

The Rise of Populist Right-Wing Parties in France

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper examines France as a microcosm of the rise of right-wing populism in the broader European context. The attack on the Charlie Hebdo newspaper is arguably, a reaction to the aggressive European secularism spreading throughout Europe that sees its true enemy in the growth of extremist and violent interpretations of Islam. With each terrorist attack, the popularity of anti-immigrant policies and ideologies increases. What ultimately drives movements like the French National Front are the concepts of monoculture and ethnic identity. This paper analyses the character of right-wing populist parties using the National Front as a case study. Such parties generate anxiety and resentment by fomenting an irrational fear of the 'other'. In this way, populists promote their identity on the basis of xenophobia, Islamophobia and practices of social exclusion against targeted out-groups. They position immigrants and foreigners as 'others', claiming they are a threat to native cultures and a source of social and economic strife. Ultimately, right-wing populism exerts a negative influence over the democratic framework in Europe and opposes the European Union's integration project. Right-wing populism attacks this supranational model because of its alleged inefficiency and departure from what it considers to be "authentic" European traditions and citizenship. In this context, understanding the rise of radical right-wing populist parties is extremely important for the future of Europe, democracy and multiculturalism.*

*Keywords: Ring-Wing Populism, Islamophobia, Front National, Muslim, Religion, Secularism, and Xenophobia.*

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## Chapter 1 - Introduction

Conducting a case study of the Front National in France, this thesis seeks to explain the proliferation of right-wing populist parties throughout Western Europe. Right-wing populist parties are exclusionary by nature and they generate anxiety and resentment by fomenting an irrational fear of the 'other'. In this context, immigrants and foreigners not only become the ultimate 'other', but also threaten the nation. In positioning immigrants and foreigners as the other, these parties use xenophobia, Islamophobia and social exclusion to promote their identity.

The analysis of populism investigates not only its concept and impact but also exposes the extent to which constructing an essential, homogenous European society contributes to the idea of Europe. In fact, the way that populism constructs and interprets collective identities rejects the European Union project, a Europe unified through diversity. In addition, this analysis identifies the important role of the media in the production of the 'other', in effect the production of an "enemy", i.e. politics of fear. Moreover, populists' propaganda always coalesces forms and content, focus on specific audiences and adjust to specific contexts. In acknowledging these aspects of populism, the deconstruction of their messages and their electoral success becomes possible.

To deconstruct, understand and explain this phenomenon, this thesis allocates France as a microcosm of the broader European ideological context. It is no coincidence that the majority of Muslims in Europe are in France. In fact, the attack on the Charlie Hebdo newspaper on January 2015 and the attacks that followed symbolize the European secularism that is hostile to conservative Islam and perceive it as its true enemy. With each terrorist attack, the popularity of

anti-immigrant governmental policies increases. Arguably, what ultimately drives movements like the Front National are the concepts of monoculture and ethnic identity.

### **1.1 Right-Wing Populism: Concept and Typology**

Recent studies conducted by Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell reveal that the surges of populism in Western Europe derive mainly from the inability of mainstream party to effectively resolve current issues.<sup>1</sup> These issues include high unemployment, the effects of globalization, the immigration and integration issue, the ineffectiveness of the European Union and the Euro, and the corruption of the elite/politicians.<sup>2</sup> In addition, these surges reflect an increase in citizens' lack of interest in and mistrust of politics and politicians, which is demonstrated by the low voting turnouts during elections across Western Europe and the decline in party memberships. Put differently, Western European societies are allocating politics to a distant and irrelevant position in their social and personal lives.<sup>3</sup> In the past, politicians were viewed in a far more positive light but today politicians are identified as incapable, impotent and self-serving. Consequently, this modification in Western European society's point of view affects their electoral behavior. This lack of confidence has raised the number of dissatisfied voters who either do not bother participating in the voting process or are becoming more susceptible to more radical, political alternatives.

Populism comprises many forms, which depend on how the government relates with the society and how the society relates with the government. Consequently, several populist theorists

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<sup>1</sup> Danielle Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell, *Twenty-first Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 3.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 3.

categorize populism into groups. For instance, Karen Priester considers populism “as an ideology, a strategy to attain and maintain power, and a discursive practice.”<sup>4</sup> This definition of populism acknowledges that populism not only is part of the system, but also defends the same values. On the other hand, Cas Mudde assesses populism not only as an ideology but also as an individual political style.<sup>5</sup> This definition of populism reinforces its modernity and foundations and further emphasizes the importance of the populist leaders' personality to the current populism wave.

Ruth Wodak proposes that populism assumes seven features.<sup>6</sup> First, populism claims to represent “*THE people*” and its homogeneity which creates a rhetoric of exclusion. This homogenised idea and rhetoric of exclusion are constructed in relation to many historical, national, and socio-political factors. Second, populism can be right-wing or left-wing, depending on how these parties structure themselves. Third, populism capitalizes on many fears, sometimes authentic and real, to construct new social divides. Such fears include fear of cultural and economic globalization and fear of the incapacity of mainstream parties to solve the current social and financial crisis. In constructing this new social divide, populism creates anxiety, frustration, and fear in relation to everything from the economy, to the government, to appeal to the general citizenry.

Four, the success of populism depends on the extensive use of the conventional media and the social media. In fact, the media produces the ‘other’ as an enemy. Five, these parties

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<sup>4</sup> Annie Benveniste, Giovanna Campani, and Gabriella Lazaridis, *The Rise of the Far Right in Europe: Populist Shifts and ‘Othering’* (Pgrave Macmillan, 2016), 6.

<sup>5</sup> Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourse Mean* (Sage, 2015), 10.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 21.

reinforce the importance of a charismatic leader who knows how to perfectly exploit the media, and to make a spectacle of political issues. Six, they construe any minority group – be it ethnic, religious, political, and linguistic – as a threat ‘to us’, to ‘our’ nation, because they are responsible for the current hardships that the nation is facing.

Finally, as Ruth Wodak explains, “linked to anti-Muslim rhetoric and campaigns, these parties currently endorse pseudo-emancipatory gender policies, which are extremely contradictory.”<sup>7</sup> For instance, although they propagate ‘freedom of women’, they prohibit Muslim women from wearing headscarves. In this way, wearing the headscarves or the burqas is not a choice, but an opposition/oppression carried by their fathers, husbands, and religion.

Using these seven features as prerogatives to understanding populism, this thesis aims to explain how these parties successfully construct fear and propose scapegoats that threaten and/or damage their societies, Europe and beyond.

## **1.2 The Rise of Right-Wing Populist Parties**

By analysing the surges of right-wing populist parties in Western Europe one acknowledges two developments. First, the confirmation that these surges are difficult to dismiss. Second, the realization that these parties are embedded in populist ideals, strategies, discursive practices and individual political styles. However, it remains unclear why these parties are so strong, and whether this is due to an ideological conflict over values and ideas, or a reflection of new socioeconomic pressure (for example; economic and cultural globalization, on European societies).

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<sup>7</sup> Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourse Mean* (Sage, 2015), 22.



According to Michelle Hale Williams, by reinventing themselves, creating a climate of fear and providing solutions, right-wing populist parties have been strengthening themselves.<sup>8</sup> In the 1980s, according to the author, these parties reinvented themselves by adopting entrepreneurial patterns that created a “politically correct, dynamic and media savvy image.”<sup>9</sup>

This reinvention of right-wing populist parties began with the Front National (FN) of France, becoming the first party to adopt an anti-immigration platform.<sup>10</sup> However, instead of constructing its anti-immigration platform on overt racism, the FN began to oppose immigration and immigrants to protect France’s economy and the rights of the average French citizen natives. As Hans-Georg Bertz describes, “this shift was a strategic calculation that right-wing populist parties made from expediency.”<sup>11</sup> In fact, these parties realized that when they resorted to unacceptable political discourse, the media criticized them, and voters did not vote for them. As a result, these parties changed their image and adopt a more acceptable stance on the immigration issue.

Moreover, Rachel Gibson argues that by opposing immigration based on “material concerns, political parties get away with ‘covert racism’”.<sup>12</sup> For example, these parties condemned immigrants for taking away social benefits that should be reserved for the native population. Thus, in resorting to national preference to oppose immigration, the FN presents its anti-immigration platform in a positive manner rather than in an anti-immigrant or racist one.

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<sup>8</sup> Michelle Hale Williams, *The Impact of Radical Right-Wing Parties in the Western European Democracies* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 56.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 57

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 57.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 58.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 58.

By adopting an anti-immigrant platform, the Front National, according to Michelle Hale Williams, created a path for other parties to follow.<sup>13</sup> Since the 1990s, one notices a growing presence of right-wing populist parties across the globe – be it as an established party (in Canada, Norway, and Russia) or as a coalition (in Switzerland, Denmark, and Austria). These right-wing populist parties challenge the legitimacy of the democratic process and the benefits of multicultural or diverse societies.

Furthermore, these parties successfully created a climate of fear by focusing on what people feared more than the economic conditions — losing their own identity. People are still concerned with their country’s economy, but as Michelle Hale Williams suggests, people may view the poor economic conditions “more-easily reversed than the loss of identity, culture, and values”.<sup>14</sup> In addition, right-wing populist parties have provided solutions by creating a scapegoat, i.e., immigrants that signify the cause of all socioeconomic problems in society, thereby isolating immigrants as perpetrators. In this scenario, foreigners are the culprits, encouraging people to respond in Islamophobic and xenophobic ways.

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<sup>13</sup> Michelle Hale Williams, *The Impact of Radical Right-Wing Parties in the Western European Democracies* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 57.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 58.

### 1.3 The Electoral Rise of the Front National

Parties can influence citizens through their ideas which are propagated by a charismatic leader. As Daniel Stockemer points out, a party's ideology, electoral programme, and leadership can convince citizens and supporters to be members and voters.<sup>15</sup> Also, it can convince citizens and supporters that their programme, ideology, and leadership fight for a cause that is relevant and necessary. When analyzing the Front National (FN), one notices that the party illustrated, and still illustrates, a radical right-wing party. In this sense, the FN has always been against, and still are against immigrants, the system, and international organizations. As Sylvain Crépon states, "the FN portrays French society as tainted by foreign influences and governed by corrupt elites that embrace lax government policies in public security."<sup>16</sup> By doing so, as Paul Haisnworth defends, "the FN advocates for an ethno-centric nation that should be reserved by people that share the same ethnicity, history, religion, and identity."<sup>17</sup>

Since Marine Le Pen assumed the party's presidency in 2011, the FN has left its marginal position transforming into a major player in French politics. The FN has succeeded on three aspects. First, concerning public opinion, to a significant portion of French society, since Marine Le Pen became president its image has improved considerably. For instance, over 50% of the population perceived the FN as the "party like other", a considerable increase when considering that under Jean-Marie Le Pen only 25% of the population perceived the FN as the "party like others".<sup>18</sup> Second, by increasing its members from 20,000 to approximately 80,000, the party has

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<sup>15</sup> Daniel Stockemer, *The Front National in France: Continuity and Change Under Jean-Marie Le Pen and Marine Le Pen* (Switzerland: Springer, 2017), 3

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 10.

<sup>18</sup> Le Point, *Le FN, un parti comme les autres, selon les Français* (Le Point, 2015), 1.

managed to become the third-largest party in the country.<sup>19</sup> Finally, the party has achieved unprecedented election results in the 2012 presidential election (18% of the votes), and in the 2014 European elections (24.9% of the votes).

Regardless of how impressive, or not, these electoral and non-electoral victories might seem, the analysis of the context in which these victories occurred involves placing them into perspective. In fact, as suggested by Daniel Stockemer these victories occurred in a period of economic, political and social crises.<sup>20</sup> First, due to the 2008 collapse of the US's financial and economic system, France's economy started to cripple which caused a rise on unemployment and inflation. Second, as the Daniel Stockemer explains, "president Hollande, discredited by scandal and government inaction, received the lowest approval ratings of any president."<sup>21</sup> Third, the refugee crisis and multiculturalism challenge the European community creating fissures between and within the members of European Union.

The notion that these electoral and non-electoral victories occurred in a most beneficial structural environment raises the question of whether the FN can sustain its progress or if it will return to its marginal position in French politics. Although the party performed well in the first round of the 2016 presidential election obtaining 21.3% of the votes against 24.01%, in the second round the party only obtained 33.9% of the votes, which is much lower than the votes (61%) obtained by Emmanuel Macron. Thus, one might be inclined to conclude that the party will return to its marginal position in French politics.

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<sup>19</sup> Daniel Stockemer, *The Front National in France: Continuity and Change Under Jean-Marie Le Pen and Marine Le Pen* (Switzerland: Springer, 2017), 2

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 8

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 2.

## 1.4 The Front National: in the name of women's rights

Since September 11, the idea that modernity and Western societies are being attacked by Islam has been reintroduced to the political arena. In this context, Islam becomes the enemy within society that aspires to dominate Europe. In contemporary France, any discussions of culture and religion are embedded with negative stereotypes of Muslims and Islam. In this context, the relationship between religion and social cohesion intensifies the social anxieties and political concerns in Europe.

Over the last two decades, in France, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK, legal disputes and political controversies have surrounded the debate on Muslim women's garments (headscarf and burqa). In this context, as Valerie Amiraux analyzes, the Islamic headscarves have effectively come to "stand for everything that is thought to be wrong with Islam in Europe".<sup>22</sup> As Valerie Amiraux concludes,

today, headscarf and burqa operate as transnational "synecdoches" for the failure of multiculturalism, the validation of secularism as a way of organizing the pacific co-existence of different religions, the securitization of cultural markets, the questioning of the moral and political loyalty of Muslim European citizens (converted or not), and the impact of foreign affairs policies on domestic spaces.<sup>23</sup>

Furthermore, in France, the Islamic headscarf in Republican school system represented the arrival of an "Islamic" society in the public life. In fact, by recognizing their cultural and/or religious belonging through veiling, girls clash with the principles of *laïcité* and modernity. In banning "conspicuous" religious symbols from public schools in 2004 Islam became the ultimate 'Other' in secular narratives.

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<sup>22</sup> V. Amiraux, "Burqa Bashing: Does Religion Stand for Race in the EU?" 2011, 5.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 5.

In addition, in its discourses advocating for the ban of the headscarves, the French republic emphasized that gender equality was its main preoccupation and priority. Due to its gender equality advocacy, the headscarves of Muslim teenage girls represented ‘the’ obstacle to equality in France. Also, the headscarves represented the intolerance and illiberalism of Islam and its incapacity to assimilate in French society. This headscarves’ representation enabled the Front National to advance its anti-Islam agenda, and to portray Muslim men as oppressors of their women. In doing so, Muslim men personify a peril for Western European societies.

As anti-Islam and anti-immigration sentiments increase in Europe, a question emerges: why are these parties, and feminist groups advocating for Muslim women’s emancipation and freedom? As Sara R. Farris analyzes, “by encouraging a rhetoric of division, a rhetoric of “Us” (white, European, Western, Christian, civilized, “women-friendly”) versus “Them” (non-white, non-European, non-western, Muslim, uncivilized, misogynist Others), the FN can consolidate its nationalist project.”<sup>24</sup> Indeed, the FN’s invocation of gender inequality within these communities creates and strengthens anti-immigrant and anti-Islam sentiments among French citizens.

### **1.5 The French Case: A Social and Historical Analysis**

In France, ‘crisis’ seems to be the most popular term used by French citizens to describe their reality. Also, crisis permeates the political, economic, cultural and social realms of French society. This sense of crisis is not new, but it has become more evident with the proliferation of far-right parties, particularly the Front National.

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<sup>24</sup> Sara R. Farris. *In the name of women’s right* (Duke University, 2017), 8.

The eradication of all distinctions within the citizenry represents France's major characteristic as a universal, and secular state. As Hafid Gafaiti claims, "France is described as a monolithic structure that destroyed the particularities of regions, populations, cultures, and political organizations to replace them, in fact to remodel them, in a unique and homogeneous republican universalism."<sup>25</sup> Thus, to assess the principles that founded France's nation and identity, one must rethink its universalism. French universalism defines the French national myth, and its central notions as French identity, citizenship, assimilation, and integration.

France has always distinguished French from non-French, citizen from immigrant. In fact, after the independence war of Algeria the term '*Nor'af*' (North African) not only characterized a segment of the global immigrant population but also stigmatized immigrants from North Africa. As Hafid Gafaiti points out the independence of Algeria in 1962, which incarnated the defeat of France and of the French imperial model, led to the image of the "phony, vicious, and treacherous Arab."<sup>26</sup> As a result, in France, the word immigrant (*immigre*) was attributed to the North African community.<sup>27</sup> Progressively, in the 1970s and on, the term *Maghrebin* not only emphasized the singularization of the word immigrant but also the automatic exclusion of immigrants from French society. In this context of exclusion, not only were parents excluded, but their children, who were designated as the second generation or the "*Beurs*", were as well.

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<sup>25</sup> Georges Van Den Abbele and Tyler Stovall, ed., *French Civilization and its Discontents: Nationalism, Colonialism, Race*. Lexington Books (Oxford, 2003), 13.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 189.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 189.

Immigration became an issue in France because it challenges its economy, politics, culture, philosophy, religion and society. In fact, as Hafid Gafaiti suggests “it shakes the very epistemological and ideological foundations of universalism on which modern France constructed its identity.”<sup>28</sup> In this context, the racialization of the French discourse on immigrants in general and North African immigrants in particular relies on the colonial history of France, the economic context, and the combination of an ethnicity (Arab) with a religion (Muslim), in which they represent France’s absolute Other.

For decades, what defined French identity has not been questioned. In fact, this unquestionability masks the fact that French nation was also constituted by and through immigration. In this sense, France’s history denies fundamental elements of its own identity. In fact, the adoption of a republican model facilitated this historical amnesia which denied how fundamental immigration was to French society and its advancement. Thus, as Gerard Noiriel claims “the French model’s ideas of assimilation, uniformity and universality of the nation – ‘*la République une et indivisible*’ – have been crucial in masking ethnic, regional and other differences.”<sup>29</sup>

By manipulating and disavowing the multicultural complexities of Algeria, the French authorities pegged the devout Muslim as the epitome of the unassimilable who could never belong to French society.<sup>30</sup> As a result, this colonial doctrine influences the France of today, by creating an intense intolerance and racism toward its Maghrebian inhabitants. As Hafid Gafaiti

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<sup>28</sup> Georges Van Den Abbele and Tyler Stovall, ed., *French Civilization and its Discontents: Nationalism, Colonialism, Race*. Lexington Books (Oxford, 2003), 191

<sup>29</sup> Maxim Silverman, *Deconstruction the Nation: Immigration, Racism, and Citizenship in Modern France* (Routledge, 2002), 17

<sup>30</sup> Georges Van Den Abbele and Tyler Stovall, ed., *French Civilization and its Discontents: Nationalism, Colonialism, Race*. Lexington Books (Oxford, 2003), 13.



concludes, “the result is a crisis in French identity, its universalist values, and the status of citizenship”.<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, by overestimating the importance of how the past is perceived and interpreted (i.e., the collective memories for contemporary French society, politics and culture) France has created an unruly reality. A reality that denies the presence of immigration in its foundational principles. In doing so, France enables parties to construct immigration as a problem, a strategy that has been exploited by the xenophobic likes of Marine Le Pen and her right-wing populist party, i.e., the Front National.

Equally important, for decades the debate on immigration suffered from lack of historical conceptualization. As Hafid Gafaiti claims, “the conceptual opposition between the French and immigrants is a relatively new phenomenon resulting from the emergence of the nineteenth-century idea of the nation-state”.<sup>32</sup> The construction of “national” and “foreigner” relied on the reevaluation of the French sociocultural and ideological values during the French Revolution and its aftermath. In this respect, the study of immigration in France requires assessing its genesis and considering it as an inherent element of French history and not an external factor to be explored separately from France itself. As Gafaiti proposes, “a basic consideration of French history indicates without ambiguity that, like any other country, the fate of France was largely determined by various fluctuations of populations and numerous influxes of immigrants from different parts of the world.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Georges Van Den Abbele and Tyler Stovall, ed., *French Civilization and its Discontents: Nationalism, Colonialism, Race*. Lexington Books (Oxford, 2003), 13

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 210.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

In addition, the attack on the newspaper Charlie Hebdo in France on January 7, 2015 highlighted the racial discrimination and social inequalities in French society. As a result of this discrimination and inequality, many young people sought rectification in street sociability. In the small disorders that accompanied them the situation was further aggravated not only by radicalizing young men that live in the ghetto, but also by radicalizing “native French” citizens. The intensification of xenophobic movements in European countries, especially in France illustrate this radicalization, which can promote and legitimize the acceptability of extreme anti-immigrant, homophobic and racist right-wing populist parties. Moreover, the anti-immigrant argument has long been a convenient alibi that assigns respectability to the hatred of foreigners and the refusal to accept and integrate them. Thus, it is not a surprise that the Front National has been achieving unprecedented election results.

To sum up, in contemporary France, the reconstruction of its identity signifies some disturbing trends. The constitution of a symbolic immigrant that causes all socioeconomic and cultural problems, the use of the term ghetto, and the reestablishment of the "immigrant" image by the media are representative of these disturbing trends. In this context two definitions of French identity seem to coexist. One includes the national legality and belonging of all French citizens, irrespective of their culture, religion and skin color. The other tends to symbolically exclude those who do not fall into the category of "native French" (a citizen who is naturally white, primarily Christian and instinctively faithful to the Secular-Republican pact).

In this context, it is extremely important to analyze French society because the crisis of identity between “native French” and “immigrants” is generated not only by the deep amnesia of French society, but also by the logic of exclusion and discrimination that exists among its citizens. The continuing exclusion and discrimination of immigrants in general and Muslim

communities in particular define French identity. An identity that functions in relation to ideological inclusion and actual economic and social exclusion.

## **1.6 Xenophobia and Islamophobia in France**

Xenophobia is the fear and distrust of people that are perceived as being different and/or foreigner by the host society.<sup>34</sup> Due to its long history of immigration and recent influx of Muslim immigrants, the study of xenophobia and racism has gained a prominent position in French academia. Thus, analysing xenophobia in France involves analyzing a more specific type of fear, which is the fear of Muslims, namely Islamophobia.

Islamophobia entails fear, distrust, and hostility towards Muslims. Islamophobia is disseminated in Europe due to three main beliefs. First, as Muslims and their symbols – mosques, minarets, headscarves, burqas – become more visible, Europeans fear that Europe might be “Islamicized”. Second, the conviction that hostility and antagonism illustrate the relationship and interaction of West and Islam. In this conviction, Muslims and Islam personify an enemy that threaten European values. As a result, as Raymond Taras claims “the immigrant is no longer just a classical outsider but also the terrorist within.”<sup>35</sup> Third, the European’s sense that Muslims dislike them. Indeed, as Muslim leaders attempt to defend Islam from threats, they formed a dialectical process that reinforced the fears of each side about the other. In this context, as Raymond Taras claims, “those who fear or hate Muslims may believe that they merely reciprocate sentiments found among Muslim communities in their country.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Raymond Taras, *Xenophobia and Islamophobia in Europe* (Edinburgh, 2012), 4.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 4.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 4

Fear and self-interest when combined have the power to unite people.<sup>37</sup> However, when studying any fear, especially of another religion, ethnicity or civilization, one must consider that an inherent complexity, obscurity and intangibility exist in what causes fear, its intensity, and its characteristic.<sup>38</sup> In this sense, when examining prejudice, one must not only recognize its pervasive predisposition but also its presence in any group. Accordingly, as Elisabeth Young-Bruehl emphasized, “studying prejudices requires the consciousness that all peoples have prejudices, and that any group will develop customs and ways of thinking that lead the group members to form prejudgments (and often leave them unable to take the next step and see their own prejudgments).”<sup>39</sup>

Furthermore, prejudice typically rests on a perverse relationship between one group (in-group), to which the subjects feel he or she belong, and another (out-group), which is perceived as different. By creating an in-group and an out-group, prejudice enables stereotyping and scapegoating. In doing so, prejudice facilitates the conviction that in-groups are superior to out-groups which creates a psychological bond between the group members.<sup>40</sup> . As Elisabeth Young-Bruehl explained,

masses and elites that have nothing otherwise in common can find that the same ideology and the same organizing leadership unites them, relieves them of their rootlessness; the same apocalyptic and redemptive vision gives them a common future. They are relieved by it, enthused by it, feel swept into place by it, and they are glad to be all alike, uniform, in a historical process that asks no thinking of them but gives them the comfort of an obedience that does not feel passive to them.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Raymond Taras, *Xenophobia and Islamophobia in Europe* (Edinburgh, 2012), 12.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 11.

By creating a bond among group members, prejudice also materializes an adversary that cannot separate violence from good. This inseparability enables the notion that harmony cannot exist without chaos, and peace cannot exist without war.<sup>42</sup> In this context, the materialization of an adversary functions as a meaning for a group to achieve its interests and solidarity among its members. Finally, as Elisabeth Young-Bruehl explained “the enemy is a *mysterium tremendum*, a paradoxical duality that simultaneously revolts and attracts us”.<sup>43</sup> In this paradox, the in-group must decide if the enemy is to be converted or destroyed.

Furthermore, an inherent complexity exists in the process that transforms ethnocentrism to discrimination, discrimination to prejudice, and prejudice to xenophobia. In this transformative process, as Raymond Taras claims, “xenophobia may be viewed as the flip side of ethnocentrism.”<sup>44</sup> Ethnocentrism evaluates and discriminates out-group cultures based on the preconceived superiority of the in-group culture. Xenophobia, as mentioned earlier, expresses a fear and distrust of people that are perceived as being different and/or foreigner by the host society. Similarly, Pierre-Andre Taguieff explained, “on the one hand, rejection, hostility, aversion – xenophobia; on the other, creating distance, cultural deafness, the inferiorisation of “others” – ethnocentrism.”<sup>45</sup>

Furthermore, Pierre-Andre Taguieff claims that, due to their multidimensional characteristic an inherent connection exists between xenophobia, ethnocentrism, and racism.<sup>46</sup> In

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<sup>42</sup> Raymond Taras, *Xenophobia and Islamophobia in Europe* (Edinburgh, 2012), 11.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 13.

this sense, racism comprises ideological discourses, that resort to science to reduce people's identity to their community of origin. In doing so, it stigmatizes and excludes these people construing them as inferior and incapable of being civilized, educated and assimilable. Also, racism includes behavior and social practices that racialize relations between groups. Indeed, it involves institutions that perform exclusionary or discriminatory actions. It involves, as Raymond Taras claims, "hostile attitudes – opinions, beliefs, stereotypes – that leads to stigmatization - insults, threats, hate speech."<sup>47</sup>

The reasons people are scared of and feel hatred towards foreigners has been the subject of study of many scholars. These studies reveal that whether fear emerges from above within elites or from below among citizens, fear has become a legitimate force to be used to bring order to modern society. In addition, politics of fear combines real and imagined fear that are difficult to separate because the person who fears determines whether it is real or imagined. As Raymond Taras claims, "one person's imagined fear can be another person's real fear."<sup>48</sup> Thus, understanding fear and its many forms will contribute to understanding the surges of the Front National in France. As noted earlier, these parties create a climate of fear that threatens the acceptance of uniqueness and diversity.

In addition, a deeper study of Islamophobia is necessary because Islam is portrayed as being lesser than the West, as an enemy, as politically manipulative, and as an insincere religious faith. Also, to justify discrimination against and exclusion of Muslims in Europe, one observes

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<sup>47</sup> Raymond Taras, *Xenophobia and Islamophobia in Europe* (Edinburgh, 2012), 14.

<sup>48</sup> Raymond Taras, *Fear and the Making of Foreign Policy* (Edinburgh, 2015), 7.

that European societies are more likely to defend hostility towards Islam than to oppose it. This positioning legitimates Islamophobia in Western European countries.

## **1.7 Methodology**

This thesis engages in a qualitative research, in which secondary literature, speeches, manifestos, surveys (the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia in Vienna, the European Social Survey at City University, and the Eurobarometer, Ministère de l'Intérieur, TNS-Sofres, IFOP, Commission National Consultative des Droites de L'Homme) and elections results are analyzed to examine why radical right-wing populist parties have proliferated throughout Western Europe. Based on a case study of the Front National in France, this thesis seeks to readdress our understanding of right-wing populist parties, their appeal and their rhetoric. Finally, this thesis examines how the Front National generates fear and a sense of crisis in order to engender further Islamophobia and xenophobia.

To comprehend these facts and their connectedness, this thesis is organized in the following way. Chapter 2 analyzes populism and how it resorts to fear, exclusion, nationalism, national identity, and gender equality to influence politics. It will also investigate how their rhetoric influences politics in Europe and its society. This will be explored because the key condition of populist leaders and parties are their ability to explore the emotional register of the people; to adopt messages that will bring to the surface people's nostalgia of an imagined past, and people's anxiety and fear of an uncertain future.

Chapter 3 analyzes the Front National and its Islamophobic rhetoric. In this chapter, the Front National's ideas, electoral and non-electoral victories, and conceptualization of otherness

will be analyzed. Also, it will explore how the FN is situating Islam as the principal enemy of France and its traditional republican concepts.

Chapter 4 examines French society and its contribution to the rise of right-wing populist parties. It will explore the conflicts between the Republic and its citizens in which the Republic advocates that citizens must respect one another but, at the same time, refuses to perceive reality as it is. This chapter will also attempt to uncover the hidden elements that are promoting an identity crisis between French natives and immigrants. Finally, this chapter will examine the ineffectiveness of the French integration model. This ineffectiveness strengthens the idea that immigrants deserve to be feared.

Chapter 5 clarifies and defines xenophobia and Islamophobia to examine their interrelation and interconnectedness. In addition, it will investigate the construction of xenophobia and Islamophobia in French society. Throughout my research, I have noticed that by failing to recognize its history, the French State and society have been marginalizing Muslims and subjecting them to various forms of racial discrimination. Whether discrimination stems from Catholic persecution, an institutional form of racism against the color of the skin, or from xenophobia against immigrants, it is prevalent in French society. These forms of discrimination are promoted by society and are reinforced by Islamophobia.

Chapter 6 identifies the central theme that this research will follow. The public support of right-wing populist parties has grown and with it, its anti-immigrant positions have become normalized and legitimized. In this anti-immigrant position, these parties articulate that immigrants threaten their nation and national identity. The time has come to recognize that these parties are using its relative marginality strategically to change their countries' society, culture,



and identity. It is important to study the right-wing populism not only in France but in Europe because of the social and political changes that they are triggering in their respective countries. Also, as Islamophobic discourses become normalized and legitimized in Europe, the investigation and study of this phenomenon gains more relevance and importance, because Islamophobia influences the national and international arena.

## Chapter 2- Populism

Right-wing populism is a political discourse and ideology that combines anti-system, anti-elitism, and anti-immigration discourses in its policy proposals. Although scholars differ on their definition of right-wing populism, Skenderovic proposes, when defining right-wing populism one can encounter three central concepts that characterizes this phenomenon.<sup>49</sup> First, the conceptualization of the ‘people’ as a ‘heartland’. Second, this heartland opposes to or antagonizes ‘others’, among them the elites (ethnic and religious), minorities, or immigrants. Similarly, as Reisigl claims, “populism constructs and sustains an antagonistic relationship between ‘the people’, ‘the elite(s)’ and the dangerous ‘others’”.<sup>50</sup> Third, populism construes a new social divide that distances ‘the people’/ ‘Us’ from the ‘Others’/ ‘Them’.<sup>51</sup>

Populism can emerge as protest movements or as right-wing parties such as Front National in France. Regardless of the form it takes, populism defends the idea that democracy should not only represent the people but also echo the people’s will. In this sense, as Anton Pelinka claims “populism is based on Abraham Lincoln’s famous definition of democracy as ‘government of the people, for the people, and by the people’”.<sup>52</sup> However, populism, as a concept, represents a vague understanding of democracy because populism assumes the homogeneity of ‘the people’. This assumption exposes populism intellectual and analytical weakness because who is included in or excluded from ‘the people’ is the result of a simplistic dogma which ignores social fragmentation. In fact, the differences within ‘the people’ tend to be

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<sup>49</sup> Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourse Mean* (Sage, 2015), 25.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>52</sup> Anton Pelinka, *Right-Wing Populism in Europe: Politics and Discourses* (Bloomsbury, 2014), 1.

overlooked by populism. Thus, as Anton Pelinka analyzes, “the people exist above the diversities of class and religion or gender and generation”<sup>53</sup>. In this sense, to create the idea that borders exist between ‘us’ and ‘them’, populism constructs national and racial identities.<sup>54</sup>

Regardless of its intellectual and analytical weakness, populism survived as a tendency and as an element. As a tendency, populism criticizes democracy for not being sufficiently democratic and for not empowering ‘the people’. As an element, populism occupies an outside position in the mainstream of democratic activities. But to survive, populism had to redefine who is included in and excluded from ‘the people’. As a result, to populists as Anton Pelinka explains, “‘the other’ was redefined as ‘alien’, as foreign due to birth, citizenship, religion, culture or race.”<sup>55</sup>

The definition of the ‘other’ by the people determines whether populism is left-wing or right-wing. The former does not exclude people that have a different nationality, citizenship, religion, culture or race. The latter constructs an agenda aiming at the exclusion of or discrimination against an ‘other’ that embodies a different ethnicity and/or nationality and/or religion. This type of populism claims to advocate for ‘the people’ while excluding ‘others’. In doing so, it conforms to a racist ethno-nationalist programme.

As Ruth Wodak explains, “ethno-nationalist form of populism frequently employs four different strategies”<sup>56</sup> First, ethno-nationalist populism creates a homogeneous nation with a homogeneous culture, and identity. In doing so, it can construct a dangerous ‘other’ that

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<sup>53</sup> Anton Pelinka, *Right-Wing Populism in Europe: Politics and Discourses* (Bloomsbury, 2014), 6.

<sup>54</sup> Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean* (Sage, 2015), 5.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, 54.

threatens the nation's homogeneity, culture, and identity. Second, according to the author, "ethno-nationalist populism emphasizes the clear distinction and distinctiveness from other nations or ethnic minorities to draw a rigid dividing line."<sup>57</sup> In this way, all persons that embody a different nationality, ethnicity, culture, and religion are automatically excluded.

Third, ethno-nationalist populism emphasizes the uniqueness and superiority of the nation and of 'the people'.<sup>58</sup> Fourth, how right-wing populist parties perceive Europe depends on their political agenda. In this sense, to exclude the 'other', they claim that 'Europe' is a unified entity with a homogeneous identity that needs to be protected.

Recent studies conducted by Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell reveal that the surges of populism in Western Europe derive mainly from the inability of mainstream parties to effectively resolve current issues.<sup>59</sup> These issues include high unemployment, the effects of globalization, the immigration and integration issue, the ineffectiveness of the European Union and the Euro, and the corruption of the elite/politicians.<sup>60</sup> In addition, these surges reflect an increase in citizens' lack of interest in and mistrust of politics and politicians, which is demonstrated by the low voting turnouts during elections across Western Europe and the decline in party memberships. In this context, a propitious environment is created in which populism can capitalize on and prosper.

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<sup>57</sup> Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean* (Sage, 2015), 54.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 54.

<sup>59</sup> Danielle Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell, *Twenty-first Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 3.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

In the past decades, parties have been resorting to fear to achieve electoral and non-electoral victories. In fact, David Altheide claims,

fear has become a dominant public perspective. Fear begins with things we fear, but over time, with enough repetition and expanded use, it becomes a way of looking at life... Fear is one of the perspective that citizens share today; while liberals and conservatives may differ in their objective of fear, all sides express many fears and point to “blameworthy” sources – often each other! The fear market promotes new fears and an expanding array of ‘victims’.<sup>61</sup>

In this sense, right-wing populist parties have been resorting to fear to increase their public support. These parties realized that fear not only influences people’s behavior but also propels the need for a change. In addition, in resorting to scapegoating, populism provides simple solutions for complex problems. For right-wing populism, the culprit is the foreign that embodies a different ethnicity, culture, and religion.

Moreover, to populist, the elite and multiculturalism create more problems to societies, because they advocate for cultural diversity, deconstructing the nation’s culture and identity. Thus, contemporary right-wing populism constructs internal and external enemies that jeopardize the nation’s purity. However, as Anton Pelinka suggests, “there is a great deal of naiveté in contemporary populism for claiming that pure nations and homogenous ‘peoples’ exist in today’s world. But as long as there is a tendency to believe in the non-existent homogeneity of ‘us’, there is enough energy to defend ‘us’ against ‘them’.”<sup>62</sup> When observing the emergences of new ultra-nationalist and xenophobic parties that are built in so called ‘new’ and ‘old’ identity concepts, one notices that right-wing populism is not a passing phenomenon. In fact, right-wing populist

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<sup>61</sup> Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear What Right-Wing Discourses Mean* (Sage, 2015), 8.

<sup>62</sup> Anton Pelinka, *Right-Wing Populism in Europe: Politics and Discourse* (Bloomsbury, 2014), 8.

parties improved their results in comparison to the elections in 2004 and 2009. As Ruth Wodak claims, as long as economic austerity plans, growing Islamophobia, hostilities against Roma, Jews, and refugees, and the Eurozone crisis continue causing and widening the gap between rich and poor, the support for right-wing populist parties will rise.<sup>63</sup>

Although the factors that explain the rise of right-wing populist parties vary from one country to the other, all these parties resort to a politics of fear, placing immigrants and immigration in the centre of their political agenda. To populists, ‘the people’ must fear immigrants and immigration because they threaten the nation’s values and identity. In addition, due to globalization and the vast complexity of modern societies everybody who is ‘different’ and who does not ‘belong’ to ‘Us’, that is, strangers, both within and outside of our society becomes a target.<sup>64</sup> For centuries, parties have been resorting to scapegoating to thrive in elections. In fact, as Ruth Wodak claims “if a foreigner looks or behaves differently, racist, anti-Semitic and nativist stereotypes are easily evoked.”<sup>65</sup> In this context, as the author concludes, right-wing populist parties instrumentalize “the collective memories, ingrained and internalized fear of ‘strangers’ and ‘others’, and new and old insecurities”<sup>66</sup> to broaden their influence on politics, to further their public support, and to achieve electoral success.

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<sup>63</sup> Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear What Right-Wing Discourses Mean* (Sage, 2015), 31.

<sup>64</sup> Danielle Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnel, eds., *Twenty-First Century Populism the Spectre of Western European Democracy* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 32.

<sup>65</sup> Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourse Means* (Sage, 2015), 32.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, 32.

## 2.1 The Mediatisation of Politics

To understand the reasons that contributed to the rise of right-wing populist parties in Europe, one must consider the decisive role of the media. In fact, in Europe, the media and populist leaders construct a relationship of complicity, which facilitates the ‘mediatisation’ of political leadership and action. The media attains a central position in the political process and communication in which politics and its language are transformed into spectacle.

In contemporary society, to capture the dissatisfied voters’ attention and support, political leaders must know how to act. As, Pierre-Andre Taguieff emphasizes “populist leaders have mastered this mediatisation of political language.”<sup>67</sup> Moreover, the mediatisation of politics personalizes political leaders that know how to dramatize boring political issues. Since the media prefers stories about real people and the presentation of political issues in a non-bureaucratic style, populist leaders fit perfectly to this media’s demand because they know how to transform political life into a spectacle.

Moreover, populist leaders’ charisma contributes to their popularity and political appeal. Right-wing populist politicians have to be perceived as authentic, as ‘one of us’, that is, as understanding the problems and needs of everybody, and must avoid being perceived as distant to the people. As Gianfranco Pasquino claims, “populist leaders do not represent the people, they consider themselves an integral part of the people. They are the people.”<sup>68</sup> In this sense,

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<sup>67</sup> Danielle Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnel, eds., *Twenty-First Century Populism the Spectre of Western European Democracy* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 52.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, 49.

authenticity implies and presupposes that such politicians represent, know and understand how ‘normal’ citizens feel and live.<sup>69</sup>

Right-wing populist politicians are part of ‘the people’, because they share the same opinions and beliefs. They are constructed as being the representatives of the common people, having the necessary courage to say what the woman/man on the street only thinks. In addition, they dare to oppose directly and explicitly the powerful elite, not minding or even transcending the rules of political correctness and politeness. In doing so, these parties and their leaders present their ideas, discourses, and policies strategically to gain media support.

Furthermore, right-wing politicians’ success relies on their ability to target a specific audience while performing in public – be it, in traditional and new media including social media, in election rallies, press conferences, and speeches. As distrust of and discontentment with politicians increase across Europe, right-wing populist parties and their leaders position themselves as being different from the political elites and consensus, and as being the saviors of the people. As Ruth Wodak claims, “right-wing populist politicians construct themselves as ‘being one of us’ (‘Us’ defined as the ordinary man/woman from the street), as saving ‘Us’ from ‘Them’ (‘Them’ being opponents, strangers and, more generally, all dangerous people or scenarios), and as knowing what ‘We’ want (as fulfilling the unspoken but shared common needs).”<sup>70</sup>

In many instances, the European media, whether knowingly or not, legitimized the communication style adopted by populist leaders. Due to the media’s proclivity towards anything

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<sup>69</sup> Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear What Right-Wing Populist Discourse Mean* (Sage, 2015), 131.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 126.



that differs from the norm in political arena, these ‘Underdog’ leaders can capture the media and public attentions. As a result, populist leaders gain visibility and their message reverberate significantly to a wide audience. Put differently, as Gianpietro Mazzoleni concludes “the media, intentionally or not, serve as a powerful mobilization tool for populist causes.”<sup>71</sup>

When analysing how media and populist leaders relate, one notices a convergence of goals. Consequently, one might perceive that, in resorting to emotions to report social issues such as public security and insecurity, unemployment, inflation, immigration and so forth, the media guarantee its profits. Simultaneously, populist leaders and their inflammatory rhetoric breach their marginal position gaining public approval and generating controversy.

The relevance of the media has increased across Western Europe, especially if one considers that parties and the public communicate through media. In this context, the media influences greatly the political agenda. Indeed, the media deeply influences the political agenda, because to alter the political agenda and achieve visibility, parties must conduct and create events in a manner that will attract media attention. Due to populist leaders’ ability to generate spectacular politics, this scenario tends to benefit populist parties. Moreover, the media provides the perfect environment for the populist leaders to communicate their message and discourse. This perfect environment is constructed by the media’s proclivity to simplify complex problems, to dramatize events and questions such as immigration, and to focus on scandals and personality contest between political parties. Thus, as Mauro Calise concludes, “having been thrown out the

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<sup>71</sup> Danielle Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnel, eds., *Twenty-First Century Populism the Spectre of Western European Democracy* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 50.

front door by the great historical tragedies of the first half of the century, the charismatic leader has come back in through the window of the television screen in the second half”<sup>72</sup>.

## **2.2 Nationalism, Identity and Right-Wing Populism**

Although the world is becoming more unified and globalized, to protect their nation from alleged and real dangers, states are building more borders and walls. Nationalism nowadays must be perceived as a global phenomenon that is present in Africa, South-America, North-America, the Middle East, Eastern and Southern Europe. According to Delanty and Kuman “nationalism is present in almost every aspect of political community and social arrangements. It pervades the global and local dimensions and can even take cosmopolitan forms.”<sup>73</sup> In this context, the nation is inclusive and solidary. In addition, to belong to the nation, one must share the same ethnic, cultural, and religious values of the nation. This idea of belonging excludes and marginalizes those who do not share this sameness.<sup>74</sup>

In this complex struggle for belonging, an ingrained dynamism, fluidity, and fragmentation exist in all identities.<sup>75</sup> As such, when analyzing identity, three assumptions must be considered. First, specific context and interactive relationships always (re)create and co-construct identities. Second, identity constructions always define an in-group (‘Us’) and an out-group (‘Them’). Third, the (re)production and expression of individual, collective, national and transnational identities occur through symbols.

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<sup>72</sup> Danielle Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnel, eds., *Twenty-First Century Populism the Spectre of Western European Democracy* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 221.

<sup>73</sup> Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean* (Sage, 2015), 71.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, 71.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, 71.

Recognizing these assumptions becomes important, considering the influence that identity and national politics exerts on right-wing populist parties and mainstream parties. First, right-wing populist parties resort to identity politics to advocate for their nationalism which inherently endorses an essentialized concept of nationalism expressed in ever more restrictive body politics. Second, mainstream political parties have also been adopting a more restrictive body politics to prevent a decrease of their public support and votes.<sup>76</sup>

Furthermore, as Checkel and Katzenstein explain, “identity construction implies specific cultural and emotional dynamics that transcend political projects.”<sup>77</sup> For this reason, although it has been in vain, political elites of the European Union not only have created shared values but also cultivated them to ensure that Europeans feel that they belong to the European community.

<sup>78</sup> In this sense, inclusive and exclusive discourses also cultivate European identities, because they define Europeaness and ‘Us’, excluding the ‘Others’. By employing discursive strategies to construct in-groups and out-groups and making the distinction between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’, the ‘non-Europeans’, the relations of the EU with the ‘others’ is redefined in context-dependent ways. That is, new criteria of belonging are created to include ‘Us’ and exclude ‘Them’.

In this context, right-wing populist parties resort to national identity and nationalism for two reasons: first, to construct the ‘real’ French, Hungarians, Austrians or British; and second, to exclude all the ‘Others’ who are considered as not belonging to the group. The ‘real’ French, Hungarians, Austrians or British is defined not by citizenry (*jus solis*), but by being born to parents who already belonged to the respective country, that is, nativist principles (*jus*

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<sup>76</sup> Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean* (Sage, 2015), 40.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

*sanguinis*). In fact, political parties and movements such as the Austrian FPÖ, the French FN, the British BNP and UKIP, and Hungarian Jobbik are raising identity issues to attract more voters.<sup>79</sup> As such, these parties and movements claim that they are the defenders of European values and the creators of a new European identity and sense of belonging. A new European identity which is, as Ruth Wodak claims “inherently tied to subjective feelings of belonging, and imposed nationalistic, religious and ethnic categories.”<sup>80</sup>

For decades, European citizens feel that they are not safe in their own country and that political authorities are incapable of dealing with the current social changes and issues. In this context, right-wing populist parties challenge the current social order by constructing a new identity(ies). This new identity(ies)’s constructions helped, and continue to help, these parties to propagate a message that European citizens can identify and sympathize with. A new identity(ies) that threatens any past and present attempt to integrate Europe politically, economically, socially, and culturally. In addition, these parties are combining gender issues with identity issues to target Islam and its symbols, in which the headscarf represents everything that is wrong with Islam and challenges the liberal European values. In this context, as Ruth Wodak concludes, “cultural heritage and issues of religions are linked with the reformulation of Christian values or the framing of anti-Muslim values in the perception of gender equality.”<sup>81</sup>

### **2.3 Right-Wing Populism and Gender**

[...] the failure to defend our own culture has turned immigration into the most dangerous threat that can be used against the West. Multiculturalism has made us so tolerant that we tolerate the intolerant [...] if Europe falls, it will fall because it no longer believes in the superiority of its own civilization. It will fall because it foolishly believes that all cultures

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<sup>79</sup> Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear What Right-Wing Discourses Mean* (Sage, 2015), 70.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 70.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 42.

are equal and that, consequently, there is no reason why we should fight for our own culture to preserve it. – Geert Wilders, leader of the Dutch Freedom Party<sup>82</sup>

In public debates about immigration and religious difference, residents that embody a different ‘culture’ and their unwillingness to assimilate threaten ‘our’ culture’s integrity. In these debates, as Ruth Wodak observes, “deictic elements acquire salience and culture is regarded as a static entity which somebody either knows about or does not, has or does not have.”<sup>83</sup>

According to most scholars in the field, right-wing populism most prevalent element is its exclusionary rhetoric, which creates an out-group. This exclusionary rhetoric includes those that are within and outside the nation’s border. For instance, in France, Muslims represent the out-group, and right-wing populism is resorting to gender to foment anti-Muslim feelings.

Gender relations are changing significantly. These changes threaten patriarchy and (re)signify social relations and our objective knowledge of the world. In this context, populist right-wing construction of fear depends on the imagined empowerment of white women and on the veiled Muslim women as the ‘Other’.<sup>84</sup> As mentioned earlier, the creation of scapegoats is ingrained in right-wing populist rhetoric in which fear of minorities is emphasized. In addition, a gendered discourse is incorporated to reinforce the idea that internal and external strangers are threatening Christian civilization and its values. This discourse is contradictory because at same time that it advocates for the emancipation of women, it also limits women’s rights based on traditional Christian religious values. In fact, these traditional Christian religious values prohibit women to abort their unwanted pregnancy and to live independent lives. As Ruth Wodak points

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<sup>82</sup> Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear What Right-Wing Discourses Mean* (Sage, 2015), 55.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 55.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 153.

out, “this gendered discourse clearly attempts to govern and regulate women’s bodies and minds, thereby objectifying and disciplining women”.<sup>85</sup>

Since the 1990s, to incorporate an Islamophobic rhetoric in the post-modern political debate, Muslim women symbolized the ultimate ‘Other’. The ‘headscarf’ – the *hijab* and the *burqa* – is still present in political debates across Europe. Both the *hijab* and *burqa* symbolise Islam’s incivility and oppressiveness of women and Western culture should rescue these women from this incivility and oppression. In this context, right-wing populist parties presume that all Muslim women, who are wearing a headscarf or a *burqa*, are not allowed to choose between wearing them or not. By doing so, right-wing populist parties challenge the mainstream political parties and elite to face its responsibility. That is, to avoid that Islam oppresses Western women, and to empower and liberate those that are already oppressed by Islam - Muslim women.

This discourse has created two problems. First, by perceiving Islam as extremely dangerous for Western society, right-wing populist parties can construct a dichotomous and homogeneous out-group – Muslims. Second, it has established an Islamophobic discourse which facilitates right-wing populist parties to ignore all other social, political and economic issues. In doing so, population’s support of right-wing populist parties is increasing, because discourse that advocates for the women’s liberation from oppression unites more voters than anti-modernization, anti-globalization, and anti-political ones. As Marsdal amply illustrates,

class issues are shoved into the background and value issues comes to the fore. Tensions over economic distribution and fairness are demobilized. This takes place, however, at the top level of party politics, and not in society. In society, economic and social inequalities and tensions have been rising over the last decades all over Europe. The political demobilizing of class conflicts does not take place because most voters have come to emphasize values issues more than class issues because economic policy debates are dull

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<sup>85</sup> Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear What Right-Wing Discourses Mean* (Sage, 2015), 153.

and grey. Then, someone says something about the Muslim veil and media hell breaks loose.<sup>86</sup>

Thus, people are voting for parties because of the parties' moral values. In this context, the headscarf and burqa symbolize how dangerous Islam is to Muslim women and non-Muslim women. As Ruth Wodak defends, "this kind of discourse makes it impossible to discuss the Islam-internal situation as every example would invariably reinforce the overall negative generalizations about Islam."<sup>87</sup> As such, the debate on headscarves and *burqas* reconstruct how Europe defines its culture, its identity, and its civilization. This reconstruction intertwines European and national identities with gender; in this case, modernity and gender-egalitarianism represent the West ('Us'), and Islam ('Them') represents barbarism and sexism. This representation of 'Us' and 'Them' facilitates the juxtaposition of the patriarchal Islam with the gender-friendly West.

Similarly, Sauer highlights that "the headscarf or burqa should not be understood merely as a piece of cloth, rather as the body of the women is used to (re)signify cultural, religious, and ethnic difference."<sup>88</sup> The common Muslim women personify the religious fundamentalism and the failure of multiculturalism to integrate diversity in Western European societies. In addition, power struggle over female bodies sustains conflicts about values, religion, and national identity.

Furthermore, in focusing on the *burqa* and headscarf other issues such as women's rights, public freedoms or access to education are relegated to a secondary position into public discourses, and sometimes not even appearing in these discourses. In assuming that a clear

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<sup>86</sup> Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear What Right-Wing Populist Discourse Mean* (Sage, 2015), 157.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, 159.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, 160.

contrast exists between women's condition in Islamic societies and the Western societies, the media legitimizes the notion that Western women are not oppressed by their societies and values. In fact, Western women are free and modern, while veiled Muslim women are not. As Ruth Wodak concludes, "this kind of imagination and construction of the 'Muslim women' may be labelled as 'neo-colonial sexism', thus identifying a tendency striving to maintain the superiority of the West."<sup>89</sup>

To summarize, in European countries, specifically in Western and Scandinavian ones, veiled Muslim women threaten European societies. Indeed, these women embody the 'Other', in a reality that everything that differs from Europe culture, religion, and way of life are perceived as a danger and a threat to Europe. In this context, an antagonistic relation is constructed in which Europeans represent civilization and 'Others' from the East symbolizes barbarism. A *neo-colonial sexism*, in which Muslim women encompasses everything that the West should fear, is emerging in the West.

## 2.4 Conclusion

The new strategy adopted by right-wing populist parties in Europe explain their rise in the past years. A strategy that create new issues, instead of focusing on and dealing with current and pressing issues. They manage to transform any event into threats. They successfully create a climate of fear by wisely focusing on what people feared more than the economic conditions — losing their identity. People are still concerned about their country's economy. But as Michelle Hale Williams suggests, "people may view the poor economic conditions more-easily reversed

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<sup>89</sup> Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear What Right-Wing Discourses Mean* (Sage, 2015), 160



than the loss of identity, culture, and values.”<sup>90</sup> In this sense, right-wing populist parties create a sense of crisis because they connect all problems – real and imagined – with the loss of identity. In doing so, they mobilize these people against a culprit (foreigners), who are blamed for all social, political, economic, and cultural changes.

Currently, fear dominates the political agenda, and some of these anxieties and fears should be addressed, such as global warming and climate change, famine and poverty, religious fundamentalism, the growing dividing line between poor and rich, and so forth. However, these problems should be addressed without resorting to fears and anxieties; they should be addressed with alternative policies that are created to not only solve these problems but also to combat social fears and anxieties. In addition, as Tafseer Amim claims,

the roots of public anxiety that make it easy to scapegoat the stranger need to be tackled head on, through reforms aiming at job generation, fair pay, equal access, universal well-being, and shared common life. Only then will the temptation to name the migrant and subaltern as the threat to the prosperity, well-being, and cohesion of the many, seem anomalous.<sup>91</sup>

Similarly, as Tony Judt argues “inequality is corrosive. It rots society from within”.<sup>92</sup> Thus, instead of politics of denial, an inclusive politics should be the goal, articulating a more integrative and inclusive ‘We’ instead of ever stricter divisions between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’.

Nowadays, right-wing populism in all its varieties has become a mainstream political force in many European countries and beyond. A nationalistic agenda has become hegemonic in

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<sup>90</sup> Danielle Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell, *Twenty-first Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 4.

<sup>91</sup> Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourse Mean* (Sage, 2015), 187.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, 187.

the rhetoric and manifestos of right-wing populist parties, articulating a desire to establish a homogeneous white and Christian European community. In some of these parties, a fascist ‘blood and soil’ rhetoric and related metaphors of ‘strangers’ visualized as ‘parasites, disease and illness’ have come to the fore, frequently drawing in fascist and national-socialist traditions and pasts, on rewritten foundation myths of lost power and territory. In this context, fear of supposed new threats and anger about the putative loss of power reinforce these nostalgic imaginaries.

Moreover, fear and anger generate an opposition to change, consequently any organization and institution - such as the European Union - that promote any undesirable change are perceived as a threat to the nation. As Ruth Wodak explains, “complexity is reduced to simplistic dichotomies; scapegoats are created and instrumentalized as reasons for any current problems or troubles.”<sup>93</sup> In this context, right-wing populist parties promote a negative mobilization which relies on a general politics of fear to all new development.<sup>94</sup> This mobilization orientates its politics and agenda to safeguard some anti-intellectual, nostalgic, and unreal past.

Furthermore, as Ruth Wodak concludes, “‘cardboard men’ and ‘plastic woman’ embody, manifest and perform new gender roles, leaving many men (particularly working-class) at a loss, as modernization losers, unemployed and with no perspective for the future, especially amongst the young generation.”<sup>95</sup> This lack of perspective for the future promotes fear among young generation, in many EU member states. Also, it empowers politicians to reconstruct this fear and

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<sup>93</sup> Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourse Mean* (Sage, 2015), 184.

<sup>94</sup> Danielle Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell, eds., *Twenty-first Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 220.

<sup>95</sup> Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourse Mean* (Sage, 2015), 186.

create scapegoats. In this context of fear, immigrants – the ‘others’ – are causing unemployment and not inequality, austerity policy and neoliberal economics. As such, any differences – be it cultural, ethnic, and religious – are being discriminated, creating more divisiveness in European countries.

Eric Hobsbawm aimed to define the role of the common people in a century that their role is disappearing.<sup>96</sup> He concluded that “the dilemma of an age when government could be ‘of the people’ and ‘for the people’, but could not be ‘by the people’”.<sup>97</sup> As Gianfranco Pasquino proposes, “democracy is inevitably characterized by ‘the constitutive tension between its ideology (the power of the people) and its functioning (the power of the elites chosen by the people)’”.<sup>98</sup> Thus, populism might continue to prosper, because for democracy to be legitimized, a gap must exist between what democracy is and what it promises to be.

Although in the twenty-first century’s democracy, Western Europe societies benefit from a diversity of rights, their voices exert less power in politics than in the past. Citizens are encouraged to participate in politics only to vote and to guarantee that problems related to education, jobs, and crime are solved. Due to their little interest in politics, most ordinary people usually ascribe politics to a peripheral position in their lives. To them, instead of interfering, politics and politicians should make their lives easier.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Danielle Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell, eds., *Twenty-first Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 218.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, 218

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, 218.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, 218.

The Western Europe of the twenty-first century increasingly provides a propitious environment for right-wing populist parties claiming that the dangerous elite and ‘others’ threaten the people’s homogeneity and identity. As Paul Taggart observes, “the idea of living at a turning point in history is an important one for populist ideas’ and populists in Western Europe rely on the sense that we are at a historical juncture in which, if the people do not act, they will ‘lose everything’”<sup>100</sup>. In addition, these parties listen to the people, focusing on their demands to frame immigration issues around those demands. For instance, if unemployment was a concern, right-wing populist parties claimed that natives do not have jobs because of immigrants. If the declining educational standards in school was a concern, populist parties argued that learning and teaching was being compromised because of the presence of immigrants in the classroom. Thus, by knowing people’s concerns, these parties managed to strategically relate those concerns to the presence of foreigners.

Moreover, immigration into Western Europe will not stop, offering ample opportunities for populist right-wing parties to mobilize. In addition, in a world, which the discourse ‘clash of civilization’ is still present, right-wing populist parties will continue to capitalize on both the West versus Islam divide and the secular/liberal versus Muslim one. In fact, since September 11, identity issues have been exacerbated which prompts adversaries to exaggerate their differences. As Frank Fukuyama claims, “angry, unassimilated cultural minorities produce backlash on the part of the majority community, which then retreats into its own cultural and religious

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<sup>100</sup> Danielle Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell, eds., *Twenty-first Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 220.

identity.”<sup>101</sup> Thus, the twenty-first century offers opportunities for the emergence and success of populist parties and their message.

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<sup>101</sup> Danielle Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell, eds., *Twenty-first Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 222.

## Chapter 3 – Front National

Parties can influence citizens through their ideas which are propagated by a charismatic leader. In this sense, parties can convince citizens and supporters to become members and voters.<sup>102</sup> Also, it can convince citizens and supporters that their programme, ideology, and leadership fight for a cause that is relevant and necessary.

When analyzing the Front National (FN), one notices that in the last decade not only it influenced citizens but also convinced them to become members and supporters. In addition, due to situating itself as an anti-immigrant, anti-establishment, and nationalist party, the FN represented, and still represents, the radical right-wing movement in Western Europe. As such, as Sylvain Crépon states, “the FN portrays French society as tainted by foreign influences and governed by corrupt elites that embrace lax government policies in public security.”<sup>103</sup> By doing so, as Paul Haisnworth defends, “the FN advocates for an ethno-centric nation that should be reserved by people that share the same ethnicity, history, religion, and identity”.<sup>104</sup>

The party was officially created in 1972, but it was only in the 1980s that the party actually found its political niche and learned how to influence French politics to its advantage. According to Jonathan Marcus, the FN accomplished that by adopting a process that would help the party to adjust to the system and evolve from 1972 through 1984.<sup>105</sup> During this period, the FN worked to become a unified and legitimate party. As a result, in 1983 and 1984 the party won

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<sup>102</sup> Daniel Stockemer, *The Front National in France: Continuity and Change Under Jean-Marie Le Pen and Marine Le Pen* (Switzerland: Springer, 2017), 3

<sup>103</sup> Michelle Hale Williams, *The Impact of Radical Right-Wing Parties in West European Democracies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 9.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 84.

at the local elections in Dreux and at the European Parliament elections, respectively. Between 1985 and 1990, the party's electorate was strengthened with members from mainstream parties.<sup>106</sup> Also, in 1988, Jean-Marie Le Pen obtained almost 15% of the popular vote in the first round of presidential elections.

Furthermore, the Front National (FN) not only deradicalized its speech but also adopted a less aggressive tone to present itself as a populist party that considers the common men and women's opinions and voices. As Michelle Halle Williams proposes, "the language of the party has evolved from its rudimentary and unsophisticated forms in the 1970 to become more socially acceptable in 1980."<sup>107</sup> For example, the party anti-immigrant position remained, but instead of justifying this opposition of immigration through racism, the FN attributed it to economic reasons. The party realized that opposing immigration because immigrants increase unemployment among French citizens, and decrease their social benefits was more acceptable. Hence, by the early 1990s, to soften its anti-immigration message, the party started to resort to 'national preference' – a concept developed by Delegate General Bruno Mégret. This meant simply that social welfare benefits should be reserved for French and European nationals, but only those that are part of the European Union. As Guy Birenbaum and James Shields conclude, by softening its language the Front National was able to communicate a message that French people could actually sympathize with.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Michelle Hale Williams, *The Impact of Radical Right-Wing Parties in West European Democracies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 84.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 96.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 96.

Although the arguments to justify its anti-immigration position shifted throughout the 1990s, the party continued to advocate for little or no immigration. Thus, immigration remains the central issue to the Front National, but instead of a racist rhetoric, the party resorted to immigration to solve all social problems. As Jean-Marie Bockel concedes, “the extreme right in France today is smart and they are not that extreme in the way they express themselves. They are not openly racist, they are not openly anti-Semitic, and they are not openly nostalgic about Nazism, so they are very careful in their discourse”.<sup>109</sup>

This reconfiguration allowed the Front National (FN) to present itself as an alternative to the left and right - a “third way” to the political consensus. Furthermore, by strategically incorporating a populist message in its discourse, the party improved its appeal and a wider audience was captivated. In addition, the party implemented populism in their discourse not only to differentiate itself from mainstream parties but also to become an alternative to them.

By incorporating a softer populist tone to its discourse, the party not only captivated a broader audience, but also influenced the mainstream parties. For instance, in 1981, both major parties in France, the Union for French Democracy (UDF) and the Rally for the Republic Party (RPR), radicalized their discourses and advocated for a more aggressive policy to deal with immigration and social issues.<sup>110</sup> As Paul Hainworth points out, “the FN’s populist strategy appeared to be effective, as its key issues were being increasingly absorbed by mainstream

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<sup>109</sup> Michelle Hale Williams, *The Impact of Radical Right-Wing Parties in West European Democracies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 97.

<sup>110</sup> Daniel Stockemer, *The Front National in France: Continuity and Change Under Jean-Marie Le Pen and Marine Le Pen* (Switzerland: Springer, 2017), 55



parties.”<sup>111</sup> In radicalizing their discourse, these parties legitimized the FN’s anti-immigration discourse giving more credibility to the party’s message.

Reinventing itself contributed greatly to the electoral rise of the party, however the transformations that France underwent in the 1980s played a major role in the rise of the Front National. Three structural factors, which caused transformation in France, benefited the party. First, the political transformation was generated by French citizens’ unhappiness with the way that the government was dealing with public security issues. For instance, the president’s decision to release prisoners and to restrain the power of the police jeopardized public security to conservative individuals.<sup>112</sup>

Second, as Piero Ignazi claims, “the French population became increasingly sensitive to immigration issues.”<sup>113</sup> Indeed, to French population, under Mitterrand, laws that regulated and enforced immigration, especially those dealing with illegal immigrants were too lenient. In addition, by the 1980s, the North African population had its status modified from a minority (2.3% in 1946) to a very visible minority (38.5% in 1982). Although, as Daniel Stockemer analyses, “North Africans have first been temporary migrants who came to fill manual labor jobs, they became a permanent addition to the country under Giscard D’Estaing’s presidency.”<sup>114</sup> In this context, immigrant families were associated with ghettoization, higher crime, and

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<sup>111</sup> Daniel Stockemer, *The Front National in France: Continuity and Change Under Jean-Marie Le Pen and Marine Le Pen* (Switzerland: Springer, 2017), 55.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 55

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, 41.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, 43.

delinquency rates. Moreover, as James Shields claims, “French citizens feared that immigrants from Northern Africa would be incapable of adapting to French culture.”<sup>115</sup>

Third, the economic crisis in the late 1970s and 1980s generated a discontentment in many voters because of its intensity and duration. To stimulate the economy, François Mitterrand authorized the nationalization of several banks and industries, created jobs in the public sector, offered loans to companies, and raised wages and welfare benefits.<sup>116</sup> However, the rise of the wages by the French’s companies reduced its profit and, consequently, its capacity to invest and to create jobs. As a result, not only these policies created a deficit in the government budget, but also increased unemployment, aggravating the voters’ dissatisfaction. In this scenario of dissatisfaction, the FN found an opportunity to propagate its new image, which was based on immigration and security issues.

By the late 1990s, the party focused on the issue of law and order, particularly on how immigrants contributed to the rise of crimes in France. Indeed, the Front National blames the foreigner for the crimes that were happening in and around urban areas. By doing so, the party constructed an immigrant that is dangerous which reinforces the idea that immigrants are criminals, arousing popular concerns about immigration and their place in French society. In fact, Pascal Perrineau claims that “the invention of the ‘diabolic nature’ of the North African immigrant has demonstrated the movement’s incredible political astuteness in recognizing that the French have still not resolved the problem of the painful collective memory of the Algerian

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<sup>115</sup> Daniel Stockemer, *The Front National in France: Continuity and Change Under Jean-Marie Le Pen and Marine Le Pen* (Switzerland: Springer, 2017), 43.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, 14

War.”<sup>117</sup> However, linking immigration to crime does not match reality. As Gerard Fuchs analyzes, “the problem is economic, with criminality rates highest among the unemployed or underemployed.”<sup>118</sup>

Moreover, linking immigration to crime illustrates the influence that the Front National exerts in France. This influence has created concerns with issues that may not reflect reality. As Fuchs concludes, “I mean they [the Front National and radical right parties] have played a great role in putting security discussions in the front of the newspaper. And for a while at the beginning of high unemployment rates, the Front National was saying just throw out foreign people and the problem will be solved.”<sup>119</sup> Indeed, as Philip Davies claims, “the party has referred to the problem of immigrants in France as *Libanisation*”.<sup>120</sup> This *libanisation* assumes a divided France in which its majority and minority are in constant conflict within themselves and with the nation.

Moreover, according to the FN, French society is oppressed by the European Union (EU) and economic globalization. In this rhetoric, as Paul Hainsworth analyzes, the FN adopts an ethnocentric worldview that relies on a nation that should be exclusive for those that have the same national identity - ethnicity, culture, religion, and history.<sup>121</sup> This ethnocentric view of the world is then transformed into a xenophobic discourse that blames foreigners and immigrants for all the current problems French society faces. These social problems include the rise in

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<sup>117</sup> Michelle Hale Williams, *The Impact of Radical Right-Wing Parties in West European Democracies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 98.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>121</sup> Daniel Stockemer, *The Front National in France: Continuity and Change Under Jean-Marie Le Pen and Marine Le Pen* (Switzerland: Springer, 2017), 10.

unemployment, high inflation, the precarization of public security, and the collapse of the welfare system. In this sense, to the FN, national preference should be incorporated to all programs in which these programs would only benefit citizens whose parents were born in France. Currently, the FN radicalizes the “Other” – that is, those whose parents were not born in France. In focusing on immigration, the party was able to define a political consent, which created the notion that nationality defines identity. Thus, placing French population against ‘immigrants’ because with their different religion and nationality they threaten the nation’s identity and citizens.

### **3.1 The Front National: from Jean-Marie Le Pen to Marine Le Pen**

The Front National (FN) was created in 1972 to oppose the national right and represent the ‘true right wing’ of France. As a traditional radical right-wing party, the FN placed immigration at the center of its policy proposals, and discourses. That is, any social and economic issues – public insecurity, loss of national identity, sovereignty, criminality, and high unemployment – were linked with immigration.

In its 2007 programme, the party used “facts” to demonstrate how much immigration harms the country. These facts include that France was spending annually 60 billion Euro with immigrants; foreigners composed 70% of the individuals that were incarcerated; 95% of foreigners were admitted to France without jobs; and 50% of welfare benefits went to foreigners.<sup>122</sup> In addition, these “facts” about immigration allowed the party to create a platform that blamed immigration for public and social insecurities, loss of national identity, and unemployment. For example, in the 2007 presidential programme, as Daniel Stockemer points

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<sup>122</sup> *Le Front National 2007*: 10

out, the FN wrote, “the overrepresentation of immigrants in crime and criminality is a fact”<sup>123</sup>. In addition, the party claimed that not only crimes against white French people have multiplied but also these crimes are neither documented by public authorities (police and politicians) nor discussed in politics and society. As a result, the FN claims that the eradication of insecurity and criminality will be only possible once they incorporate a policy that would not tolerate the atrocities committed by immigrants.

As mentioned earlier, the FN connected immigration to any social issue, including the failure of the social welfare system. According to the party, foreign nationals exploited the social benefits provided by the French state due to their countries lack of social benefits. As Daniel Stockemer reports, “to the FN massive immigration triggered a deficit in social security and an increase in expenditures on healthcare and pensions.”<sup>124</sup> According to the party, to fund the immigrant (legal and illegal), the government increases its expenditures, which burdens the common French with taxation. To alleviate this pressure off the French system and its citizens, the FN suggested that social benefits should be exclusive to the French citizens, suppressing social benefits for non-nationals.

Throughout the late 2000s, this suggestion was promoted under the slogan of “national preference”. Indeed, in an official document, the FN states that *la preference nationale* should be granted to French nationals in housing, social benefits and public sector jobs.<sup>125</sup> Although in its 2007 official programme the rise of unemployment was only connected with immigration

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<sup>123</sup> *Le Front National* 2007: 13.

<sup>124</sup> Daniel Stockemer, *The Front National in France : Continuity and Change Under Jean-Marie Le Pen and Marine Le Pen* (Switzerland: Springer, 2017), 108.

<sup>125</sup> *Le National Front* 2007: 53

indirectly, the FN still stated that, “massive and uncontrolled immigrations takes more than 1 million jobs away from the French and severely punishes our economy by imposing costs of over 300 billion francs”.<sup>126</sup> Also, the FN under Jean-Marie Le Pen resorts to globalization and Europeanization to generate fear and concerns among the French population. As Daniel Stockemer and LaMongtagne observe, “in the FN’s view, immigration, Europeanization, and the spread of neoliberal ideology undermined France’s national identity.”<sup>127</sup>

As illustrated above, immigration remained the central issue in the FN’s programme. However, in the FN 2007 programme, the party adopted a scientific tone and rhetoric rather than a populist one. For example, the party showed through estimation how much it would spend to implement any of its policy proposal. In addition, in its attempt to distance itself from a populist rhetoric, the party barely attacked the political elites in its 2007 electoral programme. In fact, the only anti-elitist aspect in the 2007 electoral programme was the FN’s rejection of the European Union, multinational corporations, and international banks. The party repudiated these institutions because they threatened France economically, socially, and culturally.

With Jean-Marie Le Pen’s retirement in 2011, an internal conflict emerged between those that favored tradition and conservatism and those that favored the modernization of the party, i.e., Marine Le Pen’s supporters. With her victory, Marine Le Pen transformed the party image into a populist one through the *dédiabolisation* of the FN. This *dédiabolisation*, inspired by *nationaux-révolutionnaires*, propelled the FN to embark on an ideological turn which combined the struggle against capitalism with a strong nationalism. To attract the working class and the

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<sup>126</sup> *Le Front National* 2006. *Programme Fraternité – Emploi*. [http://www.frontnadic\\_frater\\_emploi.php](http://www.frontnadic_frater_emploi.php)

<sup>127</sup> Daniel Stockemer, *The Front National in France: Continuity and Change Under Jean-Marie Le Pen and Marine Le Pen* (Switzerland: Springer, 2017), 110.

classical right-wing electorates, this strong nationalism combined social and conservative values which helped the FN to benefit from the existing gap between right and far-right positions.

By rebranding the party, Marine Le Pen successfully improved the party's image to a fragment of the French population. Indeed, the polls conducted by TNS-Sofres demonstrated that not only less people were perceiving the FN as a dangerous party, but also more people were recognizing the FN as "a party like the others". The "new" FN experienced a political revival and became more respectful to the French population.

Since Marine Le Pen became the party's president, the party's message and new programme reassumed a populist tone and rhetoric. First, Marine Le Pen is presented as being the savior of the nation, and she personifies what the common people want. In fact, as Daniel Stockemer notes, by adopting the title "My Project, for France and for the French people, and Marine Le Pen, the voice of the people, the spirit of France" the party reinforced these ideas.<sup>128</sup> Also, Marine Le Pen is presented as an alternative to the corrupt French elites; she will change French political system, and strengthen French values, and national and cultural identities.

To strengthen Marine Le Pen's position as the savior of the country, the party focused its campaign on the lower and working-class people who are more likely to feel that internal and external political developments jeopardize their rights, jobs, and social benefits. To captivate the masses, the programme presented transparent, simple and straightforward solutions to the greatest concerns of the lower and working-classes. To persuade the popular masses, the 2012 FN programme, under Marine Le Pen, proposed populist measures, including higher salaries

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<sup>128</sup> Daniel Stockemer, *The Front National in France: Continuity and Change Under Jean-Marie Le Pen and Marine Le Pen* (Switzerland: Springer, 2017), 118.

and pensions, the nationalization of the country's economy with no external interference, and penalizing those that are abusing the country socially and economically.

Immigration, the primary leitmotif in Jean-Marie Le Pen's platform, gains a less prominent position under Marine Le Pen. Nevertheless, immigration still remains an important issue to the party. As such, the FN advocates that French nation can only exist as an integrated community and system once French people developed a sense of solidarity amongst themselves. However, this national community and system exclude foreigners because they are destroying French's economy and society. In this sense, the FN still promotes a chauvinistic welfare position which advocates for two policies. First, all pensions for foreigners should be reserved by those who have at least 10 years of working experience. Second, if the parents are not French nationals, all family benefits should be suppressed.

Furthermore, the 2012 programme maintained three aspects of the traditional FN's proposal. First, all illegal immigrants should be expelled. Second, citizenship should be given only to those with parents that were born in the country. Third, regulations dealing with immigrants should be more rigorous. These aspects were maintained due to the party's strong nationalism. The programme also contained that *la préférence nationale* should be applied in all sectors of social life, and that any racism committed against Caucasian citizens should be punished harshly.

*Laïcité* and its notions were included in the FN's programme since Marine Le Pen assumed the party's presidency. *Laïcité* permits the FN to oppose affirmative programmes and communitarianism. In addition, the party condemns the growing presence of Islam in France, because to the party, Islam cannot separate religious and political life thus Islam is a dangerous



religion. Hence, as Dimitri Almeida claims, “the FN instrumentalizes the republican term *laïcité* to oppose all forms of community other than the nation.”<sup>129</sup>

Furthermore, as Daniel Stockemer suggests that “throughout its programme, the party tries to capitalize on the latent social and cultural turmoil and the widespread feeling of dislocation within the French population.”<sup>130</sup> Also, the party blames three institutions for the deterioration of France’s economy and society: the European Union and the Euro, the international banks and financial institutions, and the political, social, and cultural elites.

According to Daniel Stockemer, to the FN, the Euro promotes the drastic increase of prices, unemployment, outsourcing, and public debt, not delivering any of its promises in the 10 years of its existence.<sup>131</sup> Due to its suffocating effect on France, international banks, financial institutions and their domination also deteriorate France’s economy and society. According to the FN, France will only be liberated from this domination once the franc is reestablished, and France will again control its own finances and monetary policies.<sup>132</sup> The FN perceives the France’s elites – be it, political, social, and cultural – as the third culprit. For instance, Marine Le Pen claims that France’s public finance crisis was caused by the elites and their lifestyle. Thus, to restore the public finance, Marine Le Pen promises to restrain the benefits of the French political elites, especially those that originate from grand expenses and overindulgent reimbursement.

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<sup>129</sup> Daniel Stockemer, *The Front National in France: Continuity and Change Under Jean-Marie Le Pen and Marine Le Pen* (Switzerland: Springer, 2017), 123.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

Also, she claims that the corrupt members of both major parties drain France's public finances for their own personal gain.

Equally important, the FN programme, under Marine Le Pen, suggests that the current regime is in crisis, thus it needs to be replaced. As Daniel Stockemer analyzes, “semantically, the programme contains the words “rupture” and “break-up” on several occasions”<sup>133</sup>, to indicate that the party seeks to transform the current regime with its liberal values into a populist democracy.<sup>134</sup> Also, when analyzing the FN rhetorical device, one notices its reliance on war language. For instance, in the programme, the party emphasizes that French citizens will be protected from multinational corporations, international institutions, the elites, and immigration. Put differently, the party will combat those that are abusing French nationals socially, economically, and politically. As Daniel Stockemer concludes, “this strong language reinforces the message that the party is “at war” with the system and the actors that represent it.”<sup>135</sup>

In addition, the FN advocates for a strong nationalism and ethnocentrism. To the party, the state, as an organization, regulates all aspects of life. Thus, blood, ethnicity, culture, and religion should be the same among those that compose the state. Also, as Daniel Stockemer explains, “to glorify the uniting force of French identity, the FN still relies on a populist language.”<sup>136</sup> In resorting to a populist language, the party not only distances itself from the corrupt elite and parties but also identifies itself as the flipside of the current political status quo.

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<sup>133</sup> Daniel Stockemer, *The Front National in France: Continuity and Change Under Jean-Marie Le Pen and Marine Le Pen* (Switzerland: Springer, 2017), 34.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid, 34.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid, 34.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid, 35.

Furthermore, the FN resorts to an “us versus them” mentality. The FN not only demands the immediate expulsion of illegal immigrants and the interruption of massive immigration but also appeals to the French nationals, urging their unification to combat legal and illegal immigration. As Louis Alito comments, “immigration is further associated with an “alarming communitarianism” and is responsible for “the crisis of assimilation” in France.”<sup>137</sup>

Another element, which affirms the party’s populist standpoint, is how the FN and its members redefine racism and xenophobia to fit their political interests. To them, French citizens are the victims of racism and xenophobia, as Bruno Gollnisch describes “*le racism anti-blanc, anti-chrétien et anti-français* as the most common form of racism on French soil.”<sup>138</sup>

Regardless of its organizational and institutional challenges, in the past two decades, the party achieved a central position in the national politics. However, how much did the Front National change from its creation to Marine Le Pen’s ascension? As Dominique Reynie analyzes, Marine Le Pen has transformed the FN into an ethno-socialist party.<sup>139</sup> The party under Marine Le Pen differs from the one under Jean Marie Le Pen in three aspects. Firstly, under Marine Le Pen the party reassumed its populist identity. Secondly, apart from anti-Islam discourses, Marine Le Pen has softened the party’s language, in which racist and anti-Semitic discourses are neither used nor are allowed. Although Marine Le Pen remained loyal to the FN’s ideological core in changing how the party propagates its message she successfully improved the image of the party. In doing so, Marine Le Pen has managed to eliminate parts of its negative

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<sup>137</sup> Daniel Stockemer, *The Front National in France: Continuity and Change Under Jean-Marie Le Pen and Marine Le Pen* (Switzerland: Springer, 2017), 130.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid, 129.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 138.

image and be accepted into the mainstream society. Indeed, as reported by an opinion poll issued in *Le Figaro*, over 50% of the population perceives the FN as a party like any other.<sup>140</sup>

Thirdly, to advocate for an ethnocentrism *à la Française*, the FN claims that in defending sovereignty and *laïcité*, the party also defends the Republic and its traditions. In fact, as Brigitte Beauzamy claims, by promoting its anti-Islam rhetoric and propaganda, “the party instrumentalizes the meaning of secularism or *laïcité*.”<sup>141</sup> For example, to Marine Le Pen, because secularism separates religion from politics, private from public life, it guarantees equal rights to all individuals and that the nation remains one and indivisible. In addition, as James Shields observes, when Marine Le Pen affirms that Muslims and their symbols are occupying France, she embeds her racism and anti-Muslim feelings, with a republican discourse that only wants to protect France’s secularism.<sup>142</sup>

To sum up, due to its less than prominent participation in French politics, the FN juxtaposes itself against mainstream politics and the political system. As a result, the party distances itself from the corrupt elite and system which facilitates its placement as an alternative for the current political system. Using nationalism as a prerogative, the party advocates for a democracy that resorts to populist ideas to create a system and a government that will represent French nationals by assembling them in a national community and system. To reinforce this representation, Marine Le Pen gains a central position in the party’s programme, campaign, and propaganda; she embodies the popular will of the people. Also, the FN aims to strengthen the

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<sup>140</sup> Le Figaro. 2015. *Le FN, un parti comme les autres pour 54 pourcent des Français*. <http://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2011/03/28/01016-20110328ARTFIG00545-le-fn-un-parti-comme-les-autres-pour-54-des-francais.php>

<sup>141</sup> Daniel Stockemer, *The Front National in France: Continuity and Change Under Jean-Marie Le Pen and Marine Le Pen* (Switzerland: Springer, 2017), 143.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid*, 143.

police and judicial system, and to identify those that are harming and deteriorating France's society, politics, and culture. In recommending radical policies to solve the immigration issue, the precarization of public security, and the social and cultural crisis, the FN distances itself from the current French system and adopts a speech that presents the party as the only one capable of saving France.

### **3.2 The Front National and the Construction of Otherness**

As religious symbols become more visible in Western societies, a religious otherness, which must not only be opposed but also feared, is constructed and reinforced in these societies. Due to the unintelligibility of religion to European secular publics, Europe perceives Muslim religious practices as inadequate and threatening to liberal democracies. In this context, by presupposing that secularism defends core European values, the integration of an individual's religious identity not only gains complexity but also becomes a problem to European societies. In this sense, secularism determines who can be integrated and who cannot, and regulates social life. As Valerie Amiraux claims, "secularism is conflated with, or at least seen as interwoven with, national identity as recent statements by the French leaders of the Front National have shown".<sup>143</sup>

Since the end of the 1980s, EU secular public spaces have assumed a radical perspective on the growing visibility of Muslims. In fact, as intolerance towards Muslims religiosity increases, Muslims are not perceived as a cultural, social, and political problem but as a disease. In this context, the terms Muslim, and Islam illustrate an all-encompassing category without referring to anything precisely defined.

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<sup>143</sup> V. Amiraux, "Burqa Bashing: Does Religion Stand for Race in the EU?" 2011, 5.

Similar to gender or ethnicity, religion is often defined as part of a symbolic reality with no representative role in people's social life. However, as Valerie Amiraux states, "it would be misleading to continue to ignore and to some extent deny the role of religion in people's social life."<sup>144</sup> Ignoring or denying the role of religion in people's social life is misleading because religion allocates social value to people. In this context, religion is not only symbolic, it entails material translations.

Like ethnicity, race or gender, religions construct three things. First, religions construct different ways of identifying with a community. Second, they create hierarchy based on adherence to certain value. Third, they restrict access to certain social/public goods, such as healthcare, job market, social housing, and so on. As a set of social relations, religion, gender and ethnicity coproduce the social inequalities that permeates the divided and divisive European societies.

Religion effectively delineates and reproduces social division. When analyzing Europe understanding of religion, one notices that religion and ethnicity intertwine because religion embodies a symbolic reality. As a result, to European societies nationality is what makes Muslim communities different not their religion heterogeneity. As Valerie Amiraux concludes, "religious heterogeneity remains largely underemphasized/absent, principally because it would bring the observer close to what we, as 'modern enlightened secular citizens', want to keep at a distance".<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> V. Amiraux, "*Burqa Bashing: Does Religion Stand for Race in the EU?*" 2011, 6.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid, 6.

When dealing with Muslims, a question emerges: are they something more (or something less) than an ethnic minority? In France, for instance, religion was never present in the discussions of what Muslims can and cannot do. Or, perhaps, religion was present but not as a system of beliefs that affects and signifies one's life. In the French context secularism as a political achievement has conditioned the expectation of religion to be considered only in terms of its institutional manifestation, rather than as practice or experience. That is, as Ammerman explains, "French secularism do not consider the "everyday religion" performed through everyday accomplishments."<sup>146</sup> Understanding religious' practices and beliefs as a system that provides meaning and guide people's life experience would mean focusing on the various ways in which people can practice their beliefs in their daily activities. Also, it would mean considering how religion influences other parts of society. However, every attempt to limit religious symbols in public spaces reveals the necessity of secular contexts to restrict visible religious practices.

Furthermore, EU narratives shape and reinforce the idea of us (Western civilization) against them (Muslims). In this sense, Muslims in particular and Islam in general represent everything that is bad, disloyal, and extreme in Western societies. This representation of Muslims and Islam sustains the animosity towards Muslims making them 'suspect citizens', and Islam 'a bad thing'. In the French context, for instance, a stereotypical narrative not only frames what 'being Muslim' is, but also determines how Muslims experience and live their life. In these stereotypical notions, Muslims live in a distinctive way that separates them from mainstream

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<sup>146</sup> V. Amiraux, "*Burqa Bashing: Does Religion Stand for Race in the EU?*" 2011, 6

society. As a result, what alienates them is not the host society's negative perceptions and discriminatory practices but their cultural and religious isolation.

In the current discussion involving Islam and Muslims, an inherent subjectivity exists in Western European interpretations of religion because most of European citizens and political elites cannot comprehend religion. This incomprehensibility enables that a cultural line is drawn between groups of citizens or populations, distinguishing desirable citizens from undesirable ones.

Furthermore, in Europe, particularly in France, anti-Muslim rhetoric is being institutionalized by the media, public figures, and political authorities. More precisely, public hostility to Muslim visibility in France has unfortunately achieved legitimacy. This legitimacy is possible because of the reliance on euphemism to explain the reality of Islamophobia and discrimination of Muslims by major political figures and TV personalities. In doing so, Islamophobia and discrimination of Muslims do not exist because evidence to support these phenomena is insufficient.

The diffusion of explicitly racist statements not only normalize racist discourse in the country, but also integrate them to the national public discourse. For instance, when discussing the issue of praying in the streets, Marine Le Pen recently compared this Muslims practice to the German occupation of France during the Second World War. The FN positioning against the so-called "Islamization of France" is not new, however, the novelty is how the party has incorporated *laïcité* and its notion in its discourse. To the FN, *laïcité* must be defended and preserved because it represents a nation value that France should fight for.



Due to only recognizing the national community as legitimate, the assimilationist French tradition has always been perceived as an opposing model in terms of managing diversity. Indeed, this assimilationist tradition entitles different legal practices of discrimination when dealing with hostile feelings towards Muslims (Islamophobia). France's political philosophy of integration, equality and secularity attributes to religion a denominational freedom that relies on the notion that religion is private, intimate, and individual. In this sense, in regard to their private space, people are free to believe in whatever they want. However, in their public space, they are not as free, because the public space disregards individual liberty and prescribe religion practices to one's private life and intimate choices.

In the 1990s and 2000s, due to religion's intolerance and illiberalism, religion became an issue and a threat to Europe's national identity. This new perception of religion allowed the Front Nation to portray immigration and Islam as an issue and a threat to France's nation and identity thus creating a climate of fear and social anxieties on immigration and Islam. Thus, to typify behaviors considered hostile to the French republic not only a new iconography of fear is emerging in France, but also Muslim male represents the ultimate enemy and Muslim female the ultimate "other".

The construction of Islam as a threat by the media and the political parties triggered and facilitated Islamophobic acts that contributed to the sense of insecurity in French community. In this context, as Annie Benveniste and Etienne Pingaud claim, "the FN rhetoric has profoundly changed the nature of public speeches and the face of 'the other' in which Islam has become the main opponent."<sup>147</sup> Islam inhibits one's nation to socially evolve because of its conservative

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<sup>147</sup> Gabriella Lazaridis, Giovanna Campani, and Annie Benveniste, *The Rise of the Far Right in Europe: Populist Shifts and "Othering"* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 63.

stances regarding sexual orientation and gender. To the FN, ‘Muslims’ are misogynous and ignorant to the new social condition of women. In fact, how Muslim women are treated by Muslim men in particular and Islam in general remains one of the main arguments that support anti-Islam feelings, which focus mainly on the issue of headscarves.

Furthermore, due to its male domination, Islam promotes violent social relations, which are ingrained in this religion. This ingrained violence in Muslim religion reinforces the argument that Islam societies are antiquated, uncivilized, and barbaric, when compared to the civilized, and developed Western ones.<sup>148</sup> This perspective allows FN and far-right movements to justify their anti-Islam position, because they are defending modern society against the archaic assault of Islam on France and on Europe, in general.

Given all these points, the negative stereotype of Islam is not the only reason why the majority of the French people hate and fear Muslims and of why the FN has been gaining public support because of its anti-Islam and anti-Muslim agenda. In fact, as Gilles Kepel defends, “the increase of Islam’s visibility in France has contributed to the spread of feelings of insecurity in the face of this new social area.”<sup>149</sup> In addition, by prohibiting the publication of statistics about religion, the French officials are preventing that French citizens are aware of its Muslims population, which facilitates the dissemination of feelings of insecurity towards Muslim citizens. In this circumstance, a demographic argument emerged that French population will change drastically spreading fear among Caucasian natives. This drastic change entails the entire reconfiguration of French population in which not only French culture and religious values will

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<sup>148</sup> Gabriella Lazaridis, Giovanna Campani, and Annie Benveniste, *The Rise of the Far Right in Europe: Populist Shifts and “Othering”* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 72.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid*, 73.

be replaced by new ones but also the Caucasian “natives” will cease to exist due to the excessive arrival of immigrants. In this context, racist speeches and activities are targeting Muslims which foment Islamophobia in France.

### 3.3 Conclusion

Crises have always been present in France. However, it was in the last 10 years, with its economic, political, and cultural and identity crises, that a propitious environment, that would benefit an anti-system party such as the Front National, was created. First, the economic crisis has increased unemployment rates and has weakened the state’s finance by causing public debt. Second, the political crisis caused not only by internal sources – the political elites – but also by external ones – the European Union, the Euro, and the refugee crisis. Third, as Muslim population in France seems to be increasing, fears towards Muslims increase as well contributing and fomenting a sense that France’s culture and identity is in danger. However, these crises are not the only reason that explain the electoral rise of the FN, especially when considering its brutal loss in the 2016 Presidential elections.

According to Daniel Stockemer, “the success of a party such as the FN depends on agency. That is, the party’s capacity to place its message, create demand for its platform, and respond to latent demand for action within the population.”<sup>150</sup> Since 2011, with Marine Le Pen in charge, the FN has achieved unseen electoral and non-electoral victories. In addition, with the incorporation of sovereignty and *laïcité* (republican concepts) in its programme, Marine Le Pen and her party can attack both Europe or its union, and Islam, because they are only protecting French republic and its traditional values. To gain respectability in the mainstream society and to

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<sup>150</sup> Daniel Stockemer, *The Front National in France: Continuity and Change Under Jean-Marie Le Pen and Marine Le Pen* (Switzerland: Springer, 2017), 234.

avoid public scandals, Marine Le Pen has stopped anti-Semitism discourses. As Daniel Stockemer analyzes, when it comes to membership, “the deradicalization strategy has worked because rather than being perceived as the devil at the fringes, the FN has become a catch-all party”.<sup>151</sup>

The party succeeded in attracting members from all backgrounds in which nationalist sentiments unite them all. That is, regardless of their gender, age, education, and social and political classes the FN’s voters and members fear that France’s sovereignty, identity, culture, and values might be compromised by foreigners, illegal immigrants, and the corrupt elite. In addition, they fear that in compromising its republican traditional values, France might be submerged and ruined by a different identity, culture and values. Thus, as Daniel Stockemer concludes, “the FN’s ideas can spread to a wide variety of individuals, if presented in the ‘right’ way at the ‘right’ time by the “right” person.”<sup>152</sup>

However, the question is why then the party did not win? First, although the FN has succeeded in ameliorating its public opinion, in attracting new members, and in achieving electoral success, to a huge portion of the population the FN remains a marginal party. In fact, some FN’s members do not reveal their engagement with the party to avoid discrimination and negative societal reactions. Changing this stigma would depend on the willingness of the party’s leader to change drastically the FN’s ideology and programme.

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<sup>151</sup> Daniel Stockemer, *The Front National in France: Continuity and Change Under Jean-Marie Le Pen and Marine Le Pen* (Switzerland: Springer, 2017), 234.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid*, 240.

Second, the FN is unable to diversify its voters; indeed, the party's electoral poll consists of dissatisfied individuals with little or no education and from the working-class. As Daniel Stockemer observes, "these cohorts will likely not grow because education levels in France will increase rather than decrease in the years and decades to come."<sup>153</sup> As a result, the number of dissatisfied individuals with little or no education will decline, precluding the FN's strategy to capitalize on the concerns of the working-class electorate to gain public support and votes. Third, inherent and structural contradictions exist in the FN's programme. To attract conservative individuals, the party advocates for authoritarianism, nationalism, and social conservatism. However, to attract the working-class electorate, it defends an interventionist state that favors and benefits only those that are considered the 'real' French men and women. At present, French citizens are not noticing these contradictions but once the current crises weaken, these contradictions will become evident, jeopardizing the party's new-found success.

Fourth, to attract conservative individuals the party has changed its image, and how it communicates its messages. However, to conservative individuals many of the party's propositions are still too extreme, ascribing a radical characteristic to the party. For example, 85% of conservative electorate support that people that committed petty crime should be punished harshly, but only 23% are in favor of death penalty. Fifth, as Daniel Stockemer points out, "the FN has no potential political allies, representation and governing experience."<sup>154</sup> For instance, in the 2016 presidential elections, despite its success in the first round, the FN could not capitalize on this success and was unsuccessful in the second round.

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<sup>153</sup> Daniel Stockemer, *The Front National in France: Continuity and Change Under Jean-Marie Le Pen and Marine Le Pen* (Switzerland: Springer, 2017), 95.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid*, 96.

Sixth, the FN requires a more profound modernization of its structures. Although the party's efforts to professionalize itself, it still has archaic structures, which are not beneficial to any party that aims to govern a country. Marine Le Pen decides everything that happens in the party, from appointing people to important positions in the party, to determining the party's doctrine, ideology and programme. In addition, Marine Le Pen expels those who oppose her or the party's doctrine, ideology and programme. It is noticeable that Marine Le Pen has now the support and admiration of the party's members but being an autocratic leader can be dangerous if he/she wants to maintain his or her power and influence. As Barbara Geddes and Milan Svobik claim, "if the autocratic cannot satisfy his or her followers, members of the elite may start to look for an alternative."<sup>155</sup>

All this is not to say that the FN will not continue influencing French politics and society, especially when considering the party's ability to capitalize on the multiple crises that the country faces. Thus, as long as these crises linger, a beneficial environment will guarantee that the FN continue to prosper and to exert influence on French politics and society. The current refugee crisis might generate further fear in France allowing the FN not only to capitalize on this fear to recruit followers but also to foment anti-immigrant and anti-Islam feelings, engendering further xenophobia and Islamophobia. Nevertheless, as Daniel Stockemer concludes, "even if the structural environment remains beneficial, the FN, in its current composition, has likely reached out to as many people as it can."<sup>156</sup> As a result, when analyzing the Front National, one notices an improbability for the party to expand its social appeal augmenting its current success.

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<sup>155</sup> Daniel Stockemer, *The Front National in France: Continuity and Change Under Jean-Marie Le Pen and Marine Le Pen* (Switzerland: Springer, 2017), 97.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

## Chapter 4 – France

In contemporary France, any discussions of immigration and immigrants lead to a racial discussion, in which Algerians represent the immigrants. According to Hafid Gafaiti and Driss Maghraoui, the marked intolerance toward North Africans in a nation proud of its history of tolerance arises from three sources.<sup>157</sup> First, this intolerance arises from the bitter and unresolved legacy of the Algerian War. Second, it stems from questions over the place of Islam in the republic. Third, it emerges from the enduring contradiction between universalism and humanism – two important foundational concepts of contemporary France.

In recent years, the issue of immigration construed an essential feature of French identity. Also, this issue functions as a central element in the cultural and political debate in modern France. As the France's economy evolved in the postwar period and decolonization took place, what defined the immigrant in France also changed, ascribing new categories to this member of French society.

Most postcolonial discourses emphasize the fact that French universalism promotes particularism, opposing difference and diversity. In this perspective, as Hafid Gafaiti claims “universalism and particularism form a metadiscourse that encompasses them”.<sup>158</sup> In fact, in this metadiscourse, universalism and particularism define the true European men and women, which differentiate the Western civilization from the rest, focusing on their differences and distinctiveness.

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<sup>157</sup> Georges Van Den Abbele and Tyler Stovall, ed., *French Civilization and its Discontents: Nationalism, Colonialism, Race*. Lexington Books (Oxford, 2003), 187

<sup>158</sup> Ibid, 192

In “Writing ‘Race’ and the Difference It Makes”, Henry Louis Gates Jr explains that throughout the eighteenth-century Europeans sought to determine if Africans could produce literary works.<sup>159</sup> For Europeans, to be considered human, one must know how to produce literary work; as such African could only be considered humans after producing literary work. If, according to the Eurocentrist classification of species, Africans could not produce formal thoughts and aesthetic works, then they were naturally destined to slavery. So, the Enlightenment was characterized not only by its reliance on man’s ability to reason, but also its instrumentality.

Accordingly, this systematization of all human knowledge created two important conditions for the colonial enterprise.<sup>160</sup> First, it constituted the basis of modern Western thought and ideology. Second, it facilitated the construction of an ethnic discourse and colonial ideology, in which the idea of universalism founded France’s interpretations of race. In fact, a structural link exists between the eighteenth-century universalist ideal and the Enlightenment’s racist classification that justifies the colonial enterprise. Consequently, this philosophical perspective shaped largely the European world and facilitated the association of the issue of immigration in France with its colonial past. As Etienne Balibar claims,

it is a question of the “internal liaison” that was established between the notions of Mankind, the Human species, of the cultural progress of Mankind, and of the anthropological ‘prejudices’ concerning races or the natural bases of slavery. It is a question of the very notion of race, whose modern meaning dates from the Enlightenment – that great blossoming of universalism – and affects its development in return: not in a tangential way, external to its ‘essence’, but intrinsically.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Georges Van Den Abbele and Tyler Stovall, ed., *French Civilization and its Discontents: Nationalism, Colonialism, Race*. Lexington Books (Oxford, 2003), 192.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid, 193.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid, 193.



From this perspective, racism is present and ingrained in all modern societies. Also, a dividing line between universalism and racism is hard to identify. In fact, it is not possible to separate them into two distinctive ideologies; that is, it is not possible to identify all ideas that could be only considered as universalists and all ideas that could be only considered as racist. Thus, as Hafid Gafaiti concludes, “universalism and racism are determined opposites, which means that each one affects the other from within.”<sup>162</sup>

Furthermore, racism and universalism were, and still are, constituted by the same historical transformations. Indeed, they are not two distinctive essences because nationalism, which racism is constitutive, constitutes the foundational basis of modern states. When analysing France, one notices that this is certainly true because French nationalism developed at the same time France was defeated in 1871 by the Germans and began to expand its colonial Empire.

Once the colonization of North Africa began, France established a distinction between the French and the non-French. In 1830, following the Algeria’s conquest, France created a system of apartheid by establishing different types of subjects. These types of subjects were: the colons, the Jews, and the Algerians designated as “*indigènes*” or “*musulmans*”. Also, France established an ethnic distinction among the colonized. The ethnic classification and the racist categorization affected the Arabs and the Berbers, the two most important ethnic groups in North Africa, in two ways. First, it reproduced the classification of Eurocentric discourse on peoples and race. Second, it contributed to France’s colonial project.

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<sup>162</sup> Georges Van Den Abbele and Tyler Stovall, ed., *French Civilization and its Discontents: Nationalism, Colonialism, Race*. Lexington Books (Oxford, 2003), 194.

To justify and develop their racist ideology, colonial ideologists distinguished Arabs and Berbers, an operation commonly known as the “Kabyle Myth.” By distinguishing Arabs and Berbers, France was able to colonize and establish its superiority over the North African people. In doing so, France could assert the continuity between Algeria and France as two parts of the same entity. As Tlemcani explains,

Arabs cannot be transformed whereas the Kabyles can be assimilated... Arabs are lazy, soft, slow...almost sad and fanatical. The Berber is hardworking, enterprising, practical ... and finally not very religious. Accordingly, “If we have one duty in Algeria, it is to combat Islam, our eternal enemy, in all its manifestations,” so as to Europeanize culturally the “moderate Moslem”; i.e., the Berbers of Greater Kabylia. Therefore, as Captain Carette concluded in 1848: “Kabylia... must in a few years become the most intelligent auxiliary of our enterprise and the most useful associate in our tasks.”<sup>163</sup>

As shown in the passage above, the central targets of this discourse were the so-called North African Arabs and Islam. In this context, Islam became a dark parenthesis that France had to destroy to renew and develop the process of civilization initiated by Rome. As Hafid Gafaiti observes, it is remarkable that throughout the colonial period and even today, most North Africans call the French, the Europeans in general, “romi” (singular) or “raoama” (plural), a designation indicative of the continuity that they, on their part, see between the Roman conquest and the French colonization.<sup>164</sup>

Furthermore, the assimilation of the concepts of “race” and religion constituted another essential aspect of the French colonial discourse. In this respect, one must realize that the civilizing mission was not a secular operation. Indeed, as Hafid Gafaiti claims, “the *mission*

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<sup>163</sup> Georges Van Den Abbele and Tyler Stovall, ed., *French Civilization and its Discontents: Nationalism, Colonialism, Race*. Lexington Books (Oxford, 2003), 198.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid*, 199.

*civilisatrice*, as a result of republican nationalism and Napoleonic imperialism, was a colonial enterprise and a religious crusade.”<sup>165</sup> In fact, the Church was responsible for educating the inhabitants of the colonies, providing medical help for them, and converting them.<sup>166</sup> For this reason, a total collaboration existed between the politicians, the military, and the missionaries.

This redistribution of power and territory benefited the French nation in the following ways.<sup>167</sup> First, it established a compromise with the still powerful Church institutions and the still important sensitivity of the French public over religious matters. Second, it constituted a significant alliance in the process of domination of the conquered people. In fact, a division of labor between the State and the Church was implemented to dominate the Algerians culturally and religiously. The cultural domination relied on the replacement of their educational system by the French school system – a fundamental instrument of promotion of the colonial ideology. The religious domination, promoted by Church’s actions, sought to fight and eradicate Islam from Algerian identity. Although the State and the Church had a relative influence on some Kabyle communities, both enterprises failed, because of Algerians’ resistance to colonialism, and to religious and cultural dominations.

In this respect, the inclusion in and exclusion from French community, which relies on the hierarchy and distinction between social or ethnic groups, derives from France’s colonial history. Indeed, throughout the nineteenth century, racism constituted the foundational basis in the development of France’s nationalism, in the metropole and the colonies. This ideology and

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<sup>165</sup> Georges Van Den Abbele and Tyler Stovall, ed., *French Civilization and its Discontents: Nationalism, Colonialism, Race*. Lexington Books (Oxford, 2003), 199.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid*, 199.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid*, 199.

its policies assumed different labels throughout the centuries, going from *universalism* in the eighteenth century, to *mission civilisatrice*, to *coopération technique et culturelle*. Currently, with its policy of “Francophonie”, the French government continues subtly this ideology and its policies.

Thus, the hostility towards North Africans commenced during colonial times and still lingers. As such, this hostility is structural, perceiving North African as Arabs and Muslims that are undesirable immigrants.<sup>168</sup> This continuity and the ongoing importance of this factor enable the systematic marginalization of Islamic communities. For instance, the debates about the structural impossibility of integration of the Muslim immigrants in France exist since the 1970s. Hence, it appears that, structurally, there is no difference between the nineteenth-century colonial discourse and the current views of Marine Le Pen or the majority of both the French political leaders and the French electors. In this respect, the marginalization of Islam represents the rejection by the French of multiculturalism in general and Arab-Muslim identities in particular.

#### **4.1 Nation, identity and immigration in France**

In France, the construction of the idea of nation is attached to the Revolution. In fact, the 1789 Revolution represented a turning point of the fundamental principles that constructed the identity of contemporary France. It was during the Revolution that new concepts of Man, reason, and freedom emerged. In this respect, Ernest Renan’s “*Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?*” constitutes the ideological discourse that was ingrained in this new mythological concept of the French nation.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Georges Van Den Abbele and Tyler Stovall, ed., *French Civilization and its Discontents: Nationalism, Colonialism, Race*. Lexington Books (Oxford, 2003), 200.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid, 195.

A nation is a soul, a spiritual principal. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form... The nation, like the individual, is the culmination of a long past of endeavours, sacrifice, and devotion. Of all cults, that of the ancestors is the most legitimate, for the ancestors have made us what we are (...) To have common glories in the past and to have common will in the present; to have performed great deeds together, to wish to perform still more – these are the essential conditions for being a people. (...) More valuable by far than common customs posts and frontiers conforming to strategic ideas is the fact of sharing, in the past, a glorious heritage and regrets, and of having, in the future, a shared programme to put into effect, or the fact of having suffered, enjoyed, and hoped together. These are the kinds of things that can be understood in spite of differences of race and language. I spoke just now of “having suffered together” and, indeed, suffering in common unifies more than joy does. Where national memories are concerned, griefs are of more value than triumphs, for they impose duties, and require common effort.<sup>170</sup>

This concept of nation proposed by Renan Ernest has been systematically adopted by intellectuals and political authorities. Also, this idea of nation precludes any acceptance of cultural diversity thus explaining and justifying French resistance to multiculturalism. Indeed, this classification has influenced the construction of French nationals and foreigners, creating a rigid dividing line between them. Thus, a foreigner can never truly be a French national. Also, as Hafid Gafaiti explains, “this concept still informs French laws and ideology and continues to justify the most anachronistic and racist discourses and immigration policies.”<sup>171</sup> As mentioned earlier, to justify their colonial policies, an ethnic discourse was developed by French authorities. This discourse defined North African immigrants within France. This representation considered them French subjects, but the law would not apply to them in the way it applied to French citizens and they would not benefit from equal rights.

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<sup>170</sup> Georges Van Den Abbele and Tyler Stovall, ed., *French Civilization and its Discontents: Nationalism, Colonialism, Race*. Lexington Books (Oxford, 2003), 195.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid*, 196.

Furthermore, immigration became, and still is, an issue in France because immigration challenges French society and its model at all levels: economic, political, philosophical, cultural, social, and religious. In fact, as Hafid Gafait suggests “it shakes the very epistemological and ideological foundations of universalism on which modern France constructed its identity.”<sup>172</sup> In this context, the racialization of the French discourse on immigrants in general and North African immigrants in particular relies on the colonial history of France, the economic context, and the combination of an ethnicity (Arab) with a religion (Muslim) that represents France’s absolute Other. In this respect, French universalism and republicanism conceal all the inherent asymmetries of France.

#### **4.2. The Issue of Immigration in France**

When analysing North African communities in France, one notices three aspects. First, they represent the largest non-European ethnic community in France. Second, their main characteristic is their religious affiliation; that is, these communities symbolize Islam. Third, the debate about North African immigration in France exposes the contradictory nature of the liberal democracy and its unifying values. According to Driss Maghraoui, “the symbolic association with Islam made the Maghrebian community subject to cultural stereotypes and racism at different levels of French society.”<sup>173</sup>

In this respect because immigrants from North Africa’s religious identity functioned as a racialized identity, the French state treated them “only as Muslim”. As Naomi Davidson claims, “the inscription of Islam on the very bodies of colonial (and later, postcolonial) immigrants

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<sup>172</sup> Georges Van Den Abbele and Tyler Stovall, ed., *French Civilization and its Discontents: Nationalism, Colonialism, Race*. Lexington Books (Oxford, 2003), 210.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid*, 215.

emerged from the French belief that Islam was a rigid and totalizing system filled with corporeal rituals that needed to be performed in certain kind of aesthetic spaces.”<sup>174</sup> Consequently, perceiving Islam in this manner reinforced the idea that Muslims could never be anything or anyone different than they are – that is, they could only be Muslim.

Thus, “Muslim”, in France, essentially represented difference as gender or skin color. In this respect, the idea of an innate and immutable Islam emerged. Both innateness and immutability of Muslim were possible because being Muslim signified being irrational, primitive and unassimilable. Due to this perception, a subjectivity was attributed to Muslims that embodied them with a particular identity, that is non-French citizen.

Furthermore, in France Islam was, and still is, perceived as a threat and as an enemy. As a result, fear and enmity construed what Islam was and was not and who Muslims were and were not. In this respect, French authorities and thinkers focused on the physicality of the religion. Therefore, as Naomi Davidson suggests, “what marked Muslims as irrevocably different from secular French subjects, in the eyes of French policy makers and intellectuals, was the French perception that this bodily discipline was part of a totalizing system that controlled all aspect of Muslim daily life.”<sup>175</sup> Also, to French authorities and thinkers, “the word ‘religion’ does not mean the same thing for Muslims as it does for us. The Islamic religion is a doctrine and religious rituals, an entire ensemble of customs and ways of living in society.”<sup>176</sup> Thus, the

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<sup>174</sup> Naomi Davidson, *Only Muslim: Embodying Islam in Twentieth-Century France*. (Cornell University Press, 2012), 2.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid,19

categorization of Islam by France relied on North African immigrants' Muslimness that represents their identities and ethnic/cultural/racial particularities.

Accordingly, French historian Jacques Fremaux explains that from the earliest day of the conquest, colonial policy in Algeria relied on the “conviction that Algeria had never been a state, nor the Algerians a nation.”<sup>177</sup> In other words, Algeria was a blank state whose territory was to be settled, political opponents were to be deported, and theories of urbanization, medicine, and hygiene were to be assessed. Also, as Naomi Davidson points out, “France’s insistence on Algeria as a “*tabula rasa*” justified the almost complete annihilation of Muslim sites and socio-religious structures.”<sup>178</sup> This annihilation policy sought to eliminate indigenous practices and to assimilate colonial subjects.

France and Algeria had a confrontational relationship inside and outside France. As Hafid Gafaïti analyses, “the defeat of France and the French imperial model – Algeria was supposed to be the first “*colonie de peuplement*” – contributed significantly to the representation of the North African immigrants and their descendants.”<sup>179</sup> In this representation, the place of birth of these descendants, which was France, did not mean their automatic inclusion, in fact, they were still referred as immigrants – “second generation”. In this context, North African immigrants were the savage, dangerous, and disloyal Arabs. As a result, in France, a process of singularization of the word *immigre* commenced in which North Africans represented the immigrant population of France. Thus, in France, the word *immigre* identified essentially the members of the North

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<sup>177</sup> Naomi Davidson, *Only Muslim: Embodying Islam in Twentieth-Century France*. (Cornell University Press, 2012), 8.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

<sup>179</sup> Georges Van Den Abbele and Tyler Stovall, ed., *French Civilization and its Discontents: Nationalism, Colonialism, Race*. Lexington Books (Oxford, 2003), 203.



African community. Indeed, as Hafid Gafait explains, “the other main groups, such as the immigrants of Spain and Portuguese origin, were progressively assimilated, becoming “invisible” in French terms.”<sup>180</sup>

Furthermore, this singularization facilitated the exclusion of North African immigrants, particularly Algerians, of French society. This new situation and status of immigrants excluded them and their children, designated as the second generation, exacerbating tensions within the French population and increasing racist discourse in the country. Also, it places the issue of immigration at the center of the political debate. Consequently, the issue of immigration, and the place of immigrants in French society urge France to first redefine the foundational aspects of its national and cultural identities to reconstruct an identity that would include all of its citizens. It is in this context that issues that lead to the French Revolution are still present in contemporary France. These issues relate to how France constructed its nation, citizenship, republicanism, and secularism.

### **4.3 The Republican Myth from Universality to Particularity**

Since 1989, when three school girls refused to remove their headscarves in class, the French state’s measures to manage its Muslim population was exposed by the headscarf affair. These measures ranged from exclusionary laws banning (*affaire of foulards*) to the establishment of inclusionary bodies to recognize Islam and Muslim. They also illustrated the fragmentary and unsettled nature of French republic secularism.

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<sup>180</sup> Georges Van Den Abbele and Tyler Stovall, ed., *French Civilization and its Discontents: Nationalism, Colonialism, Race*. Lexington Books (Oxford, 2003), 204.

Modern political power does not always seek to eradicate difference; in fact, in order to better administer differences, modern political power disaggregates subjective population through institutionalized differences. Accordingly, as Mayanthi Fernando analyses, liberal states govern minorities and reinforce national identity and state sovereignty through exclusionary and inclusionary policies.<sup>181</sup>

Secularism, in France and elsewhere, entails three overlapping phenomena: the political and juridical separation of church and state; the relegation of religion to the private sphere; and the insignificant role of religion in people's life. In France, *laïcité* separates church and state, securing the neutrality of the French Republic and its public and political domains. *Laïcité* not only separates religion from politics but also as Mayanthi Fernando points out, "it institutionalizes the neutrality of the public space and guarantees the freedom of individual conscience."<sup>182</sup> In recent years the focus on Muslims, and their ostensibly inability to separate religion from the private to the public realm, has portrayed Islam as antagonistic to *laïcité*. Thus, to be integrated in society Islam and Muslim must be secularized. In this sense, Muslims create contradictions, rather than secularism.

To France comprehend religion, it had to create a set of propositions that would make religion comprehensible. In this context, religion is a set of beliefs that requires the acceptance of the believers to be propagated; it expresses itself in the private life of the believer; and it is a historical and geographical phenomenon.<sup>183</sup> Thus, to control religion, separate the state from

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<sup>181</sup> Mayanthi L. Fernando, *The Republic Unsettled: Muslim French and the Contradictions of Secularism*. (Duke University Press, 2014), 19.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid*, 19.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid*, 20.

religion, and protect the neutrality of the state, secularism must first identify and define religion.

As Hussein Agrama contends,

the (secular) state is always drawing a line between the religious and the secular ... by promoting an abstract notion of 'religion' defining the spaces it should inhabit, authorizing the sensibilities proper to it, and then working to discipline actual religious traditions so as to conform to this abstract notion to fit into those spaces, and to express those sensibilities.<sup>184</sup>

Thus, the abstract notion of religion produces a tension in the secular republic because in its need to draw a rigid dividing line between religion and politics, and make Islam private, it must constantly breach the boundaries established between the two. If secular rule entails separating religion from politics, it must first determine what constitutes religion, disaggregating religion from other forms of social identity and communal attachment. However, decisions about what constitutes religion are never settled and often raises questions and dilemmas. These questions and dilemmas create tensions that accentuate Muslimness while demanding a right to indifference; that readdress an exclusive nationalism while insisting on inclusion; and that claims that the headscarf is both a choice and integral to the pious self. In this context, Muslims constantly feel that they are not part of the society, in fact, they are a complication that needs to be solved. This sentiment propels a desire in Muslims to be ordinary, to be forgotten.

Republican citizenship demands the individuals' abstraction of their particular racial or religious identity to be considered a proper, universal citizen. In this context, a distinction between universal and particular is drawn, determining the distinction between politics and

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<sup>184</sup> Mayanthi L. Fernando, *The Republic Unsettled: Muslim French and the Contradictions of Secularism*. (Duke University Press, 2014), 21.

religion. This distinction demands that for Muslims to be integrated they must abstract their Muslimness to invisibility in the public sphere.

French republicanism, since its inception, resorts to universalism and particularism to determine those that deserve French citizenship. Indeed, the republic nation has always privileged whiteness, Christianity, maleness, and heterosexuality. In doing so, the republic makes any Muslims' abstraction impossible, because how one can identify with something that is inexistent in the dominant discourse. That is, as Mayanthi Fernando concludes, "how to be recognized as oneself when one is unrecognizable as what one is."<sup>185</sup>

To claim to be both a practicing Muslim and a French citizen is a contradiction because Muslims' subjectivity embodies traits that are excluded from French citizenship. Moreover, the various tactics, which intentionally target and exclude Muslims from the community of citizens, claim neutrality and deny that Muslim are specific targets. As a result, to combat these tactics, Muslims must first reveal that they are targets. In doing so, Muslims are accused of *communautarisme*, of being only Muslim, and of not trying to abstract their Muslimness, justifying their legal and political exclusion.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

The demand for recognizing France as one and indivisible, as historically, politically, and culturally continuous, as racially and religiously distinct is, in fact, to misrecognize France, because France is not and have never been one and indivisible.

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<sup>185</sup> Mayanthi L. Fernando, *The Republic Unsettled: Muslim French and the Contradictions of Secularism*. (Duke University Press, 2014), 37.

Secular modernity classifies race, ethnicity, culture, and religion, and advocates the possibility of separating them into discrete categories. As Mayanthi Fernando analyzes, “secularization also confuses and conflates ethno-racial and religious designations, which transformed the term Muslim from a theological notion to an ethno-racial category.”<sup>186</sup> This transformation relied on a modern conception of nation that essentializes Muslims’ alterity. In fact, as Mayanthi Fernando concludes, “the term Muslim now refers to people that twenty years ago were designated as *Beurs*, thirty years ago as Arabs, and forty years ago as immigrants.”<sup>187</sup>

In secular France, Muslims’ religiosity is only acceptable when expressed in the private life of the believer or in a sacred space – mosques. Thus, Islam’s symbols that requires a public expression – like the headscarf – are categorized as fundamentalist and as excessive. Relegating Islam to a designated space does not eliminate Muslim cultural and racial alterity, it creates them.

The current slippage between Muslim as religious, cultural, and racial category emerges from and reproduces a historical conflation. Although, in colonial Algeria, French state sought to secularize Islam and limit Muslim religious and legal authority, the terms native, Arab and Muslim overlapped in legal, political, and social domains. In this sense, as Mayanthi Fernando states, “Muslim was a political and legal category, not just a religious one.”<sup>188</sup> As such, French officials were convinced that Islam could not be separated from

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<sup>186</sup> Mayanthi L. Fernando, *The Republic Unsettled: Muslim French and the Contradictions of Secularism*. (Duke University Press, 2014), 138.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid*, 139.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid*, 139.

the public and private domains.<sup>189</sup> Consequently, to French officials, an inherent innateness, embodiment, and physicality exist in Muslimness. This perception of Muslims reinforced the idea that Muslim religiosity was as innate as race, making their secularization and integration impossible.

France's attempts to render religion to a discrete domain of existence not only saturated the contemporary construction of the figure of the Muslim, but also intertwined race, religion, culture and politics in secular France. Due to its reliance on the disaggregation of these domains, secularism reconfigures them as distinct and separate. Thus, Christianity becomes a religion; politics forms the secular state; whiteness defines race, though always unmarked; and culture emerges as the public presence of Christian ritual life. However, these domains remained intertwined, hence the long and unmarked racial basis of Christianity, secularity, and France culture in colonial and postcolonial contexts. The constant excesses produced by the secularization of Islam emerged not because of the inability of Islam to draw a rigid line between religion, race, culture, and politics, but because of the inability of Christian religious values, secularism, and France to separate them.

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<sup>189</sup> Mayanthi L. Fernando, *The Republic Unsettled: Muslim French and the Contradictions of Secularism*. (Duke University Press, 2014), 139.

## Chapter 5 – Xenophobia and Islamophobia

### 5.1 Europe: A Construction of an Identity

Clashes within civilizations and clash between civilization impact how states shape world politics. As Cornelius Castoriadis argued, “each society is a construction, a constitution, a creation of the world, of its own world. Its own identity is nothing but this ‘system of interpretation’, this world that it creates.”<sup>190</sup> In this sense, citizens’ adoption of a social imagery to explain their identity reveal Europe’s central issue.

Furthermore, European societies never relied on the existence of a specific European community. However, as John Hobson asserted, “Europe was constructed with the discoveries of the rest of the world.”<sup>191</sup> Therefore, Europe constructed itself and its identity based on the similarities and differences present in the rest of the world. Thus, as Romano Prodi asserted, “Europe’s identity is not inherently Eurocentric but one of universality. Universalism must aspire to “a new cultural unity” while giving mutual acceptance among Europeans of their cultural diversity.”<sup>192</sup> In 1957 with the establishment of the Treaty of Rome, European leaders commenced to propagate a new concept of Europe in which Europe was this unified and diverse entity. In this context, the EU was construed to a Europe that would embrace unity from a universalist perspective. Thus, as Raymond Taras observes, European Union (EU) constituted a *demos* rather than an *ethnos*.<sup>193</sup> The EU constituted an *ethnos* because it would transcend all the

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<sup>190</sup> Raymond Taras, *Europe Old and New: Transnationalism, Belonging, Xenophobia* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 7.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid*, 149.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid*, 57.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid*. 58.

existing divisions reproduced by class, ethnicity, religion, and political affiliation to create a mutual shared future. In this view, Europe represents this unified entity in which values such as freedom, tolerance, equality, solidarity, and cultural diversity unite citizens.

Furthermore, as Raymond Taras suggests, “there are two general methodological approaches which characterize the study of culture today.”<sup>194</sup> One proposes that culture provides a meaning to people’s life and a sense of wholeness to people. According to this approach, a *metaculture* emerges creating a discourse. As Raymond Taras explains, “metaculture has been the form in which culture dissolves the political and takes up the general labor proper to it, assuming the role of a valid social authority.”<sup>195</sup> In this discourse, for culture to exist, it needs to emphasize and highlight its own generality and historicity.

Another approach views culture as fluid, negotiable, and not defined from a territorial, state, religion, or political party perspective. Accordingly, different national understanding of culture’s importance exists. For French and Italian elites, their own cultures and identities are similar to European culture and identity. By contrast, the English elite describes their own culture and identity as being unique, thus differing from the European culture and identity. Although differences exist between European countries on an understanding of the importance of a culture, they all distinguish cultural and civic aspects according to their Europeanness. In this sense, cultural aspects are attached to ‘Europe’ as a whole, and civic aspects to the EU in particular. In this context, any process that promotes cultural, ethnic, political, economic, and religious integration creates this sense of Europeanness.

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<sup>194</sup> Raymond Taras, *Europe Old and New: Transnationalism, Belonging, Xenophobia* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 60.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid*, 60.



Moreover, as Raymond Taras proposes, “the idea of Europe is dichotomous because it can be present or not in a given society.”<sup>196</sup> Consequently, nation-building often places the nation in a larger cultural-geographical context. In this sense, ‘Europe’ illustrates a stereotype in the construction of ‘Us’ and ‘Them’, of self-identification and of distinction of ‘the Other’. Self-identification and distinction create stereotypes and xenophobic discourses that reinforces each other. In addition, these stereotypes and xenophobic discourses derives from Europeans’ understanding of who belongs to Europe. This understanding emerges from the real or imagined divide between West and East, between nationals and immigrants or minorities.

## 5.2 Xenophobia

As Etienne Balibar claims, “more and more, the modalities in which political program of *struggle against exclusion and discriminations* are defined, which constitute the touchstone of democracy in a world in which self-sufficient nationality has disappeared.”<sup>197</sup> In this context, how host societies welcome foreigners represent the most important way to measure if a country is progressing democratically. In the 1950s, due to a transformation in Europe’s political process, fear of foreigners became prominent. As Raymond Taras analyzes, this political process transformed Europe from an emigrant continent to an immigrant one, which changed immensely Europe’s social history.<sup>198</sup> Although migration into Europe was not new host societies were not psychologically prepared to receive and to welcome these immigrants.

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<sup>196</sup> Raymond Taras, *Europe Old and New: Transnationalism, Belonging, Xenophobia* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 63.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid, 83.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid, 84.

Furthermore, immigration is part of the foundational values of, if not all, at least most, societies in the world, because we are all descendants of immigrants. So, why immigration is perceived as a threat and an abnormality by people today? As Walter Laqueur suggests, “migration patterns of the last half century are quantitatively and qualitatively different.”<sup>199</sup> First, the size of the immigrant’s population increased from tens of thousands to millions. Second, 100 years ago, social and cultural integration was a concern to immigrants. Third, they did not receive any help from the host societies, nor did they receive any social, health, and financial benefits. However, nowadays, some sections of host societies are begrudging the political authorities for providing welfare and benefits to immigrants. In addition, as one French demographer suggests, this new wave represented the revenge of the Third World: ‘they are here because we were there’.<sup>200</sup>

Given the existence of group-specific moralities, this new wave of immigration posed the following questions. First, how should their loyalty to the new country be measured? Second, under what conditions their loyalty to their own community – regarding religion, identity, and culture - would be justified? These questions exposed the host society’s concerns on how the integration of these immigrants would occur. To answer these questions, Bernard Peters identified six concepts of collective identity.<sup>201</sup> First, collective identity can be deep or shallow, depending on the strength of group solidarity and time span. Second, it can be coherent or fragmented, shaped by the unity in a group. Third, the authenticity or manipulative aspect of a collective identity relies on whether it was created from below or imposed from above. Four,

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<sup>199</sup> Raymond Taras, *Europe Old and New: Transnationalism, Belonging, Xenophobia* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 85.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid, 86.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid, 86.

collective identity can include or exclude new members, depending on how potential new members are received by the community. Five, depending on how the elements, used to construct a collective identity, are related; collective identity can be open or closed. Six, when negotiating, to guarantee the group's interests, collective identity can cooperate or antagonize with outsiders.<sup>202</sup>

Given these concepts, the collective identity adopted by migrants determine whether they will receive a friendly or hostile welcome from the host society. Consequently, immigrant communities' collective identity shape and intensify xenophobic attitudes. Their collective identity contributes to xenophobia because the leaders of these communities seek a collective identity that will best express not only their own identity but also their differences. Their logic, as Raymond Taras reveals, is “while nation-states and their boundaries are reified through assertions of border controls and appeals to nationhood, a new mode of membership, anchored in the universalistic rights of personhood, transgresses the national order of things.”<sup>203</sup> Thus, granting them the possibility to practice their linguistic, religious and cultural values is a matter of human rights. As a result, due to their link with their societies of origin, the new immigrant establishes and sustains various social relations that foment xenophobic attitudes.

Xenophobic sentiments are caused by an irrational fear of foreigners that heightens solidarity and ethnocentrism among and within groups. In doing so, xenophobia encourages intolerance and closed-mindedness. Indeed, as Raymond Taras explains,

Foreigners are seen as carriers of a different culture with the potential to threaten the integrity of one's own nation. The assumption that the nation embodies culture comes from

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<sup>202</sup> Raymond Taras, *Europe Old and New: Transnationalism, Belonging, Xenophobia* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 86

<sup>203</sup> Ibid, 86.

a belief that the nation is the arena in which critical values and beliefs are transmitted to developing members. Since each culture consists of a unique mix of orientations, foreigners inevitably threaten to alter the domestic culture through the introduction of new orientations. Because membership in a nation is often equated with an ethnic heritage, cultures may appear relatively fixed and distinct in character from each other. This national cultural identity contributes to the xenophobic perception of stark, irreconcilable differences between cultural groups.<sup>204</sup>

Similarly, in its annual report, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) identified culture's impact on racism and xenophobia. According to the report's findings, cultures construct homogeneous and incompatible group of peoples that are superior to others. In doing so, cultures shape attitudes towards foreigners.

Due to their pertinence with issues related to identity, cultural values influence integration policy which can affect immigrants' status in the host societies. As one academic explains, "identity is the dangerous area where the integration project can destruct if it challenges the nations in an overly confrontational manner."<sup>205</sup> Similarly, as Ronald Inglehart finds, "culture ultimately underpins those societies that achieved freedom and modernization."<sup>206</sup> Thus, any assessment of the rise of xenophobia in Europe must consider its cultural values; and to what extent these values influence Europe's identity's construction and its receptivity to foreigners – its integration model.

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<sup>204</sup> Raymond Taras, *Europe Old and New: Transnationalism, Belonging, Xenophobia* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 83.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid, 91.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid, 91.

### 5.3 The Rise of Xenophobia: Explaining the Emergence of Fear

Scholars have been trying to understand why citizens fear and even hate foreigners for decades. Fear and even hate of strangers are caused either by one's personal beliefs and anxieties, or by society's values and attitudes towards immigrants. For instance, in a study of supporters of the Front National in France, Michel Wieviorka suggested that "French citizens, in contact with immigrants, experienced a general social malaise about and perception of crisis in the existing social order."<sup>207</sup> In fact, they were concerned about a process of disintegration thought to be fracturing the traditional national community, and about a breakdown of national institutions. In this context, the rise of xenophobia and anti-immigrant backlash, in Western Europe, can be considered synonyms. Indeed, xenophobes perceive non-European immigrants as people coming from distant places and people with a difference race and religion.

A European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) report identified the problems linked with immigrant by European: "immigrants, and particularly foreigners, are presented as the persons responsible for the deterioration of security conditions, terrorism, unemployment, and increased public expenditure. This process of stigmatization and criminalization provides a breeding ground for racial discrimination towards this part of Europe's population."<sup>208</sup> In addition, in western Europe, immigrants' status has, over the years, faced three transformations that lead to their exclusion.<sup>209</sup> First, their status went from foreigners to resident aliens. Then they went from being subjects of protection to discrimination. Finally, they went from recognition of cultural difference to racial stigmatization. Thus, prejudices

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<sup>207</sup> Raymond Taras, *Xenophobia and Islamophobia in Europe* (Edinburgh, 2012), 76.

<sup>208</sup> Raymond Taras, *Europe Old and New: Transnationalism, Belonging, Xenophobia* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 93.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid*, 93.

against foreigners correlate directly with their permanence in Europe, that is, the longer they stay, the more stigmatized they will be.

Xenophobic attitudes are heightened by two developments. First, when the line that separates those that are included in and excluded from a society disappear. Second, to include foreigners, natives and citizens by bloodlines feel marginalized. In this sense, xenophobes target *far-away locals*, a concept introduced by Zygmunt Bauman. This far-away locals are people from distant countries who are defined by the barbaric events that occur in their countries. As a result, as Zygmunt Bauman concludes, “we cannot but thank God for making them what they are – the far-away locals and pray that they stay that way.”<sup>210</sup> Similarly, Jacques Derrida theorized about how host societies create a politics of solidarity to welcome strangers; this politics of hospitality was a legal and judicial system.<sup>211</sup> These systems determined whether the Other would be welcomed or not in the host societies. As Georg Simmel defended, “a stranger is not one who comes today and goes tomorrow, but the person who comes today and stays tomorrow.”<sup>212</sup> In this context, far-away locals are constantly reminded of their status as strangers.

Each society embodies specific values that determine who belongs and who does not. However, when analyzing Europe, one notices that European countries and citizens resort to ethnocentric norms to evaluate their worlds. As Raymond Taras explains, “ethnocentric norms are by definition discriminatory, focusing on one’s own *ethnos* over others.”<sup>213</sup> Thus,

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<sup>210</sup> Raymond Taras, *Europe Old and New: Transnationalism, Belonging, Xenophobia* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 94.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid, 71.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid, 95.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid, 119.

ethnocentric norms reinforce xenophobia and racism. As the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance's (ECRI) 2006 report noted,

the appearance of manifestations of racism or intolerance within a society plays a key role in the strengthening and spreading of a negative climate of opinion. This climate is fueled by some media and also by the use of racist and xenophobic arguments in political discourse. Xenophobic discourse currently enjoys a free rein in countries where the transition to a multicultural society arouses fears which find an echo in a context of economic crisis and globalization, raising from many citizens the issue of national identity. Once again, it is minority groups and different communities which are targeted, including by the traditional political parties of many countries.<sup>214</sup>

In this context, “integrate – or else” illustrate the most encouraging message that immigrants get from their host societies. In addition, European receiving societies interpret integration differently from one another. In the integration process, according to the Council of the European Union, both parties, immigrants and receiving societies, assume particular responsibilities. The host country creates opportunities for immigrants to prosper economically and to be included in society. While immigrants, in turn, respect the liberal democracy values and its laws. In addition, integration is generally regarded as a ‘softer’ approach to accommodating foreigners than assimilation, because assimilation aims to eradicate the culture of the Other. As Christian Joppke explains, “it is not a matter of excluding the Other, but of including it to the extent that one renders it like oneself.”<sup>215</sup> By expecting minorities to adapt completely to the host society, the assimilationist model emphasizes values that oppose multiculturalism and negate otherness.

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<sup>214</sup> Raymond Taras, *Europe Old and New: Transnationalism, Belonging, Xenophobia* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 119.

<sup>215</sup> Raymond Taras, *Xenophobia and Islamophobia*. (Edinburgh, 2012), 45.

As mentioned earlier, European phobias about migrants rely on the perception that strangers have overstayed their welcome and that they are impossible to assimilate. These perceptions are heightened by how Europe resorts to Eurocentric notions to conceptualize and construct Otherness. In this context, according to Ambalavaner Sivanandan, in Europe, one notices the emergence of a new xenophobia. This new xenophobia “bears all the marks of the old racism without the genetics underpinnings. It is “xeno” in form. It is a racism that impoverish strangers even if they are white. It is xeno-racism.”<sup>216</sup> Thus, xenophobia and racism’s form, purpose, and function alter constantly. These alterations are propelled not only by economic, social, and systemic changes, but also by the challenges that the current system faces. In this context, the term “migrant” contains a synthesizing power allowing heterogeneous group to be categorized together.

Until recently, anti-immigrant discourses and politics exerted a small influence on European countries. In this sense, xenophobia may have little to do with immigrant numbers, racist ideologies or radical-right movements. However, the recent improved performance of right-wing populist parties in elections are not the only way to measure how anti-immigrant policies influence European politics. For instance, dissatisfaction with national governments, low confidence in national political leaders and institutions, and distrust in EU policies fuel prejudice which foments xenophobia. Thus, politics can be the cornerstone of this phenomenon because deep ‘democratic disenchantment’ fueled by social distrust and economic pessimism produces xenophobia.

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<sup>216</sup> Raymond Taras, *Xenophobia and Islamophobia*. (Edinburgh, 2012), 74.



In addition, the mainstreaming of xenophobic discourse has represented an alarming development. As centrist and center-right parties adopt right-wing populist parties' anti-immigrant and anti-multicultural narratives to gain more votes and power sharing. If, right-wing populist parties anti-establishment, anti-democratic, and anti-immigrant rhetoric become more normalized and legitimized, fear may deepen in Europe, shaking the very idea of Europe and its stability.

#### **5.4 The Emergence of Islamophobia: Imaging the Muslim Other**

Right-wing populist parties have been dramatizing fear of Muslim in Europe, and it is not always easy to distinguish fact-based accounts from normative, polemical ones. As Ayhan Kaya observed, “it has become commonplace that ‘Muslims are increasingly represented as members of a “precarious transnational society”, in which people only want to “stone women”, “cut throats”, “be suicide bombers”, “beat their wives, and “commit honor crimes””.<sup>217</sup> In some respects, this represents a caricature of a caricature, providing a composite of Islamophobic thinking.

Islamophobic narratives emerge for two reasons: the need to protect itself from ‘the enemy from within’; and the need to relocate the origins of the threat beyond national borders. In this context, as Raymond Taras observes, “the fear of migrants and Muslims prevalent in the West cannot have material sources; it is in fact a constructed and fabricated fear, serving the interests of nation-states which are no longer equipped with the tools to redistribute justice and peace relatively equally.”<sup>218</sup> Consequently, migrants arriving in Europe with many different

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<sup>217</sup> Raymond Taras, *Xenophobia and Islamophobia in Europe*. (Edinburgh, 2012), 84.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid*, 84.

collective identities are presented with a set of norms on integration that they are under pressure to adhere to, in which adhering to these norms will determine their future identity.

According to Raymond Taras, five alternatives are presented to migrants if they want to be accepted by host societies. First, their previous collective identities, which were adopted in their country of origin, will transform to a collective identity that will better integrate with the identity of the receiving society.<sup>219</sup> In this context, migrants' willingness to transform their collective identity will determine how receiving societies perceive and welcome them. As migrants distance themselves from their country of origin, receiving societies become more susceptible to consider welcoming these 'strangers'. Second, migrants have to choose whether their identities will remain coherent or become fragmented. To host societies, the more fragmented their identity become, the more likely it will be for them to accept diversity.<sup>220</sup> Third, to adapt to Europe, migrants communities are to adopt an identity that encompasses all European cultural, political, religious, and social values. Most of the times, becoming inclusive generates a loss in cultural and religious uniformity.

Four, receiving societies determine immigrant communities' loyalty to Europe based on their receptiveness and openness to include European values in their new collective identity. As such, the more receptive and open the immigrant community is, the less likely it will be for the receiving society to question their loyalty to the new country. However, because Muslims retain their traditional religious practices and reject secular values, Europeans perceive them as uncompromising and not trustworthy.

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<sup>219</sup> Raymond Taras, *Xenophobia and Islamophobia in Europe*. (Edinburgh, 2012), 85.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid, 86.

Five, to be accepted in the new country migrants should behave cooperatively with host society representatives. In this context, if migrant communities strive to maintain a collective identity by prioritizing rootedness, gatekeeping, coherence, rigidity, and resoluteness, they will engender hostility in host societies. As Raymond Taras states, “not adhering to the European normative regime might elicit a xenophobic backlash among some sections of the host society.”<sup>221</sup> As a result, to receiving society Muslims are not loyal to Europe, in fact, they are homogeneous, inflexible, and exclusionary. These perceptions of Muslim preclude their inclusion into European societies, ascribing them an absolute Otherness that can only threaten and disrupt European identity(ies). Given these points, Islamophobic attitudes emerge because on the five identity and integration questions Muslim minorities are faced with, their choices are politically incorrect.

Furthermore, as Etienne Balibar claimed, to Europeans Islam incarnates an “interior enemy”.<sup>222</sup> However, what has caused this enmity? Has the clash of Western and Islamic civilizations allocated Europeans and Muslims against each other? For Imam Abduljalil Sajid, the clash of Western and Islamic civilization explains this enmity. According to him,

hostility towards Islam and Muslims has been a feature of European societies since the eighth century of the Common Era. It has taken different forms, however, at different times and has fulfilled a variety of functions. For example, the hostility in Spain in the fifteenth century was not the same as the hostility that had been expressed in and mobilized the Crusades. Nor was the hostility during the times of the Ottoman Empire or the one prevalent throughout the age of empires and colonialism. It may be more apt to speak of ‘Islamophobias’ rather than of a single phenomenon. Each version of Islamophobia has its own features as well as similarities with, and borrowings from, other versions.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> Raymond Taras, *Xenophobia and Islamophobia in Europe*. (Edinburgh, 2012), 86.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid, 86

<sup>223</sup> Ibid, 113.

Moreover, to Christopher Caldwell, the new Islamophobia “encompasses misconduct toward Muslims, racism, fear of Muslim radicalism, and political opposition to certain Islamist political tendencies”<sup>224</sup>. Also, this new Islamophobia combines ambivalent feelings that construct the West’s perception of Islam; in which, the West is both afraid and fascinated by Islam. It seeks to understand how these conflicting feelings contributed, and still contributes, to the notion that Muslims stand for everything that Europeans should fight against.

In this sense, this new Islamophobia describes anti-Muslim prejudice and prescribe what can or cannot be said about Islam. Acknowledging this aspect of Islamophobia ameliorates our understanding of its impact. In this respect, according to Jonathan Laurence and Justin Vaisse, an “infernal couples” exist in Western thinking that connect Islam to all of the problems of our era.<sup>225</sup> Thus, Islam is connected to the problem of immigration, to the conflicts in the Middle East, to terrorism, to the social exclusion in the *banlieues*, and to the “clash of civilizations”. As Etienne Balibar exposes,

no single question is more likely to test the capacity of European nations to address the issue of multiple ‘belongings’, exclusive or incompatible ‘loyalties’, the growing uncertainty of boundaries between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ (or, rather, the increasing number of ‘citizens’ who are neither simply inside nor simply outside), than the status and the importance of Islam within the European space.<sup>226</sup>

Similarly, Valerie Amiraux raised the vital question: “What makes Muslim the ultimate “others”?”<sup>227</sup> She suggested that the public receptivity to the clash of civilization thesis relies on

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<sup>224</sup> Raymond Taras, *Xenophobia and Islamophobia in Europe*. (Edinburgh, 2012), 113.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid, 114.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid, 114.

<sup>227</sup> Valérie Amiraux, *Burqa Bashing: Does Religion Stand for Race in the EU?* 2011, 5.

the acceptance of Islam as a denomination and Muslim as believers.<sup>228</sup> In this assumption, Islam and Muslims constitute the ultimate “other” that will always struggle with adhering to democratic and liberal values. As a result, the rise of Islamophobia hinges in the putative historical incompatibility of Europeans and Islamic values.

The media has been disseminating negative images of Muslims in Europe, particularly in France for thirty years. This negative image of Islam is disseminated due to the media’s constant need to capture larger audiences. Also, its ideological propensity to stigmatize ‘Others’ encourages this negative construction of Islam. As Elisabeth Eide contends symbolic elites are key to the discursive reproduction of racism and Islamophobia by which ethnic prejudice are spread.<sup>229</sup> She identified five prevalent discourses about Muslim minorities in Europe receiving societies. First, the image of migrant construed as a ‘colorful community’. Second, they also assumed that such a community was satisfied by becoming normalized into a receiving society. Third, these discourses focused on ‘super integrated heroes’ such as sports stars (Zinedine Zidane). Four, in these discourses Muslim represents a problem for ‘us’. Five, we (Europe in general, France in particular) represent a problem for them. In addition, Islamophobic discourse combines anti-terrorism with anti-immigration and anti-minority agendas. In this context, security concerns justify any vocalization of religious, cultural, and ideological fears. Moreover, since 1990s, regardless of their origin, every migrant in Europe was associated with Islam, thus becoming Muslims.

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<sup>228</sup> Valérie Amiraux, *Burqa Bashing: Does Religion Stand for Race in the EU?* 2011, 6.

<sup>229</sup> Raymond Taras, *Xenophobia and Islamophobia in Europe*. (Edinburgh, 2012, 19.

As Muslim communities become visible across Europe, not only the hostility towards them increases but also any attempt to make these communities and their symbols invisible. Indeed, the headscarf, the burqa, minarets and Arabic signage highlight Islam's visibility throughout Europe. In this sense, Islamophobia combines the issue of religion, race and civilization in a contradictory way. Islamophobia defends that due to its inferior world view Islam is intrinsically incompatible with Western culture. Thus, whether it entails ascribing to the historical determinism thesis alleging the incompatibility of Islam and the West or citing superficial stereotypes of Muslims shared by Europeans today, prejudice against Muslims has become acceptable in polite circles in Europe.

### **5.5 France: from its Republican Myth to Integration**

In France, for immigrants to be integrated they need to follow a social contract in which they accept to include French values in their collective identity. In this sense, the values of liberty, equality, and fraternity of *l'assimilation républicaine* require the full insertion and inclusion of individuals in a society. As Raymond Taras observes, “paradoxically, those best positioned to be ‘inserted’ in French society – Maghrebis from north Africa who experienced over a century of French colonization, including francization – are the ones who have experienced profound marginalization.”<sup>230</sup> Also, due to positioning an abstract universalism of rights, immigrants are expected to assimilate. This expectation derives from the notion that French nation does not consider ethnic, racial, gender, religious, and cultural differences. Indeed, French nation expects from its citizenship the abstraction of these differences in order to become members of the national community.

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<sup>230</sup> Raymond Taras, *Xenophobia and Islamophobia in Europe*. (Edinburgh, 2012), 51.

In this context, citizenship can be denied if officials believe that the applicant has not fully abstracted his/her ethnic, racial, gender, religious, and cultural differences. For instance, when a Muslim woman wears the burqa to her citizenship interview, officials conclude that this woman has not been assimilated because she still wears a garment that is incompatible with French republican values. As a result, she is not compatible to become a citizen of the national community. From this republic logic, one concludes that there cannot be hyphenated French people.

Furthermore, what constitutes Frenchness today is the non-recognition of French society ethnic and cultural pluralism. As Karima Laachir concluded, “for “the French” it would mean to lose their “national identity” if they were to adopt the Anglo-Saxon model of multiculturalism.”<sup>231</sup> In this context, the French myth of a unified nation has been challenged by many scholars because under it, visible minorities become invisible. Also, by emphasizing the concept of ‘*indifférenciation*’, the French republic trumps the concept of differential racism. In doing so, recognizing minorities become superfluous. As Etienne Balibar contended, “the French refusal to recognize foreigners demonstrate a ‘profound fear of a multicultural society and cultural *métissage*’.”<sup>232</sup> In this context, people, who do not conform to the French values that define citizenship, are automatically marginalized and excluded. As Nacira Guenif-Souilamas cautioned, “through a rhetorical system that claim to be universalist, an entire generation of French people suffers from a particular and illegitimate status limited to their specific origin,

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<sup>231</sup> Raymond Taras, *Xenophobia and Islamophobia in Europe*. (Edinburgh, 2012), 52.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid, 53.

class or gender, thereby denied from equal access to citizenship.”<sup>233</sup> Thus, universalism is vacuous if it cannot be applied to specific cases.

## **5.6 Islamophobia à la française**

Due to its long history of immigration and recent influx of Muslim immigrants, the study of xenophobia, racism, and Islamophobia has gained a prominent position in French academia. Since 1960s, with the end of the Algerian war and the need to rebuild French industry, the Muslim community grew from thousands to millions. At first, only guest workers were accepted, but in 1970 the government adopted a liberal family reunification policy. However, French citizens did not welcome these families, because they thought that these families were only there to take advantage of the social benefits provided by the French state. As William Safran pointed out, “many French citizens who welcome immigrants in their midst do not necessarily welcome their families or communities, a phenomenon that may suggest that economic considerations (obtaining social benefits) compete with matters of principle, that is, with the Jacobin notion of an ethnoculturally undifferentiated structure of society.”<sup>234</sup>

Initially, the French state did not create an integration policy because these Muslims were only there for a period of time. However, evidence suggested that North Africans were experiencing upward socioeconomic mobility and high rates of intermarriage. This outcome indicated that Muslim integration into French society was possible, especially given their proficiency in French. In addition, the results provided by surveys conducted in 1988 and 2006 showed that integration was not only possible, but it was happening. According to these surveys,

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<sup>233</sup> Raymond Taras, *Xenophobia and Islamophobia in Europe*. (Edinburgh, 2012), 54.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid*, 141.



the respondents thought that immigration enriched the country, and that any religious practices, even Muslim, deserve respect.<sup>235</sup> However, such positive appraisals of migrant inclusion in France society is at odds with reality, especially, when considering the rise of marginalized youth riots.

According to Catherine Wihtol de Wenden, due to the generational divide between earlier immigration waves and the new waves, French citizens' perception may not correspond to reality.<sup>236</sup> As Catherine Wihtol de Wenden explains, "the tendency for smooth migrant integration weakens as receiving societies experience successive immigration waves."<sup>237</sup> This smooth integration was only possible because first generation immigrants focused on improving their financial and economic status and being accepted by the new societies. By contrast, second and third generations prioritise achieving cultural and social integration. In this context, French state, society, and the new arrivals are contesting the very idea of integration and immigration.

Unfortunately, the stigmatization of Muslim has become normalized in most of Western society in the world. The embodiment of negative stereotype to describe Muslim community has led to their automatic social, political, economic, and cultural isolation, marginalization and exclusion. As Fouad Ajami described, "French Muslims are shut up in ghettos, secluded and kept away from French society."<sup>238</sup> Similarly, Riva Kastoryano argues that France is beyond the stage of "post colonialism, and that internal colonization has taken its place."<sup>239</sup> Furthermore, French

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<sup>235</sup> Raymond Taras, *Xenophobia and Islamophobia in Europe*. (Edinburgh, 2012), 142.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid, 142.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid, 142.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid, 144.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid, 144.

Islamophobia is inherently contradictory because its framing of Muslims combines a number of variable categories. In these categories, second and third generations are still referred to as ‘young Arab Muslim’, even though they were born in France. This designation not only stigmatizes them but also combines ethnicity and religion referential (Arab-Muslim). As Raymond Taras concludes, “referring to them as youth demeans them further”.<sup>240</sup> In this context, every riot in the *banlieues* further exposes their national, social, and political isolation, marginalization, and exclusion. Moreover, the composition of a country’s prison population might indicate anti-Muslim bias. A study published in 2015 found that 70% of all those incarcerated in France were Muslim, even though they represent less than 10 per cent of the total population. At stake in this pattern of incarceration is not only the judicial bias but also their exposition to radical Islamic ideas while in prison.

Furthermore, Muslim communities in France are very diverse. Although by law no official statistic can be compiled on the subject, there are approximately five million Muslims in France. As mentioned earlier, a generational divide exists between first, second and third generation. For instance, the first generation of the 1960s and 1970s was largely secular oriented and focused on improving its material well-being. The second generation – daughters and sons of immigrants – focused on gaining a permanent position in French national community because even though they were French nationals, they were still marginalized. In fact, many joined the *Beur* movement, which in the 1980s mobilized across France in response to racism, discrimination, and the initial electoral success of the Front National.

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<sup>240</sup> Raymond Taras, *Xenophobia and Islamophobia in Europe*. (Edinburgh, 2012), 144.

By contrast, the third generation of Muslims has been looking for a collective identity, and for a sense of belonging that France has failed to provide them. As such, this generation is turning to Islam to fill in the gap that French universalist notions are unwilling to fill. This shift in their self-identification determined how their identity was characterized in French society. Their identity went from north African residents to Algerians, from Algerians to *Beur*, from *Beur* to Muslim. As Raymond Taras observes, “these categories are not mutually exclusive.”<sup>241</sup> In fact, religion and ethnicity coincide partially or wholly in popular consciousness. As Rachel Bloul revealed, “France experiences an ethnicisation of religion.”<sup>242</sup> This ethnicization entails the generalization of these communities and that Islam is not only treated as a religious identity but also as an ethnic one.

Furthermore, French Islamophobia homogenize, essentialise, and communitarise Muslim attitudes and behavior. In doing so, as Raymond Taras analyzes, “Muslims are portrayed as thinking and acting as one, usually in radically transgressive way.”<sup>243</sup> This perception makes them susceptible to blame for different pathologies. In addition, the defining characteristic of French Islamophobia is religion as much as racism. This racism, according to George Frederickson, “has two components: difference and power.”<sup>244</sup> It originates from the idea that denies any similarities between ‘them’ and ‘us’. Racism assumes and presupposes that an ingrained impossibility exists between ‘them’ and ‘us’. This impossibility precludes any coexistence of ‘them’ and ‘us’ in the same society, unless in a situation of

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<sup>241</sup> Raymond Taras, *Xenophobia and Islamophobia in Europe*. (Edinburgh, 2012), 148.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid*, 149.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid*, 150.

<sup>244</sup> George Frederickson, *Racism: A Short Story*. (Princeton University, 2002), 9.

domination/subordination. As Joan Scott defends, historically, French has conceived Muslims using this racist notion.<sup>245</sup> In this sense, Muslims are unassimilable to French society because they are incapable of improving their barbaric and uncivilized values. Given all these points, Islam symbolizes a peril to France, to its society, and to its model of integration, that is to its assimilationist model. As Etienne Balibar argues, Islam represents a political and religious obstacle to integration because it refuses secularism, one of the principles at the heart of French Republicanism.<sup>246</sup>

Furthermore, a stereotypical view dominates how migrants are perceived by French citizens and how migrants perceive French citizens. To French citizens the unemployed young Muslim reinforces the idea that migrants are the countries' underclass. Also, migrant impression of France, whether as a utopian or a dystopian receiving society, relied on superficial stereotype. Thus, as Tahar Ben Jelloun concludes, the dialogue between immigration and France has become a collision of ignorance.<sup>247</sup> In this context, all North and West African immigrants suffer daily racial discrimination, because they are all the same, that is Muslims. Thus, banal Islamophobia targets the average Muslim regardless of age, gender, and social condition.

## 5.7 Conclusion

When good versus evil, civilized versus uncivilized, us versus them characterized one's worldview, it inhibits self-criticism, change, and openness to difference. As Joan Scott, analyzes, by not accepting and respecting others' difference, "they become our enemies producing what

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<sup>245</sup> Joan Wallach Scott, *The Politics of the Veil*. (Princeton, 2007), 45.

<sup>246</sup> Jane Freedman, *Immigration and Insecurity in France*. (London, 2004), 130.

<sup>247</sup> Raymond Taras, *Xenophobia and Islamophobia in Europe*. (Edinburgh, 2012), 149.

we most fear about them in the first place.”<sup>248</sup> Fear of Muslim in France derived from the need to maintain unity of the nation which can only be achieved by refusing to recognize difference.

According to Heiko Henkel, “the friction between Muslim groups and host societies results partly from Muslims not being incorporated into Europe’s grand historical compromises.”<sup>249</sup> By reconciling the grand ideologies and values systems of nationalism, liberalism, socialism, and Christianity, Europe excluded the unique historical experience of Muslims. For Henkel, this inner-European consensus was explicitly created to distance Europe from any Muslim experience. Thus, in order for Muslim groups to be included, Europe would have to rewrite its secularist historical narrative.<sup>250</sup> In this context of exclusion, parallel societies have evolved, with Muslims as the underclass.

Even where Muslims secured citizenship and nominally equal rights within the receiving society, the failure to insert them into the socio-economic opportunity structure promotes a hollow naturalization. This reality facilitates the spread of extremist ideologies. Indeed, by not fully accepting Muslims, French society disenfranchises them and, consequently, Muslim youth resorts to Islam to gain a cultural identity. As Raymond Taras contends, the waning of traditional family values makes young Muslims susceptible to new influences.<sup>251</sup> Thus, marginalization and exclusion of Muslim, and periodic public protests, rioting, random violence and some extremist mobilization accelerate the spread of Islamophobia.

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<sup>248</sup> Joan Wallach Scott. *The Politics of the Veil*. (Princeton, 2007), 19.

<sup>249</sup> Raymond Taras, *Xenophobia and Islamophobia in Europe*. (Edinburgh, 2012), 123.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid, 125.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid, 124.

Exclusion is a discursive practice that cements the materiality and legality of discrimination. Individuals and communities of North and West Africa suffer discrimination and institutionalized racism in housing, policing, the criminal justice system, employment and education. Due to its ideological stance against recognizing race, race and ethnicity statistics are difficult to find in France. However, empirical field research reveals systemic racism resulting from “rule and procedures of treatment that, in their various forms, have been incorporated into the ethical and sociocultural rules in the ordinary functioning of institutions, organizations, and society itself.”<sup>252</sup> To this long-standing state of exclusion a new form is arising, that is, a new Islamophobia that combines ethnicity with religion.

This new Islamophobia derives from older and recent events: the Algerian civil war, 9/11, and the ensuing global War on Terror. It contends that Islam cannot separate religion from politics, thus Islam not only threatens Western civilization but also its secularism. In this context, France must resist the so-called Islamization of its minority population to maintain its intrinsically secular national identity. This notion justifies defensive and punitive policies against all visible signs of Islam – the veil. In this discourse, the veil represents a whole “culture” that is incompatible with French norms and values. This representation curtails any social difference and transforms the French republic into a singular entity, a “culture”, that opposes another singular entity, the veil in particular and Islam in general.

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<sup>252</sup> Mayanthi L Fernando. *The Republic Unsettled: Muslim French and Contradictions of Secularism*. (London, 2014), 44.

## Chapter 6 - Conclusion: Vive la République Plurielle

This thesis aimed to expose the unsettledness and contradictions of French secularism (*laïcité*) and republican values. These unsettledness and contradictions do not diminish French secularism and republican values but enhance it through a continual process of reiteration, re-articulation, and reintegration. The republican model of citizenship does not recognize difference; therefore, immigrants are required to shape any particular ethnic, racial, cultural, or religious attachments to a universal French national identity. Nonetheless, the social and systematic discrimination and exclusion, which immigrants face daily, are due to their race, culture, and religion.

To expose France's contradictions, this thesis analyzed the party Front National to demonstrate how this party capitalizes on the contradictions and internal exclusion, which are created and maintained by the French secularism and republican values, to gain public support. In addition, this thesis sought to readdress our understanding of radical right-wing populist parties, their appeal and their rhetoric. Finally, it examined how the Front National generates fear and a sense of crisis in order to engender further Islamophobia and xenophobia.

Populism, as an ideology or as an element, ultimately seeks to divide the political space, placing "us" (the pure people) versus "them" (the corrupt elite or the foreigner). In the populist rhetoric, the people are a specific *ethnos* and is encouraged to act against the Other. In addition, the Other is determined by a political, national, and economic signifier, namely the non-Western migrant and especially the Muslim. Non-Western migrant and Muslim signify the Other because they are non-nationals with cultural, religious, historical, and economic differences that hinder the construction of the people as one political-national subject.

In order to readdress our understanding of radical right-wing populist parties, their appeal and rhetoric, this thesis adopted a nationalist perspective because it highlighted two dimensions inherent in the right-wing populist parties: their style and political rhetoric. Both are centered on the defense of national identity and xenophobic, or directly racist discourses that are embedded in any immigration policy and/or measure.

Since 1970s, the Front National (FN) has been changing its image, its rhetoric, and its doctrine. As such, Jean-Marie Le Pen always affirms that the party is neither racist nor xenophobic. However, both Jean-Marie Le Pen and its party advocated for anti-immigrant measures which presuppose that population of immigrant origin, mainly Muslims, are by nature inassimilable. Consequently, they represent a danger to French society. This notion, that immigrants are unassimilable, not only dominates the FN's ideology and political programme, but also justifies their focus on cultural/ethnic difference. In this discourse, the policy of 'national preference' and the superiority of the 'native' French seem simple and reasonable, because the party is only preserving and protecting the national identity. As Pierre-Andre Taguieff concludes, "the racist logic of absolute and natural difference is thus replaced and remodeled in the euphemistic discourse of national preference."<sup>253</sup>

Furthermore, according to Jean-Marie Le Pen, the doctrine of national preference assimilates nations and people. In doing so, French nation becomes a huge family founded on ties of blood. This understanding reveals that behind the FN's attempt to appear moderate and reasonable, lies a racist and racializing agenda. Although the party advocates that preference should be given to French nationals, it also defends that North African in general Muslims in

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<sup>253</sup> Jane Freedman, *Immigration and Insecurity in France* (New York, 2017), 145.



particular who have acquired French nationality, or children born from foreign parents, do not deserve the same treatment as real ‘native’ French nationals.

With the stated goal of liberating the party from its political confinement and making it acceptable within the mainstream, from 2002 onward, Marine Le Pen began the *dédiabolisation* of the Front National. This *dédiabolisation* encompassed the adoption of republican themes such as secularism (*laïcité*) and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen of 1789; and the advocacy for women’s right to oppose Islam and Muslim migrants. According to Le Pen, migrants with their communitarianism, particularly Muslims, threaten the very existence of secularism and its values.

To advocate for women’s rights the party does not only stigmatize the racialized Muslim men but also the racialized Muslim women. The racialized Muslim women symbolizes the feminine sexual and non-sexual oppression and violence in the debates about the headscarves and the *burqa*. The representation of Muslim women as the ultimate ‘Other’ illustrates how paradoxical Marine Le Pen’s propaganda actually is. This propaganda strongly criticizes the patriarchal practices conducted by migrant men, but also defends traditional values that oppress Western women, i.e., the prohibition of abortion. Regardless of its paradoxical nature, this propaganda’s discourse and policies on the emancipation of the migrant women gain legitimacy with and support from female activists who are countering the same rights for the female Others.

When analyzing how West countries perceive Muslims, one notices a racialization of this perception, in which racial terms seem to epitomize Muslim communities. Indeed, the term *Muslims* describes pejoratively the population of North and West African descent. A population designated before as either immigrants or foreigners, or with terms that emphasized their ethnicity or national origin. In this context, Didier Fassin claims that a racism without race is

emerging in France.<sup>254</sup> In this new form of racism, terms, common euphemism, and the amalgamation in public discourse and political legislation of immigration, delinquency and criminality, terrorism, and Islam are homogenized and cultural differences are used to justify racist discourses.<sup>255</sup> As a result, race, religion, and culture are intertwined to construct a reified notion of radical alterity, in which Muslim becomes the signifier.

However, this intertwining is not new, in fact, what one notices is not an emergence but a reemergence of this racism without a race. As Mayanthi Fernando explains, “the people now called Muslim were previously Arabs in the post-1974 era, before that, they were called immigrant laborers, and before that *musulmans* or natives (*indigènes*) in the colonial period.”<sup>256</sup> In addition, race and religion has always formed a nexus, in which historicity and contemporaneity of Muslim as Other play an important role in understanding Muslimness as a marker of difference and identity. Thus, this race and religion nexus represents this thesis first contribution. In tracing the continuities and discontinuities of the constructions of race and religion in colonial and post-colonial France, this thesis showed how the production of contemporary forms of Muslim alterity occurs, which is based on the intersectionality between race and secularism.

Furthermore, French universalism insists that sameness is the basis for equality. In this sense, sameness is an abstraction that conveys that any difference – be it religious, ethnic, racial, linguistic, or national origin - should be eradicated. As a result, no records of the religion,

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<sup>254</sup> Mayanthi L. Fernando, *The Republic Unsettled Muslim French and the Contradictions of Secularism* (Duke, 2014), 16.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid, 17.

ethnicity, or national origin of French population exist; and having records would mean to recognize a fractured and divided France, not – as it claimed to be – a united, singular entity. As such, France requires from all its citizens to abstract their particularities in order to become the same, thus belonging to the national community. However, any attempt to become the same must conform to the idea of the republic of what being French means; that is, must conform to an already established Frenchness. Thus, if an individual identifies him or herself as being different, be it – culturally, sexually (gender or sexuality), or religiously – he or she precludes any aspiration to sameness. As Joan Scott concludes, “if one has already been labeled different on any of these grounds, it is difficult to find a way of arguing that one is or can become the same.”<sup>257</sup>

In not recognizing difference to ensure national unity, French universalism not only reinforces the notion that Muslims are unassimilable but also constructs Muslim in particular, and Islam in general, as a threat to French nation and national identity. As a result, Islamophobia is legitimized and normalized. Thus, this thesis aimed to demonstrate how French universalism is less open to alterity than it imagines itself to be, and in fact it reproduces a series of asymmetries.

Moreover, in analyzing the *affaire of foulards* one understands how the Front National, feminist groups, and the French nation are resorting to gender – in the name of women’s rights – to foment Islamophobia. Young girls who choose to wear the veil are portrayed as mere passive agents: either they are being oppressed by Muslim men or Islamic organizations are manipulating them for their own purposes.

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<sup>257</sup> Joan Wallach Scott, *The Politics of the Veil* (Princeton, 2007), 13.

As Jane Freedman explains, those against the headscarves were because, according to them, Muslim girls need to be protected from and free of patriarchy.<sup>258</sup> On the other hand, those for the headscarves were because these girls would only be integrated in French society, if they attended schools.<sup>259</sup> In doing so, girls would be liberated from Islam and any male oppression. Although these arguments are opposite, one notices two similarities in them. First, they both imply that French society is superior to patriarchal Islamic society. Second, they both ignore and deny how male dominated their own society actually is. These arguments represent a typical post-colonial discourse which divide Muslim women (who signifies the ultimate Other) into two types: those that were assimilated and those that were not. This binary categorization oversimplifies their representation and prevents the objective knowledge of how diverse and complex these women in particular are, and of Muslim community in general is.

In this context, this thesis tried to show that the problem with the headscarves (or any Muslim symbols) lay not in how patriarchy dominates women, but in the decision to wear a *foulard* by supposedly integrated and Westernized girls, young women, and women. Thus, the headscarf and modernity juxtapose which highlights the inability of French Republic to fully assimilate these girls, young women, and women. In addition, they challenge the integrity of French national identity.

Finally, in terms of shortcomings, the analysis proposed by this work could be improved if interviews were conducted in France to comprehend the perception of French citizens on the Muslim visibility in their country. Also, to conduct interviews with Muslim girls, young women,

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<sup>258</sup> Jane Freedman, *Immigration and Insecurity in France* (Routledge, 2017), 137.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid*, 137.

and women to understand why they choose to wear the veil, how they perceive this reluctance of France in accepting difference, and if they feel that they belong in French society. In order to amplify its findings, this thesis is the beginning of a comparative analysis that will be conducted in Western European countries. To conclude, it is time that we acknowledge difference in ways that question the certainty and superiority of our own views; it is time that we create a social, political, and cultural system that negotiate differences, because difference is what is common to us all.

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