

Secular Tolerance? Anti-Muslim Sentiment in Western Europe

EGBERT RIBBERINK
*Centre for Sociological Research
University of Leuven*

PETER ACHTERBERG
*Department of Sociology
Tilburg University*

DICK HOUTMAN
*Centre for Sociological Research
University of Leuven*

The literature about secularization proposes two distinct explanations of anti-Muslim sentiment in secularized societies. The first theory understands it in terms of religious competition between Muslims and the remaining minority of orthodox Protestants; the second understands it as resulting from value conflicts between Muslims and the nonreligious majority. The two theories are tested by means of a multilevel analysis of the European Values Study 2008. Our findings indicate that, although more secularized countries are on average more tolerant towards Muslims and Islam, strongest anti-Muslim attitudes are nonetheless found among the nonreligious in these countries.

Keywords: *secularization, Islam, Western Europe, religion, secular cultures, religious competition.*

INTRODUCTION

Long before the PEGIDA demonstrations at the beginning of 2015, anti-Muslim expressions were front-page news in many European countries. Geert Wilders's *Fitna* movie in the Netherlands, in addition to protests against the construction of mosques in Switzerland, the headscarf controversy in France, and protests against the integration of Turkey into the European Union in countries like Austria, France, and Germany suggest that anti-Muslim sentiment in Western Europe is common (Betz and Meret 2009; Gerhards and Silke 2011). Particularly striking is its marked presence in some of the most secularized Western European countries, such as the Netherlands (Theo van Gogh and Geert Wilders), Germany (PEGIDA), Norway (Anders Breivik), France (Charlie Hebdo), and Denmark (Mohammed-cartoon riot). This anti-Muslim attitude after all contradicts the common notion that these countries constitute secular bulwarks of tolerance, inclusiveness, and broadmindedness (Bruce 2002:43; Emerson and Hartman 2006:130; Inglehart 1997; Norris and Inglehart 2012; Penninx 2006).

This article therefore studies anti-Muslim sentiment in these alleged tolerant and inclusive secularized Western European countries, focusing on who constitute its principal carrier groups, and why exactly. There have been various studies on anti-Muslim sentiment in Europe recently, to be sure (e.g., Fetzer and Soper 2003; Strabac and Listhaug 2008), but none of these draws a direct link with the literature about secularization. A growing body of literature does, however, link processes of secularization to newly emerging tensions between groups (Achterberg 2006; Bornschier 2010; McLeod 1997), including nonreligious ones and Muslims (Mudde 2010; Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007; Van Bohemen et al. 2011). We intend to contribute to this literature, both empirically and theoretically, by comparing, analyzing, and explaining anti-Muslim sentiment in Western European countries.

Correspondence should be addressed to Egbert Ribberink, Centre for Sociological Research, University of Leuven, Parkstraat 45, Box 3601, Leuven 3000, Belgium. E-mail: egbert.ribberink@student.kuleuven.be

In the literature on secularization, two distinct theories propose quite different answers to the question among which groups in secularized countries strongest anti-Muslim sentiment can be expected and why. The first theory understands it as an outcome of religious competition between Muslims and the remaining minority of orthodox Protestants. The second theory relates it to the growth of a secular culture and ensuing value conflict between Muslims and the nonreligious. We elaborate the two theories below and test the relevant hypotheses by means of a multilevel analysis of the data of the European Value Studies 2008. After the presentation of our findings, we conclude with a summary of our findings and a discussion of their implication for the relationship between secularization and hostility towards Muslims in Western Europe.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Secularization and Anti-Muslim Sentiment

When Muslim immigrants from North and East Africa, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Turkey, and the Middle East initially arrived in Europe in the 1950s and 1960s, they were warmly welcomed (Nielsen 2004). They were willing to do jobs that Europeans did not want to do against wages that Europeans did not accept for themselves. However, those immigrants did not leave Europe when jobs became scarce in the 1980s. Instead, they started to bring their families from their home countries or started new families with partners from their ethnic groups. They were there to stay (Peach and Glebe 1995). Ever since they arrived, but with increasing ferocity since the 1990s, hostility towards Muslims has surfaced throughout Europe, for many different reasons (Casanova 2012; Laurence 2012). Considering the received notion that the secularized countries distinguish themselves by religious indifference, tolerance, and broadmindedness (Bruce 2002:43; Emerson and Hartman 2006:130; Inglehart 1997; Norris and Inglehart 2012; Penninx 2006), it is particularly striking to observe the strained relationships with Muslims and Islam in these countries (Mason and Poynting 2006).

In the past, problems with religion in secular societies could be attributed to governments imposing a privatization of religion, as was the case in secularist¹ countries like Albania, Russia, and East Germany. In contemporary Western Europe, however, anti-Muslim sentiment appears not simply to be imposed from above by the political system, but to emerge to a large extent from the general public itself (Froese 2004). For example, in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Sweden, rightist-populist politicians like Geert Wilders, apparently aware of the popularity of secular liberal discourse, use the latter to critique Muslims and Islam as intolerant and basically incompatible with secular modernity (Akkerman 2005; de Koster et al. 2014). So, who are those who lend support to this anti-Muslim rhetoric in secularized societies? Are these indeed the nonreligious, who feel the secular foundations of liberal secular democracy to be under threat by increasing Muslim public presence? That may be the case (Mudde 2010), but a competing theory suggests rather that anti-Muslim sentiment stems from feelings of religious threat and competition among remaining faithful Protestants, who find themselves under pressure of secularization, too (Casanova 1994). We elaborate both theories below, starting with the latter.

¹The term “secularism” is “mostly used in connection with the nationalist agenda of political secularists in countries like Eastern Germany (at the time), Estonia and France” (Martin 2005). It is also used to describe the ideology of militant atheists, primarily in the U.S. context (Cimino and Smith 2007). In this way, it is distinct from “the secular” or “secularity” that are mostly used to describe nonreligiosity.

Religious Competition

A first possible explanation for hostility towards Muslims in secularized countries is offered by the religious competition theory, which addresses the consequences of secularization for the remaining faithful (e.g., Stark and Bainbridge 1987; Stark and Finke 2000; see also Einstein 2008; Scheepers, Gijsberts, and Hello 2002). In Western Europe, Protestantism has lost more of its former dominance than Catholicism (Berger 1967; Bruce 2011) because the values embedded in Protestantism have played a major role in stimulating the process of secularization (Bruce 2002; Martin 1978, 2005). The Protestant Reformers had a strong aversion against the central authority of the Roman Catholic Church and its decisive role in man's salvation, which stimulated a primacy of the individual believer and the local church over central church authorities. This not only sparked rationalization of faith in Western Europe but also religious pluralism, that is, an enormous variety of Protestant denominations (Berger 1967; Bruce 2002), and over time led to cultural and religious relativization (Bruce 2011). As a result, many Protestants lost their faith and stopped attending church, and if they continued to believe, they did so in increasingly nondogmatic ways. Nonetheless, this trend of secularization has not led to a complete demise of Protestantism. Although many of the Western European countries can today best be characterized as "post-Protestant" or "secular," there are still sizable numbers of Protestants around. There are even indications that they are becoming not less, but more strict and orthodox, precisely in response to the secularizing forces they are facing up to (Achterberg et al. 2009; Roeland et al. 2010).

According to the religious competition theory, the process of secularization increases competition among the remaining religious groups (e.g., Einstein 2008; Scheepers, Gijsberts, and Hello 2002; Stark and Finke 2000). Indeed, Starke and Finke propose that in the absence of a regulated religious market, i.e., in the absence of a state-sponsored religious monopoly, the smaller religious communities will reinvigorate:

This theoretical emphasis on competition . . . suggests that individual religious groups will be more energetic and generate higher levels of commitment to the degree that they have a marginal market position—lack market share. That is, other things being equal, small religious minorities will be more vigorous than will firms with a large local following. (Finke and Stark 2004:103)

In the secularized, post-Protestant countries of Western Europe, where religiosity is less and less the norm, religious reinvigoration, fundamentalism, and dogmatism are hence predictable behavioral patterns among the remaining Protestants (Berger and Zijderveld 2009; Betz and Meret 2009; Roeland et al. 2010). Casanova (1994) refers to this as "religious deprivatization" and suggests that religious groups pressured into a privatized role tend to become more assertive and activist. The religious competition theory thus predicts that

H1a: In secularized countries, anti-Muslim sentiment will be strongest among the remaining Protestants.

Religious competition theory also explains why Protestants will be the ones who are most strongly opposed to Muslims in their vicinity. As explained above, Protestant churches have declined much more than Catholic and Orthodox churches in Western Europe. The remaining Protestant groups now find themselves in a setting of increased competition with religious others. In the case of Muslims, these religious others compete with Protestants in two ways. First, they compete for "switchers," people who are looking for a religious alternative, although switching from Christianity to Islam can entail an "expensive loss of religious capital" (Stark and Finke 2000:119). This is a larger threat in secularizing societies because there people experience "greater freedom to switch affiliations" (Stark and Bainbridge 1987:302). Second, they compete with rival truth claims, which are a serious threat to Protestants who believe their salvation solely depends

on their personal faith (Berger 1967). This increased competition with religious others, then, will make believers “move back up the tension dimension” (Stark and Finke 2000:216). “Tension refers to the degree of distinctiveness, separation and antagonism between a religious group and the ‘outside’ world. At the high end of the tension axis, serious antagonism exists, sometimes erupting into bloody conflict” (Stark and Finke 2000:143). Historically, orthodoxy with respect to the tiniest of issues (considered far from tiny by those concerned, to be sure) has sparked many a conflict and schism in Protestantism, sometimes more or less peacefully, other times very violently. Moving up the tension dimension also implies that Protestants will become more strict and orthodox (Stark and Finke 2000:216), which in turn generates more vigorous religious action (Stark and Finke 2000:258). Consequently, opposition against Muslims can be expected to be strongest among those Protestants who hold on to strict, orthodox beliefs (see Fetzer and Soper 2003; Immerzeel, Jaspers, and Lubbers 2013; Johnson 2006). This leads to the extended hypothesis that

H1b: Strongest anti-Muslim sentiment in secularized countries can be found among Protestants with the most orthodox beliefs.

Nonreligious People and Anti-Muslim Sentiment

An alternative explanation for anti-Muslim sentiment in secularized societies does not focus on religious competition and orthodox Protestants, but on the nonreligious (Casanova 2004; Modood 2009; Mudde 2010; Van Bohemen et al. 2011). Although many people may still be church members, and even though there are many religious manifestations such as church buildings and references to God in public speech and public institutions (such as the monarchy or the oaths that public officials take), these manifestations have lost their former specific religious function, such as worship, salvation, or blessing (see Bruce 2011, 2013). For Norwegians, for example, it is still common to call themselves Lutheran. However, this is an aspect of national identity rather than of religiosity (Campbell 2007; Martin 2005). Similarly, the expression “oh my God” was initially used as a prayer for forgiveness and an act of worship, but is nowadays commonly used as an expression of surprise or excitement. Its meaning has secularized. Indeed, the nonreligious expect the religious to normatively accept the quintessentially modern understanding of religion as privatized and in effect without public significance beyond the boundaries of churches and congregations.

Muslims in Western Europe have, however, not just retained their religious beliefs, but their religious identities have even strengthened through their encounter with the secularized cultures in which they have come to find themselves: the latter are ‘Made in Europe’ (Phalet et al. 2013; Voas and Fleischmann 2012). Muslims begin to challenge the secularist accommodation of religion that has evolved in Western societies over the last hundred years, claiming right to confessional education, protection of their faith from criticism and ridicule, and remedying of inequalities in laws and policies on the freedom of religious expression (Glendinning and Bruce 2011:504; Modood 2009). Whereas outside of remaining pockets of orthodoxy the typical Christian has transformed his or her religiosity into a strictly personal affair, Muslims are perceived to insist on public recognition and state support for their faith (Cesari 2011), thus challenging the secular truce, i.e., the social contract that guarantees religious freedom yet relegates religion from the public sphere to the private realm (Achterberg et al. 2009; Casanova 1994; Luckmann 1967). This tension sparks new controversies over the place of religion in Western European countries, as observed by Cesari with respect to Islam in France:

Through the decades, major religious groups—Christian and Jewish—have made uneasy peace with *laïcité* by relegating religious expression to private domains. Muslim settlement in France has disrupted that peace. It has

introduced new confusion over boundaries between public and private space and led to renewed controversy over religious freedom and political tolerance. (2002:36)

Because Muslims hence challenge the secularized Western European countries, the nonreligious are expected to be the principal carriers of anti-Muslim sentiment. This leads us to formulate the hypothesis that

H2a: In secularized countries, anti-Muslim sentiment will be strongest among the nonreligious.

Besides religious freedom, gender equality and gay rights are central values that foreground the freedom of individuals to shape their own life and their own identity in secular liberal democracies (Mudde 2010). The secular celebration of individual freedom after all entails a rejection of traditional religiously informed morality, i.e., traditional gender roles, marriage, and sexual norms (Akkerman 2005; Berger 1967, 2004:140; Campbell 2007:351; Houtman, Aupers, and de Koster 2011; Modood 2003; Norris and Inglehart 2012:247; Van Bohemen et al. 2011). Observers suggest that the more people identify with secular values like these, the more they will oppose those who do not share them (Beaman and Tomlins 2015; Betz 2003; Smith 2013; Taylor 2006:14), so that secular identity² becomes a primary motivation for anti-Muslim sentiment (e.g., Bruce 2002:33). The underlying argument is here basically that secular liberal democracies cannot tolerate Islam because the latter is not compatible with these secular values and hence “intolerant” (i.e., Asad 2008; Casanova 2012).

[W]hile conservative religious people are expected to tolerate behavior they may consider morally abhorrent, such as homosexuality, liberal secular Europeans are openly stating that European societies ought not to tolerate religious behavior or cultural customs that are morally abhorrent in so far as they are contrary to modern liberal secular European norms. (Casanova 2004:10; see also Modood 2003:110)

In secularized countries, anti-Muslim sentiment can thus be expected to be strongest among the nonreligious because it is they who are the principal carriers of secular values, which leads to the hypothesis that

H2b: In secularized countries, anti-Muslim sentiment will be strongest among the nonreligious who identify most with secular values.

DATA AND METHODS

To test these hypotheses, we used the most recent European Values Study data set (EVS 2008). These data deal with economic, political, and religious values and attitudes in Western Europe. We are interested in attitudes towards Muslims in Western European countries with a varying degree of secularity, and therefore we included all Western European countries available in this data set. The Western European countries studied are: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus,³ Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Great Britain, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and Northern Ireland with an *N* of 26,138 in 21 countries.

²Although secular people usually do not identify themselves as such and relate more to a humanist or atheist identity, the consistent identification with secular values might create this shared identity (see Lee 2015). In this study, secular identity is used as an analytical concept, not as an empirical concept.

³We excluded Northern Cyprus since it is part of Turkey.

Anti-Muslim sentiment is our dependent variable. There is only one question in the data set inquiring about respondents' attitude towards Muslims, and it does so only indirectly. It is a so-called social distance question about which groups of people respondents find undesirable as neighbors. The question is as follows: "On this list are various groups of people. Could you please sort out any that you would not like to have as neighbors?" The list consists of 14 groups, among which are "Jews," "homosexuals," "drug addicts," "large families," and "Muslims." Response to the last item, concerning Muslim neighbors, was coded into a dummy variable, with score 1 if the respondent mentioned Muslim neighbors as undesirable and 0 if this group was not mentioned. Because this is a somewhat crude measure to use singularly, we also used several items that asked for anti-immigrant attitudes. There are two reasons to do so. First, almost all larger immigrant minorities in Western Europe have a Muslim background (except for Indian people in Great Britain). When people are asked to think of immigrants, they tend to think about Muslims most of the time⁴ (Spruyt and Elchardus 2012; see also Strabac and Listhaug 2008). And several studies have shown that anti-Muslim sentiment is closely related to other types of prejudice, like ethnocentrism (Van Bohemen et al. 2011), cultural and economic xenophobia (Elchardus and Spruyt 2014), and other general measures of prejudice and authoritarianism (de Koster et al. 2010). Second, using the dichotomous "Muslim as neighbor" item, we conducted a linear probability multilevel analysis to check whether the results from the extended scale are comparable with the responses to the dichotomous variable. We found the results to be similar in such a way that we can be confident that our more robust, combined scale measures anti-Muslim sentiment as effectively as the dichotomous social distance variable does.⁵ The items used (eight) inquire about the respondents' attitude towards immigrants getting jobs, undermining cultural life, place in welfare system, influence on crime, and about the number of immigrants. All items were coded in such a way that high scores indicated negative attitudes towards immigrants and Muslims. The items were standardized and linearly combined to create a scale for anti-Muslim sentiment (the reliability and factor analysis of this scale is given in Table 1).

Our measure of nonreligiosity is based on two indices of religiosity. First, we included respondents indicating no religious affiliation (coded as 1, religious affiliation is coded as 0). Second, we included those people who indicated to be a member of a religious denomination, but hardly ever or never go to church (attendance measure, coded monthly attendance or more as religious, others nonreligious).⁶

Our measure for a country's level of secularity was based on this same calculation, aggregated at the country level.

Individual Protestants were coded as such when they indicated to be a member of a Protestant denomination (all Protestant churches, including the Free Church) and attended church at least monthly.

⁴Of course, this is a generalization or even a bias. Even within the Muslim category there are many differences in attitudes, convictions, and beliefs (Modood 2003). However, what we use here is the way in which people have a similar attitude towards Muslims as to immigrants in general in Western Europe.

⁵For example, country-level secularity scored between .04*** and .07*** on the "no-Muslim-neighbor-item," secular values .11*** and .12*** and orthodox beliefs .03 and .04***. Nonreligiosity did not score as strongly as in our normal model (between .00 and .03***). The interaction items did score similarly, albeit less strongly (orthodox beliefs*country level secularity scored -.04*** and nonreligiosity* country-level secularity scored .05***). Also, this extra model has much higher levels of explained variance as a result, with a maximum of 3 percent explained variance at the individual level, whereas the models in Table 6 have a maximum of 22 percent variance.

⁶Especially for the Scandinavian countries, this combined measure gives a better indication of nonreligiosity. For example, in Denmark around 12 percent of the people indicate no denomination, but around 91 percent are included in the combined measure of no denomination and members of a denomination that indicate less than monthly attendance. We think the latter percentage more actually indicates Danes' level of religiosity, since for them, church membership is more related to citizenship than to religious convictions or practices (Campbell 2007; Martin 2005).

Table 1: Factor and reliability analysis for the anti-Islamic attitudes scale

	Factor loading
Immigrants will become a threat to our society	.85
There are too many immigrants	.80
Immigrants undermine our cultural life	.79
Immigrants are a strain on our welfare system	.79
Immigrants take jobs away from our people	.78
Immigrants increase crime problems	.74
Immigrants make me feel a stranger	.67
When jobs are scarce, give priority to native inhabitants	.63
I do not like having a Muslim as a neighbor	.39
Eigenvalue	4.75
R^2	.53
Cronbach's α	.87
N	24,662

Source: EVS 2008.

We created a Muslim presence variable, which simply indicates the percentage of Muslims per country, as provided by the Pew-Templeton Religious Futures Project (Pew Research Center 2013; see Table 2). Based on Strabac and Listhaug (2008), we did not have specific expectations for this indicator, but we use it as a control variable.

The overview of the unstandardized⁷ percentages of Muslims per country, and the country's level of secularity measure can be found in Table 2. In Table 2, we also included the aggregated levels of regular attending Protestants and Catholics/Orthodox per country for comparison reasons, but these are no country-level variables in the multilevel analysis.

As stated above, secular values center on the freedom of an individual to decide one's fate, unhindered by religious authorities. We used the variables that express support for sexual permissiveness (homosexuality, cohabitation, abortion), a nontraditional view of marriage (women can also work, men can take care of children, people do not have a duty to society to have children), and a nontraditional view of gender patterns (having a job can be as fulfilling for women as raising children, preschool children suffer when their mother is working, etc.). We grouped 16 items around these three themes and created three scales that indicate agreement with that theme.⁸ The Cronbach's α for these three scales range between .62 and .65. We calculated a combined score for these three scales to create the secular values variable. The factor analysis of this combined scale is given in Table 3.

To measure orthodox beliefs, we used several indicators of religious convictions. We constructed a combined scale of five items that asks for respondents' belief in God, life after death, heaven, hell, and sin (with answers "yes" coded as 2, "no" coded as 0, and "don't know" as an intermediate position, coded as 1). The average score for these five items was calculated and

⁷In the multilevel analysis, we worked with the standardized score to be able to better compare the effects.

⁸The 16 items are: children need both parents to grow up happily; women need children to be happy; women should not be single when parenting; men need children to be happy; to have children is a duty towards society; it's child's duty to take care of ill parent (nontraditional gender scale—six items—reliability: Cronbach's α is .65). Preschool kids suffer from a working mother; women want to be at home and have children; long-term relationship is necessary in order to be happy; working mother cannot establish warm and secure relationship with child; being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay; what is important for a happy marriage: to have children (nontraditional marriage scale—six items—reliability: Cronbach's α is .62); do you approve of abortion when: women is not married; do you approve of abortion when: married couple does not want more children; how do you feel about: it is all right for a couple to live together without getting married; how do you feel about: a homosexual couple adopting children (sexual permissiveness scale—four items—reliability: Cronbach's α is .62).

Table 2: Overview of country-level religiosity measures

	Level of secularity	Muslim presence	Protestant culture	Catholic/Orthodox culture
Sweden	.93	.05	.05	.01
Denmark	.91	.04	.08	.00
Finland	.90	.01	.09	.00
Norway	.89	.04	.09	.01
France	.88	.08	.01	.09
Iceland	.88	.01	.11	.00
Germany	.84	.06	.06	.08
Belgium	.83	.06	.01	.14
Great Britain	.81	.05	.10	.04
Luxembourg	.81	.02	.01	.16
Switzerland	.80	.05	.06	.11
Netherlands	.75	.06	.14	.09
Spain	.75	.02	.00	.19
Austria	.72	.05	.01	.25
Greece	.56	.05	.00	.43 ^a
Portugal	.53	.01	.01	.44
Italy	.52	.04	.00	.47
Northern Ireland	.47	.05	.24	.26
Cyprus	.45	.25 ^b	.00	.54 ^a
Ireland	.42	.01	.02	.54
Malta	.16	.01	.01	.83

Source: EVS 2008; Pew Research Forum 2010.

^aOrthodox affiliation.

^bIncludes Northern Cyprus.

Table 3: Factor and reliability analysis for the secular values scale

	Factor loading
Nontraditional gender values	.85
Nontraditional marriage values	.84
Sexual permissiveness values	.80
Eigenvalue	2.05
R^2	.68
N	24,468

Source: EVS 2008.

standardized to create the variable for orthodox beliefs.⁹ The reliability and factor analysis of this measure are given in Table 4.

As individual control variables we used gender, age (16–108 years), level of education (as coded in EVS in six stages), and income (recoded in five categories: €0–1,500/month,

⁹The orthodox beliefs measure and the secular values measure are negatively correlated ($-.45^{***}$), but not in such a way that they cannot be put in the model together.

Table 4: Factor and reliability analysis for the orthodox beliefs scale

	Factor loading
Belief in heaven	.87
Belief in hell	.81
Belief in sin	.79
Belief in afterlife	.75
Belief in God	.73
Eigenvalue	3.14
R^2	.63
Cronbach's α	.85
N	27,714

Source: EVS 2008.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics for all variables used

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean/ percentage	SD
Anti-Islamic attitudes scale	27,053	-1.76	1.51	.006	.714
Country-level secularity	21	.16	.93	.714	.200
Muslim presence	21	.01	.25	.046	.045
Nonreligious (ind.)	28,075	.00	1.00	.713	.452
Protestant denomination (ind.)	28,075	.00	1.00	.044	.205
Secular values	28,155	-4.56	4.25	-.004	1.563
Orthodox beliefs	27,714	.00	2.00	1.031	.725
Age	28,306	16	108	48.860	17.961
Sex respondent	28,391	1	2	1.550	.498
Education level (recoded)	28,062	0	6	2.990	1.460
Income <1500 (dummy)	28,403	0	1	25.6	
Income 1,500-2,500 (dummy)	28,403	0	1	28.6	
Income 2,500-5,000 (dummy)	28,403	0	1	14.6	
Income >5000 (dummy)	28,403	0	1	8.2	
Income nonreport (dummy)	28,403	0	1	23.1	
Valid N (listwise)	26,138				

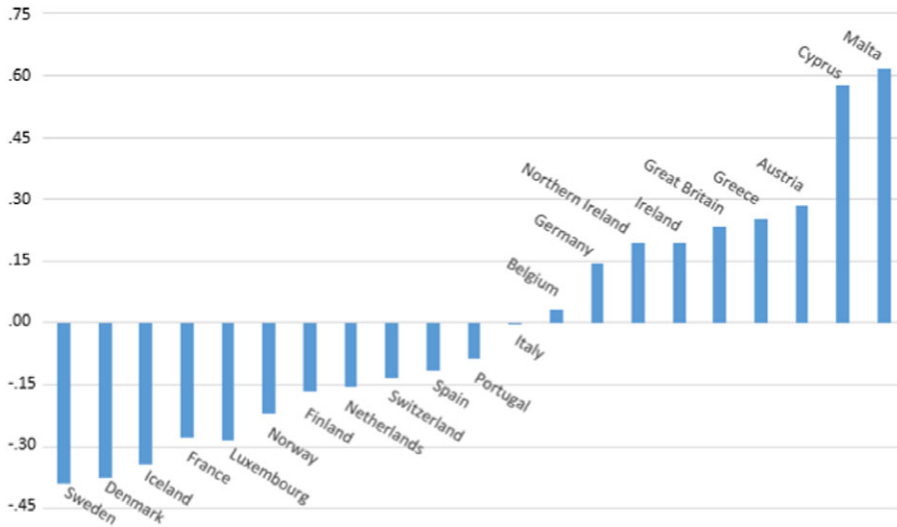
Source: EVS 2008.

€1,500-2,500/month, €2,500-5,000/month, €5,000 or more/month, and a nonreporting category¹⁰). To gain insight into the variables that were thus created, the descriptive statistics for each of the variables are presented in Table 5.

Before moving to the analysis and results section, two preliminary observations can be made that give a general overview of the religious situation in Western Europe. First, in the discussion of the theory leading up to the hypothesis on religious competition, it was argued that Protestants would be most prone to oppose Muslims as they have undergone the effect of secularization more than other religious groups. Table 2 indeed shows very low percentages for the number of Protestants in Western European countries. Most Protestants can be found in Northern Ireland

¹⁰The EVS data set has 23.1 percent missing on this income measure. Following Savelkoul et al. (2011), we added the category of nonreported income to our list of dummy variables, to include all respondents. This category gives similar results as the lower-income groups.

Figure 1
Country-level anti-Muslim sentiment in 22 Western European countries
[Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]



Source: EVS 2008.

(24 percent of population), followed by Iceland (14%), the Netherlands (11%), and Great Britain (10%). To compare, based on the same calculation for the number of Catholics and Orthodox people, the scores are vastly different, with Malta showing 83% of the population being Catholic and attending church monthly or more often, followed by Ireland (54%) and Italy (47%). For the Orthodox countries, Cyprus (54%) and Greece (43%) show similar numbers. These numbers indicate that Protestant countries have indeed secularized much more than the Catholic and Orthodox countries.

Second, in Figure 1, an overview of the average levels of anti-Muslim sentiment for all countries in our model is given. It shows that the countries with most negative scores on anti-Muslim sentiment are also among the most secularized countries and vice versa. In statistical terms, the country-level indicator of secularity is negatively correlated with anti-Muslim sentiment (Pearson's r is $-.741$).

Against this background, we will now present the analysis of two sets of hypotheses that each proposed quite distinct answers to the question of which groups would be the carriers of this anti-Muslim sentiment in these countries and why.

RESULTS

With the analysis of our data set on political/economic and religious values, we intend to test the two hypotheses concerning anti-Muslim sentiment in secularized Western Europe. First, we developed the hypothesis that relates anti-Muslim sentiment to the reinvigoration of Protestantism in secularized countries, with a subhypothesis expecting the strongest opposition among the most orthodox believers. Second, we developed a hypothesis that relates anti-Muslim sentiment to the nonreligious in secularized countries, with the subhypothesis that the strongest aversion against Muslims would be explained by the identification with secular values.

We used ordinary least squares linear multilevel analysis with maximum likelihood estimation to test these hypotheses for two reasons. First and foremost, multilevel analysis makes it possible to simultaneously estimate effects of individual-level variables and of country-level variables. As

our data are structured in such a way that there are two levels, 26,138 individuals with certain characteristics (e.g., age, education, beliefs, attitudes, etc.) are nested in 21 countries with certain characteristics (percentage of Muslims per country, country-level secularity), multilevel analysis is the most suitable option. Second, as our hypotheses aim at investigating how individuals respond differently to differences in country-level religiosity, multilevel analysis is very suitable as it allows for testing cross-level interactions. We estimated different models with a different number of effects. These are effects of the variables at either the individual or at the national level, and we estimated the interactions between these variables. Each of the models also contains so-called random effects. These effects, noted as variances, are estimations of the variability of the mean level of anti-Muslim sentiment in a country, and of the variability of the level of anti-Muslim sentiment at the individual level. Each model that shows lower levels of these two types of variability explains anti-Muslim sentiment a bit better. The results of our analysis are presented in Table 6.

The individual control variables in our models, that is, gender, age, income, and education, result in stable individual effects on anti-Muslim sentiment. The direction of these effects is in accordance with the literature on these variables. Females are slightly less anti-Muslim in their attitude than males, older people tend to score slightly higher on anti-Muslim sentiment, lower income people too (Savelkoul et al. 2011) and education leads to significantly less anti-Muslim attitudes (Hello, Scheepers, and Gijsberts 2002). Also, at the country level, the presence of Muslims gives a stable positive effect in all models. This is different from what we expected, based on the results obtained in earlier studies. However, it is not surprising because in countries where there are hardly any Muslims, we would not expect to find strong anti-Muslim sentiment. Although these control variables show consistent effects, the other variables relevant to our hypotheses show strong significant effects as well and these are not diminished by the control variables. We will discuss the outcomes relevant to our hypotheses next.

As discussed in the operationalization section, there is a negative correlation between anti-Muslim sentiment and country-level secularity. This is also visible in this multilevel model (model 2 in Table 6). Thus, secularized countries on average score less high on anti-Muslim sentiment than religious countries. The question is who in this climate of relative tolerance is most prone to oppose the presence of Muslims. Our first hypothesis stated that in secularized countries, levels of anti-Muslim sentiment will be higher among Protestants (H1a), and that this can be explained by their level of religious orthodoxy (H1b). To begin with the first, our analysis shows no individual effect for Protestantism.¹¹ Inclusion of the random slopes effect for Protestant denomination (model 3) or the interaction effect for Protestants in secularized countries (not significant; see model 4) does not alter this picture. In other words, people with Protestant affiliation do not specifically score high on anti-Muslim sentiment, nor is this altered when living in secularized countries. H1a must therefore be rejected.

Looking at the most orthodox among this group, there is no significant relationship at the individual level. Only in secularized countries there is an interaction effect, showing them to be even more tolerant towards Muslims than less orthodox believers. See Figure 2 for a visual representation¹² of this effect on anti-Muslim sentiment in secularized countries. We thus find that instead of competing with, orthodox believers identify and associate with Muslims, as they probably experience the same pressure from their secular environment. Therefore, H1B must also be rejected. The religious competition theory fails to explain opposition against Muslims in secularized countries.

¹¹Apart from a small effect of Protestant denomination in the sixth model, but this was designed to measure the effects of nonreligiosity and secular values. Models 2, 3, and 4 were designed to measure the effect of Protestant denomination and there it appears that this variable does not influence people's anti-Muslim attitudes.

¹²This representation is based on a calculation developed by Golder (2003) and one of the co-authors of this author.

Table 6: Explaining anti-Islamic attitudes (OLS multilevel analysis, maximum likelihood)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Constant	.00 (.10)	-.01 (.08)	-.00 (.08)	-.03 (.08)	.00 (.08)	.02 (.08)
Country-level secularity	-	-.16*** (.01)	-.17*** (.01)	-.14*** (.01)	-.16*** (.01)	-.14*** (.01)
Muslim presence	-	.09*** (.01)	.09*** (.01)	.09*** (.01)	.09*** (.01)	.10*** (.01)
Gender = male (ref.)	-	0	0	0	0	0
Gender = female	-	-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)
Age	-	.04*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)
Education	-	-.13*** (.01)	-.13*** (.01)	-.13*** (.01)	-.13*** (.01)	-.13*** (.01)
Income >€5,000 (ref.)	-	0	0	0	0	0
Income €2,500–5,000	-	.02* (.01)	.02** (.01)	.02* (.01)	.02* (.01)	.02** (.01)
Income €1,500–2,500	-	.07*** (.01)	.07*** (.01)	.07*** (.01)	.07*** (.01)	.07*** (.01)
Income <€1,500	-	.07*** (.01)	.07*** (.01)	.07*** (.01)	.07*** (.01)	.07*** (.01)
Income nonreported	-	.08*** (.01)	.08*** (.01)	.08*** (.01)	.08*** (.01)	.08*** (.01)
Nonreligious	-	.08*** (.01)	.08*** (.01)	.09*** (.01)	.07*** (.01)	.07*** (.01)
Protestant denomination	-	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.02 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.03*** (.01)
Secular values	-	-.22*** (.01)	-.22*** (.01)	-.22*** (.01)	-.23*** (.01)	-.23*** (.01)
Orthodox beliefs	-	.01 (.01)	.03 (.06)	.04 (.06)	-.00 (.01)	.00 (.01)
Country-level secularity × Protestant denomination	-	-	-	-.00 (.01)	-	-
Country-level secularity × Orthodox beliefs	-	-	-	-.06*** (.01)	-	-
Country-level secularity × Nonreligious	-	-	-	-	-	.08*** (.01)
Country-level secularity × Secular values	-	-	-	-	-	-.03*** (.01)
-2 log likelihood	72956.83	67856.26	67659.96	67588.41	67536.23	67407.49

(Continued)

Table 6 (Continued)

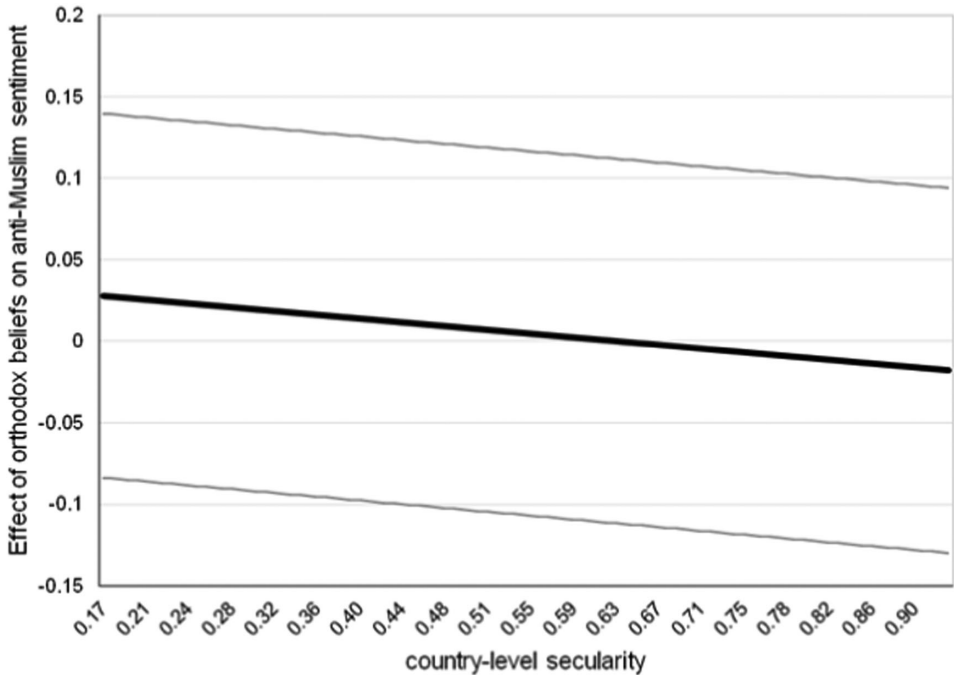
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Variance, individual level	.97	.79	.79	.78	.78	.78
Variance, country level	.044	.022	.024	.024	.027	.026
Variance, Protestant denom.	–	–	.000	.000	–	–
Variance, orthodox beliefs	–	–	.013	.013	–	–
Variance, nonreligious	–	–	–	–	.001	.001
Variance, secular values	–	–	–	–	.017	.016

Source: EVS 2008.

Notes: ~ $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed test for significance). $N = 26,138$ in 21 countries.

Figure 2

Predicted effect of orthodox beliefs on anti-Muslim sentiment in various secularized countries

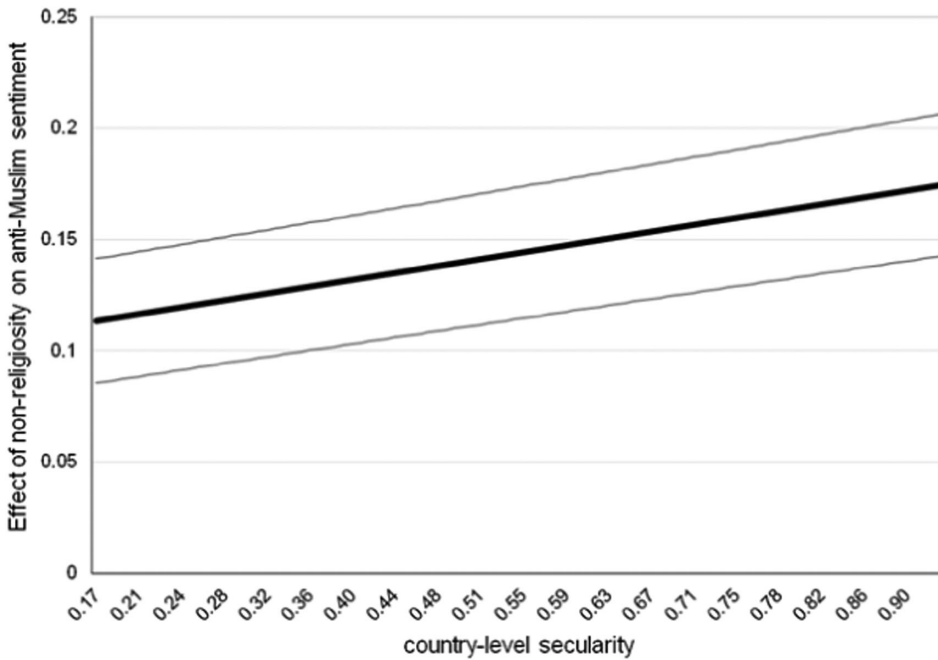


Source: EVS 2008.

Our second hypothesis stated that anti-Muslim sentiment could be expected to be stronger among the nonreligious in secularized countries (H2a) and that this sentiment could be attributed to those who identified with secular values most (H2b). Indeed, nonreligious respondents score higher on anti-Muslim sentiment than religious people (models 2–6 in Table 6). The inclusion of the interaction effect (model 6) shows how the nonreligious are even more intolerant in more secular contexts. Figure 3 (based on model 6) illustrates the effect of nonreligiosity on

Figure 3

Predicted effect of nonreligiosity on anti-Muslim sentiment in various secularized countries



Source: EVS 2008.

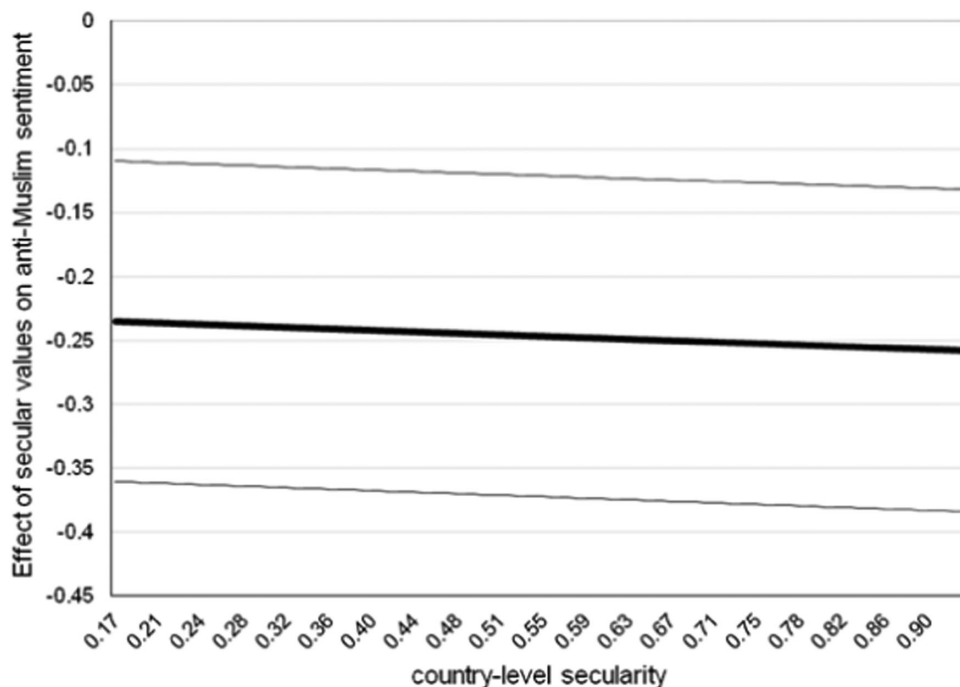
anti-Muslim sentiment in secularized countries. The descending slope shows that the gap between the nonreligious and the religious groups grows wider the more secular a country is. This growing divide between religious and nonreligious in their tolerance towards Muslims is striking. However, it cannot be answered conclusively whether this finding must be attributed to the tolerance of the religious, who are a minority in secularized contexts, or to the intolerance of the nonreligious, who are a majority in those contexts. Still, within the (more tolerant) secularized countries, the nonreligious are more intolerant towards Muslims than the religious, which confirms our expectation as laid out in H2a.

The question is whether this intolerance by the nonreligious can be explained by their identification with secular values, as H2b argues. The answer is no. Models 2–6 all show how people who identify with secular values score lower on anti-Muslim sentiment than those who do not identify as much with secular values. Including the interaction effect does not change this picture at all. If anything, it even strengthens this trend somewhat (model 6). See Figure 4 for a representation of these effects. This implies that people with secular values are on average very tolerant towards Muslims, and that a country’s level of secularization influences this attitude slightly positively, too. For these reasons, we find no support for H2b, which stated that in secularized countries, the more people identify with secular values, the more intolerant they will become towards people with opposing values. This hypothesis must therefore be rejected.

A country’s level of secularization does influence people’s attitude towards Muslims, but not exactly in the way we expected. The opposition towards Muslims neither comes from competition with the orthodox Protestants, nor from people who identify with secular values most, but it does show to divide the religious from the nonreligious groups in secularized societies. We thus find evidence for a polarized situation among these groups around the accommodation of Muslims, which explains the controversies and debate that are so prominent in the more secularized countries.

Figure 4

Predicted effect of secular values on anti-Muslim sentiment in various secularized countries



Source: EVS 2008.

CONCLUSIONS

In secularized Western European countries, anti-Muslim sentiment is widespread. This article was aimed at finding out who constitute its principal carrier groups and why. Following the religious competition thesis, we expected the Protestants to be most intolerant, especially when they are more orthodox. However, we could not find confirmation for this thesis. Instead, our results point out that Protestants who take their faith most seriously are most tolerant towards Muslims. There seems to be some sort of solidarity between these religious groups that struggle to hold on to their religion and their values in a secular context (Fetzer and Soper 2003). An example of this interpretation of our finding might be that many religious believers are frequently found to be particularly welcoming towards refugees from Syria and Iraq in Western Europe.

Based on a discussion of secularization and conflicts around secular values, we also derived a hypothesis that expected the strongest opposition towards Muslims among the nonreligious and that argued that this could be explained by their identification with secular values. The first part of this hypothesis was endorsed, the second part was not. There is a consistent relationship between nonreligiosity and anti-Muslim sentiment. This association is even stronger in secular contexts. In these contexts, there is more polarization between the religious and the nonreligious than in religious contexts (i.e., Ribberink, Achterberg, and Houtman 2013). These two categories are divided on the issue of Muslim integration in secular contexts more than in religious contexts. Consequently, this explains the controversies and debate that seem to be primarily prominent in relatively “tolerant” secular countries. The expectation that identification with secular values would trigger anti-Muslim sentiment among the nonreligious could not be endorsed, however. Although secular liberal values have repeatedly been argued to be the major reason for the

rejection of Islam in Europe, we find this not to be the case (Casanova 2004; Modood 2003; Mudde 2010). This issue requires further investigation.

An extended longitudinal analysis of Western European countries could perhaps establish whether this polarization is a final spasm of public religious conflict in a trend towards a broadly embraced religious indifference or another example of the continuing religious contestation of the “secular truce” (Achterberg et al. 2009; Davie 2007:197). A longitudinal analysis could also assess the extent as to which the growth of secularity in a country creates less or more conflicts over the values that are foundational to liberal secular democracy. One of the cultural conflicts at hand in Western Europe is the popularity of right-wing populists and their attitudes about Muslim and immigrant integration, enlargement of the European Union, and loss of the sacred canopy (Achterberg 2006). Our findings suggest that the relationship between nonreligiosity and extreme voting behavior is stronger when a context has secularized more (compare Arzheimer and Carter 2009; Ribberink, Achterberg, and Houtman 2015).

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional Supporting Information may be found in the online version of this article at the publisher's website:

Appendix: Explaining Muslim Neighbor Attitudes

Table A1: Explaining Muslim neighbor attitudes (linear probability multilevel model, maximum likelihood)