

Article

Religious Racism. Islamophobia and Antisemitism in Italian Society

Alfredo Aletti¹ and Dario Padovan^{2,*}

¹ Department of Humanities Studies, University of Ferrara, via Paradiso 12, Ferrara 44121, Italy; E-Mail: ala@unife.it

² Department of Cultures, Politics and Society, University of Torino, Campus Luigi Einaudi Lungo Dora Siena 100, Torino 10153, Italy

* Author to whom correspondence should be addressed; E-Mail: dario.padovan@unito.it; Tel.: 00390116702604.

Received: 15 July 2013; in revised form: 15 November 2013 / Accepted: 20 November 2013 / Published: 26 November 2013

Abstract: Racism and racial prejudice, considered a relic of obsolete and outdated social systems, is emerging in the depths of ultra-modern Western societies with different characteristics from the past but with a surprising and worrying virulence. These waves of prejudice and racism testify to the many fears that fill the horizons of advanced societies, undermining not only their internal reliability, but also just their democratic settings. This paper presents a critical review of Islamophobia as a racial prejudice, showing that two main definitions are at work: Islamophobia as xeno-racism or linked to the so-called clash of civilizations. Then, it presents the outcomes coming from a Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) survey led among a representative sample of the Italian population ($n = 1,523$) on Antisemitic and Islamophobic attitudes. The cogency and structure of anti-Muslim public discourse and connected mass attitudes, revealed by our investigation, confirm the emergency of these two relevant dimensions of Islamophobia, which claim for a more accurate definition of Islamophobia. Moreover, the distribution of anti-Semitic and Islamophobic attitudes illustrate an interesting overlapping of Islamophobia and Antisemitism which claims that racism is multi-targeted and that there is not so much options between Antisemitism and Islamophobia. Finally, we use three main variables—*anomie*, *ethnocentrism*, and *authoritarianism*—as predictors of Islamophobia and Antisemitism. We tested the strength of these three predictors with the aid of path technique based on multiple regression analysis, which helps to determine the direct and

indirect impacts of certain independent variables on dependent variables in a hypothetical causal system.

Keywords: Islamophobia; Antisemitism; racism; ethnocentrism; Authoritarianism

1. Introduction

Despite what is claimed by fans of neoliberal globalization, societies have not moved to a state of deep and widespread prosperity, free from conflict, hostility, exclusion, and discrimination. Racism and racial prejudice, considered a relic of obsolete and outdated social systems, is emerging in the depths of ultra-modern Western societies with different characteristics from the past but with a surprising and worrying virulence. They testify to the many fears that fill the horizons of advanced societies, undermining not only the internal reliability, but also just their democratic settings. Forms of racial prejudice, such as Antisemitism, reappear in unexpected forms, presenting new and unpredicted characteristics, whereas Islamophobia seems to challenge, by diffusion, transversality, and essentiality, the worst historical anti-Semitic exhibitions of early twentieth century. These waves of racial prejudice that are passing through all Western countries seem to tackle more with cultural and religious signs of otherness than with differences inscribed upon bodily traits. This is the reason why some scholar speaks of “religious-driven hatred and hostility” [1].

The endeavour of this research is to understand the nature of these new cultural and religious racisms, which are irresistibly growing up inside Western societies. In the paper we will use different terms and concepts—such as prejudice, racism, hostility, intolerance, discrimination, and so on—to which we give, for now, similar and interchangeable meaning. We realize that the logics of racism are not easy understandable, but the reasoned choice of appropriate theoretical vocabulary for the definition of plastic, changing, elusive phenomena such as Islamophobia or Antisemitism, on which scholars are still questioning, may be a consequence and not a premise of researches such as that presented here.

This research is based on 1528 interviewed with CATI technique (Computer Assisted Telephone Interview) subjects, which are a representative sample of the Italian population stratified according to age, gender, and residence. The questionnaire used was built by a set of scales divided according to areas covered by our working hypothesis, scales that are part of a well-established empirical tradition. Regarding the items of the scales of Antisemitism and Islamophobia, we have pursued well-beaten paths, especially those related to questions (*items*) on anti-Semitic attitudes that have reached in time a certain maturity and methodological validation, whereas for the anti-Muslim attitudes the situation is less clear and evolved [2]. To these scales we add three others scales pursuing a strategy aimed at the unveiling of a structured model, which takes into account some crucial attitudes of the psycho-sociological dynamics of prejudice. Specifically, we designed three scales aimed at the identification of these attitudes, respectively the authoritarianism, ethnocentrism, and anomie scales.

The frame for the reflection upon data is formed by different sections: in the second we discuss some aspects of the Islamophobia category, trying to identify among scholars two different and latent dimensions of Islamophobia, the first related to the so called xeno-racism the second to idea of clash of

civilizations. In the third one, we present some anti-Muslim discourses spread in Italy in recent years. In the fourth section we discuss on the basis of our data the two dimensions of Islamophobia while in the fifth we present some theoretical aspects related to the empirical overlapping of Antisemitism and Islamophobia. Finally, we present the racist predictors pattern we used to explain the nature of this new racism, its liquidity and its final and unexpected function of social bonding.

2. Some Critical Notes on Islamophobia

In recent literature, the prejudice against Muslims has been called Islamophobia the meaning of which was delineated in 1997 by the *Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia* promoted by Runnymede Trust [3]. The use of that category, and its variations, has not been without criticism and disagreement, more or less legitimate and plausible [4]. This has led us to a short reflection on the general concept of Islamophobia. First of all, a “phobia” is not racism. It is an attitude that is fed more by fears than a willingness to subordinate, racialize, and crystallize the differences and inequalities of the “Other”, as in the case of Antisemitism. Even though it encourages racist attitudes or practices and it is able to change from fear to racism, it is not by definition a racial prejudice. Islamophobia appears in such way as a polysemic concept, embracing too much different phenomena and with porous borders permeable to various kinds of interpretation. The Runnymede Trust’s large definition of Islamophobia risks losing a rigorous perspective of analysis [1,5]. Therefore, the term Islamophobia is to some extent misleading, as it refers primarily to a fear of Islam historically rooted in the Christian-Western culture since the time of the Crusades. As reported by Zafar Iqbal, “Islamophobia is a new word for an old fear”. It is a form of religious intolerance, whose manifestations can be found in historic wars, crusades and genocides spread long over centuries [6].

In reality, these deep feelings of cultural distance often overlap to broader phenomena as, for example, fear of immigrants or foreigners. Moreover, Islamophobia refers to a perception of threat that seems not thus widespread as the belief that the Muslims are instead a closed and biased group. As suggested by Heitmeyer and Zick [7], Islamophobia is a form of group-oriented enmity and a general attitude of rejection of Muslims and all religious symbols and rituals that stem from the Islam. This definition focuses on construction of the enemy, which implies not only a generic ‘phobia’, but a rational construction of a racialized other where symbols and rituals become parts of an unchangeable identity. Here ‘phobia’ becomes a racism, because it transforms the bearer of a perceived threat in a racialized ‘Other’, where there is a strong continuity between religious characters and individual behavior, in which it is thought that the group exercises strong influence on individual will, where differences are crystallized once for all.

Without wishing to belittle or invalidate the concept of Islamophobia as a means to highlight an aggressive and hostile attitudes and discourses against Muslims, we think that is possible to recognize two different patterns of Islamophobia or anti-Muslim racism: one oriented to the model of ‘internal enemy’ and strictly connected with the fear of the proximity of Muslim body [1]; the second oriented to a more general view of Islamic civilization as an ‘external threat’ perpetrating attacks, wars and invasions. In the first case we observe an Islamophobia that seems very close to the so-called cultural or differential racism [8,9]. The lack of phenotypic racial characters of people targeted by this cultural racism makes it moving towards a religious-driven racism very close to Antisemitism. As suggested by

Balibar [9], all the contemporary differential racism can be understood from the formal point of view as generalized Antisemitism. For this reason it is possible to understand the potential theoretical proximity of the terrorist, fanatic, violent, and intolerant Muslim with the dreadful, conspirator, outrageous Jew. Although different and not fully overlapped, racisms fed by these figures share the same classical racial morphology and the same authoritarian and fascist syndrome well known in European history [10].

The difference is that in recent years the new Islamophobia has replaced in the prejudiced social imaginary, as regards distribution, grounding and virulence, the old Antisemitism, to the point where it should be compared to hostility against the Roma, perhaps the most stigmatized and racialized subject around the world. The folk devil represented by the Muslim—and in smaller measure the Jew—is, in this view, a figure of collective anxieties and fears, a scapegoat which nourishes the racist and fascist conviction that only cultural, religious and racial purity can stem the breakdown of social order and the collapse of society [11]. This kind of anti-Muslim prejudice is a process in which Muslims—but also Roma, Blacks, Jews, Asians—are seen as a threat to the purity and order of the nation and its ethnic fabric, a nation imagined as a cohesive community. In this way, the racism we are facing is liquid, transitive, highly mobile, generically oriented against all foreigners. Following the Sivanandan definition, we are witnessing the rising of a new racism, called ‘xeno-racism’ [12]. This anti-foreignness sentiment, this fear of strangers means at the same time the defence and preservation of “our people”, our way of life, our standard of living, and our “race”. “If it is xenophobia, it is—in the way it denigrates people before segregating or expelling them—a xenophobia that bears all the marks of the old racism, except that it is not color-coded. It is xeno-racism: a feature of the Manichaean world of global capitalism, where there are only the rich and the poor—and poverty is the new black. The rhetoric of demonisation is racist, but the politics of exclusion is economic: a prelude to creating a peripatetic underclass of international *Untermenschen*”.

After the September 11, this xeno-racism has been directed against Muslim communities even though they have been settled in Europe for decades, and are European born citizens. They do not merely threaten Europe as the “enemy within” in the war on terror; their adherence to Islamic norms and values threatens the notion of Europeanness itself. Under the guise of patriotism, a wholesale anti-Muslim racism has been unleashed which itself threatens to destroy the fabric of the multicultural society [13]. Undoubtedly specular to this process, some Muslims tend to construct a polarized world-view opposing the Islamic *ummah* and the West, the latter seen to be led by a Jewish-American conspiracy [11].

It is this ubiquity that makes this racism working as a social bond for scared and isolated people inside Western societies, yet not only in these latter. It asks for subordinated assimilation and instantly recognizable inferiorization of Others, putting them on the last rung of an imaginary social ladder. This desire to subordinate the Other is strictly linked with the authoritarianism, which is embracing not only Italian society. Here lies the thrust towards *coercive assimilation*, through the adoption of a number of measures, which include the recasting of citizenship laws according to security considerations; the introduction of compulsory language and civics tests for citizenship applicants; codes of conduct for the trustees of mosques; a cultural code of conduct for Muslim girls and women who, in some areas of Europe, will be forbidden to wear the hijab in state schools and other state institutions. However, all these obligations are inscribed in the frame of an insurgent

authoritarianism and European ethno-nationalism. As has been stressed by different authors, all modern nation-states seek to reduce differences to a majoritarian conceived unity. In this way majorities can feel 'possessive about the country for democratic, historical and other reasons and insist that the definition of national identity should reflect their privileged status. The implication we draw from this concern is that the inclusion of minorities within nation states must necessarily *negotiate* a potentially coercive "othering" tendency [14] (see also [15]).

The second model of anti-Muslim racism is something new. This kind of racism not only blames the single Muslim or the single domestic settled community, the single fundamentalist who lives next door, the single body which bears intolerable cultural and religious symbols (flags, graves, hijab), but the entire civilization which produced and shaped him. Is this generalization so decisive at the point to render Islamophobia a unique and different form of racism quite unlike that of familiar racialization of Roma, Blacks, Jews, or Asians? Are fears leading to Islam-phobia really so different from those driving to Jew-phobia or Roma-phobia? As suggested by Theo Goldberg, 'Islam is taken in the dominant European imaginary to represent a collection of lacks: of freedom; of a disposition of scientific inquiry; of civility and manners; of love of life; of human worth; of equal respect for women and gay people' ([10], p. 345). The guilty party here is the Muslim civilization, which is producing and reproducing anomic and anonymous violent guys, broadly global networked to tear up the social fabric of Western democratic societies. The Islam is bringing inside Europe death, on the fear of which, as pointed out in a very brilliant way by Goldberg, Hobbes so heavily rested the motivation to (Euro-) modernity's social contract. Not individual Muslims, not even Muslim communities, but the collective Muslim, his ancestry civilization and legacy, has come to represent the threat of death. Islam is become the monster of our times, our collective nightmare, the paranoia of Europe's cultural demise, of European integrity. In this view Islam appears as the epitome of traditionalism, pre-modernism, the enemy of modernization and globalizing democracy, the bearer of tyranny, despotism, and absolutism. From here, the unavailability of the clash between Western and Islam. In this perspective, as noted by Iqbal, first *Orientalism* appeared as a fruitful perspective to study Islam and its relations with other civilizations [6]. Then, in the same wake, came Huntington's thesis that a new cold war would take place not on the basis of economics or politics, but based upon culture and civilization marked by epistemic orders and religions.

3. Public Anti-Muslim Discourse: Some Evidence from Italian Case

The Italian case presents both these perspectives. Undoubtedly, the Italian case appears in certain ways anomalous if compared to the rest of Western Europe. The specificity of Italian Muslims comes from the great number of their countries of origin, the speed of the settlement, their scarce or sporadic visibility in public space, the fragmentation of their circles, and the weakness of their representativeness in front of public institutions [16,17], in spite of their significant presence being equal to 2% of total population.

The reasons for the quick rise of anti-Muslim public speaking considering the early stages of Arab-Islamic immigration are manifold [17,18]. The issue of immigration in Italy faces a historic period of profound changes in social, economic, and politics. The early 90s witnessed the collapse of

the old political system and the emergence of new political forces—such as the Northern League and Forza Italia—whose populist nature has long been analyzed and studied [19–22].

The racist party the Northern League was the key carrier of explicitly anti-immigrants and anti-Muslim positions, promoting both public discourses and national and local governance practices [20]. In his discussion of the Italian variant of populism, Laclau notes that the Northern League has moved increasingly into a ‘theory of the enemy’ endorsing the idea that if a radical change had to happen the social field had to be split in two [23].

Over time, the Islamophobia of Northern League gained radical forms of mobilization against the construction of Mosques in some major cities of the northern regions in which are concentrated the majority of immigrants. According to some observers, the turning point occurred in a small town near Milan, where the granting of land for the construction of buildings to be used as a place of worship for the Islamic community unleashed an Islamophobic campaign fiercely reaching extremes, including the invitation to sprinkle the ground with the urine of ‘Padanian’ pork. The mobilization against the mosques by the Northern League is undoubtedly a paradigm in building the “internal enemy” and to endorse logic of social antagonism. The partial, but significant support of local citizens is the outcome of this emphasis on foreignness.

The legitimacy of an anti-Muslim public discourse aimed at building the internal enemy has found support from some influential intellectuals, opinion-makers and members of the Catholic clergy [24–27]. After September 11, the most widely read and important Italian newspaper, *Corriere della Sera*, published a long article by the noted novelist Oriana Fallaci, entitled ‘The anger and the pride’. The article is an openly racist invective against Muslims (Muslims ‘breed like rats’, ‘we have no place for muezzins, for minarets, for false teetotallers, for their fucking Middle Ages, for their fucking chador’), where she complains the softness of the West in the confrontation with Islam portrayed as the contemporary absolute evil, a new Nazi-fascism (see [24]).

In 2001, she published a book with the same title of the article [28]. Translated into major languages, it became a sensational bestseller, with more than one million copies sold, reflecting a creeping and a growing consensus in public opinion toward the xenophobic and anti-Muslim arguments developed by Fallaci. Her next book, also, published in 2004 and entitled ‘The Force of Reason’, became a bestseller. Confirming her former extremist thesis she evokes the risk that the higher birth-rate of Muslim immigrants can transform Europe in ‘Eur Arabia’ [29]. In 2006, a few months before her death, Oriana Fallaci was interviewed by *The New Yorker*, an event that contributes to international resonance to her anti-Muslim fundamentalism, stressing the comparison of Islam with Nazism and Fascism, the impossibility of dialogue and urging destruction of a mosque:

‘They want to build damn mosques everywhere.’ She spoke of a new mosque and Islamic center planned for Colle di Val d’Elsa, near Siena. She vowed that it would not remain standing. “If I’m alive, I will go to my friends in Carrara—you know, where there is the marble. They are all anarchists. With them, I take the explosives. I make you jump in the air. I blow it up! With the anarchists of Carrara. I do not want to see this mosque—it’s very near my house in Tuscany. I do not want to see a twenty-four-meter minaret in the landscape of Giotto. When I cannot even wear a cross or carry a Bible in their country! So I BLOW IT UP!” [30].

A special case concerns the political scientist Giovanni Sartori, professor emeritus at the Columbia University in New York and at the University of Florence, columnist for the *Corriere della Sera* and

intellectual of the center-left. His essay 'Pluralism, multiculturalism and foreign', published in 2000 [31], shows an unambiguous reasoning that is configured as an explicit model of 'academic Islamophobia' [26]. On the one hand he proposes the essentialist representation of the Islamic religion as dogmatic, intolerant and marked by fanaticism; on the other hand, he focuses on the compatibility of Islamic immigrants to our 'cultural tradition'. In a passage of the essay he shows this qualitative leap that opens up a very problematic horizon about the possible integration:

'I'm wrong, for example, to argue that the immigrant Muslim is for us the farthest, the most alien and therefore the most difficult to integrate? If I'm wrong no one has shown me it. But not even I mistake in claiming that Muslim immigrants are fundamentalists at all' (cited in [26]).

The invectives of Fallaci and the erudite reflections of Sartori serve up to the Italian conservative intellectual and political class a significant Islamophobic trend, reinforcing the political logic of building the internal enemy. Pulled by this rhetoric, a larger Islamophobic vision takes hold in Italian racist landscape, investing the entire Islamic civilization. The first case regards Magdi Allam, a Muslim who recently converted to the Catholic faith with much fanfare, for years deputy director of *Corriere della Sera* and influential commentator on Islamic issues. In an article published in 2005, before his conversion, entitled 'Mosque-mania: need a stop', he calls, by virtue of his being a secular Muslim, for the suspension of the construction of mosques as they 'generate the brainwashing that turns human people into death's robots' [32]. The narrative used sustains the stereotype of the Muslim potential terrorist and of the Imam as a preacher of hate towards the West. This discourse is clearly oriented against the Islamic fundamentalism that provides for 'well-founded' fear that unites honest Muslims and Italians'.

The second one regards Marcello Pera, another well-known intellectual who moved from philosophical relativism to the conservatism by election in Italian Parliament with Berlusconi's party, Forza Italia. He published, in February 2006, a Manifesto called 'For the West, Force of Civilization' which, in total harmony with the clash of civilizations paradigm emphasizes the spiritual and moral crisis of the West incapable of responding to the challenge of terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism and 'the commitment to reaffirm the value of Western civilization as a source of universal and inalienable principles, contrasting in the name of a common historical and cultural tradition, any attempt to build a Europe alternative or opposed to the United States' [33].

This is still the case of an intransigent rhetoric defending Western values against Islam, only shown in its fundamental dimensions, and interweaving both with the exaltation of Christian civilization and the negative image of the Italian left guilty of hating our civilization and handing it over to Islam, of being lenient with countries and terrorist groups and of being in favor of multiculturalism. Here, the image stemming from these neo-conservative positions is that of the global threat, of the invasion perpetrated by the terrifying world of Islam. These examples of intellectualism clearly hostile to Islam and its embodiment in the Muslim migrants pose a significant question: the formalization of a model of thought that nourishes a prejudiced common sense targeted against Islamic otherness and multicultural society (see also [24]). What unites these various interventions, before and after September 11, is an a-critical view of Islam seen as a single monolith, incompatible with the principles of democracy and freedom, very close to the differentialist thesis of the Samuel Huntington's clash of civilizations. The question is whether this representation in Italian public opinion has had a consensus,

or if there are less hostile views to Islamic civilization than forms of prejudice connected to the proximity and visibility of Muslim migrants.

4. The Two Latent Dimensions of Islamophobia

Data collected by the survey show that the double dimension of Islamophobia above mentioned is well rooted. In fact the distribution of frequencies among the single items of Islamophobia scale reveals this double nature of anti-Muslim prejudice (Table 1): on the one hand, we note that public opinion is scared by the Muslim in ‘flesh and blood’; on the other hand, people feel threatened by an entire and historical civilization. For the largest part of the sample, Muslims are intolerant, fanatical, anti-modernist, strongly closed in themselves, with a clear and powerful identity, scarcely loyal to the country in which they live, barely committed against terrorism. From the other side, Muslims are seen under the light—negative or positive—of their civilization, of the weight of culture and intellectual and scientific life in European tradition.

Table 1. Item frequencies of Islamophobia Scale.

| | False | Probably False | Probably True | True | Tot. |
|--|-------|----------------|---------------|-------|------|
| Muslims are not very tolerant | 19.41 | 11.05 | 21.40 | 48.14 | 100 |
| Islam is a religion too traditional unable to adapt to these times | 16.68 | 9.11 | 21.34 | 52.88 | 100 |
| Muslims prefer to associate with members of their group in isolation from other | 18.95 | 9.08 | 21.30 | 50.67 | 100 |
| Muslims are more loyal to their country of origin than to the country in which they live | 14.35 | 8.76 | 19.43 | 57.45 | 100 |
| Islamic religious leaders are doing too little to fight terrorism | 11.86 | 7.43 | 22.72 | 57.99 | 100 |
| Islam is a threat to Christian civilization | 47.61 | 10.54 | 15.82 | 26.04 | 100 |
| Islam is a religion that has many values in common with our | 33.28 | 14.60 | 20.39 | 31.72 | 100 |
| European culture is superior to Islamic culture | 54.65 | 11.03 | 14.03 | 20.29 | 100 |
| It's right that we build places of prayer for Muslims | 22.52 | 4.82 | 12.80 | 59.85 | 100 |
| The contribution of Islamic intellectuals to European culture was important | 16.30 | 10.38 | 23.86 | 49.46 | 100 |

In this double perspective, some data illustrate how widespread is the typical representation of Muslim as a subject that expresses great distance from our lifestyles and values. For example, the closure of Islamic communities and their loyalty to the country of origin is a tangible sign of the plausibility of the discourse on the difficulty of integrating Islamic immigrants to Italian society.

Some others illustrate that Islam considered in its overall dimension of civilization arouses more positive feelings. In fact, there is a polarization between two positions: one that does not feel threatened by the Islamic civilization, believes that Islamic culture was important for European culture and, above all, that it is not inferior to ours and is able to convey values similar to the ourselves; vice

versa, a second position expresses a high level of incompatibility and the perceived threat of Islamic civilization. Moreover, positions regarding the construction of mosques confirm this ambivalence. Only a clear minority expresses its opposition to the Mosques building, outcomes that show how protests and mobilizations manipulated by the Northern League involve only a livid minority. This distinction is confirmed by the factorial analysis of the Islamophobia scale, which shows two separate factors in line with what is stated on the analysis of frequencies of individual items¹ (Table 2). The first dimension or indicator consists of those items related to the aforementioned characteristics of closeness, intolerance, traditionalism, and anti-modernism holding hostile attitudes towards Muslims considered a homogeneous group negatively defined, while the second factor evokes feelings regarding Islamic culture and religion in its generality, belief that results in less prejudice than the previous one. The items forming these two separate dimensions are quite homogeneous, except perhaps for two sentences that might be deemed dissimilar: item 2 (*Islam is a religion too traditional unable to adapt to these times*), and item 9 (*It's right that we build places of prayer for Muslims*). The explanation for this apparent discrepancy may be of both a statistical and cognitive nature. From a statistical perspective, if we remove those two items, outcomes of factor analysis are the same, namely the significance of the two groups does not change. On the cognitive level, we can say that respondents may have understood the questions in the same direction as here emphasized. The charge of conservatism against Muslims could be used as the explanation for certain events associated with patriarchal customs (such as the killing of young women who wanted to marry an Italian guy) or with external signs brought by Muslim people such as the Hijab of Muslim women. In this view, conservatism does not refer to an abstract dimension but to the concreteness of everyday behavior of subjects considered Muslims. The item on mosques is perhaps one of the most discussed in literature. The substantial agreement of the sample with the sentence is interesting because it shows a degree of religious tolerance likely depending on the fact that Islam is a legitimate monotheistic religion with a long history. Here, we don't find discomfort for the building of a mosque, but the adherence to a principle of religious freedom, which is well adapted to the second dimension of Islamophobia that we detected.

Here the problem is to understand the nature of this polarization, which shows also diverging rates of hostility: the first dimension records more hostility than the second one. We can affirm that the first indicator is more able to represent attitudes against Muslims as 'internal enemy or threat'. The second indicator recognizes Islam as an "external and threaten enemy" and it is less shared by Italian public opinion. The first dimension appears strongly supported by the negative image of Muslim individuals and communities as visible elements bearing an irreducible cultural distance; conversely, when Islam is considered in its cultural and religious dimension that image weakens. We can say that Islam in its version of the "clash of civilizations" breaches the conservative political side, which in turn shows preference toward authoritarian and ethnocentric attitudes that are important in shaping the racial prejudice.

¹ The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy is large 0.889, and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is 0.000. These results indicate that is reasonable to proceed with factor analysis.

Table 2. Factor Loading for anti-Muslim Attitude Scale *.

| | Factor 1 | Factor 2 |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|
| The Muslims are not very tolerant | 0.63458 | |
| Islam is a religion too traditional unable to adapt to these times | 0.62955 | |
| Muslims prefer to associate with members of their group in isolation from other | 0.63217 | |
| Muslims are more loyal to their country of origin than to the country in which they live | 0.63911 | |
| Islamic religious leaders are too little to fight terrorism | 0.66359 | |
| Islam is a threat to Christian civilization | | 0.57038 |
| Islam is a religion that has many values in common with our European culture is superior to Islamic culture | | 0.63287 |
| It's right that we build places of prayer for Muslims | | 0.51231 |
| The contribution of Islamic intellectuals to European culture it was important | | 0.64210 |
| | | 0.71217 |

* (Cronbach Coefficient Alpha: factor 1: 0.70; factor 2: 0.67).

The responses (Table 3) were then reclassified on four classes or scores through a uniform system of allocation of points in which higher scores were expressing Islamophobia. This re-classification has allowed us to identify four clusters of attitudes (see for another interesting classification [34]):

- (1) tolerant
- (2) indifferent/neutral
- (3) loyal with prejudice
- (4) intolerant

These categories try to capture the different and often ambivalent feelings, which are at work among people. We use the term 'tolerant' in a way very close to Michael Walzer [35]. For him, tolerant people are those who have no difficulty making room for men and women whose beliefs they do not accept, nor try to imitate their practices; people living with otherness whose presence in the world they approve of, but which still remains an element far from their experience. Among tolerant, we include of course even those who enthusiastically endorse the differences we might call 'xenophile'. Tolerants are mainly people with a good level of education and center/left position.

The terms indifferent/neutral combine two types of social distance identified by Bogardus [36]. The pattern of indifference and neutrality is based on the absence of social contacts with members of other groups, on a permanent separation from those racial groups that they do not understand, on the lack of (positive or negative) emotional reactions. No new experience can change their alleged neutrality and indifference to the other groups. Here, people with higher education level and positioned at the center/left of the political spectrum are more likely neutral.

The loyalist model comes from a strong sense of loyalty to the belonging "racial" community, which often hides the vices and defects of the members of their same group, thus, creating an immutable social distance [36]. A complex of overestimated superiority leads many people to attitudes of superiority towards the less fortunate races. Behaviors of prejudiced paternalism characterize this type of person, especially if their social status is not threatened by the "inferior races". Here we

may note that high, medium, and low levels of education are equally represented, while center-right positions are generally more widespread than the center-left.

The intolerant model comes from a combination of different but homogeneous attitudes: a sense of superiority; the belief that the other races are intrinsically different and alien; the idea of having an exclusive right in certain areas of privilege and advantage, and the fear and suspicion of the subordinate races full of projects in order to weaken the prerogatives of the dominant race [37]. Here people with lower education level and positioned at the center/right are more likely intolerant.

Table 3. Frequencies level of Hostility against Islamics (%).

| | |
|----------------------|--------|
| Tolerant | 4.77 |
| Indifferent/neutral | 16.36 |
| Loyal with prejudice | 40.75 |
| Intolerant | 38.12 |
| Total | 100.00 |

At the general level, we may assert from the point of view of main socio-demographic variables (age, gender, cultural capital, and class) that older people have more widespread negative attitudes than younger ones, and education plays an important role: the lower the cultural capital is, the more often the attitude is negative; gender is not so meaningful, while anti-Muslim feelings are equally distributed among all social classes. In general a greater openness to Islam by young and well-educated people is confirmed.

A particular importance regards the influence exerted by political affiliation on racial prejudice. People that express an orientation toward the center/left are more tolerant than those oriented to the center/right. These latter confirm their hostility toward both the internal dimension of threat and the external one connected with the “clash of civilization” syndrome. However it should be noted that an important part of the center-left political orientation (34% of sample) agrees intolerant attitude concerning the “internal threat” indicator, although it is tempered by a greater openness on the second indicator.

5. The Overlapping between Islamophobia and Antisemitism

Our idea is that we are facing a racism that changes easily its targets reproducing a well-known morphology. It is confirmed by the fact that the 45% of the sample cultivates simultaneously prejudice against Muslims and Jews. This idea pays a tribute to Robert Fine argument sustaining that recently there has been a “methodological separatism” in the field of racial and ethnic studies, which split the study of Islamophobia, Antisemitism, and other kind of racisms in different and often oppositional areas [38]. It is a remarkable outcome of our survey the identification of a strong connection between these two kinds of racism, as noted in other researches [39]. Meer and Modood argue that there are important analogies in the racial content of Antisemitism and anti-Muslim sentiment or Islamophobia [14,40]. A comparison of Antisemitism and anti-Muslim sentiment could promise novel insights not only into our understanding of both, but also into the interpretation of the widely racialized dynamics which embrace our multicultural societies. This strong similarity and overlapping of Antisemitism and Islamophobia (see Table 4) should be explained by the plastic nature of the new racism. Jews and

Muslims, although with differing percentages, are targets of a single racial prejudice, characterized by indifference to its victims and an alarming transitive property that makes it move easily from one target to another. We face the emergence of a public racist discourse that sees the bearer of different symbols and beliefs, the “otherwise” Italian or European, a threat for the majority cultural homogeneity and for the sense of group position. Almost 45% of our sample expresses attitudes against Jews and Muslims, while only 15% is tolerant. Furthermore the 65% of those who show anti-Muslim feelings are at the same time anti-Semitic, while 91% of those who show anti-Semitic attitudes are at the same time anti-Muslim.

Table 4. Frequencies overlapping hostility against Jews and Muslims.

| | Frequencies | % |
|---------------------------|-------------|--------|
| Pro Jews, Pro Muslims | 223 | 14.66 |
| Against Jews, Pro Muslims | 99 | 6.47 |
| Pro Jews, Against Muslims | 520 | 34.12 |
| Against Jews and Muslims | 681 | 44.75 |
| Total | 1523 | 100.00 |

One might call this phenomenon an ‘indiscriminate discrimination’ or a ‘systemic and generalized racism’ or again as we have, ‘liquid racism’. The overlap between the two forms of prejudice suggests some thoughts. On the one hand it shows that, at least in this country, prejudice and racism unfolds along similar and symmetrical models. The two groups are perceived hostile based on similar characters. Both groups are considered closed, little tolerant, loyal to foreign countries, especially traditionalist and immutable. Of course, nobody denies them a place to pray, just as their contribution to European culture it is not in discussion. But both are undergoing a process of essentialization or racialization. Secondly, one can see that the two groups are not perceived as actors of a conflict where one or the other may have reasons on their side to justify their mutual animosity. Unlike those who think that judgments on the two groups are fuelled by polarized ideologies—something that is confirmed for 40% of the sample and probably for reasons that go beyond the ideological tensions produced by the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis—60% expresses similar opinions on both groups.

It may be noted here that in history waves of racism occur which change their target from one group to another. Antisemitism is a historical form of racism so elaborate that it constitutes a model for the racialization of other groups. Racism against Muslims shares the same pattern of anti-Jewish racism, as it would appear that anti-Romaism, which is becoming the prevalent racism, spread on the basis of a model once more similar to that forged by Antisemitism.

Finally, as noted by some anthropologists, Jews and Muslims share, in the light of detractors, some dystonic and opposing attitudes towards globalizing modernization, such as preferences for food processed on the basis of principles of worship, for religious and traditional garments, for more or less esoteric and secret traditions, and the fact of being monotheistic religions in competition with Christianity. All aspects that cast over the two groups, at least in this country, a shadow of prejudice and vilification.

6. Predictors for Antisemitism and Islamophobia

In the social-psychological and sociological research different prediction models of racism are used. Dekker e van der Noll [5] used for example as a predicting model of prejudicial attitudes a combination of three processes: direct contact, socialization and attitudes' self-generation through inference processes (see also [41]). In the case of Zick, Küpper and Wolf [42], the focus was on the Group-focused Enmity syndrome and the predictors were six different elements: anti-immigrant attitudes, Antisemitism, anti-Muslim attitudes, racism, sexism, and prejudice towards homosexual persons.

Differently from these researches, we tested a more classical model based on ideological dimensions, which however entail behavior and practices. Our research design was based from the outset on the idea that the intolerant conduct, in this case against Muslims and Jews, is dependent on other components of the system of beliefs, attitudes and practices of social actors. This viewpoint was first tested a high level of reflection and empirical research by Adorno, Levinson and colleagues in the famous research on authoritarian personality. Usually, this system of ideas is called ideology, but this term, since its coinage, has changed over time gaining multiple and divergent meanings. Some scholars, reviewing the dimensions of ideology, gave to the concept a twist of cognitive nature that makes it a more useful and high rank research tool. A cognitive angle was also present in the research of Adorno and colleagues: in the Introduction it is said that "ideology is the term used in this volume in the common meaning in current literature, under which it designates an organization of opinions, attitudes and values a way of thinking about man and society" ([43], p. 18). But their interest was primarily oriented to explaining the correlations between ideology and individual personality, whereas the latter factor mediates the sociological influences on ideology and attitudes. Some components of the ideology that influence the racist views and attitudes have long been believed by social scientists to be those of ethnocentrism and authoritarianism. To these two predictors we have added one further explanatory variable, used repeatedly in research on racism, but more structural and situational, which we call anomie.

According with these underlying assumptions, research shows that racism is the result of three large collective phenomena or conditions that mark Italian society:

- A widespread ethnocentrism and nationalism, which seems to feed a strong national or regional or ethnic identity is present in a large proportion of respondents. We argue that the ethno-national identity is a circumstance that favors the occurrence of prejudice. At the same time and in a recursive or circular logic, the anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim prejudice contributes to national unity in a classical dynamic based on the identification of a threatening out-group.

A widespread authoritarianism, which is a reaction to anxieties and insecurities both individual and collective. Under conditions of particular uncertainty and social fragmentation, authoritarianism becomes a flight "from freedom" and from the individual and collective responsibility; it crystallizes in punitive attitudes and an obsessive request for compliance. In the same recursive perspective first outlined, authoritarianism enter into a relationship of "reciprocal causality" with prejudice, making this latter a functional substitute for the social and juridical covenant that should ensure social harmony and social cohesion [44]. Racism is, thus, not only the source for new social ties, but also a tool to deal with the crisis of the rule of law. Here lies the thrust for the drive towards assimilation.

- A widespread situation of anomie, or social uncertainty and distrust, which feeds the prejudice and produces the conditions for racism, is the starting point for new forms of social solidarity, backed now on an aggressive but short-lived ethno-racial identity. In this case we have split up anomie in two diverging dimensions: distrust of the future and distrust of society, alluding the former to a condition of complete uncertainty toward the near upcoming individual and familiar condition; the latter referring to a contingent situation of absence of social supports and solidarity. In all three cases there is clear evidence that the lower the cultural capital and social status, the stronger the authoritarian, ethnocentric and distrust attitudes.

In our research we tested the strength of these three predictors (Authoritarianism, Ethnocentrism, and Anomie), made from its scales, with the aid of path technique based on multiple regression analysis which helps to determine the direct and indirect impacts of certain independent variables on dependent variables in a hypothetical causal system. From the multiple regressions, coefficients are obtained that indicate the strength of this effect, called beta coefficients.

Authoritarianism and ethnocentrism, which are highly correlated (+0.61), explain clearly the intolerance toward Muslims and Jews. The more one is authoritarian and ethnocentric, the greater is one's level of intolerance towards Muslims and Jews (β coefficient = 0.27 and β = 0.28). In this model, the distrust of the future is not in a significant causal relationship with intolerance because it is mediated by the other two indicators, with which it is strongly correlated: +0.45 with authoritarianism and +0.41 with ethnocentrism.

From the presentation of the various diagrams showing the direct and indirect effects of the three main predicting variables of the model we can make some evaluations. First, the authoritarian attitude proves to be a decisive factor in shaping negative opinion of Jews and Muslims, in line with several other research studies. Even ethnocentrism reinforces the injury due to the high correlation between these two variables. Undoubtedly, expressing opinions of an authoritarian model easily connects to the emergence of attitudes that favor a positive vision of subjects' own hegemonic group identity. In the sociological dialectic between in-groups and out-groups, such attitudes are often the result of a series of historically specific social circumstances, which increase the flow. In other words, the relationship between authoritarianism, ethnocentrism, intolerance, and prejudice against Muslims and Jews should not lead us to think in terms of specific personality, but rather to reflect on the current social and economic situation of our society and how it promotes the emergence of these attitudes, especially in those people that belong to the right of the political spectrum. Anomie has no direct effect on intolerance, it is nevertheless a condition that feeds an authoritarian and ethnocentric perspective, which provides "good reasons" and structural conditions for the occurrence of prejudice and racism. In essence, anomie acts as carrier of resentment that feeds on the legitimacy of authoritarian and ethnocentric reasons.

It is however important to note (Figures 1 and 2) that the two predictors considered—authoritarianism and ethnocentrism—act on prejudice against Jews and Muslims in a different, if not completely opposite manner. In the case of Antisemitism, authoritarianism turns out to be less important than ethnocentrism, thus revealing a nationalist prejudice fed by a special sense of irreducible distance between cultures. In the case of Islamophobia, authoritarianism prevails instead in the causal relation, confirming, as argued earlier, that prejudice against Muslims is more closely linked to a sense of social

disorder, to the feeling that people of Islam religion are in themselves threatening or dangerous. Authoritarianism is a syndrome embraced especially by the lower class. It is likely that the social frustration generates growing demands for conformity, justicialism, hierarchy and control of outsiders. Authoritarians claim for a well-ordered society where “others”, here identified with Muslims, must occupied their fated social position avoiding any voice for rights. Ethnocentric people feel Jews as high-level competitors bearing privileges naturally stemming from ethno-national origin and belonging. Insofar as Muslims are seen as a threat of natural social order and so are matter of hierarchy, Jews are felt as competitors belonging to another but privileged ethnic minority and so are matter of national loyalty.

Figure 1. Path between Authoritarianism, Ethnocentrism, Distrust in the future and Intolerance towards Jews (R-square = 0.18).

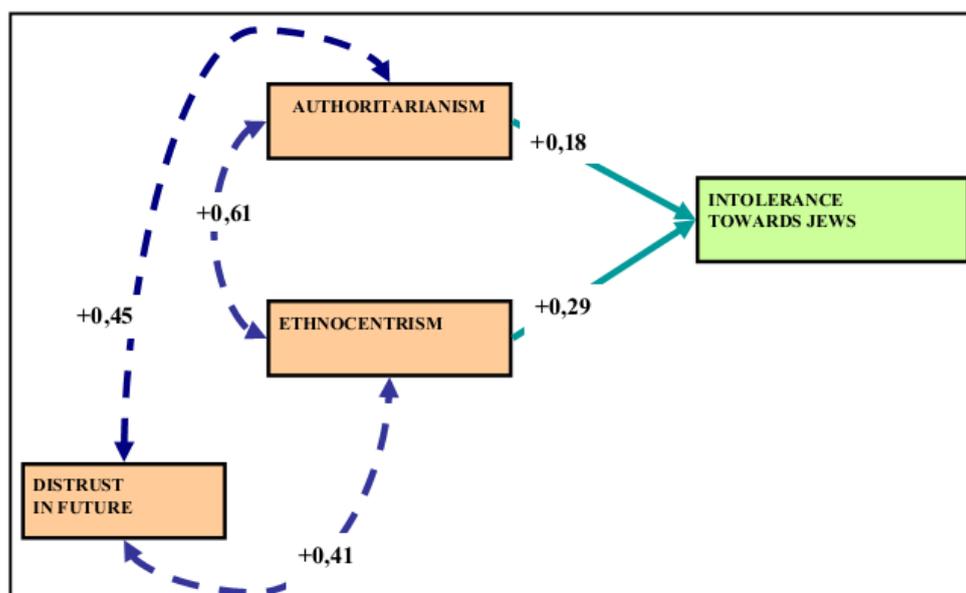
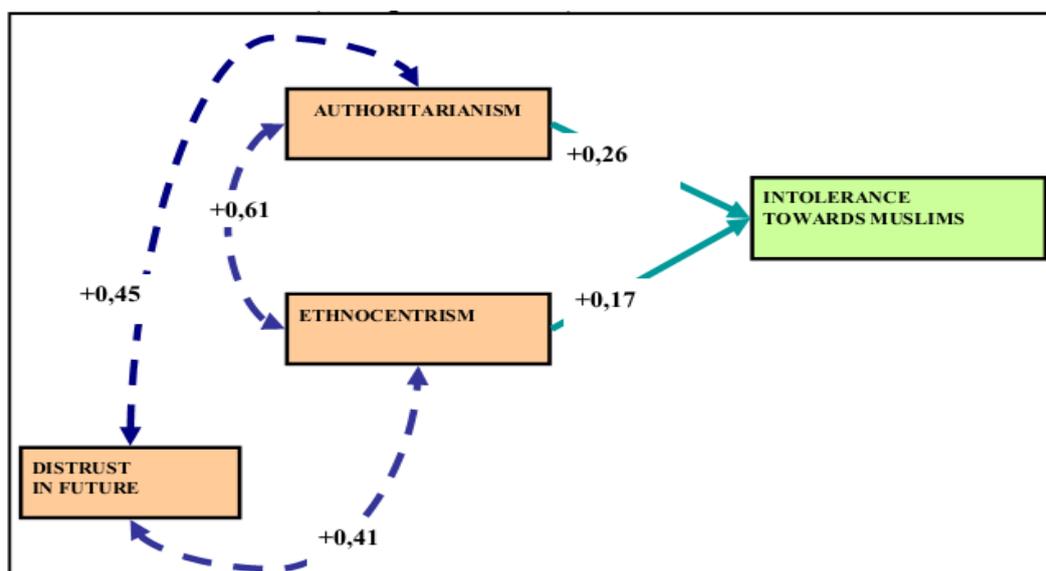


Figure 2. Path between Authoritarianism, Ethnocentrism, Distrust in the future and Intolerance towards Muslims (R-square = 0.15).



7. Conclusions

The research here summarized casts a glance on the pervasiveness of prejudice in Italy, a phenomenon that is often underestimated, if not entirely denied. The firm denial that racist attitudes exist poses a double problem: on the one hand, this denial takes the form of self-exculpatory behaviours considered limited to minority racially or ideologically extreme situations that may also justify certain attitudes, and second, that denial is a proper strategy which, by denying the evidence of harmful policies, speeches, statements, does not openly violate the order of public discourse, which obviously is not racist. The latter strategy generalizes the classical assertion that individuals use to excuse themselves from guilt: ‘I’m no racist, but...’, and surreptitiously undermines the anti-racist public discourse.

This research illuminates a reality consisting of deep-rooted and pervasive hostile attitudes targeted both toward minorities such as Jews, which we believed had vanished from the ideological horizon of the citizens of democratic societies, or to new internal enemies that can be identified in Muslims. These prejudices have grown slowly over the time, scarcely contrasted, supported by coarse, but clear, discourses and ideologies, diffused by media and by, so called, “political entrepreneurs of racism”. Furthermore, this trend has grown on the basis of widespread authoritarianism, ethnocentrism, and social distrust, which mark these collectivities expressing fear of the future and living (or feeling) a deeply socio-economic uncertainty. Feelings of fear and distrust find in racism and prejudice a “safety valve”, especially among popular classes, and people with scarce cultural resources, who are more vulnerable facing a generalized political and economic crisis. The collected data show some further points:

- In the horizon of the new racism Antisemitism has to be understood as racism, perhaps as the archetypal form of the new differentialist racism.
- Antisemitism and Islamophobia have to be considered as the same family of racial prejudices. Obviously different in some aspects, they however share a long sequence of similarities regarding the folkways evoked and the discourses subtly diffused.
- Behind the term Islamophobia are two different but correlated dimensions, the first leading to a “phobia” which easily transforms into racism discriminating against Muslim individuals and communities, the second leading to a hostility against Islam as civilization which is older in its features.
- Racism is becoming not only a widespread but disorganized and confused arrangement of prejudicial attitudes. It is becoming something more structured, something that we can call a social bonding in order to substitute different forms of social organization such as the rule of law or class solidarity and cohesion.

The data here commented on ask unavoidable questions mainly to anti-racist people, because they show how anti-racism, mainly because of an irresistible trend of ideological reproduction, is almost totally ineffective in curbing racism. The current anti-racism has become a pale replica of the great mobilization and critical skills that marked the years immediately following World War II, when the racism to be fought was much more evident on both the ideological and political sides, consisting of the extermination Jews, Gypsies, and other minorities. The current racism that hides behind phenomena such as social insecurity, or at the back of discourses such as the authenticity of cultures

and their natural hierarchies, is very different from the explicit racism of the early twentieth century, but it is quickly becoming a common sense, which is already part of the public discourse. To combat it we need thin and insightful tools, able to deconstruct the self-evident argument as to who is racist and to pierce the veil of ignorance that envelops the racists—“by choice” and “by chance”—and the anti-racists who want to fight them. More appropriate then, would be a more courageous and compelling critique of the political ideologies and institutional practices that often fuel hostility.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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