

INTEGRATION AND MUSLIM IDENTITY IN EUROPE

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INTEGRATION AND MUSLIM IDENTITY IN EUROPE

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCMTF	Coordinating Committee of French Turkish Muslims
CFCM	French Council of the Muslim Faith
EU	European Union
FFAIACA	French Federation of Islamic Association of Africa, Comoro, and the Antilles
FIS	Islamic Salvation Front
FNMF	National Federation of French Muslims
GIA	Armed Islamic Group
UMP	Union for a Popular Movement
UOIF	Union of Islamic Organizations

SUMMARY

The portrayal of collective identity of Muslim populations in Europe presents an increasingly important issue within identity politics. While European Muslims represent a diverse population that has experienced longstanding socio-political concerns, they are also increasingly portrayed in light of wider global perceptions of Islam in a post-9/11 era. Consequently, there is growing concern over a confusing of such pre-existing domestic issues and larger international problems of radical fundamentalism and Islamic terrorism. The misrepresentation of European Muslims as linked to such issues in turn often exacerbates domestic problems and contributes to an evolving sense of oppositional Muslim identity in Europe. In light of these concerns over inaccurate depictions of Muslims and their harmful effects, many of which will be expounded upon below, a more critical and deliberate approach is necessary in scholarly assessments of Muslim populations.

This thesis examines the situation of European Muslims amidst such portrayals of commonality and international influence. After discussing some facets of political identities and critiquing other approaches to this issue, the study focuses on the case of Muslims in France. Using the lens of universalism, I examine the context of Muslims in France and evaluate the accuracy of assertions of common identity. After illustrating the diversity of French Muslims, the study then turns to the situation of Muslims in Europe, comparing the French case with those of Great Britain and Germany. Finally, it returns to the recent French national identity debate for concluding remarks. The study demonstrates that, while portrayals of Muslims as a uniform threat to European identity are at present inaccurate and misleading, such assertions also carry potentially harmful effects in stigmatizing Muslims and contributing to oppositional identity formation.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Recently, identity politics, an interdisciplinary subfield that draws scholars from sociology, anthropology, political science, and cultural studies, has become an increasingly important subject of inquiry. As the world evolves into an ever more tightly knit global community, questions of how people see themselves and each other – and become incited to violence in the name of one or the other – become quite important. Many scholars present ideas of opposing sources of identity, raising important questions about the origins and development of political and cultural identity and the ways in which these conceptions of identity influence contemporary issues.

An increasingly important subject in identity politics is the portrayal of collective identity of Muslim populations in Europe. While European Muslims represent a diverse population that has experienced longstanding socio-political concerns, they are also increasingly portrayed in light of wider global perceptions of Islam in a post-9/11 era. Consequently, there is growing concern over a confusing of such pre-existing domestic issues and larger international problems of radical fundamentalism and Islamic terrorism. The misrepresentation of European Muslims as linked to such issues in turn often exacerbates domestic problems and contributes to an evolving sense of oppositional Muslim identity in Europe. In light of these concerns over inaccurate depictions and their harmful effects, many of which will be expounded upon below, a more critical and deliberate approach is necessary in scholarly assessments of Muslim populations.

Sources of Political Identity

Nationalism

Within the growing body of identity literature, scholars have focused on several sources of identity. Many insist on the predominance of nationalism as the primary vehicle of political identity in the modern era. In his seminal work, *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson asserts that conceptions of the nation have dominated forms of political identity since they replaced religious and monarchical systems of rule in the wake of the Enlightenment.¹ He describes the nation as a socially constructed body imagined by a community of members who perceive themselves to be bound by a common link. Anderson claims that these communities are necessarily imagined, since citizens will never feasibly meet one another, and that they are also bounded by a sense of exclusivity and sovereignty in that a dynastic monarchy may not claim control over those who belong within them. Anderson traces the predominance of the nation to the conditions of the industrial revolution, which he claims enabled its development and diffusion.

While some such as Anderson see value in national identity and portray the focus on nationalism in a fairly positive light, others such as Ernest Gellner and Eric Hobsbawm have been more critical of the emphasis on the nation as sole political unit. Hobsbawm is particularly cautious of nationalism and the principle of national self-determination, viewing this as too easily driven by the political will of a select group of

¹ Anderson, Benedict R, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. (London: Verso, 2006)

upper class elites.² Other Marxist thinkers similarly emphasize the importance of class identity over that of the nation.

Ethnicity

Although Anderson's conception of nations as 'imagined communities' finds no need for ethnic ties between citizens necessarily, others focus on the importance of ethnicity in forming collective identity. Anthony Smith also figures heavily in the national identity discussion, challenging Anderson's assertion that the nation exists as a product of modernity. Smith asserts that ancient nations have also existed and sees remnants of ethnic elements that survive in modern ones.³ He argues that characteristics of ethnic identity such as religion, customs, culture, kinship, ancestry, and homeland, can form the basis of nations as "ethnies," and asserts that Anderson's emphasis on the "imagined" nature of nations obscures these more tangible links that often exist beneath them. Another eminent figure in the field of ethnic identity is Fredrik Barth, whose view of ethnic groups as interconnected, and often even interdependent, challenges traditional conceptions of ethnicities as bounded and fixed entities.⁴ He crafts a sense of ethnic identity as constructed, fluid, and based on concepts of inclusion and exclusion, ideas which have greatly influenced successive identity scholars. Similarly, another common issue in this area centers on whether ethnic and national identities are formed consciously⁵ or whether they emerge naturally from 'primordial' identities of cultural communities, stemming from collective experiences and contributing to the furthering of

² Hobsbawm, E. J, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*. (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1992)

³ Smith, Anthony D. *The Antiquity of Nations* (Oxford: Polity, 2004)

⁴ Barth, Fredrik, Editor. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969)

⁵ Gellner, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism* (Malden: Blackwell, 2006)

common experience.⁶ Others, while noting the importance of ethnic identity, have been more wary of a focus on this identity form. John Rex has written on the potential for exploitation of ethnic identities for political gain⁷ while Edward Said and other postcolonial scholars criticize ethnocentrism as a western phenomenon and question the authority of scholars to classify such forms of identity.⁸

Challenging National Identity

While, as Smith asserts, ethnicity can form the basis of nationality, it can also exist as a challenge to national identity through the presence of ethnic minorities. This is merely one example of alternative identity sources, which many argue challenge, from both above and below the national level, the emphasis on the dominance of national identity. Thomas Hylland Eriksen examines ethnic subnational identities, which often remain despite the state's efforts to incorporate them or despite members' own efforts to integrate, which can be met with segregation politics.⁹ Much as Barthe does, Eriksen emphasizes the relationships between minority and majority ethnic identities as well as their fluidity and malleability. Other subnational challenges to national identity can form around social movements, which build identity around an existing feature of collective identity or the mobilization around a shared cause, as well as regional or even state identities.¹⁰

Additional challenges to national identity are presented by some who discuss the development of other structured identities above the national level. With the increasing presence of regional political bodies such as the European Union (EU), many place a

⁶ Geertz, Clifford *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973)

⁷ Rex, John. *Ethnic Minorities in the Modern Nation State* (New York: MacMillan, 1996)

⁸ Said, Edward. *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (Vintage Books. 1979)

⁹ Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. *Ethnicity and Nationalism* (London: Pluto Press. 2002)

¹⁰ Tilly, Charles. *Social Movements, 1768-2004* (Colorado: Paradigm. 2004)

growing emphasis on the development of corresponding supranational identities.¹¹ The emergence of fluid borders with the Schengen Agreement and the cultivation of European citizenship and identity brings issues traditionally reserved to the state to the supranational level along with challenges to national identities.¹²

Other scholars point to emerging transnational identities as further challenges to nationalism. Migration presents one potential source of this type of challenge, as newcomers bring foreign cultures and backgrounds into the traditional realm of the nation. While immigrants can exist within a national context as a minority ethnic group, increasingly, facilitated by advanced transportation and telecommunication technologies, many migrants maintain strong transnational ties to more than one home country, blurring the relevance of proximity and territoriality to identity cultivation.¹³ This concept is supported by Randolphe Bourne, whose view of nationality focuses on the connection between a person and the “spiritual country” of his or her culture rather than physical location.¹⁴ Transnational identity projection is also increasingly seen with multinational corporations, international non-governmental organizations, and other groups that act as proponents of culture across the world. Religion provides yet another source of transnational identity, with the bonds of Catholicism, Islam, and Judaism as specific examples of a global transnational ideology transcending national borders.¹⁵

¹¹ Checkel, Jeffrey T., and Anthony J. Katzenstein. *European Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009)

¹² Feldblum, Miriam. *Reconstructing Citizenship: the Politics of Nationality Reform and Immigration in Contemporary France* (Albany: State University of New York, 1999)

¹³ Glick Schiller, N., L. Basch and C. Blanc Szanton. “From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration.” *Anthropology Quarterly*. 68 (1995): 48

¹⁴ Bourne, Randolphe, Randolphe Silliman Bourne, and Olaf Hansen. *The Radical Will: Selected Writings, 1911-1918* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992)

¹⁵ Schmidt, Garbi. “The Transnational Umma: Myth or Reality? Examples from the Western Diaspora,” *The Muslim World* 95 (2005) 129

Clash of Civilizations and Singular Identity

Transnational religious and cultural identity forms the basis for Samuel Huntington's now infamous "clash of civilizations" theory. In *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Huntington posits that future conflicts will emerge mainly around what he terms 'civilizational' identities, which he sees as the highest form of cultural and religious identity.¹⁶ He divides countries into categories of such civilizations, arguing that, in a post-Cold War era, the world will revert back to a system where conflict arises based on these civilizational identities rather than nationality. Particularly notorious has been Huntington's claim that "Islam has bloody borders." Huntington classifies Islamic civilization as one of two "challenger civilizations," due to a disproportionately young population, an Islamic resurgence, and this civilization's simultaneous borders with so many other civilizations. Huntington asserts that civilizational conflicts are "particularly prevalent between Muslims and non-Muslims," dating this history of conflict to the initial Muslim invasion of Europe and tracing it through the centuries. He points to exclusive Western Christian and Islamic claims to universalism as the reason for an increased likelihood of violence between these civilizations.

Controversial assertions such as these have prompted many critiques of the Clash of Civilizations theory. Some critics have accused Huntington of perpetuating an aggressive stereotype that legitimates existing conflict.¹⁷ Many others argue against such civilizational categories altogether, asserting that they fail to account for positive interaction and interdependence across civilizational lines and neglect to capture the

¹⁶ Huntington, Samuel. "The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order," *Foreign Affairs* (Summer, 1993)

¹⁷ Said, Edward. "The Clash of Ignorance," *The Nation*. (October, 2003), <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20011022/said>

relational and interactive aspects of culture, where values often transcend such divisions. Internal difference within civilizations is also ignored in the theory.¹⁸ Furthermore, Huntington's broad claims do not address trans-civilizational elements, such as populations with roots in one civilization and citizenship in another. Despite this lacuna, his ideas have been extended to issues in this realm, as will be shown later.

Beyond the Clash of Civilizations

Amartya Sen directly challenges Huntington's broad conceptions of identity based in 'civilizations' in his book, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*. Sen's own notion of identity is perhaps less rigid than others, which allows for his assertion that all people simultaneously embody a myriad of identities based on their various affiliations, interests, and opinions.¹⁹ Sen dismantles the concept of a singular cultural identity, stating that one may simultaneously be "without any contradiction, an American citizen, of Caribbean origin, with African ancestry, a Christian, a liberal, a woman, a vegetarian, a long-distance runner, a historian, a schoolteacher, a novelist, a feminist, a heterosexual, a believer in gay and lesbian rights, a theater lover, an environmental activist, a tennis fan, [and] a jazz musician."²⁰ According to Sen, civilizational identity is neither singular nor exclusive, nor does it necessarily determine one's destiny. The partitioning of the world into civilizations, he says fails to capture the "messiness" of true human identity.

In fact, Sen argues it is this insistence on singular, exclusive identities and their manipulation and exploitation that often results in many of today's conflicts. The focus on one characteristic, such as religion or culture, to the exclusion of others constitutes

¹⁸ Berman, Paul. *Terror and Liberalism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003)

¹⁹ Sen, Amartya, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006)

²⁰ Sen, Amartya, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006)

according to Sen a “minimization” of human beings and their complex characteristics and beliefs. This minimization, Sen asserts, is dangerous for several reasons. For one thing, minimizing people to one quality facilitates the creation of an enemy in others. Viewing people as merely one aspect of identity and not as a collection of many characteristics, some of which may overlap and be shared with others, limits one’s ability to identify and empathize and permits an easier view of others as inherently and distinctly different.

Furthermore, minimized identities can easily be manipulated. Sen suggests that a sense of persecution of an aspect of identity leads to increased identification with that quality and an easier view of non-members as “other.” This principle can be exploited by those within or outside of a group who seek to garner support for a cause. In support of this idea, Sen discusses the role of identity reduction in the Rwandan genocide, the Muslim-Hindu violence of India, and Nazi Germany, showing how in each case the idea of religious identity was deliberately manipulated to serve a violent purpose. Sen asserts that in order to escape this tendency towards identity-based conflict, human beings must be viewed as the fundamentally complex creatures they are, with the acknowledgment that they are more than one aspect of their identity. For even in instances where cultural or ethnic identity is exploited for conflict, people continue to retain multiple identities. Thus, while "a Hutu laborer from Kigali may be pressured to see himself only as a Hutu and incited to kill Tutsis . . . he is not only a Hutu, but also a Kigalian, a Rwandan, an African, a laborer and a human being."²¹ While critics of Sen bemoan his failure to explain the mechanisms by which recognition of complex identity composition will result in decreased conflict, his theory nonetheless presents some interesting ideas which hold relevance in the world today.

²¹ Sen, Amartya, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006)

Applying Theories of Identity: Muslims in Europe

With such ideas of identity gaining salience in recent years, theoretical identity debates offer an interesting perspective from which to examine contemporary issues and conflicts. Perhaps nowhere is this identity literature more relevant than, quite ironically, in what most accept to be the very birthplace of the nation itself: Western Europe. Recently, ongoing identity debates have taken center stage, with European national identities challenged by subnational, transnational, and supranational elements. From the supranational level, much anxiety has been raised over the question of a European identity and whether this could pose a challenge to nationalism.²² From the subnational and transnational level, Europe has faced a considerable amount of tension around its growing Muslim population. This issue has proven to be a contentious one within many countries and has sparked identity debates on the national and European levels. The dynamics of this situation and the important implications for identity politics render it an interesting focus for a discussion of identity issues.

Much of today's European Muslim population has roots in the waves of immigration that followed the World Wars and brought tens of thousands of new immigrants to Europe from many predominantly Muslim countries in North Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Years after this initial immigration, a great portion of this population, now second and third generations deep, remains visibly unintegrated into European society. Muslims in Europe often live physically separated in suburban areas

²² Checkel, Jeffrey T., and Anthony J. Katzenstein. *European Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2009)

around large cities, where, frequently due to discrimination, they experience disproportionately higher rates of unemployment, crime, and violence.²³ With this physical separation has also come the perception of an extreme cultural difference and accusations that this population of Muslim immigrants has been less able or less willing to assume “European” identities than previous groups.

Over recent years, tensions between immigrant populations and native Europeans have grown into bouts of riots and violence that have captured the attention of media worldwide. In 2005 rioting broke out in over 300 French cities in response to the deaths of two Arab-French youths who were running from the police. The media portrayed the young Arab French rioters as part of a “Muslim uprising” or “French intifada”²⁴ belying the misconceptions that many have of their Muslim neighbors. Additional chaos and media attention surrounding events elsewhere in Europe such as the Rushdie Affair in Britain, the political cartoon scandal in Denmark, and the murder of Theo Van Gogh in the Netherlands have led to a common perception that efforts to integrate Muslim immigrants into European society have failed miserably.

In the search to frame the issue of the growing Muslim presence in Europe, many have turned to identity concepts. One strong tendency in this, however, has been to view Muslims in Europe through the broad, blanketing lens of the “clash of civilizations” theory rather than with the subtlety that Sen argues is necessary. The continuation of marginalization and sporadic violence has resulted in speculation that immigrants represent an extension of an Islamic culture that is simply incompatible with secular or Christian European ideals. Many seem to have drawn on the themes of Huntington’s

²³ “Muslims in the European Union: Discrimination and Islamophobia” European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia. (EUMC, 2006).

²⁴ Foster, Darren, “Paris Riots: Voices from the Ghetto” (Nov. 17, 2005) http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/blog/2005/11/voices_from_the.html

work, portraying the growing Muslim presence as a natural continuation of centuries-long conflict to “bloodily defin(e) the boundaries of Christianity and Islam.”²⁵

Unfortunately, this tendency to over-generalize based on incidents of violence and civilizational divisions leads to a growing perception of European Muslims as a homogenous group marked by violent radicalization and unbreakable ties to the Arab world. While elements of violence, fundamentalism and transnational links have played a part in the history of integration of Muslims, it has been a minor role and is certainly not indicative of the entire population. Nonetheless even reputable scholars and publications have not escaped the temptation to make overarching claims about European Muslims that quite often border on the ridiculous. For instance one statement that “the common denominator that links them [Muslim immigrants] to the Muslim world is their sympathy for Palestine and Palestinians”²⁶ completely neglects the possibility of variation in political opinion between European Muslims. Others have generalized about a Muslim desire to impose Sharia law in Europe, implying that European Muslims bring with them unseverable ties to a culture shown as inherently less civilized, and that in many cities, “all you ha[ve] to do to travel from a modern, post-Enlightenment democracy to a strict patriarchy out of seventh century Arabia [is] to walk a few blocks.”²⁷ Such portrayals have resulted in the widespread use of the term “Eurabia,” a term coined by Bat Ye’or to portray a Europe that she claims has grown “subservient to the ideology of *jihad* and the Islamic powers that propagate it.”²⁸ Others have contributed to this perception with the

²⁵ Bilefsky, Dan and Ian Fisher, “Doubts on Muslim Integration Rise in Europe,” <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/11/world/europe/11iht-muslims.3121591.html> (accessed Mar. 25, 2010)

²⁶ Taspinar, Omer, “Europe’s Muslim Street,” *Foreign Policy*, (Mar. 26, 2010) http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2003/03middleeast_taspinar.aspx

²⁷ Bawer, Bruce. *Surrender: Appeasing Islam, Sacrificing Freedom* (New York: Random House, 2009)

²⁸ Ye’or, Bat, *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Press, 2005)

notion of “Londonistan,” as a breeding ground for terrorism.²⁹ This kind of rhetoric, which is quickly entering common vocabulary, demonstrates a tendency to view European Muslims as essentially extensions of a very characterized image of the Muslim world. Many of these scholars neglect to mention the distinctions between European Muslims or the thousands who have embraced European life, choosing to focus on depictions of this population as homogenous, radicalized, and dangerous. “Europe's emerging mujahedeen [that] endanger the entire Western world”³⁰ becomes a perception of the norm, rather than the exception. Even less violent portrayals have still generally held to overarching negative stereotypes of Muslims in Europe, often rendering them the scapegoats for other problems. Muslims in Europe have been blamed for a variety of other social ills, from unemployment to population crises to ghettoization to the prediction of the very downfall of Europe itself.³¹

Certainly not all scholars have contributed to the portrayal of Muslims in such a stereotyping manner. Indeed, many have produced comprehensive studies that have shed light on the many complexities of the European Muslim population.³² Others have added the histories of the many European Muslims who have successfully integrated into influential positions in Europe, recounting their experiences and relationships with native

²⁹ Phillips, Melanie, *Londonistan* (New York: Encounter Books, 2006)

³⁰ Leiken, Robert S. “Europe’s Angry Muslims,” *Foreign Affairs* (Jul/Aug. 2005) <http://www.cfr.org/publication/8218/>

³¹ Berlinski, Claire, *Menace in Europe: Why the Continent’s Crisis is America’s, Too* (New York: Random House, 2006)

Gordon, Philip H. “Last Days of Europe: Epitaph for an Old Continent,” *Foreign Affairs* (Sep/Oct, 2007) <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/62736/philip-h-gordon/the-last-days-of-europe-epitaph-for-an-old-continent>

³² For examples, see Laurence, Jonathan and Justin Vaisse. *Integrating Islam; Political and Religious Challenges in Contemporary France* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 2006) or Pauly, Robert, *Islam in Europe: Integration or Marginalization* (New York: Ashgate, 2004)

Europeans.³³ However, the volume of works that conversely portray Muslims in a unifying, negative light continues to greatly influence perceptions and shape the public discourse regarding integration issues by creating a widespread sense of fear and misunderstanding. The rise of such fears, often amounting to a growing “Islamophobia,” contributes to the success of radical right wing parties that demonize immigrants such as France’s Front National, the Dutch Freedom Party, and others who capitalize on misconceptions and fears.

This continued battle over how to conceive of Muslim populations has had implications for identity politics on many levels. Faced with surfacing identity-related issues surrounding the integration of Muslim populations, many countries have turned inward to examine their own conceptions of national identity and citizenship. In this context, the controversial assertions put forth by many scholars regarding the threat of growing Muslim populations have acted as a catalyst for debates on national and European identities.

Perhaps nowhere is this controversy and its links to national identity more apparent than in France, whose traditional preoccupation with national identity verges on obsession. With its tradition of Republican universalism, French political philosophy places unique emphasis on an identity of national citizenship while refusing to acknowledge subnational identities, particularly those concerning religion. The tension between this political history combined with perceptions of a threatening Islamic subnational identity have resulted in several high profile events in recent years, including the ban of religious symbols in schools as well as recent discussions of Islamic dress and national identity debates. In light of the extraordinary weight given to its national identity

³³ Klausen, Jytte, *The Islamic Challenge: Politics and Religion in Western Europe*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005)

and the recent controversy over symbols of Muslim identity, France provides an interesting case study for this examination of interaction between Muslim and national identities. Despite this unique emphasis on identity, however, the issues debated in France are typical of those in wider Europe. Identity debates center on a perceived threat of a Muslim population portrayed as cohesive and similar. In reality, though, French Muslims, as those elsewhere in Europe, present many internal divisions and differences that render them far from uniform.

Overview

In this thesis, I seek to expand on some of these ideas concerning the collective identity of European Muslims. I confront the portrayal of European Muslims as a homogenous threat to European identity using the basis of Sen's concepts of identity as fundamentally multiple and complex. The study focuses on the French case in particular, offering a detailed look at both the challenge of Muslim presence to a conceived national identity as well as the implications of the continued portrayal of Muslims as a homogenous community. I find that, while both French national identity and Muslim identity are shown often as fixed and uniform, neither is as clear cut as portrayed. French conceptions of national identity are marked by historical and contemporary contradictions, while French Muslims experience a plethora of internal divisions that prevent them from exhibiting a homogenous group identity. There is evidence to suggest, however, that subnational identities do exist within France and that these risk growing more cohesive and religion-based with the continued portrayal of the Muslim population in collective religious terms. When taken to the European level, similar tendencies persist. European Muslims exhibit even more internal differences than those in France, with the insistence on their homogeneity resulting in further complications.

This thesis proceeds as follows. The second chapter examines much of the relevant literature concerning the integration of Muslim immigrants in Europe, critiquing

some of the other approaches to the studying of this issue. The third chapter offers an in-depth case study of Muslims in France and the evolution of collective identity within the particularities of French national identity conceptions. Here I use Celestin and DalMolin's framework of 'universalism in crisis' to position the development of Muslim identity within the French context, highlighting several notable events which have shaped perceptions of French Muslims. Chapter four takes a broader, more comparative perspective of Muslim identity at the European level, examining the cases of Muslims in Great Britain and Germany for comparison with the French case and analyzing trends on a wider scale. Finally, chapter five provides a look at the current French national identity debate before offering concluding insights gathered from the study. Overall I find that a lens of identity is the most useful one through which to consider the issues of Muslim integration in Europe, but that assertions of a common Muslim identity, in France and in wider Europe, have been much exaggerated thus far and have led to unhelpful policy trends. I argue, however, that there is potential for the development of a collective Muslim identity in the future, encouraged ironically by the continued portrayal of this group as a unified and homogenous population.

CHAPTER 2

INTEGRATION AND ISLAM IN EUROPE: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Increasingly over the last few decades, Muslim immigration to Europe has arisen as a major issue in European domestic and international politics, prompting many recent studies in related areas. Scholars have approached the subject from a variety of fields, employing an array of methodological and conceptual tools for examining the question of Muslim integration, including comprehensive historical, economic, and social analyses as well as comparisons of national policies, periods of immigration, and immigrants of different origin, many of which point to different causes of tension. Multiple levels of analysis also come into play, with scholars addressing the question at the local, national, European, and wider regional levels. While this variety adds a richness to the debate, it also contributes to the complexity of examining what lies at the heart of the issue. The contention surrounding integration topics becomes apparent in debates over terminology, while the elusiveness of measurement of related concepts remains a challenge for those who enter the debate. Despite a plethora of methodologies and theories, few seem to get at the heart of why Muslim immigrants and their descendants apparently continue to struggle to successfully assimilate into European society. Many of these approaches as well as their benefits and shortfalls are explored here. I argue that an identity framework is the most useful through which to examine issues of Muslim integration in Europe.

Clashes of Islam and Christianity (or Secularism) in Europe

As mentioned earlier, one recurring theme in the literature situates current European conflicts with Muslim populations within a long history of European clashes

with the Muslim world. Part of this line of reasoning emphasizes the consolidating power of religion in this context in bringing together traditionally factious groups against a common group or idea. While scholars seem to generally agree on the influence of Christianity in uniting Europe in the past against the invasion of Muslim forces and draw comparisons between the unifying nature of Christianity in the Middle Ages and the secular European Project today, authors differ on the role of the EU in today's relationship with the Muslim world. While some see the EU as offering a path to integration for Muslim immigrants through minority rights legislation and the possibility of adopting a new "European" identity along with their host societies,³⁴ others view the EU-Muslim relationship as almost inherently antagonistic. In his recent book, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe; Immigration, Islam, and the West*, Christopher Caldwell shows how the European openness and tolerance that allowed for Muslim immigration *en masse* has now become the basis by which immigrants oppose European society.³⁵ He asserts that the unification of Europe now encourages the consolidation of Muslims in the same way it did centuries ago under the Christian faith: by presenting the opposing side with a challenge to predominance in the region. In this logic, rather than making mutual concessions to one another, Muslim immigrants and native Europeans actually reinforce the others' opposition because of their cultural differences in this age-old struggle. In his book, however, Caldwell and others in this camp of literature fall into the 'Clash of Civilizations' trap of making blanket statements about all Muslims in Europe, failing to recognize the differences in this population and perpetuating unhelpful stereotypes based on historical struggle.

³⁴ Pauly, Robert, *Islam in Europe: Integration or Marginalization* (New York: Ashgate, 2004)

³⁵ Caldwell, Christopher, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe: Immigration, Islam and the West* (New York: Random House, 2009)

Exceptionalism of Muslim Immigrants

These allusions to historical tensions between Europeans and Muslims implicitly lead to a more direct debate over whether Muslim immigrants present a distinctively different challenge to Europe compared to other immigrant populations. One study by Alberto, Pattacchini, Veridier and Zedou using British survey data finds that Muslim immigrants to Britain “integrate less and more slowly than non-Muslims” and retain stronger religious identities after decades of life in Britain than do their non-Muslim counterparts, regardless of education and neighborhood segregation.³⁶ This finding seems to support the clash of civilization theories mentioned above. The authors of this study, however, offer no explanation of a causal link and present their findings only as unsupportive of mainstream political movements favoring diversity. Other scholars, such as Manning and Roy, contradict these findings, quantitatively showing that Muslim immigrants in Britain actually integrate no more slowly than those of other backgrounds, and that in fact immigrants from poorer and less democratic countries generally assume a British identity much more quickly than those from first world democracies.³⁷ Qualitative studies also challenge the notion that Muslim immigrants are culturally or religiously hindered from integrating into European society. A study by Hargreaves argues that Muslim immigrants are disadvantaged, not by exceptionalism due to culture or religion, but rather by socio-economic and political changes that make it more difficult to integrate.³⁸ Other studies echo this idea, such as one by Marie-Claude Blanc-Chaléard, which refutes claims of exceptionalism by drawing interesting parallels

³⁶ Alberto Bisin et al., “Are Muslims Different in Terms of Cultural Integration?” *Journal of the European Economic Association*. (Sept. 2007)

³⁷ Manning, Alan and Sanchari Roy, “Culture Clash or Culture Club: The Identity and Attitudes of Immigrants in Britain.” CEP Discussion Paper No 790. Center for Economic Performance. (April, 2007)

³⁸ Hargreaves, Alec G., *Immigration, ‘Race’ and Ethnicity in Contemporary France*. (New York: Routledge, 1995)

between earlier waves of immigration of Italian immigrants to France and the recent Muslim population in terms of discrimination, perceptions of racial differences, and violence, and point rather to differences in colonial histories and changes in national and global circumstances as sources of contemporary conflict.³⁹ Thus, scholars in this area have produced a variety of studies supporting an assortment of contradictory claims about the exceptionalism of Muslim immigrants. Nonetheless most continue the trend to address “Muslims” in a national or international context as the distinctive community in question as though they are an internally consistent group.

Race, Religion, Ethnicity, or Immigration – What Is the Salient Issue?

Within this debate over the exceptionalism of Muslim immigrants, another area centers on which characteristics of today’s groups are the most salient, and whether religion, race or ethnicity lies at the heart of the question of exceptionalism. This discussion also serves to peel away layers of the debate, often rendering a comparison easier to make. Scholars differentiate between the three terms based on their belief of what is preventing successful integration, resulting in a difference in terminology across the debate. Some authors resist calling the issue a ‘Muslim’ question and thus prefer to use ethnic relations terminology.⁴⁰ Others focus on the subject of race over religion or ethnicity, which allows for comparison with the United States or other countries or regions where immigration or minority ethnic populations do not have a large Muslim component. In comparing the U.S. and Europe specifically, some authors focus on race and point to the combination of religious, immigration, and minority issues as the cause

³⁹ Blanc-Chaléard, Marie-Claude. “Old and New Migrants in France: Italians and Algerians,” in *Paths of Integration: Migrants in Western Europe (1880-2004)*. Ed. Leo Lucassen and David Feldman and Jochen Oltmer, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006)

⁴⁰ Hargreaves, Alec G. *Immigration, Race’ and Ethnicity Contemporary France* (New York: Routledge, 1995)

of the particular contention in the European situation.⁴¹ Largely, however, the debate focuses on specifically “Muslim” immigrants, with scholars such as Cesari,⁴² Laurence and Vaisse⁴³ justifying the focus on religion as the central quality used by sociologists in defining the most recent stage of integration and also by members of the population in forming their perceptions. These scholars do not view Islam as the cause of integration difficulty - Laurence and Vaisse strongly assert that it is not - but rather the identifying characteristic of the most recent wave of immigration at this time. By focusing on a single factor, scholars have been able to compare integration success across countries and regions, such as Cesari’s comparison of Muslims in Europe and the U.S., where she explores different policies, perceptions, and identities in both cases.⁴⁴ In addition to adding a practical aspect of comparison, the classifying this wave of immigration as Muslim gets at part of what is at the heart of the debate: that regardless of their place of origin, whether Pakistan, Morocco or Turkey, the populations in question largely share a Muslim faith. This classification though, however neat it may render the situation, may in turn also contribute to the problem by casting the population in question in a single negative light. Nonetheless, the differences in terminology themselves continue to show the many elements of difference that transect broad religious lines and demonstrate some of the difficulty in broadly classifying people according to one religious identity.

⁴¹ Katz, Michael. “Why Don’t American Cities Burn Very Often?” *Journal of Urban History*. Vol. 34. No. 2 (January, 2008)

⁴² Cesari, Jocelyne. *When Islam and Democracy Meet: Muslims in Europe and in the United States* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004)

⁴³ Laurence, Jonathan and Justin Vaisse. *Integrating Islam; Political and Religious Challenges in Contemporary France* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 2006)

⁴⁴ Cesari, Jocelyne. *When Islam and Democracy Meet: Muslims in Europe and in the United States* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004)

Integration Policy: Assimilation vs. Multi-Culturalism

While transatlantic comparisons such as Cesari's prove interesting, most comparative studies contrast different European integration models and their effectiveness. To a large extent the debate in Europe has explored variations in integration models ranging from assimilation to multiculturalism, with the classic comparison between France and Britain. Adrian Favell contrasts these two countries and explains their adherence to opposing models based on what he terms their "public philosophies," or political dialogues through which policies are formed based on national myths.⁴⁵ These philosophies he says become ingrained due to path dependence, resulting in inconsistent and ineffective policies that cannot adapt to changing circumstances.

Other studies show the effects of adherence to various models on the assimilation-multiculturalism spectrum, with varying results. Ersanilli and Koopmans compare integration of Turkish immigrants in France, Germany, and the Netherlands, with the aim of evaluating the effectiveness of national integration models.⁴⁶ By and large, while integration policies certainly have an effect on immigrants and their descendents, none in Europe appears to be seeing much success.⁴⁷ Contradictory results show that, while French universalism is exceptionally rigid in denying a dual identity, more laissez-faire policies in Britain result in the development of parallel societies. Even traditionally hybrid-integration models and traditionally tolerant multicultural societies such as the Netherlands have experienced the effects of serious integration shortcomings. The prevalence of similar integration difficulties across countries despite such different

⁴⁵ Favell, Adrian. *Philosophies of Integration: Immigration and the Idea of Citizenship in France and Britain*. (New York: Palgrave, 1998)

⁴⁶ Ersanilli, Evelyn and Rudd Koopmans. "The Cultural Integration of Turkish Immigrants: A Controlled Comparison." (Presented at 'Dag van de Sociologie,' 2007)

⁴⁷ Alberto Bisin et al., "Are Muslims Different in Terms of Cultural Integration?" *Journal of the European Economic Association*. (Sept. 2007)

integration policies suggests that there must exist either something common to all approaches or a factor beyond integration policy inciting the same problem.

While approaches such as Favell's are useful in exposing some of the "myths" behind conceptions of national identity and integration philosophy, most comparisons of national integration policies have produced few helpful conclusions, since the immigrant populations within them are so different. Even in studies such as Ersanilli and Koopmans', where the origins of immigrants is held constant, while scientifically more sound than others, they are limited in benefit since most populations in question do not fall into this category of rural Turkish immigrants. Nonetheless, this area of study makes important steps in recognizing and illuminating the differences that exist between national contexts to shape the experiences of Muslims within them.

Socioeconomic Factors

Beyond the deficiencies of specific integration models, scholars examine several other factors as barriers to Muslim integration in Europe. Many point to socioeconomic factors as major hindrances to the incorporation of Muslims into society. High unemployment rates plague Muslims across European countries, sometimes up to four times the national average⁴⁸ with marked discrimination being blamed for much of this.⁴⁹ One study done by The Pew Global Attitudes Project shows the greatest concern of Muslims in all European countries surveyed to be unemployment, suggesting that Muslims in Europe face real challenges in this area.⁵⁰ In her comparison of Italian

⁴⁸ Pauly, Robert, *Islam in Europe: Integration or Marginalization* (New York: Ashgate, 2004)

⁴⁹ Cediey, E. and F. Foroni. "Les Discriminations a Raison de "l'Origine" dans les Embauches en France; Une Enquête Nationale par Tests de Discrimination Selon la Methode du Bureau International du Travail." (Organisation Internationale du Travail, 2007)

⁵⁰ Pew Center. "Muslims in Europe: Economic Worries Top Concerns About Religious and Cultural Identity Few Signs of Backlash from Western Europeans." Pew Global Attitudes Project (Washington, D.C. July, 2006)

immigrants of the inter-war period and later Algerians, Blanc-Chaléard points to differences in the economic climate during the *trente glorieuses*, the thirty years of economic growth in France after World War II, as opposed to the economic downturn of the 1970s and 80s as a distinguishing factor between the two groups' integration circumstances. Nonetheless, this comparison also rests on the facilitation of Italians through workers rights groups that were not the focus of issues during later periods of North African immigration. This suggests the interplay between economic and identity factors in integration. While economic concerns factor heavily in the lives of European Muslims, they also contribute to a wider sense of discrimination and inequality that spreads beyond economics. This sense of inequality and alienation breeds more dissatisfaction than economic struggles alone.⁵¹

Thus, while socioeconomic factors surely influence the situation of Muslim immigrants, especially combined with discrimination, this cannot be the only variable at play. As others have pointed out, socioeconomic concerns are a serious concern for many immigrants, regardless of origin or religion, with most non-Muslims also facing very real challenges to economic success in their new countries.⁵² Furthermore, particularly in Britain, Muslim immigrants hail from a range of origins and vary to a great extent in their economic security.⁵³ Pauly quotes Mark Brown that "some of the [widest] economic differences occur within broad racial groupings, particularly the South Asian population, within which Indians appear relatively successful, whereas Pakistanis, and to an even greater extent Bangladeshis, stand out as disadvantaged communities within the Asian and national population. These differences display the many variations that may cut

⁵¹ Sen, Amartya, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006)

⁵² Nachmani, Amikam. *Europe and Its Muslim Minorities; Aspect of Conflict, Attempts at Accord.* (Portland, Oregon: Sussex Academic Press, 2009)

⁵³ Pauly, Robert, *Islam in Europe: Integration or Marginalization* (New York: Ashgate, 2004)

across religious lines. Finally, the issue of radicalization has never been convincingly tied to poverty⁵⁴ but remains a concern among European Muslims. It seems likely that economic factors such as unemployment do influence integration, but perhaps more because of the effects of discrimination rather than pure economics. Karich states in his article on “Economic Development of Muslim Communities” that “discrimination towards minorities has increased in recent decades [and] the consequences of this discrimination are also often understated. Stress, loss of self-confidence, discouragement, frustration, insecurity and the absence of prospects or the inability to plan projects are all perfect ingredients for marginalisation.”⁵⁵

Middle East Spillover and the Role of Terrorism

Another issue pertinent to the ongoing question of the growing Muslim presence in Europe is that of Islamic fundamentalism and ties to global jihadist movements. Seemingly every volume addressing the issue of Muslim immigration in Europe includes a chapter on Islamist violence or terrorism, tying integration issues more closely to security concerns. Others directly claim that radicalization and general conflicts concerning Muslims in Europe are merely a reflection of a wider political context driven by events in the Middle East, hinting once more at the influence of civilizational clash ideas.⁵⁶ This, Cesari says, is “confusing the issues” of integration, identity, and Islam.⁵⁷ For example, there was no evidence of Islam or an outside Islamic actor as a motivator in the 2005 riots, and efforts by religious groups to quell or mediate the outbursts saw no

⁵⁴ Krueger, Alan B. and Jitka Meleckova. “Education, Poverty and Terrorism: Is There a Causal Connection?” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*. Vol.17. No. 4. (Fall, 2003)

⁵⁵ Karich, Imane. “Economic Development of Muslim Communities” in *European Islam, Challenges for Society and Public Policy*. (Brussels: Center for European Policy Studies. 2007)

⁵⁶ Pargeter, Alison. *The New Frontiers of Jihad; Radical Islam in Europe*. (New York: I. B. Taurus. 2008)

⁵⁷ Cesari, Jocelyne. “Ethnicity, Islam, and les Banlieues: Confusing the Issues.” <http://riotsfrance.ssrc.org/Cesari/>. 2005.

success. Furthermore, rioters made no political demands, neither did they reference outside conflicts or show any other signs of solidarity with global Islam. While ties have been discovered between violent Islamist groups and France and radicalization is undeniably a factor among particularly second and third generation European Muslims, it is likely that integration problems are allowing for this rather than vice versa. Nonetheless, global conflicts involving Muslims can perhaps play a role to the extent that they affect the perception of persecution of religious identity.

Identity

Despite the plethora of studies employing methodology and analytical approaches of many kinds, few have made headway in determining the source of integration difficulty, suggesting that the integration question has been shaped incorrectly. The wide range of studies conducted on Muslim populations in Europe often reflects the temptation to depict European Muslims as a collective and homogenous population. These assumptions, however, prove to be unhelpful in identifying and assessing the issues within integration since populations of Muslim immigrants across the continent differ immensely in a variety of areas. Immigrants to Europe from the Muslim world have arrived over different periods of time which generally go unnoticed, with most now existing as European citizens. European Muslims have their roots in an extremely wide range of countries from which they bring their own backgrounds and ethnicities, traditions, and perceptions of Europe and the specific countries to which they immigrate. While some studies do acknowledge the role of national integration policies in shaping the experiences of Muslims in Europe, which constitutes another large difference, the complex relationships between national identity myths and integration principles are poorly understood. Additionally, European Muslims are divided between ethnicities, colonial pasts, generational differences, political opinions, and personal preferences, among others.

Given these many divisions which cut across the European Muslim population, Sen's conception of identity as varied and multifaceted proves a much more constructive lens through which to examine this issue. Sen's assertion finds support in the difficulty in merely pinpointing the salient, unifying quality of immigrant populations in Europe. Most of the recent wave of immigrants to Europe are Muslim, but they also hail from different countries, regions, political systems, socioeconomic situations, and educational backgrounds, and hold different views on issues such as democracy, gender roles, politics, and even specific aspects of Islam and its role in politics, all of which shape their interactions with their host society. They have their own within-group divisions across lines of age, beliefs, politics, and economic standing that differentiate between members of this population. In reducing this group of people with different qualities and views to one homogenous group of Muslims, both societies and immigrants "miniaturize," in Sen's terms, the members of the populations in question.

Thus, given the shortfalls of studies which assume the homogeneity of Muslims and their experiences, the relevant question must first be whether a collective identity exists between European Muslims. The next two chapters undertake this question, examining the Muslim populations in France and then comparing the complex reality of Muslims in this context to those in Great Britain and Germany. I find that not only are assumptions of collective identity premature, but that they are also potentially harmful in contributing to the creation of a potentially negative and oppositional identity within this population.

CHAPTER 3

MUSLIM IDENTITY IN FRANCE: IMPLICATIONS OF PORTRAYED SIMILARITY

In this section I offer an examination of the complex representations of Muslim identity in France. Using Celestin and DalMolin's framework of "Universalism in Crisis," I assess the presence of a Muslim identity in the French context, with its unique history of *laïcité* and universalism. This specific case and framework present an interesting perspective from which to examine identity since the French approach to the subject is so unique, while the situation itself remains an example typical of what is presented as a Europe-wide issue.

The French conception of national identity plays an extremely important role in political and social life and has been the subject of recent government led conversations and studies.⁵⁸ Stemming from the Enlightenment-era philosophies of the French Revolution, the concept of a strong national identity has preoccupied the French for centuries. The Third Republic in particular took upon itself a mission to cement concepts of a cohesive national identity into French society through centralized government-controlled education, an insistence on the learning of standard language and shared history, and mandatory military service. Today, the identity conversation lives on, as France confronts the idea of a national identity in the midst of a seemingly ever more

⁵⁸ A public study and debate of French national identity has been conducted at the request of President Sarkozy, the results of which are to be discussed in April. This effort has been tied to other measures aimed at Muslims and is largely seen as a response to a perceived threat posed by this group to traditional French identity. Recommended measures to bolster national identity are said to include additional citizenship requirements as well as increased focus on symbols and figures of French pride in schools.

diverse population. The recent influx of largely Muslim immigrants who have struggled to integrate into French society has contributed to the sense of a lost French cultural identity and has spurred fears of “*communautarisme*,” or factionalism, that purportedly threatens French universalism.⁵⁹ Thus, the French case presents an interesting place to examine the identity of Muslims vis-à-vis the state. While, as shown earlier, Muslims in Europe are often portrayed as a homogenous community of “Islam” as a whole, they are in fact quite a diverse and divided population. Conversely, conceptions of French national identity, based in secular ideals of universal republicanism prove often hazier than they are credited. In this area I draw on ideas by Celestin and DalMolin’s book, *France from 1851 to the Present: Universalism in Crisis*, in which the authors illustrate the many challenges to French universalist concepts of identity.⁶⁰

In the section that follows, I briefly describe some of the ideas that shape French conceptions of national identity before presenting the demographic data and other relevant information that helps to establish a more accurate portrait of Muslims in France. I then use three examples of the construction of the Paris Mosque, the headscarf affair, and the 2005 Paris riots to illustrate the complexity of both France’s relationship with religion and identity and the complex internal divisions between its Muslim communities. The statistics and examples shown suggest that the Muslim population in France is far more nuanced than typically portrayed and that its grouping together as a religious body is more an outside label given to Muslims than an assumed identity that they perceive themselves as sharing. Following these examples, however, I look at some evidence

⁵⁹ In justification for recent focus on identity, Minister of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Solidarity, Eric Besson has cited a poll, conducted for the Immigration Ministry, showing that 74 percent of those polled believe that France's national identity is weakening, with 30 percent attributing that weakening to immigration and 18 percent to cultural and ethnic issues. <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2010/02/08/world/main6186666.shtml>

⁶⁰ Celestin, Roger, and Eliane DalMolin. *France from 1851 to the Present: Universalism in Crisis*. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007)

suggesting that a common identity could develop in the future, due to shared experiences of discrimination and isolation as well as an external insistence on religion as a label.

French Universalism

French national identity is a complicated topic, which even today has been the subject of a national study and public debate in France initiated by the government.⁶¹ While it would be impossible to comprehensively illustrate what all this idea entails in such a limited space here, some notion of the basis of French concepts of identity are useful in looking at the relationship of Muslims with the state. Celestin and DalMolin base their study specifically on the concept of universalism, an approach which I adopt to some extent here. Universalism has existed as a pillar in French political thought since the creation of the French Republic, which was driven by the ideals of the Enlightenment. Thinkers of this period emphasized a reliance on reason and embraced concepts of inalienable rights and equality that led to revolutionary movements and challenges to the historical ties between the monarchy and the Catholic Church. The ideas of the French *philosophes* provided justification for the Revolution and laid the foundation for a new government based in equality, Republicanism, and *laïcité*, or a strict interpretation of secularism.

Despite an emphasis on individual rights, however, the ideals of the Revolution also included important concepts of community, citizenship, and public discourse. Particularly influential during this period was Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *The Social Contract*, which many leaders appropriated as a manual for the Revolution and the construction of the French Republic. Rousseau's ideas of a society based in "general interests and shared values over individual interests and pluralism" would develop into a

⁶¹ "Fillon réunit le gouvernement sur l'identité nationale." *Le Monde*. Feb 8, 2010. http://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2010/02/08/fillon-reunit-le-gouvernement-sur-l-identite-nationale_1302435_823448.html

uniquely French political philosophy.⁶² This approach relies on a strong set of common values and identity to form the backbone for society and depends on the state to support their development. Citizens are required to be French first, valuing commitment to the society of the Republic above other alliances. Factionalism or “*communautarisme*” of any kind is to be discouraged in favor of the “*universalisme*” of the principles of society as a whole. These values, rooted in the philosophical writings of the Enlightenment, lay at the heart of the Revolution, whose victory was perceived as a triumph of reason and justice over centuries of hierarchy and arbitrary rule by the church-supported monarchy.

Far from being restricted to the period and circumstances of the Revolution, or even France as a whole, however, the ideas of the Enlightenment and the French Republic have been viewed as truly universal in nature, or applicable regardless of time and place. This notion of universalism allowed the country to approach its colonial ambitions as justified through the idea of a *mission civilisatrice*, which aimed to bring the ideals of the French Revolution to parts of the world seen as less developed. In fact, since the First Republic, the values of the Enlightenment and the Revolution have formed the basis of French political identity and thought in many realms. Even today politicians, scholars, and French citizens exhibit a tendency to reach into their political history of Enlightenment ideals to justify present conditions and policies.⁶³ For instance, in explaining many of today’s controversial policies concerning the banning of headscarves and other issues, scholars and politicians alike point to the founding principles of the Republic for justification of the country’s seemingly harsh line. Many scholars and politicians refer to Rousseau when explaining political decisions in France,

⁶² Bowen, John R. *Why the French Don’t Like Headscarves; Islam, the State, and Public Space*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007)

⁶³ Bowen, John R. *Why the French Don’t Like Headscarves; Islam, the State, and Public Space*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007)

demonstrating the significance and impact of these ideas even today on important policies.

It is important to note, however, that, upon closer examination, one finds many instances where these ideas of universalism pivotal to the French national identity and politics have themselves been hotly contested and debated throughout the years, casting doubt on what many claim to be a strong and established tradition of agreed upon social principles. The tradition of *laïcité*, endlessly cited as the basis for the often controversial French approaches to integration, presents an especially hazy area of Republican values. Bowen presents two separate histories of *laïcité*, which, when used interchangeably to justify seemingly contradictory approaches, contribute to much of the confusion surrounding the role of religion in France.⁶⁴ Although many assert that *laïcité* is a solid institution of the French Revolution, its first recorded use is actually not until 1871.⁶⁵ During the Revolution, two separate modes of thought towards religion flourished. The first, which can be justified through Rousseau, was the establishment of a civic religion to unify the country, whether, as some desired, the Catholic Church or the brief revolutionary cult of goddesses of Reason and Freedom. The second approach emphasizes the right of the individual to a freedom of conscience to develop his or her own beliefs and to follow these to the extent that they do not disturb public order. Bowen asserts that these two approaches, one enshrining the state's role in religion, the other separating the two realms, have created a pendulum of French policy which swings intermittently between the two extremes.

⁶⁴ Bowen, John R. *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves; Islam, the State, and Public Space*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007)

⁶⁵ Bowen, John R. *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves; Islam, the State, and Public Space*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007)

This contradiction can be seen even with the laws that are often cited as enshrining *laïcité*. The first, created in 1901, permits the formation of voluntary associations and actually aimed to weaken the Catholic Church by requiring religious congregations to obtain authorization from the state to operate. This legal linking of church and state was balanced by the passage of a second law in 1905, which, in a pluralist spirit, guaranteed freedom of conscience and a right to practice any organized religion, while restricting the state from formally recognizing or subsidizing any one religion. The seemingly contradictory requirements of these two laws, one ensuring an element of French control over religion and the other guaranteeing its separation from the realm of the state, embody the conflicting requirements of *laïcité* and foreshadow many of the complexities of its role in French politics in subsequent years.

Despite the contradictions and “legal awkwardness” of French concepts of *laïcité*, notions of universalism as a whole thrived throughout successive Republics in France.⁶⁶ The ideas of universalism particularly flourished under the Third Republic in the nineteenth century. Faced with a country comprised more of a collection of regions than a unified nation, the French state sought to solidify Republican values among the population by reinforcing a ‘French’ identity where previously there had been merely an amalgamation of Bretons, Corsicans, Basques, and others, each with their own history, culture and dialect. The state designed a model to bolster this conceived French identity and values through a centralized education system that would make “peasants into Frenchmen” through teaching of history and standard French language over regional *patois*, mandatory military service that fostered patriotism and shared experience, and

⁶⁶ Bowen, John R. *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves: Islam, the State, and Public Space*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007)

widespread entrance into the workforce.⁶⁷ While they isolated some rural regional populations who struggled to see themselves in the ‘French’ figures described at school, these efforts were considered largely successful in creating a universal sense of French identity among the wider population and those who entered it.

In addition to solidifying these values at home, the Third Republic also sought to spread them abroad, taking on a *mission civilisatrice* into the French colonies in Africa and Asia. Here it sought to apply many of the same principles it had used at home to integrate the French population, insisting on spreading its standard language and education. Despite the supposed *mission civilisatrice* to bring Asian and African *indigènes* into the French fold under the umbrella of universalist principles, the act of colonization was most often a brutal and oppressive process that went against the very ideals that the French were supposedly spreading. Exploitative labor and ruling systems marked the experience of many French colonies, while those who were permitted to retain more autonomy in North Africa, or were officially incorporated into the French Republic in the case of Algeria, were still treated as subjects rather than citizens of France.

In their effort to show the cracks in the foundation of French universalism, Celestin and DalMolin point to several limitations and contradictions that exist from quite early on in the conception and application of its ideals. For example, in this imposition of universalist values – in itself a contradiction – in French colonies, supposed citizens of the French Republic in Algeria were treated as a distinct indigenous population with separate rights from those who were French by birth. The French colonials also breached ideas of *laïcité* by actively supporting Islam in the Algerian department to facilitate

⁶⁷ Weber, Eugen. *Peasants into Frenchmen; The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914*. Stanford (Stanford: University Press, 1976)

control in the colony, designating family affairs to be regulated by a version of Islamic law. Celestin and DalMolin also mention the reinstatement of universal suffrage as a quintessential part of Republican values. However, the restoration of ‘universal’ suffrage failed to include women, therefore denying basic rights to one half of the population. Finally, the construction of Paris itself as one sees it today with its grand boulevards and monuments required the displacing of those on the periphery who did not fit into the French model: what the authors describe as “the backward, the unhealthy, the mad, the criminal, the unpatriotic, the provincial, the unclean, and subversive masses.”⁶⁸ The authors point to World War II as the point at which the French universalist model finally began to really unravel, however, with the decline of French global influence and the rise of alternative universalist models in the consumerism of the United States and Soviet communism.

While this assessment of an ongoing tension between “homogenizing and centralizing state” and the various identities and ideologies of the groups within it reflects relatively recent circumstances, as Bowen shows, the problems with universalism can be traced back to its very conception. There has never been a definitive explanation of republican values or *laïcité*, but rather a series of French ideas, laws, and precedents that have been interpreted in various ways to justify particular approaches and tainted by the history of their misuse and violation. Universalism’s shortcomings have become especially apparent today however, with a diverse population of Muslim immigrants and the tension surrounding their integration into the French Republic.

One final idea of Celestin and DalMoulin proves particularly relevant in the discussion of Muslims in France, however. The authors assert in their critique of

⁶⁸ Celestin, Roger, and Eliane DalMolin. *France from 1851 to the Present: Universalism in Crisis*. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007)

universalism that the very idea of universalism creates a “dual movement” of assimilation and exclusion, or the forming of an “us” and a “them.” This concept is useful in examining today’s climate in which Muslims are often portrayed as a cohesive threat to French universalism and republican ideals. The universalist history in France seems to encourage this depiction of Muslim populations as a collective threat to the country’s traditional republican values, however, this oversimplifies the situation and arguably exacerbates tensions. The Muslim population as it actually exists in France is far from collective and unified, embodying various nationalities, circumstances, and views. The fact of this heterogeneity further complicates ideas of universalism, however, showing the various shades of Islam in France and differing ways of integrating the two identities. Furthermore, this dual movement tendency in the French case can be especially counterproductive, since the insistence on describing Muslim populations as a “them” in universalist terms appears to encourage a collective identity where none existed previously.

In the next section I focus on the issue of Muslim immigration and integration into France and its illumination of the limits of French universalism. After giving some details as to the composition of the Muslim population, I seek to trace some of the most visible signs of this tension and to situate them within the broader idea of the failure of the universalist approach. Finally, I assess the existence of a Muslim collective identity and suggest some ways in which the false portrayal of Muslims as a cohesive group actually serves to solidify what is now a varied population.

Muslims in France

The situation of Muslims in France, as in wider Europe, is often misrepresented. The numbers of this population are frequently misreported in a variety of ways, depending on one’s political leaning and objective, and it is often implied that Muslims are less willing or able to integrate into society than immigrants of other origins, suggesting a religious incompatibility with secular French or European culture. Islam is

often depicted as a threatening force, a portrayal which is facilitated by a post 9-11 climate in which Muslims are seen as potential terrorists. Most remarkably, perhaps, is that Muslims across Europe are seen in these terms as being unified and similar. Painted with large brushstrokes of religion that are tinted by suspicion and blame, they are classified as a homogenous and threatening group. The depicting of this population as a cohesive population at all is misleading and unhelpful at best, and counterproductive and harmful at worst. I will discuss some of the implications of this approach below after giving an overview of the demographic complexion of Muslim presence in France.

The Muslim community in France, as elsewhere in Europe, is marked first and foremost by its variety. Despite common assumptions and assertions in today's public discussions and media coverage of a uniform invasion of fundamentalist Muslims, the French Muslim population lacks homogeneity in nearly every area. From age to socioeconomic status to piety to political views, Muslims in France span a gamut of positions that are often reflective of the French wider population. Nonetheless, some commonalities do persist, particularly in struggles against disadvantage and discrimination which in turn results in some sense of common identity. The following section details the composition of the French Muslim population, its differences, and, where possible, some of the overarching trends.

History

Muslim movement into France stretches back to the Moors of the eighth century, recalling the history of the struggle against the invasion and the French battle at Poitiers, but also including some Muslims seeking asylum during the Spanish Inquisition. Increased contact with the Muslim world followed during periods of expanding trade and then with the French colonization of much of North and West Africa. The largest population of Muslims in France, however, originated with a significant wave of immigration following the World Wars, in the wake of an often violent decolonization process. While many Muslims emigrated spontaneously from the former colonies in

North Africa, others arrived as recruited workers under programs for reconstruction in France. The presence of the latter group was expected to be temporary, however many remained in France beyond the foreseen term of their work, their incorporation into French society facilitated by wide employment and the boom of the *trente glorieuses*. With the oil crisis and the economic downturn of the 1970s, however, the government ended large-scale labor migration from the Maghreb. Nonetheless, the Muslim population in France continued to grow throughout the 1970s and 80s due to the reunification of families. This wave thus changed the demographics of the French Muslim population from mostly adult male to include nuclear and even extended families. Today the French Muslim population is comprised largely of this most recent wave of immigrants and increasingly of their descendants, but also includes longstanding citizens who immigrated centuries earlier, recent immigrants from other regions of the world, and French converts to Islam.

Demographics

A few studies have gone into great detail concerning the demographics of Muslim populations in France. This paper draws mainly from a couple of exemplary works, one by Jonathan Lawrence and Justin Vaisse and another by Robert Pauly. A persistent problem with demographic studies in France in general, however, is the lack of official data. A 1978 law prohibits the collection of data concerning race or ethnicity, designed to prevent repetition of the shame of the French compliance in deportation of Jews in the Holocaust. As a result, however, few numbers relevant to Muslims in France exist, and those estimates that do circulate often span a wide range of figures that reflect political agendas. Even data concerning naturalization goes uncollected, requiring a creative approach to statistics on religious or ethnic groups in France. Methods of gathering statistics include examining numbers of foreign-born populations and their descendants and then extrapolating information from percentages from sending countries and adjusting for religious diversity. However, these fail to adequately reflect the increasing

number of second and third generation Muslims in France, who constitute a significant portion of the population. Other private groups have attempted to collect religious statistics, for example from polling data, however these are generally considered inaccurate due to low voter registration among the Muslim population, young average age, and a reluctance on the part of French Muslims to declare their religious affiliation in polls.⁶⁹

Despite the variety of unofficial statistics, most serious estimates put the number of Muslims in France at around 5 million. Figures vary, however, from between 3.6 million and 6 million, or from about 6 to 10 percent of the French population. This gives France the largest Muslim population in Europe, both in terms of total number and percent of the population, with French Muslims accounting for around a third of the total Muslim population in Europe.⁷⁰

The ethnic composition and background of the French Muslim population is surprisingly diverse. 123 nationalities are represented within this group, bringing a variety of cultural and political traditions to the mix. Nearly three quarters of the Muslim population hail from the former French colonies in the Maghreb (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia), however, only about half of France's Muslims are of Arab decent, with the rest consisting of Moroccan or Algerian Berbers, immigrants from Turkey, West Africa, or Asia, or French converts. Distinct differences exist between those who have emigrated from former colonies and those who hail from other parts of the world, and then again between those who are native French.

Even across national origin, however, many differences remain in history, experience, ethnic background, and social and political standing in immigrants' countries

⁶⁹ Laurence, Jonathan and Justin Vaisse. *Integrating Islam; Political and Religious Challenges in Contemporary France* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 2006)

⁷⁰ France is also home to the largest Jewish population in Europe.

of origin. For example, an estimated 2 million Muslims have immigrated to France from Algeria, which was itself considered part of the French Republic during colonialism. This Algerian population, however, while homogenous in nationality of origin and distinct from other groups, is quite divided in background even within itself. One group consists of the *évolués*, who, during the colonial period “evolved” through education and assimilation into model colonial subjects. They were generally privileged elites in Algeria, many of whom had studied in France and had held white collar jobs. This population was treated favorably in Algeria by the colonial administrators and enjoyed a special relationship with the French state. Another group of Arab and Berber *Harkis* made up the ranks of colonial administrators and soldiers during colonization. This group also received exceptional treatment during colonization and collaborated with the French during the Algerian War. Many members of this group immigrated to France during and after the Algerian War, despite the disapproval of the French government, in attempt to avoid reprisal from the FLN and nationalist Algerians. Finally, a third group of Algerians consists mainly of the previously mentioned laborers recruited in the 1960s. This group comprises most of the Algerian population, who bore the brunt of colonialism but nonetheless immigrated to France in search of employment. Thus, even within this group from the same country, Muslim immigrants to France bring different experiences, skills, and relationships with and attitudes towards the French state.

Another divide within the Muslim population tends to fall along a generational line. The age distribution of Muslim populations in France is heavily skewed towards the young. Up to one half of the Muslim population is estimated to be under the age of 24, with Muslim youth comprising an increasingly large portion of the young French population. Data show that in some parts of the country up to 20 to 30 percent of

children are born to immigrant families, the majority of which are Muslim.⁷¹ This is generally thought to be a result of initially higher fertility rates among immigrant women in general, a trend which tends to even out over time spent in France but nonetheless fuels fears of a Muslim invasion from within. Current fertility rates for Maghrebi women in France are between 2.5 and 2.9, compared to the 1.9 per French woman, contributing to speculation that Muslims could number 8 million by 2020, or approximately 20 percent of the population. At a time when fertility rates are on the decline across much of Europe this is not entirely unwelcome news, however it fails to consider the tendency of Muslim fertility rates to converge with those of French women the longer immigrants reside within France, due to perhaps new social norms, costs of living, close quarters, or women entering the workforce.⁷²

The largest populations of Muslims in France reside in the cities of Paris, Marseille and Lyon and their suburban outskirts, or *banlieues*. The greatest concentration of Muslims, about 30 to 40 percent of the total, live in the Ile-de-France region, where they make up 10 to 15 percent of the local population. Another 15 to 20 percent of French Muslims live in the southern regions near Marseille and Nice, comprising nearly 25 percent of the population in Marseille. Another 15 percent reside in the Lyon-Grenoble area, with another 5 to 10 percent around Lille. Several other smaller towns also have notably high Muslim populations, including Rubaix in the north, where close to 50 percent of the population is Muslim.⁷³

Religion

⁷¹ Laurence, Jonathan and Justin Vaisse. *Integrating Islam; Political and Religious Challenges in Contemporary France* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 2006)

⁷² Laurence, Jonathan and Justin Vaisse. *Integrating Islam; Political and Religious Challenges in Contemporary France* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 2006)

⁷³ Laurence, Jonathan and Justin Vaisse. *Integrating Islam; Political and Religious Challenges in Contemporary France* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 2006)

Even within religion, itself the supposedly unifying characteristic assigned to this group, there is more variety within the Muslim population (and more similarity with the greater French population) than commonly assumed. Religious observance varies widely among Muslims in France along ethnic, national, and generational lines as well as personal preference. Statistics suggest Sub-Saharan Africans to be the most observant group, with Algerians being the least pious. Moroccan and Turkish Muslims occupy a middle ground in between these two groups when asked to describe their religiosity. Ethnicity also has effects on the ways in which Muslims practice their beliefs, although not necessarily across national borders. One survey found that Algerian Berbers are twice as likely to engage in Muslim forbidden practices such as eating meat and drinking alcohol than their Arab Algerian counterparts, and are more likely to say that they do not practice their religion at all. Moroccan Berbers, on the other hand, are as a group more observant than other groups in Morocco. These figures illustrate just some of the differences that exist across this vastly diverse population. The various ways of measuring piety also suggest that different groups hold varying aspects to be of greater importance than others.

Another misconception is that religion plays a significantly greater role in the lives of Muslims in France in comparison to the general French population. In fact, among the 5 million Muslims in France, the percentage of those who identify themselves as religious or practicing Muslims mirrors almost exactly the corresponding percentage of the French Catholic population. Among Muslims, 10 percent say they attend service regularly (compared to 9 % of French Catholics), with 5% attending weekly. Many Muslims do report being more pious in private than Catholics do. A higher percentage of Muslims claim to pray regularly (38 percent pray daily compared with 13 % of Catholics)

and 80 percent say they fast during Ramadan, although these figures tend to be exaggerated.⁷⁴ Nonetheless, these figures and trends, while useful in countering fears of a stark shift in religiosity in France, obscure the many differences in practices, attitudes towards Islam, and manners of being Muslim.

Politics

Political leadership presents another realm where divisions within France's Muslim population become quite apparent. Divisions, usually by nationality, mark the lines between various political and social organizations, which have formed to capture the assorted political and religious voices of Muslims in France. Muslims of different national backgrounds have gained power in different areas, reflecting distinctive circumstances and priorities. Moroccans tend to occupy positions of direction as prayer-leaders in mosques because of the availability of religious instruction in Morocco. Tunisians enjoy leadership in schools and institutes, because many such figures were forced to leave by the government during internal debates over the role of Islam in Tunisia. Algerians show higher involvement in political and cultural associations. Turks are especially divided over issues of *laïcité* in politics because of the Turkish struggle to define the role of religion in the public sphere. Muslims of different nationalities occupy different roles within political organizations as well, although these can serve to reinforce or cross-cut national divisions.

The most influential of these Muslim political organizations includes the Great Mosque of Paris, which will be discussed in more depth later. This group, the most

⁷⁴ Laurence, Jonathan and Justin Vaisse. *Integrating Islam; Political and Religious Challenges in Contemporary France* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 2006)

closely affiliated with the French government, is known for its moderation and ties to the Algerian community, along with other groups that tend toward moderate views. The National Federation of French Muslims (FNMF) began as an alternative to the Paris Mosque and is most closely associated with the Moroccan population. The Union of French Islamic Organizations (UOIF), perhaps the most visible organization, pools its support from local associations throughout France and is not tied to any one country. Other less influential groups include The Coordinating Committee of French Turkish Muslims (CCMTF) and the Milli Gorus Islamic movement, which represent the divided interests of the Turkish population, which itself is split over the role for religion in state matters. These two organizations tend to align with either the Paris Mosque or the UOIF, according to their preferences. Finally, the French Federation of Islamic Associations of Africa, Comoro, and the Antilles (FFAIACA) claims to speak for those Muslims not spoken for in the main organizations. The existence of these groups demonstrates some of the large divisions across the French Muslim population, which render it anything but cohesive. Organizations enjoy varying degrees of relationship with the French state, have taken different stances on social policies, and promote different views on religious issues. Even these generalizable differences across nationalities and political groups must be qualified however, since they are also, like many of the divisions listed above, transected by others of social class, age, or other distinctions.

Common Trends and Experience

While the many divisions discussed above continue to mark the Muslim population in France, some general trends and shared experiences must be mentioned. Many of these common themes have implications for identity which will be discussed at the end of the chapter.

One common situation faced by Muslims in France is an unfavorable economic outlook. The general economic downturn of the 1970s and 80s resulted in the failure of an important aspect of the French integration model of the Third Republic: widespread

entrance into the workforce. Unemployment rates among French Muslims are generally twice as high as those of the overall population and are even higher among young North Africans. In 1999, 22 percent of the foreign-born population was unemployed compared with 13 percent of native French.⁷⁵ Immigrants are overrepresented in blue-collar jobs and, even at similar skill levels, they are more likely to be unemployed than the overall French population. In 2002, unemployment rates for those with a college degree were twice as high among immigrants (16 percent) than among native French (8 percent). These unemployment rates reach even higher levels in younger generations. While native French youth under 30 with a high school diploma had an unemployment rate of 15 percent in 2002, rates reached 32 percent for immigrant youth. Furthermore, stark differences persist in unemployment rates of immigrants from predominantly Muslim countries compared with others. For instance, while Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish immigrants experience lower unemployment rates than native French populations, immigrants from Africa and Turkey have much higher rates, particularly among youth. This is a grave situation, given that half of the Muslim population is under 24 years of age. Unemployment rates for young people from North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and Turkey reach dire levels of near 40 percent. These low employment levels have left Muslim immigrants struggling to support families without the assistance of steady income as well as to integrate into French society without constant interaction with mainstream society.

An important factor in these high unemployment rates is discrimination. Widespread reports of discrimination abound concerning Muslim populations, particularly in the realm of employment. One study by the International Labor

⁷⁵ Laurence, Jonathan and Justin Vaisse. *Integrating Islam; Political and Religious Challenges in Contemporary France* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 2006)

Organization using volunteers impersonating job-seekers revealed that, with all other factors being equal, candidates for employment were 3 to 4 times less likely to be called for an interview if they had a Muslim name compared to those with traditional French ones. Additionally, the study presents transcriptions of telephone calls that demonstrate the blatant discrimination faced by Muslim job seekers on the basis of their religion, ethnicity, and neighborhood of residence⁷⁶. Similarly, another study by SOS Racisme, an antiracism organization in France finds after examining records of two major employment agencies that candidates with “non-European” first names were one and a half times as likely to be unemployed in every category, with higher levels in fields such as sales that require interaction with the public. Other realms of widespread accusations of discrimination include arms of the state itself, in run-ins with law enforcement officials and the wider legal system.

The above section shows that, while Muslims in France are geographically concentrated in several key areas and often experience overarching trends in population growth and challenges to integration, as a body they are quite a diverse group. Hailing from different countries, and ethnicities within those, they bring different attitudes towards religion, politics, and the French state, which most often results in internal discord rather than unity. Thus, generalizations about a Muslim invasion or standoff cannot accurately reflect the situation in France.

The French state’s approach to integrating its Muslim population often reflects this tendency to mistakenly view the group as homogenous. Perhaps influenced by a universalist predisposition mentioned by Celestin and DalMolin to view society as “us” and “them,” the French government, as well as the society and media, have shown an

⁷⁶ Cediéy, E. and F. Foroni. *Les Discriminations à Ruminations de “l’Origine” Dans les Embauches en France: Une Enquête Nationale Par Tests de Discrimination Selon la Méthode du Bureau International de Travail*. (Organisation Internationale du Travail, 2007)

inclination to ignore the variety within the Muslim population, usually in their haste to link domestic and international politics, to gain political points, or to exert control over the role and direction of religion in France. The three events detailed below illustrate this pattern and demonstrate both the shortcomings of French universalism and one of its greatest casualties, the ignored diversity of Muslim populations and the ensuing alienation and societal exclusion.

Examples

The Role of the Paris Mosque

One issue that demonstrates both the divergence of interests within the French Muslim community and the difficulty of navigating the politics of *laïcité* and universalism is the construction of the Paris Mosque. Ironically, perhaps the greatest symbol of Islam in France, the Grande Mosquée de Paris, was actually conceived and constructed by the French state itself, in large part to attempt to control the influence of Islam within the state. The resulting maze of finances and leadership to make this project compatible with the laws of 1901 and 1905 exemplifies the blurry lines of *laïcité* in France as well as some of the limits of universalism. Additionally, the politics over the control of the mosque illustrate the extent to which the French Muslim population has competing and divergent interests and views within itself.

While widespread immigration to France did not begin until after World War II, the idea for the Paris Mosque can be traced back to 1895. The proposal gained traction after World War I, when France began to increase its presence in the Middle East after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. The country saw the potential to benefit from its relationship with the Arab world and attempted to garner support among Arab nationalists in order to compete with British predominance in the region and establish

itself as a “great Muslim power.”⁷⁷ The state encouraged Muslims in French controlled lands to pilgrimage to Mecca to increase French presence in the holy lands.⁷⁸ The mosque project, intended to bolster France’s sway in the Muslim world, also gained more support following the war as a way to also display the country’s gratitude to the 100,000 North African Muslims who lost their lives in World War I and to demonstrate the possibility of a peaceful coexistence between Islam and France. At this time, the French state also saw another benefit in controlling the mosque project in that it would be more capable of molding the growing Muslim presence in France. This longstanding desire to have a French-controlled symbol of Islam exemplifies the French approach towards the religion and its adherents and reflects the persistent tension within the strands of *laïcité*.

The logistics of erecting a state-funded religious building in the heart of the *laique* French capital proved challenging but not impossible. The French state organized a ‘Society of Pious Trusts and Islamic Holy Places’ in Algiers, which was at this time within a department of France, and charged the organization with creating a Muslim Institute in Paris that would become the Paris Mosque. Since the 1905 law prohibited the state from financing religious activities, the government ensured that the Institute would also include other features such as a restaurant, conference rooms, a library, a bath, and other features to qualify it as a cultural institute. At this point, the Society of Pious Trusts and Islamic Holy Places moved to Paris and occupied the space secured for it by the state. This legal finagling in creating private non-religious organizations to handle the construction of a religious institution shows the grey areas surrounding *laïcité* and the

⁷⁷ Bowen, John R. *Why the French Don’t Like Headscarves; Islam, the State, and Public Space*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007)

⁷⁸ Bowen, John R. *Why the French Don’t Like Headscarves; Islam, the State, and Public Space*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007)

determination of the state to walk a fine line between simultaneously controlling religion and separating itself from it.

Construction for the Grande Mosquée de Paris officially began in 1922 as a public and political affair to showcase France's amicable relationship with the Muslim world. The Mosque's varied relationship with different sectors of the Muslim community, however, serves to illustrate the extent to which divisions exist within this population in France. Moroccan influence played a substantial role throughout the construction, which began with a representative of the Moroccan Sultan laying the building's cornerstone and which continued under the direction of Moroccan *résident-général* and foreign minister, *Maréchal Lyautey*, and featured the work of Moroccan artisans. The dedication of the Mosque in 1926 was jointly attended by the French President and the Moroccan Sultan. However, representatives other countries also worked to influence this important symbol of Islam in France. Ties to Algeria were also deeply rooted with the Mosque's origin in the Society of Pious Trusts and Islamic Holy Places in Algiers and Algerian *Abdelkader ben Ghabrit* directing the Mosque until he died in 1954. After *Abdelkader's* death, control of the Mosque fell under competition among Muslims of Moroccan, Tunisian, and Algerian backgrounds. Most attendees were Algerians, however, who, particularly after independence, fought to retain control of the Paris Mosque. Despite a persistent battle for control, the Paris Mosque for now remains mostly a representative of the Algerian community and a more moderate voice controlled by the government.

While the Paris Mosque still occupies a strong role, albeit influenced by the state, in French politics, the French state continued to try to unify the Muslim population behind a single organization that would interface with the government concerning important issues of relevance to Muslims. Two major efforts to create a political Muslim council failed to form a cohesive body, due to the role given to the Paris Mosque over other groups of French Muslims, before a notorious effort, led by then Interior Minister, *Nicolas Sarkozy*, succeeded in forming the French Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM)

in 2003. This organization was intended to give a collective voice to Muslims in France in political matters, on par with the Catholic Bishops Conference, the Protestant Federation of France, and the Jewish Consistory, which have negotiated issues of religious concern with the state for centuries.⁷⁹ Sarkozy's success in forming the Council, however, was not without struggle. Control over the council was and is an issue of hot debate within the Muslim community, whose diverse interests and views cannot be entirely represented by a single body. A "seemingly endless struggle for power among the various associations" finally ended with the three most powerful groups, the UOIF, the Paris Mosque, and the FNMF agreeing to the demands of the state for the selection of its preferred moderate leader, Algerian Dalil Boubakeur in exchange for guaranteed vice presidencies for the other two associations.⁸⁰ Invitations for elections to the body of the CFCM were extended to mosques with electoral lists tied to national origin, showing the importance of divisions of national lines in these issues.

The example of the Paris Mosque and its role in the CFCM shows the extent to which politics and religion are actually melded in France and the lengths to which the state will go to influence the direction of religion in France. That the French political system contains, and indeed encouraged the creation of, a political body in which religious organizations play a key role demonstrates clearly France's willingness to negotiate the supposedly foundational concepts of *laïcité* in its desire to control the expression of Islam within the state. The very acknowledgement of the existence of a Muslim community at all goes against the French universalist presupposition that all citizens of the Republic are equal and French without regard to religious or ethnic

⁷⁹ Bowen, John R. *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves; Islam, the State, and Public Space*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007)

⁸⁰ Bowen, John R. *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves; Islam, the State, and Public Space*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007)

background. French politicians have made efforts to sidestep this contradiction by asserting that the CFCM is not a body to represent the Muslim “community” so much as a “Muslim component of French society,” however this distinction is quite weak.⁸¹ The Council was designed to represent the interests of a group, which must constitute some form of community separate from France if it requires a voice with which to speak separately to the French government. While the efforts to put the Muslim community on par with other established religions through the creation of a political body seems fair and practical, it also shows a willingness to work around the laws behind *laïcité*.

Also evident in the process of establishing the Paris Mosque and the CFCM is France’s attempt to gain control over the direction of Islam in France through the selection of leaders whose ideas are compatible with those of the French government. Ironically, however, the state’s efforts to promote leadership often result in the delegitimizing of the elements the state wishes to support. Boubakeur, after being chosen as leader of the CFCM, saw his credibility crumble in the eyes of Muslims, as he was seen as a puppet of the state. The very idea of the French government appointing leaders for the population harkens back to colonial practices, where the French would select regional rulers to govern in the colonies. In this case, Sarkozy ironically hand picked the leaders to the CFCM with the consultation of the governments of the countries from which they had come, adding another dimension to the complicated scheme of Muslim politics.

Overall, however, the creation of the CFCM illustrates two ongoing themes in the relationship between Muslims and the state: firstly, that the Muslim community, far from being the cohesive invading force of the media portrayals, has plenty of its own internal

⁸¹ Bowen, John R. *Why the French Don’t Like Headscarves: Islam, the State, and Public Space*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007)

divisions, and secondly, that the French state walks an often contradictory line that is typical of its history *laïcité*, alternating between wanting to control and separate itself from religion.

The Headscarf Affair – Rights or Repression?

The question of headscarves in France presents another controversial point of interaction between Muslims and the state in France that demonstrates the heterogeneity of the Muslim population. The law banning headscarves in schools resulted from several rounds of very public debate that each reflected the political climate of its time. The seemingly increasing Islamic component of international crises led many to portray Muslims in France as a part of this broader context. The eventual law banning the voile in school had little to do with scarves themselves, but reflected the ongoing French concern with symbolism, identity, and human rights in this international context, as well as a continued reluctance to acknowledge the nuances and complexity of the Muslim population and its circumstances.

That these events in France unfolded within the context of schools comes as no surprise. Schools in France have long been the realm of the state as formative places of creating French identity and citizenship and have grown into symbols of French Republicanism itself. This importance, both practical and symbolic, of French schools has long been understood by those who have sought to influence them over the years. Schools served as the grounds for battles over the role of the Catholic Church throughout the years, as well as other religions, and fittingly they became the backdrop for one of the state's most public and controversial confrontations with Islam.

The domestic and international political environment of the 1980s and 90s set a background of tension that directly shaped the interpretation of the headscarf dilemma and the conversation surrounding it. In France, radical right wing parties such as Jean Marie Le Pen's Front National, which tended to blame immigrants for France's economic woes, were gaining influence against François Mitterand's Socialist government.

International political events, such as Ayatollah Khomeini's fatwa against Salman Rushdie for the publication of his *Satanic Verses* as well as the formation of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in Algeria as an Islamic alternative to the socialist democracy in place since independence bolstered the success of such parties by creating an international climate of increased conflict between Muslims and the West. Fundamental Islam seemed to be gaining power on the world stage and fears grew that this movement would enter France through its own Muslim population.

Thus, tensions were already high in September, 1989, when three girls, two sisters of Moroccan decent and one girl of Tunisian roots, arrived at their middle school in Creil, outside of Paris, in Islamic dress. Class photos show that this was not the first time that students had worn scarves to school, but with increased public consciousness of Islamic confrontations this instance drew much controversy. The principal expelled the students after they refused to remove the headscarves, on the grounds that they infringed upon the *laïcité* of the public school space. The situation soon erupted into a national incident that evoked strong reactions across the board. Most religious organizations called for more negotiations (Paris Mosque, Arab League, the Vatican), while others, fearing a crackdown on all religions, called for acceptance of scarves (Danielle Mitterand, various Muslim organizations, the chief rabbi of France, the secretary of the Teaching League) and many other teachers stood firm on a narrow and strict interpretation of *laïcité*. Foreign governments weighed in as well, with the Moroccan government publicly asking the parents of the Moroccan students to send the girls to school without the scarves. The Tunisian government, however, refused to get involved and the other young girl was expelled.

The State Council heard the case and, citing the French Constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights, declared that the girls had a right to wear the scarves as long as they did not disturb school life. The Council suggested that religion itself was not incompatible with *laïcité* as long as it did not include ostentatious

propaganda or proselytism that disturbed teaching. This remained the message for a while, with the State Council finding for the rights of students who sued schools in 41 out of 49 cases, unless the school could prove the existence of danger or excessive proselytism.

The headscarf issue reemerged, however, in 1993-94, with even more controversy over two instances of veiled girls. The first involved another two girls who refused to remove their scarves during their gym class in a school near Lyon. In this case, teachers mobilized against the presence of scarves, organizing a strike and asserting that the voile was physically and symbolically dangerous in school as a tool of segregation. When two radical Muslim preachers stated publically that the scarf was a requirement for Muslim girls, many protested the inherent discrimination and subjugation that the scarf represented. These comments seemed to justify spreading fears of fundamentalism, fueling speculation that the scarves signified a real threat to France's universalist republican values of both individual rights and *laïcité*.

Another case in Grenoble, however, showed a different side of the headscarf controversy, suggesting another symbolism of the voile. In this case, a girl in her final year of high school had begun wearing the scarf as a symbol of her own personal embrace of Islam, and, when she was expelled, began protesting outside of the high school with a 22-day hunger strike. In this instance the scarf became not a tool of repression, but rather an avenue for asserting individual identity and political rights.

Despite the complexity of Muslim identity displayed by these two instances of the *voile*, the government response in 1994 was even more resolutely opposed, reflecting the escalated fears of radical Islam due to wider political developments. Since the first incident in 1989, the situation in Algeria had erupted into a full-scale conflict and the FIS, after being denied an electoral victory, had been replaced by the even more radical and violent Groupe Islamique Armée (GIA). Many of these members were former mujahedeen from Afghanistan who represented the pinnacle of what France feared would

enter its society. There was a perception of an all out culture war in France, with immigration debates coming before the National Assembly and international events interpreted as linked to domestic concerns. In 1994, Education Minister François Bayrou banned all ostensible religious signs from schools. Over 100 students were expelled under this directive, with some teachers directly citing their desire to prevent the Algeria situation from permeating France.

By the time of the third headscarf incident in 2002-3, the awareness of domestic social problems linked with Muslim populations had grown enormously, leading many to link international crises with growing domestic unrest. An official report in 2000 from the High Council on Integration denounced the expulsion of covered girls on the basis that this hindered integration of Muslims into French society and would foster communitarianism by driving girls home to radical families and private religious schools that would arise to accommodate them. However, a growing and very vocal minority called for a total ban on the scarves, and when, in 2002, another girl was expelled for wearing a scarf in a school outside of Lyon, this minority grew. There was a sense that something had to be done to stop the progression of the “Muslim problem,” both domestically and abroad. Teachers at this school protested and went on strike citing *laïcité* and solidifying this as the basis by which the scarves would be opposed.

Many figures in the debate played on widespread public fears of fundamentalist Islam to further their own agendas. While speaking in front of the UOIF on the eve of the presidential elections, Nicolas Sarkozy launched a new headscarf debate aimed at garnering support by fanning the growing fear and controversy. Other politicians also mobilized around the issue as a way to criticize the left for having abandoned Republican principles in favor of multiculturalism or in hopes of pulling support from far right. The media also capitalized on the public’s fears, publishing story after story detailing the horrors of fundamental Islam and thereby implying links between scarves in France and oppressive fundamentalist regimes around the world. This helped to create a sense that

the headscarves were inherently un-French in their repression and symbolized a greater threat of a coming fundamentalist challenge. A poll in 2003 found that 49 percent of those polled supported a ban on scarves in school compared to 45 percent who were opposed. Most who agreed with a ban based their opposition to the scarf in its role in lowering the status of women, and few mentioned the importance of *laïcité*. Bowen suggests that the banning of scarves became a tangible way of protesting and fighting fundamental Islam intended in much the same way that the New York crackdown on graffiti worked to reduce serious crime.⁸² Others asserted the need of a law to clarify *laïcité* and the role of religion in the modern republic, while religious leaders claimed that a ban would open a Pandora's box of religious antagonism.

Another incident in a school in Aubervilles led President Chirac to announce, in July, 2003, the formation of the Independent Commission of Reflection on the Application of the Principle of Laïcité in the Republic, known more commonly as the Commission on Laïcité or the Stasi Commission after its president, Bernard Stasi. The commission was convened to examine issues of *laïcité* with a focus on the role of the voile. Comprised of a diverse group of figures involved in the debate, the Commission looked into many areas of *laïcité* including the role of social problems in exacerbating the situation of Muslims, the possibility of an amendment to the 1905 to finance religious buildings, new ways of teaching *laïcité* in school, and the role of the CFCM. In the end the Commission came out in favor of a law banning all ostensible signs of religion, with 18 votes for and one abstention. Most commissioners justified their finding saying that things in schools had gotten out of hand and something had to be done, although most showed uncertainty that a law would make a real difference. The Commission made

⁸² Bowen, John R. *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves: Islam, the State, and Public Space*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007)

plenty of other recommendations as well, from alleviating poverty, to battling discrimination, to allowing Jewish and Muslim holidays, although they frequently reported that the only recommendation taken to heart was the headscarf ban. The public supported the decision, however, with a new poll by the same group, BVA, finding that 72 percent favored the ban, up from 49 before the Commission.⁸³

Important to note with the Stasi Commission is the lack of representation of those who actually wore scarves, as the Commission failed to interview either girls who had been expelled or sociologists that had studied the phenomenon. Only one veiled woman came before the Commission, and little was said to gain her perspective on the issues at stake. In looking into whether the voile was a tool of oppression incompatible with French *laïcité* and universalism, the Commission, and indeed the wider public, ignored many of the nuances of the veil and the women who wore it. Nicolas Sarkozy, himself not known for treading lightly around issues with the Muslim community, remarked about being approached by covered women after his testimony in front of the Stasi Commission that “I was struck by the fact that many of them were at university, were born in France, and why then the need to caricature their identity? It is because they see their identity caricatured in the eyes of others.”⁸⁴

This oversight demonstrates the extent to which France overlooked and arguably continues to avoid the diversity within the Muslim community. The attention given by the government, the media and the public to international issues with fundamental Islam overshadowed the French women whom the law would actually impact and the many reasons these women have for wearing head coverings. The individual cases themselves

⁸³ Bowen, John R. *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves: Islam, the State, and Public Space*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007)

⁸⁴ Bowen, John R. *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves: Islam, the State, and Public Space*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007)

show the many reasons for adorning the voile. While some girls came from families who encouraged the covering of their heads, others, such as the young woman in Grenoble, adopted the headscarf of their own volition as a symbol of protest and provocation rather than one of submission. The final case leading to the law shows another variation of the veil. These girls, Alma and Lila Lévy, came from a diverse family. Their father, an atheist French Jew, was the leader of the Movement against Racism and for Friendship among Peoples, while their mother was from Algeria, although she herself had never worn a voile. The girls' independent choice to gradually embrace Islam and adopt the veil initially irritated their father, who said he spoke with them of the burden posed by the veil in Muslim countries. However the girls said that they understood and would never wear it in a country where it was required. Clearly in this case the veil did not represent oppression, but rather a voluntary embrace of a part of the girls' identity and an assertion of their right to choose to embrace this aspect. Ironically, in this case and others like it, the very symbol of oppression designed to make women blend invisibly into a repressive society was used by French women to stand out and powerfully negotiate their own identity.

Other studies have confirmed this varied pattern of behavior in groups of women who wear the scarf, although of course many different types of circumstances exist. Two sociologists, Françoise Gaspard and Farhad Khosrokhavar, found in 1993-94, after interviewing many women who wore the veil, that there were a few main streams of behavior.⁸⁵ They found that one group of women tended to wear the scarf to appease their parents as they transitioned into adulthood and usually abandoned it later in life. Others adopted the scarf independently of their families during high school or afterwards

⁸⁵ Gaspard, Françoise, and Farhad Khosrokhavar. *Le foulard et la République*. (Paris: La Découverte 1995)

to suit their own identity. These women tended to be well educated and successful and embraced the veil as a component of the Islam of their choosing. A final group consisted of those who had immigrated to France and had worn some form of head covering all their lives. All of the women in the study spoke of their dress as a choice, and none claimed any affiliation with fundamentalist groups. Thus, as seen in these examples, the headscarf often represents to women, not always a symbol of oppressive Islam in another part of the world, but rather a manner of negotiating an identity in France that reconciles their background and their current circumstances.

The response to the passage of the headscarf law was equally marked by a diversity of reactions. Muslim organizations fell on various sides of the debate that often reflected their general role in French politics. The Paris Mosque and other moderates, as well as most Turkish and Sub-Saharan Africans, generally supported the Republican line. The CFCM struggled with its own response due to internal disagreements and thus said little publicly, while the UOIF came out forcefully against the ban and attempted to organize a strong objection. Three major demonstrations took place in Paris, with opposition to the law being the only thing that many participants shared. In attendance were Marxist groups with no support for religion specifically but who called for class solidarity and antiracism, women's rights groups, protestors against homelessness and other issues, and Muslim men and women of many backgrounds. The latter group portrayed themselves not as angry immigrants, but as citizens of France protesting for the universal right to attend school. While most attendees were women, few wore scarves.

This variety, in reasons for wearing the scarf, in levels of support for the ban, and in response to the law, reflects the overall diversity of the Muslim population and suggests the error of portraying Muslim women and their circumstances as uniform. The unfolding of the headscarf affair demonstrates this dangerous tendency to generalize Muslims in France in terms of conflicts involving Muslims in other parts of the world, where French Muslims themselves acknowledge no connection. Whereas the French media, politicians,

and public made quick leaps from the Algerian civil war to scarves in schools, French Muslims viewed themselves with much more nuance. In fact, many used the resources and traditions of France to contest the law via strikes, protests, and legal routes. This shows a more sophisticated interpretation of Islam and its requirements and role in France on the part of Muslims than the wider French population, who tended to see Muslims as cohesive and threatening.

The controversy also illustrates a mistakenly black and white interpretation of *laïcité* and universalism that ignores the historical complexity of these ideas in France. For example, the Catholic Church historically played a role in schools that was not neatly navigated throughout French history. Additionally, when the definition and role of public space became relevant in the debate, it quickly became clear that this concept, along with broader ideas of *laïcité*, had not been sufficiently clarified. Furthermore, what established guidelines and precedents for *laïcité* did exist in France, while they have suited the tradition of Judeo-Christian practice fairly well, do not fit so easily the Islamic tradition. If the size of a symbol is the basis by which it is deemed appropriate, the universalism of the French Republic seems trivial and unprepared to operate in a Muslim context where larger objects such as scarves are important.

The headscarf affair further demonstrates France's desire to control the direction of Islam within the state. In its reaction to international developments, the French government prioritized some manner of action to prevent this form of Islam from developing within it. It thus walked a traditionally complicated line of playing the *laïcité* laws off of each other. While the French government used the 1905 law to outlaw the presence of scarves in schools, it also acted in line with the tendency of the 1901 law to assert control over the variety of religion practiced within the country. While this upholds France's tradition of wanting to mold young French into model citizens of the Republic through solidifying within them the traditional Enlightenment values of equality and reason, it also reflects its tendency to manipulate religion to reach this end. This

shows an effort on the part of the government to encourage the creation of what some have termed an *Islam de France*, or an Islam specific to France, rather than simply *Islam en France*, or Islam in France.⁸⁶

2005 Riots: Emerging of a Common Identity?

Perhaps the most notorious recent event that has brought the question of Muslim integration to the forefront of public consciousness both in France and around the world has been the riots of 2005. These visible and violent eruptions of mostly Muslim youth in the banlieues have been interpreted in a variety of ways, from an extension of political turmoil in the Middle East,⁸⁷ to class struggle, to a response to police brutality,⁸⁸ to proof that Muslim populations are actually incompatible with France,⁸⁹ to, as the government concluded, a cry for an acknowledgement and addressing of the discrimination and inequality faced by Muslim populations. Regardless of interpretation, the riots seemed to offer a confirmation of the existence of a uniform Muslim identity captured by the simultaneous mobilization of groups around the country around a common concern.

The events have also been misinterpreted, particularly in the United States, as having a strong racial or religious tint. The riots did not involve a representative portion of the Muslim population in France and indeed involved many other groups. In fact, there was little to suggest a common religious or ethnic component at all. Rather, rioters converged around what presents the strongest aspect of what could be considered a

⁸⁶ Bowen, John R. "Islam in/of France: Dilemmas of Translocality." (13th Int'l Conference of Europeanists, Chicago, Mar, 14, 2002) www.ceri-sciencespo.com/archive/mai02/artjrb.pdf

⁸⁷ Brown, Bernard E. "God and Man in the French Riots." *American Foreign Policy Interests*. (29, 2007)

⁸⁸ Schneider, Cathy Lisa. "Police Power and Race Riots in Paris." *Politics and Society*. 36 (2008) 133

⁸⁹ Caldwell, Christopher, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe: Immigration, Islam and the West* (New York: Random House, 2009)

shared identity: common experiences of youth in the banlieues. This event demonstrates that, while the Muslim population is diverse and hardly generalizable, the banlieues themselves have begun to offer a real challenge to the French universalist claim.

The actual events that set off the rioting remain somewhat shrouded in mystery. Police reports claim that the officers involved apprehended a group of young boys after receiving a call about some adolescents stealing equipment from a construction storage area in Clichy-sous-Bois, near Paris. The boys themselves, as well as some of the neighborhood residents, claim that the police had approached the boys while they were returning from a soccer game and that they had fled out of fear of a lengthy interrogation. Whatever the pretense, however, six youth were apprehended by police around 6pm on October 27, 2005, while three others escaped capture by scaling a fence to hide in an electric turbine station. As they hid, two of these young boys were electrocuted to death inside the station, while the third escaped badly burned.

Many people blamed the deaths of the boys on the routinely harsh treatment by the police, which many claimed had caused the supposedly innocent boys to flee rather than talk with the officers. The general state of poor relations between the government and the largely Muslim populations of the banlieues had already been deteriorating for quite some time, and with this incident reached a breaking point. What followed illustrates the levels of frustration and dissatisfaction that exceeded what many in France had previously considered. Riots broke out in Clichy-sous-Bois that gradually spread to cities throughout France. Anger at the injustice of the boys' deaths mixed with longstanding frustrations at the treatment of the underclass populations of the suburbs to produce the most destructive riots since the events of 1968. Over the course of the following 20 days, rioting spread to 274 towns across France, claiming the lives of two people and injuring countless others, including 126 police and firefighters. An estimated 200 million Euros of damage was incurred, including the burning of nearly 10,000

vehicles and several buildings, and resulted in the arrest of 2,888 people. On November 8, 2005, President Chirac declared a state of emergency and imposed curfews.

Given the widespread participation in the riots across the entire country, a crack in French universalism seemed apparent. For weeks, thousands of young people collectively rose up in anger against the larger state. Despite their massive scale and the widespread participation in them, however, the riots in 2005 were surprising in that they had no real leadership or structure. No demands were made on the government by leaders of the communities in flames. In fact, the largely Muslim banlieue communities themselves were generally very concerned with ending the riots, since it was their property that was being destroyed. Participants in the rioting consisted mainly of young males, divided generally according to neighborhood rather than by religion or ethnicity. Despite assertions of a religious component,⁹⁰ not all rioters were Muslim and, in fact, many clerics came forth and publicly called for an end to the violence.⁹¹ Rioters did not respond to the wishes of the religious leaders, however, suggesting, not only that the events were not driven by religious motivation, but also that the words of the religious leadership did not carry much weight with the perpetrators. Also surprising, given the way that the riot's depiction centered on the high immigrant populations of the communities, was the fact that 92 percent of those arrested were French citizens.⁹²

What the rioters did mobilize around, however, was the exclusionary social structure and widespread discrimination and racism that denied them access to economic mobility and justice. As Hargreaves points out, the violence during the riots focused on burning cars, which symbolized the upward mobility that seemed so off limits to the banlieue youth, as well as police forces that represented the discrimination and

⁹⁰ Brown, Bernard E. "God and Man in the French Riots." *American Foreign Policy Interests*. 29 (2007): 183

⁹¹ Schneider, Cathy Lisa. "Police Power and Race Riots in Paris." *Politics and Society*. 36 (2008): 133.

⁹² Dickey, Christopher "Europe's Time Bomb." *Newsweek*. Vol. 146 (2005) 42

humiliation they faced from the French state and society.⁹³ In rising up collectively, the marginalized communities of young people in the banlieues actively drew unavoidable attention to their situation, moving the periphery of the cities where they had been ostracized to the center of the country, and even the world's, awareness.

The 2005 riots were certainly not the first in France, however, and not the first involving these communities. Riots had intermittently shaken French cities to a smaller degree throughout the previous decades. Cesari claims that the 2005 round increased in intensity because of a decrease in government involvement in the banlieues.⁹⁴ She points to the resources that the government had channeled to 'beur' organizations, through money, education, and social workers during the 1970s and 80s as resulting in an increased state presence in the banlieues that kept these communities linked to wider French society. Now she claims that the state presence has declined, leading to a growing disconnect between the *beur* leaders tied to the government and the swelling population of discontented youths, who are easily driven to violence by issues such as police brutality.

This disconnect between the government and the population of the banlieues appears to be increasing and contributing to the sense of hopelessness among the people who live there. Even before the riots, there were an estimated 150 "no-go zones" within France, or areas into which French police refuse to venture without major reinforcements.⁹⁵ This situation of tension and hostility at the absence of the state exacerbates fears on both sides and leads to a sense that those within the banlieues have been abandoned by the government.

⁹³ Hargreaves, Alec G., *Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity in Contemporary France*. (New York: Routledge, 1995)

⁹⁴ Cesari, Jocelyne. "Ethnicity, Islam, and les Banlieues: Confusing the Issues." <http://riotsfrance.ssrc.org/Cesari/>. 2005.

⁹⁵ Dickey, Christopher "Europe's Time Bomb." *Newsweek*. Vol. 146 (2005) 42

Lessons from these Examples: Is there a Muslim Identity in France?

The preceding demographic information and analysis of significant events in the relationship between Muslims and the state in France suggest that at this point in time a collective and unified Muslim identity does not exist. Muslims in France remain quite divided across many facets of identity ranging from country of origin, ethnicity, political views, generational lines, religious leanings, and other characteristics. As seen with examples of the Paris Mosque and the CFCM, unifying a Muslim voice behind either religion or politics has proven to be impossible. This is to be expected, given Amartya Sen's insistence on human beings as multi-faceted creatures simultaneously embodying many identities. To reduce this population to a single "Muslim" label would be to ignore the many other factors at play and to minimize the people in question. The example of the headscarf affair suggests that assertions of a common identity by French media, politicians, and others have been premature and have likely been influenced by unrelated outside events. Furthermore, the identity ascribed to Muslims through these sorts of situations has been largely negative and, combined with high profile laws such as the banning of the veils, has contributed to a stigmatization of Muslim populations.

This leads to a second point that, while no strong common identity exists now within Muslim populations in France, there is evidence to suggest that one could develop in the future, and in fact may be encouraged by the public's insistence on religion as a negative and characterizing feature. While older generations of Muslim immigrants tended to gradually adopt a more secular "French" outlook over the course of their residence, increasingly, younger generations are identifying themselves more exclusively by their religion. This can be seen as a way of negotiating a difficult mixed identity in France, but it is also likely in response to the insistence on labeling this group based on

their religious beliefs. Vaisse and Lawrence report a finding that young Muslim students today claim an “increased personal identification with Islam” compared to those of earlier generations.⁹⁶ A surprising one third of Muslim students polled said they felt most defined by their religious group, much more than by their skin color (10 percent) or where they lived (9 percent). Only 4 percent of non-Muslims reported this strong religious identity, feeling their identities to be much more tied to gender (24 percent), and place of residence (27 percent).⁹⁷ The authors attribute this emphasis on religion to a reflection of the way students feel they are classified by their peers and their society.

Thus, the portrayal of a cohesive Muslim population could ironically turn into something of a self-fulfilling prophecy. While the diverse population shares little in common in reality, constant assumptions of its homogeneity by the wider population may actually create a sense of shared identity where one did not exist before. Vaisse and Lawrence mention this in their assessment of Islam in France, directly citing efforts such as the creation of the CFCM as putting an emphasis on religion rather than on the workers groups or civic organizations that characterized past generations’ relationship with the state.⁹⁸ With the connection made for them from their background to Islam by a societal insistence on religion, many embrace Islam as a part of their heritage, ironically turning to the global version of the religion that France fears rather than the “family Islam” of their parents.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Laurence, Jonathan and Justin Vaisse. *Integrating Islam; Political and Religious Challenges in Contemporary France* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 2006)

⁹⁷ Laurence, Jonathan and Justin Vaisse. *Integrating Islam; Political and Religious Challenges in Contemporary France* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 2006)

⁹⁸ Laurence, Jonathan and Justin Vaisse. *Integrating Islam; Political and Religious Challenges in Contemporary France* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 2006)

⁹⁹ Laurence, Jonathan and Justin Vaisse. *Integrating Islam; Political and Religious Challenges in Contemporary France* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 2006)

Also tied to this growth of Muslim religiosity are many of Amartya Sen's ideas about identity. Sen asserts that a facet of identity tends to increase in importance in the face of persecution. Thus, Muslims in France could experience a greater pull towards their religion as they perceive its disregard in society. This is certainly possible given the negative values, stereotypes, and associations attributed to Islam during the debates and coverage of the events described above. For instance, Vaisse and Lawrence credit a spike in religiosity among Muslims after 9/11 to the sharp rise in anti-Muslim sentiment that followed the attacks. Others have likewise anticipated this result of stigmatizing Muslims during the controversial French debates. During the headscarf debate Nicolas Sarkozy argued against a new headscarf law during his term as Interior Minister for a similar reason that it would only serve to humiliate Muslims and radicalize both sides of the debate.¹⁰⁰ The tendency seen above to link Muslims in France with Muslims in wider global conflicts also harmfully contributes to ideas of Islam in society, perpetuating a negative image of French Muslims. One young Muslim woman claimed to be able to tell when something negative had occurred involving Muslims in the world simply by the way people would look at her at any given day on the metro.¹⁰¹ These harmful perceptions, mixed with a continued 'minimization' of Muslims in France to their religious persuasion could thus contribute to a growing sense of unity among the population, in effect creating what has been wrongly identified as common Muslim identity in society.

For now however, the closest thing to a common identity among French Muslims is not one of Islam, but rather of the banlieues themselves, as demonstrated in the 2005

¹⁰⁰ Bowen, John R. *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves; Islam, the State, and Public Space*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007)

¹⁰¹ Bowen, John R. *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves; Islam, the State, and Public Space*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007)

riots. While the Muslim population could not come together to agree on important religious, social, or political issues, many of its youth, along with others in the banlieues around France, showed an element of cohesion, albeit not to the extent portrayed by some, in response to a perceived act of discrimination. This suggests what some describe as a growing identity of the banlieues. This identity is not based in ethnic or religious heritage but rather in a shared experience of discrimination, poverty, and stigmatization by a France that views them as a threat, as well as a distinct culture developing in the isolation of the banlieues.

The banlieues have seen a developing culture of their own in the absence of French or North African cultural influences. With immigrants from such a variety of places and backgrounds as shown above, the communities of the banlieues exhibit little of any one foreign culture. Furthermore, these suburbs are increasingly filled with second and third generation French Muslims who, while they feel ties to their background, especially in light of discrimination against it, have never lived outside of France. Traditional French culture, however, is also largely absent from these areas. Isolated geographically in the periphery of large cities, populations in the banlieues exist in what Cesari terms a ‘cultural void.’ Marked by characterless buildings and poor transportation, the banlieues lack the cafes, shops, and cultural spaces that normally pervade the traditional French landscape and exemplify the French experience. They thus have few physical or symbolic links to traditional French life. In the absence of either French or North African culture, the communities of the banlieues have developed many of their own social norms and behaviors.

Banlieue culture exists in a variety of realms, including social structure, music, language, and attitude. The absence of community structures and symbols has left a hole

in this area filled by the rising population of youth, who themselves are often the providers of local social rules, “based on aggressive manhood, control of the streets, defense of a territory.”¹⁰² Disappointed and disenchanted with the system that seems to have abandoned them, the youths destroy the very symbols of failed social mobility, including schools, welfare offices, and other public buildings, and promote a culture of antagonism towards the state. Many scholars have made the comparison between banlieue culture and that of American ghettos. In fact, when Hollywood movies are dubbed into French, a banlieue accent is typically given to African American characters, furthering this link between the two cultures.¹⁰³ The banlieues have likewise influenced the music scene in France. For example, *rai* music, which mixes Western and Arab influences, originated in the banlieues and later became quite popular in wider France. Additionally, the banlieues have exerted a large influence on language with the emergence of *verlan*, or a type of slang originally specific to these neighborhoods which has since spread to mainstream culture. By inverting syllables to create their own words, youths of the cités have been able to further their own subculture within France in a very traditional way. These cultural aspects are cemented by a sense of community in opposition to the French state, which many youths view as abandoning or even persecuting their banlieue population.

Some such as Cesari have painted these tendencies and others as a way of reclaiming a positive identity out of a negative one assigned by society at large. In addition to the discrimination of a Muslim identity, many face judgment based on their

¹⁰² Roy, Olivier. “Get French or die trying.” *New York Times* (Nov. 9, 2005)

¹⁰³ Roy, Olivier. “Get French or die trying.” *New York Times* (Nov. 9, 2005)

neighborhood of residence.¹⁰⁴ Public incendiary remarks have also fueled this perception, such as the infamous line given by Nicolas Sarkozy, when he vowed as Interior Minister to rid the banlieues of *racailles*, or scum, even if he had to use a power hose.¹⁰⁵ With this perception of persecution, a banlieue identity arguably, according to Sen, gains salience in the eyes of these youths. Feeling an increased attachment to this identity, many strive to reclaim it as a positive quality. Thus, through exclusive vocabulary, unique styles of music, and defiant attitudes towards police, the banlieue communities assert a degree of positive common identity in opposition to mainstream society. Ironically, however, this created identity occasionally spills over into the wider community, resulting in the adoption of certain *verlan* terms into general vocabulary and the growing popularity of music styles originating in the banlieues.

While these common circumstances of the French Muslim population are perhaps not enough to form a concrete shared identity or an imagined community, they do suggest a strong challenge to French ideas of universalism. In a sense, France continues to fight against the same signs of *communautarisme* that it has in the past. The use of *verlan* in the banlieues as a dialect of a specific culture harkens back to the struggle of the Third Republic to stamp out regional identities by eliminating *patois* dialects. Universalism thus continues to fight the same sorts of battles against communities within it, be they regional, religious, ethnic, or community-based. Unfortunately, many of the things which might help to navigate a blended identity and address the identity void question, such as the teaching of Maghrebi history and language in schools, would also likely undermine many ideas of *laïcité* and universalism.

¹⁰⁴ Cediey, E. and F. Foroni. *Les Discriminations à Ruminations de "l'Origine" Dans les Embauches en France: Une Enquête Nationale Par Tests de Discrimination Selon la Méthode du Bureau International de Travail*. (Organisation Internationale du Travail, 2007)

¹⁰⁵ Laurence, Jonathan and Justin Vaisse. *Integrating Islam; Political and Religious Challenges in Contemporary France* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 2006)

Does this challenge to universalism render the French model obsolete? It seems a catch-22 to suggest that the preservation of a system would require the violating of its basic principles, however there is perhaps room for progress. The government appears to have taken note of the gravity of the situation, even if it has not handled it in the most tactful of ways, given the unfolding of the current controversial identity debate. In light of this willingness to engage with the public on such issues, Amartya Sen's arguments could prove the most useful, as France tries to navigate the best path through preserving its traditional ideological stance while acknowledging the diversity of its citizens. Sen's arguments imply that some recognition of diversity is necessary. To view people as the collection of attributes, opinions, and interests that they embody rather than minimizing them to a single characteristic would likely go a long way in this situation in recognizing the many differences between Muslims on a large scale. In his book, Sen asserts that the question for Britain is not the degree of multiculturalism in its model, but the type. Perhaps the same question can be true of France; that it need not abandon, but rather clarify, or update, its universalist ideals. Given that many of these principles, such as *laïcité*, have never been comprehensively codified, this seems a reasonable approach. Perhaps a 21st century French identity is in order, one that evolves with the population. This evolution appears consistent with Rousseau's ideas even, that a society's sense of itself would depend on and emerge organically from the community itself. With Muslims making up a growing portion of the population, it is time to include them in the national identity conversation.

CHAPTER 4

MUSLIM IDENTITY IN EUROPE

The following chapter contextualizes the French case within wider Europe. Given some scholars' assertion that the unique traditional French perspective presents an "exceptional" case,¹⁰⁶ it is helpful to look to other countries for comparison to evaluate this claim and analyze on a broader level. Presented here is an overview of two cases of Great Britain and Germany, in order to better situate and compare the experiences of Muslims in France within a broader European context. While this comparison attempts to avoid oversimplifications of national contexts, a general overview of the demographics and the main policy tendencies is helpful to show the variety that exists in both population and national context throughout Europe. This is followed by an analysis of common trends on the broader European level. Scaling back from the French case to wider Europe shows several similar patterns of portraying and interacting with Muslim populations, both at the national and European levels.

While many European countries have large Muslim populations that could be examined, these particular cases have been chosen for several reasons. Both Great Britain and Germany are also home to significant Muslim populations that have been the subject of recent discussion and controversy. In the wake of startling events such as the Rushdie Affair in Britain and an overall increasing concern with isolation of growing Muslim populations into "parallel societies," a similar tendency has arisen in both countries to portray all Muslims as homogenous, violent, and unwilling to assimilate into society. Furthermore, Britain and Germany present interesting political models with which to compare the French case. Other scholars have examined these three countries in

¹⁰⁶ Godin, Emmanuel and Tony Chafer, *The French Exception* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005)

comparison,¹⁰⁷ with the British case in particular featuring often since it offers a near opposite approach to integration relative to the French.¹⁰⁸

Upon closer examination, the situations in these countries also present an informative illustration of the overall diversity of European Muslims and the political contexts in which they live. British and German Muslims bring with them ties to completely different parts of the world with distinct cultural, religious, and political traditions and perspectives, varying relationships with their host countries, and unique backgrounds and immigration circumstances. When combined with the unique political characters and integration approaches of Britain and German, within which Muslim communities must integrate and forge varying degrees of new identities, the result renders the condition of European Muslims extremely diverse.

Despite this variety, however, a general trend persists across Europe to portray European Muslims as a simplified, uniform, and usually threatening group. This mirrors the general French tendency to erroneously view its Muslim population in a similar light. This is likely the result of widespread media portrayals, politicians seeking to capitalize on populous fears, and a general trend towards policy convergence on the European political level. These assumptions can be very dangerous, however, in leading to ineffectual policies and creating an inaccurate and often negative perception of Muslims that can result, as seen in the French case, in the development of stronger oppositional Muslim identities.

¹⁰⁷ Fetzer, Joel S. and J. Christopher Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005)

Also Haddad, Yvonne Yazbeck and Michael J. Balz. "October Riots in France: A Failed Immigration Policy or the Empire Strikes Back?" *International Migration*. Vol. 4 (2), (2006)

¹⁰⁸ Favell, Adrian. *Philosophies of Integration; Immigration and the Idea of citizenship in France and Britain* (New York: Palgrave, 1998)

Great Britain

Britain's experience with its Muslim population offers an especially interesting point of reference for the French case. Britain likewise welcomed many Muslims from former colonies into its borders during the years following World War II. These populations exhibit many of the same divisions and diversity of French Muslims, contributing even more variety to the European Muslim population as a whole. Generally speaking, this British Muslim community has faced many similar obstacles to integration as in the French case, often living isolated from mainstream society and battling discrimination and stereotypes. However, Muslims in Britain also operate within a very different national political framework. The British approach to integration is often portrayed as the textbook opposite to France's method.¹⁰⁹ Multiculturalism features as the cornerstone of an integration philosophy that focuses on race and ethnicity over other religion, differing sharply from the French universalist model and controversial history of *laïcité*. Muslims from this population also hail from extremely different parts of the world, bringing their own distinct cultures and perspectives to this unique context.

As in France, many cross-cutting variables of ethnicity, background, socio-economic circumstance, residence, and religious beliefs render the notion of a homogenous British Muslim population impossible. The demographics of Muslims in Britain show this variety in many regards. Britain's 1.6 million Muslims make up approximately 2.8% of its population¹¹⁰ and hail from an assortment of countries. The relationship between Britain and the Muslim world also dates back quite far to the Middle Ages, since which time Britain's Muslim population has grown intermittently. The

¹⁰⁹ Favell, Adrian. *Philosophies of Integration; Immigration and the Idea of citizenship in France and Britain* (New York: Palgrave, 1998)

¹¹⁰ Muslims in Europe, Country Guide. *BBC*. (Dec. 23, 2005)
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4385768.stm> (accessed March 13, 2010)

British Empire contained such a large number of Muslims that the nineteenth-century statesman Lord Salisbury once claimed in a statement remarkably like that in the French context of the Paris Mosque construction, that Britain was “the greatest Islamic power on earth.”¹¹¹ Yemeni immigrants established the first significant British Muslim community in the 19th century when they came to work on ships and then constructed the first British mosque in 1870. Despite these longstanding ties, however, most Muslims today have origins in more recent waves of immigration that originated from former colonies in East Africa and Asia. While the British government did not extend a formal invitation to immigrate through worker recruitment programs, many immigrated to the United Kingdom in search of employment opportunities following decolonization. The partitioning of India and Pakistan also brought many Muslims from this region to the United Kingdom in the 1940s and 50s seeking an escape from the violence. Muslim presence grew as families reunified over the following decades, with 361,000 immigrating in 1971 alone.¹¹² In the 1960s and 70s, immigration from East Africa increased greatly, particularly from Kenya and Somalia. Within this group, however, many immigrants had roots in India, further diversifying the backgrounds of Muslim immigrants. A wave of approximately 100,000 Bangladeshis arrived following the country’s independence from Pakistan in 1971, and finally, another wave in the 1980s and 90s of mainly Iranians, Turks, Yemenis, Egyptians, Moroccans, and Iraqis resulted in a very diverse population of 1.6 million Muslims in 2001.

Divisions across national lines contribute to variety within the Muslim population in a number of ways. Immigrants from different countries brought with them distinct

¹¹¹ Barnes, Hugh. *Born in the UK: Young Muslims in Britain*. (London: The Foreign Policy Centre, July, 2006)

¹¹² Pauly, Robert, *Islam in Europe: Integration or Marginalization* (New York: Ashgate, 2004)

cultural and linguistic characteristics, but also very different national relationships with Great Britain, which influence the way they perceive, and are perceived by, their new communities. Many immigrants come from former colonies, often implying a distinct relationship, compared to both other former colonies and countries never occupied by the British. With British Muslims’ roots quite literally extending all over the globe, these differences in culture, language, and background were often quite pronounced. Robert Pauly quotes Charles Husband as he emphasizes the necessity of speaking of “Muslim communities in the plural to underscore the empirical fact that Muslims belong to a variety of linguistic, regional and sectarian groups. The making of British Islam is an ongoing, unfinished process of experimentation, diversity and debate.”¹¹³

Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Indian immigrants and their descendants make up the largest percentage of Muslims in the U.K., although there are significant populations of several groups. Using figures by Robert Pauly, who cites a number of sources, the table below represents recent figures for the origins of Muslims in Britain.¹¹⁴ As shown, significant Muslim communities in the United Kingdom from around the world reflect diverse backgrounds.

Table 1: National Origins of Muslims in Britain

<u>Place of Origin</u>	<u>Population</u>
Pakistan	675,000
India	295,000
Bangladesh	257,000
Middle East/North Africa	350,000
Other (esp. Nigeria, Malaysia)	180,000

¹¹³ Pauly, Robert, *Islam in Europe: Integration or Marginalization* (New York: Ashgate, 2004)

¹¹⁴ Pauly, Robert, *Islam in Europe: Integration or Marginalization* (New York: Ashgate, 2004)

These national divisions often remain quite pronounced in Britain generations after immigrants arrive, with communities of Muslims of the same national origins tending to reside in common areas. For example, nearly half of British Pakistanis reside in Greater Manchester, West Midlands and West Yorkshire, while another third lives in Birmingham (110,000) and Bradford (96,000). Nearly one half of British Bangladeshis live in London, while more than three quarters of Indian Muslims live in either London or Leicester. These communities tend to be quite culturally distinct and insular, thus contributing to the continued national divisions, despite ties through British citizenship, shared beliefs in Islam, and often common experiences of economic hardship and discrimination.

Economic depravity persists as a common theme among Muslim populations throughout Europe, and Britain is no exception, although socio-economic status does tend to vary somewhat across different populations within Britain. For instance, Indian Muslims have seen some relative economic success compared with other groups, while Pakistanis and particularly Bangladeshis experience relatively greater poverty levels, in large part due to their traditionally higher levels of work in textile industries, which have slowed during recent years. Income levels of Southeast Asians as a whole, however, differ strikingly from the majority population. A study by the British Board of Health found that 90 percent of Bangladeshis and 70 percent of Pakistanis subsist on less than 10,000 pounds a year, compared to only 28 percent of the national population as a whole. Conversely, while 23 percent of British make 30,000 pounds or more, only 1 percent of Bangladeshis and 4 percent of Pakistanis earn this amount.¹¹⁵ However, even these economic characteristics vary quite substantially by area and other factors. For example,

¹¹⁵ Pauly, Robert, *Islam in Europe: Integration or Marginalization* (New York: Ashgate, 2004)

in Manchester, which is home to a significant number of Pakistanis, this population fares quite well, often operating as professionals, manufacturers, and small business owners.¹¹⁶

Britain's Muslim population is likewise young and increasingly born in the U.K.. At least 50 percent of Muslims in Britain have been born in Britain, while one third of the population is under 16 years of age, the highest for any population group.¹¹⁷ In some regions, Muslim children make up one third of the local youth population, predicting the demographic shift that will occur with Britain's generally ageing population. Half of Britain's Muslims are under age 25, while 92 percent are under 50 years of age.¹¹⁸

As in France, large differences in religious practices and traditions also cut across British Muslims. These variations, while significant, are likewise poorly understood and often unacknowledged by the wider population. Robert Pauly lists several major misconceptions about Islam in Britain that paint the religion as a more negative and uniform practice marked by violence, indulgence, and opposition to Christianity.¹¹⁹ In actuality, religious beliefs among Muslims in Britain vary along similar lines as those in France, cutting across characteristics of national, generational, and personal difference. Given that Britain's Muslims come from such distant regions, some of these differences can be quite prominent.

Without the same controversial history of *laïcité*, religion has traditionally been given a freer reign in Britain. As a result of this, mosque construction has grown enormously, with a rate of nearly 100 new mosques per year at present. Nonetheless, this growth does not reflect a uniform presence, and indeed perhaps encourages religious plurality with more options for worship. Muslim beliefs vary considerably by ethnic

¹¹⁶ Pauly, Robert, *Islam in Europe: Integration or Marginalization* (New York: Ashgate, 2004)

¹¹⁷ Pauly, Robert, *Islam in Europe: Integration or Marginalization* (New York: Ashgate, 2004)

¹¹⁸ Barnes, Hugh. *Born in the UK: Young Muslims in Britain*. (London: The Foreign Policy Centre, July, 2006)

¹¹⁹ Pauly, Robert, *Islam in Europe: Integration or Marginalization* (New York: Ashgate, 2004)

group despite a societal tendency to perceive Muslims as a monolithic entity. Similar to the situation in France, divides cut between branches of Sunni and Shiite Islam as well as across national and ethnic lines and manners of practicing. For instance, even though Pakistanis and Bangladeshis tend to follow Sunni Islam and rate their religion as very important to them, they seldom worship at the same mosques.¹²⁰ Even within the same nationality, mosque attendance varies by region, with many imams recruited from specific villages to reflect and preserve the specific traditions of the region. These imams usually focus heavily on the specific practices and politics of the sending country and hold little regard for ‘global’ Islamic movements. These different interpretations of Islam and varying political views transect this group and impede cohesive action and unified representation at the national level, as they do in France. Furthermore, competition outside of religion, such as for scarce jobs, often reinforces divisions by nationality and ethnicity and thus works to prevent the development of common Muslim communities and bonds.¹²¹

Only two Muslims have ever served in the British Parliament, and both instances served to divide Muslims more than to unite them behind political movement and progress. More have managed to reach levels of local representation, however, with some being able to do so under the banner of the Islamic Party of Britain, which aimed to find common ground between Muslim sects and promote shared interests. However this group suspended campaigns in 2003, citing its own internal divisions. General Secretary Dr. Sahib Mustaqim Bleher stated that “British Muslims were too busy competing with each other for acceptance by the establishment” to be able to act cohesively to alter it.¹²²

¹²⁰ Pauly, Robert, *Islam in Europe: Integration or Marginalization* (New York: Ashgate, 2004)

¹²¹ Pauly, Robert, *Islam in Europe: Integration or Marginalization* (New York: Ashgate, 2004)

¹²² Press statement. Islamic Party of Britain. <http://www.islamicparty.com/press/10062003.htm> (accessed March 13, 2010)

A growing number of Muslim political advocacy organizations exist among the Muslim population, although most serve very specific ethnic, regional, linguistic groups of local neighborhoods or cities, convened for a variety of causes and missions.

In addition to the multitude of differences that exist between Muslims within the United Kingdom, specifics of the British approach also serve to differentiate the experience of British Muslims from others around the continent. The British approach to citizenship, and thus to integration into British society, starkly contrasts that of the French. In fact, these two countries are often portrayed as opposite ends of the integration spectrum, as they espouse diametrically opposed views of citizenship and its acquisition.¹²³ In contrast to French universalism, the United Kingdom bases its political philosophy in multiculturalism, asserting that all cultures have equal value and protection under the law. British citizenship has also been traditionally tied to birth on British soil as *jus solis*, or citizenship through birthplace rather than ethnic heritage. While this traditional multiculturalist and open approach perhaps results in a slightly more favorable and respectful view of Muslim communities among the British population compared with others it also arguably contributes to the insular nature of many minority communities, in what many have termed ‘parallel societies’.¹²⁴ In the absence of an emphasis on immigrants to integrate fully into society, and with culturally specific communities entrenched throughout the country, many often remain isolated in communities of ethnically similar populations.

Britain has also tended to pursue its multicultural approach through a focus on race in Britain, viewing minorities through lenses of skin color or ethnicity, but not

¹²³ Favell, Adrian. *Philosophies of Integration; Immigration and the Idea of citizenship in France and Britain* (New York: Palgrave, 1998)

¹²⁴ Niblett, Robin. “Islamic Extremism in Europe,” *CSIS: Statement Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Subcommittee on European Affairs*.
<http://foreign.senate.gov/testimony/2006/NiblettTestimony060405.pdf>

religion. This complicates matters for British Muslims since they come from many different racial and ethnic backgrounds and also exacerbates national and ethnic differences that inhibit collective Muslim identity development or cohesive action. While this slightly different perception of Muslims has evolved somewhat over time, Muslims still must work within a race-based legal system. While Jews and Sikhs have been acknowledged as ethnic groups, Muslims do not receive this distinction, thus leaving them more vulnerable to religious discrimination that is technically not prohibited by British law.¹²⁵ Some groups receive protection through their ethnicity as Pakistani or Arab, but not all qualify for, or wish to claim, racial minority status. The absence of such legislation, which is imposed from the European level with the Treaty of Amsterdam but has not been addressed on a national level, marks a void in the British relationship with its Muslim population.

Additional distinctions of the British case lie in its slightly different colonial interactions that often preceded its relationships with its Muslim citizens. The greater physical distance between Britain and its former colonies than France and North Africa arguably had implications for colonial rule. Pauly asserts that this distance often resulted in a generally less violent transition to independence, and has led to less contemporary British influence over politics since independence.¹²⁶ This leaves for a much freer foreign policy, with relationships with its Muslim populations remaining a domestic policy issue rather than one tied largely to post-colonial relationships and foreign policy. This physical and relational distance may have perhaps led to a less frequent linking of

¹²⁵ Modood, Tariq, "Muslims and the Politics of Difference" in *The Politics of Migration, Managing Opportunity, Conflict and Change*. Ed. Sarah Spencer. (New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2003)

¹²⁶ Pauly, Robert, *Islam in Europe: Integration or Marginalization* (New York: Ashgate, 2004)

domestic and foreign issues involving Muslims, although these issues still arise in the linking of European contexts which will be discussed later.

In the wake of the London bombings of 2005, as well as periods of unrest that have been attributed, rightly or not, to the failed integration of Muslims in the U.K., many have begun to question Britain's traditional multicultural approach. Some of its critics suggest that "these British bombers are a consequence of a misguided and catastrophic pursuit of multiculturalism" and that "in recent years [Britain has] focused far too much on the 'multi' and not enough on the common culture."¹²⁷ Many suggest that Britain has occupied a role on the far end of the integration policy spectrum for too long and that it should adopt policies demanding more integration of its minority populations. This tendency to evaluate domestic issues with an eye to contexts in other states proves typical of European countries seeking to address concerns with their own domestic integration concerns.

The headscarf issue represents one area where Britain has particularly begun to question its multicultural approach. In 2007, just three years after the French ban on headscarves in schools, British courts saw their own headscarf scandal brought forward, and they subsequently ruled that schools could forge their own codes relating to Islamic dress.¹²⁸ Despite many reasons given by British Muslims for adopting Islamic clothing,¹²⁹ the veil is increasingly viewed as beyond the scope of British multiculturalist tolerance. In the wake of the recent French movement to place restrictions on the wearing

¹²⁷ William Pfaff and Trevor Phillips cited in Tariq Modood's article <http://www.surrey-research-park.co.uk/Arts/CRONEM/Tariq-Modood-article.pdf>

¹²⁸ "The Islamic Veil across Europe," *BBC*. (Jan 26, 2010) <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/5414098.stm> (accessed March 13, 2010)

¹²⁹ Perlez, Jane. "Muslims' Veils Test Limits of Britain's Tolerance," *New York Times*. (June 22, 2007) (accessed March 13, 2010) http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/22/world/europe/22veil.html?pagewanted=1&_r=2 (accessed March 13, 2010)

of the niqab in public, similar debates have also emerged in Britain, reflecting internationalization of this debate and the questioning of traditional approaches.¹³⁰

Germany

Differing once more from the French and British contexts, the general German approach to integration has been influenced by a traditional notion that Germany is not a country of immigration, but one based on a sense of the nation. Contrasting the French model rooted in territoriality, political citizenship, and ideology, where one could theoretically “become” French, the German system takes as its foundation ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and racial characteristics that are less easily adopted. Thus, despite the fact foreigners have accounted for 80 percent of Germany’s population growth over the last 50 years, few of them have easily transitioned to citizenship.¹³¹ While the country actively recruited foreign laborers after World War II as France did, it also considered them as temporary workers, rather than the permanent residents they would become. The German case is also marked by legal entrenchment of these ideas within a historically strict interpretation of *jus sanguinis*, or citizenship through blood or ethnicity. Thus, the large populations of immigrants to Germany, and often their descendants generations later, were denied substantial legal rights and protection due to a lack of official citizenship status. Only recently in 2000 has Germany lowered barriers to citizenship to allow for the naturalization of much of its Muslim population. Within this view of citizenship marked by the sense of a German nation, however, Germany’s integration approach has proved to be one of tempered balance between the extremes of the French Republican and British multicultural models. While rejecting outright assimilationism, Germany has wavered somewhat on the degree of multiculturalism it is

¹³⁰ “The Islamic Veil across Europe,” *BBC*. (Jan 26, 2010)

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/5414098.stm> (accessed March 13, 2010)

¹³¹ Pauly, Robert, *Islam in Europe: Integration or Marginalization* (New York: Ashgate, 2004)

willing to accept in light of its traditional self-regard as a nation of ethnically and culturally similar Germans.

Germany is home to the second largest Muslim population in Europe, with 3 million Muslims making up 3.6 percent of its population.¹³² Unlike France and Britain, however, Germany did not have a substantial Muslim population until after World War II, when it initiated the Federal Republic's First Employment Agreement with Turkey in 1961. In an effort to spur on reconstruction and economic growth with cheap labor, the Federal Republic of Germany had previously made such agreements with Italy, Spain, and Greece, and proceeded to make others with Portugal, Tunisia and Morocco throughout the 1960s. As in the French case, this worker recruitment, intended as temporary, resulted in large, permanent communities of Muslims in Germany. The reunification of families, as well as the arrival of Kurdish Turks seeking escape from government repression enlarged this population throughout the 1960s and 70s, with Turks becoming the largest minority group in 1981.¹³³ As in the French case, despite government measures aimed to encourage the return of existing immigrants and halt the flow of new ones, the Turkish population continued to grow through new generations, reaching 2.1 million by the end of the century. In addition to the Turkish community, increased immigration from the Middle East and Asia in the wake of civil unrest, for instance, in Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Iraq, brought the German Muslim population closer to the large and diverse group it is today.

The table below illustrates the demographic composition of German Muslim populations in recent years. The diversity of the group is apparent, with significant populations from 13 countries or regions. The Central Asian community consists of

¹³² "Muslims in Europe: Country Guide" *BBC*. (Dec. 23, 2005)
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4385768.stm> (accessed March 13, 2010)

¹³³ Pauly, Robert, *Islam in Europe: Integration or Marginalization* (New York: Ashgate, 2004)

Muslims with roots in Azerbaijan, Kazakstan, Kyrgystan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, further adding to the diversity of the mix. Additionally, while three quarters of German Muslims are of Turkish background, this population is also divided between ethnically Turkish and Kurdish communities, the latter of which numbers over 400,000.¹³⁴ Most demographic information tends to focus on Muslims of Turkish origin as a whole, however, since this group does make up a large majority of the Muslim population. Because of this, most statistics in this study, taken largely from Robert Pauly's book, *Islam in Europe: Integration or Marginalization*, will refer to the Turkish population specifically, even though they cannot necessarily reflect the situation of all German Muslims.

Table 2: National Origins of Muslims in Germany

Place of Origin	Population
Turkey	2.1 million
Bosnia	167,690
Iran	116,446
Morocco	81,450
Afghanistan	71,955
Central Asia	55,600
Lebanon	54,211
Iraq	51,211
Pakistan	38,257
Tunisia	24,260
Algeria	17,186
Albania	12,107
Somalia	8,350

135

¹³⁴ "Whose Fatherland? A proposal to Grant Citizenship to Members of Germany's Vast Immigrant Community Stirs Passionate Debate," *Time International* (25 January 1999)

¹³⁵ Pauly, Robert, *Islam in Europe: Integration or Marginalization* (New York: Ashgate, 2004)

Along with substantial differences existing between Turkish and Kurdish communities, several other issues divide German Muslims and prevent cohesion. For instance, while the majority of Muslims in Germany practices Sunni Islam, there are considerable populations of Iranian and Iraqi Muslims who are predominantly Shia. Most obstacles to uniting Muslims behind common issues, however, despite common need for reforms, stem once more from national and ethnic divisions. One study suggests that ethnicity and not religion is the primary motivating factor behind political organizations in Germany. According to the study, 82.5 percent of minority claims filed with the German government from 1990-95 came from groups organized around ethnicity or nationality rather than religion.¹³⁶ Furthermore, while the Central Council of Muslims operates on the national level much as the CFCM in France, over 2000 organizations with Islamic linkages operate on the regional level, reflecting a wide range of ethnicities, nationalities, social concerns that are often influenced by a plethora of international actors and issues abroad. Thus, despite efforts such as those in France to consolidate Muslims behind a single organization in the Council, Muslims in Germany defy generalization at this point.

Nonetheless, some trends about the population become evident. As in the French and British cases, Muslims in Germany are disproportionately young, often due to high fertility rates compared to native German populations. Studies have shown 70 percent of the Turkish population to be under the age of 30, while only five percent are 65 and older, compared with 17 percent of the overall population.¹³⁷ Muslims in Germany also tend to live in poor outskirts of mid to large sized cities, such as Berlin, Munich, Frankfurt, Duisberg, and Cologne. Over three quarters of the Turkish population

¹³⁶ Pauly, Robert, *Islam in Europe: Integration or Marginalization* (New York: Ashgate, 2004)

¹³⁷ Pauly, Robert, *Islam in Europe: Integration or Marginalization* (New York: Ashgate, 2004)

specifically occupy urban areas, such as the neighborhood of Kreuzberg in Berlin, while 35 percent of this group lives in the North Rhine-Westphalia district, the site of the original industrial plants that attracted workers in the 1960s.¹³⁸ Other Muslim populations also tend to reside in urban areas throughout Germany and, as in Britain, exhibit tendencies towards isolation and the development of “parallel societies.”

One reason for this isolation that marks a difference from the experiences of Muslims in Britain and France is a wide linguistic barrier faced by most German Muslims. Since Germany did not have as strong a colonial presence, particularly in traditionally Muslim countries from which populations have come, immigrants do not often possess the language skills to match those of, for example, many Algerians immigrating to France. Thus, with most populations arriving with low levels of German skills and subsequently living in ethnically insular communities, they experience an additional serious barrier to integration. Many third generation immigrants still lack sufficient knowledge of German, a condition which results from an early disadvantage.¹³⁹ One study of Turkish families in Kreuzberg found that 63 percent of preschool children in the study “spoke little or no German and thus failed to meet the linguistic requirements for primary school.”¹⁴⁰ This shortcoming in language acquisition contributes to especially low education levels among German Muslims. Whereas 30 percent of native German students qualify for university admission, one study found that only 14 percent of Turkish students were eligible, and that 40 percent of young Turks had no vocational qualifications compared to 8 percent nationally.¹⁴¹ Insufficient language skills, educational and vocational deficiency, combined with the economic downturn and

¹³⁸ Pauly, Robert, *Islam in Europe: Integration or Marginalization* (New York: Ashgate, 2004)

¹³⁹ Pauly, Robert, *Islam in Europe: Integration or Marginalization* (New York: Ashgate, 2004)

¹⁴⁰ Pauly, Robert, *Islam in Europe: Integration or Marginalization* (New York: Ashgate, 2004)

¹⁴¹ Pauly, Robert, *Islam in Europe: Integration or Marginalization* (New York: Ashgate, 2004)

widespread discrimination, contribute to low economic status that parallels the French and British situations. Many Muslim immigrants exist in Germany as blue-collar workers with little possibility for employment.

Muslims in Germany do face many similar hurdles to those encountered by Muslims elsewhere in Europe in the perceived homogeneity of followers of Islam and the tendency to link domestic and international events. One German Muslim describes this, asserting “that all Muslims are made to be responsible by the media for everything any single Muslim does at any place in the world in the name of Islam,” adding that “to cut through these layers of public prejudice and misinformation is the first prerequisite to a wider discussion acceptance of Islam in Germany.”¹⁴²

Germany has also seen a recent questioning of its traditional integration approach. As in the British case, the country began to reexamine its stance on Islamic dress in the wake of the French headscarf ban. Several cases emerged as early as 2004 of schools banning headscarves, most often for teachers rather than students, while occasionally leaving loopholes for Christian crosses or nun’s habits.¹⁴³ While the Constitutional Court declined to find scarves incompatible with German law, it left the issue to the states’ discretion, and today half of Germany’s states have restrictions on Islamic dress for teachers and other civil servants. While some German politicians have shown a reluctance to compromise what many see as a history of warm relations with religious groups, popular support has often favored bans. In 2004, then President Johannes Rau addressed the issue of the headscarf, referencing Germany’s distinct history with its Christian past and respect for religion and the state, saying that Germany was neither a religious nor a non-religious state and that it would respect the religious practices of all

¹⁴² Pauly, Robert, *Islam in Europe: Integration or Marginalization* (New York: Ashgate, 2004)

¹⁴³ “German State Backs Headscarf Ban,” *BBC* (April 1, 2004)
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3591043.stm> (accessed March 13, 2010)

citizens.¹⁴⁴ He contrasted this history with French *laïcité*, saying that “I fear that the headscarf ban is the first step on the path to a secular state, banned religious signs and symbols from public life. This I do not want. That is not my idea of our country, for many centuries influenced by Christianity.”¹⁴⁵

Implications

From this comparison with other European countries, several conclusions can be drawn regarding the French case and the wider European context. Firstly, the French exception often asserted by scholars, if it exists, is likely not in the nature of the issues the country seeks to address, but in its approach to addressing them. This difference should not be exaggerated, however, since indeed, each country experiences some sense of exceptionalism, in that it approaches the issue of Muslim identity and citizenship from its own distinct history, philosophy, and conceptions of national identity. Specific issues and sticking points in France, Britain and Germany have emerged as a result of these countries’ different histories and contexts as well as the various characteristics and concerns of the vastly diverse Muslim populations living within them. However, the essence of the question faced by each country of how to best incorporate Muslim identity in the face of great tendencies to generalize and oversimplify a complex population is shared. Muslims in each context face hurdles in overcoming a widespread negative image of Islam pervasive within the European, and perhaps Western, worldview due to a growing Islamophobia often encouraged by media and politicians. If the French case is exceptional, it is perhaps in the country’s insistence on a universal national identity after

¹⁴⁴ Religionsfreiheit heute – zum Verhältnis von Staat und Religion in Deutschland”. <http://www.uni-kassel.de/fb5/frieden/themen/Rassismus/rau.html> . (accessed March 13, 2010)

¹⁴⁵ “Religionsfreiheit heute – zum Verhältnis von Staat und Religion in Deutschland.” <http://www.uni-kassel.de/fb5/frieden/themen/Rassismus/rau.html> . (accessed March 13, 2010)

decades, or arguably even centuries, of challenges from various sources, including immigration. Just as Muslims within the country are portrayed as a monolithic threat, the traditional French identity is itself promoted as singular and allows no room for compromise with other identities. This is reflected in the ongoing national identity debate, which will be addressed again later.

Secondly, if anything can be taken from comparisons with these other European countries it is the wide range of backgrounds and circumstances of European Muslims. Hailing from all regions of the world from which they bring distinct sets of values and perspectives, Muslims in Europe are a diverse group, much more so on the European level than in France. Thus, where it was difficult to pinpoint a cohesive identity amidst French Muslims, it is virtually impossible to do so on a European scale. In addition to the differences immigrants have brought with them from their range of countries of origin, they also are now functioning within the distinctive national contexts of their new countries, where they confront many specific issues and concerns. Nonetheless, the tendency remains to classify this group in a unified, and generally negative, light.

To emphasize the differences between European Muslims and the inaccuracy of any assumptions of the similarity of these populations and their situations, the table below shows the general differences between the three cases mentioned in this study. Even using gross generalizations that neglect the many differences existing within Muslim populations in a single country, the differences between the three cases are apparent.

Table 3: Muslims in France, Great Britain, and Germany

	France	Great Britain	Germany
Percent of Population	8%	2.8%	3.6%
Majority ethnic makeup	North African	South Asian	Turkish
Former colonial status	Yes	Yes	No
Integration approach	Republican/assimilationist	Multicultural	Mixed
Main point of tension	Religion vs. laïcité	Religion vs. Race	Citizenship
View of Muslims	Religion	Race	Immigrant
Citizenship	Mixed	Jus Solis	Jus Sanguinis

Thirdly, another important tendency on the European level deserving of discussion is the proclivity of governments in Europe to view their own domestic issues through the lens of international events. This was seen in the French case, particularly during the headscarf debate, and is symptomatic of a wider tendency in Europe. However, while international circumstances in the Middle East and North Africa influenced the direction of the French headscarf debate, increasingly influence is coming from within Europe. As European countries adopt measures aimed at mitigating the integration difficulties of their own populations, oftentimes, similar policies will appear on the political agenda in other countries, despite different populations and contexts. For example, the recent Swiss referendum on the construction of minarets had rippling effects throughout Europe, as other countries began to consider their own bans. Whereas minarets had not featured as an issue in most other European countries before this point, they quickly arose as such after the Swiss vote. National polls suddenly showed that majorities in other countries favored similar bans. *Le Figaro* reported that 73.7 percent

polled in France supported a ban on minaret construction,¹⁴⁶ while the magazine *L'Express* put the figure even higher at 88 percent.¹⁴⁷ Similarly, 80 percent of Spaniards in an *El Mundo* poll and 86 percent of Germans surveyed by *Die Welt* supported the Swiss decision.¹⁴⁸ The issue of minarets sprouted up all over Europe in reaction to the referendum of a single country.

This support is often initially confined to popular opinion, with politicians showing more hesitance and reluctance to alienate Muslim populations. However, with widespread support to be gained, there is an incentive to mimic the popular measures taken in other countries. For example, while polls showed wide support for the minaret ban among citizens, most political leaders denounced it initially. Despite French citizens' wide support for the ban, French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner publically criticized the decision, saying that "[i]t is an expression of intolerance and I detest intolerance. I hope the Swiss will reverse this decision quickly."¹⁴⁹ Similar reactions occurred in Sweden, where Foreign Minister Carl Bildt stated that "[i]t's an expression of quite a bit of prejudice and maybe even fear, but it is clear that it is a negative signal in every way, there's no doubt about it,"¹⁵⁰ despite polls indicating that less than half of the respondents

¹⁴⁶ "Faut-il interdire la construction de nouveaux minarets en France ?" *Le Figaro*. (Dec. 1, 2009) <http://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2009/11/30/01016-20091130QCMWW00619-faut-il-interdire-la-construction-de-nouveaux-minarets-en-france-.php> (accessed Mar. 13, 2010)

¹⁴⁷ Fleeson, Will. The European Institute. "Swiss Minaret Ban Popular in Europe -- Controversy Points to Deeper Malaise" (Dec. 2009) <http://www.europeaninstitute.org/December-2009/swiss-minaret-ban-popular-in-europe-controversial-measure-points-to-deeper-malaise.html> (accessed Mar. 13, 2010)

¹⁴⁸ Fleeson, Will. The European Institute. "Swiss Minaret Ban Popular in Europe -- Controversy Points to Deeper Malaise" (Dec. 2009) <http://www.europeaninstitute.org/December-2009/swiss-minaret-ban-popular-in-europe-controversial-measure-points-to-deeper-malaise.html> (accessed Mar. 13, 2010)

¹⁴⁹ Vatican and Muslims condemn Swiss minaret ban vote . BBC. (Nov. 30, 2009) <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8385893.stm> (accessed Mar. 13, 2010)

¹⁵⁰ "Bildt blasts 'prejudice' of Swiss minaret ban." *The Local*. (Nov 30, 2009) <http://www.thelocal.se/23562/20091130/> (accessed Mar. 13, 2010)

in a Swedish survey were in favor of continued minaret construction in Sweden.¹⁵¹ Other politicians, however, perhaps noting the political gains to be made given the popular support, have shown more favorable responses to the Swiss decision. French President Nicolas Sarkozy encouraged understanding of the Swiss position and took a lukewarm position, implying that France “does not necessarily need” more minarets, while another UPM minister has said publicly that “minarets symbolize the land of Islam, and France is not a land of Islam.”¹⁵² Thus, while most officials elsewhere spoke of their disappointment over the Swiss decision, there is a sense that domestic votes may be gained should politicians decide to support a similar course of action. That the minaret ban has become public debate in so many countries following the Swiss decision shows the extent to which European policies have become “contagious” in today’s political climate often marked by fear of Islamization.

Similar tendencies have also been seen with the French discussion on banning Islamic dress in public spaces. While the reasoning used in France in banning the headscarf in schools has been quite specific to the French context of *laïcité* and freedom from religion in the public sphere, other countries have begun to adopt the measure, as seen in Britain and Germany, contrary to the initial reactions of political leaders. A recent article from the BBC shows this tendency clearly, in expressing British reactions to the French decision to place restrictions on the wearing of the burqa in public spaces.¹⁵³ The article, entitled “Should the U.K. ban the Muslim face veil?” discusses the

¹⁵¹ Landes, David. Minaret ban favoured by one in four Swedes: poll. EuropeNews. (Dec. 3, 2009) <http://europenews.dk/en/node/28124> (accessed Mar. 13, 2010)

¹⁵² Fleeson, Will. The European Institute. “Swiss Minaret Ban Popular in Europe -- Controversy Points to Deeper Malaise” (Dec. 2009) <http://www.europeaninstitute.org/December-2009/swiss-minaret-ban-popular-in-europe-controversial-measure-points-to-deeper-malaise.html> (accessed Mar. 13, 2010)

¹⁵³ Barford, Vanessa. “Should the UK ban the Muslim face veil?” *BBC*, (Jan 27, 2010) http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/8481617.stm (accessed Mar. 13, 2010)

possibility of a similar measure in the U.K. While Schools Secretary Ed Balls responded to the French decision by saying that it was “‘not British’ to tell people what to wear in the street,”¹⁵⁴ much popular support exists for a similar ban, with one poll claiming that two thirds of Britons support such a law.¹⁵⁵ Restrictions on the full Islamic covering have also made it onto the political agendas of Germany¹⁵⁶ and Italy.¹⁵⁷ With polling data such as this, some fear further exploitation of these issues for political gain. Under pressure to deal with public concerns, politicians likely seek to promote themselves as actively rather than passively addressing issues with Muslim populations.

President Sarkozy hinted at the pressures of such popular fears resulting from the media focus as he was quoted following the Swiss referendum as “deploring the ‘excessive’ French media coverage of the event.”¹⁵⁸ There is perhaps some truth in this indictment of the media in the portrayal of events involving Muslims. In stirring fears and drawing quick conclusions about such events, pressure mounts for political leaders to address similar concerns within their own domestic sphere. However, politicians are likewise guilty of stirring fears to their own advantage, as seen in the French example.

This contagion effect of policies on the European level is worrisome for several reasons. For one thing, it encourages a homogenous view of Muslims on a wide scale, which, as seen above, is wholly inaccurate. Muslims in France differ widely from

¹⁵⁴ Barford, Vanessa. “Should the UK ban the Muslim face veil?” *BBC*, (Jan 27, 2010) http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/8481617.stm (accessed Mar. 13, 2010)

¹⁵⁵ “Ban the Burkha” *L’Express*. (Feb 1, 2010) <http://www.express.co.uk/posts/view/155411/-Ban-the-burkha-> (accessed Mar. 13, 2010)

¹⁵⁶ “Bildt blasts ‘prejudice’ of Swiss minaret ban.” *The Local*. (Nov. 30, 2009) <http://www.thelocal.se/23562/20091130/> (accessed Mar. 13, 2010)

¹⁵⁷ Pisa, Nick. “Now Italy considers banning the burqa too” *Daily Mail*. (Oct. 7, 2009) <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/worldnews/article-1218543/Now-Italy-considers-banning-burqa-too.html> (accessed Mar. 13, 2010)

¹⁵⁸ “Sarkozy wades into Swiss minaret ban debate,” *Swiss Info*. (Dec 8, 2009) http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/index/Sarkozy_wades_into_Swiss_minaret_ban_debate.html?cid=7855722. (accessed 13, March, 2010)

Muslims in Britain, which are not similar to Muslims in Switzerland. Furthermore, this policy spreading tendency results in legislation that is reactionary rather than designed to address actual domestic concerns and thus risks being ineffectual at best and quite possibly harmful at worst. In feeding off of reactionary fears, governments promote a generally homogenous view of Muslims in encouraging the assumption that what is good for one country must be good for another. This view also generally tends to be a distinctly negative one with little understanding for the nuances of Muslim experience. As seen in the French case, with this increased negative portrayal comes often an increased identification with Islam as an identifying feature. Thus, in seeking to limit the influence of a global Islam within their borders with measures to decrease its visibility, many countries may actually be encouraging its growth.

This convergence of policy on the European level may also imply an emerging European identity and an increased value for European wide policies and approaches encouraged by the integration of the EU. With citizens increasingly looking to their European neighbors for policy solutions, there is perhaps an increased sense that policies should be shared at the European level. While the EU has passed very little legislation on the issue of integration, the common adoption of similar policies could also be interpreted as a look to Europe for a solution to a perceived common problem.

While the definition of a common European identity has arisen as a much sought after goal for European leaders and scholars alike,¹⁵⁹ its development in this context could be very dangerous. Developing a common European identity around the issue of growing fears of Muslim populations would encourage the very “us versus them” mentality that many Islamophobic scholars and politicians have been describing, and

¹⁵⁹ Checkel, Jeffrey T., and Anthony J. Katzenstein. *European Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009)

would likely polarize and stigmatize Muslims rather than encourage integration. Rather, if a common stance is going to be taken, it should be one committed to increased acknowledgement of and education about the diversity of Muslims in Europe. As Amartya Sen has asserted, to prevent the emergence of identities around a single characteristic, we must view people as the multifaceted collection of identities that they represent. Perhaps with this increased willingness to look outward for solutions to the question of integration, there is room for the EU to take a greater role in the debate. However, at a time when the development of European identity is also an important and much debated issue¹⁶⁰ it would be an especially beneficial and empowering step to also involve Muslims, while recognizing their diversity and resisting the urge to generalize and oversimplify, in this process. Most Muslims in Europe are citizens and therefore should factor into the development and promotion of any European identity in the future.

¹⁶⁰ Checkel, Jeffrey T., and Anthony J. Katzenstein. *European Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009)

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Having demonstrated the complexity of the Muslim population in Europe and the implications of continued misrepresentation of domestic and international political issues involving Muslims, this chapter returns to conceptions of national identity in France. I discuss the role of French national identity in recent years, including the results of the controversial French national identity debate and its implications for French Muslims before offering conclusions of this study.

Debating French National Identity

Events of recent years have confirmed the continued importance of national identity in French politics as well as the willingness of politicians to use the supposed threat of minority identities for political gain. Despite the persistence of this latter trend, however, there is perhaps some hope for progress to be found in the widespread negative reaction to the recent government-led national identity debate. Such reactions suggest a rejection of continued politicization of integration and identity issues and hint at an evolving perception of identity as multifaceted.

Issues of integration and national identity played an important role in the 2007 French presidential elections, signifying the enduring relevance of these issues to voters and politicians. Both second round candidates in the elections devoted considerable amounts of time to discussions of these topics. Nicolas Sarkozy, with a long history of involvement in integration issues, balanced commitment to a strict law and order approach in dealing with immigrants with a demonstrated willingness to negotiate some principles of *laïcité* through government dialogue with religious groups. He pledged to

link identity and integration with the creation of a new cabinet ministry position for integration, immigration and national identity, as well as to bring the French people closer to the national identity and immigration issues through public debate. Even his opponent, Ségolène Royal, known for her more moderate stance on integration issues, attempted to gain political ground in the first round by emphasizing the importance of national identity in alluding to a duty for all homes to own a French flag and sing “La Marseillaise” on Bastille Day. After Sarkozy’s victory, he quickly fulfilled his campaign promise in establishing the Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity, and Solidarity Development, which has since become the topic of some controversy.

With Integration Minister Eric Besson, President Sarkozy launched a widely publicized debate on French national identity in November of 2009. Presented as a dialogue at the local and national levels to consider French national identity and its role today, the debate presented questions to be discussed by students, teachers, workers, unions, and officials. The main questions explored the basis of French identity and the effects of immigration, with other more specific prompts also featuring in the discussion. The administration created a government website where the public could respond to questions by posting ideas concerning French identity and expressing personal opinions. As the conversation unfolded it triggered discussion of many of the anticipated traditional ideas about *liberté*, *égalité*, and *fraternité*, as well as *laïcité*, gender equality, and much of the usual rhetoric from politicians.

The launching of the national identity debate and the creation of ministerial position itself also sparked controversy, however, and drew pointed criticism from scholars, politicians, and citizens, who accused the government of using these as tools in an attempt to score easy political points. Many claimed that the national identity debate was deliberately timed to redirect attention from more serious issues, such as the suffering economy and the effects of the global financial crisis, in the months leading up to regional elections. With Sarkozy’s Union for a Popular Movement (UMP) struggling

as well against a crisis of public image due to internal problems, such as former President Chirac's trial for corruption charges, many protested the identity debates as a political stunt. Additional criticism came from others who claimed that the identity debate would only serve to further stigmatize and alienate immigrants, since it left little room for their experiences in the focus on traditional institutions of French identity.¹⁶¹ Criticism also focused on the timing of the debate in light of other domestic and international issues concerning Muslims, such as the Swiss minaret ban and the French debate over the burqa, and suggested that these links would misguide a debate and further distance French Muslims. In response to the debate, the antiracism group, SOS Racisme, presented a petition signed by over 200 influential thinkers and public figures, which was published by the journal *Liberation*. Signatories claimed that the national identity debate was "at best stigmatizing, at worst racist" and should be ended.¹⁶²

Thus, despite a favorable view at the outset, support for the national identity debate dwindled as criticism mounted over the reasons behind the debate and the implications of the way it was being carried out. By the end, half of those surveyed thought the debate should be suspended or stopped altogether, with many of these citing that they found it to be unhelpful or offensive. Only one in three viewed the debate favorably by the end, compared with the 60 percent who approved of it at the outset.

Due to such large amounts of criticism and controversy, the debate concluded with very little attention, in contrast to the wide promotion it received from the government when it was initiated. On February 8, 2010, Prime Minister Fillon announced

¹⁶¹ "Débat sur l'identité nationale: ça commence curieusement," *TF1 News* (Nov. 25, 2009) <http://lci.tf1.fr/france/societe/2009-11/debat-sur-l-identite-nationale-ca-commence-curieusement-5560851.html> (accessed March 29, 2010)

¹⁶² "Arrêtez ce débat, monsieur le Président," *Libération* (Dec. 12, 2009) <http://www.liberation.fr/societe/0101609703-arretez-ce-debat-monsieur-le-president> (accessed March 29, 2010)

the results and recommendations, which were viewed as mostly slight and symbolic gestures needed to extract the government from the debates and related criticism. Recommendations included emblematic requirements for schools to fly the French flag and to display the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in classrooms, both of which are regularly performed by many schools already, and for students to keep "Young Citizen's Logs" in which to record their civic actions. Recommended measures also included increased, although vague and unspecified, linguistic and integration requirements for naturalized foreigners.¹⁶³

While the recommendations yielded few concrete outcomes, results of a survey by the Office of the Minister of Integration did present some interesting information concerning notions of national identity in France. Responses to the survey suggested that an overwhelming 82 percent of citizens continue to believe that a French identity does indeed exist, with 75 percent claiming they are proud to be French. Thus, despite the negative reactions provoked by the politicization of the identity debate, most French citizens questioned appeared to find the subject to be of some importance. Interesting as well are the responses to questions concerning identities other than national. Of those surveyed, 39 percent claimed to feel French only, while 32 percent said they think of themselves to be both French and European citizens, suggesting that European supranational identity is also gaining importance. Another 13 percent described themselves as citizens of the world, while only 1 percent said they consider themselves to be a citizen of another country only.¹⁶⁴ However, 74 percent of those surveyed agreed that French national identity had been weakened, with 30 percent of these attributing this

¹⁶³ "French 'Identity' Debate Leaves Public Forum," *The New York Times* (Feb. 8, 2010) <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/09/world/europe/09france.html> (accessed March 29, 2010)

¹⁶⁴ "L'identité nationale française existe pour 82% de sondés," *l'Express* (Feb. 5, 2010) http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/politique/l-identite-nationale-francaise-existe-pour-82-pourcent-de-sondes_846941.html (accessed March 29, 2010)

decline to immigration, 20 percent to the loss of values, 18 percent to ethnic and cultural diversity, 13 percent to religion, and 11 percent to politics.¹⁶⁵ These results suggest that, while the public may not have approved of the way in which the national identity debate was conducted, national identity and immigration remain issues of importance and concern. However, in the criticism there is perhaps hint of a movement towards demanding a more deliberate and respectful dialogue on these subjects.

Implications of the Debate: Moving towards Complex Identity?

The conduct of the national identity debate and the resulting controversy concerning the discussions and the role of the minister suggest several implications for political identity in France. The focus of the French presidential candidates, and subsequently of President Sarkozy during his term, on subjects of integration and identity, as well as French citizens' agreement on the importance of national identity, shows the weight that these topics continue to carry in France. Their discussion at strategic moments during campaigns also demonstrates an ongoing willingness on the part of French politicians to capitalize on such concerns for political gain. At first glance, the national identity debate seems to follow the same patterns as seen in previous discussions by perpetuating stereotypes and exploiting fears. Issues of national identity appear again complicated by other international and domestic concerns such as the Swiss minaret ban and the controversy over the banning of the burqa, and French Muslims once more portrayed as a threat to national identity that must be guarded against by a ministerial position and further reinforced by a stigmatizing national debate.

There is also, however, perhaps reason to hope for the evolution of a more nuanced identity interpretation in the wake of this latest debate. The rejection by many

¹⁶⁵ “L’identité nationale française existe pour 82% de sondés,” *l’Express* (Feb. 5, 2010) http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/politique/l-identite-nationale-francaise-existe-pour-82-pourcent-de-sondes_846941.html (accessed March 29, 2010)

French citizens of the politicization of the national identity debate, as shown by opinion polls and then in the success of the opposition party in regional elections, in which Sarkozy's UMP party received only 35 percent of the vote to the Socialists' 54 percent, suggests that the French public may be tiring of the continued use of national identity as a political tool.¹⁶⁶ The results of the survey by Minister Besson are also encouraging in implying that traditionally exclusive notions of national identity may be evolving towards more multifaceted interpretations. That only about a third of the French surveyed thought of themselves as exclusively French suggests that many are beginning to view identity as more than national citizenship. Recognition of European and global sources of identity even amidst a national identity debate and widespread acknowledgment of the importance of French nationalism imply that many are coming to view their own identity as more nuanced and complex.

One posting from the government-sponsored website for the debate exemplifies this rejection of singular identity and manipulative political tactics. This contributor responds to the question "what is French identity?" by saying that: "être français ... c'est être européen et ouvert sur les autres. C'est ne pas mettre au sein d'un même ministère immigration [et] identité nationale."¹⁶⁷ This quote, and others like it throughout the protest against the identity debates, hints at an acknowledgement of the limitations of universalism and perhaps a demand for a shift towards a more comprehensive and pluralist interpretation of French identity. That so many French citizens believe national identity to still be an important part of their country suggests that this form of identity is

¹⁶⁶ The UMP currently retains control over only one of France's 26 regions. "French Left Beats Sarkozy's Party in Regional Vote," *The Washington Post* (Mar. 22, 2010) <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/21/AR2010032100366.html> (accessed March 29, 2010)

¹⁶⁷ Author's translation: "to be French... is to be European and open to others. It is not putting immigration [and] national identity at the heart of the same ministry."

not fading as an integral part of French conceptions of citizenship, but the hostility displayed towards the manner in which the debate has been steered by the government reveals a certain contestation of the politicization of the subject and the need for more critical, self-reflexive and even individualized interpretations.

Another encouraging step towards appreciation of complex political identities was seen in the European Union's Year of Intercultural Dialogue. This initiative by the European Commission funded projects throughout 2008 aimed at promoting exchange and understanding between various countries as well as subnational, and transnational communities. The program highlighted the evolving sense of identity within Europe, encouraging the expression of the many ways in which to be "European." Of particular interest was the focus on religious and cultural minorities in several sponsored events, such as a week of Christian-Muslim dialogue designed to move participants beyond "simplistic view[s] of each other due to centuries of rejection and conflict" and an internet project for children created to combat racism and ethnic stereotypes.¹⁶⁸ Another project empirically examined "how differences within European societies can be taken into account without creating conflict or exclusion" by speaking with youths in schools across Europe in hopes of establishing a European perspective on openness and "mutual respect across religious and cultural differences."¹⁶⁹ That respectful dialogue concerning such subjects is being encouraged on a European level also bodes well for the future of identity politics in Europe.

Conclusions

Despite these hints at evolution in identity perceptions, much progress remains to be made concerning the status of Muslims in France and broader Europe. Real issues

¹⁶⁸ <http://www.interculturaldialogue2008.eu/1227.0.html?&L=0> (accessed March 29, 2010)

¹⁶⁹ <http://www.interculturaldialogue2008.eu/1275.0.html?&L=0> (accessed March 29, 2010)

persist among this population that limit prospects for the future. Poverty and unemployment levels among European Muslims remain chronically high, and problems such as discrimination, marginalization, and violence continue. However, the first step to confronting these issues must be the recognition of the diversity of experience and complexity of the Muslim population, lest the “solutions” serve to contribute to the problems. In approaching dialogues and debates concerning Muslims in Europe, more deliberate attention towards the portrayal of this population is needed in order to avoid falling into the same patterns of stigmatizing Muslim identity throughout Europe. European Muslims embody a wide range of ethnic, political, national, and religious identities, and their continued classification as unified based on one shared characteristic ignores these differences and contributes to a misrepresentation of a more complex reality. Furthermore, greater care must be taken to avoid stereotyping Muslims according to international circumstances and events, which tend to contribute to the negative perceptions of European Muslims. The continued portrayal of this population as a homogenous, radical community and the implementation of reactionary policies based on international events risks contributing to the formation of an oppositional identity among Muslims in Europe. Given the harmful effects of such portrayals and reactions, it is imperative that more nuanced conceptions of identity be promoted by scholars, politicians, and citizens alike.

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