Counter-Islamophobia Kit

Workstream 1: Dominant Islamophobic Narratives – France

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Working Paper 8

Countering Islamophobia through the Development of Best Practice in the use of Counter-Narratives in EU Member States.

CIK Project (Counter Islamophobia Kit)

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Counter-Islamophobia Kit

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About the CIK Project

The *Countering Islamophobia through the Development of Best Practice in the use of Counter-Narratives in EU Member States* (Counter Islamophobia Kit, CIK) project addresses the need for a deeper understanding and awareness of the range and operation of counter-narratives to anti-Muslim hatred across the EU, and the extent to which these counter-narratives impact and engage with those hostile narratives. It is led by Professor Ian Law and a research team based at the Centre for Ethnicity and Racism Studies, School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds, UK. This international project also includes research teams from the Islamic Human Rights Commission, based in London, and universities in Leeds, Athens, Liège, Budapest, Prague and Lisbon/Coimbra. This project runs from January 2017 - December 2018.

About the Paper

This paper is an output from the first workstream of the project which was concerned to describe and explain the discursive contents and forms that Muslim hatred takes in the eight states considered in the framework of this project: Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Portugal and United Kingdom. This output comprises eight papers on conditions in individual member states and a comparative overview paper containing Key Messages. In addition this phase also includes assessment of various legal and policy interventions through which the European human rights law apparatus has attempted to conceptually analyse and legally address the multi-faceted phenomenon of Islamophobia. The second workstream examines the operation of identified counter-narratives in a selected range of discursive environments and their impact and influence on public opinion and specific audiences including media and local decision-makers. The third workstream will be producing a transferable EU toolkit of best practice in the use of counter-narratives to anti-Muslim hatred. Finally, the key messages, findings and toolkits will be disseminated to policy makers, professionals and practitioners both across the EU and to member/regional audiences using a range of mediums and activities.

Contents

1. **Introduction**

Several reports have confirmed the proliferation of anti-Muslim narratives across European countries (FRA 2016, Ameli, Merali 2015, Europol 2015). These narratives, based on anti-Muslim prejudice rooted in colonialism and racist and far-right ideologies, lead to exclusion, discrimination and Islamophobic incidents against individuals and places of worship. In this regard, France is no exception. Despite the decline in anti-Muslim acts observed in 2016, the figures confirm an overall upward trend observed since 2011: anti-Muslim incidents increased by 30% in 2011, by 28% in 2012, by 11.3% in 2013, decreased by 41% in 2014 and a phenomenal increase of 223% was registered in 2015 (CNCDH 2016). The month following the Charlie Hebdo shootings in January 2015 saw a 70% increase in acts of Islamophobia compared with the same period previous year (CCIF 2015). In addition, the violence of the incidents listed seems to have intensified (CNCDH 2016). Civil society has repeatedly issued warnings against the trivialisation of discourses that demonise Muslims and Islam (CCIF 2016).

The aim of this report is to categorise prevailing narratives of Muslim hatred within the context of France, identify their key elements and interlocking contextual environments employing the Domination Hate Model of Intercultural Relations (IHRC 2016). First section focuses on existing literature and studies dealing with Islamophobia in France. We shall first explore the history of the term and retrace the evolution of its use in the contemporary period and then reflect upon various definitions of the term adopted by scholars, practitioners and institutions. The section also comprises a review of academic research and grey literature dealing with Islamophobia, with particular attention given to civil society reports and working papers. Section two of this report provides a demographic overview of Muslim population in France. A brief description of the polity model, the church-state pattern and the integration policies is included in order to provide a broader picture of the accommodation of Muslims' religious practices and their social and political incorporation. Third section analyses the development of anti-Muslim hatred through history. It gives an outline of the most significant events from the colonial period until the recent past having an impact on the formation of Islamophobia. Section four retraces the content and formation of the most prevalent anti-Muslim narratives in political and media

discourses. Narratives of hatred based on subjective experiences of anti-Muslim prejudice and discrimination in everyday life are explored in section five. This report is grounded in Sayyid's (2010) understanding of Islamophobia as a series of interventions and classifications that affect the well-being of populations designated as Muslim. The author also argues that this hostility is neither emotion nor religious or cultural but rather political. His classification of Islamophobic acts into six clusters (attacks on persons, attacks on property, acts of intimidation, institutional Islamophobia, comments that disparage Muslims or Islam and state Islamophobia) served as a basis for identification of the most dominant anti-Muslim narratives.

2. State of the art in research on Islamophobia

The term 'Islamophobia' appeared for the first time in the works of Alain Quellien and Maurice Delafosse, two "administrators-ethnologists" (Grandhomme 2009) studying West African and Senegalese Islam at the beginning of the 20th century, who denounced hostility of the colonial administration towards Muslims and Islam. Delafosse (1910) defined Islamophobia as "a principle of administration of indigenous territories". Quellien (1910) viewed Islamophobia as a "prejudice against Islam among people of Western and Christian civilisation". The term appears again in two works by Alphonse Etienne Dinet and Sliman Ben Ibrahim (1918, 1922) in a similar context of denunciation of French colonial policy and misconceptions about Islam. The authors criticise the pseudo-scientific nature of Islamophobia which they describe as hostility towards Muslims rooted in the Crusades and a sort of ideology justifying the colonial conquest (Hajjat, Mohammed 2012). Although coined in French, the term *islamophobie* did not gain its place in the public discourse and was not picked up again until the publication of the Runnymede Trust report *Islamophobia, a challenge for us all* (1997). Tariq Ramadan (1998) followed by the mainstream media, reintroduced the term in French on the basis of the findings of this report. The use of the term 'Islamophobia' became much more prevalent after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The neologism entered the dictionary of the French language, *Le Petit Robert,* in 2005 where it is defined as "a particular form of racism directed against Islam and Muslims, manifested in France by malicious

acts and ethnic discrimination against immigrants originating from Maghreb" (Rey-Debove, Rey 2004), associating Islamophobia with France's colonial and migration history. This definition also completely obliterates the presence of Sub-Saharan Muslims and converts (and the very fact they might be targets of anti-Muslim hatred) and conflates ethnic origins with religious affiliation.

It should be noted that in France, there is an ongoing debate between experts and practitioners about the appropriateness of the term Islamophobia. Indeed, for many scholars and practitioners the term is a source of confusion since from the point of view of semantics, it refers to the fear of Islam and "therefore cannot, in the strict sense of the term, fall within the forms of racism" (CNCDH 2013:16) which, still according to the same source, relate to ethnicity rather than religion. At the same time, others consider Islamophobia as a catchall term for discrimination and acts of racism that do not target specifically religion and therefore are more prone to use expressions such as 'Arabophobia' or 'anti-immigrant racism' (Babès 2013). Its detractors often argue that the concept is used "as a weapon against secularism meant to protect a religious dogma" (Pour le président de la Licra 2016) and hinders legitimate debate about Islamic doctrines by putting Muslims systematically in the role of victims.[1]

Because of the lack of clarity, the academic works using the term, let alone attempting to conceptualise it, were rather scarce before 2001. However, Islamophobia as a sociological phenomenon was object of academic research even before. Both Cesari (1997) and Khosrokhavar (1997) analysed the origin of anti-Muslim sentiments and argued they were rooted in French imperialism, thus helping to create parallels between their historical and modern forms. Amiraux and Leghmizi (2002) further explored the historical legacy of the colonial period.

The first academic work attempting to conceptualise the phenomenon is *La Nouvelle Islamophobie* by Vincent Geisser published in 2003. Geisser makes a clear distinction between

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[1] See Taguieff, P. A. 2002. *La Nouvelle Judéophobie*. Paris: Mille et Une Nuits ; Trigano, S. 2009. Islam, Islamisme, Islamophobie. *Controverses*. **12**(11). pp.107-111.

the traditional forms of racism, xenophobia and anti-immigrant prejudice and Islamophobia by defining the latter as targeting faith and religious practices of Muslims. Though the phenomenon can be found worldwide, Geisser estimates that what makes Islamophobia in France different is that it is, above all, a "religious phobia" which has roots in the colonial history, war in Algeria and anticlerical republicanism (Geisser 2003).

Geisser (2010), along several other authors (Gresh 2004, Mucchielli 2004, Tévanian 2005, Büttgen et al. 2010) further analysed the role of media and that of certain members of the French intellectual elite in shaping public opinion about Islam by spreading fear and legitimating anti-Muslim prejudice in the society. Deltombe (2005) extensively studied the portrayal of Muslims in the French TV news since the Iranian revolution in 1979 until the headscarf ban in schools in 2004. He argues that television contributed to a large extent to the creation of "imaginary Muslims" and the rise of hostility towards them by broadcasting a biased image of Islam, which culminated in the 1980s with the construction of "the Muslim problem" (Hajjat, Beaugé 2014).

Media and political discourse accompanying each headscarf ban or attempted ban since 1989 further entrenched the narrative of incompatibility of Muslims and French values (Bouzar & Kada 2003, Tévanian 2005, de Galembert 2009, Delcroix 2011, Amiraux 2014). An intertwined narrative furthered through this interplay in the collective imaginary headscarf is the stereotypical view of suburbs where young Muslim men perpetuate the patriarchal system by obliging girls to cover (Guénif Souilamas 2005, Mucchielli 2005). Rivera (2010) pointed out the limits and shortcomings of the French republican model by comparing anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim discourses in Italy and France.

Hajjat and Mohammed (2013) offer probably the most exhaustive analysis of the scope and content of the concept, its different uses through time and sources of prejudice it is tied to. While stressing the historical continuity of the anti-Muslim prejudice, they define it as "a complex social process of racialization/othering based on the sign of (real or supposed) affiliation to the Muslim religion" (Hajjat, Mohammed 2013: 20). In 2011 the researchers launched an

undergraduate seminar on Islamophobia in order to discuss existing research from a critical perspective and explore new research opportunities.

Without national statistics and a legal framework allowing for a clear-cut distinction between discrimination based on religion and ethnicity (Amiraux 2005), anti-Muslim hatred remains difficult to assess. The survey Trajectories and origins (Beauchemin, Hamel & Simon 2010) revealed that 26% of immigrants and 24% of descendants of immigrants suffered from some kind of discrimination. It also underlined the importance of taking into account the interrelation between gender, class and race when analysing Islamophobia (Asal 2014). CV experiments (Adida, Laitin & Valfort 2010, Valfort 2015) were performed to distinguish between discrimination based on race and country of origin and religious discrimination. The results confirmed the presence of anti-Muslim discrimination in the French labour market (See Section 5).

Despite the lack of conceptual clarity, the term Islamophobia is widely used by practitioners from the civil society and anti-discrimination agencies and Muslim populations themselves. *La Commission nationale consultative des droits de l'homme* (CNCDH, [National Advisory Committee on Human Rights]) has introduced questions on Islam in its annual survey on racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia since 2003. It also attempted to frame the concept of Islamophobia in 2013 (CNCDH 2013). *Le Collectif contre l'Islamophobie en France* (CCIF, [The Collective against Islamophobia in France]) founded in 2003 to fight Islamophobia – defined as "all acts of discrimination and violence targeting institution and individuals for their supposed or real affiliation to Islam" – publishes its annual report listing acts of anti-Muslim hatred since 2008.

National Observatory of Islamophobia (*Observatoire national de l'Islamophobie*) – founded in 2011 on the basis of an agreement signed between the Ministry of the Interior and the Muslim representative body *Conseil français du culte musulman* – records and analyzes complaints received by the public prosecutor's office and compares them to the field data. Ameli, Merali and Shahghasemi (2012) offer a thorough analysis of experiences of discrimination and hatred the French Muslims face, which substantiates the claim that Islamophobia affects all areas of

social life. The report provides statistical data on hostility and discrimination, including hate crime targeting Muslims. European Islamophobia report (Bayrakli, Hafez 2016 and 2017) examines trends in the spread of Islamophobia and comprises also a chapter on France (Esteves 2016, Louati 2017).

The promise made by President François Hollande after the Charlie Hebdo shooting to "fight relentlessly against racism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia" (Elysée 2015) may be of particular significance in this regard.

3. Background: Muslim population in the country

In France, limited collections of data on the ethnic, racial and religious identity of its citizens do not allow for tracking the exact evolution of Muslims' presence in France. According to earlier estimates based on the 1999 Census and works of different researchers (Dargent 2010) between 3.5 and 5 million[2] Muslims resided in France in the early 2000s (1.5 – 1.6 million of Algerians, 1 – 1.5 million Moroccans, 350,000 – 500,000 Tunisians, 250,000 – 500,000 Sub-Saharan Africans, 400,000 – 500,000 Turks and Middle Easterners and 360,000 others), of whom about 3 million were French citizens. The latest surveys, however, consider these estimates to be exaggerated since they are based solely on ethnic and national origin of the populations surveyed, not on their religious affiliations. In fact, if only people who declare themselves Muslims during the survey are considered as such, it brings their number down to 3.9 – 4.2 million (Simon, Tiberj 2013). As a recent survey of immigrants' identity patterns shows, the majority of the descendants of immigrants, including Muslims, "feel French and at home in France" (Simon 2012:9).

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[2] These discrepancies are due to the lack of statistical data on religious affiliation of the French population. For different methods and sources used to obtain the figures see Dargent, C. 2010. La population musulmane de France : de l'ombre à la lumière ? *Revue française de sociologie*. 51(2), pp.219-246.

Since the question of religion can be addressed neither in the general census nor through surveys, the information about French Muslim population is usually extracted from researches on immigrants (persons born abroad having a foreign nationality at birth). The survey *Trajectoire et Origine* (TeO) (Beauchemin, Hamel & Simon 2010) shows that immigration from the Maghreb region is ancient – one fifth of the immigrants was already present in France before 1974, the rest of them arrived under family reunification arrangements after 1974. Turkish and Sub-Saharan immigration is considered more recent, as most immigrants originating from those regions arrived after 1974, once the government passed laws restricting immigration: 50% of Turkish immigrants arrived after 1989 and 80% of immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa entered France after 1984. As to their age groups, half of the Turkish immigrants are less than 35 years old (Lhommeau & Simon 2010). The average age of the immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa and from the Maghreb region, still according to the TeO survey, is between 37 and 41 years. Among immigrants, the number of women is slightly higher than the number of men: they are respectively 52% and 48%. There seems to be an over-representation of lower socio-economic profiles among immigrants: between 61% and 74% of immigrants from Turkey and the Maghreb region are workers-employees, the rest of them are classified as entrepreneurs and self-employed. Moreover, parental origin seems to determine the socio-economic category of their children; having two immigrant parents increases the odds of being from a modest background: 40% of persons from the Sahel region, 36% of persons of Algerian descent and 29% persons of Turkish and Maghreb origin hail from families of non-qualified workers (compared to 15% of children of one immigrant parent and 13% of children with no immigrant parents).

The social integration of immigrant communities but also their political incorporation is determined by the polity model – statism in France favours a top-down approach – and the founding principle, Republican Universalism, which ignores differences and places the emphasis on universal values. Echoed among other measures by the 1905 law on the separation of church and state, it insists that universal values transcend religious and ethnic differences in order to guarantee equality among citizens, whatever their faith and skin colour. Other factors, such as church-state model and integration policies, shape the state accommodation of the religious needs of Muslim populations and their effective political representation (Maussen 2007:10).

The set pattern in church-state relations predetermines relations between state and different religious groups. The strict church-state separation in France does not allow the French policy-makers to interfere in religious matters and organisation of religious communities and makes it difficult for Muslim communities to argue their case for recognition of their religious needs. France follows a model known as *laïcité[3],* which tends to oscillate between the state control of religions and strict secularism.

This ideology often leads to misinterpretation of the young generations' fight for equality and against exclusion through associating it to what Cesari (1997) calls the processes of re-Islamisation or Islamisation. Their claims for official recognition of Muslim religious practices, voiced since the mid-1980s and especially during the headscarf controversy, have raised questions whether, and to what extent, French universalism should adapt to those demands.

French intellectual and political elites tend to question Muslims' ability to be good citizens and accuse them of communalism (*communautarisme*) – a tendency to put forward values associated to assigned cultural, religious and ethnic identities perceived as a threat to social cohesion and the "French values" – whenever they formulate specific religious demands, affirm their religious identity in the public sphere or criticise practices they deem discriminatory. Grosfoguel and Mielants (2006) argue that it is rather the politically and economically privileged white majority that adheres to communalism; this "*communautarisme masculin blanc*" is invisible because the "racially-blind racism" is "institutionalized and normalized."

The political power in France remains highly centralised despite decentralisation efforts; this has made Muslims seek regulation at a national level because the impact of their actions on local

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[3] *Laïcité* or secularism is a system that excludes the churches from the exercise of political and administrative powers, and in particular the organisation of education. The secular state distinguishes between the temporal and the spiritual, reserving the expression of particularism in the private sphere. In the case of France the separation of church and state was declared in 1905 and formalised the freedom of conscience and the neutrality of the society in religious matters. The principle of the secular state is laid down by Article 1 of the French Constitution of 1958 (Encyclopédie Larousse 2016).

officials is not as important as they would wish (Ireland 1994). The establishment of the national representative council – the *Conseil français du culte musulman* (CFCM) in 2003 – was preceded by an extensive state-led consultation. The need for the council was justified by similar efforts in other European countries as well as by the need to represent the Muslim faith in the public sphere through a centralised and state-recognized religious authority. Its official role is to deal with the aspects of worship that needed state regulation. These include training of imams, funding of worship, creation of Muslim plots at cemeteries, organisation of the pilgrimage to Mecca, construction of mosques, halal certification, prison, hospital and military chaplaincies, and celebration of religious holidays. The first years of the CFCM were marked by dissonances and inability of the Muslim partner federations to rise above their differences, which prevented it from becoming a truly effective representative institution. Moreover, the Council was repeatedly criticised for its dependence on the Ministry of the Interior whose officials brought coordinate and consistent approach to elevating Muslim leaders to the role of national representatives, settled disputes among members and provided expertise in implementing policy (Galembert de 2003, Godard, Taussig 2009).

Despite their diversity, Muslims are generally perceived a more or less monolithic and able to swing the vote due to their concentration in specific areas.[4] Muslims represent about 1.5 million voters, which is about 3.75% of all voters, and the majority of them vote for left-wing candidates. In 2007, 64% of French Muslims declared they had voted for the Socialist Party candidate Ségolène Royal, 19% for the centrist candidate François Bayrou, only 1% for the right-wing candidate Nicolas Sarkozy (Le Dossier 2007). In comparison, in 2012, 57% of Muslim voters gave their vote to François Hollande in the first ballot, whereas only 29% of the national electorate voted for the Socialist candidate. In the second ballot, the gap was even greater since 86% of Muslim voters voted for François Hollande, which was by 34% higher than the national average (Fourquet 2013).

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[4] Sixty percent of all immigrants are concentrated in Paris and its surroundings (Ile-de-France region). 35 to 40% of all French Muslims live in the Ile-de-France region, 15 to 20% live around Marseille and Nice, 15% in Lyon and Grenoble and 5 to 10% live around Lille (Ireland 1994:22).

Political representation of ethnic and religious minorities is, however, scarce since few descendants of immigrants hold elected offices. This is so not only due to the French universalism, which advocates for neutrality and dismisses any public expression of religious or ethnic identity (white French being the norm) on the grounds of contradiction to its principles, but also to the party system and the dynamics of the local politics. Since the rise of the extreme right in the 1980s, major political parties have tended to marginalise the candidates who were seen as catering for the interests of particular communities out of fear of losing their seats to Front National (Garbaye 2005). Starting from the 2000s, more and more 'diversity' candidates began to appear on the voters' lists of all mainstream political parties in an effort to secure the ethnic minority vote, the ideal candidate being a young (and often pretty), secular, well-educated female of Maghreb descent (Avanza 2010). Geisser and Soum (2008) argue that parties usually prefer candidates with no activist past who haphazardly find themselves confined to the role of representatives of successful integration. More often than not, parties instrumentalise those candidates and make them run for offices in districts with a higher rate of inhabitants with a foreign or immigrant background. Though used as a vehicle for political mobilisation of ethnic and religious groups from which they hail, many 'diversity' candidates belong to the elites and their legitimacy and potential for advancing social justice is regularly questioned by voters. As members of ethnic and religious minorities rarely speak for the groups they are supposed to represent, placing them in high or strategic positions is often likened to politically convenient tokenism (Fredette 2014).

4. **Background: the formation of anti--Muslim hatred**

Although the history of France's contact with Muslims dates back to a period much earlier than the beginning of colonisation, deeper relations between France and Muslim countries were established only after the conquest of Algeria in 1830, followed by the colonisation of West and Equatorial Africa and the creation of the protectorates in Morocco and Tunisia. Those relations should therefore be analysed through the prism of colonisation. We pay particular attention to the history of Algeria as a part of French colonial empire as it the focal point of the formation of anti-Muslim hatred.

Considered as French subjects since annexation of Algeria in 1834, the local Jewish and Muslim populations did not have full nationality and no legal procedure allowed them to obtain it until 1865.[5] While the procedure of naturalisation was simplified for the Jewish populations[6] and for foreign nationals, for whom *jus soli* applied since 1889[7], Muslim populations were left out of the loop, their legal status "irreversibly downgraded" (Weil 2002: 338). For those Muslims who decided to apply for citizenship, the procedure was full of obstacles.[8] Moreover, in order to enjoy the same rights as French citizens, they were obliged to waive their Muslim personal status. It did not mean renouncing their faith altogether but abandoning those customs which were considered incompatible with the French Civil Code.[9] Between 1865 and 1915, only 2396 Arabs-Berbers were awarded full citizenship (Weil 2002:358), while the rest of the native population was subjected to the discriminatory measures of the *Code de l'indigénat*.[10] The sub-citizen status of the indigenous population (they were neither foreign, nor fully French) and their political, social and economic domination by the European settlers altered their perception by the French mainland population.

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[5] Within Algerian colonial society citizenship was legally distinct from nationality. Local populations were considered French, yet distinguished from the settlers by the absence of the right to vote and their personal status (customs based on religious law and specific to each faith group). A decree of the senate (*sénatus- consulte*) of 14 July 1865 officially allowed approximately 3 million Muslims, 30,000 Jews and 250,000 foreigners to apply for citizenship (Blévis 2001).

[6] The Crémieux decree, which "naturalised" the Jewish populations *en bloc* in 1870, disrupted the formal equality that existed between Jewish, Muslim and foreign populations. Muslims, far outnumbering the European population, could be naturalised on a case-by-case basis only.

[7] Amendments to the nationality law voted in 1889 provided for the granting of nationality by simplified procedure to the descendants of foreign nationals. Children born in Algeria to parents already born in Algeria were French at birth. Children born in Algeria to parents born abroad became French at the age of majority. Algerian elected officials opposed the application of the *jus soli* to the Muslim populations.

[8] Weil (2002:356) argues that the colonial administration in Algeria intentionally hindered the application process which was already long and far more complex than in other territories: the Muslim applicant had to produce eight difficult to obtain legal documents and undergo an official administrative inquiry. The case was then referred to the prefect, the governor of the Ministry of Justice, the Council of State – the highest administrative court and finally, if the case was approved, the President would sign a decree of naturalisation.

[9] Customs considered incompatible were polygamy; the right of *djebr* allowing a man to coerce his child to a forced marriage; repudiation of the wife by her husband; the theory of "the sleeping child" which allowed a man to establish parentage of a child born up to five years after the dissolution of marriage; male privileges in the matters of inheritance.

[10] A series of measures codified in 1881 and applied to the Muslim populations and in force until Algerian independence in 1962. They included offences not provided for by the French law such as assembly without prior permission, departure from the territory of the municipality without a travel permit, disrespectful behaviour, offensive language towards an enforcement officer either on or off duty, etc. These offences were punishable by sequestration, fine or internment. (Ageron 1968:171).

Unequal treatment and discrimination against Algerian Muslims persisted despite the abrogation of the travel permit they previously required in July 1914. Arriving in the mainland France since 1914, North Africans ensured a supply of cheap and unskilled labour and were perceived as 'savages', ethnicised and maintained in spatial segregation from the white majority. First xenophobic campaigns spreading the myth of "Arab criminals" appeared consistently in the press in 1923 (Noiriel 2007:314) and led to the creation of the North-African Monitoring and Protection Service (*Service de surveillance et de protection des indigènes nord-africains*).[11] Under pressure from groups hostile to colonial migration, administrative restrictions – obligation to carry an ID card and a medical certificate – appeared.

In the tense post-war period, the question of changing the status of French colonies, including Algeria, began to arise as a solution to growing calls for independence. In order to silence them, the government voted a special status for Algeria in 1947 and changed the status of its indigenous population to French Muslims of Algeria.[12] The integration process was severely hindered by the Algerian war for independence which broke out in November 1954. As summarised by Gérard Noiriel, "[i]t is from this point that Algerians will become the central, even unique, figure symbolising "the enemy within" (Noiriel 2007:518). In the mainland France, Algerians were subjected to exceptional policing measures such as frequent identity checks, roundups, curfews, searches or administrative detention (Blanchard 2007). Police repression reached its climax during the demonstration of 17 October 1961 dubbed as "the bloodiest act of state repression of street protest in Western Europe in modern history" (House, MacMaster 2006) and the 'Charonne massacre' in February 1962.[13] The war ended in 1962 with the Evian

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[11] Created by the municipal council of Paris in 1925 as a result of an intense press campaign and mobilisation of elected officials following the double murder of the Fondary street. Its role was to control and contain French Algerians and to monitor the colonial political activists (Blanchard 2004).

[12] The status of Algeria as French department meant to introduce political and civic equality. Algerian Muslims, from then on considered as regional migrants, were allowed to move freely to the mainland. The lifting of restrictions caused a significant increase in Algerian migration: in 1946, 22,000 Algerians were in France; by 1954 their number had risen to 210,000, and by 1962, to 350,000. Migrants from other Maghreb countries were also numerous, however, due to the absence of a favourable immigration policy, their numbers did not increase as dramatically. When residing in France, Algerians enjoyed all the rights attached to citizenship (the right to vote). The indigenous populations of the colony, by contrast, were subjected to a two-tier electoral system designed to reinforce the dominant position of the European minority. Muslim women were denied the right to vote (Winnock 2004).

[13] Multiple sources reported that starting from 1944, the roundups of Algerians occurred almost systematically. Most of the time they were limited to collective identity checks but frequently resulted in preventive arrests and unlawful detentions, especially during demonstrations. Demonstrations on 28 May 1952 and on 14 July 1953 claimed several lives.

Accords, which foresaw the creation of the Algerian Republic.[14] Contrariwise to Morocco and Tunisia, where transition to independence was relatively peaceful, Algerian struggle for independence traumatised generations of French and Algerians. The conflict had a lasting impact on the relations between the state and the descendants of Algerians and by extension, on all its Arab-Muslim communities, as the state continuously treated them as foreign. The growing feeling of rejection and hatred towards North Africans within the French society gave an impetus to acts of violence[15] – at least 70 Algerians were victims of racially motivated crimes between 1970 and 1977 (Noiriel 2007:567) – and to passing laws restricting immigration.

The 1970s were marked by the economic recession and continuous efforts of the government to reduce the number of immigrants coming from North Africa. The image of an economically prosperous country capable of absorbing migrant labour that France had during the *Trente Glorieuses* (thirty years of post-war boom) was brutally replaced by economic decline and massive unemployment. The election of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in May 1974 marked the end of legal immigration; from then on, drastic controls on the flow of migrants were adopted. Economic hardship that arose resulted in frequent expressions of "crisis racism" (Gastaut 2004: 107) where North African migrants, who were the first victims of the mass layoffs, served as scapegoats on whom one could shift the blame for the gloomy economic prospects and one's own misfortune. However, the country's economic difficulties were not the trigger, but rather "an indicator of xenophobia already widespread in French public opinion" (Ibid.). The crisis only provided arguments for the hate narratives and allowed them to be expressed in a different manner. As a

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The demonstration against the police violence and the discriminatory curfew imposed on Algerian workers was organised on 17 November 1961 by the French Federation of the FLN. The violent repression of the demonstration left a number of people dead (between 100 and 200 according to the estimates), some of them found drowned in the Seine River. The repression of the peaceful demonstration on 8 February 1962 against the 'Secret Army Organisation' (OAS) – a military organisation for the maintenance of French Algeria, dissolved in 1962 – resulted in 9 deaths.

[14] Under arrangements between the two countries, Algerians living in France had the opportunity to choose their nationality; those residing in Algeria were from then on treated as 'foreign nationals'. The conflict resulted in the repatriation of nearly a million settlers (*pieds noirs*) and 90,000 Harkis.

[15] Xenophobia and racism were particularly virulent in the industrial regions of the southern France where North African workers were numerous. Far-right organisations such as *Occident* and *Ordre Nouveau* (the founder of the *Front national* in 1972) used the slogan "France belongs to the French" to oppose the immigration policy and engaged in xenophobic acts targeting North Africans and their gathering places. (Noiriel 2007:566).

result, Anti-Arab sentiments, virulent since the end of the war in Algeria and the conflict in the Middle East, reached a new high during that period (Gastaut 1993).

5. <u>Dominant political and media narratives of anti-Muslim hatred</u>

Rarely an object of media attention before 1975, Muslim populations first appeared in the public discourse **framed as immigrant workers**. By using the recession caused by the oil crisis and unemployment as arguments, the government took measures in the form of favouring French workers over foreign workers in the labour market. The North African immigrants, labelled as "**four million intruders**" (Lion 1977), became unwelcome to such an extent that procedures for limiting foreign labour were introduced. In 1977, a grant of 10,000 francs (known as the *million Stoléru* named after Secretary of State Stoléru who introduced the measure) was proposed to encourage voluntary repatriation. The rhetoric of politicians and the administration regarding immigration later shifted. While in the 1970s it focused primarily on the financial burden illegal immigration represented, twenty years later it was immigrants' lack of integration that became the priority issue.

The period of economic crisis saw surges of racism and xenophobia and made the discursive framing of immigrant workers as **bearers of social threats** more prevalent. Strikes among skilled workers, including many North Africans, which took place between 1981 and 1984, captured public attention in a negative way. Although the strikers' demands were purely economic, the media kept their focus on "Moroccan delegates equipped with megaphones to address the crowd in Arabic" (Gastaut 2000: 496) and **presented the strikes as a clash of cultures**. The portrayal of the strikers as religious fanatics manipulated by Iranian '*mollahs*' and the declarations of the Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy that those workers were "agitated by religious and political groups whose motives have little to do with the French social realities" (Noiriel 2007:613) discredited both strikers and their claims. Their failure revealed yet another reality:

having replaced Italians and German Jews (in the narratives spread in the period between the wars), North Africans were in turn perceived as **culturally inassimilable and a threat to national identity and values**.

Discrimination of Muslim men in employment is grounded in their stereotypical representation as male chauvinist and religious fanatic, accompanied by other anti-Muslim tropes, such as the welfare profiteer and the religious extremist. Brouard and Tiberj (2005) noted that politicians throughout all parties have in the past hinted at immigrants 'invading' France only to cheat the system and live on welfare money, thus fuelling the stereotype of a lazy benefit fraudster. These stereotypes gained mainstream approval and have re-emerged with the 'migrant crisis' which had a negative knock-on effect on acceptance of asylum seekers and economic migrants arriving in France in waves since 2015.

Islam was, in fact, portrayed as a **foreign religion having no reason to be in France**; 'immigrant', 'Arab' and 'Muslim' became interchangeable in the media and political discourse. The notorious caricature of Marianne – the symbol of the French Republic – wearing a chador, first published on the cover of the far-right newspaper *Minute* and adopted by *Le Figaro* (in 1985 with a caption "Will we still be French in 30 years?" and again in 1991) shaped the opinion of the population on the topic of North African immigrants and reinforced prejudices towards Muslims. An essential change in media narrative could be observed as it placed the emphasis on the foreign workers' origin and religious affiliation. The immigration was depicted as "problematic" because immigrants hailed from North and Sub-Saharan Africa (Noiriel 2007:615).

Since the 1980s the immigrant populations were perceived through the prism of **securitisation** and the **problems of the suburbs** had become part of all election platforms; rather than with the economic burden of illegal immigration, North Africans became associated with a potential security threat they could represent. The Right had centred its speeches on 'security', and even the Left, had followed the same pattern. In 1991, the Socialist party denounced the "mafia drift" (Rosso 2001) in these areas. Even if the Left initially positioned itself against the security

campaign led by the Right, a few years later, it realised the challenge posed by the suburbs in terms of the electorate, including the most needy who were already seduced by the discourse of the Front National. In 2001, upon his election, the Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin declared, "there [was] no choice between freedom and security" (Ibid.). The new policy of the Socialist party promised not only to erase social inequalities liable for delinquency (by basing itself on local service), but also to find ways to ensure the safety of citizens.

The media image of French Muslims was constructed also through global conflicts and crises. Following widely broadcast events as the Iranian Revolution in 1979, the Rushdie affair in 1989, the Gulf War in 1991 and Algerian civil war in 1991 among others, the image of Muslims in French public opinion has become more distorted. Muslims were no longer perceived merely as 'an enemy within', a direct link between the French and all the other Muslims was established (Deltombe, Rigouste 2005). The **double allegiance** of this population reinforced their othering and added to the idea that they were unassimlable. As pointed out by Le Figaro, "[w]hatever we do, whatever we say, the *Beur*[16] of Saint-Denis will always feel closer to his brothers who shout down France in the streets of Algiers and Tunis" (Le Figaro 1991). Since the series of bomb attacks carried out by the Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA, [Armed Islamic Group]) in 1995, the media coverage of Islam rocketed and was almost exclusively associated with **terrorism, religious proselytism and community withdrawal (*communautarisme*)** (Boniface 2015). Muslims were treated with suspicion. A new media figure of the "Islamist terrorist" appeared during this period, advancing the dichotomy of the integrated "moderate Muslims" and the "Islamists" whom one had to fight (Deltombe 2005).

In the collective imagery, young Muslims are associated with the above-mentioned figure of the **'Islamist'** (considering Islam as a political ideology and sympathising with radical political movements coming into prominence in Muslim countries) and with the one of **a 'suburban youth'.** Since the 1980s, the young suburban populations (thus mainly African and Muslim) were viewed through the prism of the widely publicised urban violence in the *banlieues* (suburban

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[16] Slang term for Arab. For the origin of the term see footnote 18.

ghettoes) and inner cities where they were living.[17] The Right and the Left have traditionally taken opposing stances on how to address migrant incorporation, but neither managed to cater for the needs of the second generation of young people from immigrant backgrounds who have since been represented as causing crime and insecurity in the country (Toubon 1984). The March for equality and against racism, commonly called by the marchers as *la Marche des Beurs*[18] was intended as a protest against police violence, racism and exclusion and as a means of conveying a more positive image of young North Africans. Its success (by the time the procession arrived in Paris it counted 100.000 marchers) and the positive media response strongly influenced their image through the 1980s; it created a new social identity for a generation of North Africans (Beaud, Masclet 2006). The march, however, did not bring a lasting change in terms of social and political advances or destigmatisation of these populations. **'Rioter' and 'delinquent'** were the labels that would stick with them for the coming decades also because they became drivers of media attention: not only did the suburban youth become news, they were also more newsworthy with each new outbreak of violence (Fredette 2014:39). The press would also make an analogy with the Israel-Palestine conflict, dubbing the unrests ***Intifada des cités*** and depicting the situation in the suburbs as a more or less constant state of war provoked by "a devastating cocktail of school failure, drugs and misery": "Not a week goes by without a upheaval in one of the French suburbs: rodeos in Vénissieux, cars burned down in Gonesse and attacks on the synagogue in Villiers-le-Bel (Val-d'Oise), riots in Saint-Florentin (Yonne), shots in Rouen, attack of the police station in Saint-Priest (Rhone)..." (Gilbert 1994).

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[17] The first conflicts between urban youths and the police occurred in 1979 in Vaulx-en-Velin. In 1981, when the youths from the housing project Cité des Minguettes in Vénissieux (the second largest suburb of Lyon) clashed with the police and burned cars, the media blamed 'North Africans'.

[18] Although the Algerian war for independence was over, a certain colonial pattern was still in force. The climate of extreme police violence and a wave of racist crimes gave an impetus to the descendants of North African immigrants (mostly Algerians) to organise the March of 1983. Their objective was to denounce and stop police brutality, claim equal rights and civic recognition. The term 'Beur' is derived from verlan, the vernacular based on syllable reversion used by suburban youth, and coined by the latter in order to distinguish themselves from their immigrant parents. For the origin of the term see Laronde, M., 1988. La" Mouvance beure": émergence médiatique. *French Review*, pp.684-692. For the significance of the vernacular in the *banlieues* and the political message it carries see Mével, P.A., 2007. The translation of identity: Subtitling the vernacular of the french cité. *Modern Humanities Research Association* (2), pp.49-56.

Political discourse on suburbs became progressively framed as a debate on the immigrant youth. While serving as the minister of the interior, Nicolas Sarkozy made regular discursive attacks on suburban youth. They embodied **"the failures of French integration"** (INA 2003) and were likened to **dirt that should be "cleaned with a high-pressure hose"** (INA 2005). Association of the suburban youth with criminality became more commonplace after the 9/11 terrorist attacks and used as a pretext for reinforcement of the anti-terrorism legislation. By including provisions directly targeted at suburban youth with no apparent link to terrorism[19], the government conflated the issues related to domestic security and delinquency with counterterrorism (Cesari 2001).

This is how the media (especially television) covered the riots in November 2005 starting in Clichy-sous-Bois and extending through France. Nicolas Sarkozy's address to rioters as **"thugs" and "scum"** (Gas 2005) was widely circulated to justify the government's security measures, and the analogy between Islamic fundamentalism and the suburbs was made. The report presented by the intelligence service of the French police (DCRG) refuted the allegations made by several politicians, according to which the rioters were manipulated by organised criminal or Islamist groups (Selon les RG 2005). Rather than by religious or cultural differences, the unrests were caused by structural phenomena such as youth unemployment, insecurity, worsening urban segregation, poor academic achievement, poverty and disintegration of working-class families living in council housing, work-based discrimination and everyday racism (Beaud, Pialoux 2005). Foreign media more readily pointed at the correlation between unrests and "grievances of the Muslim and African communities, ignored and demeaned and kept in poverty by a system which cares very little about them" (Simpson 2005). Discursive association of immigration, delinquency and insecurity helped construct the idea that suburban youth represented a threat. At the turn of the century, the dominant criminalizing discourse that linked suburban youth to violence, vandalism, anti-Semitism, oppression of women, religious fanaticism and even terrorism made the *jeunes des cités* the central figure of the French collective fear (Mucchielli 2006).

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[19] The law on security passed on 15 November 2001 suspended the right to assembly in the hallways of the apartment blocks and raised the maximum penalty for fare evasion in public transport to six months.

At times, media have framed the working-class ethnic neighbourhoods as places characterised by moral decline. The religion – Islam, plays a significant part in the othering process that sets young girls – **a symbol of gender-based violence** – in opposition to other men (Dalibert 2014). The male inhabitants of these neighbourhoods are likened to **sexual predators** who can let off steam of their frustration only by sexually harassing women: "They [girls living in the suburbs] are not kept in check only by their brothers, but also by all the boys from the neighbourhood. If their outfit does not comply with their idea [of acceptable], they are soon categorised as "teases". They then suffer insults and sexual harassment. It goes all the way to gang rape" (Gabizon 2003). The narrative linking suburbs to gang rapes, performed by youths of African or North African origin, became notorious at the beginning of the 2000s thanks to several cinematographic and literary works.[20] The feminist movement *Ni putes, ni soumises* [Neither whores, nor submissive] emerging during that period used the narrative to denounce the binary vision Muslim men were supposed to impose on women, whose only means to protect themselves would be to appear modest and chaste: "Young girls start wearing the headscarf to be more respected. Others adopt the tracksuit, formless and masculine. It is a public pledge of submission" (Rotman 2002). Their stigmatising vision[21] represented Muslim male (through the figure of the father or big brother) as aggressive and virile – his tormented sexuality finding its outlet in religious fundamentalism. Muslim woman, on the other hand, is portrayed as secluded, her emancipation hindered by men who protect her virginity and honour, making her to live according to the Islamic doctrines and eventually forcing her to marry a man whom she did not choose (Dalibert 2014). These representations suggest that gender-based violence, and especially sexual violence, remains the group characteristic of foreign and Muslim men, and as such is both exotic and archaic and therefore does not apply to the majority population (Fassin 2007).

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[20] Two works deal directly with the topic of gang rapes in the suburbs and denounce the culture of violence and male chauvinism of certain suburbs: the movie *La Squale*, directed by Fabrice Genestal and released in 2000 and *Dans l'enfer des tournantes* (2002, Paris: Denoël), an autobiographical novel by Samira Bellil.

[21] On the media construction and sociological reality of 'gang rapes' see: Hamel, C. 2003. "Faire tourner les meufs". Les viols collectifs: discours des médias et des agresseurs. *Gradhiva*. (33), pp.85-92 and Mucchielli, L. 2005. *Le scandale des "tournantes". Dérives médiatiques, contre-enquête sociologique.* Paris: La Découverte.

The event commonly referred to as 'headscarf controversy'[22] marked another important milestone in the visibility of the French Muslims in the media. The framing of the figure of the veiled Muslim girl, one of the few female representations appearing in the media spotlight next to those of the immigrant worker, North African, Arab and beur, is based on a polemical vision of Islam and as such, according to De Galembert (2009), plays into "the dynamics of stigmatisation that are all the more operative in that they concern dominated populations." De Galembert also points out that one of the side effects of the first headscarf debate was that the Muslim personalities – most of them were leaders of the faith-based organisations that emerged in the 1980s and were encouraged by the authorities to take part in the creation of the national body representing all French Muslims, the future *Conseil français du culte musulman* – were called upon to speak on behalf of the 'Muslim community', which significantly contributed to its formation and to legitimating its spokespersons (Ibid.). First acclaimed, these personalities were later criticised for their ambiguous relations with the government – once their status officialised, they were looking for consensual arrangements of polemical issues –, for their vacillation between religious and political roles, and a constant lack of representativeness. On the other hand, while they allowed the experts and intellectual elite to be heard, the media did not give the floor to the main protagonists: schoolteachers, pupils and girls wearing the hijab[23]. The headscarf affair illustrates how biased reporting which gives voice only to the detractors and disqualifies its opponents, can result in passing a repressive law (Tévanian 2005).

The discursive construction of hijab as a symbol of sexism, bigotry and backwardness is ambivalent since it operates on several levels: **the women wearing a hijab are alternatively put**

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[22] The first controversy around the headscarf in France dates back to the late 1980s; in 1989, three schoolgirls from Creil arrived at school wearing headscarves and refused to remove them in class. Despite mediation between the principal, the girls' father, and religious representatives, no agreement was found. The girls were not allowed to attend classes until they removed their headscarves, so they eventually left the school. The second headscarf controversy emerged in September 2003. Two sisters Alma and Lila Lévy were excluded from the grammar school in Aubervilliers in October 2003 for having refused to remove their headscarf at the school's premises. Since the girls' father was a lawyer close to the anti-racist movements MRAP, it gave the case an unexpected anti-discrimination twist and significant press coverage. In the height of the hijab debate in 2003, almost 600 articles were published by the daily *Le Monde* alone.

[23] See Winter, B. 2008. *Hijab & the republic: Uncovering the French headscarf debate*. New York: Syracuse University Press discussing the governmental instrumentalization of protection of women's rights and pro-ban feminist movements such as Ni putes ni soumises during the **consultation.**

in the role of victim and culprit. While designated as victims of sexism and male oppression, the veiled women have been recently more frequently associated with fundamentalism (Cordelier 2015). This was even more the case since reports about French teenage girls and women drawn to jihad and leaving for Syria hit the news. The media coverage of the terrorist attacks also shaped the public perception of Muslim women - they were assigned a new, more threatening identity. In the aftermath of the thwarted terrorist attacks in September 2016, whose authors were dubbed "female jihadist commando" (Voiture aux bonbonnes 2016), media warned against "the feminine jihad [that] continues to evolve" (Egré 2016).

Amiraux (2009) remarks that most terms associated with the headscarf belong to the lexical field related to 'drama' (*drame*). The standoff between the covered schoolgirls and various institutions are described as 'the school in crisis', 'the Republic challenged' or 'the need to return to a school as sanctuary'. The dramatization, provoking fear and rejection, had an emotional and mobilising effect on the audience (Ibid.). The legacy of the 1905 law played an important role in both affairs (1989 and 2003); it resulted in the law banning religious symbols from state schools and reaffirmed the state's principles of secularism.[24] However, *laïcité* is frequently evoked by those who want to elude accusations of racism and Islamophobia.

The hijab and other religious practices seen as assertion of Muslim identity in the public space[25] have been repeatedly used to point at as a form of **religious fundamentalism and the non-respect of France's republican and secular values**. In 2010 president Sarkozy initiated a debate on 'national identity' which in reality served to denounce **incompatibility of Islam and especially its visible symbols, and France**. During a heated debate at the National Assembly, which resulted

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[24] The law of 15th March 2004 banned wearing symbols and clothes manifesting a religious affiliation in schools, colleges and high schools. This law, perceived as an extension of the concept of secularism, seems to have added to the overall confusion (should *laïcité* be used to limit the power of the institutions or 'standardize' the public?) and is often evoked to legitimize anti-Muslim prejudice and discrimination.

[25] Many French Muslim women understand hijab as a means of reshaping the perception of Muslim female identity and eradicating misconceptions about them. Rather than conforming to a normative order, women who choose to wear a hijab do so out of non-conformism – against the societal and family norms (Laborde 2006). The injunctions on Muslims to make their religious practices private – hijab worn by staff in private crèches was outlawed in 2011, headscarf ban in university was discussed in 2013, halal food in school canteens was complained about in 2012 and 2015, etc. – is perceived by the latter as an assertion of identity norms of the dominant group.

in a law banning the full veil in 2011, politicians from across the political spectrum portrayed niqab as "backward, uncivilized, extremist, and uniformly misogynist" (Fredette 2014:7). The ban was considered to be a means of attracting right-wing voters or a mere distraction technique – controversial themes always come in handy when the government wants to divert public attention from unpopular reforms or is short of real projects.

The 9/11 terrorist attacks were a turning point: from this moment on the media coverage of Islam-related issues changed dramatically. They were increasingly **treated as cultural incompatibilities, fuelling prejudice and hostility**. Negative perceptions of Islam dominated all mainstream media ever since. Anti-Muslim hatred, caused by stereotypical portrayal of Muslims, became even more widespread as the media coverage of an alleged progression of political Islam gained ground. Muslims were once again framed as both **'enemy within'** and **'outside enemy'**. In the aftermath of the attacks, the French media described the events on a number of occasions as an act of war[26] not only to convey the unacceptability of the attacks but also to set them into the framework supporting the idea of the clash of civilisations (Ramel 2008). The coverage of the 9/11 and the 2015 Paris attacks bore a lot of similarities. Most national dailies used frequent references to the lexical field of war when describing the attacks.[27] France was described as a "battlefield" (Barluet 2015) where a new type of conflict (Guibert, Seelow 2015) broke out.

In a similar way as in the aftermath of the Charlie Hebdo shootings, the government called on the media to respect national unity and to avoid outright accusations of Muslims and Islam. They nevertheless constructed their discourse around dichotomous logic of inclusion and exclusion by **opposing 'good' (integrated and respectful of French values) and 'bad' (fundamentalist) Muslims**. The categories thus contributed to essentialisation and stigmatisation of all French Muslims. The criminalising discourse which associates Muslims with a range of threats frequently reappears when security measures against this population need to be strengthened.

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[26] "Third World War" (Le Monde, 12 September), "a new war", "a total war" (Le Figaro, 12 September), "war on the West" (L'Express, 13 September), "state of war" (Le Point 14 September).

[27] "The war in the middle of Paris" (Le Figaro, 14 November 2015), "It's the war" (Le Monde, 16 November 2015), "Hollande, the politics in the time of war" (Le Monde, 17 November 2015), "When the youth of France enters war" (Le Figaro, 17 November 2015), "The war continues" (Le Figaro, 19 November 2015).

They have served in the past as a justification for abusive stop-and-search practices[28] and recently to validate enlarged police powers under the state of emergency – itself a policy acting as a vehicle for narratives of hatred – in force since Paris terrorist attacks in November 2015.[29]

6. **Experiences of discrimination in everyday life**

Inexistence of national statistics and the reluctance to elaborate religious and ethnic categories is linked to the tradition in French sociology, itself linked to particular modalities of the conception of the French citizenship, whose vocation is universal and transcends particular belongings (Schnapper 2008). Belonging to the nation presupposes that the citizen has no regional, ethnic or national origin and no religion. The law of 6 January 1978 formally prohibits collecting and processing personal data that reveal, directly or indirectly, racial origins, political, philosophical or religious opinions or trade union affiliation without the consent of the person concerned. Those in favour of ethnic statistics argue that their absence makes it difficult to assess the scale of racism and discrimination (Meron 2009). Others fear that misuse and erroneous interpretation could lead to stigmatisation and othering of certain populations (De Rudder, Vourc'h 2007).

Though not allowed to record ethnicity of the victims, the statistical data on crime, collected by the Ministry of the Interior since the 1990s, provide some understanding about trends and evolution of racism in France. The collected data concern racist, anti-Semitic and since recently also anti-Muslim and anti-Christian acts aimed at persons, groups or places of worship. Yet, the accuracy of the statistical data depends not only on the capacity of the law enforcement officials to accurately categorise the incident but also on whether the victims are encouraged and given

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[28] ID checks concern particularly young people (40% of 18-24 year olds were checked during the last 5 years) and those "perceived as black, Arab / Maghreb": 80% have been checked at least once (Défenseur des droits 2017). In November 2016 the systematic stop-and-search by the police was ruled discriminatory as based on racial profiling.

[29] Emergency powers allow the police to search homes and place people under house arrest without prior judicial approval. Between November 2015 and February 2016, 3,200 raids were carried out and between 350 and 400 people were placed under house arrest. Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and Rights Defender raised concerns about human rights and rule of law violations and abuses targeting Muslim populations.

means to report it. The discrepancy between the official data and the data compiled by independent NGOs such as the CCIF, is due to different methodologies they use: while the government figures take into account only the complaints filed by the victims, the CCIF records also acts of discrimination and acts of institutional racism – cases of discrimination by civil servants within public institutions. Asal and Mohammed (2014) argue that the ever-rising number of reported anti-Muslim incidents is likely due to the higher media profile of the organisation since 2012 and does not reflect a profound change in behaviours. It is, nevertheless, important to note that a survey conducted by the CCIF (2014) shows that only 20% of acts of Islamophobia are reported and that most respondents identify anti-Muslim media and political discourse as the primary cause of Islamophobia. Peaks of recorded incidents are concurrent with significant global events and public debates on Muslim religious practices (Ibid.). Ameli, Merali and Shahghasemi (2012) argue that otherisation of Muslims by politicians and mainstream media affects the mentality of the general population and makes Muslims more prone to physical and verbal attacks and Islamophobia.

Education is one of the areas where Muslims experience most discrimination. Inequalities that children of immigrant background face are most of the time linked to the social class they belong to. Muslim children from disadvantaged neighbourhoods are often discouraged from pursuing higher education, let alone attending elite schools, which further reduces their chances for a decent job (Dhume, Hamdani 2013). The way teachers interact with children is also determined by the origin of the latter. Studies (Zimmermann 1978) show that teachers feel a less emotional bond with pupils perceived as North African. More importantly, it is at school that descendants of immigrants are ethnicised, perceived and treated as foreigners by their classmates, teachers and school counsellors for the first time. This sort of othering fosters a feeling of alienation, which can either promote identification to failure, or conversely, an increased combativeness (Dhume, Hamdani 2013).

The ban on religious symbols (among which Islamic headscarves) in schools intensified the prevalent patterns of exclusion experienced by Muslims in education and to this day continues to foster a climate of mistrust: the re-emergence of headscarves among Muslim girls was

construed as a resurgence of rigorist and radical interpretation of Islam, eventually leading to terrorism. We demonstrated in the previous sub-section that the proposal provoked public discussions whether such legislation was needed at the cost of stigmatising an entire religious community. Weil (2005) argues that hijab has become not a sign of individual liberty but a tool of politicised religious groups which use schools as their principal battlefield and the 2004 law was voted with the aim to protect young Muslim girls from the religious pressures of their fellow believers. Twisted and erroneous understanding of *laïcité* and of the 2004 ban causes 'demands for religious neutrality' not only on the school premises but also in all educational contexts. The findings of the IHRC report (2009) show that the ban on religious symbols at schools had a knock on effect on the employment of Muslim women wearing headscarf in the public and private sector; many of them were dismissed on the grounds of business needs or for having breached the disciplinary rules. The CCIF reports have regularly (since 2005) exposed cases of veiled Muslim mothers forbidden from participating in school outings, sanctions against students wearing a skirt too long, school cafeterias inciting children to eat meat and refusing to serve a replacement vegetarian meal, frequent attempts to extend the scope of the ban to universities and public institutions, etc. (CCIF 2008, 2015). The pressure on Muslim schoolchildren to 'appear secular' and adhere to the republican values has intensified after the Charlie Hebdo shootings and Paris attacks (CCIF 2015). The public debate was shaped in a way constantly opposing Islam and laïcité. Schoolchildren, in one case as young as eight years old, were accused by teachers of condoning terrorism if they refused to take part in government-decreed minute of silence or criticised the Charlie Hebdo cartoons mocking Muslims.[30] Such practices and insistence on secularism as a prerequisite for integration represent a threat to social cohesion for instead of inducing a feeling of belonging, they provoke community withdrawal (Dhume, Hamdani 2013).

It should also be noted that schools with a high rate of pupils of immigrant origin, perceived as 'ghetto schools', traditionally tend to dissuade higher social classes. Despite strict districting

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[30] The counterterrorism law passed in November 2014 brought tighter surveillance of the Internet and more severe criminal sanctions for glorification of terrorism both online and offline. At least 69 persons were arrested for "defence of terrorism" in the wake of Charlie Hebdo shootings 2015, some of them for making ironic or offensive comments on social networks. French Muslim populations perceived the prosecutions and convictions carried out under the new legislation as a crackdown on free speech. Amnesty International (2015) considered that the vague definition of "defence of terrorism" might lead to criminalization of statements that did not incite to violence or terrorism.

(*carte scolaire*) meant to ensure that students attend schools on the basis of residence, more and more privileged parents pull their children out of such schools. As a result, the lack of social and ethnic diversity (*mixité*) in certain areas leads to their progressive ghettoisation (Dupuis 2009). Since underperformance in segregated schools is much higher than the average (Dhume, Hamdani 2013), Muslim students are often confined to the category of dull students without ambition, all the more so if they originate from 'sensitive urban areas'. In fact, the place of residence is perceived as a potential source of stigmatisation, such that it made the French Senate recognise the territorial discrimination in 2014 (Zappi 2014). The suburbs continue to be perceived as territories inhabited by lower social classes of immigrant origin where the process of integration has failed.

Limited access to quality education and frequent school failure – which would be more likely for boys of Algerian and Turkish origin (39% obtained high school diploma compared to 67% of the general population of the 20-35 year olds, Beauchemin, Hamel & Simon 2010) – have an impact on immigrants' and their descendants' access to job market. What is more, college dropout among students of North African descent allegedly reaches 50% and makes their employability even more uncertain (Dhume, Hamdani 2013). North Africans need twice as much time as the majority population to find a stable job, with North African girls suffering on two counts – because of their gender and immigrant background (Okba 2012)., As the before mentioned CV experiment (Adida, Laitin & Valfort 2010) confirmed, Muslim job applicants are subject to discrimination in access to employment; Muslim candidates are two and a half times less likely to get a job interview than their Christian counterparts.[31] Discrimination represents a barrier to their effective economic integration and has implications for the income of Muslim families: second-generation Muslim households earn on average 400 € per month less than comparable Christian households. Another experiment (Valfort 2015) on religious discrimination confirmed that being perceived as Muslim is a significant factor of discrimination in the French labour market: if they appear religious Muslim male applicants have to send out four times as many

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[31] The CV experiment consisted in sending out three comparable fictitious CVs: two of them from women of Senegalese origin (chosen because relatively ancient and less associated with Islam) – Khadija (Muslim) and Marie (Christian) – and the third from an ethnic French woman called Aurélie Ménard, used as a "reference candidate". Besides details signaling religious identity of the candidates (work and volunteer experience) their CVs were identical. While Marie received a positive response rate of 21%, Khadija's positive response rate was only 8%.

CVs as their Catholic counterparts[32] and experience even more discrimination when they appear outstanding. The assumptions that Muslims attach more importance to religion and have a more traditional view of gender roles are the source of discrimination. In fact, employers fear that if they hire a Muslim they will have to accommodate his religious demands and face tensions between male and female employees. Presence of Muslim employees in the workplace is therefore perceived as a cultural threat to the principles the French hold dear: the separation of church and state and gender equality (Ibid.)

The religious extremist trope gained notoriety with the baggage handler case (Bagagistes musulmans de Roissy 2008), which saw the prefecture of Seine-Saint-Denis take away security zone badges from 72 employees at Charles de Gaulle airport suspected of being tied to Islamic terrorist circles. Although none of them was convicted, it helped construct the image of the Muslim employee as a security threat. Surveillance of employees of Muslim background was extended to other high-security sectors such as sensitive military zones or civil nuclear energy where about ten persons a year are refused a security clearance on grounds of radicalisation (Le nucléaire n'échappe pas aux dérives islamistes 2015).

For their part, veiled Muslim women are the most frequent victims of verbal abuse and discrimination in access to services, for their Islamic belonging is made more visible through the hijab.[33] Given the fact these women see their rights challenged because of their headscarf – the argument frequently advanced is that the headscarf is an attempt on secularism[34] and the tenets of Enlightenment philosophy (Laborde 2006) – they see their status socially and politically downgraded. Whether in a hospital, on public transportation or during their leisure activities, they are frequently ordered to remove their headscarf and refused the service if they disobey

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[32] This time, comparable CVs of three young men – Michel, Dov and Mohammed – were sent out to recruiters. All three fictitious characters were born in Beyrouth, attended French schools and had an outstanding profile. While Michel needed to send out 4 CVs in order to get a job interview, Dov had to send out 6 CVs and Mohammed needed to send out as many as 20 CVs.

[33] The CCIF estimates that women make up more than 80% of all victims of Islamophobia (CCIF 2016). According to the CNCDH survey carried out in 2014, 79% of respondents considered the headscarf to be an obstacle to "living together" and 93% of respondents believed that the full veil had no place in the French society (CNCDH 2015).

[34] Secularism tends to be the main concept evoked here. Security along with health and safety are a lot less prevalent in the French debate, which indicates the strength of the *laïcité* argument.

(CCIF 2016). They are often treated as second-class undeserving citizens and commanded to 'return to their country' (Ibid.). The hysteria that accompanied the burkini controversy in summer 2016 further trivialised the racist and Islamophobic views. Though the burkini ban was lifted and the practice dismissed as a violation of fundamental freedoms, the calls for Muslims to display their faith in the public space in a more "discreet" way multiplied (Clavel 2016). Secularism, or rather its perverted form that bullies a particular faith community (in this case Muslims) for practices running counter the 'French identity', has found new adepts in France in recent years. The rise of the Front National – the self-proclaimed champion of French secular values –, which has set the tone of the political debate, made the right and left wing politicians tempted to attract these voters and normalise the official racist and Islamophobic discourse.

7. **Concluding remarks**

French Muslim populations are frequently described in a repetitious and circular discussion between state institutions, law and policy, media, politicians, and public intellectuals in a number of demonised and stigmatised ways. The public and media discourse on French Muslims are framed by stereotypical perceptions and representations that have emerged in the recent years as a result of local, national and global events and trends. The present report offers an attempt to assess the dominant anti-Muslim narratives in reference to the current framing of political and media discourse on Muslims in France. On the basis of findings of the report, we attempted to rank the dominant anti-Muslim narratives in order of frequency and impact on the Muslim communities as follows.

The narrative that identified Muslims as a **security threat (1)** by establishing the **link between Islam and Islamic fundamentalism (2)**, developed in the 1990s in relation to acts of terrorism carried out in France by the GIA. This narrative was internalised by the general public and in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks provoked an unprecedented backlash towards members of the Muslim communities. Moreover, as the fight against global terrorism became central in the post-9/11 political context, the image of Muslims as **terrorist sympathisers (3)** emerged as

dominant representation of Muslims held by non-Muslims in France and even more so with the outbreak of the Syrian civil war and the attacks in Paris and Nice.

French Muslims are regularly portrayed and discussed as **unwilling or unable to integrate into French society (4)**. Through references to the colonial history, immigration and elements of foreign and domestic policy linked to the Muslim populations, the latter became increasingly portrayed as **a threat to French national identity (5)**. French Muslims' sense of belonging and loyalty are constantly questioned whenever they identify as believers. Public debates premised on the need to address Muslim integration problems clearly indicate that Muslims continue to be perceived as **illegitimate and not fully French (6)**. Whatever its cause, any geopolitical or social event involving persons of Arabic or Muslim background inevitably triggers stigmatising comments on Islam and its place in France as if all Muslims formed a distinct and homogeneous community.

The principle of *laïcité*, whose role is to protect the freedom of belief, authorises public manifestation of one's religious affiliation provided that it does not violate public order. This principle is the object of constant manipulation by certain politicians and sections of media so as to categorise visible **religious symbols as an underhanded attempt on secularism (7)**. Over time, the Islamic headscarf came to be viewed as a threat to secular values and an outlet for political Islam. The women wearing it are perceived as **oppressed victims (8)** of the patriarchal system and sexist religious doctrines and demonised if they advance the argument that the headscarf is an expression of their religiosity. The Islamic headscarf battle gained an increasingly political character, and the ban on religious symbols at schools (2004) became a 'flagship' policy of the French political class intending to preserve the values of the Republic and of secularism threatened by Islamist groups.

The progression of the extreme right and numerous episodes of violence in the suburbs through the 1980s resulted in a progressive reclassification of the problem of immigration as a domestic security problem. Muslim suburban youths were from then on framed as **social and economic**

outcasts (9) rejecting the codes and values of the wider community and **resorting to radical forms of Islamism or to violence (10)** against authorities. When riots broke out in 2005, political leaders and media suggested that the majority of rioters were well known delinquents and even made a connection between the rioters and the so-called extremists.

Though general public seems to be better informed about Islam and different dynamics within Muslim communities, certain stereotypes established by media and politicians about Muslims still persist . Negative characteristics attributed to Muslim women (considered **oppressed, backward and living in seclusion**) (11) and men (viewed as **religious, traditionalist, intolerant to diversity, oversexed**) (12) lead to prejudice, verbal abuse and hostility, but also to unfair treatment and discrimination.

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