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"Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the Blessed Hope, calling for us to cut our ties with the world and build ourselves on this One who will soon appear. He is our hope—a Blessed Hope enabling us to rise above our times and fix our gaze upon Him." Tozer

Strasbourg: Capital of the EU and "The Future of Europe"

by Giulio Meotti

January 17, 2019 at 6:00 am

<https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org>

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– *In October, from Strasbourg, the European Court of Human Rights upheld the shameful conviction of an Austrian woman for what the court called an "abusive attack on the Prophet of Islam" -- just like that, in a stroke, accepting and legitimizing Islam's blasphemy laws. It was, as one news analyst, born in Iran, took note, "the day free speech died in Europe."*

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According to the official website of Strasbourg, France, the city "embodies the fundamental values of Europe". But if the current trend continues, these values will be the opposite of those, such as freedom of expression, on which Europe was founded. Pictured: The Cathedral of Our Lady of Strasbourg, one of Europe's most famous Christian sites. (Image source: Claude Truong-Ngoc / Wikimedia Commons)



"New York, Geneva and Strasbourg are the only cities in the world which are home to international institutions without being national capitals", an official page of the French city proudly proclaims. "The choice of Strasbourg as the European capital following the Second World War is no accident. The city stands as a shining symbol of reconciliation between peoples and of the future of Europe".

Last December, however, Strasbourg was shocked by a new terrorist attack. Cherif Chekatt, shouting "Allahu Akbar", murdered five people, before being neutralized in a two-day manhunt. Among Chekatt's victims were Italian, Polish and

French citizens. Unfortunately, Strasbourg has become one of Europe's hotbeds of jihadism, an ideology

seemingly aimed at destroying Europe's people, not conciliating with them.

The weekly Valeurs Actuelles called Strasbourg a "French bastion of jihadism". Seven men from Strasbourg, who went to Syria between December 2013 and April 2014, have already been sentenced to prison terms ranging from six to nine years. The heaviest sentence was handed to Karim Mohamed-Aggad, the brother of the Bataclan Theater suicide bomber Foued Mohamed-Aggad. The weekly L'Obs called Strasbourg "land of jihad".

"It's true that we have statistically more 'S-Files' [individuals labelled by authorities as a threat to national security] here in Strasbourg and in the Bas-Rhin department than the national average", the mayor of Strasbourg, Roland Ries, said. Farhad Khosrokhavar, a sociologist and director of studies at the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences in Paris, explained:

"Strasbourg is one of those leading cities of what could be called 'jihadogenic urban areas', such as the suburbs of Paris, Toulouse, Nice or Lyon in the past... Strasbourg is at the crossroads of Europe, all you have to do is cross the Rhine to be in Germany and you are not very far from Switzerland."

There is not only violent terrorism. Pope Francis, in a 2014 address to the European Parliament in Strasbourg, said:

"In many quarters we encounter a general impression of weariness and aging, of a Europe which is now a 'grandmother', no longer fertile and vibrant. As a result, the great ideas which once inspired Europe seem to have lost their attraction, only to be replaced by the bureaucratic technicalities of its institutions."

Islamists dream of replacing this aging Europe, and it they are doing quite well. The Archbishop of Strasbourg, Luc Ravel, nominated by Pope Francis in February 2017, declared in July that year:

"Muslim believers know very well that their fertility is such that today, what do they call it?... the Great Replacement; they tell you in a very calm, very positive way, 'but anyway, one day all this will be ours...'"

Strasbourg not only hosts one of the two wings of the European Parliament. The city is known for one of Europe's most famous Christian sites, the Cathedral of Our Lady of Strasbourg, which has been called a "Gothic masterpiece". The writer Victor Hugo called it a "gigantic and delicate marvel". Its construction began in 1015. Robert Schuman, the French statesman and one of the founding fathers of what would become the European Union, thought about the project of a European Union meditating inside that cathedral, "the highest church of Christendom".

"France is a privileged target in the plan of global Islamization conceived of by various states and Islamic organizations", the Algerian novelist Boualem Sansal recently said. For years, Strasbourg has been a magnet for political Islam. There is not only the Great Mosque designed by the Italian architect Paolo Portoghesi, which, as Le Monde reported, has been financed by Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, the last two countries known for financing and spreading radical Islam in Europe. In 2012, then Minister of Interior Manuel Valls attended the inauguration of the Great Mosque, which also received funds from the municipal and regional governments. The Moroccan imam Abdellah Boussof called it "an Alsatian mosque with a European vocation".

"European vocation"?

The city councilors of Strasbourg recently granted another building permit for a new mega-mosque paid for by Turks and less than two kilometers from the Great Mosque. The building will be one of the largest mosques in Europe. The groundbreaking ceremony for what is being called the "Great Turkish Mosque", with two 36-meter-tall minarets, was attended by Turkish government officials, including the Deputy Prime

Minister. In a new report, Foreign Policy dubbed it "mosque diplomacy". French authorities have facilitated the construction of not one, but two Great Mosques in Strasbourg.

The first Muslim public cemetery in France was also opened in Strasbourg; and a French-Turkish campus is being built in Strasbourg's outskirts, including a high school and a faculty for training imams. Fully funded by Ankara, it is "the most ambitious project ever for France's Muslim community of Turkish origins". "The scale and ambition of the project have taken everyone by surprise", the daily Libération reported. The purpose of the high school is apparently to offer a curriculum based on the Turkish one. Saban Kiper, a local Turkish leader, did not hide the goal: "The high school will be a pole of excellence and influence for Islam in France and Europe".

Speaking of influence, it is from Strasbourg that the Turkish government has launched the Equality and Justice Party, which is part of the network wanted by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to influence Europe through its Muslim population. Erdogan held an election rally in Strasbourg in 2015, and the crowd chanted "Allahu Akbar". Strasbourg has been called "the AKP's laboratory", the initials of the Erdogan's ruling Justice and Development Party.

Contravening the famous French principle of secularism, the city of Strasbourg, led by the socialist mayor Roland Ries, offered four different menus in the school cafeterias. A quarter of the Strasbourg's public school students choose the halal Islamic menu. Schools, mosques, cemeteries, political parties: Strasbourg appears to have been chosen as the French laboratory of the Islamic secession in the heart of Europe. Political Islam is nurtured by this "separation", as the French philosopher Alain Finkielkraut recently noted. "France," he said, "is falling apart and, faced with the strength of numbers, there are no recipes to reduce the fracture".

"Strasbourg," according to the city's official website, "embodies the fundamental values of Europe". This is true. Strasbourg has been the cradle of Christian humanism and the site of the French-German reconciliation after 1945. In the future, Strasbourg will continue to embody the "values of Europe". But if the current trend continues, these values will be the opposite of those, such as freedom of expression, on which Europe was founded.

On October 25, 2018, in Strasbourg, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) upheld the shameful conviction of an Austrian woman, Elisabeth Sabaditsch-Wolff, for what the ECHR called an "abusive attack on the Prophet of Islam" -- just like that, in a stroke, accepting and legitimizing Islam's blasphemy laws. It was, as one news analyst, born in Iran, took note, "the day free speech died in Europe."

Why the West Should be Holding its Breath over the Desperate Battle for Britain

by Melanie Phillips

Current events in Britain's Parliament are making politics in both Israel and America look positively sane and tranquil by comparison.

Around the world, jaws are dropping at the UK's convulsions over leaving the European Union. This resembles not so much a divorce as an amputation without anesthetic using blunt knives and a broken saw, with the surgeons throwing punches across the operating table.

This week, the deal struck between Prime Minister Theresa May and the EU over the Brexit terms was thrown out by an enormous majority in the House of Commons.

Although this was the largest prime ministerial defeat in British history, Mrs. May survived a motion of

no-confidence the following evening.

This was largely because of two factors: the infighting among Tories about who should replace her, and the fear of precipitating a general election which might bring the far-left Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn to power.

At the core of May's spectacularly inept EU negotiating strategy lay a fundamental conceptual error. Britain is bitterly split down the middle between Brexiteers and Remainers, who want to stay in the EU. May wanted to deliver a Brexit deal which would bring both sides together by giving each a little of what it wanted.

But on the issue of sovereign British independence, there can be no compromise. The UK is either out of the EU or it is in. May's deal would have left the UK under the thumb of the EU over which, as a non-EU member, it would no longer have any influence at all. It was Brexit in name only – or Remain by stealth.

The lesson here for the wider world is that negotiating with the non-negotiable always leads to surrender. Under pressure from the West, Israel has tried to bridge an unbridgeable gulf with rejectionist Arabs. As a result, it has been unable to extricate itself from a perpetual state of war and terrorist attack.

May has survived; but Brexit itself now faces its moment of greatest peril. For a majority of MPs are Remainers, and many if not most are determined to stop Brexit in its tracks.

Westminster is currently heaving with plots aimed at reversing the 2016 referendum result – while purporting to honor it. So MPs are coming up with demands to delay the legal date for the UK's departure, demands for a second referendum, demands for "compromise" departure terms that are, in effect, forms of Remain.

This is all to break what is widely reported as the parliamentary "deadlock" over the issue. But there's no deadlock. The legally binding default position is that if no deal with the EU is struck, Britain will leave on March 29 without a deal.

This is enshrined in an act of parliament passed last year. So the way forward is in fact very clear. The problem is that MPs who passed this act of parliament now want to dump it. They claim that leaving with no deal is out of the question because it would plunge Britain into chaos and ruin.

Britain has been subjected to a blizzard of scare stories about starving to death, running out of medicines or being unable to fly to Europe if it leaves with no deal.

These are ludicrous exaggerations. Much more to the point, the EU itself has far too much to lose from having no deal. But it will only do a deal on Britain's terms if its own back is to the wall. In other words, leaving with no deal is essential to get the deal that Britain wants.

Yet instead of helping bring that about, Remainer MPs are spitting in the eye of democracy by seeking to reverse the referendum result, thus setting parliament against the people. Why?

At the core of much Remain thinking lies a profound indifference toward or even contempt for the very idea of a sovereign nation. For people who take pride in their cosmopolitanism and who regard national ties as a form of bigoted atavism, democracy can be endlessly reinvented in their own image.

Such Remainers thus grossly underrated the depth of feeling behind the vote for Brexit because they grossly underrate Britain itself.

Britain is a very special country; which is why it's the one country to leave the EU. The countries of mainland Europe, with their long histories of mutual invasion, permeable borders, shifting national boundaries and attachments to democracy that are fitful and tenuous, have a shallow understanding of national identity.

By contrast, Britain is an island nation with an unequivocally distinct and separate identity. It hasn't been invaded for 1,000 years and has consistently repelled attackers from across the seas.

This history has created its national character: independent of mind, stoic under pressure, opposed to extremism but ferocious in defense of its liberties and very, very averse to being bullied or told what to do.

This is why Britain was the cradle of political liberty. And this is why it voted to leave the EU – because despite the cultural demoralization of its post-war elites which took it into the European project in 1973, it still knows itself to be special.

There are three nations which have this view of themselves as being uniquely blessed: Britain, America and Israel. All have played an outsized role in bringing the benefits of civilization to the world.

Yes, all have had their faults. The British Empire had episodes of great cruelty; America had vicious racial prejudice; Israel's political system is corrupt and dysfunctional.

All three countries, however, are beset from within by an intelligentsia determined to distort their nation's history, exaggerate its failings and prove it was born in original sin.

A nation cannot be defended unless its people love and admire it, and unless it is led by men and women who acknowledge it for what it is rather than what they want it to be.

People look for leaders who will defend their way of life, promote the historic culture that binds their society together into a nation they can call their own, and take all necessary measures to keep it safe and inviolate.

The failure by the political establishment to deliver that led directly to the Brexit vote, the election of US President Donald Trump and, in Israel, to the destruction of the Left as a political force.

The idea of the modern nation state grew out of the Enlightenment which first came up with the notion of limited government, the consent of the governed and sovereignty within national borders.

Britain was first into the Enlightenment – but having led the West for the past half-century in secular ideologies which repudiate truth and reason, it's also been the first out. Through restoring national independence, Brexit offers Britain its last chance to become itself again.

This titanic fight has now entered its final agony. If this battle for Britain is lost, the repercussions for all who believe in political freedom, democracy and moral integrity will spread far beyond its shores.

I'm pretty sure that humans won't be able to resist broad-reaching ID systems, it's going to happen. But this is still interesting and always a bit creepy...

If you value privacy, resist any form of national ID cards

by Matthew Feeney

The Chinese telecom company ZTE is helping the Venezuelan government build a network for its "Fatherland Card," an ID card that is being increasingly linked to government services. The Fatherland Card provides access to troves of personal information including political affiliation, medical history, employment status, and much more. What was ostensibly designed to provide millions of Venezuelans with documentation required for opening a bank account or voting has morphed into an ID card program ideal for authoritarian government.

It's distressing, but not surprising, that the Chinese and Venezuelan governments are colluding to further erode their citizens' privacy.

In the U.S., we're nowhere close to living under the degree of surveillance seen in Venezuela or China. Nonetheless, we must remain vigilant for calls for increased data gathering and national ID systems that put our privacy at risk, especially those calls that are couched in the name of immigration enforcement and anti-terrorism efforts. These ID proposals, if left unchecked, will diminish the freedom to travel and work, and expose more details of our private lives to the authorities.

Americans have historically been resistant to the kind of compulsory ID card schemes seen around the world. Yet before Trump's presidency there were bipartisan calls for ID cards as a tool of immigration enforcement. In March, 2010 Sens. Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., and Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., took to the pages of The Washington Post to argue for a national biometric ID card as a means to tackle illegal immigration. Fortunately, Sens. Schumer and Graham failed to get their proposed mandated ID passed into law.

Yet ID schemes already exist in the U.S., and proposals for government data-gathering only add to a growing identity infrastructure framework.

One such scheme the current administration supports is E-Verify, a voluntary Department of Homeland Security system designed to allow employers to check the employment eligibility of new hires. E-Verify is an inefficient and expensive system that should be scrapped.

Yet despite the problems associated with E-Verify, many of those calling for crackdowns on illegal immigration are also pushing to mandate the system nationwide. Such calls pose a significant risk to our privacy. To fix E-Verify, DHS would need more information, perhaps including biometrics such as fingerprints and facial images related to U.S. citizens.

ID systems are not only discussed in the context of immigration enforcement. The threat of terrorism also provides fertile ground for national ID proposals. REAL ID, created in 2005, outlines federal requirements for state drivers licenses in order for them to be accepted by agencies such as the Transportation Security Administration. According to DHS, REAL ID enacts the 9/11 Commission report recommendation that the federal government "set standards for the issuance of sources of identification." In order to be REAL ID compliant, states must not only adhere to federal standards but also share information included on drivers licenses on a national network.

Although some states initially rejected REAL ID, every state is now complying with at least some portions of the system. While the federal government can't directly coerce states into compliance, it can provide plenty of incentives. According to the TSA, drivers licenses that aren't REAL ID compliant will not be considered a valid form of ID from October 1, 2020, onwards.

Defenders of E-Verify and REAL ID may claim that worries that these systems will develop into a national ID are overblown and that civil libertarians are being hyperbolic. But history is on the side of those sounding the alarm.

Shortly after the passage of the Social Security Act of 1935, the use of Social Security numbers was limited to the identification of earnings covered by the new program. Since 1935, the use of SSNs has spread beyond government and into the private sector, regularly being used by credit bureaus, hospitals, and educational institutions.

We should therefore be wary when advocates for biometric Social Security cards, mandatory E-Verify, and REAL ID tell us the use of these systems will be limited. As current ID systems expand they could easily morph into a de facto national ID scheme, with compliance required for air travel, gun purchases, banking, and much more.

The United States is a long way from implementing the degree of surveillance and authoritarianism seen in Venezuela and China. Nonetheless, plenty of immigration and terrorism-related proposals and schemes risk setting us down the slippery slope towards an identification system that's a national ID in all but name.