Egypt's Jews. A second book in 1980, *The Dhimmi: Jews and Christians Under Islam*, explored in greater detail the impact of the institutionalized persecution of Jews, Christians, and other non-Muslims who did not convert to Islam after the Arab conquest of Middle Eastern lands began in the seventh century. Her second book, which popularized the word dhimmi, stood in sharp contrast to prevalent scholarly trends, which combined denunciations of Western colonial treatment of Arab lands and cultures as uniquely racist with accounts of peaceful religious coexistence in vanished Muslim empires. Islam, Bat Ye'or reminded readers, was not merely the exotic "other" in the eyes of 19th- and 20th-century Western travelers and scholars. It was also a 1,300-year-old faith that in its day had conquered many older cultures and had purposefully reduced Jews, Christians and other non-Muslims to second-class status.

Though their status and treatment differed from state to state and over time, those covered by a "dhimma," or a contract between the Muslim victors and vanquished non-Muslims, the so-called "protected" or, she prefers to call them, "tolerated" minorities, often lived as virtual serfs.

They were permitted to practice their faith, but could not seek converts from Islam or build new churches or synagogues; pre-Islamic structures could not be taller than nearby mosques or enlarged. Non-Muslim houses of worship could be ransacked, burned or demolished as acts of reprisal against the community. Dhimmis were not permitted to carry weapons or ride "noble" animals—camels or horses—a rule still in force for Yemenite Jews as late as 1948. A Muslim man could marry a dhimmi woman, but a dhimmi man could be killed for marrying or having sex with a Muslim woman. Dhimmis were often required to wear distinctive clothing. Though they could work and own property, they were required to pay an onerous per capita tax—the "*jizya*." In legal disputes, their testimony was not equal to that of a Muslim, and a dhimmi was not allowed to give evidence against a Muslim.

Toward the end of the Middle Ages, except in Muslim Spain and under Ottoman rule, dhimmis had to live in specified areas in houses that were "shabbier and

smaller” than those of nearby Muslims. They were not permitted to group together to talk in the street. The most degrading tasks—carrying away dead animals and cleaning latrines, even on the Sabbath—fell to the dhimmis.

Such mistreatment, which was widely recorded by both Muslim and non-Muslim travelers and historians, was not the result of historical accident and circumstance, Bat Ye'or argued. Rather, it is intrinsic to the practice of Islam itself—even though the Koran, which Muslims consider the words of God, “had nothing to say on the matter,” she wrote. But because Islam divided the world between the Muslim lands, “Dar al-Islam,” the “House of Islam,” and “Dar al-Harb” the “House of War” and instructed all Muslims to engage in jihad, or holy war, until all inhabitants of the latter were killed or brought to the true faith, those who refused to convert or flee had to be subjected and humiliated, however “tolerated” they may be. The privileges extended to them were not rights; they could be ignored or revoked at will—and as she demonstrated, often were.

“This system of oppression and humiliation was practiced over a vast area for more than a thousand years,” she wrote. This, in turn, “affected manners, shaping traditional ways of thinking and patterns of behavior.” Twelve centuries of such “subjugation” and “moral degradation”—in effect, an ancient version of “apartheid”—had reinforced not only the Muslims’ sense of superiority, but also the minorities’ lack of self-worth. She called this systematic and legalized persecution, a condition she likened to slavery, as well as its debilitating impact on the mindset of Jews and Christians, dhimmitude—a term that quickly gained traction among anti-Islamist campaigners, especially on the political right.

Not surprisingly, her book was attacked by mainstream scholars and others who imagined condescension and systematic oppression of the “other” as the province of the West, and often saw themselves as tribunes for positive understandings of Islam. Chase F. Robinson, a historian of Islam who is now the director of the Sackler Gallery in Washington, D.C., asserted that her work contained “too many errors to list,” though he failed to mention a single error in Bat Ye'or’s work. Sidney

Griffith, a professor emeritus of early Christian studies at Catholic University, dismissed her book as a “polemical tract,” not “historical analysis.”

In an interview, Mark R. Cohen, the preeminent historian of Jewish-Muslim relations who taught at Princeton, called her account of the dhimmi plight “exaggerated” for having concentrated too heavily on incidents and periods of the most severe repression. “Dhimmi,” he told me, meant “protected, not persecuted.”

A more ambivalent critic of Bat Ye'or was the late Bernard Lewis, the distinguished British American historian at Princeton. Lewis, among the first to cite Bat Ye'or's work, nonetheless challenged her assertion that Islam had always disparaged Jewish and Christian minorities. Islam, he argued, was not fundamentally moved to racist antisemitism, or even to virulent, Christian-like theological hatreds.

Picking up on such criticism, many scholars—especially those in the field of Middle Eastern Studies—dismissed her as a nonacademic parvenu whose screeds were hardly worth serious scholarly consideration. After all, they complained, she neither spoke nor read Arabic. Who was this independent researcher who had never held a university post to challenge what supporter Robert Spencer, the anti-Islamist activist and historian, called in his own book *The Myth of Islamic Tolerance?* Who was this presumably Jewish nobody with a Hebrew pen name to explode the fable of “Al-Andalus”—the supposedly glorious era in medieval Islamic Spain in which Muslim, Jewish, and Christian scholars, artists, and philosophers were said to have lived together in a fraternal paradise of multiculturalism and unbroken harmony?

Bat Ye'or well understands what it means to be a dhimmi. “There are peoples roaming the earth who no longer have a soul,” she wrote in an early essay. “Flight and exile have enfeebled their memories, dimmed their sight, and stifled their speech. ... Vanquished peoples, they have been rejected by history. Thus, they

wander through the world, with neither roots nor memories, strangers, forgotten by time, atomized—bearing their nostalgia like a shackle.”

She felt the dhimmis' pain so keenly because she was one of them. Born Gisele Orabi in Egypt in 1933 to an Italian father and a French English mother, the third daughter of four children, she was raised in the comfortable style of Cairo's Jewish haute bourgeoisie. Her grandfather, who received Egyptian nationality by exception, was also honored with the title of “bey” by the Ottoman sultan. Her father renounced his Italian nationality in response to Mussolini's anti-Jewish, racist laws in the late 1930s.

The Orabis led a life of privilege. There were servants and governesses and a driver named Ulysses who chauffeured them between their French private school classes and sports at exclusive clubs. There were summers in Alexandria on the Mediterranean. There were afternoon teas with pastries from Groppi, the high-end Swiss bakery which, though much degraded, was still in business when I arrived in Cairo in the 1980s as *The New York Times* bureau chief.

Her father, disabled by polio since childhood, was proud of his family's Egyptian nationality, carefully preserving the uniform his father had worn to the sultan's court even as the family's prospects—and that of much of Egypt's 75,000-strong Jewish community—grew increasingly imperiled with the impending world war. “Subsidized by the Nazi and Italian Fascist regimes, Amin al-Husseini, the former mufti of Jerusalem, “fanned hatred against the British and the Jews,” Bat Ye'or wrote in her memoir, a “political biography” published in French in 2017 but still not in English. “Insults, threats, and daily defamation poured through the local press. Bombs were thrown at Jewish shops and synagogues.”

“Egyptians didn't hate Jews,” she told me. “This was the result of government policy against Jews because of the alliance of the Muslim Brotherhood with Nazi criminals who had fled to the Middle East after 1945.” She named several of them in her early books.

“Critics accused her of inspiring both Anders Breivik and the ‘Great Replacement’ theory of Renaud Camus”

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Though Egypt's Jews cheered the Allies' victories and the war's end, the Muslim Brotherhood grew ever bolder. Accused of a Zionist conspiracy, Jews were attacked in the streets, on public transport, and in public places. After a law restricted Jewish employment, many secretly fled the country. Still, her family clung to hope, and to Egypt.

At home, “our parents lived on edge.” She was told to “hide our Judaism, to keep silent.” “The walls have ears,” people whispered. Though she was always a Zionist, she told me, the word Israel was never spoken. “We called it ‘Texas,’” she said.

Conditions for Jews continued to worsen. When the sequestration of her family's property was briefly lifted, the Orabis decided to flee. Her father managed to get some money out of Egypt to a Geneva bank, a risky, illegal gambit that helped save their lives. But her mother's broken foot delayed their plans to leave.

Their departure, swift and secret, came early one morning in 1956 after Gamal Abdel Nasser had seized power. Each family member took one suitcase and the maximum currency allowed—20 Egyptian pounds. “At the airport, we were made to sign documents certifying that we renounced our Egyptian nationality, all our property, and promise never to return to Egypt.” Their suitcases' contents were

thrown on the floor at the airport; their money was confiscated. A soldier cracked open her mother's leg cast, searching for hidden jewels.

As their plane departed for Europe, and freedom, she took a last look at the country and life she was leaving forever. "I saw the Nile, a ribbon of green silk, shimmering in the rosy morning light between two deserts," she wrote. "I watched it until it disappeared," tears streaming down her cheeks. She was 24 years old. She would never return.

Years later, when she decided to shield her family from controversy by writing under a pen name, she chose "Bat Ye'or," Hebrew for "Daughter of the Nile."

Settling in England, she braved the cold English winters, frozen toes and fingers, and marveled at something she had never before seen—snow. In 1959, she met and married an Ashkenazi British Jew, a historian whose modest family wealth enabled him to pursue his passion for advancing Jewish causes by advising nongovernmental organizations. They moved to Switzerland.

Taking care of her four children and her husband, David, who had an insatiable yen to travel, left her little time to obtain an advanced university degree. But she never stopped researching and writing. In 1961 when her eldest daughter was just 4 months old and she was pregnant with a second child, an Israeli organization persuaded her to go to Morocco, the scene of anti-Jewish riots, to help spirit Jewish children out of the country to safety in Israel. Pretending to be an Anglican couple sending the children to a Swiss "summer camp," she and her husband spent four months there secretly arranging to put children onto rickety boats to leave the country. Decades later, the couple were honored in Israel for their courageous part in "Operation Mural" which helped rescue 530 Moroccan Jewish children and eventually their parents who followed them to Israel. Having rescued Jewish children with her own hands, she now set out to tell the larger story of how her people came to be treated as less than human in Muslim lands.

Bat Ye'or's books on the dhimmis brought her a grudging measure of academic recognition. However, her 2005 book, *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis*, sparked controversy well beyond the ivory tower. Journalists, intellectuals, and celebrities began talking about her work, especially in Europe, where Muslim immigration was already touching a raw nerve. In the U.S., Bernard Lewis, who once told me that he disagreed with some of her theory, appeared to support her *Eurabia* warning when he told a German newspaper that if present trends continued, "Europe will be Islamic by the end of this century at the latest." Yet if her work on dhimmitude had gained a measure of acceptance in academia, her new book was largely dismissed by scholars as an inflammatory conspiracy theory—and even as proof that the author was mad.

In *Eurabia*, Bat Ye'or argued that Europe was becoming Islamized due to mass Muslim migration and its leaders' craven political concessions to the Arabs. At the heart of the controversy over the book was Bat Ye'or's assertion that this development was not a historical accident. Rather, the Islamification of Europe was the planned outcome of a largely secret conspiracy between Europe's elites and the Arab states to allow large numbers of Muslims to enter Europe and transform it into what an obscure European Community group had called *Eurabia*, a term now attributed to her. This largely secret project, she argues, was initiated, sanctioned, and encouraged by anti-American European leaders including France's Charles de Gaulle in the '60s, and later by officials from the European Economic Community, the EEC—a predecessor to the EC and the EU.

As evidence of this conspiracy, Bat Ye'or's book cited voluminous official statements, meeting notes, conference minutes, and the declarations of a little-known project within the EEC called the Euro-Arab Dialogue. Initiated in 1974, the dialogue was funded mainly by Arab states, and was unknown to most Europeans and even many students of European politics when her book was published. In the minutes and declarations of that obscure group, Bat Ye'or found what she believed to be a blueprint for the social transformation of Europe against the will of its citizens—a transformation that was now becoming evident to even casual observers.

Europe's turning point, she argued, was the energy crisis of the 1970s after the 1973 Yom Kippur War, when a coalition of Arab states launched a surprise assault on Israel that ultimately failed to reclaim territories lost to Israel during the 1967 Six-Day War. In response to U.S. support for Israel, Saudi Arabia and other oil cartel members imposed an oil embargo to punish Israel and its Western supporters, causing global energy prices to quadruple and sparking an international economic crisis. Shaken by a growing number of deadly Palestinian terror attacks on its soil, Europe responded to the Arabs' economic blackmail by making deals to placate Arab leaders through programs like the Euro-Arab Dialogue. This, in turn, prompted ever greater political and economic concessions that opened the floodgates to large-scale Muslim immigration that has eroded European identity and culture. As a result, she argued, non-Muslim Europeans have been transformed into de facto dhimmis, minorities, and supplicants in their own continent.

Citing a mountain of painstakingly unearthed documents, she argues that the end goal of the dialogue and similar efforts was always the destruction of Israel, which, in Arab eyes, was the ultimate, unpardonable insult to Islam—an illegitimate dhimmi state. Muslims had a religious duty to conduct jihad to restore it to the Palestinians, the newly minted redeemers of sacred Muslim land. Participants in the dialogue, she noted, were required to recognize the “legitimate grievances” of the Palestinian people, endorse the creation of a Palestinian state, and to recognize Yasir Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organization, which until the Oslo Peace Accords in 1993 openly called for Israel's destruction, as the sole representative of Palestinian aspirations.

A secondary goal of this semisecret compact between the European governments and the Arab states, she continued, was to weaken the U.S., Israel's chief defender. Explicit anti-Americanism became ever more fashionable and reflected in European Union policy, she wrote, especially after the Soviet Union's collapse, which freed Europe, at least temporarily, from its need for American military protection. In sum, she argues, although the dialogue was couched in the language of mutual respect and benefit, it was, in fact, the vehicle for a three-decade-long

series of concessions by Europe's leaders to Arab Muslim demands that amounted to "moral justification for their own self-destruction."

For many analysts, Bat Ye'or's Eurabia thesis appeared to have come from Mars. While prominent anti-Islamists praised her for having coined the term "dhimmitude"—which gave the historic, institutionalized, religiously sanctioned humiliation of Jews and Christians in Muslim lands a name—several now disputed what they called her conspiratorial explanation of a complex economic, sociological, and political phenomenon. Daniel Pipes, a long-standing anti-Islamist activist, said that while Bat Ye'or was right to be concerned that Europeans were acting "preemptively like dhimmis," blaming this development on an obscure Euro-Arab working group from the 1970s was inaccurate. "I don't think that a group of bureaucrats who began meeting 30 or 40 years ago in Brussels ever had that importance," he told me.

"Bat Ye'or insists that jihad is central to the practice of Islam"

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Marc Weitzmann, an author and expert on antisemitism who writes for Tablet, argues that Bat Ye'or has it backward. Because Europe's Muslim neighbors, none of them democracies, feared that European-based Muslims would become Westernized and democratized, "they have wanted to control the European Muslims, not to Islamize Europe, but to protect their own countries from being influenced back." To control the European Muslim migrants, "they turned to the Muslim Brotherhood," among the most secretive and committed of fundamentalist

Islamist groups. While Salafist extremists relied on terror to frighten Europeans into concessions, the Brotherhood has preferred to infiltrate institutions and work within the political system to erode barriers to implementing Sharia, Islamic law. Europeans, in other words, hadn't made concessions to Arab states bent on destroying them, but rather fully cooperated in their own destruction, by doing deals with the Brotherhood which they saw as an instrument for controlling their own, often native-born Muslim populations.

“There was no giant plot,” said Lorenzo Vidino, an Italian American writer on Islamism who heads Georgetown University's Program on Extremism. “Not even the Muslim Brotherhood, which plans 200 years ahead, thought of moving millions of Muslims to Europe,” he said. Rather, it happened “serendipitously.” Muslims came as workers, refugees fleeing wars, students, and dissidents who were not tolerated at home. “Then they sensed opportunity.” Now, he said, their desire to create a separate Muslim community and Islamize and polarize society “are no longer fringe.” While acknowledging that many of the social developments that Bat Ye'or foresaw are real and continuing, Vidino also takes issue with the author's refusal to distinguish between “mainstream” Islam and “Islamism,” or the extremist interpretations of the faith. “She continues to insist that the religion itself is the problem,” he told me, calling the lack of such a distinction not only wrong, but “counterproductive.”

Though Bat Ye'or acknowledges that not all Muslims subscribe to “militant jihad theories of society” and urges anti-jihadists to work with both Muslims and Christians to oppose the erosion of Judeo-Christian culture, she nevertheless insists that Muslim leaders have never abandoned the command to wage perpetual war on non-Muslims—and that the impetus to jihad is central to the practice of Islam in both the religious and the political spheres, which Muslims understand to be one and the same. What gives her insistence added bite is that in the past 20 years, both violent and nonviolent forms of Islamism have increased dramatically

in Europe and Britain. Lethal attacks throughout the continent have left hundreds dead, injured, or scarred for life.

In a 2024 report, Matthew Boyse, a former U.S. official and expert on Europe, wrote that knife attacks by Muslims on non-Muslims have become an “everyday phenomenon” in Europe, particularly in Germany, which endured some 14,000 such attacks between 2021 and 2023. In 2019, some 3,000 European churches, schools and other Christian landmarks were vandalized, looted, or defaced, he wrote—most of them in France (three a day on average), Germany (two per day) but also in Belgium, Britain, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, and Spain. Jewish synagogues and schools now require constant police protection. While not all of these attacks had a proven Islamist aspect, Boyse wrote, “a very large percentage did.” Throughout much of Europe, “Christmas” festivals are heavily guarded and renamed as “winter” festivals to avoid offending Muslim sensibilities.

On their face, however, migration data do not support the assertion that Europe will become an Islamic caliphate any time soon. According to a benchmark Pew Research Center study, Europe’s Muslim population share is expected to rise from its 2016 level of 4.9% to 7.4% by 2050, even if all migration into Europe were to stop immediately, which is unlikely. With normal migration, that is, excluding the immigration sparked by the turmoil in Syria and other conflict zones, Muslims could account for 11.2% of Europe’s population by 2050. If migration were to continue with the record flow of mostly Muslim refugees experienced between 2014 and 2016—which is also unlikely—Muslims could make up 14% of Europe’s population by 2050—nearly triple the current share. But their numbers would still be “considerably smaller” than the population of both Christians and people with no religion,” the Pew projections show.

Such forecasts, however, reflect neither current political perceptions nor the fact that when asked, many Europeans contend that Muslims account for as much as 30% of their country’s population. Mujtaba Rahman, of the Eurasia Group, attributes this false perception to the nationalist right’s success in claiming that whites are being “replaced” by nonwhites. The forecasts also fail to account for the

disproportionate influence that a highly motivated, ideological, religious minority can have in democracies.

Consider France and Britain, whose secular systems are under the greatest Islamist pressure, and which Bat Ye'or asserts have already become “Islamized Christian” societies.

Bernard-Henri Lévy, the French public intellectual, fierce opponent of antisemitism, and champion of human rights, strongly disagrees with Bat Ye'or's analysis of Europe's direction. Yes, he acknowledges, France has Europe's largest Muslim population—officially estimated at about 7.9% of the country's 70 million (though because France prohibits census questions about race and religion, many analysts say the percentage is closer to 10%). While there are pockets of unintegrated Muslims in some cities and suburbs and even in the countryside, he told me, “the vast majority of French Muslims are perfectly integrated in the republic.”

French President Emmanuel Macron, though now underwater politically, has pushed back hard not only against Islamist terror attacks, but also Islamist demands that French culture and traditions reflect Muslim sensibilities. In 2020, a year after the beheading of Samuel Paty—a teacher who had shown caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad published by the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* during a lesson on free speech—Macron enacted landmark legislation to fight Islamic “separatism.” The wide-ranging law to combat groups operating outside of France's laws and secular values allows the state, among other things, to monitor the funding of mosques and Muslim associations, close those that incite violence or hatred, and replace extremist imams who preach in them. Since then, according to Interior Ministry data, the government has closed 700 of the 24,000 Muslim-run businesses, schools, and associations it has inspected, seized or frozen \$50 million of their assets, and targeted over 90 mosques for closure or intensive monitoring—more action in the past four years than in the previous 20 years combined. In 2025, the forced removal of people accused of inciting hatred or violence increased by 21%.

Yet Macron's critics, particularly those on the right and far-right, like the National Rally's Marine Le Pen and Jordan Bardella, call such laws "too little, too late." France, which has experienced 30 terrorist attacks in the past decade, has seen record-high levels of legal immigration in recent years—an 11% increase in 2025 over the previous year. Plus, they argue, although deportations of extremists increased to the highest number in the European Union, less than 15% of the 33,000 people a quarter ordered to be deported actually left France, thanks to legal appeals or the refusal of their home countries to accept them.

“For many analysts, the ‘Eurabia’ thesis appeared to have come from Mars”

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France's secular education system, crucial to shaping French identity, also faces a particularly severe challenge that Macron's laws and regulations have so far failed to remedy. Didier Lemaire, who taught philosophy in a school in a west Paris suburb, had to be put under police protection after he denounced the spread of radical Islam in French schools and compared Islamist extremists to Nazis. Left-wing teachers, he complained, have repeatedly yielded to Islamist demands that boys and girls sit separately in schools and that curriculum reflect Islamist values.

The threat of violence has silenced many educators, said Evelyne Tschirhart, a teacher who has written extensively about the failure of France's educational system. “Teachers are pressured to say that Islam is a religion of peace and justice, and warned not to say that jihad is a war against non-Muslims,” she said in an

interview. “They fear teaching about the Holocaust, or anything about the historic persecution of Jews.”

Florence Bergeaud-Blackler, a French anthropologist who has studied Islamists for 30 years, said that while the media have focused on Salafist terror attacks, the Muslim Brotherhood is even more dangerous because of its skill at using French law and culture to undermine the Republic’s own institutions. “They don’t confront society; they use the weakness of society against itself,” she told me. Since publishing *The Muslim Brotherhood and Its Networks: An Investigation*, a popular 2023 book published in French, she, too, has required police protection. Her book documents how the Brotherhood has used some 250 associations since 1983 to spread its influence throughout French society far beyond its mosques—to schools, hospitals, medical associations, law firms, and sports and other clubs.

“They know it will take decades, but that by changing the social contract, French society will ultimately come to accept Islam,” she said. “When the Brotherhood encounters resistance, it retreats, until strength is on its side. But it won’t stop pushing to create a French Islamic republic.”

Well-founded or not, similar concerns have seized hold of Great Britain, which until recently had what amounted to an open-door policy to Muslim immigrants from Pakistan and other countries with imperial British ties. As former British Prime Minister Liz Truss told me in a recent interview, “concerns about immigration and by extension, Islamicization, are at the core of politics in the U.K. today.”

While a 2016 ICM poll found that 86% of British Muslims surveyed said they felt a strong sense of belonging to Britain, the enormity of the challenge posed by a militant minority was highlighted in a detailed 2023 study of “Prevent,” the government’s key program in combating terrorism. The study, led by Sir William

Shawcross, concluded that the program had lost sight of its “core mission” by focusing too heavily on threats from the far-right, and not enough on Islamist extremism. While Islamists posed the “largest terrorist threat facing the U.K.”—accounting for roughly 80% of reported attacks and incidents—the government spent most of its time and resources investigating terrorism by right-wing groups, which accounted for between 10% and 20 % of such crimes. The program was too “culturally timid” and failed to identify and combat dangerous Islamist ideologies, it concluded. In some cases, NGOs were found to have endorsed or spread Islamist viewpoints. Shawcross recommended a “radical” overhaul of the strategy. Though the government accepted all of his 34 recommendations, a follow-up report a year later showed that few of them had been implemented effectively.

In a country of roughly 70 million, there are now roughly 2,300 mosques, 180 Muslims schools, and over 80 Sharia councils which operate alongside British law. Social unrest and violence are particularly noticeable in the areas where Muslims are concentrated.

Islamism, and the government’s reaction to it, have already had profound political consequences, including for free speech, said Douglas Murray, the British commentator. Encouraged by the European Union, he says, “Britain,” along with “virtually every European country, now have de facto ‘antiblasphemy laws’ that restrict free speech and make people hesitant to criticize Islamism,” he said.

The British have been most appalled by the systematic, decadeslong sexual exploitation and abuse of some 17,000 vulnerable young girls in northern English towns by gangs of men of Pakistani origin, over two-thirds of whom are Muslim. Almost as pernicious as what became known as the “grooming gang scandal” itself, however, were the reasons that law enforcement failed to pursue it, and then covered up the abuses for so long. In 2025, a government-commissioned study found that the police had often “shied away from” investigating the myriad reports of sexual exploitation and from identifying the perpetrators’ ethnicity because they feared being called “racist” or “offending” the Muslim community.

Bat Ye'or insists that she is not “political,” and that especially since her husband’s death in 2012 she has avoided political gatherings and concentrated on writing her books. At the same time, she argues that Europe is obviously not doing enough to contain the spread of Islam and to counter Islamic pressures. The right-left divisions cited by so many political scientists are outmoded, she argued, since the traditional left and right too often form alliances which advance Eurabian interests. “This is a civilizational struggle,” she says.

She has political favorites among Muslims, to be sure—historically, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who secularized Turkey, and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, whose 1979 peace treaty with Israel and recognition of the Jewish state prompted his assassination by Muslim extremists in 1981. She also praised Hungary’s Prime Minister Viktor Orbán for his staunch defense of Judeo-Christian values and efforts to control migration, despite hefty EU-imposed fines. She called President Donald J. Trump a “strong leader” who has steadily “supported Israel” and understands the need to curb migration. Seemingly untroubled by the bullying that has alienated some of America’s closest European allies, she refused to criticize even his avowed determination to own Greenland. “Better the U.S. than China,” she replied.

The determined daughter of the Nile, now issuing her prophecies from the Swiss countryside, seems equally unfazed by the rise of the far-right throughout much of Europe and the U.K. In France, Marine Le Pen’s National Rally party is enjoying a historic surge in popularity. Italy has been led since 2022 by the popular right-wing Giorgia Meloni. Slovakia and the Czech Republic are also led by populists. Support for the right-wing Alternative for Germany, or AfD, which came in second in the 2025 elections, is steadily growing, even as conservative Chancellor Friedrich Merz has vowed to deport migrants “on a very large scale.”

While pleased by these developments, Bat Ye'or is not reassured by the fact that so many Europeans are finally awakening to the danger she has been decrying for so

long. “Our enemy is determined and monstrous,” she said as we sipped tea in her book-filled study, crammed with files stacked high. She was not optimistic that Europeans would awaken in time, she told me. “Democracy is fragile,” she sighed. While her early books were aimed at Europeans, she had written *Eurabia*, her first book in English, for Americans. “I know and love your country,” she said. “If Western civilization is to be preserved, America must be saved. don’t become like us in Europe.”

Judith Miller, Tablet Magazine’s theater critic, is a former *New York Times* Cairo bureau chief and investigative reporter. She is also the author of the memoir *The Story: A Reporter’s Journey*.

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