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Integration and Laïcité

Muslims in France

Abstract :

Integration is not and has never been a topic easy to study, and adding laïcité – French-specific secularization – does not make it easier. This thesis looks at the case of French Muslims and the way they are viewed by the French as they settle for generations in France. France lacks a unified identity which makes it uncomfortable for them to integrate newcomers. Further, laïcité is a core value of French identity and this makes it difficult for the French to integrate Muslims and leads to a general fear of Muslims. Finally, I argue that some signs and theories today point to a future of laïcité which would reject not just religion but all culture from the public sphere.

Introduction

Ma France, l'intime France,
C'est mon foyer, mon berceau,
C'est le lieu de ma naissance,
Dans ce qu'il a de plus beau ;
C'est la terre où s'enracine
L'érable national,
C'est le ciel où se dessine
La croix du clocher natal.

My France, intimate France,
Tis my home, my cradle,
Tis the place of my birth,
And a place so beautiful ;
Tis the land where takes root
The national maple ;
Tis the sky that paints for me
The cross of my homeland steeple.

Nérée Beauchemin, Ma France, Patrie Intime

When I started thinking about my thesis, the reaction of French citizens to immigration and immigrants' integration, with a sociologist's eye, I was far from imagining that I was actually bumping into an issue of philosophy. That walking in this or that street makes me feel nervous, foreigner in my own country, is not a question of décor, so to speak. The neighborhood of Guillotière is not as visible as a Chinatown in New York or a Soho in London. More precisely, the slight physical changes that I notice are nothing compared to why these changes occur. And it is not only because, suddenly, immigrants' offspring decided to revive their ancestors' culture. It is the deeper feeling that, if immigrants, though now officially French since a few generations, are reviving the culture of their country of origin, it is because the French culture did not succeed in attracting them. Walking in those streets then becomes the brutal image of a weak culture that seems overturned by other ones.

The feeling of discomfort I felt in those streets of Lyon is probably subjective though not unique. One example that can only fit in such an introduction marks how stark the discomfort can be. « Bâtard, connard, choure ta mère la prochaine fois ! ... Jamais je remets

les pieds dans cette place, y a que des sans-papiers, des malpropres, des voleurs... ! »¹ yells a young mother in a rough vulgar language with a perfect French (and lack of) accent as she almost lost her phone to a sneaky hand visiting her pocket, when she was stepping in the tram with her daughter, a few days before Christmas. The thief ? Seemingly of Arab descent. The victim ? Also probably of Arab descent, though certainly a French citizen. But no one can ever know for sure.

Of course, there is here not just a peaceful encounter but an attempted burglary, however the vocabulary used is specific to the immigrant suburbs (although the scene takes place in “Guillotière”, in the center of the city), and the area is well-known to immigrants, be they illegal or legal. This random scene thus underlines the discomfort of many French nationals in that particular neighborhood and that these immigrants have yet to find their place in the society they have walked in. Such discomfort is especially visible regarding immigrants who come from the Middle-East and Northern Africa, which I will call hereafter Muslims.

I do not wish to make a claim that all the immigrants from these countries are members of Islam, for many arguments point in the other direction and I believe that religion itself is not enough to characterize these immigrants. However, it cannot be denied that those countries have been deeply influenced by Islam throughout history, and although their inhabitants may not share the Muslim faith, many aspects of the countries’ cultures have their roots in Islam. My use of this term, Muslim, in this article also does not account for non-immigrants of Muslim faith.

¹ Pardon my French ! A loose translation : Bastard, shithead, jack your mom next time! ... I'll never set foot in this area again, there are only undocumented immigrants, grody guys, thieves !

In France itself, most immigrants come from Africa, a heritage of France's colonial era. Whether in a positive or negative sense, that heritage is still present and leads to the current issues around immigrants. Many French nationals are well unaware that it shapes their everyday interactions with immigrants. Sometimes though, this heritage was taken over by immigrants themselves...or their offspring. Many neighborhoods, like the one previously mentioned, are regularly targeted by the media or public opinion and pictured as hard to deal with or places to avoid.

More generally, the media do not go a single day without speaking about an immigration-related issue. The government questions who will benefit from their welfare system and how to deal with people who seem to challenge their deepest principles of liberty, equality and secularization ; citizens wonder who will become their neighbor ; migrants themselves are seeking more rights and some stability. Groceries also reflect this diversity of cultures, with wide shelves dedicated to "international items". Many examples could be given on how impactful immigrants are, and scholars have been trying to understand immigration and integration, particularly in a profoundly secularized France.

Secularization, in fact, seems to play a key role in the debates about Muslims. As you may have cleverly noticed, I used above a tweaked version of the famous three-worded French motto, as these three terms, those less musical to the ear, have become central principles of French identity since the revolution of 1789 and even more so in 1905. In France, the concept of secularization is so different from that of Anglo-Saxon countries that I will henceforth use the French term *Laïcité*, which will be defined in part 1. Much like immigration, *laïcité* has been at the forefront of public opinion, media debates and constantly coming back in political discourses. The role of *laïcité* with respect to French attitudes on the

integration of Muslims is however to date little studied. This article is thus guided by the following question : To what extent does laïcité influence French attitudes towards Muslim integration ?

Lyon is the source of my reasoning on this question and is a very rich city in terms of history, population and immigration, therefore I use it as a case study – in particular one of the main immigrant neighborhoods called Guillotière – in order to add to theories a more meaningful background. To do so, I did an ethnography of Guillotière and interviewed a few people who have lived in Lyon for many years. Along with these, I added some data on immigration, integration and Lyon. As for the theories, they come from various fields within the humanities department, namely philosophy, social science, political science, theology and history. This wide range of theories enabled me to piece together information to create a coherent framework to understand the role of laïcité.

Before starting to answer my guiding question, the complex notions embedded in it require some defining and it seems equally necessary to provide some historical information on France and Lyon with respect to those terms. Hereafter are thus definitions of immigration, integration, identity, Muslims and laïcité, with French historical background when necessary.

Conceptual Discussions

1) Immigration and its history in France and Lyon

Immigration is commonly defined as the action of coming, traveling into a country for the purpose of permanent residence there. It is thus fundamentally different from tourism,

which is the action of traveling into a country for a limited time. Countries tend to accept tourism with more flexibility than immigration, because of the lack of purpose of permanent residence. Similarly, immigration here is in the voluntary sense, meaning people seeking asylum and refuge are not accounted for because of their different goal, as they wish to return home when the conflict or catastrophe is solved.

France is one of the oldest countries of immigration – of course ancient Rome is one of the first examples of it – but more recently, several waves came from neighboring countries such as Italy, Spain and also Poland. They mainly came to seek jobs or to provide France with new abilities, as was the case for the Italians for the silk industry. Carl Strikwerda² underlines that before World War I, France was the most important importer of labor in the world. As the War started, the Armaments Ministry sought Asian and North-African workers to replace the men who had left to the front ; other sorts of migrations were restricted, and migrants were asked to get a visa. The “Carte d’Identité” (Identity Card) was therefore originally created in 1916 only for the foreigners, being extended to all (male) citizens as late as 1950. It was a way to recognize immigrants, and their way to avoid expulsion. To some extent, mentalities considered Carte d’Identité holders as temporary inhabitants, and not citizens, who, again, didn’t have any identification paper for a long time. Today this is reversed, as only citizens have the right to ask for a Carte d’Identité. Foreigners must have passports issued by their country of origin.

After World War I, migrations were dependent on bilateral immigration agreements (especially with Italy and Morocco). The 1958 Treaty of Rome made immigration within Europe even easier, and newly independent colonies also sent migrants to France, especially

² In Klausen & Tilly 1997, p.62

from Morocco and Algeria. Of course, immigration from these countries was frequent before their independence, but at that point they weren't considered as immigrants but as French citizens from the colonies. The last wave to start was Sub-Saharan immigration in the mid-60s.

Lyon has always been a strategic geographical position with regards to trade and commerce, and thus to migration. In fact, the two rivers which flow through it start, for the Rhône, in Switzerland, and for the Saône, in Northern France, are linked by canals to all of the main water routes in France. At first, the city was on the hills on the west side of the rivers

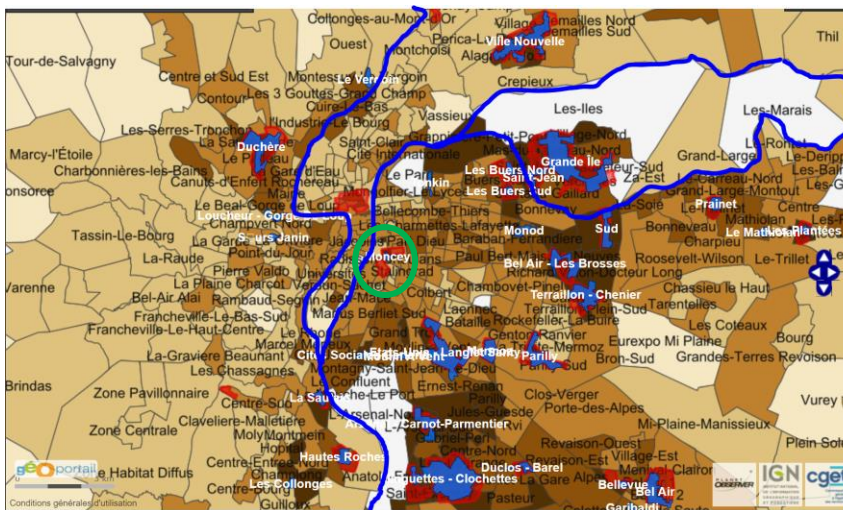


Map 1 : This Map (from Google Maps satellite and colored by me) represents roughly the different phases of extension. At first, in yellow, it was the peninsula and the east hill. Then it extended to the east bank and northern hill (red), then later (blue) the west bank was added along with some extensions in the north. Today (black) the river is tame enough to extend more in the south.

and on the peninsula (see map 1), because the currents were unpredictable and would frequently submerge the other banks. The east bank was the most dangerous of all, which explains why populations settled there later than the other areas. Until 1852, it was not part of Lyon, but regulated the entrance to the city through the fee on the only bridge linking the peninsula to the east. Thus, many

travelers, foreigners, merchants, paupers, exiles, quarantined people were there, either permanently or just for a night or two. Therefore, this neighborhood has always been multicultural. The area was often destroyed by the floods caused by the river's freshet, which did not help the image of an insalubrious and unhealthy district. This led rent to be particularly low, calling in even more immigrants to stay longer.

There has thus always been an incredible amount of activity, with various fairs, the textile industry especially silk, along with banking. Its proximity to Italy brought a lot of immigrants from there, even more so because of Italy's lead in – precisely – banking and silk manufactures. Of course, architecture could be added to that list, although in that case it is not an Italian lead but a simple difference. Today, Lyon is the second³ largest city of France and is trying to be more attractive for national and international companies. Although factories are less important nowadays, there is still the largest French textile industry in Lyon, though it's not silk anymore but carbon fiber and other new textiles. Moreover, the last few mayors have constantly renewed the wish to see Lyon and make Lyon become a Eurocity, a city with international importance.



Map 2 : This Map shows Lyon and its priority neighborhoods (in red) with urgent priority neighborhoods in light blue. Immigration per area is also represented : the darker the more immigrants. The red areas are always in darker shades of brown. This map does not show the limits of Lyon and most suburbs are actually outside of the official limit of the city.

Around Lyon are a number of suburbs⁴ and other towns, which have twice as much social, low-income housing than in the city⁵. These suburbs are usually where immigrants settle (see map 2). There are 35 suburbs close to Lyon, 10 of them being actually in Lyon. The

³ Forked tongues say 3rd, depending on how it's counted

⁴ Suburbs in France have nothing to do with their meaning in America. They would actually correspond to the “inner cities” more or less. The State recently transformed their official title into “priority neighborhood”, however the inhabitants still refer to them with the term “banlieue”, which is suburbs.

⁵ Carpenter & Verhage, 2004 graph p.65

others are right outside of the city, easily accessible through multiple means of public transportation. One of these suburbs is where the old bridge came (circled in green on Map 2). Today called Place Gabriel Péri (A French resistant), it was first known as Place Commune (Common Square) and later Place du Pont (Bridge Square), and was the eastern door into the city of Lyon.

When the neighborhood became part of Lyon, the city sent there its biggest and most polluting factories. In 1958, the bridge was rebuilt, which no longer went to Bridge Square, by the way already renamed Gabriel Péri. Yet, the name lives on in many hearts. Those living there were once Italian, Greek, Maghrebis, Armenians, Jews, Spanish, Pied-Noirs, Cambodians, Turks, most of them have become French. Bridge Square is somewhat of a transition zone, between immigration waves and assimilation. Nowadays, immigrants do not always live in that neighborhood, but in the outskirts of Lyon, in low-rent housing. They regularly come to Bridge Square for business, and perhaps to seek a certain sense of community.

Azouz Begag names this square a “North-African hub” in the region of Lyon, which became a real oriental “souk” selling “fabric, spices, kosher meat, Arabic cassette tapes, hair salons, Maghrebin restaurants-hotels-bars... and also cheap products. The sellers are mainly Maghrebin, Jew or Armenian.”⁶ This open-air market has since then been dismantled and several changes have occurred in the neighborhood. A major one is the construction, in the center of the square, of a mirror-covered townhall (or rather, arrondissement-townhall). This made it impossible to have such a big market and also made the place. There are still

⁶ Begag 1984, p.103

some drug dealers and other standing sellers however (Marlboro cigarettes⁷ and other small items, with no stalls, potentially illegal).

2) Integration

Integration is a loaded term that has conveyed many different meanings in the past. Durkheim speaks about the term integration in a broad sociological way : a society is *integrated*, he states, when it is held by institutions and a social contract to which the individuals adhere⁸. In the modern analysis of migrations, the term is used rather to “describe the paths of individuals in the host society”⁹. The goal of integration, according to Escafré-Dublet, is to ensure that the immigrant labor force is distributed throughout the work field as evenly as the majority population. This definition, although very nuanced and seemingly close to a certain truth, is heavily reliant on a purely economic factor.

Begag argues that integration means both knowing and recognizing one’s own identity. This identity changes with time, which makes the process more complex, but it is because France is evolving and that is something positive¹⁰. On a similar note, AlSayyad and Castells refer to the term cultural pluralism, which indicates the recognition of differences without communitarianism, and keeping common values¹¹.

Many scholars prefer using terms like assimilation and multiculturalism, which are other ways to understand French integration. According to Richard Alba and Victor Nee, assimilation is “the decline of an ethnic distinction and its corollary cultural and social

⁷ Not to advertise anything, but that’s what I clearly remember hearing every single time I went there, the characteristic sound of “Marlboro Marlboro... Marlboro Marlboro...”

⁸ Durkheim, 1967

⁹ Escafré-Dublet 2013, p.6

¹⁰ Begag 2003, p.19

¹¹ AlSayyad & Castells 2002

differences” in order to achieve “parity in life chances”¹². Assimilation is usually measured by socioeconomic status, spatial concentration, language assimilation and intermarriage. Seekings & Natrass even talk about the surrender of the immigrants’ culture¹³. As Begag puts it, assimilation is to make one similar to the host population and to render one’s identity alike the host population’s. He adds another word however : acculturation, as the process of adopting the values and culture of the other country¹⁴. This last term is interesting in that it doesn’t imply a rejection of another culture and set of values, if, and only if, culture and sets of values are not considered exclusive.

Marrow underlines that there is often a misconception of assimilation as being both the process and the outcome of a convergence of cultural and social behaviors. A good example of the gap between outcome and process can be found in Herbert Gans’ study proving that immigrants can achieve upward mobility without being culturally closer to the majority-culture¹⁵. This leads to the idea of segmented assimilation, which is the understanding that the process of coming into the host society is not a linear progress but depends on the host society, on the immigrants themselves, and may therefore not happen as expected by traditional measures of socioeconomic level.

Multiculturalism is sometimes seen as one of the options to integrate immigrants. It is, however, strongly rejected by French political elites as it is thought to lead to communitarianism which leads to division which leads to tension and thus to threats and less security¹⁶. Hartmann and Gerteis define multiculturalism as being “a response – or a set of

¹² Quoted in Marrow 2013

¹³ Seekings & Natrass, 2005

¹⁴ Begag 1984

¹⁵ Marrow 2013

¹⁶ Simon 2012

responses – to diversity that seeks to articulate the social conditions under which difference can be incorporated and order achieved from diversity”¹⁷. Seekings & Natrass add that it involves a process whereby immigrants keep their norms while sharing common national values and institutions. Another term seems more suitable for them : the melting pot, which they define as different groups interacting and creating a new culture with cross elements¹⁸. Klausen, although using this definition for integration, agrees to this reciprocal process of give and take, between the population seeking integration and the native population. This definition requires that policymakers accept immigrants as partners in the determination of policies, especially that of citizenship¹⁹.

Many authors agree that citizenship is a big, though not exclusive, part of integration²⁰. In fact, it is only a factor of political integration. Wikan also adds that there can be several definitions of citizenship itself, whether cultural, ethnic, civic, or political... Moreover, dual citizenship adds a limit to the exclusive use of citizenship as marker of integration, since it would mean that one could be integrated where one is not. Finally, all of these arguments converge to the idea that citizenship, this historically political construct, has shaped the way immigration and integration is understood.

3) French Identity

Ernest Renan defines a nation as “a large-scale solidarity (...) It presupposes a past; it is summarized, however, in the present by a tangible fact, namely, consent, the clearly

¹⁷ Hartmann & Gerteis 2005

¹⁸ Seekings & Natrass 2005

¹⁹ Klausen, 2005

²⁰ See Wikan (2002) and the term cultural citizenship, Klausen 2005, Klausen quoting Tilly 1997, Joppke 2015

expressed desire to continue a common life.”²¹ Therefore, the very idea of nation implies a common identity, which is the definition of that particular common life that is consented to, along with reason as a prerequisite for giving consent.

Wikan defines identity as the idea of who oneself is and implies regular changes. Similarly, culture is not fixed and is shaped by both tradition and personal experiences. Therefore, there does not exist one common culture, even within the same community, but many variances of a culture²². Noiriel & Offerlé add another element to the question of identity. They argue that national currencies – and by extension institutions – can be a barrier against foreigners and create a common bond²³. These definitions underline the complexity of identity, both in its individual and communal forms.

French identity has roots all the way back to the earliest centuries. During the French monarchy (5th – 18th century), identity was not questioned and depended on the feudal system. The peasant belonged to the lord and the lord belonged to the king. There was a fixed set of values tied to that system and deeply rooted in Christian culture : care for the poor, protection of the one Religion, chivalry, honesty, loyalty, to cite only some of them. When the Revolution came, there was not the rejection of the French past, but the acceptance by all provinces of their belonging to France. Although the term nationality does not exist yet, that's when its basis is set, along with the sense of a popular identity²⁴.

That identity was made up of the Declarations of the Rights of Man and of Citizens (DDHC), bringing up values such as liberty, propriety, security, and freedom against

²¹ 1882, Ernest Renan is the most famous thinker of French nation.

²² Wikan 2002

²³ in Klausen & Tilly 1997, p.80-81

²⁴ Heuré & Pascal-Moussellard, 2009

oppression. These rights go hand in hand with duties which are, however, not written down²⁵. Paradoxically, these rights are very individualistic and lead to an individualistic sense of French identity, which is the legacy of the Enlightenment and individualism. The common reason behind this is that communities cannot be equal and create division, which then creates tensions and then insecurity. As a guardian of security, the State cannot take that risk and thus found individualism to be the best compromise between equality and security.

The French Constitution of 1958 became an official and legal fundament of French law and identity only in 1971. It is comprised of the text of 1958 along with the DDHC and the Preamble of the Constitution of 1946²⁶. The Preamble of 1958 starts much like its American counterpart, by a mention of the French people, though in the 3rd person singular, therefore hinting at a more distant link to the people. It forms a national community unified by “France” and under a common institution based on liberty, equality, fraternity and democracy. France is defined as “a Republic, indivisible, secular (*laïque*²⁷), democratic and social” and equality is guaranteed for all – with no distinction of origin, race, religion, gender – in front of law. The French equality is thus legal and not social.

The second article of the Preamble details the symbols of the Republic : French is the national language, the Tricolor Flag is the national emblem, the Marseillaise is the national hymn and the national motto is “Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité”. With these also appears a famous ~~American~~ French guiding principle : “Government of the people, by the people, for the people”²⁸.

²⁵ Begag 2003 p.19

²⁶ There is also a text from 2004 that however is not a fundament of identity but solely of law and environment, so I left it aside.

²⁷ You probably noticed here the same root as laïcité

²⁸ I don't know who to quote here... Abraham Lincoln 11/19/1863 or French Constitution 1958 ?

The Preamble of the Constitution of 1945 adds an interesting clause about the French Union being composed of nations and peoples (both plural) that work together to develop their civilizations. Although France is not a colonial country anymore – since 1962 – these phrases still imply that France can be plural and can find within itself the will to cooperate for a common yet not unified good (civilizations is plural as well).

The DDHC defines the human rights in the second article as natural and imprescriptible, and lists freedom, property, security and resistance to oppression. These vague terms are slightly clarified in the later paragraphs of the document. Freedom is just restricted by the freedom of others as defined by law. The law itself may only prohibit what is harmful for the society, and depends on the common will. Democracy is also present in this text, as an authority that can only exist if it comes expressly from the people.

This text interestingly underlines the necessity of commonality. Democracy and Law both rely on it as they are to come from “the people” (singular). This unity is however not so clear, as depicted in the Constitution of 1946 above. This discrepancy between the underlying principles guiding the French institution, which constitutes its identity, and the formal ideals of that institution, are an embedded weakness in French identity.

4) French colonial past and Muslims

Krishan Kumar explains that the way countries perceive colonies depends on their national identity. France has always been a colonial empire. At first it was because of science, the urge to discover new places, which soon became areas with useful resources²⁹. However, if “Nations are formed of national memories” as would say Renan (1882), then Triumphs,

²⁹ Kumar 2006 p.415-421

Glory, Defeats and Trials, which both create memories and come from collective effort, are ways to shape identity. Jules Ferry also stated that France “needs to be a great country”³⁰ and conquests were a way of achieving that goal. Colonies thus have a specific role in the creation of French identity, especially in the 19th and 20th centuries. This tight bond between colony and identity may be one of the reasons explaining why it was so hard for France to let go of its colonies in 1946-1962. It was getting rid of part of its identity and part of what created its identity.

Moreover, colonialism in France had taken the meaning of improving foreign culture by bringing to them the ideals of the French institutions and Republic, which was called the “mission civilisatrice” (civilizing mission). French culture, ideas, language and administration were thus spread out. There was also a disagreement on what needs to be spread out. Some want it to be Christianity, other refuse that and prefer reason, science and progress³¹. This bi-conception of French identity, clearly visible in this issue of colonialism, never entirely disappeared from France.

One of the most violent expressions of colonization and decolonization is the independence of Algeria. It had become one of the French departments, meaning that it was not considered a foreign conquered territory but fully part of France. Its inhabitants were all fully French, with no distinction. The independence war was thus considered as a civil war that hurt France deeply and led it to question its “children” (citizens) and institutions. That war led to high levels of racism, as being white meant being on the side of metropolitan

³⁰ Quoted in Kumar 2006

³¹ Kumar 2006, Escafré-Dublet 2013

France and being brown meant being Algerian³². White people were thus forced back to France and brown people who would have liked to go to France were not so easily let in³³. This violent fracture is not entirely forgotten today and still leads to discrimination.

The category I call “Muslims” is comprised of Algerians, but also of all of the other countries of North Africa and the Middle East. The reason I picked this broad category is that French people, broadly speaking, are not able to differentiate say Algerians from Moroccans. Various names are given to them, ranging from “Arabs” to “diversity-population”. None of these names are precise, quite purposefully. In fact, racism³⁴ is forbidden in France, and even so, French do not discriminate on the basis of color but on the basis of culture. This culture can sometimes be seen in color, but also through language, clothing, hairdo³⁵. Muslims have to “look” French to be accepted as “French” and thus not discriminated against.

Escafré-Dublet also quotes Lévi-Strauss (1952), in the UNESCO program, arguing that instead of race, we can rather see an irreducible ethnic difference, meaning that it is culture and not race that is the main issue³⁶. She however continues her argument by saying that socially constructed racial categories existed in our societies, and by refusing to name them, we could avoid finding them³⁷. It is also interesting to see, as an example of France avoiding racial terms or racially connotated terms, the changes in one of the French as a Second Language textbooks. Originally called “Ali apprend le français” (Ali learns French) in 1950 it later became “Ali progresse en français” (Ali improves in French) then “J’apprends le

³² This does not mean that all white people supported colonialism and all brown people supported independence.

³³ Sayad 1999

³⁴ For definitions of racism, see Wikan 2002, Isaac 2004, Nirenberg 2007, Foner 2005, Escafré-Dublet 2014

³⁵ Beaman 2015 p.40 ; Simon 2012 p.13

³⁶ Lévi-Strauss 1952 quoted in Escafré-Dublet 2014

³⁷ Escafré-Dublet, 2014 p.88

français" (I'm learning French) before turning into "Cahiers Nord-Africains" (North-African Notebooks), finally settling on "Hommes & Migrations" (Human Beings and Migrations)³⁸.

Muslims is then a constructed category for the purposes of this article comprised of the people from North-Africa and the Middle-East, with no consideration of color or religion, who struggle to look French. This struggle, seen by other French from an outside perspective, is subjective so as to render the term itself malleable to each French individual.

Many authors have found that Muslims have to some extent replaced the Jews and later the Communists as the "Other" of Europe, meaning that they help define the identity of Europeans as opposed to them. Michel Michalak and Agha Saeed also add that the fear of integration can lead to violence and civil misbehaviors, which then leads to a Western fear of integrating Muslims³⁹.

A few possible reasons for this fear are given by Thomas Faist. He argues that natives feel that immigrants could dilute their protective rights and lower their status. Moreover, natives consider that immigrants could cause wage depression, could decline union strength and would increase the welfare issues. However, it is the refugees who are usually not allowed to work and thus rely exclusively on the welfare system ; and labor unions actually lack immigrant representation, thus, these arguments do not apply. On the contrary, unskilled or low-skilled immigrant labor could lead to a quicker upward mobility for natives⁴⁰.

Finally, Jonathan Sacks explains that each person is "genetically disposed to defensive-aggressive conduct when faced with someone not like us, outside the group, not bound by its

³⁸ Escafré-Dublet, 2014 p.19

³⁹ in AlSayyad & Castells 2002 p.143

⁴⁰ in Klausen & Tilly 1997 p.224, 230

code of mutual identity reciprocity”⁴¹. What is threatened depends on what is dear to each person, be it life, territory or simply what is familiar. Thus, it is important for both sides to work together on integration issues.

5) Laïcité

The most useful framework on laïcité is José Casanova's. In *Public Religions in the Modern World*⁴², he defines secularization as the differentiation, the decline of religion, the privatization of religion and the deprivatization of religion. Differentiation, also called separation of Church and State, is the most common – yet insufficient – understanding of secularization. The decline of religion proved wrong in many countries, yet not in France. The privatization of religions, meaning their relegation to the private sphere, is also debated, yet not unfounded in France either. The deprivatization, finally, is a neologism created by Casanova to explain how religions attempt to keep – or regain – a role in the public spheres. The plurality of spheres also corresponds to Casanova's framework tool. The public spheres are comprised of the Government, the political society and the civil society. The Private sphere on the other hand is what is kept within the boundaries of one's home.

Jean-François Chemain, in his book *Une Autre Histoire de la Laïcité*⁴³, goes at length about the long tradition of laïcité, starting from the beginning of the French history, through the crusades commanded by the Kings and the Inquisition. I do not recount his history in detail here, instead preferring to focus on the part which impacts more directly our current

⁴¹ Sacks 2015, p.181

⁴² Casanova 1994

⁴³ 2013, Another story of Laïcité, or perhaps it could be translated as Another Narrative of Laïcité, given that he shapes and tells a certain story of laïcité, by the way somewhat distant to the mainstream history of laïcité in France, which makes it not just an event like any other narrative, but a certain revolution, like Galileo in his time (Redfield 1975). Being against the mainstream, according to Hauerwas, is actually positive in that it puts into question the existing tradition, enabling it to grow. (p.14)

period. I thus start from 1789 until the present, underlining the most relevant legal developments of laïcité in France.

1789 is the year the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (DDHC) was signed. The precept to laïcité is kept within it : “No one can be disturbed because of their opinion, even religious, as long as the expression of these opinions does not disrupt public order.” This last sentence points out the ambiguity of religious expression, as it is always subordinated to public order, the definition of which is defined by the State.

After being stripped of all of its possessions in 1789, the Church (and other religions, though they were small minorities) was offered a pact by Napoleon in 1801 called Concordat : it would regain some of its buildings and the usufruct of a wider majority of them, if they accepted that the State choose their hierarchy. This was a way for the State to control the Church, therefore not entirely corresponding to the definition of laïcité. During the Restauration of 1814-1830, the Church was used to legitimize the monarchy, thereby retrieving its previous position of power.

1882 marked the end of private schools. Jules Ferry, following the philosophy of the Enlightenment, Rousseau and Descartes, restricted education to the State, despite many Catholic congregations who offered cheap and quality education. Schools were able to reopen in 1905, when the law on separation of Church and State was signed. This law was the end of a long debate on laïcité and the form it should take in France. It disestablished officially the Church and enabled a plurality of denominations which opened the door to religions who had, until then, been overshadowed by the Catholic Church. There is one single exception to the separation, with the ownership of religious buildings. Those stayed government property

yet giving entire usufruct to the religious communities. About 30,000 buildings, built before 1905 and stolen during the Revolution, were thus freely made available for religions.

This law is today still applied everywhere in France, and all of the other laws on laïcité add to this law within the limit of its framework and apply everywhere in France⁴⁴. It is stated that the members of the government and any state officials along with the official and administrative buildings, must be neutral spaces. This means that they can neither bear nor wear religious symbols nor express religious ideas. This idea of neutrality is what guarantees that the users of public services are not bothered by religious aspects when entering these spaces, thus preserving their own religion or opinion. In France however, there are numerous cases of religious elements, for example the nativity scenes around Christmas, which are tolerated in administrative buildings such as townhalls, on the pretext of cultural, traditional or artistic justifications, not religious⁴⁵.

In 2004, after long months of debate, the parliament decided to exclude from school all visible personal religious symbols. This includes the hijab, along with kippahs and oversized crosses, which are not named in the law itself. This law is applicable in all public and semi-private schools, and targets all students attending the school. The professors already had to be neutral in school through the law of 1905, as they are state officials, and thus must be strictly neutral, that is, religion-less while they are teaching.

In 2010, a law targeting the public space is added : face-covering garments (including Muslim veils) are forbidden, for security reasons. This is allowed through the vague notion

⁴⁴ This is however not the case in Alsace-Moselle, definitely French since 1919, which was German in 1905. It kept the organization of the Concordat which it had last known in France. Therefore, in those 3 departments of France, the clergy is payed by the State and the Church hierarchy is appointed by the State.

⁴⁵ CNFPT (Centre National de la Fonction Publique Territoriale), Massive Open Online Course 2018, Les clés de la laïcité, on www.fun-mooc.fr

of “public order”, both in the DDHC and the 1905 law. In fact, this term can mean anything, depending on the context and the interpretation that the government decides to apply to it. It is nonetheless consistent with the idea that the State is the guardian of liberty, equality and security, which are all part of the public order. The two first concepts would tend to enable all-covering veils or other garments, whereas the last one was the basis of the restriction in this case. Yet, this balance favoring security could be reversed in a later interpretation, hence the vagueness of the term of public order.

6) Hypotheses

Through these definitions and background, it is made clear that French attitudes are particularly ambiguous when it comes to Muslim integration. The following parts of the paper are guided by three main hypotheses :

First of all, France lacks a unified national identity, and without it, French are uncomfortable in integrating newcomers.

My second claim is that laïcité is a core value of French identity and this makes it seem to French people that integrating Muslims is impossible and leads to a general fear of Muslims.

Finally, I argue that some signs and theories today point to a future of laïcité which would reject not just religion but all culture from the public sphere.

In the process of studying these hypotheses, I will first delve into the complexities of identity and laïcité in the French context. I will then look at the role it is playing with regards to Muslims in France and its potential future.

French Identity and Laïcité

Denis Tillinac, a French philosopher and journalist, meddles with the concept of French identity. He underlines the importance of 3 elements in the creation and upholding of that national identity : the French language is the most important of them. He argues that, albeit the regions tend to develop and rediscover local dialects, they all continue speaking French fluently and it is the main language, whether on the mainland or in the French Overseas Departments. Alongside the language, the public administration, with, third component, a single national law are components of French identity. French people, in his opinion, construct their identity around these three things. The language is not very original, however, thinking about the law and administrative system is. Most of the echoes one can hear is that those working for the French administration, the “Functionaries”, are ill-appreciated and considered to lazily work for a bad system. What Tillinac’s article points out is that, maybe the system is not perfect, but it is a characteristic of the French society, and most French people can agree to its importance, and probably its flaws as well⁴⁶. Those elements are coherent with what the Constitutions say about French identity.

Kumar also points at the possibility of French identity being tied to territory, specifically since the 19th and 20th centuries⁴⁷. Several French thinkers were interviewed in the past 30 years, and their thoughts were gathered in a book called “What does it mean to be French?” in 2009. They point to various concepts of French identity, with Max Gallo in particular talking about 10 elements of Frenchness⁴⁸. Five of them bring new light on how to

⁴⁶ Tilliniac, 2018

⁴⁷ Kumar 2006 p.426

⁴⁸ Max Gallo in *Qu’est-ce qu’être français ?* 2009 cites *ius soli*, equality, state, citizenship, school, laïcité, division, language, gender equality and universality as core elements of Frenchness.

understand French identity. First of all, equality, though of course a core principle, is described by Gallo as the concept that prevents any hierarchy but leave enough space for the enemy to be seen as unequal. A second notion is school, which is nationalized and transmits reason, a legacy of the enlightenment. Laïcité comes after, explained by the necessary reason that pushes aside religion. Next, division is part of the identity because the of the state which is built on democracy and therefore on elections. Those elections are a choice that the citizens need to make, leading to a certain division at each election. The presence of such division within identity indicates that the ideal of unified identity – on which the constitutions are based – is far from being reached. Finally, the idea of the universality of Frenchness points to Frenchness as being an ideology tied to a country more than a country with a specific identity. Which in turn would be compatible with the idea of Frenchness as solely an institution.

Michel Maffesoli adds to that conception of ideology by defining it as living intensely and comfortably, make the most out of the present day and follow the trend of consumption⁴⁹. Other elements that Marc Obendall mentions are will, love and history⁵⁰. Those are not part of official legal texts yet most of the interviews I conducted also speak about these. Most interviewees were answering questions about the elements that are necessary to integrate in France, which was another way of asking what was important to become French and thus have a French identity. Some of them however started speaking about identity directly and I also took note of that. They all cite language and symbols as core elements of French identity.

My first interviewee is a young man named Paul⁵¹. He is from a traditionalist Catholic background; his father is in the military and his grandfather immigrated from northern

⁴⁹ Qu'est-ce qu'être français ? 2009

⁵⁰ Qu'est-ce qu'être français ? 2009

⁵¹ Names have been changed. All interviews are in the annex

Poland. He studied in Lyon both political science and business. He is a member of monarchist associations and politically leans right. He names the Christian culture first off, and then the geographic and historic context of the Western World and Europe (not the European Union). He adds the “terroir” (a land tied to a certain handicraft), language, symbols, way of life and traditions. He also talks about learning history and the values of chivalry and through them, loving truly the country. All of these have strong links to the past and a sense of exclusive collectivity. Exclusive because heartfelt love cannot be geared towards various countries and collective because French identity brings the individual to the understanding that he belongs to a wider community through this identity.

The second one, Damian, grew up in Lyon. He served as a firefighter and wants to become a paramilitary police officer. He is also a right-wing Catholic with a father in the army. “Christianity, dry sausage, and good wine !” were the three first terms that came to his mind. Later, he named laïcité and history as being crucial elements of identity. He added the specific concepts of will and service which are both tied to love. All French people should serve their country and thereby show their love for it and that they deserve to be French, he repeats. This kind of definition, quite close to the previous, underlines the importance of will and merit. The first one has roots in the monarchy, the second one however is a legacy from the Revolution and both can be tied to individualism as they are personal abilities that shape identity. On the other hand, the importance of service situates that identity in a larger whole. Moreover, when he later talks about dual citizenship, he clearly states that citizenship should be exclusive in the public space, though in private there could be another. This leads me to think that identity in his definition would have a similar prioritization when entering the public sphere.

Eric, Damian's brother, studied law and defense strategy in Lyon. To him, language is only necessary at basic level for communication, but history and the concept of laïcité are fundamental. History to him is a way of understanding the others and laïcité is the overarching concept in French administration. His definition of French identity is thus rather collective, as part of a shared history and administration ; and inclusive of other identities to the extent that the French identity is still felt and shared.

Sylvia, a left-leaning young woman, is the only interviewee who does not live in Lyon. I chose to interview her because I knew she worked with immigrants in Lille for a long time. She, thus, was particularly aware of cultural difference and what migrants need to do and be to become French. Laïcité was one of the first elements she cited as part of French identity and she defined it as the "rejection of all religious distinction from the public space". Another important part of identity is French law and the administration that comes from it. Those three elements are the most important in France, they're everywhere and with them, all the French should be able to say : "This is my country". This use of "my" as opposed to "our" implies a certain individualism of the identity despite the recognition of a shared law and administration which then become something the French individually need to know how to handle and that impacts one individual identity more than anything else. This conception of individuality makes identity inclusive, with French identity becoming an identity that can shape many different identities.

The last interviewee was an older Catholic woman named Germaine. She and her husband lived for long periods of time in sub-Saharan Africa, going back to Lyon every once in a while. She thus saw Lyon change and its population as well. For her, love of the country is the main element of national identity. Being French is also a question of will and even of

choice, and as she says : “Choosing is Losing”, identity is exclusive. Furthermore, French identity is mainstream, and thus, as a French person, one is part of a shared and collective identity.

These few interviews, though far from being representative of the entire population of Lyon let alone France, give already an interesting insight on the lack of unity. The definition that each person gave to identity varied on the lines of exclusive or inclusive, along with individual or collective⁵² (see Table 1). However, they are not fixed categories and not binary categories either as there exist some middle-ground. Although being an interesting framework to understand the deeper meanings of definitions of identity, I do not wish to make here the claim that it is either sufficient or flawless.

Table 1	Exclusive	Inclusive
Individual	X ⁵³	Sylvia
		Damian
Collective	Germaine Paul	Eric

These differences show how diverse French identity is, even just in definition. The common ground, so dear to Renan (1882) exist, yet are not shared in the same way. Some of that seems to be due to the Enlightenment-based individualism which transpires in the French Constitutions. The importance of a common knowledge of the past through history and symbols, linked to the necessity of a common language and the existence of an overarching “laïque” administration corresponds to what Kastoryano & Escafré-Dublet find :

⁵² I’m using these four terms in a very literal sense. Exclusive is “I am X thus not Y”. Inclusive is “I am X and could be Y”. Individual is “it’s mine”, collective is “it’s ours”. Some scholars may have different definitions tied to identity and these terms, such as Amanda Knorr (2011).

⁵³ None of the interviewees fit in this category which does not mean that it doesn’t exist in reality. My modest research is not enough to give any importance to that X.

that France has a civic national identity with some ethnic components⁵⁴. What fits inside this structure however is still debated but seems to include laïcité, administration, law, and language.

Territory and history, on the other hand, sometimes are considered to fit in identity, sometimes not. Although after the Revolution and during the 19th century and half of the 20th century, territory was highly valued by the French, the decolonization put a halt to this feeling of attachment to lands. First of all, there were a few wars against Prussia and Germany that won and lost and retrieved Alsace and Moselle. Further, the shift of language between the constitution of 1946 and that of 1958 are one of the examples of that difference. Although colonization was not quite done at that time, many territories had become independent already (Morocco and Tunisia to cite only two). The language in the constitution shifts from one of diversity of territories, peoples, and nations to one of unity of French people (granting graciously their institutions to other peoples if they want). That underlines how different the territory is perceived before the decolonization period and at the end of it.

History is not considered as necessary by all, but some French thinkers emphasize its role in identity creation. In fact, François-Xavier Bellamy argues that the lack of historic education today is the continuity of the trend started by Descartes, Rousseau, and Bourdieu, of learning by experience and not by knowledge. History, being considered less important, is one of the subjects that is less taught in school, which leads to a weakening of knowledge which would enable a stronger identity. For him, knowing one's past is the key to living the

⁵⁴ Kastoryano & Escafré-Dublet, 2016 p.90-91

future and understanding one's present⁵⁵. That idea was shared by 4 of my interviewees as well.

Laïcité, finally, is one of the key conceptual components of French identity. The understanding of it varies a lot, as hinted by some of my interviewees, but most importantly varies between politicians and French thinkers too. The official government position is that laïcité is the separation of state and church and that nobody can be "bothered because of their opinion, even religious". To avoid any such annoyances, all government officials, including anyone working in public administration, is not allowed to show their faith nor act in a faith-based way. The Massive Open Online Course on French Laïcité offered by the CNFPT⁵⁶ early 2018 acknowledges the slim limit between religion and culture in the administration.

Leeway is given to administrative officials as to what they allow for the cultural⁵⁷ associations, in terms of manifestations and events. In fact, depending on the locality, a cultural association may or may not be able to give the same conference in a public building, or hold a demonstration in the street (this could apply to Catholic processions as well, since they are counted as demonstration). The CNFPT states that this leeway is actually not meant for that but to let the government official choose the best way to accommodate all associations. Yet the Observatoire de la Laïcité acknowledges the ill-functioning of the law in this respect.

The public space, furthermore, is allowed to keep the religious symbols of before 1905 as cultural heritage, yet not qua religious heritage. Again, we see the discrepancy between the name and the reality, which politicians have noticed as well. One of the other examples of

⁵⁵ Bellamy, 2014

⁵⁶ CNFPT (National Center of regional public officials), MOOC 2018

⁵⁷ Associations of religion, of "cults" therefore not cultural, which would be of culture.

religion in the public sphere, which would be in the deprivatization definition of secularization according to Casanova, is the statue of John Paul II on a public square. The statue was originally a gift by an artist to a small town, several years before a debate appeared, but was recently forced to move to a religious space. There was a long debate on whether that decision was justified or not, because of the large cross above the statue. In the end, that decision was kept, because, even though the statue was a public work of art and represented a historical character, the cross reminded the religious aspect too much, and, thus, was removed.

Although the government's definition is fairly clear, and the law of 1905 is commonly accepted, they lead to many interpretations on both the politicians' and thinkers' side. There are two main tendencies in the group of politicians of all political sides (far-left to far-right with anarchists and monarchists included) of which I studied the quotes : keep the law of 1905 as it is right now, or extend the law.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon (far-left, socialist party) argues for the strict separation of Church and State, one ruling the public sphere, the other relegated to the private sphere, both spheres having no overlap and no discussion possible. "From this separation ensues the State neutrality towards all religions, philosophies and political opinions. [...] To think that certain religious heritages are the basis for the concepts of freedom, democracy, or equality, is a biased and false reading of History. The secular heritage of France comes from the philosophers of the Enlightenment !"⁵⁸

This quote from Mélanchon's presidential program shows how his narrative of laïcité can be understood through Casanova's "privatization" definition of secularization.

⁵⁸ Mélanchon, 2017

Additionally, this excerpt shows that he considers the Enlightenment and its direct premises as the beginning of laïcité, discarding any of the progress and impact of the past. This analysis ties into McIntyre and Hauerwas' interpretation of the importance of the recognition of the past in understanding the present. By silencing part of the past, Mélançon's understanding of laïcité is voluntarily biased.

A relatively similar position is also held by the center right. François Bayrou is the main voice of the party Democratic Movement (MoDem). "Laïcité is the separation between religious convictions and the rules of life as a society. Even if we have various religious convictions or none at all, we all belong to the same society. The separation [...] is fundamental. It means that no one can force another to follow their personal religious law or philosophy !" This definition of laïcité takes off from both the differentiation and the privatization theories of secularization. The main goal of laïcité in this definition is to enable pluralism, which is one of the prerequisites of modern societies . His opinion of plurality through laïcité implies a narrative that goes back to the dawn of society, back to the Roman and Greek civilizations, which makes his narrative and the community linked to it stronger.

On the other hand, Bayrou is afraid to open the "pandora box" of laïcité. He fears that, once opened, the debates will rage, and a new consensus will not be found, even though the one from 1905 is good in his opinion. This narrative of fear shows that the pluralism he values so much is not tamed and does not make him feel entirely comfortable. In other words, to him, pluralism is necessary but scary. And this paradox is probably one of the deepest issues of the French identity today.

Monarchists also analyze laïcité in other terms. They consider, following the lead of Charles Maurras⁵⁹, the laïcité is actually another word for nationalism. In fact, nationalism is “political existence (national independence) and social life (civil liberty)” to which contemporary France aspires. National independence would be the separation of Church and State, and civil liberty would be the separation of civil and political society and Church. Through this definition, they are close to Mélenchon and Hamon’s idea of laïcité, as defined by the law of 1905.

The second trend, of extending the law, is represented first of all by Manuel Valls, one representative of the left. He gives another perspective on laïcité : “Laïcité is not a sword, it’s a shield, it’s what brings us together, we must cherish it, not instrumentalize it. Laïcité is the ability to live together and that’s why I protect it,”⁶⁰ declared Valls in 2017. His metaphor of the sword and shield are strong images that he doesn’t entirely explain. However, given that the role of the state is to guarantee security, calling laïcité a shield may be a way of saying that there can be security only with it, thus targeting fundamentalist Islam (and terrorism). As a result, he has a vision of laïcité that goes a bit further than the law of 1905 and adds to it the strict equality of man and woman as one way of countering fundamentalism.

Nonetheless, if this is a case, it would be inconsistent with the beginning of his sentence, denying laïcité as a sword. If it targets a specific group or a specific trend of thought, is it not a sword ? Is forwarding laïcité as a way to security not an instrumentalization of laïcité in some sense ? Those questions are difficult to answer because the most recent causes of debate on laïcité are due to Islam, so untying the conception of laïcité in France today and

⁵⁹ Maurras, 1949

⁶⁰ Manon Rescan & Lucie Soullier, 01/24/2018,

Islam is tricky. Moreover, as narratives, these quotes are also events and thus an instrument of a certain kind, a historical instrument, and every history has its guiding thought. Seeing laïcité as security against fundamentalism is just one of these possible historical interpretations.

Emmanuel Macron, center left and current French president, has an idea of laïcité which both guarantees the 1905 law and hints at a possible extension of it, in particular considering the veiled Muslim women case. “Laïcité is the separation of political and religious fields, in order to protect individual freedom of conscience. Concretely, this means that the political power must be neutral towards religions. Laïcité is a fundamental value of our Republic. Laïcité is before anything else a liberty : the freedom to believe or not, the freedom to practice one’s religion.”⁶¹ A year later, he adds : “Why does the hijab make us insecure ? It is not consistent with our country’s civility. We care about the equality between man and woman.[...] No woman should be forced to wear the hijab. That’s what I want. It’s a fight for emancipation. ”⁶² This fight against the submission of women to men is similar to Valls’ idea of a sword. Again, laïcité is instrumentalized for something else than just itself.

Laurent Wauquiez, the main voice of the right wing today, sees laïcité as a tool against religious communitarianism, just like Macron and Valls. However, he does so from a Christian standpoint and not an irreligious one. As the president of the Rhone-Alpes region, he decided to place in the administrative building a “santon exposition”, in other words, a nativity scene with little terracotta figurines, which in fact, is one regional handcraft. His use of a cultural term as opposed to a religious term underlines a shift in language which, according to

⁶¹ Bernard Gorce, 05/03/2017, ; Martin Brésis, 05/04/2017

⁶² Ronan Tésorière, 04/16/2018

Casanova, can lead to differentiation, though this time, it would not be differentiation of religion from public spheres but of culture as a whole from public spheres.

The fiercest position to extend the law of 1905 is Marine Le Pen, leader of the National Rally⁶³ (Far-right). She wants to extend the law of 1905 by enforcing the 2004 law (neutrality of students) to the public space. The only exception to that would be for the “religious personnel”, so priests, imams, rabbis and such. She also denounces “the incompatibility between Islam and our mode of life.”⁶⁴ Her definition of laïcité is one of privatization, and she adds that, “the Republic can take action only in a public space which keeps only the bare minimum enabling the common good”. This idea, which would also correspond to the one I stated above, would be, in the end, an extended definition of laïcité, not just geared toward the religious but toward any cultural difference.

This would actually be encouraged also by the Anarchists, though they would also disagree with keeping an institution at all even with only the bare minimum left (their views are unclear about this possibility). Their vision of laïcité is one of rejection of the religious from all spheres : they consider that even in the private sphere it would prevent individuality, therefore being inconceivable⁶⁵. The history they trace about laïcité is the strict opposite of Chemain’s. Where he sees the influence of the state, they point to the Church’s greediness. That narrative is one of revenge, often linked to ideas of Marxism in the sense of breaking away from the binds of the system.

Finally, away from those two main trends, Jean-Frédéric Poisson, the Christian Democrat representative, gives another interpretation of the law of 1905. “The law of 1905

⁶³ The name changed in June 2018 from National Front to National Rally.

⁶⁴ Gorce, 05/03/2017

⁶⁵ Toast, 03/17/2015,

[...] means that the one who wants to wear a kippah, a veil, a cross, a dove, must be allowed to do so in peace, not being troubled by anyone. This is why I think that starting to prohibit without any particular reason – just because of the suspicion of provocation – is entering in a logic of clothing police.”⁶⁶ Interestingly, this narrative seems close to the far-left vision, in that it does not extend nor reject the law of 1905, however it analyzes it very differently, in a way that could be described as more liberal. Through this definition of laïcité, there is in fact more freedom, though perhaps also the freedom to provoke which is narrated here as being seen by others as an issue.

Outside of the political sphere and governmental sphere, French thinkers also play a part in the discussion. Some of them, such as Michel Onfray state that “Why should we have a laïcité respecting all the religions and their proselytist essence ? [...] Laïcité is not the tool that would enable the democracies to subsist against those for whom democracy is not a virtue but a vice, not anymore. History needs active minorities, not silent majorities.”⁶⁷

Through this statement, Onfray denies the ability of religions to have a role in the public space, similar to Casanova’s privatization. However, the difference with the framework is that Onfray’s idea is not the relegation but the rejection of religion, because of its incompetency and supposed greed. Similar to Onfray’s opinion is Bernard-Henri Lévy’s (BHL). He adds to it that humans need to have within themselves boundaries. Meaning that the man in the public sphere is not the same in the private sphere : he is a citizen in the public, a believer in the private sphere. Those cannot overlap, according to BHL⁶⁸.

⁶⁶ Poisson, 10/17/2016.

⁶⁷ Onfray, 2015, summarized by JosPublic, 01/22/2015

⁶⁸ Lévy, 4/09/2018

Another thinker, Laurent Bouvet, argues that the fundamental question behind the debate of laïcité is whether laïcité today is enough to give France an identity that would fix the issue of existential crisis that the country is going through⁶⁹. However, if laïcité continues to be a process leading towards individualism, adding the question of community and common citizenship is actually counter-productive. This insight is also helpful to understand the link between issues such as immigration, integration, citizenship, and the notion of laïcité.

This range of opinions of laïcité shows how complex this concept is in France, far from the rather simple though nuanced framework given by Casanova. In the end, laïcité, just like identity, is not straightforward. Laïcité is a component of identity, albeit so many disparities indicate how unstable French identity can be. Some of the opinions quoted above also spoke directly about laïcité with regards to Muslim integration. The next and last part of this article studies that relation more in depth.

Laïcité and integrating Muslims

1) rejection of Multiculturalism

“If you live in France a few months, you notice that this diversity [of cultures] is perceived as a recurring malaise. [...] the idea we have of ourselves must change [to integrate others],” says Mamadou M’Baye in a debate on French Identity⁷⁰. This idea seems to correspond to the Constitution which calls for the assimilation of all under the French

⁶⁹ Devecchio, 11/05/2017,

⁷⁰ Qu’est-ce qu’être français ? 2009

institution and, also, the individualist vision of identity that some of my interviewees mentioned.

Similarly, Azouz Begag states that the republican model of integration is against communitarianism and that “for many on the majority, [the need for] integration has been a coded way of saying that people of minority ethnic origin must give up cultural differences supposedly blocking their absorption into mainstream society.” In fact, no community can be integrated in France since France wants to be an individualistic society⁷¹.

Many French citizens define integration as a twofold process in one direction : the foreigner has to adapt to the French way of life, mores, and culture and, also, has to interiorize French values that are a heritage of the French history. Integration is then the process of becoming part of the French “vivre ensemble” (community harmony) according to Abdennour Bidar. He adds that this can seem overwhelming for a newcomer; however, France gives so much in return for such a commitment that it makes sense⁷².

My interviewees’ definitions of integration can also give an interesting insight in different trends of French opinion. “When my husband and I lived in Africa, we had to behave like the locals there, accept their government and so on, we had to stay discreet and not be a cause of shock for them,” narrates Germaine. She considers that, when you choose to move out of your country into another one, you need to conform to the host culture. Or else you needed to stay in your own country. “Choosing is losing”, she repeats. Either you stay in your country of origin with its culture, or you come here and take this culture. “You can’t just take a bit of everything, whatever you want or need” she continued. At this part of the

⁷¹ Begag 2005 p.xix

⁷² Abdennour Bidar in France Inter 3/10/2013

conversation, her son blurted out “*La France, you love it or leave it*”. She repeated the sentence and agreed to it, not knowing that it was the motto of the National Rally, a party she despises blatantly. Her opinion of integration is very close to her own education, believing that values and goods come in bundles of rights and duties. When one enjoys rights without complying to the duties in relation to them, discretion is lost, and it becomes profit or individual interests. Again, her idea of a collective identity is made very clear in that reasoning on integration.

Paul says that integration is “becoming aligned with the values or way of life of France, the West and Christianity. [...] It’s basically integrating within oneself those values. This definition makes it harder for people with a different religion than Christianity to integrate, such as Muslims, yes. There is no common ground at first, so more effort has to be put in by the immigrant to integrate the values, especially those around having a job, rights of women and power. For Coptic immigrants though, it stays easy to integrate, it’s not a question of country but of religion.” This quote ties back to the definition of French identity Paul had given earlier, adding that cultures akin to French culture would not find this as hard as some other cultures. It is also an opinion very similar to Germaine’s, like their visions of identity. This hints at a correlation between opinions of identity and integration, in the case of a collective and exclusive identity.

“Integration is the will to adapt to the culture and functioning of the country and make them one’s own,” states Eric. The functioning refers to the institutions, the culture to history. One must have will in order to adapt to both. This voluntary component is key in Eric’s opinion of integration and immigration as a whole. Without this will, nothing much can be done, and that’s when immigrants “start claiming a strong culture [and] try to recreate it”.

This claim leads to immigrants “sticking in their communities,” which creates some sort of “ghettos”. While Eric’s understanding of identity was rather collective and inclusive, his view on integration shifts to a more exclusive and collective perspective. It seems to be closer to Damian’s point of view also, with respect to will.

Damian defines integration as the “will to respect the habits and customs of the country and to live within the French community, which depends mainly on the immigrant. However, there is a small role of French people who need to accept the incoming people.” This ties into what Begag and M’Baye were saying about being absorbed into the mainstream society. This also underlines that the French themselves could need to integrate, if they do not respect the habits and customs. He adds later that, “we need to be proud of our history to integrate people,” which is another way to say that history should become a common ground between the French and the immigrants, both learning it and admiring it. This vision of integration seems to correspond to Damian’s central-mindset in the framework of identity : will being individual, though tied to a collective community, with neither an exclusive nor really inclusive position.

Sylvia agrees that communitarianism is undesirable and adds that immigrants need open-mindedness to avoid it. She also takes the perspective of immigrants, saying : “I would define integration as the way the immigrants see the country : ‘this is my new country’.” She clarifies that this implies both not forgetting the origins but also accepting the new country as one’s own. With such a definition, integration is not a reciprocal process but a state of mind, which is somewhat different to the other interviewees. On the other hand, being rejected by France, as she puts it, can also lead to that state of mind not being fully attained. This “can lead to extremism, to find more acceptant people, and delinquency, to claim

difference and draw attention to them [the rejected immigrants]”. Her definition of integration yet corresponds to her perspective on identity : very individualistic. On the other hand, there seems to be a slightly more exclusive idea of integration, when accepting a country as one’s own. The possibility of having or belonging to several countries is, however, never overruled.

One of the topics I asked about in interviews is the sentiment of integration of Muslims from the 3rd and 4th generations and more. That data statistically does not exist in France because there is no ethnic census. Such a census would rely on a French ethnicity which does not exist, since French identity is officially, only civic⁷³. All of my interviewees replied that they find those Muslims less integrated than the 1st and 2nd generations. This goes against the concept of linear assimilation which suggests immigrants would be better assimilated as they live in the country. In France, at least, they are sometimes not perceived as integrated. Begag explains that there are three sorts of Muslims : those who try their best to integrate and thus are cut from their community including family ; those who refuse to be cut from their community and thus do not wish to integrate and claim their culture of origin ; and those who would like to both integrate and keep their community relations, thus not picking a side and seeming indifferent⁷⁴.

When asked about why they seemed less integrated and how it could be fixed, Damian answered that the education system should be revised – not down-leveled – so that everyone has a common knowledge. Eric answered that it might have come from the economic slowdown of the 1980s which coincided with a cultural crisis in France, making both jobs and

⁷³ Kastoryano & Escafré-Dublet, 2016 p.90

⁷⁴ Begag 1986

identification harder for all, probably even more so for immigrants. Germaine and Paul explained that they thought they are less integrated because they are more arrogant in public and publicly claim their foreign roots, which they actually probably never really experienced.

All of the interviewees agreed on one aspect of integration : communitarianism is incompatible with it. In Lyon, areas of communitarianism are well-known, a few names are constantly cited by my interviewees (in separate conversations thus not recorded) : La Duchère, Les Minguettes, Guillotière. It is believed that immigrants and their families after them live there by love of their community. Scholars paint a very different picture of them however. Only 60% of immigrants (1st and 2nd generations) live in suburbs, explains Escafré-Dublet, which is less than what is portrayed by the media. If they live there, it is mainly because housing is cheaper, not because their families are there⁷⁵. Begag, when recounting his personal story, adds that his family always wanted to leave these places, which were far from the center of the city and not well built, even at first, in the 1970s. This was a hard process though, not just because of price, but because some neighborhoods' estate agencies would refuse them⁷⁶. More recently, the movie "Fatima" also shows how wearing a hijab hindered the main character's apartment-hunting⁷⁷.

2) Fear of Islam

The question of communitarianism is often brought up by the media and politicians as one of the downsides of multiculturalism. However, some scholars argue not for multiculturalism but for cultural recognition⁷⁸. Wieviorka in particular points out that the

⁷⁵ Escafré-Dublet, 2014, p.16

⁷⁶ Begag 1986

⁷⁷ Fatima, 2015, film directed by Philippe Faucon.

⁷⁸ Wieviorka 2001, Doytcheva 2005, Weil 2011, in Barou 2014

fear of Muslims appeared especially in the 1980s, when individual Muslim immigrants became a group in the eyes of French people. Since this idea came in a period of economic slowdown, French people feared that Muslims would take advantage of France and undermine its social identity. Wieviorka adds that Muslims had become a French scapegoat in the face of globalization and American soft-power and that, in fact, French stereotypes which feed the fear of Muslims are wrong and Muslims are not coming as foreigners to benefit of France, but as immigrants who are building a new culture with France⁷⁹.

That there are differences in the acceptance of others goes in complete opposition to the most basic conception of equality and ability to achieve through sole merit and nothing else. Yet there is a social reality behind this twist. Some may say that this person or this other one managed to achieve socially the way the French consider achievement. It is “l’arabe qui cache la forêt”⁸⁰, a modified idiom which comes from the expression “l’arbre qui cache la forêt” (the tree which hides the forest, meaning a distraction from the real problem). That individuals can manage being assimilated in the French society is true, but is not the whole problem. France is afraid to enrich its culture, especially when it touches religion and politics⁸¹.

This was especially clear when I asked Germaine if it would be bad to change French culture, especially since she pointed out that Muslims tend to take everything good from our country and abandon all the things they deem useless. If so, “couldn’t the French actually use that for our own profit : keep what immigrants are taking as good from our culture and check the rest to see why they didn’t take it and...change ?” Her stern response was unequivocal :

⁷⁹ Wieviorka, 1995 p.134

⁸⁰ “The Arab who hides the forest”

⁸¹ Begag 2003, p.19

“No, we can’t change like that⁸².” Paul, Damian and Eric followed a somewhat similar logic by never saying that French culture can change but that it can learn from other cultures for its own benefit. Eric added that immigrants’ understanding of religion and family could help France find its lost identity (the one France had under the monarchy millennium).

Sylvia had a contrasting opinion. “Immigration can totally have a positive impact in France, through a culture mix that can transform the French culture, but that may not be bad, it’ll just be new. We shouldn’t be afraid of that. We do need to keep the main principles though.” Those principles, for her, are laïcité, language and administration. Interestingly, laïcité is, on the contrary, the French principle that for Macron, Wauquiez and Valls, serves as a shield or sword against Muslims.

The issue of past colonialism and discrimination makes Muslim integration particular. Klausen⁸³ distinguishes 4 models of Muslim integration : secular integrationist, Euro-Muslim, neo-orthodox, and anticlerical. The secular integrationist considers that Islam should be treated like all the other religions in Europe, meaning higher constraints for Islam in the case of France. Anti-clericalists see Islam as incompatible with the West, and all religions should be kept private. The Euro-Muslim wants differentiated policies for Islam, and the neo-orthodox considers Islam as incompatible with the West and thus needing special policies. The fact that these four types exist further prove that integration is a very complex topic that includes various aspects.

One aspect, especially developed by Wikan, is the notion of respect. It is considered by many Muslims to be a basic right and, therefore, is claimed. However, from a Western view

⁸² My fingers are itching to talk about my beloved concept of “stability” here, however it will have to be a topic for another article...or more.

⁸³ Klausen 2005. See also Bassam Tibi in AlSayyad & Castells 2002 p.38

point, respect should still be earned and not simply due. This aspect is important to understand how Muslims can define their own integration, and how they can feel comfortable and accepted in their host-country⁸⁴. This issue was also raised by Germaine, Eric, and Damian, who noted that some Muslims seemed to want respect outright even though France has a long tradition of “meritocracy”, at least since Jules Ferry⁸⁵.

Another is religious revival. Klausen argues that Islam has brought to Europe a new religious revival, forcing other religions to look into their faiths as well. In link with this idea is the notion of proselytization. Klausen states that it has very positive consequences when proselytization is directed towards one’s own community or self, as it increases one’s faith and helps return to roots. However, proselytization towards other communities is a barrier to interfaith dialogue. This dialogue, between Christians and Muslims, could easily find common ground with Abraham⁸⁶.

The last aspect of Muslim integration is the funding of mosques and prayer halls. Klausen argues that funding comes from the countries of origin because of the lack of public funding. Most of her interviewees (Muslim elites) criticize such attempts, as other countries do not know what they actually need, and incoming imams are not always appreciated. Similarly, organizations with one branch in Europe and the other in the country of origin – although temporarily having some positive impact – are not desirable in the long run. Many articles, especially *le Point*⁸⁷, studied this question of foreign funding and said that on average, only 10% of the mosques are funded by foreign investors. There are a few cases that

⁸⁴ Wikan 2002

⁸⁵ See Krop, 2014,

⁸⁶ Klausen (2005) p.155

⁸⁷ Pétreault & Godard, 01/21/2016

have been entirely funded by another country, such as the Great Mosque of Lyon, funded by Saudi Arabia. Le Point explains however, that, because this generous act did not encourage Muslims in France to support the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the country barely funded anything since then.

3) Future of Laïcité

According to politicians, thinkers and scholars, we saw that laïcité tends to have the following features : it is the separation of Church and State, with the impossibility for the state to fund any cultural association ; it is the rejection of religious symbols and expressions in the public space, except around religious buildings ; it is a guarantor for all to have equality in front of the law, even gender equality ; it is a way to limit the impact of new religions in France, especially Islam.

La Nouvelle Garde, a new French magazine, analyzes laïcité as being dual in France. "First of all, the libertarian left sees in it an obstacle to the post-national and multicultural society. [...] On the other side, laïcité appears to be a shield against Islam."⁸⁸ This view summarizes quite well the French state of Laïcité. On the one hand, the pursue of a society of individuals not subjected to any authority except the rules of the French institution ; on the other the fear of Islam and fundamentalist religions as a whole. This opinion is not so violently stated in politicians but rather expressed by thinkers, which is why laïcité, in France, is experienced more strictly than the law actually defines it. Moreover, since all dualisms are problematic⁸⁹, in order to keep using the term laïcité, France needs to find a third way.

⁸⁸ La Nouvelle Garde, 02/01/2018

⁸⁹ Sacks, 2015 ; Peter Ochs, 2017

Perhaps, with the new options to understand laïcité, France will find a way to reconcile itself with the idea of community.

In fact, France has had a long history of questioning of community. Some thinkers⁹⁰ first tried to create a universal community. It was the idea of the crusades, or today's jihad. Then they tried to make democracies the means of an inter-communitarian peace. Yet that did not work either. If a universal community and democracy do not help move out of tensions, what can ? Perhaps tearing down every community and leaving the individual bare, just under a state ruling, which helps steady norms and international connections. In this perspective, the sole fact that religion exists annihilates the individualistic attempts, because one of their main purposes is to create a sense of community and belonging, under God or under a set of values.

Bilgrami, in *Secularism, Identity and Enchantment* (2014), argues that those values are absolutely necessary in human life, and that the lack thereof puts the human being in a state of alienation. Alienation implies a mindless use of resources, where everything has an economic worth only, within a secularized world. Gandhi and Marx had also underlined the dangers of alienation, although they did not use that term. The issue with "value" (ascribing meaning – not economic worth – to things) is that it has a religious connotation and breaks with the tradition of detachment which enables agency. This is because, by accepting a religion, individuals would agree to let go of some of their agency through the ideology or theology of the religion. Moreover, culture – and thus identity – seems to conflict with

⁹⁰ Begag 2005

secularism when it enters law ; yet reason is what enables culture to be taken into consideration⁹¹.

Joppke, in his book *The Secular State Under Siege* (2015) questions to what extent religion can be excluded or included in the public sphere and if there can be partiality in this respect, granting privileges to some religions and not to others. He argues that there is sometimes the transformation of religion into culture, with religion qua culture being accepted into the public sphere.

Casanova, in his framework of secularization, details the process of differentiation as occurring when a previously strong sphere (religion), which had the monopoly of certain elements of life (care for the poor), sees its role taken by another increasingly strong sphere (the state), which then renames the role (humanitarian aid). Along with that, there is often questioning of that first sphere, and the increase of a third sphere to support the second (capitalism or the economy for example). The diversification of spheres and the loss of monopoly, by some spheres, can lead to differentiation⁹².

When tying these three authors together, there is a strong hint that laïcité may continue to evolve and may become the trunk of a bigger phenomenon in France : that of the rejection of all cultural particularities from the public sphere, leaving it bare, with just institutions and law to impose a public order. First of all, several examples in France show that religion and culture are controlled by the state. Around Christmas, nativity scenes in the public sphere are constantly put into question, and it has become essential to name them “cultural” for them to be tolerated. Paul, Germaine and Eric also are an example that Muslim

⁹¹ Bilgrami 2014

⁹² Casanova 1994 p.20-25

religious outfits and actions are discriminated against, not by the state directly but by other French people, not because of their religious origin but their cultural one. This shift in language is one of the indicators of a detachment of values, as criticized by Bilgrami. More things go into the realm of “secular” values, ties to culture and identity, and those are not in adequacy with the state’s framework. As examples, the laws of 2004 and 2010 on the hijab in France along with Macron’s quote that laïcité ensures gender equality. In that event, the state is taking the role of Islam to say what is good or bad.

Given these elements, it becomes clear that the state has already begun a new process of differentiation, this time not of itself with the Church, but with cultures as a whole. This would probably need a new name because of its distinction from just religious differentiation, and maybe deculturalism (or deculturalization) could be the study of a scholar if the process continues on the unfortunate track it is taking. Many authors⁹³ nonetheless argue that although the division between Church and State is necessary, it must not become a division between society and religion, for religion is very important in the construction of identities. Bilgrami leaves us with a hopeful note however : reason sets a limit to this process, and France is one of the cradles of reason and free-thinking.

Conclusion

At the end of this article, I have shown how intricate the relation between French identity, laïcité, and integration is. Several frameworks can help navigate through the various

⁹³ Wikan 2002, Klausen 2005, AlSayyad & Castells 2002

complexities, especially that of laïcité given by Casanova and that of identities, which may have come from French institutional identity itself.

First of all, there is a great disparity in the opinions the French have of their identity. Two key elements unite them all however : language and institution, which are seen as overarching elements under which many individual identities can find their place. Yet there is a tendency to feel uncomfortable with this idea and to seek instead a more cultural identity through history and education.

Second, laïcité has become one of the core principles of the French Republic, transpiring in every part of the institution and also hidden in the secularized language. This leads to many misperceptions and fears of Muslims and their possible integration, which seems to be hindered by the strict separation of State and Church. On the other hand, other voices pointed to the ease Muslims have in adapting to that framework.

Finally, some elements of the discourses and theories reveal that laïcité may further its process and become geared not only against religions but against any sort of cultural particularism, which could lead to a greater fear of Muslims and any new incoming culture. This process may have started ; nevertheless, it can be stopped by reason and re-enchantment of the public sphere.

In the end, from a French perspective, Muslims seem to be scapegoats of process of change and evolution that many seem to deny and oppose. This process involves securing a new definition of French identity through laïcité, along with reason and individuality. Whether we want it or not, this evolution will include Muslims, in one form or another. It is our duty, as French individuals, as French communities, to push aside our fears and make this transition peaceful.

Annex : Interviews

Paul

I think that language, symbols, having a job and knowing French history at least basically (monarchy, then revolution, then Napoleon then democracy) are necessary to be integrated. Language is fundamental in order to communicate with others, symbols and history enable an attachment to the country. Having a job is a way to have a social life and see the everyday French life. Money, laïcité and nationality are not necessary to integrate however. Money will come with having a job and nationality will come with integration eventually. As for laïcité, it should be the freedom for all to practice their religion, not anything forced by the state. On a similar note, being of Christian background makes it easier to integrate, though it's not necessary.

It seems that integrating would be easier if the welcoming population doesn't frown upon it, yet past examples show that it's possible nonetheless (the North Polish population integrated even though they were not at all welcomed). Integration is a question of will, coming from the immigrants themselves.

What is integration? I would say that it is being aligned with the values or way of life of France, the West and Christianity (because Christianity influenced the other two). It's basically integrating within oneself those values. This definition makes it harder for people with a different religion than Christianity to integrate, such as Muslims, yes. There is no common ground at first, so more effort has to be put in by the immigrant to integrate the values, especially those around having a job, rights of women and power. For Coptic immigrants though, it stays easy to integrate, it's not a question of country but of religion.

Muslim immigrants can have a positive impact on the French society if they are integrated. If not, then it's bad. If they feel French, respect everything, yes. They can bring culture, not enforce it, but offer it. Right now, immigration is not good in France, they stay in their communities (somewhat of a ghettoization, they feel like they don't need to integrate outside of it), they benefit from the welfare system (economic free-rider), they cause social problems. Because of them, France is not imposing French culture, it's barely even offering it. There is thus a down-leveling, in education for example, so that they can achieve well in school.

3rd-4th generation Muslims seem less integrated to me. They say they return to their roots, refusing integration, especially young Muslims. It's not all of them, but those who do cause a lot of problems. They should be better integrated though! We should deport them, but that's actually even harder because most of them are French and it's hard to judge who gets to stay and who must leave. I don't know if they'd be better integrated in their country of origin. We need to try to see! I also consider dual citizenship to be ludicrous. Obviously, they do it for tangible benefits, their own material interests. It can't be heartfelt love for the countries. People need to be where their heart is, where their culture is. You can't change your culture.

To change things for immigration and immigrants, we should have a true laïcité that doesn't support any religion, but not specifically geared towards diminishing radicals either. Prayer times should not be tolerated by the government and there shouldn't be specifically halal combat rations either. The government should also have a better control over who's who on its territory. Associations should be sorted out, it's unacceptable that the Muslim Brotherhood had a branch in France. Associations willing to destroy Christian culture should not be tolerated. As for what we can do at our individual scale...I don't know. Maybe stop posting messages in the streets saying, "Muslims out of Europe !" (laughs) We can also pray for them. As for discrimination, it's normal and not ethnic or anything. Like if a white person is wearing dreadlocks, they won't be employed either. It's a question of environment, vibe, not color or ethnicity. I mean, human beings are always trying to be around people that are like them, it's not good, but it's the reality of life.

French Identity is first of all a culture of Christian tradition. You can see it in architecture, French cuisine and the way of life. You can see it in religious life with all the churches, Christian holidays, even locally we have December 8th ! France is also part of the Western World, of Europe, and I'm not speaking about the European Union here. It's the old Europe, the "Europe of the People". France is a set of "terroirs" (specific land), a language, symbols (red white and blue, the rooster, the national hymn, though that one's unfortunate). French people live a certain way of life, has a specific understanding of time and life (rythme de vie). There are also many traditions (July 14th, Labor Day, even local celebrations such as the "Beaujolais nouveau" (wine feast in the Lyon region) and more). France is chivalry, at least the idea and values of it (respect of women), it's also savoir-faire, with luxury industries, wine, handicraft.

Damian

I think that language, symbols, having a job, history and laïcité are all necessary for integration. Without the language, you can't understand nor express yourself, which means you won't get a job and won't learn the culture, so you'll be marginalized and that leads to communitarianism. French symbols are a marker of French history, and history needs to be known at least basically. Working brings social ties and money. Money itself isn't necessary to integrate, and getting money through the welfare system and not work is anything but integration. Laïcité today is necessary to integrate. It means not speaking of religion and no proselytization. Religions have to be seldom visible, discreet (well, cassocks are allowed though). Nationality on the other hand must be earned. You need will and need to earn it, you need to be able to serve your country. By the way, I think that civic service is also essential for integration. I mean, for everyone, not just immigrants. That way people can show their goodwill and willingness to serve their country.

Integration, as "will to respect the habits and customs of the country and to live within the French community", depends mainly on the immigrant. However, there is a small role of French people who need to accept the incoming people. When immigrants are integrated, they can bring good things to the country, by explaining their culture and thus helping to understand the

hows and whys of conflict abroad. But that can only work if they don't reject French culture. It's a choice ! Either you choose to respect French law in France, or you get out of here and choose another country and its law. There are also bad aspects to immigration. Terrorism for one, but that's also due to an inner crisis. The demographics of immigration are also scary because they may become the majority population soon, and then we'll lose our history, our religion, our culture, and that will lead to conflict, maybe even a civil war. Immigration is not well regulated, because right now we don't need them, we don't need an extra workforce. And if there's a lack of control, it leads to huge masses coming in that can't integrate. We should deport the immigrants who don't have the will to become French. As for dual citizenship, you have to be French in the public sphere. French first, and maybe another citizenship in private.

The country of origin does have an impact of integration, depending on the religion, which can be radical, and very different from the Christian tradition of France, in terms of women, law and respect. I heard about the story of this woman, 17 years old, married to a guy who kept her locked in the house and would beat her regularly. Well her family knew that but wouldn't let her divorce because it would be a huge disgrace for them. So different countries also imply different degrees of open-mindedness (for example if we compare Algerians and Tunisians, it's not the same at all, Algerians are less openminded). It also depends on culture and on the wars on the country of origin. If you come from a war-torn country, people can be suspicious.

3rd and 4th generations are less integrated than their parents and grandparent. Their grandparents knew why they were coming to France (to work or because they were harkis, so Algerian war veterans), and they would be discreet. Today, their grandchildren are claiming a different, a foreign culture, they lack values, identity and a French past. They need more markers to guide them. Because they are seeking their identity they are not stable, don't feel comfortable and distrust France. They shouldn't have these problems...they wouldn't if the National Education system were clearer, would teach history, country history, not just an overview of world histories, making it "more accessible to all" as they say. That's down'-leveling. And immigrants (3rd-4th generation) need to learn and accept that French history. Would they be better integrated in their country of origin ? Probably not. They need to move their ass, get away from dealing and communitarianism and earn integration. They need to be obliged to their country.

We need to be proud of our history to integrate people. The government needs to implement civic service and improve History lessons, there shouldn't be any taboo in history. Sports should also be encouraged because it teaches to go beyond one's limits, always improve. Oh and also, they should put homework back into primary school. Right now teachers aren't allowed to give homework, because some families aren't able to provide good study spaces. But that just teaches them to be lazy ! There are already a few associations that do a good job, for example coexist and other humanitarian organizations. And individuals have to accept that others can work here and we shouldn't look at their origin. We should also give a better meaning to the "Legion of Honor", which today is just given out to rich and famous people. It should be for

everyday heroes who show by their actions that they love serving France. We all need to be more involved in France, be encouraged to volunteer. As for immigrants, that should be compulsory. They should be able to claim proudly : I am French.

Eric

Language, symbols, history and the concept of laïcité are necessary for integration. Language doesn't have to be mastered, and many French people don't either ! But at least enough knowledge of it to understand and speak. History is absolutely necessary because if you don't know where the country comes from, you can't lead it to its future. Even when visiting a country or say, French military abroad, they learn about the history of the country they're in, so they can understand the people they're fighting and those they're protecting. Moreover, knowing history leads you to knowing about the symbols and their meaning. Laïcité is also important because it's the overarching concept in French administration. Moreover, integration is a question of will and also of culture, learning the culture of the country and the way of life, with simplicity. Integration is the will to adapt to the culture and functioning of the country and make them one's own. It's not only their doing, we have to accept them and help them learn all of that, help them find housing and so on.

Immigrants can have a positive impact on society, like what happened in the 8th and 9th centuries, which was great economically. They also have a way of life that we can learn from, in their way of understanding family, prayer and religiosity. They also accept to work in jobs that other French people don't want, and they improve our demographic statistics. However, if immigration is not controlled, it can lead to jihadism, and if there are too many of them, they can't integrate. They might also take advantage of the social system and social housing, but those effects depend on their will to adapt, and a bit on the region – not the country – they are coming from. Right now, immigration in France is disorganized, there are too many immigrants and the borders of the EU are too porous. Moreover, we are seeking our identity and it doesn't help.

3rd and 4th generations are for the most part not integrated. Some of them are though. It could be because of the 30 miserable years, economically speaking, which came after the 30 glorious years... it led not only to economic slow-down but also a cultural crisis which makes integration harder. Immigrants start claiming a strong culture that is actually not a tangible reality but something they think they remember but their memory of it transformed. Of course, they need to remember where they come from, but that doesn't mean they need to try to recreate it. By the way, that means they would probably not be integrated in their country of origin because they imagine something different from the reality. They also probably already adapted to the huge liberty and lifestyle that's accessible in France and their country of origin may not guarantee all of that.

You ask if they should BE integrated...since integration is a question of will, I'll reply that they need to integrate THEMSELVES. Right now, they don't all have that will, and choose to stick in their communities, not necessarily being conscious of it, but it can create some sort of ghettoization process. And that itself leads to unequal opportunities, between them and those out of these "ghettos". Fundamentally, there's not much that we can change to help their integration, we're already doing a lot. They need to find that will to adapt. We could find our identity, make it clearer, but that wouldn't be sufficient. We could put forward some sort of "soft-power à la française", something like "Christianity, dry sausage and good wine !" as my brother would say. We should be proud of our history and our past, of our heritage, which we see in the streets, on TV through various shows and so on. The government should also have more authority. Use the army not just outside of our borders but inside, alongside the police, increase the sanctions of immigrants who step out of line...and remove the French nationality of people with dual citizenship who have committed a crime that would today require 5 years of prison. Moreover, France needs to find more independence, not leaving the EU, still cooperating, but we just can't all have the same laws, they need to be more adaptable to our country's history, and there should be more border control as well.

Sylvia

To me, the language is fundamental to integrate, along with laïcité. Both are ways to understand, be understood and use the administration which is necessary to integrate. Laïcité is the "rejection of all religious distinction in the public space" and should stay that way. Women who want to wear a burka go to the UK, that's fine. Here, they need to obey the law. Having a job is really important too, but not having money, though that becomes more important as you integrate, as long as it's not financial aid money. The national symbols and history are not necessary, though the underlying concepts and main principles are useful. The symbols aren't really relevant today, they're just a marker of the republican past and revolution. I think that with all of that, the culture of the host country and country of origin are important to take into account to integrate. Usually we classify immigrants in 3 integration categories : those who come from Europe or Indo-Europe, those who come from ex-French colonies, and those who come from everywhere else. Integration does not depend only on immigrants, also on French people, be they descendants of immigrants or not.

After thinking a bit, I would define integration as the way the immigrants see the country : "this is my new country". That's a central aspect of the identity of the immigrant. Integration is also to be openminded and not stuck in communitarianism. Finally, integration is to have a stable job and potentially a family life built in France. Those two last one's aren't compulsory but helpful. It doesn't mean that you forget your own culture, but you accept the new one as your own. There's actually no big difference, from a migrant point of view, in their day by day integration, whether they come from the Arab world or elsewhere. I think that the country of origin doesn't really do much to integration... if they come from big tourist cities abroad, they'll be used to

seeing different cultures for example. But yeah, there is this idea of extremism in some countries too which can make it way harder to integrate.

Immigration can totally have a positive impact in France, through a culture mix that can transform the French culture, but that may not be bad, it'll just be new. We shouldn't be afraid of that. We do need to keep the main principles though. Moreover, immigrants shouldn't stay trapped in their culture, they should be open to the host country otherwise it's bad because not reciprocal. By the way, sometimes integration is actually more positive if the immigrants can be in their communities, because those give them more confidence and can be reassuring. But it depends on each person. Immigration could maybe have some negative impact, as it triggers identity groups who use immigration as a scapegoat and increase the fear of losing French culture. But that would never happen ! Though I understand those who are afraid of communitarianism. Overall, I think that there are many benefits to immigration, be it new talented people, economy or culture.

3rd and 4th generations can be better integrated than their parents, or not as well. It actually depends on them more than anything else, and on how their parents and grandparents integrated. If they integrated well, then their offspring will too. If not...it depends. My grandfather was from Belgium, and I feel totally integrated in France, France is my country. I guess it does actually depend a little on country of origin and the reasons of migration in the first place. 3rd & 4th generations should be better integrated if they want to stay in France. If not, then okay, fine. There's a double danger of "France is rejecting me" which can lead to extremism to find more acceptant people and delinquency to claim difference and draw attention on them. I don't think they would be better integrated in their country of origin, it ultimately depends on will and future project. Integration is always hard, wherever it is.

We need to change a lot of things to help their integration. First of all, political discourses on immigration in general. We should also change CESEDA (code de l'entrée et du séjour des étrangers et du droit d'asile : code of entry and residence of foreigners and asylum rights), to make things easier for them and to make immigration a right in itself. Today associations help integration in big cities, but it could be improved in smaller localities. As for our own individual perspective, there's so much to change. We need to open up to the foreigners, share with them, not in a neo-colonialist way "I'm more developed than you so I'm helping you" but "I'm a human being and I'm sharing my culture with you, another human being." Our first reaction to immigration shouldn't be rejection but help. Perhaps we shouldn't call them immigrants but "people starting a new life in France."

I want to point out that immigrants are just as afraid as we are, though for different reasons. They are confronted to a strict administration which they can't understand, which is why so many of them don't go through the hassle of getting legal documents and stay irregularly in France. Some of them cheat on their age to get "better rights" though actually if they're just honest, they'll end up better off...but they don't know so they choose a different right to claim. I worked with asylum associations and everyday I heard government officials giving fake

information about the administration to force the immigrants to leave... which often led to the immigrants choosing to stay illegal. It's also super long to get a residency permit, and until you get one you can't leave the community which is your only protection, and when you do get one, you created ties with that community that are strong enough to want to make you stay, which is why there is an effect of communitarianism. And we mustn't forget those who refuse to become regular and do anything to avoid being a burden for the country...they don't claim any of their rights and thus can't integrate in the mainstream society.

Germaine

4th and 5th generations of immigrants are not as integrated as they should be. The 1st generation would be discreet, the 2nd and 3rd would find their place, but 4th and 5th claim their origins, become arrogant, speak Arabic only, wear hijabs and long tunics, especially young people. They say they're not integrated but they're not making any effort, they have a different vocabulary, behave differently, clothe differently, even their haircut is different. They refuse to adapt to our culture. There are too many of them and the French are quickly becoming a minority and will lose power and authority. When my husband and I lived in Africa, we had to behave like the locals there, accept their government and so on, we had to stay discreet and not be a cause of shock for them. That's what we had to do, even if we knew we'd be coming back to France soon. But them ? They don't do that at all. Because of that, they stay in communities and French professors are afraid to teach in areas where these communities are ! There are many books on that kind of experience. Professors, especially women, don't feel safe there. Why ? Because these communities are violent and impose on "their territory" (in France of course) their own rules and authority.

Immigrants have a certain arrogance which is frightening. When you choose to move out of your country into another one, you need to conform to the host culture. Or else you needed to stay in your own country. "Choosing is losing"! Either you stay in your country of origin with its culture, or you come here and take this culture. You can't just take a bit of everything, whatever you want or need. "Why couldn't the French then actually use that for their profit: keep what immigrants take from the culture, and check the rest to see why they didn't take it...and change ?" No, we can't change like that. *La France, tu l'aimes ou tu la quittes : La France*, you love it or leave it. (It is the motto of the National Rally, often considered as right extremists, though she disagrees with their views – most of the time).

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