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ALEXANDER GORDON. MOSLEM IMMIGRATION AS A THREAT TO EUROPEAN IDENTITY: THE DOCTRINE OF THE GREAT REPLACEMENT

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Abstract. The article examines the circumstances of the spread in the socio-political life of the West of the doctrine of the French writer Renaud Camus about the “Great Replacement,” implying the loss by European peoples of their identity under the influence of Islam and immigration from Africa and Asia. When assessing the particular popularity of Camus’ ideas in France, attention is drawn to both objective demographic prerequisites and collective neuroses caused by the depressive state of national consciousness, as an example of which the phenomena of xenophobia in the history of the country are analyzed.

The social and political life of many European countries has recently been strongly influenced by the immigration issue.

The scale of intercontinental migration makes us recall the great migration of peoples at the beginning of a New era. Undermining the way of life that has been formed for centuries, sowing irritation and anxiety in the minds of the conservative part of European inhabitants, responding with panic moods among orthodox zealots of Western civilization, it becomes a factor of destabilization of the primary order.

In the panic that reaches hysteria in some countries, the fear of the invasion of Islam comes forward. The minarets of mosques being built in European cities and the closed attire of Moslem women – all visible signs of religiosity excite the public consciousness of the fairly secularized inhabitants of Europe in the twentieth century, sometimes giving rise to primitive anti-Moslem campaigns resembling a “witch hunt”. The paroxysms of Islamophobia, in turn, create favorable ground for the cultivation of radical Islamism among the Moslem population of Europe, which attracts a politically active part of the youth and is realized in monstrous acts of terrorism. In such a historical situation, a breeding ground is formed for the emergence and dissemination of racist doctrines.

The concept of the “Great Replacement” is unoriginal to the point of banality and simple to the point of truism: it implies a global ethno-demographic process, as a result of which the majority of the population of European countries will be non-Europeans, immigrants from Africa and Asia. This concerns not only Europeans, but also the fate of the entire white race. It is no coincidence that the Australian lone terrorist who shot about a hundred aborigines in New Zealand, by his own admission, was inspired by the concept of “Great Replacement.” He stated that contemplation during his stay in France, a country where “invaders were everywhere,” convinced him of the need to move to action, and despair that Macron, an “internationalist, globalist, opponent of whites” was defeating Marine Le Pen, became the detonator of his murderous madness [31].

However, the distinctly racial essence is covered by an intellectual shell that allows the concept to claim a new doctrine. The factor of fertility, higher birth rate among Afro-Asian migrants who settled in Europe and formed stable diasporas is indicated. According to the calculations of 2017, the time of the introduction of the concept of "Great Replacement" into politics, even with zero migration only due to higher fertility, the Moslem diaspora will increase by one and a half times by 2050: from 4.9 per cent of the population of 28 European countries to 7.4 per cent. At the same time, average estimates will be higher in France (12.7 per cent), Belgium and Sweden (11.1 per cent), Great Britain (9.7 per cent), the Netherlands (9.1 per cent), Germany (8.7 per cent), Italy (8.3 per cent) [19].

The factor of exclusively fashionable geopolitical conspiracy theory is introduced and the culprit of a new "tectonic catastrophe" leading to racial cleansing of European countries is established. These are the world's elites, who in this way expect to ensure their dominance, which has been shaken due to the economic recession and constant political crises.

Finally, and this is the subject of this article, in order to carry out their insidious plan and paralyze the resistance of the indigenous population of European countries, the elites seek to demoralize it by pursuing a policy of "great deculturization", that is, alienating the European population from their roots.

An alien culture of "aliens" is being imposed on Europeans, Islam is seen as the most dangerous¹. With it, the adherents of the "Great Replacement" are chosen on the ground of confrontation between Christianity and Islam, which has been compacted for many and many centuries, remembering the Christian roots of European civilization, and at the same time advertising their affiliation or familiarization with them, which looks quite strange in the secularized societies of modern Europe² and especially France, where the republican system has established itself on the principles of equidistance of the state from all religions and *Laicism* (secularism), which, in confrontation with Islam, have been defended until recently even by right-wing radicals.

Meanwhile, it is in the confessional context of an emphatic appeal to Christian “roots” that the original racial idea acquires a shell of “clash of civilizations,” quite decent from the point of view of the political correctness existing in Europe, about the danger of which Samuel Huntington warned half a century ago [see 13].

Meanwhile, the question arises why the doctrine claiming to protect the entire Christian civilization, the global ethno-demographic character and the revelation of tectonic shifts in the world historical process, turned out to be at the center of the ideological and political life of France alone, turning the life of the cradle of European civilization on the eve of the last presidential elections into an arena of a clash of believers or non-believers in the prospect of a “Great Replacement.”

France has the largest Moslem diaspora in Europe, numbering, according to various estimates, about 6 million (8.8 per cent of the country’s population) people, while it to a lesser extent felt the effect of the last invasion of refugees from the Moslem Middle East, so that the share of the migrant population and its demographic composition have changed less significantly than, for example, in neighboring Germany [19]. And it is no coincidence that now only more than half (57 per cent) of the French are concerned about the number of immigrants [26]. Crushing acts of mass terror by Islamist militants followed in 2015, and the peak of the socio-political reaction to those tragic events, it seemed, should have been expected earlier.

The key to understanding the alarmist hysteria that accompanied the French presidential campaign of 2022 can be given, I think, by a comparative assessment of the significance of various factors in cultural and psychological terms. President Emmanuel Macron, who acted and ultimately confirmed his legitimacy, announced in 2017 the revival of the “greatness of France” as the motto of his own government [1; 10]. He linked the acute issue of the country’s lag in the transition to a high-tech economy with the spiritual state of French society.

Macron, writes the editor of an authoritative business publication, claims that France “will restore self-confidence and its dynamism only if it regains its Greatness.” This attitude coincides with the idea of Charles de Gaulle, who proclaimed that France can only be great or none. “To abandon the wounded Greatness – this has been the course for the past forty years,” to focus on the example of others, these “little” Swedes, these “average” Canadians or these distant New Zealanders who “teach us lessons of success.”³ Macron holds the opposite opinion: “If things are going badly in the French economy, it’s because /.../ it is necessary to liberate the spirit of creativity.” The whole problem is precisely in the “state of mind.” It should be truly national. And France will become truly dynamic only if it “turns to its roots, culture, creative spirit, as well as social justice and the desire to restore dignity to the man of work and the citizen” [24].

However, the inspiring program of the renewal of France on the path of liberal economic reforms addressed to national pride [1; 11] was thwarted by circumstances, some of which could have been foreseen and turned out to be completely unpredictable in another part. There began protest actions of the “yellow vests,” who did not see a place for themselves in the presidential renewal program and who, with their comparative smallness, expressed the sentiments of a very significant depressive periphery, concerned about the stability of their financial situation on the basis of the decades-old practice of increasing state subsidies in the social sphere policy République protective, a radical French variation of the “welfare state” [5; 9].

The COVID-19 pandemic completed the disruption of reforms, the fight against it required not only huge investments in the social sphere, but also repressive restrictions on public space, which alienated numerous adherents of liberal democracy from the president. By the time of the presidential elections in 2022, the spiritual atmosphere began to descend into that abyss of

decadent moods (*déclinisme*) [7; 10], to get out of which Macron's program pursued as its goal.

"Two-thirds of the French have a feeling that France is in decline, according to a survey conducted by the CSA Institute⁴ in September 2021. This fear is constantly returning due to current events" [21]. Although the authors of the article in the Catholic newspaper (they are not the only ones doing this) consistently refute the idea of the economic decline of France, the political agenda in the election campaign was formed under the influence of various and increasing fears, the sources of which were the pandemic, the environment, the recession and most of all – migration [23].

And, as the authors of the article in *Figaro* emphasize, fear can be the "engine of history." "It unites and destroys societies, becomes the basis of their organization, as well as disorganization." At the moment, "phantoms of concern seem to be becoming decisive /.../. Crises turn out to be everywhere/.../, creating the impression of an endless crisis" [*Ibid.*].

In such a political situation, the ideology of restoring French Greatness was devalued into the pathos of the "war of civilizations", national renewal – into the ideologies of the "Great Replacement", faith in republican institutions – into conspirology. According to the results of a sample survey conducted in 2018 by the French Institute of Public Opinion (IFOP), it is clear that about half of the respondents of the sample (48 per cent, 17 per cent – completely) agree with the statement that the "Great Replacement" is "a political project of replacing one civilization with another, consciously carried out by our political, intellectual and media elites and it needs to end by sending those people back to where they came from."⁵

A similar survey conducted by Challenges-Harris Interactive on the eve of the election campaign in May 2021 showed that public opinion in the country is literally overwhelmed by fears of "Great Replacement": two-thirds of the French believed in "replacement". Fear struck adherents of

different political orientations, although, and this is significant, extremely differently. Among the supporters of the president, only half believed, while among the supporters of the "National Association" of Marine Le Pen, 93 per cent were concerned [26].

The insertion into the political agenda of the phantoms of collective consciousness, fueled by the expectation of ethno-political and ethno-cultural cataclysms, is extremely reminiscent of the seemingly long-lived situation of the country, revealed under the Third Republic in connection with the infamous "Dreyfus affair"⁶. The republican regime could not strengthen in any way, the country was torn apart by antagonisms, losing international positions and being threatened by a powerful neighbor. The defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871 and the capitulation, burdened with a huge indemnity and the annexation by the Prussians of the two historical provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, wounded the French national consciousness painfully. This had the most serious consequences "not so much for the pride of the people, who retained the conviction of their greatness, but," Christophe Prohasson points out, "for the essence of their identity." The search for national identity in the distant past, characteristic of the new nationalism⁷, the historian argues, was nothing more than a "reaction to a sense of decline" [23, p. 67].

It was in vain that the supporters of the Republic, with facts in their hands and proper statistical data, proved that there was no need to talk about the decline of the country and, economically, the development of France was marked by obvious growth rates⁸. The experience of national decline has become a propaganda device of the ultra-right in the fight against the republican system. The decline was declared the legacy of the Revolution of 1789, which destroyed the Old Order, so it was subject to fierce word-painting, up to aestheticization. Maurice Barres⁹, who is considered the forerunner of modern French national radicalism, succeeded especially in this field.

"Like his teachers Taine and Fustel de Coulanges," writes historian Claude Dijon, "Barres saw France sick / .../. He glorified disquietude and whipped up anxiety. The land and the graves of his ancestors – that's his motto / .../. In contemplation of cemeteries, Barres sought his way / .../, reveling in the smell of death." The spirit of decadence is useful, he assured, because the "fierce nationalist passions generated by it are necessary for the defeated peoples" [16, p. 431-432].

Ethnic prejudices focused on anti-Semitism became the object of nationalist passions. For the ultra-right, it was a godsend, as Charles Morras, the creator of *Axion Francaise*, frankly admitted: "Everything seemed impossible or difficult to implement without this providential anti-Semitism. Thanks to it, everything is being put in order, leveled and simplified" [22, p. 129].

In anti-Semitism – and this is the secret of the success of the ultra-right agitation, which provided the national radicals with mass support that they had not previously received – medieval religious prejudices and frustrations of certain segments of society, bypassed by the historical process, merged. In their view, Jews embodied all the evils of the New European civilization of Modernity: the power of money, the smoking chimneys of factories, the destruction of the rural way of life, the contrasts of the capitalist city, and finally, what is now dubbed "globalization."

The World Exhibition of 1889 was called the "triumph of Jewry" by the instigator of the anti-Semitic campaign, publicist Eduard-Adolphe Drumont, "the author of the immortal work" on the dominance of Jews in France¹⁰ [10], as stated in the epitaph on his grave, knocked out in 1942 (and destroyed by order of the Paris Mayor's Office in 2002). With gloomy delight he described his visit to the World's Fair: "The Jew made a sample of his ideas out of it. This gigantic bazaar; this tent, more majestic than a palace; this Nomadism, streaming with golden rain and covered with purple; this last word of Modernism – a tower reminiscent

of the Tower of Babel and its origin; it is base magic with its false radiance"¹¹ [22, p. 69].

With such a worldview, it did not matter that Jews in France (according to 1914) accounted for 0.2 per cent of the population – 80 thousand residents of several large cities. It is important that this people embodied, as M. Vinok writes, “in its purest form”, a Different One or Something Different [22, p. 13], an alien principle in French society, which had to be disposed of. In accordance with the Royalist-clerical tradition, Protestants and Freemasons were also declared alien to the French identity. In the twentieth century, the space of xenophobia was progressively expanding.

A particular concern for French identity was the increasing number of immigrants, which was accompanied by increasing difficulties with their assimilation. The largest researcher of immigration, Gerard Noiriel, records three waves of fears that spread in France in the twentieth century.

From a legal dissertation of 1914: “Can we always encourage interventionists (envahisseurs) to accept our morals, our civilization/.../? Is assimilation successful? Unambiguous symptoms seem to indicate that we are approaching the saturation point. Our customs are permeated with exoticism, our language is littered with foreign expressions, our very security is threatened by dangerous elements who are attracted by our wealth and whom lenient laws do not hinder in any way.”

From the journalistic bestseller of 1931: “Now that compact hordes of foreigners have established themselves on our territory and when in some districts young foreigners outnumber local youth, the problem takes a completely different turn, and we are forced to conclude that ethnic minorities are forming among us.”

From the “Figaro Shop” on October 26, 1985: “Will we still be French in 30 years?” (the meaning of the rhetoric was clearly conveyed by the image of the symbol of the Republic of Marianne, wrapped in a paranja) [12, p. 321].

The theme of ethno-cultural invasion and especially the progressive establishment of the civilization of Islam on French soil was developing in countless journalistic products, as well as in novels from the genre of dystopia. The most significant in terms of the talent of the authors and their influence on society can be considered "The Camp of Saints" by Jean Raspail and "Submission" by Michel Houellebecq. Raspail's novel was published back in 1973 and in well-known circles of French society is revered as a prophetic novel about the death of European civilization under the pressure of non-European masses who found themselves in Europe thanks to the sympathy of Europeans for their poverty and the goodwill of governments. Specifically, Raspail depicts a million migrants from the banks of the Ganges who landed on the Cote d'Azur and completely subordinated the life of Provence to their manners and customs [28].

The novel by Houellebecq, published in 2015 on the eve of Islamist terrorist attacks, was already a very concrete prediction of the collapse of European civilization in France as a result of the victory of a representative of the Moslem Brotherhood in the presidential elections of 2022. Houellebecq used the developed in the popular consciousness and literature theme of the orthodox Moslem ruler of France, who found himself in the Elysee Palace [12].

The balance of power in the presidential campaign of 2022 and its outcome turned out to be completely different than described in the novel; however, it is unnecessary to refute the writer's futuristic assumptions with political realities. He reliably and profoundly displayed disorientation and depression in a well-known to him intellectual environment, but most important – vividly and emotionally expressed the fears prevalent in French society, which created a favorable ground for the insertion and promotion of the concept of "Great Replacement" into the center of socio-political life¹².

The author, the French writer¹³ Renaud Camus (born 1946), according to his own statement, came to this idea on a whim (apparently, like Morras to anti-Semitism). It literally dawned on him that the growing mass immigration of Afro-Asians in European countries conceals the self-interest of the elites – political, economic, intellectual – of these countries.

If we detach ourselves from the subconscious area of this extraordinary personality, we can say that a favorable situation has developed, and Camus felt the opportunity to show his ambitions. And his ambitions corresponded to the prevailing mood in society. He began by defending left-wing political positions, because of which he was expelled from his parents' old-fashioned bourgeois family. In the 1970s and 1980s, he expressed support for pedophilia in his works of art. In the 1990s, he was noted for anti-Semitism. The next stage was the protests against Moslem immigration since the beginning of the 2010s, marked by the publication of the book "The Great Replacement" [15]. In 2014, he was sentenced to a fine by the Correctional Tribunal for speaking at a conference on "Islamization", where Moslems were declared a host of invaders whose goal is to replace the French people and their civilization with Islam.

Meanwhile, Camus' ideas began to take root in French public opinion, a second wind was given to their spread by a journalist and politician, a "pundit¹⁴ of French television", as his colleagues dubbed him, Eric Zemmour (born 1958). He built his political program around the slogan of the Reconquista, calling his party "Reconquête (Reconquest)." Bearing in mind the historical example of the expulsion of Moslems¹⁵ from the Iberian Peninsula, Zemmour conceives the "reconquest" of France from Islam in the name of the triumph of Christianity. While in Armenia in an ancient monastery on the border with Turkey, he heralded the "great confrontation of Christianity with Islam," which once began on these borders and "has now resumed" [29]. Victorious Christianity, Zemmour believes, will return France to

its civilizational origins and, thanks to this, will restore its greatness after decades of decline.

The fight against Islam in France should take place, according to Zemmour, precisely at the civilizational level. He demands the “zeroing out” of immigration, that is, the termination of access to France for immigrants arriving from Africa and the Middle East. The country should abandon multiculturalism and return to the course of assimilation of immigrants approved during the Third Republic. In Zemmour’s election program, a special section was devoted to this topic: “Resume assimilation to remake the French.” And Zemmour promises: “I will remake the French thanks to a genuine policy of assimilation.”

Proposed: “To transform school into the melting pot¹⁶ for forming assimilated Frenchmen by resuming education in the national spirit in primary school, presenting and inspiring /students/ with love for the history of our country. Encourage the knowledge of great literary works so that all Frenchmen from a very young age could speak French. To enable all young French people to succeed in school without the threat of being judged by the environment from which they come, and to do this, expand the network of special boarding schools for the best secondary school students. To restore school uniforms in order to eliminate differences in clothing that contribute to communitarianism, school harassment, social inequality. To end the invitation of teachers from Arab countries and Turkey within the framework of EILE – Enseignements Internationaux de Langues Etrangères¹⁷. To propose a law on names for newborns in a referendum so that the first name is established on the basis of French and regional calendars or prominent people of ancient and biblical history. To enable 10,000 young men annually to undergo voluntary military service for better assimilation with the national community. To establish a great ministry of the World of Knowledge and / their / dissemination, uniting public education, higher education and culture” [32].

It is easy to notice that the author diligently adapts to the regime of official political correctness: there are no references to Islam or the Afro-Asian origin of immigrants, there is not even a reference to immigration. The program is addressed to all French people, pursuing the goal of educating them from school years in the proper patriotic spirit. In detail, it is certainly useful: knowledge of French history, literature, language, and in general it looks like a repetition of the past, a reproduction of the experience of the colonial school that has sunk into oblivion, where African, Arab, Vietnamese children recited "Our ancestors are Gauls." And the purpose of their training was to educate the pro-French native elite of the "advanced (évolue)".

In response to Camus' discovery of the "great deculturation", the alienation of the indigenous French from their civilizational roots, Zemmour suggests the alienation of people from Afro-Asian countries from the civilizational heritage of their ancestors. It is surprising that a native of colonial Algeria ignores the works of Octave Mannoni, Albert Memmi, Franz Fanon, who described the destructive split mind of a person that found itself at the "turn of cultures" [2; 25; 30]. Meanwhile, this situation was subjected to artistic representation and analytical reflection in many works of the era of decolonization, eloquently linking the personal crisis in the environment of the intelligentsia formed by the colonizers with its transition to the position of political radicalism. Prophetic in this regard was Fanon's book "Black Skin, White Masks" (1952) about the neuroses of a dark-skinned intellectual from the colonies in France [20].

Realizing the impossibility of "reconquista" in the full historical sense of expelling Moslem immigrants from France, Zemmour, in addition to demographic "zeroing" (stopping the immigration influx), comes to the idea of civilizational "zeroing," cleansing French society of the heritage of non-European civilizations, completely denying the possibility of a "dialogue of cultures" and their mutual enrichment. Even in an ennobled, civilized form, the doctrine of the "Great Replacement," as it

turns out, threatens France with the loss of the universality of its identity, the historical purpose of its civilization, which, according to adherents of the idea of French greatness, “carries a message to the whole world” [24].

Notes

1. On the topic of the Islamic threat in France, there is extensive, including domestic literature: see [6].
2. From the latest literature, see: [4].
3. This refers to the so-called giscardism, a political course voiced by President Giscard d’Estaing and implying a weakening of the role of the state in the modernization of the country. See [10].
4. Conseil supérieur de l’audiovisuel.
5. de Montvalon J.-B. Les théories du complot bien implantées au sein de la population française // *Le Monde*. – 2018. – 7 janvier.
6. For the main lines of the split that occurred in French society, see: [3, P. 158–167]. Stable stereotypes of historical consciousness in the definition of national identity [14].
7. In comparison with optimism and a future-oriented attitude in the nationalism of the Great French Revolution and its legacy (Hugo, Michelet, Gambetta).
8. Among the relevant texts, I would like to draw attention to the report of the author of the multi-volume “History of the French Nation” Gabriel Hanotaux for the academic forum. The fact is that the “big” Academy turned out to be largely on the side of the “anti-Dreyfusars,” supporting the national radicals: 22 of its members signed the manifesto of the League for the Defense of the French Fatherland against the revision of the case, even when evidence of forgery was discovered. Thus, the text of Hanotaux is also important for assessing the evolution of the position of the French academic elite (see: Hanotaux G. *la France est-elle en décadence ?* Séance publique annuelle des cinq Académies le 25 octobre 1901. — URL: <https://www.academie-francaise.fr/la-france-est-elle-en-decadence>. (accessed: 5.07.2022).
9. It is characteristic of France that the ideologists of national radicalism usually became writers, including those from the first row of continuing popularity in public opinion.
10. Drumont's lengthy (1200 pages) pamphlet “Jewish France”, published at the end of 1885, became a bestseller, opening a series of similar publications

(several dozen annually), which psychologically prepared public opinion for the "Dreyfus Affair. "

11. The "Tower of Babel" in Drumon's imagination turned out to be Eiffel's creation, built for the opening of the Exhibition.
12. The fact that the plot of Houellebecq's novel expressed not only French neuroses may be evidenced by the appearance of a similar Russian dystopia 10 years earlier: E. Chudinova, *the Mosque of Our Lady of Paris*. 2048. M.: Yauza, 2006. 446 p.
13. Camus is the author of more than 160 literary works, as well as albums of drawings and photographs of his own work.
14. In modern English-language journalistic discourse, an intellectual whose opinion is authoritative in the media.
15. The fact that Sephardic Jews were ostracized at the same time, Zemmur, obviously Sephardic by origin, kept silent.
16. It is possible to translate "boiler" by association with the popular concept of the American assimilation process.
17. The program of teaching foreign languages by their native speakers.

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