Nativism, Islamophobism and Islamism in the Age of Populism: Culturalisation and Religionisation of What is Social, Economic and Political in Europe

PRIME Youth Project: Conclusive Final Conference

Istanbul Bilgi University, European Institute
European University Institute, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (RSCAS)

Conference Date: 13 June 2023
Conference Venue: Sala del Capitolo
European University Institute, Badia Fiesolana, Via dei Roccettini 9, I-50014
San Domenico di Fiesole (FI) – Italy

Conference Report
3 July 2023

Istanbul Bilgi University
European University Institute
Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies
European Research Council

PRIME Youth Project: Conclusive Final Conference

Conference Report

3 July 2023

Reporter & Editor

Metin Koca, Postdoctoral Researcher, PRIME Youth ERC Project

Scientific Organisers

Ayhan Kaya, Principal Investigator, PRIME Youth ERC Project

Metin Koca, Postdoctoral Researcher, PRIME Youth ERC Project

Ayşenur Benevento, Postdoctoral Researcher, PRIME Youth ERC Project

Photos & News Coverage

Didem Balatlıoğulları, Projects Coordinator, European Institute,

Istanbul Bilgi University

The ERC in a Nutshell

The European Research Council, set up by the EU in 2007, is the premiere European funding organisation for excellent frontier research. Every year, it selects and funds the very best, creative researchers of any nationality and age, to run projects based in Europe. The ERC offers four core grant schemes: Starting, Consolidator, Advanced and Synergy Grants. With its additional Proof of Concept grant scheme, the ERC helps grantees to bridge the gap between grantees' pioneering research and early phases of its commercialisation.

For more information, please visit: https://erc.europa.eu

CONTENTS

1. Event Description and Announcement

The event will discuss the main findings from the ERC-funded [PRIME Youth](#) project (ISLAM-OPHOB-ISM, number 785934) along with presentations from esteemed colleagues on the current debates surrounding Islamist and right-wing radicalisations.

The ISLAM-OPHOB-ISM project addresses a historical juncture marked by the escalation of ethnocultural and religious tensions in the EU, hit by two substantial crises: the global financial crisis and the refugee crisis. The project utilises a single optical lens to analyse the socioeconomic, political, and psychological factors behind the radicalisation of two groups of European youths: the natives who support movements labelled as far-right and the migrant-origin self-identified Muslims. Across two interview rounds scheduled in 2020 and 2021, the research team conducted 307 interviews in four European countries: Belgium, Germany, France and the Netherlands.

As opposed to approaches that take radicalisation as a process to be curbed, the ISLAM-OPHOB-ISM project takes radicalization as a symptom of social problems, and possibly a quest to resolve them. Therefore, the project demonstrates a colourful set of foundational claims that youths make in reaction to their socioeconomic, political, spatial, and nostalgic grievances.

This final conference will coordinate the concluded and ongoing research from partner ERC projects, including:

GREASE - Examining the role of religious diversity and its governance in Europe and beyond.
PREVEX - Understanding the factors that contribute to the prevention of violent extremism.
BRaVE - Investigating the dynamics of polarization, radicalisation, and violence in Europe.
DRIVE - Exploring the role of social exclusion on polarizing ideas, values, and beliefs.

Together, we will explore the cultural, religious, social, economic, and political aspects of radicalisation in Europe.

Event Page: https://www.eui.eu/events?id=555845

For more information, please visit the project Website: https://bpy.bilgi.edu.tr

  @BilgiERC   @BilgiERC

2. Minutes of the PRIME Youth Final Conference

The ERC-funded **PRIME Youth project** (Acronym: ISLAM-OPHOB-ISM, number 785934) has reached a milestone with the completion of its final conference on June 13, 2023, at the European University Institute (EUI) in Florence. In the meeting, **the PRIME Youth research team** shared their main findings and arguments alongside the presentations from esteemed colleagues on the current debates surrounding Islamist and nativist radicalizations.

As part of the event description, we contextualized the PRIME Youth project in the historical juncture marked by the escalation of ethnocultural and religious tensions in the EU, hit by two substantial crises: the global financial crisis and the refugee crisis. The project utilized a single optical lens to analyze the socioeconomic, political, and psychological factors behind the radicalization of two groups of European youths: **the natives who support movements labeled as far-right** and **the migrant-origin self-identified Muslims**. Across two interview rounds scheduled in 2020 and 2021, the research team conducted 307 interviews in four European countries: Belgium, Germany, France and the Netherlands.

As opposed to approaches that take radicalization as a process to be curbed, the ISLAM-OPHOB-ISM project took radicalization as **a symptom of social problems** and possibly **a quest to resolve** them. Therefore, the project demonstrates a colorful set of foundational claims that youths make in reaction to their socioeconomic, political, spatial, and nostalgic grievances.

Based on the PRIME Youth project description, this final conference coordinated our concluded and ongoing research with those of the partner ERC projects, including **GREASE**, examining the role of religious diversity and its governance in Europe and beyond; **PREVEX**, understanding the factors that contribute to the prevention of violent extremism; **BRaVE**, investigating the dynamics of polarization, radicalization, and violence in Europe; and **DRIVE**, exploring the role of social exclusion on polarizing ideas, values, and beliefs.

Professor Erik Jones, Director of the **Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies** at the EUI, acted as the event's host. In his introductory speech, Jones emphasized the importance of such gatherings on pressing problems related to **social exclusion and diversity** in Europe. Professor Jones shared his congratulations with the PRIME Youth team for encouraging, along with its partner ERC projects, open dialogue and exchange of ideas, providing valuable insights, and fostering understanding among various stakeholders.

After the welcoming speech of Professor Jones, **Professor Ayhan Kaya**, Principal Investigator of the PRIME Youth project, shared an overview of the project. In his presentation, Professor Kaya discussed the ISLAM-OPHOB-ISM ERC project as **a challenge to the mainstream understanding of radicalization** which, he argued, conflates radicalization with violence and terrorism. Kaya made the caveat that the PRIME Youth project is "not dealing with extremism." Instead, he described radicalization as **a reactionary response** to various forms of social, economic, and political exclusion, subordination, alienation, humiliation, and isolation experienced by individuals. Reading the PRIME Youth data in this light, Kaya's presentation focused on the reactionary radicalization processes of self-identified Muslim youth and self-identified native youth residing in Europe. Professor Kaya explained that the main reason for selecting these two groups was the assumption that they are co-radicalizing each other in the contemporary world, which has been influenced by the ascendance of civilizational political discourse.

Drawing on the findings of in-depth interviews conducted with 307 "youngsters" from both groups in Belgium, France, Germany, and the Netherlands, Professor Kaya demonstrated

that the main drivers of radicalization for these two groups could not be explained through **civilizational, cultural, and religious differences**. Instead, he argued that the drivers of radicalization for both groups are strikingly similar, as they are both **socio-economically, politically, and psychologically deprived** due to the flows of globalization and various aspects of neoliberal governmentality.

Dr Metin Koca, Postdoctoral Researcher in the PRIME Youth project, then questioned how violent and non-violent radicalizations may be conceptualized, considering **the broader radicalization literature** concerned with the "whys and hows of **violent extremism**" before any other scenario. Presenting several several "**reflexive boundaries**" among individuals pursuing religious purity and cultural essence, Koca concluded that violent extremism often involves reducing the ideology into violence, whereas the complete form of an ideology, and radicalization as seeking completeness as such, involves much more.

After questioning the importance of this divergence for democracies, Koca's presentation focused on the governance of religious radicalization in Europe, with possible impacts on nativist and Islamist radicalization. Focusing firstly on Christian conservatives who undergo a **"religious moderation into the Populist Radical Right,"** Koca questioned the limits of promoting moderation at all costs. On the flip side, he problematized the international governance of radicalization by examining migrant-origin Muslim Europeans' self-positioning beyond the sending and receiving states' politics of religion. After emphasizing these individuals' wide-ranging ideology-making processes with a series of references from **Palestine to Black Lives Matter**, Koca questioned the capacity of Networked Social Movements to bring together individuals who rely on clashing parochial ideological repertoires. Koca's discussion in this context revolved around the **Yellow Vests** movement as a case study, analyzing the movement's potential to represent a cross-ideological horizon for the nativists located in rural France and the Muslims in the relatively isolated pockets of the larger cities. In conclusion, Koca stressed the importance of social linkages in democracies and reconnecting the radicalization study with the broader field.

Dr Ayşenur Benevento, Postdoctoral Researcher in the PRIME Youth project, addressed the growing concern over radical right movements and parties, which, she identified, have become important political forces over the past decade. While **qualitative interviews** have been increasingly used in this field of research, Dr Benevento noted that the body of knowledge on radical Islam based on interviews with European Muslims of immigrant origin has not been able to provide **a methodological basis** for the study of native youth sympathizing with the radical right. Benevento continued as follows: "Although they are seen as different groups, these two groups, at least in the Western European context, go through similar radicalization processes."

Dr Benevento highlighted the importance of understanding **the interpersonal and cultural contexts** within which radicalization develops, posing two research questions: 1) How do we interpret radicalization processes in our research? 2) What elements should be considered when conducting research with radically labeled populations and what elements can contribute to the ethical and robust nature of the research? In addressing the first question, Dr. Benevento referred to Voutryas (2016: 235), who argued that radicalization should be seen as "a moment that opens up a field of various possibilities" rather than as something inherently positive or negative. This "**unbiased approach**," Dr Benevento asserted, would lead to more curiosity and nuanced findings in the research field. To answer the second question, Dr Benevento drew on existing studies and personal insights from her own research process and offered "**going beyond the identity labels**."

In the Q&A session following the panel, PRIME Youth advisory board member **Professor Anna Triandafyllidou** (Toronto Metropolitan University) asked how the research team would describe the research participants' radicalization levels. **Dr Metin Koca** stated that he considers the sample not as one constituted by "radicalized/radicalizing" individuals, but a sample relevant to the study of radicalization due to the research participants' use of illiberal value expressions associated with radicalization—"often for the wrong reasons." Koca exemplified opposing the prophet cartoons or insistence on the Islamic veil in the public sphere. **Professor Kaya** underlined the interlocutors' discontent with the political-institutional system, manifested as solid criticisms towards the current state of representative democracy, distrust towards political and media actors, and discontent with the current party systems.

In connection, PRIME Youth advisory board member Professor **Thijl Sunier** (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)**,** Professor Kaya and Dr Koca discussed how the governments instrumentalize "radicalization" to tame the opposition. Metin Koca illustrated several interviews where French Muslims argued that the Macron government scapegoats them to mask the Yellow Vests protests. Ayhan Kaya concluded that "governments are among the root causes of radicalization." Finally, **Théo Blanc**, PhD Candidate at the European University Institute, questioned the limits of "going beyond the identity labels" by asking Dr Benevento if it would be possible to not use labels without creating other labels. Furthermore, often used by "the proponents" themselves, removing these labels, Blanc argued, would lead to a total individualism that fails to capture the significance of collective identities. In response, **Dr Benevento** exemplified how labels may be used based on other markers, such as location.

In the second panel, **Professor Thijl Sunier** and **Professor Anna Triandafyllidou**, PRIME Youth Advisory Board Members, made their presentations. Sunier discussed the challenges faced by Muslims in Europe, who are often confronted with a negative image and perceived as a problem and security risk by politicians. At the same time, he noted that a process of **bureaucratic incorporation of Islam** has taken place over the past few decades, providing Muslims with access to resources, services, and, in some cases, formal recognition as a religious community.

Professor Sunier explained that bureaucratic incorporation has generated a certain level of legal stability and offered Muslims **relative protection against political volatility** and online hate campaigns. However, he also pointed out the **downside to this incorporation**, as it provides governments with tools to effectively monitor and control Muslim activities. European governments, he argued, desire a **"domesticated" Islam** that aligns with their policy goals. As a result, Muslim representatives and spokespersons are often forced to comply with political demands or risk exclusion from negotiations. Furthermore, Professor Sunier emphasized that Muslims, even those born and raised in Europe, increasingly feel pressured to conform to an imposed image of the "**ideal Muslim**." Drawing on examples from his own fieldwork, Sunier discussed the two-sided nature of bureaucratisation and reflected on the future development of Islam and the position of Muslims in Europe.

Introducing various non-Western contexts to the previous debates on the governance of religion, **Professor Anna Triandafyllidou** examined the dynamics behind the rise of **religious nationalism** in **Central Eastern and Southeastern Europe**, characterized by distinct populist, nativist, and authoritarian overtones. She explored the relationship between nationalism and religion, as well as the broader transformation challenges within the region and globally that can shape this relationship.

In doing so, Triandafyllidou delved into the historical experiences in the region concerning the relationship between **state and church**, as well as nationalism and religion. She

critically analyzed how these relations have evolved during nation-state formation in the 19th and early 20th centuries, under **Communism**, and over the last three decades. Drawing on a critical analysis of the relevant literature, she discussed the entanglements between state and religious institutions, as well as between **national identity and faith**, and how these are mobilized today. The paper presented by Professor Triandafyllidou argued for the need to consider **both internal and external factors** in the evolution of the relationship between nationalism and religion in Central Eastern and Southeastern Europe.

The third panel was constituted by the presentations of the PRIME Youth field researchers, **Dr An Van Raemdonck** (Belgium), **Dr Max-Valentin Robert** (France), and **Lalla Amina Drhimeur** (Morocco, France). Dr Van Raemdonck discussed the political views of **right-wing youth in Flanders, Belgium**. The respondents expressed affinities and support for the largest right-wing party, Vlaams Belang, and to a lesser extent, N-VA. They shared an overall "**sense of injustice**" in different areas concerning political representation and socio-cultural life.

An Van Raemdonck analyzed their viewpoints using the framework of **ethnoregionalism** to understand their preferences for a more independent region of Flanders. The respondents believed that increased political autonomy would redress **institutional injustices** embedded in the current political structures of the federal state and counter **the powers of globalization over national sovereignty**. To analyze the sense of unfairness concerning socio-cultural life, Van Raemdonck employed the frameworks of **civilizationism and Islamophobia**. The respondents expressed unease with what they perceived as unsustainable high inflows of migrants and refugees. Their political responses to negative perceptions of and anxieties regarding immigration ranged from civilizationism to Islamophobia. Civilizationism encompassed **identitarian Christianism**, emphasizing and re-cultivating Christian heritage, taking a secularist posture, and a liberal defense of principles such as gender equality and freedom of speech, earlier analyzed as femonationalism. In her talk, Van Raemdonck distinguished between civilizationism and Islamophobia, with the latter referring to fixed beliefs about Islam, the incompatibility of Western and Muslim values, and beliefs in population replacement "theory."

In the second presentation of this panel, based on his co-authored article with **Professor Ayhan Kaya**, **Dr Max-Valentin Robert** discussed the individual determinants of **radical political preferences**, which have been widely used to study electoral support for far-right parties but rarely applied to understand the dynamics of radicalization among Western Muslim youth involved in political Islam. To address this, Robert conducted 37 semi-structured interviews between 2020 and 2021 with young **self-identified Muslims of Turkish and Moroccan descent**, aged 18-30, based in the Paris or Lyon areas as part of the PRIME Youth project.

Drawing on **the social movements literature**, Robert uncovered two sets of factors influencing radicalization, each based on two distinct oppositional groups of attitudes: (1) a feeling of estrangement from **mainstream societal values**, such as morality, secularism, and a perceived assimilationist trend emanating from the French national frame, and (2) **a sense of dissatisfaction** towards the political-institutional system, which appeared as latent criticisms of the current state of **representative democracy**, distrust of political and media actors, and discontent towards the current French party system.

The third panel ended with **Lalla Amina Drhimeur**'s presentation on the evolution of Morocco's diaspora politics and their impact on the religious and identity needs of Moroccan migrants in Europe. Drhimeur explained that during the 1970s, **Morocco's diaspora politics**

were focused on surveillance, retribution, and security, as well as promoting state legitimacy within the diaspora. Migrants were discouraged from integration and assimilation, and their religious and identity needs were largely unaddressed. Drhimeur highlighted that **Saudi Arabia and Qatar** filled this void by spreading **Wahhabism and Salafism** in Europe, offering a sense of "belonging" to the ummah as an alternative to Western society. This led some migrants to turn to militant Islamism in their quest for identity, while others chose to withdraw from society and live in closed communities, fostering **extremist views**.

In the 1980s, Morocco began developing religious diaspora politics, using **Islam as a source of legitimacy and normative power**. However, many young people rejected this understanding of Islam, viewing it as a corrupt heritage of colonialism. To break free from their parents' cultural understanding of Islam, they opted for a stricter interpretation of religion without any social and cultural grounding. Drhimeur explained that recruiters appeal to this sentiment pool, attempting to mobilize people's **grievances and vulnerabilities** and channel them toward concrete violent action. Through her presentation, Lalla Amina Drhimeur shed light on the complex dynamics of religious identity and radicalization among Moroccan-origin Muslims in Europe.

Following Drhimeur's presentation on Morocco, **Théo Blanc** directed the participants' attention to **the Tunisian case**. Blanc explored the role of state management of religion and its effects on radicalization processes. Blanc raised several important questions, including: Does **state management of religion** affect radicalization, and how? What role can religious actors play in preventing and fighting radicalization, and what are the limitations of this role? Is **traditional Islam** an antidote to radicalization? What role can unofficial and/or anti-establishment religious actors, such as "Salafis," play in contrast to official/traditional religious actors? To address these questions, Blanc primarily focused on the Tunisian case, while also referencing examples from other North African countries. Regarding the distance between **Salafism(s)** to both official religious actors and violent extremists, Blanc concluded that "Salafists are neither pacifists nor warmongers." Blanc's presentation shed light on the consequences of specific forms of state management of the religious field in terms of **violent radicalization**, offering valuable insights to better understand the intricate dynamics at play.

Bringing our attention back to the European contexts, **Dr Richard McNeil-Willson** explored new trends of radicalization in the Netherlands and Northern Europe. He pointed out that **societal exclusion** has given rise to an atomized far-right, Islamophobia, anti-migrant mobilizations, and the spread of conspiracy theories online. These developments have fueled **polarization and extremism** and have become new concerns in recent years.

McNeil-Willson also pointed out how extreme **Islamic and far-right milieus** have been borrowing ideological or tactical elements from each other, or even acting in solidarity against authorities. These movements all share a common thread: a declining trust in government, the media, and liberal democracy. This suggests that **an effective response** must address both the changes in activism by extremist movements, such as shifting from membership-based street organizations to loose online communities, and challenge the legitimization of far-right tropes and continued securitisation of Islam within mainstream European politics and society. McNeil-Willson's presentation was based on ongoing research from the European Commission-funded **DRIVE project**, which explores links between social exclusion, community polarization, and radicalization in the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, and the UK. His findings also build upon results from the **BRaVE project**.

The final panel was concluded by the keynote speech of **Professor Olivier Roy**, joint-chair at the RSCAS and Social and Political Sciences department of the EUI, and Adjunct

Professor at the EUI School of Transnational Governance. Roy started his speech by pointing out **a methodological limitation** emanating from making sense of radicalization by looking at "a final outcome," such as a violent action. He then questioned the institutional needs that push academics to simplify complex processes into "pyramids." Following several methodological caveats, Roy drew **similarities between right-wing and Islamist extremisms**, including their shared feelings of being a minority and underrepresented, as well as their claims of suffering more than others. All in all, Roy drew "a common landscape" where both groups are constituted by "losers." However, Roy disagreed with the notion that both groups have a **nostalgia for a past** and stressed that not all individuals are seeking roots. Additionally, Roy highlighted the differences in suicidal tendencies between right-wing and Jihadi violent extremists.

Based on previous contributions on the state management of radicalization, Roy described "a backlash effect" resulting from the state promotion of **moderate or national Islams**. These campaigns, he argued, suggest that governments still do not know how to proceed in response to violent extremism or non-violent discontent. Finally, drawing attention to various models and paradigms dominating the field, Roy distinguished between the **Huntington and Hunter paradigms**. While the war between Ukraine and Russia refuted Huntington's civilizational paradigm, Hunter's model based on value clashes remains valid, according to Roy. In conclusion, he underlined the limits of the multiculturalist models and "wokism" in this climate of value clashes. Instead, Roy argued, researchers should pay attention to "**strange proximities**" between the opposing forces.

Roy's keynote speech was followed by a roundtable discussion on the central themes of the conference and future research trajectories. Referring to the previous debates on "ideal Islam," **Louis Blin**, Head of **the Middle East Directions Research Programme** at the Robert Shuman Centre and Diplomat at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, problematized the dominant tendency of seeing Islam as an ethnicity in Europe. Blin identified the attempts to construct an "ideal Islam" as one of constructing a "non-Islam." After a series of comments regarding the limits and merits of comparing Islamist and nativist radicalisms throughout the event, Professor Thijl Sunier concluded the event by appreciating the PRIME Youth project as an effort to seek figures to compare, without "debunking the realities of others."

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

The Conference ended with some discussion and elaboration of the notions of radicalism, extremism and deradicalization. The following points were raised in the discussion session:

- All radicalisation processes are local, hence local, individual, contextual and micro level aspects of these processes should be taken into consideration;
- Increasing levels of anti-Muslim racism and Islamophobism have transformed the European public in general to become more culturally Christian;
- Since the migrant labour recruitment treaties in Europe in the 1960s, there is a prevalent assumption among the European political elite that dictates that Islam is not compatible with the European way of life. This assumption has recently been internalised by right-wing populist politicians. It is because of this assumption the migrant-receiving states failed in creating political opportunity structures for Muslim-origin migrants and their descendants. Instead, they preferred to delegate the responsibility of dealing with the faith-related matters of migrants to the migrant-sending states such as Turkey and Morocco;
- Migrant-sending states such as Turkey and Morocco have been engaged in pursuing religious-based diaspora politics to reach out to their citizens abroad and to politically mobilise them in order to attain their foreign and domestic policy goals. They were also joined by the migrant receiving states to form their own national versions of Islam as well as by the Gulf states (Saudi Arabia, and Qatar) and Iran to compete on Islamic hegemony;
- Neoliberal civilizational rhetoric was criticised by all the participants since it is assumed that it has created a political climate that has made individuals overlook socio-economic, political and psychological aspects while trying to understand the root-causes of radicalism;
- Individuals with migration and Muslim backgrounds seem to be imprisoned between religious-based diaspora politics of their countries of origin and cultural-based integration politics of their countries of destination;
- It was also agreed that the civilizational rhetoric has the risk of concealing the root causes of the socio-economic and political discontent in the European Union;
- Global Islam seems to be offering young Muslims in Europe an opportunity to transcend the imposed nationalist hegemonies of their countries of destination and to connect with a larger global community of Umma;
- Native young populations who live in the margins of big cities, small remote towns that were previously preoccupied with agricultural production or industrial production are also becoming socio-economically, politically and psychologically minoritized; and
- The minoritiziation of native and Muslim youth groups finds separate channels for political expression. The former relies on ethno-nationalist nativist discourses, while the latter on Islamic discourses.
- It was also discussed that these two groups who are socio-economically and psychologically going through similar processes of minoritization are in a position to co-radicalise each other due to the lack of the third-liminal spaces (such as youth centres, cultural centres, community centres, art venues, popular culture venues) where they could communicate their feelings of discrimination, humiliation, exclusion, and structural outsiderism through the aesthetic forms of expression such as arts, music, dance, painting, graffiti etc.

3. Participation List

Name	Affiliation	E-mail
An Van Raemdonck	Ghent University, Department of Languages and Cultures, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, PRIME Youth Field Researcher	anvanraemdonck@gmail.com
Anna Triandafyllidou	Toronto Metropolitan University, Professor, Canada Excellence Research Chair in Migration and Integration, PRIME Youth Scientific Advisory Board Member	anna.triandafyllidou@torontomu.ca
Ayhan Kaya	Istanbul Bilgi University, European Institute, Director, PRIME Youth, Principal Investigator	ayhan.kaya@bilgi.edu.tr
Aysenur Benevento	Istanbul Bilgi University, European Institute, PRIME Youth Postdoctoral Researcher	aysenur.benevento@bilgi.edu.tr
Didem Balatlıoğulları	Istanbul Bilgi University, European Institute, Project Coordinator	didem.balatliogullari@bilgi.edu.tr
Erik Jones	European University Institute, Professor, Director, Robert Schuman Center for Advanced Studies	erik.jones@eui.eu
Lalla Amina Drhimeur	Sciences Po Lyon, PhD Researcher, PRIME Youth Desk Researcher	amina.drhimeur@gmail.com
Max-Valentin Robert	University of Nottingham, Political Science, Postdoctoral Researcher, PRIME Youth Field Researcher	maxvalentin.robert@etu-iepg.fr
Metin Koca	Istanbul Bilgi University, European Institute, PRIME Youth Postdoctoral Researcher	metin.koca@bilgi.edu.tr
Müge Palancı	Sapienza University, Istanbul University, PhD Candidate	mugepalanci@yahoo.com
Olivier Roy	European University Institute, Professor, Robert Schuman Center for Advanced Studies, PREVEX project	olivier.roy@eui.eu
Richard McNeil-Willson	Leiden University, the Institute of Security and Global Affairs (ISGA); the University of Cambridge, postdoctoral researcher, BRaVE & DRIVE projects	r.mcneil@fgga.leidenuniv.nl
Thijl Sunier	Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, PRIME Youth Scientific Advisory Board Member	j.t.sunier@vu.nl
Theo Blanc	European University Institute, PhD Researcher	theo.blanc@eui.eu

4. Conference Program

Venue: Sala del Capitolo
Badia Fiesolana | Via dei Roccettini 9, I-50014 | Florence
Date: 13th of June, 2023, 10:00-17.00 (CET)

10.00 – 10.15	Opening Remarks by Prof. Erik Jones (EUI, RSCAS)
10.15 – 10.35	Presentation of the Project and Overview of Main Findings by Prof. Ayhan Kaya (Istanbul Bilgi University, PRIME Youth)
10.35 - 10.55	Presentation by Dr Metin Koca *Radicalisations in Europe: Rethinking Convergence, Divergence and the Social Linkages*
10.55 – 11.15	Presentation by Dr Ayşenur Benevento *Beyond Identity Labels: Fostering Curiosity to Find the Radical Ways of Expressing Political Discontent*
11.15 – 11.30	Q&A
11.30 – 11.35	**Coffee Break**
11.35 – 11.55	Presentation by Prof. Thijl Sunier *The Janus-face of bureaucratic incorporation of Islam in Europe*
11.55 - 12.15	Presentation by Prof. Anna Triandafyllidou *Religion and Nationalism in Southern, South-Eastern and Central Eastern Europe*
12.15 – 12.30	Q&A
12.30 – 13.30	**Lunch break**
13.30 – 13.50	Presentation by Dr An Van Raemdonck *Right-wing youth in Flanders, Belgium: ethnoregionalism, civilizationism and Islamophobia*
13.50 – 14.10	Presentation by Dr Max-Valentin Robert *Islamism, Nativism, and Reactionary Radicalism: The Political Determinants of Religious Radicalisation among the French Muslim Youth*
14.10 - 14.30	Presentation by Lalla Amina Drhimeur *The Morocco Diaspora Politics and Moroccan-Origin Youth Radicalisation in Europe*
14.25 - 14.40	Q&A
14.40 – 14.50	**Coffee Break**

14.50 – 15.10	Presentation by Theo Blanc
	The Role of Religious Actors in Preventing and Fighting Radicalisation
15.10 – 15.30	Presentation by Dr Richard McNeil-Willson
	Contemporary Patterns of Radicalisation and Social Exclusion in the Netherlands and Northern Europe
15.30 – 16.00	Keynote Speech: Prof. Olivier Roy
16.00 – 17.00	Roundtable Discussion and Closing Remarks

5. Abstracts

Ayhan Kaya
Presentation of the Project and Overview of Main Findings

This presentation discusses the ISLAM-OPHOB-ISM ERC project. The term "radicalisation" is discussed as a process that appears to be a defensive and reactionary response of various individuals suffering from social, economic, and political forms of exclusion, subordination, alienation, humiliation, and isolation. To that effect, the project challenges the mainstream understanding of radicalisation. This presentation will concentrate on the elaboration of reactionary radicalisation processes of self-identified Muslim youth and self-identified native youth residing in Europe. The main reason behind the selection of these two groups is the assumption that both groups are co-radicalizing each other in the contemporary world that is defined by the ascendance of a civilizational political discourse since the war in the Balkans in the 1990s. Based on the findings of in-depth interviews conducted with youngsters from both groups in Belgium, France, Germany, and the Netherlands, I demonstrate that the main drivers of the radicalisation processes of these two groups cannot be explicated through the reproduction of civilizational, cultural, and religious differences. Instead, the drivers of radicalisation for both groups are very identical as they are both socio-economically, politically, and psychologically deprived of certain elements constrained by the flows of globalization and dominant forms of neo-liberal governance.

Metin Koca
Radicalisations in Europe: Rethinking Convergence, Divergence and the Social Linkages

This integrative presentation synthesizes arguments based on my research on radicalizations in Europe, exploring several convergences, divergences, and social linkages. The presentation comprises three main sections. Firstly, I will refine the concept of radicalization by juxtaposing non-violent and violent radicalization processes. Introducing "critical radicalism" in contrast with violent extremism, I will present several reflexive boundaries among individuals pursuing religious purity and cultural essence. After questioning the importance of this divergence for democracies, the presentation will explore the governance of religious radicalization in Europe, with possible impacts on nativist and Islamist radicalization. This section will first examine the politics of Muslim (de)radicalization and its relationship with the political orientations of religious Christian youths in France and the Netherlands. Focusing on Christian conservatives who undergo a "religious moderation into the Populist Radical Right," I will question the limits of promoting moderation at all costs. On the flip side, I will critically engage with the international governance of radicalization by examining migrant-origin Muslim Europeans' self-positioning beyond the sending and receiving states' politics of religion. Finally, the presentation will question the capacity of Networked Social Movements to bring together individuals who rely on clashing ideological repertoires. The discussion will revolve around the Yellow Vests movement as a case study, analyzing the movement's potential to represent a cross-ideological horizon. The presentation will conclude with implications for the importance of social linkages in democracies and reconnecting the radicalization study with the broader field.

Ayşenur Benevento
Beyond Identity Labels: Fostering Curiosity to Find the Radical Ways of Expressing Political Discontent

Over the past decade, radical right movements and parties, important political forces and their rise, have led to a proliferation of academic publications trying to shed light on this topic. In this ever-growing field of research, there is a growing body of work using qualitative interviews, which are seen to be of invaluable importance. However, to date, the body of knowledge on radical Islam based on interviews with European Muslims of immigrant origin has not been able to provide a methodological basis for the study of native youth sympathizing with the radical right. Although they are seen as different groups, these two groups, at least in the western European context, go through similar radicalization processes. On the other hand, there is still no comprehensive and practical guidance on how to conceptualize their similarities, conduct ethically and methodologically sound research with individuals from these groups.

This presentation aims to discuss this gap and highlight the importance of interpersonal and cultural contexts within which radicalization develops. The two research questions of the presentation are 1) How we interpret radicalization processes in our research? 2) What elements should be considered when conducting research with radically labeled populations and what elements can contribute to the ethical and robust nature of the research? In answering the first question, I support Voutryas (2016: 235) in claiming that radicalization, "is not something positive or negative, but should be seen as a moment that opens up a field of various possibilities." Such an unbiased and welcoming approach to defining the area of interest will inevitably bring more curiosity and more nuanced findings to the research field. To answer the second question, I will draw on existing studies and personal insights from our own research process. I hope that our interpretation of the term radicalization, research experiences will be useful for researchers who rely on qualitative methods to collect data, as well as scholars from different fields such as political science, psychology and sociology who are interested in understanding the perspectives and lived realities of the radical individual.

Thijl Sunier
The Janus-face of bureaucratic incorporation of Islam in Europe

Muslims in Europe are facing a strongly negative image and an increasing tendency on the part of politicians to view Islam as a problem and a security risk. On the other hand, a process of bureaucratic incorporation of Islam has taken place in the past decades. This has enabled Muslims to get access to resources and services, and in some cases, it has resulted in formal recognition as a religious community. Bureaucratic incorporation generated a certain level of legal stability and provided Muslims with relative protection against political volatility and hate campaigns on the internet. The downside of the bureaucratic incorporation of Islam, however, is that incorporation also provides governments with tools with which Muslim activities can be effectively monitored and controlled. European governments want a 'domesticated' Islam in accordance with policy goals. Representatives and spokespersons of Muslims either have to comply with the political demands, or they are seen as a problem and excluded from negotiations. Moreover, Muslims increasingly have to comply with the imposed image of the 'ideal Muslim', even if they were born and raised in Europe. In my presentation I discuss this two-sidedness of bureaucratisation on the basis of examples from my own fieldwork and I shall reflect on the question of how the position of Islam and Muslims in Europe will develop in the coming years.

Anna Triandafyllidou
Religion and Nationalism in Southern, South-Eastern and Central Eastern Europe

This paper explores the dynamics behind the rise of religious nationalism in Central Eastern and Southeastern Europe with distinct populist, nativist, and authoritarian overtones. The paper explores the relationship between nationalism and religion today and the broader transformation challenges both within the region and more globally that can shape this relationship. It then looks closer into the historical experiences in the region with regard to the relationship between state and church as well as nationalism and religion, critically analysing how these relations have evolved during nation-state formation in the 19th and early 20th century, under Communism, and in the last three decades. Analysing critically the relevant literature, the paper discusses the entanglements between state and religious institutions as well as between national identity and faith, and how these are mobilised today. The paper argues for the need to consider both internal and external factors in the evolution of the relationship between nationalism and religion in Central Eastern and Southeastern Europe and more broadly.

An Van Raemdonck
Right-wing youth in Flanders, Belgium: ethnoregionalism, civilizationism and Islamophobia

This talk focuses on the political views of right-wing youth in Flanders, Belgium. Respondents expressed affinities and support for the largest right-wing party 'Vlaams Belang' and to a lesser extent 'N-VA'. Respondents share an overall 'sense of injustice' in different areas concerning political representation and socio-cultural life. Their viewpoints are analysed first through the framework of ethnoregionalism to understand their preferences for a more independent region of Flanders. In their view, more political autonomy would redress institutional injustices embedded in the current political structures of the federal state and in the powers of globalisation over national sovereignty. The frameworks of civilizationism and Islamophobia are used to analyse a sense of unfairness concerning socio-cultural life. Respondents expressed unease with what is perceived as unsustainable high inflows of migrants and refugees. Their political responses to negative perceptions of and anxieties with immigration range from civilizationism to Islamophobia. The former includes identitarian Christianism - or emphasizing and re-cultivating Christian heritage, taking a secularist posture and liberal defence of principles of gender equality and freedom of speech, earlier analysed as femonationalism. The talk distinguishes between civilizationism and Islamophobia, with the latter referring to fixed beliefs about Islam, the incompatibility of Western and Muslim values, and beliefs in population replacement 'theory'.

Max-Valentin Robert
Islamism, Nativism, and Reactionary Radicalism: The Political Determinants of Religious Radicalisation among the French Muslim Youth

A substantial literature has developed around the individual determinants of radical political preferences. Widely used to study electoral support for far-right parties, this perspective has rarely been mobilised to understand the dynamics of radicalisation, or the process of going back to the 'roots', among fractions of Western Muslim youth involved in political Islam. To address this, 37 semi-structured interviews were conducted between 2020 and 2021 as part of ongoing ERC Advanced Grant research with young (aged 18–30) self-identifying Muslims of Turkish and Moroccan descent based in the Paris or Lyon areas. Also drawing on the social movements literature, we uncovered two sets of factors influencing radicalisation, each based on two distinct oppositional sets of attitudes: (1) a feeling of estrangement from mainstream societal

values, such as morality, secularism, and a perceived assimilationist trend emanating from the French national frame, and (2) a sense of dissatisfaction towards the political-institutional system, which appeared as latent criticisms of the current state of representative democracy, distrust of political and media actors, and discontent towards the current French party system.

Lalla Amina Drhimeur
The Morocco Diaspora Politics and Moroccan-Origin Youth Radicalisation in Europe

In the 1970s, Morocco's diaspora politics were an extension of the state's repressive domestic policies towards political activists and dissident voices. They were merely mechanisms of surveillance, retribution, and security, or propaganda machines to further state legitimacy within the diaspora. Migrants were discouraged from integration and assimilation which the state perceived as a threat to the flow of remittances. They were mainly left alone to manage their own religious and identity needs. In the meantime, Saudi Arabia and Qatar have become leading centers for the spread of Wahhabism and Salafism in Europe. They came to fill the void and the possibility of fulfilling one's spiritual and identity needs. They offered a sense of "belonging" to the ummah as an alternative to Western society that "rejects" them. Some of these migrants might then turn to Militant Islamism to get answers to their quest for identity. Some will choose to 'withdraw' from society and live in "closed communities" because they came to perceive their family and friends as "infidels". "Desocialization", which enables them to form their counter-society with their "brothers and sisters", usually favors extremist views. In the 1980s Morocco started elaborating on religious diaspora politics. Islam became a source of legitimacy and normative power. What is preached within mosques in Europe serves to enhance regional and global influence while delegitimizing those who oppose the Moroccan regime. But these young people revolt against this understanding of Islam. For them, this type of Islam is "corrupt", an instrument in the hands of the Moroccan regime and a colonial heritage linked to humiliation and ignorance. To break free from the "narrowness" of their parents' cultural understanding of Islam, these young people might then opt for a "stricter" interpretation of religion "without any social and cultural grounding". "Pure" Islam offers them the feeling that they "know better," that they hold the truth, and this makes them better than their parents. Recruiters then appeal to this "sentiment pool" and attempt to mobilize people's grievances, vulnerabilities and channel them towards concrete violent action.

Theo Blanc
The Role of Religious Actors in Preventing and Fighting Radicalisation

While much has been written on the role played by religion and religious ideology in radicalisation processes, little has been told on the consequences of specific forms of state management of the religious field in terms of violent radicalisation. The questions this presentation addresses are as follows: Does state management of religion affect radicalisation and how? What role can religious actors play in preventing and fighting radicalisation and what are the limitations to this role? Is traditional Islam an antidote to radicalisation? What role can unofficial and/or anti-establishment religious actors such as Salafis play, by contrast with official/traditional religious actors? To answer these questions, I will largely rely on the Tunisian case, also with references to other examples from other North African countries.

Richard McNeil-Willson
Contemporary Patterns of Radicalisation and Social Exclusion in the Netherlands and Northern Europe

New trends of radicalisation have developed in Netherlands and Northern Europe, linked to societal exclusion. The rise of an atomised far right, Islamophobic and anti-migrant mobilisations and the spread of conspiracy theories online have emerged as new concerns in recent years, fuelling polarisation and extremism. Extreme Islamic and far-right milieus have also been observed borrowing ideological or tactical elements from each other, or even acting in solidarity against authorities. These movements are drawn together under the common thread of declining trust in government, the media and liberal democracy. This suggests that an effective response must address both the changes in activism by extremist movements – such as the replacement of membership-based, street organisations with loose online communities – as well as acting to challenge the legitimisation of far-right tropes and continued securitisation of Islam within mainstream European politics and society. This paper draws on on-going research of the European Commission-funded DRIVE project, exploring the links between social exclusion, community polarisation and radicalisation in the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway and the UK, as well as building on the findings of the BRaVE project.

6. Photos from the Event Day