

MAHOMET OU LA RÉPUBLIQUE VERSUS
MAHOMET ET LA RÉPUBLIQUE:
ISLAM AND REPUBLICANISM IN FRANCE
SINCE 1989

By

KATHERINE EMILY PURBRICK-THOMPSON

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College of Arts and Law

University of Birmingham

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Abstract

This thesis examines two opposing intellectual discourses furthered by the intellectual and political elite on the subject of the integration of Islam into the French narrative and identity. The hypothesis which underpins this dissertation is that, in France, it is the physical practice of Islam which is perceived to represent a threat to the nation. I have named the discourse which demands that Muslims demonstrate the predominance of their loyalty to the Republic over their devotion to their religion through the renouncement of orthopraxy *Mahomet ou la République*. Its development, I argue, is linked to the renewed enthusiasm for Republicanism which emerged in the 1980s. By contrast, the proponents of the counter position, which I have termed *Mahomet et la République*, argue that the full acceptance and integration of orthopractic Muslims is possible and desirable. They do not see a threat to Republican values in the Islam of the majority of French Muslims. The development of these discourses will be discussed considering my own typology of the theorists implicated. I will argue that the *Mahomet ou la République* discourse is ultimately based on a biased interpretation of Islam, yet it regularly eclipses the *Mahomet et la République* discourse.

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Abbreviations

CCIF – Collectif contre l’islamophobie en France

CEPT – Collectif une école pour tou-te-s

CFCM – Conseil français du culte Musulman

CNCDH – Commission nationale consultative des droits de l'homme

DILCRAH - Délégation interministérielle à la lutte contre le racisme, l’antisémitisme et la haine anti-LGBT

ECFR – European Council for Fatwa and Research

FLN – Front de libération nationale

FN – Front nationale

FNMF – Fédération nationale des musulmans de France

FRA – European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights

GIA – Group islamique armé

GMP – Grande Mosquée de Paris

IM – Institut Montaigne

Ifop – Institut français d'opinion publique

LICRA – Ligue internationale contre le racisme et l’antisémitisme

LR – Les Républicains

MEP – Member of the European Parliament

MF – Musulmans de France

NPNS – Ni putes ni soumises

PS – Parti socialiste

RPR - Rassemblement pour la République

UMP – Union pour un mouvement populaire

UOIF – Union des organisations islamiques de France

Introduction

Towards a Synthesis of Intellectual and Political Discourses on Islam in France

France and Islam have a turbulent shared history. Over the course of the last 30 years, concern regarding the supposed 'issue' of Islam in France has intensified, with the matter becoming a regular subject of intellectual and political discussion. The media's intense focus on the Iranian revolution, the Algerian civil war, and the propagation of terrorist cells in the Middle East such as al-Qaida constructed the image of an Islam opposed and threatening to Republican values. With this negative image of Islam abroad remaining in the background, concern soon turned to the Islam already present in France. There have been various intensifications of socio-political debate on the subject, including: the multiple episodes of the *affaire du foulard* in 1989, 1994 and 2003; the discussions surrounding the eventual ban on facial coverings in public (arguably a thinly veiled attack on the niqab) in 2009; restrictions on religious acts and dress in the workplace following the Baby-Loup affair; the attempted bans on the burkini in August 2016; as well as various rumbling debates which have periodically reappeared in public discourse such as pork and halal meat in school meals and praying in the street. The common denominator between all these perceived issues is orthopraxy, the practical element of religious faith. I have thus identified orthopraxy as being the crux of the issue in contemporary debates on the integration of Islam in France, as opposed to mere Islamic faith.

The spate of terrorist attacks in France which began in 2015 has rendered it yet more probable that the subject of the accommodation of Islam in France will continue to be a political and intellectual concern for some time yet. It was revealed in a survey carried out in France in 2017 by Ifop (*Institut français d'opinion publique*) for the thinktank More in Common that '38 pour cent des Français jugent l'Islam incompatible avec la société française' (More in Common, 2017, p.7). This suggests that a significant proportion of the French public perceive something of an opposition between a non-Muslim 'nous' and a Muslim 'eux' and thus a fundamental difficulty in reconciling the

Islamic religion with French national values. It is also of note that the same survey found that 59% agree that 'l'identité de la France est actuellement en train de disparaître' (More in Common, 2017, p.34). Tensions surrounding the acceptance of Islam into the French Republic are, therefore, a most relevant area of French Studies.

This study will situate the long-standing debate about the place of Islam in French society within a contemporary framework. A central consideration of this thesis will be the assertion that Islam is variously perceived as a threat to *la République*. Throughout this study I will demonstrate that this threat is perceived by sections of the intellectual and political elite, as well as by the broader public, from a variety of perspectives which I will attempt to classify and analyse. I will argue that this view of Islam in France has aided the growth of a discourse which demands that Muslims actively assert the predominance of their citizenship over their religion in order to be fully accepted and welcomed into the French Republic. This is what I shall henceforth refer to as the '*Mahomet ou la République*' discourse. This outlook appears to foster the notion that one cannot be loyal to both Islam and France as devotion to the former necessarily precludes dedication to the latter and its accompanying values. This discourse therefore frames limiting Islamic orthopraxy as a legitimate means of protecting the Republic. The multiplication of limitations made on religious orthopraxy resulting from discussion almost exclusively about Islam demonstrates that *Mahomet ou la République* is effectively the dominant intellectual and political discourse in France. It is rarely elaborated explicitly, however, by the mainstream political elite or by the majority of French intellectuals. The alternative discourse, which I shall call '*Mahomet et la République*', posits that Islamic faith is, in fact, compatible with loyalty to the Republic and respect for its values. In consideration of the threat perceived in Islamic orthopraxy, however, this position holds significantly less political and intellectual capital.

This study will therefore consider the development and consolidation of the two opposing discourses in the intellectual sphere, primarily, among both non-Muslim and Muslim intellectuals. Intellectuals in France have long played a pivotal role in the formulation and elaboration of political debate, and so their argumentation must be analysed as central to the development of the two opposing discourses. As Bowen has

noted, '[p]erhaps in no other country does applied philosophy intertwine with media campaigns to the extent it does in France' (Bowen, 2008, p.134). The political sphere and public opinion will also be considered in order to construct a complete picture of each discourse. The opinions of French Muslims will be considered against these discourses to demonstrate that the *Mahomet ou la République* discourse is problematic as it relies upon a biased and misguided reading of their views and beliefs. This will suggest that the *Mahomet et la République* position, by contrast, enables a more peaceful, and therefore sustainable, relationship between France and its Muslims.

The growth of neo-Republicanism is a key consideration of this study in relation to the perception of the incompatibility of Islamic and French values and the consequential development of the *Mahomet ou la République* discourse. Since the 1980s, and thus over the time period on which this study will focus, there has been a resurgence of Republicanism in France. Neo-Republicanism is predominantly based on the state structure and values consolidated during the Third Republic, as well as those of the Revolutionary period of 1787-1799 (Chabal, 2015, p.7). It is therefore recognisable in a contemporary devotion to values and structures such as *laïcité* and *l'école républicaine*, and even in values which only recently came to be seen, by some, as Republican such as gender equality¹. The power and ubiquity of this neo-Republican trend is evident in the proliferation of references to *la République* and values and institutions upheld as Republican from the 1980s onwards. However, as Heine has argued, the growth of the newly 'communitarian' incarnation of Republicanism appears largely responsible for the 'new form of closed *laïcité*' (Heine, 2009, p.170-171) and identitarian interpretations of Republican values that have developed in recent years. My working hypothesis, therefore, is that neo-Republicanism is closely linked to the *Mahomet ou la République* discourse.

There is already a variety of works that consider the relationship between France and its Muslim population from various angles, written by academics, journalists, and other commentators from both inside and outside of the French context. There appear to

¹ Due to the specificity of *laïcité* and *l'école républicaine* to the French context and the complex tensions of their histories, I will be retaining these terms in the French rather than translating them.

be two broad types of literature which consider the place of Islam in France: on the one hand, there are several major works which aim to consider the overall progress of the growth and integration of Islam in France, whilst on the other hand, there are many works which consider a particular issue from within this broader framework. For example, there is a particular concentration of works which consider the debates of headscarf affair. Both the broader and the more specific works have been invaluable to this study.

While the integration of Islam is not the main focus of Emile Chabal's *A Divided Republic: Nation, State and Citizenship in Contemporary France* (2015), the subject is considered throughout the work in relation to its central theme, neo-Republicanism. *A Divided Republic* provides a contextualization of French politics regarding Islam through a most thorough analysis of the re-emergence of Republicanism and its myriad effects on French society. As its expansion has led to an 'extensive reinterpretation' of *laïcité* (Chabal, 2015, p.26), Chabal argues that neo-Republicanism has certainly affected the framework proposed for the integration and acceptance of Muslims into the Republic. He also argues that there is a liberal framework running parallel to that of neo-Republicanism. He concludes that 'it is above all the creative interaction between a resurgent republican language and a powerful liberal critique of this language that has structured contemporary French politics' (Chabal, 2015, p.263). I would nuance this position and posit that, rather than resulting in a 'creative interaction', the exclusionary, neo-Republican interpretation of French values often appears to overshadow any other framework relating to the integration of Islam in France.

Alain Gresh's *L'Islam, la République et le monde* (2004) and Jonathan Laurence and Justin Vaisse's *Integrating Islam* (2006) both consider the overall position of Islam in France, focussing on issues such as the organisation of Islam, the headscarf affair, and the notions of integration and discrimination. While Laurence and Vaisse's work has a more institutional focus and asserts that the conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims in France is not as acute as it is sometimes portrayed as being (Laurence and Vaisse, 2006, p.5), Gresh's work is more critical of the prejudice and discrimination that underlie the accusations regularly made against Islam by the media and political elite. Andrew Hussey's *The French Intifada* (2014), another overview of the relationship between

France and its Muslims, gives a critical portrait of French Muslims, associating many with what he describes as 'racism' towards 'French people' (Hussey, 2014, pp.10, 57). Whilst these works have provided an excellent background to the contemporary conflict between France and Islam, my own will consider the intellectual discourses and the specific issue of orthopraxy far more deeply than these works do.

Islamophobie by Abdellali Hajjat and Marwan Mohammed (2016) and *La Nouvelle islamophobie* by Vincent Geisser (2003) have a narrower focus: the development of discrimination against Islam. Both works link Islamophobia to the apparent defence of Republican values. *Islamophobie* examines the trends in the development of Islamophobia, how it manifests itself, and both the actors who further it and those who combat it. Central to the development of Islamophobia, the authors argue, has been the construction of the Muslim as the 'autre', which has led to the elaboration of a negative and divisive discourse on the 'problème musulman'. I propose that this discourse encompasses the rhetoric of a threat from Islam which powers the *Mahomet ou la République* outlook. Geisser's work, meanwhile, is based upon the theory that 'c'est moins l'islam vécu qui est visé dans de tels propos or de tels projets d'action publiques (lois, décrets, circulaires, etc.) que l'islam reconstruit sur un mode imaginaire, puisant dans les différents registres de notre mémoire collective' (Geisser, 2003, p.20). He considers intellectual Islamophobia, although he identifies different intellectuals (Michel Houellebecq aside) to those whom I have identified as playing a central role in more contemporary debates. My study, therefore, endeavours to bring the debate on intellectual discourses on Islam in France up to date. Geisser also uniquely considers the role of Islamic theorists in the consolidation of Islamophobia, a concept which I will examine further in this study.

Thomas Deltombe and Pierre Tévanian have both undertaken analysis of the representation of Islam in the media in their respective works *L'Islam imaginaire* (2007) and *Le Voile médiatique* (2005). Through the analysis of an extraordinary amount of television footage produced between 1975 and 2004, Deltombe demonstrates how a negative discourse against Islam emerged despite explicit racism being decreasingly tolerated in French society, as Islam was increasingly perceived as a civilisation with

values counter to and incompatible with those of France. Tévanian, by contrast, focusses on the media's role in the representation of political and intellectual discourse in the progress of the debate on the proposed law banning religious symbols in schools: 'Tout indique au contraire qu'un choix politique est à l'origine de l'affaire, que les grands médias ont relayé l'initiative politique, et que « l'opinion » n'a fait que suivre' (Tévanian, 2005, p.31). The theory that a negative political and intellectual discourse regarding Islamic orthopraxy has developed to become the status quo, thereby legitimising limitations on orthopraxy, will underpin the present study. I shall expand on the works of Tévanian and Deltombe, however, through a consideration of more recent debates and the role of intellectuals, and by examining the discourse that opposes the negative status quo.

There is a particular concentration of literature related to the headscarf affair. A significant proportion of these works are written by non-French authors, likely in part because gender studies is a particularly fast-growing discipline in Anglo-American academia. In *The Politics of the Veil* (2007), Joan Wallach Scott condemns the hypocrisy of the French feminist discourse which previously denounced the over-sexualisation of women's bodies, but which now sees equality as being derived from sexual emancipation which is measured in the visibility of women's bodies (Scott, 2007, p.156). I will develop this line of argument by considering this interpretation of feminism as closely linked to neo-Republicanism. In *The Hijab and the Republic* (2008), Bronwyn Winter proposes that there were two broad camps within the debate: one advocating a 'flexible' application of *laïcité* which would potentially permit religious symbols among school pupils, and the other advocating an 'intransigent' application of *laïcité* which demands religious neutrality throughout the public sphere (Winter, 2008, p.7). This notion of a stark opposition of ideals for the integration of Muslims into the French nation is one I shall expand upon, beyond *laïcité*, in this study.

Sophie Heine and John Bowen both consider the notion of identity in their analyses of the motivations for the 2004 law. In *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves* (2008), Bowen focuses on French neuroses surrounding communalism, Islamism and sexism. His noteworthy work on the perception of oppositional French and Muslim

identities will add to my study. Heine combines analysis of the headscarf affair with that of Republicanism. In her article, 'The Hijab Controversy and French Republicanism: Critical analysis and normative propositions' (2009), Heine argues that there are two interpretations of Republicanism. One is based on individual liberty, the other is incompatible with liberalism and places such great emphasis on national identity that it becomes communitarian (Heine, 2009, p.169). There is consequently a unitary interpretation of *laïcité* too, which was used against the headscarf during the debate. In my own study, I will demonstrate that this communitarian interpretation of Republican values and identity goes far beyond *laïcité* and the headscarf.

Sharif Gemie and Mayanthi Fernando offer a greater focus on the Muslim perspective in their works on the headscarf affair. Gemie's 2010 work *French Muslims: New Voices in Contemporary France* rather unusually considers the position of four thinkers, Chahdortt Djavann, Fadela Amara, Tariq Ramadan and Houria Bouteldja, whom he considers to be 'French Muslims', 'speakers for their generation' and arguably household names (Gemie, 2010, p.7). He discusses their arguments regarding the place and acceptance of Islam in France primarily through their respective roles in the headscarf affair, in an attempt to understand the views of French Muslims regarding the French nation and citizenship. In my own study I will endeavour to broaden this perspective further through the consideration of a wider range of Islamic theorists and leaders, as well as data from polls and interviews of the Muslim public. Fernando's fascinating article entitled 'Reconfiguring freedom: Muslim piety and the limits of secular law and public discourse in France' (2010) sheds new light on an old debate. Fernando notes that the law was seen as fair as it did not limit one's beliefs. She argues instead that veiling should be seen as an obligation of belief, rather than a choice of practice, which would render the ban a limitation of one's beliefs and thus unjustifiable (Fernando, 2010, pp.23-28). Fernando's *sui generis* line of argument has contributed to my consideration of the sanctity of orthopraxy.

Overall, it is evident that the discourses of the French intelligentsia, arguably a pillar of French socio-political culture, have been largely ignored by other theorists in the field. In contradistinction to the majority of the above works, I will therefore demonstrate

their central contribution to the consolidation of the *Mahomet ou la République* – *Mahomet et la République* dichotomy. Furthermore, my study will underscore the role played by the expansion of neo-Republicanism in the development of the two opposing discourses which I have identified. Through their focus on the headscarf affair and the particular difficulties Muslim women in France face, several of the works discussed above necessarily hint at the specific rejection of Islamic orthopraxy. However, as many of these works were written over a decade ago, they do not consider the developing evidence that it is *always* orthopraxy that is perceived to clash with Republican values. I shall therefore deconstruct the rejection of orthopraxy through a consideration of the ways in which Islam is deemed to threaten Republican values in intellectual and political discourse. These approaches to the subject substantially differentiate my work from the rest of the field.

The present study will therefore answer the following research questions: Who is involved and what are the arguments used on either side of the debate between those of the *Mahomet ou la République* and *Mahomet et la République* positions? How have these lines of argument developed? According to the data currently available, what are the views of French Muslims regarding their integration into the Republic? Why is the *Mahomet ou la République* position more powerful and prevalent currently and, finally, to what extent can it be argued that the *Mahomet et la République* position is more sustainable for the future of Islam in France?

As regards research methods, this study will uniquely combine analysis of relevant works by various polemicists, feminists and Islamic theorists to determine the position of each theorist on the subject of the integration of Islam into the Republic, and to find patterns and parallels between the various positions elaborated. Interviews, newspaper articles, open letters and television appearances will also be analysed when appropriate. This three-pronged approach combining study of the discourses promoted by three categories of theorists is essential for the construction of a complete picture of the *Mahomet ou la République* and *Mahomet et la République* discourses. The polemicists tend to focus on broad issues that have for a long time been a central concern of French society such as *laïcité* and security. The feminists contribute newer, women-focussed

concerns to the debate, which have quickly come to be central. The Islamic theorists will also be studied as it is surely illogical to discuss the integration of Islam in France without thoroughly considering the position of those influential within the faith. The discussion of the intellectual positions will be combined with evidence of political discourse and media spin on social and political developments to demonstrate the strength and influence of the *Mahomet ou la République* and the *Mahomet et la République* discourses. The validity and potential effects of each discourse will be considered through discussion of available poll and interview data of French Muslims regarding their views on Republican values and other critical issues.

This study thereby provides a unique comparison of various voices that are too rarely brought together in dialogue with one another. Many pre-existing works in the field consider the French political side of the debate, but discussion of the multiple Islamic perspectives is often lacking. This is perhaps a reflection of how the issue has become so polarised and abstracted from its root causes that the religious element behind it has been increasingly, yet counter-intuitively and mistakenly, side-lined. This work therefore seeks to further contribute to the expansion of the field through the provision of a balanced consideration of Muslim and non-Muslim intellectual and popular positions in this debate.

It will likely become apparent to the reader over the course of this work, through both its tone and its reflections, that my own political predilections strongly support the *Mahomet et la République* position. I am convinced that the *Mahomet ou la République* political framework can only lead to greater antipathy between France and its Muslims as the legal restrictions made on religious orthopraxy effectively assert that Islam does indeed represent a threat to the Republic and legitimises further demands for limitations on orthopraxy. Each restriction further indicates to French Muslims that an intrinsic part of their beliefs is not welcome in the Republic, which is likely to instigate sentiments of rejection from the nation and, consequently, hostility towards it. This, in turn, could be interpreted as further evidence that Islam represents a threat, which would encourage additional limitations and even aggression towards Muslims. A vicious circle of antagonism and resentment would thereby emerge. This is, of course, a 'worst case

scenario'. In the thesis itself, however, I have tried as far as possible to remain within the study's remit of analysis of the commentators rather than offer anything that may resemble a set of precise policy prescriptions or recommendations as to what France 'must' do to avoid this situation.

This dissertation contains four main chapters. The first chapter will give an overview of the complex relationship between France and Islam, including an analysis of the actions the state has taken since 1989 which effectively limit Islamic practice. There will be considerable focus on the development of *laïcité*, especially in the context of the rise of neo-Republicanism which arguably led to more identitarian interpretations of Republican values. The emergence of the two opposing discourses will be described and it will be demonstrated that Islamic orthopraxy, although acknowledged as an obligation of the Islamic faith by some Muslims and non-Muslims, may be considered by others to be an indicator of opposition to Republican values.

In the second chapter, I will expound a typology of theorists and intellectuals which I have created specifically for this study. The typology contains those who I argue have played an influential role in the progression of the intellectual debate and discourses on Islam in France. The typology will enable comparison between the views of the various individuals and groups, and analysis of the development of the groups and their lines of argument. Each of the three main categories of theorists: the polemicists, the feminists, and the Islamic theorists, will be broken down into subgroups. Each group ultimately furthers either the '*Mahomet ou la République*' position or the '*Mahomet et la République*' position. The table below shows the various groups and their members:

Mahomet ou la République		Mahomet et la République	
The Nostalgics	Alain Finkelkraut	The Pro-Diversity Liberals	Olivier Roy
	Michel Houellebecq		Edwy Plenel
	Éric Zemmour		Jean Baubérot
The Orthopraxy Sceptics	Gilles Kepel	The Pragmatist Feminists	Christine Delphy
	Michel Onfray		Houria Bouteldja
	Caroline Fourest		Sylvie Tissot
	Abdelwahab Meddeb		Elsa Dorlin
The Universalist Feminists	Chahdortt Djavann		
	Fadela Amara	The Staunch Defenders of Piety	Ahmed Jaballah
	Elisabeth Badinter		Amar Lasfar
	Sihem Habchi		Tariq Ramadan
The Literalist Conservatives	Anne Zelensky	The Liberal European Reformists	Dalil Boubakeur
	Yusuf al-Qaradawi		Soheib Bencheikh
	Hassan al-Banna		Tareq Oubrou
The Extremists	Groupe islamique armé (GIA)		
	Al-Qaida		
	Daesh		

The third chapter will focus on the *Mahomet ou la République* discourse, beginning with a consideration of the link between this discourse and France's colonial past. Central to this chapter will be the consideration of the perception of a threat in Islam, emanating from both inside and outside of France. It is this perception which underpins the *Mahomet ou la République* discourse, and which furthers the promotion of less orthopractic interpretations of Islam as 'acceptable'. I will argue that the threat perceived in orthopraxy is based on a misreading of Islamic signs, but that it has nevertheless created much political capital for the *Mahomet ou la République* discourse.

The fourth and final chapter will focus on the '*Mahomet et la République*' rhetoric. It will begin with a consideration of the position of French Muslims regarding their attachment to the French nation and values to demonstrate the desire of a large majority of French Muslims to be accepted into the Republican identity. It will then consider the mechanisms which allow discrimination against this contingent of the French population to persist. Next, the intersectionality of discriminations against Muslims – particularly Muslim women – will be analysed to demonstrate the centrality of feminism in anti-discrimination policy and vice versa in relation to Islamic orthopraxy. Finally, I will demonstrate that the *Mahomet et la République* discourse encompasses

acknowledgment of the necessity of equal representation of the many different voices within French Islam as a pre-requisite to the eradication of discrimination against orthopractic Muslims.

The Difficult History of Islam and the French State

Religion: A Sensitive Subject in France

Conflict between the French Republic and Islam is by no means a new phenomenon. The Crusades may be considered as the earliest occurrence of such discord. From the eleventh to the thirteenth century, Western European Christians travelled eastwards to Constantinople and beyond (Jotischky, 2004, pp.54-55), with the aims of expanding the rule of Western empires (see, for example, Dubois, 1956, pp.37-39) and converting the Muslim people in the Holy Land to Christianity (Paine, 2001, p.15). Whilst these 'holy wars' are demonstrative of the opposition of ideals, values and beliefs of Christians and Muslims at the time, and although this may still be exploited by groups widely labelled as extremist today, given that these wars were fought a thousand years ago, it is unlikely that they, in themselves, have much bearing on the present-day tensions between the people and politics of France and Islam¹. The temporal distance between eleventh century 'France' and the French Republic of today makes the two territories, their politics and their identities, incomparably different.

In contemporary France, friction surrounding Islam is rarely linked to the historical opposition between Christianity and Islam. In Europe at least, relations between the two religions are in fact harmonious for the overwhelming majority. Rather, the clash between France and Islam appears to revolve around Islam's compatibility, or otherwise, with French laws and social and political values. This chapter will engage with a series of significant events in French history which will help to contextualise the conflict that has emerged in the relationship between Islam and the French Republic.

The French Revolution of 1789 saw the beginning of the development of the Republican values that the nation continues to hold dear. It was in the spirit of the Revolution that the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* was adopted in 1789

¹ The extremist group Daesh regularly describes its Western opponents and targets as followers of the cross (SITE, 2015).

(Légifrance, 1789), and the motto 'Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité' began to be used by Republicans from 1791 (Aulard, 2011, pp.13-16). The regular references to these pillars of the Republican narrative in contemporary French institutions and political discourse serve as evidence of the Revolution's legacy. Republicanism is the political framework which both drove and resulted from the Revolution. Around that time, in its most simple form, Republicanism merely involved support for the idea that 'the government should be subjected to the control of at least part of the people, rather than being left to a hereditary ruler', in order for the state 'to be free' (de Dijn, 2015, p.61). In its more extreme forms, Republicanism was virulently anti-clerical and supported severely limited executive powers. At least until the establishment of the Third Republic, and arguably until the end of the Dreyfus affair, Republicanism was associated with the political left. The right, meanwhile, was more inclined to support the monarchy and close ties between the state and the Catholic Church (Passmore, 2013 offers a detailed analysis of the right during this period). It is regularly stated that the period from the Revolution to the 1905 law separating church and state:

'est traversée par la guerre des deux France. Face à face, deux projets politiques et culturels s'affirment et se combattent : d'un côté, la France révolutionnaire, puis républicaine, laïque et démocratique ; de l'autre, la France catholique, qui est le plus souvent royaliste, antirépublicaine et antilaïque' (Dagens, 2001, p.649, see also McMillan, 2003, pp.5-6; Mayeur, 1997, p.111).

This total opposition of political values is demonstrative of the long battle that has been waged in France for hegemony of its very identity.

The anticlericalism of the late eighteenth century was predominantly based on the revolutionaries' desire to end clerical privilege (Réville, 1905, p.606). However, Napoleon Bonaparte reversed all progress that had been made by the Republicans in cutting the ties between the state and the Church with the signing of the Concordat in 1801 (Réville, 1905, p.607). During the nineteenth century when power largely resided with the anti-Republican right, France was considered as the '« fille aînée » de l'église catholique'. However, this special relationship was not to last as the country eventually became 'la « France laïque » qui fait de la religion une « affaire privée »' (Mayeur, 1997,

p.13). After the installation of the Third Republic, the political elite once more took to attempting to limit the influence of the Church. They had realised, after the wavering support for the Second Republic, that public education was sorely needed to 'school the electorate in Republican values' (McMillan, 2003, p.3). This led to the passing of the Jules Ferry laws of 1881 and 1882, the former making primary education free of charge, and the latter rendering it compulsory and 'laïque' (Froeschlé, 2007, pp.137-141). This, of course, did not pass without resistance from those opposed to the Republican regime, and the Catholic versus anti-clerical conflict continued to intensify: By 1904, the country was on the verge of civil war (Baubérot, 2012, p.12). The law of 1905 brought about the complete severance of the Church from the state, yet this still did not end the bitter dispute on the matter, particularly with regard to the role of the Church in education (Moatti, 2004; Halls, 1995, p.15), a quandary that has remained, in one form or another, to this day. It is of note that Alsace and Lorraine remain under the regime of the Concordat of 1801 rather than the law of 1905 as they did not belong to France when the latter law was passed.

During the Second World War, Pétain brought the Church back into public life once more. After the trauma of the War and the Vichy regime, the constitution of the Fourth Republic marked a definitive return to the supremacy of Republican values: 'Article 1. La France est une République indivisible, laïque, démocratique et sociale. Article 2. [...] La devise de la République est : " Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité. "' (Conseil Constitutionnel, 1946). These key principles were maintained in an almost identical format in the constitution of the Fifth Republic (Légifrance, 2009). This constitution, and the values it upholds, have been widely accepted from the time of their establishment, with relatively little opposition between secularists and Christians in recent decades (Morineau, 2001, p.83), notwithstanding the *Manif pour tous* movement against gay marriage in 2012-2013. In the struggle over the soul of France that began with the Revolution, 'la France [...] républicaine, laïque et démocratique' was the eventual victor. Since the late 1980s, however, Islam, rather than Catholicism, has most commonly been seen to be threatening *laïcité* (Zuber, 2018, p.28).

The Contemporary Conflict Begins

Alongside tensions surrounding religion, another key narrative in the development of contemporary Franco-Muslim tensions in France is that of colonialism. France's first period of colonial expansion began in the 1500s, and by the mid-eighteenth century the French had conquered parts of North America, the Antilles, French Guyana, and parts of India and the coast of Western Africa. However, it lost the majority of these newly acquired territories between 1763 and the beginning of the Napoleonic wars (Page and Sonnenburg, 2013, p.214). A second period of colonial expansion began in 1830, under the rule of King Charles X, when France invaded Algeria (Horne, 2006, p.29), then various regions across North and West Africa, and also Indochina. This is arguably the point at which France and Islam began to interact closely again. Tensions, which were more significant in Northern than Western Africa, soon began to rise (Godard, 2015, p.31). There were, of course, some who sought to include the native populations in the expansive French programme. A most notable example is Napoleon III who envisioned Algeria not as a mere colony, but as an 'Arab Kingdom' and hoped to make it 'a Franco-Muslim homeland open to Europeans and natives alike' (Murray-Miller, 2014, p.3). However, this framework for France's colonial governance did not come to fruition.

During the colonial period, France elaborated its *Mission civilisatrice*, a paternalist endeavour which assumed that, with the aid of the French, the colonies could be 'uplifted' to assume the 'cultural, political, and economic development of France' and leave behind their barbarity of the past (Conklin, 1997, pp.1-2, 6; see also Røge, 2012, p.117). As Røge has noted of the civilising narrative, '[d]es dichotomies telles que « Noir » et « Blanc », « sauvage » ou « barbare » et « civilisé », apparaissent alors comme autant de moyens mis en œuvre par le colonisateur pour justifier la domination des colonisés' (Røge, 2012, p.117). In the North African case, the dichotomy of 'musulman', which was interchangeable with 'Arabe', and 'Français' must be added to this list. The religion of the colonised was used to differentiate them from the colonisers and the European settler (*pied noir*) population, due to the desire of the latter to maintain their own social and economic privileges within the region. The religion of the native peoples thus became intertwined with the negative attributes with which they were labelled. Being Muslim

was considered to be reason enough for preventing the native peoples from gaining French nationality in the early twentieth century (Horne, 2006, p.35).

Considering the oppression intrinsic to colonialism, Memmi has argued that the system was deeply and completely flawed; it could therefore only end in confrontation between the colonised and the coloniser (Memmi, 1985, p.143). During the Algerian War of Independence, new stereotypes emerged relating to the Muslims' supposedly innate penchant for blood-thirsty violence and terrorism (Laurence and Vaisse, 2006, p.50). Charles de Gaulle's oil and vinegar analogy, made in 1959 (Peyrefitte, 2002, p.66), suggests that the deeply negative perceptions of the Algerian people which were used to justify the view that the Algerian and French people were ultimately incompatible is likely to have influenced the eventual ceding to the demands of the *Front de libération nationale* (FLN) and granting of Algerian independence. The overall effect of the 130 years of imperialism in Africa, therefore, was that Islam and its accompanying legal codes and lifestyle were deemed to be utterly incompatible with French citizenship. The eight-year war for Algerian independence was brutal and traumatic and the scars left by it and the preceding colonisation have been linked to social and ideological conflict until the present day.

The Colonial Legacy in France

Following independence, tensions and suspicions of the formerly colonised peoples certainly did not disappear. The multiple and complex frictions which marked the period of decolonisation were imported with immigration to France. 'The colonial legacy involves more than just migration: it is instead something that is deeply embedded within the social and cultural norms of the metropole itself' (Bhabba, 1990, 1994, cited in Adamson, 2006, p.628). The large influx of immigrants of North African origin from the 1960s onwards combined with the 'colonial hangover' of continuing racial prejudice and negative stereotyping of the North African peoples has plausibly contributed to the continuation of race-related tensions, particularly during periods of economic turmoil (Geisser, 2003, p.21; Laurence and Vaisse, 2006, pp.53-54; Gresh, 2004, p.19).

The French nation struggled to come to terms with the permanent addition of a population which was for a long time assumed to be only a temporary workforce (see Meynier and Meynier, 2011, pp.220-225). This was compounded over the course of the 1960s and 1970s as there was increasing family re-unification of immigrants (Laurence and Vaisse, 2006, p.17). By 1973, the economy was in crisis due to plummeting oil prices. During this period of increasing economic difficulty, France's rejection of its immigrants reached new intensities (Gastaut, 2004, p.107). Gastaut has suggested that the economic troubles created an easy excuse for the increasingly widespread, explicit rejection of immigrants (Gastaut, 2004, p.107; see also Deltombe, 2007, pp.43-44). The following year, during Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's presidency, the 'fermeture des frontières' was made law and all immigration was suspended (Laurens, 2008, p.70). When this measure still did not adequately reduce the immigrant population, the government began to offer subsidised repatriation to immigrants who volunteered to return to their country of origin (Freeman, 1978, p.30).

The economic uncertainty combined with increasingly exclusionary political policies can be seen to have liberated racist (anti-Algerian, anti-Arab and later anti-Muslim) rhetoric and actions among the French population. Among the worst of the violence was the *flambée raciste de 1973*, during which fifty Algerians were killed and almost 300 injured (Bedjaoui, cited in Gastaut, 1993, p.75). The *Marche pour l'égalité et contre le racisme*, more commonly known as the *Marche des beurs*, which took place a decade later in 1983 is evidence of the exclusion and discrimination still felt by many of those of Maghrebi descent, even over twenty years after the end of colonial rule in North Africa. The *Marche* asserted the permanence of France's new cultural demographic, as well as the imperative to accept and welcome it, and was considered hugely successful on these fronts (Joseph and Miské, 2009). Nonetheless, these racial tensions have never completely dissipated. Various negative stereotypes have remained present over the course of the last seventy years to the present day.

Colonial stereotypes of the native North African peoples based on their race and their religion have endured in various guises. Throughout the twentieth century, North African men were regularly accused of crimes, often of a sexual nature; 'a sign that Arabs

lacked “civilisation” (Scott, 2007, p.52). Gresh argues that these stereotypes are still used against those with North African roots:

‘Ce qui frappe, c’est la permanence de ces images. [...] Elles n’ont jamais été effacées, mais simplement refoulées après l’indépendance algérienne. [...] L’Arabe est marqué par le fanatisme, dû à sa religion ; il est fourbe et tient toujours un « double langage » ; il est voleur ; il a une sexualité incontrôlée. Et quand ce n’est pas l’Arabe, c’est le musulman’ (Gresh, 2004, p.378).

After a deeply troubled colonial period, the strained relationship between France and the people of its former colonies has continued, with the perpetuation of damaging colonial stereotypes evidencing this (Laurence and Vaisse, 2006, p.49). The negative perceptions of those of North African origin remain a barrier to the full acceptance of French Muslims into the contemporary Republican identity.

The *Commission nationale consultative des droits de l’homme* (CNCDH) has proposed that there has been a shift in the discourse and framing of prejudice over the course of the second half of the twentieth century: ‘Le racisme a subi un profond changement de paradigme dans les années postcoloniales, avec un glissement d’un racisme biologique vers un racisme culturel’ (CNCDH, 2013, p.18). While the colonial discrimination of the early and mid-twentieth century was race-based, the new ‘cultural racism’ has religion, specifically Islam, in its sights (Gresh, 2004, p.22; see also Deltombe, 2007, p.10). Although cultural discrimination has become more common than racism, that is not to say that the former has entirely replaced the latter. Berg and Lundahl argue that although explicit racialised discourses have significantly diminished, they were:

‘absolutely normal when most of the thinking that we proudly see as defining us – modernity, secularity, democracy, human rights – was articulated. This makes it not only possible but likely that there are implicit traces of race thinking in most of the heritage from the Enlightenment’ (Berg and Lundahl, 2016, p.278).

Following Berg and Lundahl’s theory, it is likely that it will take substantial effort and comprehensive change to fully eradicate such thinking from French institutions. Overall, therefore, we can assume that both cultural and racial discrimination are active within

French society. Discrimination against Muslims in France is thus complex and often multi-layered.

The Development of Neo-Republicanism

From the 1980s onwards, there has been a gradual and fragmented, yet discernible, shift in the framing of political aims and rhetoric in France. There has been a resurgence of French Republicanism; 'a neo-republican revival', as Emile Chabal has labelled it in his 2015 work on the subject, which brought reliance on Republican values rather suddenly back into mainstream political rhetoric. Neo-Republicanism is not 'a unified political philosophy' (Chabal, 2015, pp.7-8). Rather, it appears to be a phenomenon perceptible in the marked evolution of socio-political thought in both the electorate and the political elite, across the political spectrum. Neo-Republicanism is predominantly based on both the state structure and the dominant values developed and instilled in French citizens at the height of the Third Republic – although, of course, it also recalls the principles consolidated during the Revolutionary period of 1787-1799 (Chabal, 2015, pp.7-9). The neo-Republican turn has thus resulted in a renewed devotion to *laïcité*, *universalisme*, and the *école républicaine*, but which often goes beyond the original meanings and implications of the principles through a stronger focus on a unified national identity. Heine has posited that:

'The communitarian dimension of French republicanism appears in an equally communitarian interpretation of *laïcité* and manifests itself in a patriotic rhetoric. In this national–communitarian approach, the patriotic discourse embraces both the idea of the Republic and the principle of *laïcité*' (Heine, 2009, pp.167-168).

The redevelopment of Republicanism therefore caused a notable increase in rhetoric protective of these values, and of the nation as a whole, against perceived outside threats.

The new political reliance on Republicanism emerged following the economic fragility of the 1970s; a decade plagued by high unemployment. Chabal notes that:

‘It was at this point that some public figures began to talk about republicanism again – not as a historical passion confined to the pages of history books, but as a living political ideal that could offer real solutions to intractable socio-economic and political problems. By the 1990s, republicanism and the Republic had become unavoidable reference points in French political discourse’ (Chabal, 2015, p.18).

Although the moderate right may not have been as involved as the left in the very beginnings of the development of neo-Republicanism (Nilsson, 2018, p.3), it certainly found its place in the movement from the late 1980s with the beginning of the *affaire du foulard* (Lépinard, 2007, p.389). Just a few years earlier, the far-right *Front national* (FN) had begun to make its first major electoral gains, entering the mainstream from the fringes for the first time¹. In 1984, as the *Front d’opposition national*, it won the fourth largest share of the French vote in the European elections, gaining ten MEPs (Mabille, 1984, p.8) and, two years later, it gained 35 *députés* in the legislative elections (Wieviorka, 2013, p.10). The FN has notoriously profited from periods of ‘insécurité sociale’ and ‘insécurité physique’ (Alidières, 2012, p.18, see also Bouvet, 2015, pp.89, 160-161). The increasing popularity of neo-Republican values and the rise of the FN have likely emerged from the same strained circumstances; their near-simultaneous development attests to the depth of the political and economic crisis of the time. Although the FN traditionally subscribed to what Agulhon calls a ‘minimalist’ Republicanism (Agulhon, 1998, pp.122, cited in Howarth and Varouxakis, 2014, pp.7), it has undoubtedly reaped the benefits of the new interpretation of Republicanism in the last decade (Baubérot, 2014, p.120). The link between economic difficulty and an increase in an identitarian interpretation of national values has also been noted by Krishnan and Thomas, who have suggested that during such times ‘there is often an increase in xenophobia, even within the French “Left”, where people take “solace” in French “republican values”’ (Krishnan and Thomas, 2008, p. 308, cited in Hopkins, 2015, p.157). The surge of both neo-Republicanism and the far right likely led to increased legal limitations on the practice of Islam in France. The link between neo-Republicanism and the discrimination which has affected French Muslims therefore merits deeper analysis.

¹ The FN is now names *Rassemblement national*.

Neo-Republicanism and Islamic Orthopraxy

Having developed in the 1980s, neo-Republicanism is still active today, demonstrating remarkable longevity. Jeremy Ahearne suggests that *laïcité* has recently been deformed from a political policy to a French national identity marker (Ahearne, 2014, p.324). *Laïcité* is the value that has been most strongly promulgated and defended since the re-emergence of Republicanism, and which has most often been employed against Islam. Fernando appropriately highlights how *laïcité* officially protects one's rights both to follow and not to follow religion, yet this right to protection from religion is increasingly evoked at the expense of the right to practise religion (Fernando, 2010, p.28).

It was also in the 1980s that intolerant discourse targeting Arabs shifted to focus on Muslims, and that the visibility of Islamic orthopraxy first became a 'problem'. There is therefore a correlation between the evolution of the politics of discrimination and the increasing defence of values seen as Republican. As Islam was deemed to threaten these values, the negative rhetoric about Islam that is now recognisable as cultural discrimination began to be seen as acceptable, despite racial discrimination becoming less acceptable (Deltombe, 2007, pp.59-76). This was predominantly played out at the time in the conflict surrounding the construction of mosques, and factory workers' industrial action between 1982 and 1984 (Deltombe, 2007, pp.47-51). The 1980s also saw an increase in rhetoric suggesting that France was in the midst of a Muslim 'invasion' and warning of the threat of 'islamisme'¹. A particularly shocking example of this was the *Le Figaro Magazine* 'dossier immigration' special published 26th October 1985 which ran with the headline 'Serons-nous encore Français dans 30 ans?' next to a photo of a veiled statue of Marianne. The press coverage of the 1979 Iranian revolution and consequential Islamic regime had certainly sown the seeds of suspicion of Islam among the French public, and the Iran-Iraq war and the Salman Rushdie affair in 1989 only served to reinforce these fears (Scott, 2007, pp.22-23; Winter, 2008, p.132).

¹ The term 'Islamism' in its most scientific sense implies a political framework which is based upon Islamic teachings and prescriptions. The majority of Islamists are not violent, but the media regularly uses the term in relation to violence linked to Islam and to describe extremist groups such as al-Qaeda and Daesh, which makes it a rather problematic term (Hamid and Dar, 2016).

In a context of increasing fear of Islam, particularly its political interpretations, as provoked by these international events, 1989 also saw the first episode of the *affaire du foulard*, a controversy which was not fully resolved for fifteen years after it first surfaced. The furore over the acceptability, or not, of the wearing of a hijab to school 'became the catalyst for a debate in which the combat for secularism – and interpretation and application thereof – became inextricably linked with the national angst over "integration" of "immigrants" and the place [...] of France's second religion' (Winter, 2008, p.133). The *Conseil d'État* eventually ruled that the wearing of a headscarf in school was not, in itself, incompatible with *laïcité* as the laws did not necessitate that pupils present themselves as religiously neutral (Conseil d'État, 1989). This was the first occasion in which *laïcité* had been utilised in a legal attempt to curb Islamic orthopraxy in post-colonial France. The debate garnered much media coverage, bringing the orthopraxy 'issue' to the attention of a broad audience. The fact that 'l'affaire ne divise pas selon les clivages politiques et intellectuels habituels' (Rochefort, 2002, p.147), suggests that a new political force was at work. I suggest that this force was neo-Republicanism.

The episode appears to have legitimised the weaponization of *laïcité* against French Muslims as just five years later the headscarf was the implicit subject of the 1994 'Circulaire Bayrou', although the issue of the legality of excluding girls from school for wearing a hijab had never fully disappeared in the intervening years, nor did it for the next decade. The *circulaire* relied heavily on neo-Republican principles such as opposition to *communautarisme*, but ultimately gave a weak argument for the banning of 'signes ostentatoires' by declaring that they are, in themselves, 'des éléments de prosélytisme ou de discrimination' (Assemblée nationale, 1994). Marceau Long, then-head of the *Haut Conseil à l'Intégration*, criticised the *circulaire* for these reasons, but was himself criticised for his naivety to the 'threat of Islamism' (Winter, 2008, pp.180-181). This demonstrates the heightened sensitivity which surrounded the issue of Islamic fundamentalism at the time.

Mahomet ou la République, Mahomet et la République

In the debates surrounding the headscarf, the genesis of two opposing positions on the place of Islam in French society can be seen. These positions are applicable to the French general public, political elite, intellectuals, media, and Islamic leaders based both inside and outside of France. I have termed the position which demands that Muslims actively assert the predominance of their loyalty to the Republic over their faith as a prerequisite to being fully welcomed and absorbed into the national narrative *Mahomet ou la République*. Those of this position are likely to view the renouncement of certain aspects of Islamic orthopraxy by Muslims as necessary for 'integration' into French society. This position, I argue, has resulted from and remains closely linked to the neo-Republican turn which began in the 1980s, as those who advocate a *Mahomet ou la République* perspective regularly base their argumentation on the principles of *universalisme, laïcité, liberté, égalité* and *fraternité*. These values are of course also referred to by those who, conversely, advocate the perspective that I will call *Mahomet et la République*; those on both sides of debates on the place of Islam in contemporary French society promote the respect of Republican values. However, when the *Mahomet ou la République* supporters rely on these values, it is in a dogmatic and exclusionary fashion which often goes beyond classical interpretations, particularly with regard to *laïcité*. They ultimately posit that one cannot be loyal to both an orthopractic Islam and to France, as devotion to the former necessarily precludes dedication to the latter. The *Mahomet et la République* position, on the other hand, accepts the compatibility of Islam in its many different varieties with complete loyalty to the Republic and does not demand that Muslims curb their practice in order to be accepted as being fully part of the French nation. Those of this view accept the limits of Republican values with respect to the preservation of the French national identity. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, over the course of the first two episodes of the *affaire du foulard*, these opposing positions are visible in those supporting or opposing the exclusion of girls who did not wish to remove their headscarves for school. These discourses were still in the early stages of development at this point, though: it was not until the 2003-2004 episode of the affair that the full spectrum of argumentation for both positions was fully established.

Tension Rises

The turn of the century brought further obstacles and hostilities between France and its Muslims. The 9/11 attacks in the United States unleashed widespread fears of 'Islamism', having demonstrated that the perceived threat was real. There was also an intensification in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict around this time, with the second Intifada erupting. This war has often had destabilising effects on other countries, including France, likely due, at least in part, to the religious aspect of it (Silverstein, 2008, pp.5-6). The terrorist attacks carried out in Madrid in 2004 and London in 2007 further provoked and legitimised fears of increasing 'Islamist extremism' in Europe. France saw bloodshed of its own during the 2012 anti-Semitic attacks perpetrated by Mohammed Merah and, from 2015 onwards, France has been the victim of a steady stream of attacks by terrorists usually affiliated with, or at least inspired by, Daesh. At its peak in late 2014, the terror cell controlled a large area 'stretching from North of Aleppo to South of Baghdad' (Barrett, 2014, p.8). Despite having lost a significant proportion of its territory since January 2015 (Rosiny, 2015, p.104), Daesh remains a player in the current Syrian conflict, and there is broad concern that Daesh 'may remain viable in the long term, both as a group and as an inspiration, [...] because it has been so successful in attracting foreign recruits' (Barrett, 2017, p.6). Fear of Daesh is certainly justified, but the fact that the terrorist attacks in Europe and the Middle East have been carried out by individuals and groups, such as Daesh, who claim to act in relation to their Islamic faith has greatly increased tensions in France regarding the loyalty of its large Muslim population.

It was during a period of intensified conflict in the Middle East that the FN reached the second round of the 2002 presidential elections. Across the board, campaigns had been led with a strong focus on national identity and security which undoubtedly benefitted the FN. After the initial wave of support for Chirac over Le Pen had worn off, it is likely that the newly-formed *Union pour un mouvement populaire* (UMP) sought a policy that would win back some of the support they had lost. It has been variously suggested that the media attention on the Lévy sisters' exclusion from school for wearing headscarves was seen to provide such an opportunity for Chirac's government, and would also constitute a distraction from unpopular social reforms and a means of outmanoeuvring the increasingly popular Nicolas Sarkozy (Gemie, 2010, pp.20-

21; Tévanian, 2005, p.30; Ahearne, 2014, p.322). This time the debate on Islamic headscarves was more pervasive than ever before, with unprecedented media coverage. In 2003 alone, *Libération*, *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro* published 1,284 articles between them on the topics of 'laïcité' and 'le voile'; an average of one per publication per day (Tévanian, 2005, p.15).

In 2003, the debate focused more sharply than it had previously on women within Islam, with many feminists arguing that Islam oppressed women, that Islamic dress was a visible sign of this oppression, and that legal intervention was essential to stop its propagation and to foster the assumption of French Republican values instead. During these debates, the lines between Islam and 'islamisme' were consistently blurred, likely as a result of the attention paid by the media to war and terrorism linked to Islam. The Stasi Commission, officially named 'La commission de réflexion sur l'application du principe de laïcité dans la République', was established in July 2003, although it was really a definitive answer to the headscarf question that the public and Chirac expected of it (Baubérot, 2004, pp.135-137). The Commission proposed in its final report that all religious symbols in state schools be prohibited, as well as political symbols. However, of twenty-six recommendations listed in the Stasi report, the only initiative the French government immediately made law was the ban on religious symbols in schools, which came into effect for *la rentrée* of 2004 (Gemie, 2010, pp.24-25).

The neo-Republican shift towards an identitarian interpretation of *laïcité*, which erroneously sees *laïcité* as a founding value of the Republic, was visible throughout the debate, as demonstrated in *Le Monde's* coverage of the Stasi Report:

'La République française s'est construite autour de la laïcité. Tous les États démocratiques respectent la liberté de conscience et le principe de non-discrimination ; ils connaissent des formes diverses de distinction entre politique et religieux ou spirituel. Mais la France a érigé la laïcité au rang de *valeur fondatrice*' (*Le Monde*, 2003, p.17, emphasis added).

By this time, the *Mahomet ou la République* – *Mahomet et la République* dichotomy had developed fully, with politicians and intellectuals on both sides of the debate playing major roles. The law in itself is a *Mahomet ou la République* measure as it demands that Muslims actively renounce an aspect of Islamic orthopraxy or else be excluded from the

Republican school. Many of those who supported it, particularly in the political sphere, argued that they saw the measure as a means of promoting a *Mahomet et la République* discourse, however.

Theorists such as Ahearne (2014, pp.322-324) and Baubérot (2015, pp.41-43) have suggested that there has been a recent co-opting of *laïcité* by the right and later the far right. Baubérot labels what he sees as the right's new, specific brand of *laïcité* 'la *laïcité* UMPénisée' (Baubérot, 2014, p.45). While it is undeniable that the FN has taken a rather surprising step away from its traditional sympathies towards Catholicism, it appears far more likely that the right's overall shift in attitude towards *laïcité* is part of the broader movement of neo-Republicanism, which cuts across party lines, rather than an active co-optation of *laïcité*. Indeed, the moderate right has been implicated in identitarian debates on *laïcité* since the re-emergence of a staunch interpretation of Republicanism in the 1980s: Even if it was initially 'gênée par l'aspect "laïque" de l'affaire [du foulard]' in 1989 (Deltombe, 2007, p.102), the right certainly exploited the attention given to the headscarf 'issue' to further debate on the 'problems' associated with immigration, and it soon began to weaponize the preservation of *laïcité* for this purpose (Deltombe, 2007, p.112). Furthermore, Ernest Chénier, the headteacher who was arguably the driving force behind the 1989 eruption of the headscarf affair, eventually became a *député* for the *Rassemblement pour la République* (RPR) party (Scott, 2007, p.26). Some even called him the 'loup de la droite extrême' (Bitton, 2003). Conversely, the left-wing minister for education at the time, Lionel Jospin of the *Parti socialiste* (PS), opposed the exclusion of headscarf-wearing girls, although his party was very divided on the matter: Jack Lang favoured Jospin's position whereas Jean-Pierre Chevènement and Henri Emmanuelli supported a ban (Winter, 2008, p.134). These actions and positions serve to demonstrate that many on the right, as well as the left, have been supporting a firm, 'communitarian' (Heine's term, 2009, p.171) reading of *laïcité* since the late 1980s, which in turn proves that both the left and the right have been implicated in the growth of neo-Republican rhetoric, including the development of hard-line interpretations of *laïcité*. The 'co-optation' alluded to by Baubérot and Ahearne appears instead to be the continuation of this trend.

A Multiplication of Limitations on Islamic Orthopraxy

Since the first law which effectively curtailed Islamic practice in schools in the name of preserving *laïcité*, there have been many other debates, bans, and attempted bans which aim to keep religious practice restricted to the private sphere. The *Mahomet ou la République* position has repeatedly been reinforced by these restrictions (see also Hajjat and Mohammed, 2016, p.176). 2010 saw the publication of the Gerin report on the 'pratique du port du voile intégral sur la territoire national' (Gerin, 2010, p.1). The commission, which notably failed to give voice to perspectives which supported full-face veiling (Selby, 2011, p.389), concluded that '[a]u fil des auditions, il est apparu aux membres de la mission que le port du voile intégral lançait un défi à notre République. C'est inacceptable ; il faut condamner cette dérive' (Gerin, 2010, p.188). The niqab was seen as a political, not a religious symbol. The recommendations of this report ultimately led to the passing of the 2010 law banning 'la dissimulation du visage dans l'espace public' (Vie Publique, 2010). Support for the ban was predominantly based on arguments that the niqab was in itself an attack on women's freedoms, and a demonstration of religious extremism, Islamism, and *communautarisme* (Selby, 2011, pp.386-7).

The dress-code of Muslim women was once again targeted in the summer of 2016. Several mayors attempted to ban the burkini on French beaches predominantly in the name of 'l'ordre public', although hygiene and safety were also given as reasons for the ruling (*Le Monde*, 2016)¹. The *Conseil d'État* eventually suspended the ban which was put in place by the mayor of Villeneuve-Loubet (*Conseil d'État*, 2016), but the various bans, and the support for them, are certainly indicative of common societal perceptions of Islam. The burkini was often mistakenly interpreted as a sign of extremist Salafism and of the oppression of women (see, for example, Godin, 2016), like the niqab. According to Ifop poll data, between March 2008 and February 2013, *laïcité* overtook universal suffrage to be seen as the most important national value (Ifop, 2015, p.7). This both explains the misapplication of *laïcité* in the burkini bans for example (see Lisnard in *Le*

¹ Despite its name, the burkini bears very little relation to the burqa. Rather, it looks similar to a wet suit, usually comprising a long-sleeved top, trousers and a hood.

Monde, 2016), and demonstrates the continuation of the development of this strongly identitarian interpretation of Republican values, which has targeted Muslim women in particular.

Like the headscarf affair, conflict surrounding the provision of halal food, particularly alternatives to pork, in school meals (as well as those provided in hospitals and prisons) has flared up on many occasions, with many arguing that providing such food is contrary to *laïcité*. However, it has been noted by Papi (2012, p.6. see also Killian, 2003, p.572) that, somewhat hypocritically, fish, rather than meat, is often served on Fridays in school canteens in accordance with Catholic tradition. There is no overall law on what may and may not be served in school canteens so individual communes and regions are able to make their own decisions on the matter (Papi, 2012). The most recent re-emergence of the issue, however, saw an FN mayor ban the provision of alternatives to pork in school lunches (*Le Figaro* and AFP, 2018). This issue ties into a broader debate on the arguably inconsistent application of *laïcité* in schools. Ahearne has commented on the incongruity of the policy which allows state money to be used to fund private religious schools (Ahearne, 2014, p.321). Gresh also touches on the subject in a critique on France's Catholic public holidays (Gresh, 2004, p.208). These discrepancies suggest that Islam is seen as being particularly incompatible with *l'école républicaine*, which, in turn, serves as evidence that the increasing claims of Republicanism go beyond the classical definitions of such politics and are linked to the preservation of a particular notion of French national identity.

It is not only schools that have witnessed conflict on the issue of *laïcité*. Although public-sector employees are subject to restrictions on religious symbols in the workplace (Vie Publique, 2017), there have been several court cases concerning the right to practise one's religion in the private-sector work place, including the famous Baby-Loup affair. In this case the Cour de Cassation ruled that the employer acted within its rights when it dismissed an employee for refusing to remove her headscarf at work in a private nursery (see Hunter-Henin, 2015). In August 2018, ten years after the affair began, the United Nations delivered a verdict on the issue in which it criticised France for restricting the defendant's freedom to practise her religion (*Le Monde*, 2018a). In 2017, due to a severe

lack of mosques and other prayer spaces, a group of Muslim men resorted to congregating in the streets of Paris for Friday prayers. A group of politicians protested against the gatherings with a march. Participants sang *La Marseillaise* as they passed by the group in prayer (*Le Parisien*, 2017); an act which clearly signalled that they did not consider the behaviour of the Muslims in prayer to be 'French'.

The Importance of Orthopraxy

These varied episodes are all indicative of the power and prevalence of the *Mahomet ou la République* stance as they represent attempts to curb Islamic orthopraxy in France to protect a certain interpretation of French values and identity. Their regularity suggests that since the 2004 law which resulted from the headscarf affair, many have begun to consider limitations on Islamic orthopraxy in the name of *laïcité*, gender equality, and security as legitimate and desirable. Each new limitation on Islamic orthopraxy has further reinforced the misguided conviction that one cannot simultaneously be loyal to Islam and to the Republic.

This clash of ideals between Muslims demanding their right to practise their faith openly and those who consider such practice to be demonstrative of disloyalty to Republican values is problematic as orthopraxy is highly important to a significant and growing proportion of French Muslims. Ifop has found that there has been a significant increase in the number of French Muslims fasting during Ramadan: in 1989, 60% reported fasting whereas in 2011, 71% did (Ifop, 2011, p.11). A recent study of French Muslims published by the *Institut Montaigne* (IM) found that 70% of respondents always buy halal meat, while only 6% never do (El Karoui, 2016, p.32). The study also discovered that 80% agree that pupils should be able to eat halal meat in school canteens, and that 60% agreed that girls should be allowed to wear a headscarf in schools and *lycées* (El Karoui, 2016, pp.32-35).

Fernando (2010) has highlighted how the headscarf is considered a religious duty and obligation by the Muslim women who wear it. However, this sense of obligation comes from within the individual; there is not necessarily any outside pressure to wear it

and so individual rights and freedoms are not infringed by this obligation. She concludes that it must be emphasised that once someone has accepted to follow the orthopractic obligation, it is no longer only a choice and must not be considered academically as one. To do so would legitimise the argument that orthopractic Muslims are prioritising Islamic values over French values, and that it is thus reasonable for the state to limit orthopraxy (Fernando, 2010, p.29). This is a common misconception among those who further the *Mahomet ou la République* perspective. To be considered well integrated into French society, one must be fully loyal to French Republican values above and beyond all other loyalties, but Islamic orthopraxy is viewed as putting Islam above Republican values. Seen in this way, it is easy to understand how orthopraxy is regularly linked to religious extremism. This logic implies that Islamic and Republican identities are mutually exclusive. This is not the case, however, as will be demonstrated in chapters Three and Four.

The results of various polls of the French population demonstrate the extent to which orthopraxy is indeed perceived to be a barrier to integration. A 2016 survey by Ifop found that 47% of respondents thought that the ‘présence d’une communauté musulmane en France est plutôt une menace pour l’identité de notre pays’, and that only 32% of respondents believed that Muslims and those ‘d’origine musulmane’ are ‘bien intégrés’ into French society (Ifop, 2016, pp.6, 10). The most commonly given reason for the lack of integration was Muslims’ refusal to integrate (67%) (Ifop, 2016, p.13): Muslims’ behaviour is considered by the majority to be at fault. A comparison with data from previous Ifop studies on the same subject suggests that the perception that Muslims are refusing to integrate, or that their cultural differences are too great to overcome (an opinion reminiscent of the later stages of the Algerian War for Independence), are becoming increasingly common (Ifop, 2016, p.13). This, combined with the finding that 63% of French respondents agreed that ‘l’influence et la visibilité de l’islam en France sont aujourd’hui “trop importants”’ (Ifop, 2016, p.16), and the sustained popularity of measures to limit Islamic orthopraxy, suggests that the refusal to integrate is seen in orthopraxy. The conflict surrounding Islam in France is centred on orthopraxy, therefore. Although by the end of the twentieth century Muslims were much more accepted in French society than they were fifty years previously (Gastaut, 2000, pp.93, 109, cited in

Gresh, 2004, pp.158-9), the opinions revealed in these recent polls nevertheless pose a problem for societal cohesion. Those who gave negative responses regarding Muslims' presence and efforts to integrate are likely to be of the *Mahomet ou la République* perspective. These views imply a demand that orthopractic Muslims further reduce the visibility of their faith. Conversely, the minority who see French Muslims as generally well-integrated are likely to be of the *Mahomet et la République* perspective as they appear not to consider Islamic orthopraxy to necessarily be a barrier to integration.

It is important to highlight at this stage that the majority of Muslims live unproblematically in France. When conflict does emerge on the subject of Islam, it is orthopraxy, the practical element of religious faith, that is targeted. Belief in Islam, when it is not visible, is not deemed to be problematic with regard to being accepted into the Republic (Hajjat and Mohammed, 2016, pp.37-39). Although new sources of such conflict are relatively uncommon, once a dispute has arisen, it tends not to fade quickly from public discourse. Moreover, each new conflict arguably has a cumulative effect, reinforcing the preexisting negative perceptions of Islamic orthopraxy and thus aiding the consolidation of the *Mahomet ou la République* discourse.

Concluding Remarks

The conflict between French Muslims and broader French society consistently emerges when a behaviour that many Muslims see as an intrinsic aspect of their faith and identity is opposed by the broader, non-Muslim population and the political elite as it is seen as an indication of being insufficiently 'integrated' into French culture and society. Muslims' supposed lack of integration is perceived as a threat to French culture, values, and security as their loyalty is presumed to lie with Islam, rather than with the Republic. In consideration of the high levels of international terrorism, widespread war in the Middle East (particularly since the new millennium), and the media focus on autocratic Islamic regimes with poor records on women's rights, it is unsurprising that measures to limit orthopraxy in order to counter the 'islamist' threat and purportedly aid integration have gained popularity among the public: opposition to the headscarf in schools has risen from 74% in 2003 to 89% in 2012 (Ifop, 2012, p.22).

Due to the increasingly pugnacious support of *laïcité* that has emerged since the 1980s as part of the neo-Republican trend, *laïcité* has regularly been used as a yardstick to measure the ‘integration’, or lack thereof, of French Muslims, and deployed to enforce integration when it is deemed to be unsatisfactory by those of the *Mahomet ou la République* point of view. This confrontation between orthopractic Muslims and staunch neo-Republicans who support a *Mahomet ou la République* domestic policy-set appears set to worsen as religiosity has been increasing among young French Muslims in recent years (Brouard and Tiberj, 2005, pp.30-32). Furthermore, a survey of French Muslims found that over a third agree that ‘[e]n France les musulmans sont victimes d’un complot’ (El Karoui, 2016, p.41). This suggests that current political situation which is dominated by *Mahomet ou la République* actions is not acceptable to a significant proportion of French Muslims, and that they support the *Mahomet et la République* position instead. The questions of which intellectual actors are on each side of the debate, how the *Mahomet ou la République* position has grown to eclipse the *Mahomet et la République* voice, and whether the *Mahomet ou la République* position reflects the views of French Muslims must therefore be answered.

The Nature of the Debate: A Typology of Theorists

Having considered the history of the, at times, tense relationship between France and Islam in Chapter One, I will now turn to the analysis of the positions of the main theorists involved in the contemporary debates. This chapter will therefore comprise the explanation of a typology of the intellectuals who have played a central role in the development of the *Mahomet ou la République – Mahomet et la République* dichotomy. The typology uniquely contrasts various key theorists' views regarding the integration of Islam in France, to demonstrate the arguments proposed on each side of the debate.

Why a Typology?

In order to understand fully the development and trajectory of the *Mahomet ou la République – Mahomet et la République* dichotomy and its role in the debate on Islamic orthopraxy in France, it is necessary to consider the dynamic of the dialogue and confrontation between some of the predominant intellectual actors furthering each viewpoint. A wide variety of theorists have involved themselves in the debates on Islamic orthopraxy and its acceptance into the Republican identity including polemicists, Islamic religious theorists and, particularly since 2003, feminists. The typology will enable the establishment of the role played by some of the most influential and well-known thinkers in the development of the present debate and allow for a direct comparison between certain aspects of the theorists' lines of argumentation that have not previously been used for this purpose. Moreover, it will enable comparison between voices that are seldom, if ever, compared side by side. This will aid the development of a new understanding of the tension surrounding Islamic orthopraxy in contemporary France. Kenneth Bailey asserts the broader benefits of an effective typology: it can 'transform the complexity of apparently eclectic categories of diverse cases into well-ordered sets of a few rather homogenous types, clearly situated in a property space of a few rather important dimensions' (Bailey, 1992, cited in Bailey, 1994, p.33).

The present typology comprises protagonists and those whose works I have considered as primary sources; in short those who, in their works, discourses and ideologies, have contributed to the overall development of the *Mahomet ou la République* and *Mahomet et la République* positions through their considerations of the development of Islam's integration in France and the West. The typology will not, therefore, include those who have retrospectively commented on such sources, even if the convictions of these actors would place them in a certain group within the typology.

The inclusion of intellectuals, the non-political actors in socio-political discussions, is important in the consideration of the *Mahomet ou la République* – *Mahomet et la République* dichotomy as France has a long tradition of intellectual involvement in such debates. The late nineteenth century is widely upheld as the dawn of cultural intervention in political debate, but, as Sirinelli argues, 'si l'affaire Dreyfus marque bien l'émergence historique de ces intellectuels en tant que force collective, et notamment par leurs pétitions et manifestes, il existe toutefois une « préhistoire » de tels textes' (Sirinelli, 1990, p.21). The role of the intellectual has evolved greatly since this time, however.

As television has developed into a cornerstone of modern entertainment, France has witnessed the 'intellectuel-médiatique' come into being (Delporte, 2009). With the rise of social media, the role of the intellectual has continued to change. The trajectory of the intellectual towards the media and the mainstream has led to various suggestions over recent decades that the French intellectual tradition has all but disappeared (Poizat, 2014, p.102; Delporte, 2009, p.148). The media, through its relentless drive for sales and high viewing figures, has certainly furthered the visibility, especially among the younger generations, of the more controversial thinkers, possibly at the expense of those of a more moderate position. However, as Chabal argues, although French intellectual life has undeniably changed radically, it undoubtedly remains vigorous, and the intellectual domain is now much larger (Chabal, 2017, pp.109-111). This is evident in the wide variety of voices coming from many different sectors and backgrounds that have participated in the debates concerning the place of Islam in French society. The typology will reflect the expansion of the intellectual field by considering those who have gained influence as a

result of the shift towards the media, as well as those who continue to use more traditional platforms to expound their positions.

I have divided the theorists that will be studied into three broad categories: polemicists, feminists, and Islamic theorists. The first category comprises polemicists whose works primarily concern the changing landscape of French society. Within this, *laïcité*, religion, and immigration are particularly pertinent topics for these theorists. Those in this category have variously been involved in the debates surrounding Islamic orthopraxy since the 1980s.

The second category encompasses the feminists. While a few arguments focussing on women's rights were mooted during the early incarnations of the headscarf affair, this category's significant involvement only began in 2003 with the third eruption of the *affaire du foulard* (Gaspard, 2006, p.86). For a theorist to be included in this category, they must further their intellectual interventions through a feminist prism. This condition being met, these actors nevertheless come from rather heterogeneous backgrounds: some had long, successful intellectual careers prior to their interventions regarding the headscarf, whilst for others, this was their first foray into French intellectual activism.

The final of the three categories is that of the Islamic theorists. Theorists within this category have been growing in both number and influence with the increasing Muslim population in France, particularly since the 1980s when several Muslim associations were founded (Cesari, 1994, pp.138-144). This allowed for greater representation of French Muslims, as well as a platform for theorists. The theorists of this category have all dedicated much of their careers to the study and teaching of Islam. The majority are, or have been, rectors of mosques or involved in the leadership of other large Islamic organisations. They are considered to be authorities on Islam, although far from universally.

The three categories all include a combination of theorists whose interventions have either furthered the *Mahomet ou la République* or the *Mahomet et la République* perspectives. Each of the categories has been further divided into smaller groupings according to the theorists' positions on central aspects of the debate on the integration of Islam into French society. All the theorists included in this typology are all well-known

in their fields, with many of them being household names as a result of the media attention that they garner. Their views are therefore wide-reaching and, consequently, have the potential to influence significant numbers of their followers.

The Polemicists I: The Nostalgics

The 'polemicists' category will be considered first. It is divided into three subgroups based on the theorists' perception of a threat to France's socio-political values in Islam. I have named the first group of polemicists, containing Alain Finkielkraut, Éric Zemmour, and Michel Houellebecq, the 'Nostalgics'. These intellectuals are united in their perception of a threat to the values and identity of the Republic in the growing presence of Islam in France. Finkielkraut says, for example, of France and Islam: 'les modes de vie se heurtent, la crise éclate' (Finkielkraut, 2013, p.23; see also Zemmour, 2014, p.526; Houellebecq, 2015, pp.88-89). I have focussed particularly on Houellebecq's *Soumission* (2015), Zemmour's *Le Suicide français* (2014), and Finkielkraut's *L'Identité malheureuse* (2013) when considering the positions of these intellectuals as they consider in some depth subject of Islam in France. Furthermore, their recent publication means they have been written since the consolidation of the debate on Islamic orthopraxy in France as was outlined in Chapter One. Although the Nostalgics do not necessarily identify with the 'déclinisme' movement, they do, like those within this movement, consider France to be losing footing in world-rankings on the economic, social and political levels (Spoiden, 2010, p.68; Zemmour, 2014, p.9). These theorists have all also, on multiple occasions, been labelled as 'nouveaux réactionnaires' by other commentators (see, for example, Durand, 2015; Lindenburg, 2002).

Zemmour and Houellebecq in particular have gained a certain level of notoriety over the course of their careers. Zemmour has twice been charged with inciting religious hatred (*Le Monde*, 2018b). Houellebecq has famously labelled Islam, as a religion, as 'la plus con' and 'dangereuse' (Aïssaoui, 2014), and openly admitted his 'Islamophobia' (Chrisafis, 2015). Finkielkraut has had a slightly less inflammatory career. In his youth, he was a supporter of the far left. More recently, however, his views have become increasingly similar to those of the right and even the far right, as his 2013 work

demonstrates. Finkelkraut represents a more traditional image of an intellectual, having published broadly in journals and being a regular signatory of intellectual petitions. Like Zemmour, though, he is also something of a regular on the television talk shows which are a platform for contemporary, and often controversial, theorists, which suggests that he has adapted his methods to keep up with the modern demands of intellectual life (see Delporte, 2009, p.140 in particular).

The three works mentioned above share a common line of argument that French culture is being eroded by the presence of immigrants and those of immigrant descent (Finkelkraut, 2013, p.102-112; Houellebecq, 2015, p.188; Zemmour, 2014, p.14). Furthermore, the Nostalgics have each demonstrated a subscription to the idea that religious piety, as elaborated through orthopraxy, is evidence of the subordination of Republican values to Islamic values (Finkelkraut, 2013, p.54; Zemmour, 2014, p.330). Houellebecq goes as far as to suggest, through the discourse of a Muslim character in his novel, that in Islam, one's submission to God is akin to that of the brutally dominated O in Réage's *Histoire d'O* (Houellebecq, 2015, p.274). The three theorists see this submission as deeply problematic both in terms of accepting Muslims' integration into the Republic, and for the security of the Republic and the preservation of its values. Their works therefore suggest that there is a fundamental incompatibility between orthopractic Islam and French values. This is further reaffirmed in the authors' condemnations of any yielding to Islam by either the political elite or the broader population (Finkelkraut, 2013, p.116; Zemmour, 2014, p.214). Their lines of argument also rely greatly on opposition to *communautarisme*, which is presented as being among the greatest threats facing French society (Houellebecq, 2015, pp.34-35, 84 in particular; Zemmour, 2014, p.331; Finkelkraut, 2013, pp.118-119). This, as well as Finkelkraut's near-obsession with the preservation of *l'école républicaine* in his 2013 work, is likely to resonate with the identitarian aspect of the neo-Republican viewpoint (Finkelkraut, 2013, pp.38-39). The Nostalgics' views, particularly in these works, can appear somewhat hysterical. However, that does not lessen their effect on the hardening of the debate surrounding Islamic orthopraxy.

The Polemicists II: The Orthopraxy Sceptics

The second group of polemicists contains the theorists whom I have identified as being 'Orthopraxy Sceptics': Gilles Kepel, Michel Onfray, Caroline Fourest and the late Abdelwahab Meddeb. As the name of this group suggests, all the theorists within it are deeply critical of dogmatic and orthopractic interpretations of Islam. They reason that they are linked to violence and are therefore a threat to the security of the Republic.

Kepel is the most exemplary 'Orthopraxy Sceptic'. He is an academic at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques in Paris and a prolific and successful writer: his research on the *banlieues* and the terrorist attacks in France have gained him much interest from the media. Unlike the Nostalgics, he does not suggest that Islam, in itself, is a threat to French values. Instead, he is rather more supportive of Muslims' integration, as the concluding sentence of his 1987 work, *Les Banlieues de l'Islam*, demonstrates: '[...] la naissance de l'Islam et son développement dans les banlieues de l'Hexagone contraignent dès maintenant la société française à repenser la définition de la nationalité et à inventer une nouvelle et dynamique affirmation d'elle-même' (Kepel, 1987, p.384). Kepel's anxiety regarding French Islam focusses on Salafism and Jihadism. This neurosis seems to be a more recent development in his argumentation and, in part, a result of the recent spate of terrorism that has struck France and several other European countries, which he links directly with Salafism (Kepel and Jardin, 2015, pp.24-25).

Kepel describes a 'rupture culturelle' which has developed both in the West and in the Maghreb, that has allowed Salafism to gain a certain, although minority, influence and which is liable to lead to the radicalisation of those involved (Kepel, 2016a). He links increasing orthopraxy, which he sees in what he describes as Salafism, with diminishing support for the Republic, its values and ideals (Kepel and Jardin, 2015, p.114). He has therefore been supportive of measures limiting Islamic orthopraxy, such as the ban on headscarves in schools – indeed, he was a member of the Stasi Commission – as a means of containing Salafism. Kepel suggests that the French *banlieues* have a concerning proportion of Salafi preachers and followers, and that these areas are breeding grounds for Salafi radicalism (Kepel and Jardin, 2015, pp.114-115, 120-122; see also Dakhli, 2016). Kepel (relying on Antoine Jardin's research) does, however, acknowledge the role played

by the poor standards of living, high rates of unemployment, and general discrimination faced by those living in the *banlieues* (Kepel and Jardin, 2015, pp. 221-222; Jardin, 2016), as well as the aggressive discourse of the FN (Kepel and Jardin, 2015, pp.85-89), in the development of Islamic fundamentalism.

Onfray acknowledges that many of the flaws he perceives in religion are common to Christianity, Judaism and Islam, but it is *Islamic* orthopraxy which he sees as the most nonsensical (Onfray, 2007, pp.69, 72-76, 101). He echoes Kepel's assertion that terrorism stems from the radicalisation of Islam (Onfray, 2016, p.29; Daumas, 2016), thereby linking the faith of the peaceful majority with terrorism. Also like Kepel, Onfray has attacked France's role in creating the conditions in which extremism is able to take hold (*Le Point*, 2015). Unlike the Nostalgics, Onfray does not frame his arguments attacking Islam in French identitarian terms. It is physical danger to non-Muslims that he is most fearful of: 'The Koranic law, which forbids killing, committing crimes against, or massacring one's neighbour, is strictly confined to members of the community: the *ummah*' (Onfray, 2007, p.199; Onfray, 2016, pp.69-70). He therefore fears that Muslims see violence against non-Muslims as permissible.

Caroline Fourest, meanwhile, has argued that younger women born in France who follow Islamic prescriptions by wearing a hijab are 'antilaïcité', and furthering 'intégrisme'. She suggests they are inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood (Fourest in Loyer and Papin, 2010, p.28). She thereby links common Islamic orthopraxy with politicised Islam, which she perceives as a threat to France. This is also visible in her work condemning Tariq Ramadan as a promoter of the rhetoric of the Muslim Brotherhood (Fourest, 2004). She argues that the niqab should be banned to prevent 'trouble à l'ordre public, à la sécurité, à la notion de vivre ensemble' (Fourest in Loyer and Papin, 2010, p.33). Like Kepel, Fourest is favourable to the integration of Islam into the Republic, although this is limited to the interpretations of Islam in which orthopraxy is restricted to protect against the threat of political Islam (Fourest, 2007, p.36).

Meddeb, considering the violence perpetrated in the name of Islam, describes the religion as 'malade' (Meddeb, 2009, p.9, pp.13-14). He contends that in order to be cured, Islam must 'rejoindre un site post-islamique contemporain des sites où logent juifs

et chrétiens', and prioritise citizenship over religion (Meddeb, 2009, pp.12-13). He argues that secularism and a departure from literalist interpretations of scripture are a part of this cure and also asserts the state's role in it (Meddeb, 2009, pp.13, 172). Frégosi suggests that Meddeb intervened in the present debate as a 'musulman éclairé', owing to his robust opposition to 'islamisme' (Frégosi, 2008).

The Polemicists III: The Pro-Diversity Liberals

Academics Olivier Roy and Jean Baubérot, specialists on Islam and *laïcité* respectively, and journalist Edwy Plenel collectively form the 'Pro-Diversity Liberals' group. Again, I have focussed particularly on these theorists' recent works: Roy's *Le Djihad et la mort* (2016); Baubérot's *La Laïcité falsifiée* (2014); and Plenel's *Pour les musulmans* (2016). These works deal most comprehensively with the issues under consideration in this thesis, and their recent publication, around the same time as the works of the Nostalgics, allows for comprehensive study and comparison of these theorists' positions.

The Pro-Diversity Liberals differ rather substantially from the other two groups of intellectuals and polemicists as, although they acknowledge the threat of Jihadism, they separate it entirely from the Islam practised by the overwhelming majority of French Muslims. They do not see Islam or its practice as a threat to either the values or the security of the Republic (Roy, 2016, p.74, 108; Plenel, 2016, pp.11-12). The Pro-Diversity Liberals often position themselves in opposition to theorists whom I have placed in other groups and are deeply critical of them. Roy, for example, has been embroiled in a bitter and widely publicised dispute with Kepel over the centrality of Islam in radicalisation to Jihadism (Daumas, 2016). Roy argues that the issue at hand is the Islamisation of pre-existing radicality (Roy, 2016, p.15). Plenel, meanwhile, implicitly rejects the ideologies of Houellebecq, Finkelkraut and Zemmour in their respective 2015, 2013 and 2014 works, and further attacks Finkelkraut in an unrelenting critique of a speech that he gave on Islam in a radio appearance (Plenel, 2016, pp.23, 39-44). The present group contend, therefore, that Islam in France has been subjected to excessive criticism and rejection (Plenel, 2016, pp.90-91; Bauberot, 2014, pp.65-66, 95-96).

The Pro-Diversity Liberals suggest that it is the mobilisation of *laïcité* against Islam, seen in the apparently desired elimination of the religious from the public sphere, that is likely to create tension between those who advocate it and French Muslims (Roy, 2016, p.115; Bauberot, 2014, pp.37; Plenel, 2016, pp.117-127). Plenel and Baubérot blame a rightward-shift in political rhetoric for these demands (Plenel, 2016, pp.14-15, 90; Baubérot, 2014, p.7), although I argue that neo-Republicanism explains the right's new reliance on such values. I propose, therefore, that Roy, Baubérot and Plenel represent a non-neo-Republican perspective. The Pro-Diversity Liberals often denounce various aspects of political policy as damaging to the acceptance of Islam in contemporary French society (Roy, 2005, p.151; Plenel, 2016, P.164; Bauberot, 2004, pp.139-140). Overall, the Pro-Diversity Liberals promote a societal framework which recognises and welcomes diversity, whilst retaining French values.

The Feminists I: The Universalist Feminists

This chapter will now turn to the discussion of the second category of theorists that I have identified: the feminist theorists, who focus on the protection and development of women's rights. The feminists are divided into just two, rather oppositional groups based upon the theorists' interpretations of and positions regarding Muslim women's emancipation. The first group is the Universalist Feminists. In this group I have included Chahdortt Djavann, Fadela Amara, Elisabeth Badinter, Anne Zelensky, and Sihem Habchi. Some of these theorists, such as Badinter, have long been known in the academy, while others, such as Djavann, were largely unknown before the 2003 eruption of the *affaire du foulard*. Amara and Habchi have both been president of the feminist organisation *Ni Putes Ni Soumises* (NPNS), the former during the 2003-2004 headscarf affair, the latter throughout the 2009-2010 debates on the niqab.

The Universalist Feminists see the practice of veiling as a metaphorical and literal symbol of the anti-feminism that they consider to be latent within Islam (Vigerie and Zelensky, 2003; Djavann, 2003, pp.10, 13). They are therefore supportive of legal limitations on Islamic orthopraxy in the name of protecting women's rights and freedoms (see Habchi and Badinter in Assemblée nationale, 2009a; Gaspard, 2006, p.87). NPNS even

supported calls for a ban on headscarves in the 2004 International Women's Day march in Paris in 2004 (Gemie, 2010, p.77). The theorists in this group commonly argue that women do not want to wear a headscarf. They thereby further the disproven argument that Muslim women are implicitly or explicitly forced to veil by their families and communities (see Badinter et al., 1989, pp.30-31; Badinter in Assemblée nationale, 2009a). Djavann acknowledges that some women choose to veil, but she unflatteringly suggests that these women only do so 'pour qu'un mari enfin les choisisse les yeux fermés', comparing these women with 'les prostituées qui dissimulent leur corps dans l'ombre des nuits pour tromper les clients' (Djavann, 2003, p.36, see also p.12). Habchi argues the existence of the logic whereby '[i]f you are not respectable you are a whore, and if you are a whore, you can be used as [a] sexual object [...] you can be burnt, you can be raped, collective[ly] raped' (Radio France Internationale, 2010, cited in Spohn, 2013, p.151). Habchi asserts that this brutal rhetoric, which is supposedly prevalent in the *banlieues*, forces women to follow Islamic dress codes in order to protect themselves against such violence.

The Universalist Feminists rely heavily on Republican values in their reasoning when considering women and Islam (see, for example, Vigerie and Zelensky, 2003; Djavann, 2003, p.46; Amara and Abdi, 2006, p.31, cited in Gemie, 2010, p.68; Badinter et al., 1989). For Habchi, the choice for Muslim women really is *Mahomet ou la République*: During her interview by the Gerin Commission in 2009 on the full-face veil, Habchi declared that 'c'est la République ou la burqa' (Habchi, cited in Assemblée nationale, 2009a). Indeed, Universalist Feminists consider that feminism cannot achieve its aims within organised religion, as it is intrinsically sexist (Amara, 2005, cited in Gemie, 2010, p.80). This explains their particularly strong defence of secularism within France.

The Feminists II: The Pragmatist Feminists

The other group of feminist thinkers, the ensemble which furthers the counter position to the Universalist Feminists, is the Pragmatist Feminists. The Pragmatist Feminists group also comprises a mix of well-known, heavy-weight feminists such as Christine Delphy, who has been implicated in debates on feminism in France since the 1970s (Disch, 2015,

p.831), with names that have only emerged since the new millennium, such as Houria Bouteldja. They were both part of the organisation *Collectif une école pour tou-te-s* (CEPT) which campaigned against the 2004 law and supported girls who had been or who were at risk of being excluded from school for wearing a headscarf (Baeza, 2006, pp.150-151; Chouder et al., 2008, p.55). I have also placed Elsa Dorlin, Françoise Gaspard and Sylvie Tissot (another member of CEPT) in this group.

These feminists all have relatively tolerant attitudes towards Islamic veiling. However, they are not ignorant of or naïve to the suggestion that dress codes which apply only to women may have implications for women's freedoms. Dorlin acknowledges that there ought to be 'veritable debate in feminist circles' on whether the burqa represents the 'absolute submission' of women (Dorlin, 2010, p.435, cited in Spohn, 2013, p.151). Delphy (2006, p.61) notes how Christianity and Judaism also traditionally have similar dress codes for women, and that this ultimately is a sign of the domination of men over women. The common denominator between the respective views of the Pragmatist Feminists is the argument that the consequences of outlawing religious symbols, particularly in schools, are far more damaging to those implicated, and the broader population, than the religious symbols themselves (see particularly Delphy, 2004, p.66; Gaspard, 2004, p.77; Gaspard, 2006, p.90; Tissot, 2011, p.42; Tissot, 2007, p.16). Some Pragmatist Feminists, without entering into a theological debate on the obligation of veiling, assert the various benefits that some women gain from wearing the headscarf, and argue, therefore, that these benefits must be maintained by keeping such practice fully legal (Gaspard, 2004, p.73; Tissot, 2011, p.43). The Pragmatists Feminists argue that the overwhelming majority of women in France who dress according to Islamic codes do so of their own free will. They also recognise that many young women begin wearing the headscarf against the wishes of their families who understand that wearing a headscarf can cause friction within places of work and education (Gaspard, 2006, p.90; see also Chouder et al., 2008, p.17 for example).

The feminists in this group link the limitations on Islamic orthopraxy with the continuation of colonialist rhetoric and racism (Bouteldja et al., 2004, p.50; Delphy, 2004, p. 50; Delphy, 2006, p.67; Tissot, 2011, p.47). They thoroughly disapprove of the way in

which sexism is ignored when it is not seen as being linked to Islam: ‘Le foulard ne peut pas être le seul signe d’une inégalité qui est inscrite au cœur de notre société. Mais les autres signes, qu’on n’est pas en peine de trouver sont « les nôtres »’ (Delphy, 2004, p.65; see also Dorlin, 2010, p.432 cited in Spohn, 2013, p.152 ; Tissot, 2007, pp.15-16). Like the Universalist Feminists, the Pragmatist Feminists argue that their position will allow for the greatest amount of freedom for women. Bouteldja notably asks: ‘Quelle différence fondamentale y-a-t-il entre une femme que l’on oblige à se couvrir et celle que l’on oblige à se dévêtir ?’ (Bouteldja, 2004). The Pragmatist Feminists, therefore, are also mindful of and respect Republican values (Gapsard, 2004, pp.78-79; Delphy, 2004, p.66), but come to entirely different conclusions to the Universalist Feminists about the best way of protecting these values for all.

The Islamic Theorists I: The Liberal European Reformists

The final of the three categories of theorists is the Islamic theorists. These theorists, as experts in Islamic theology, primarily base their lines of argument upon Islamic teachings. This category comprises four sub-groups which are based on the opinions of the theorists regarding Islam in Western society, including how far they believe Muslims should change or limit their practice for the modern, occidental context, if at all. The first of these four groups is the ‘Liberal European Reformists’. This group is most neatly typified in Dalil Boubakeur and Soheib Bencheikh, but Tareq Oubrou also merits inclusion in this group. Mufti Dalil Boubakeur is the rector of the *Grande mosquée de Paris* (GMP), and former president of the *Conseil français du culte musulman* (CFCM). Bencheikh is the Mufti of Marseille, and a former member of the CFCM. Tareq Oubrou is an Imam in Bordeaux and representative of the *Musulmans de France* (MF, formerly known as the *Union des organisations islamiques de France*, UOIF) at the CFCM. As the name of the group suggests, these theorists represent a European Islamic perspective and share a similarly progressive outlook. They are favourable to Islam’s reform for the French context, particularly through involvement and cooperation with state institutions.

The Liberal European Reformist theorists do not advocate a close following of Islamic prescriptions. Rather, they denounce dogma, particularly with regard to Islamic

dress codes and diets (Boubakeur 2004, p.85; Bencheikh, 1998, pp.113-115, 131; Oubrou in Peter, 2014, p.73). They rarely challenge France's increasingly secular demands. Indeed, the CFCM largely supported the government with regard to the 2004 law on religious symbols in schools. Bencheikh signed a petition in favour of it (Conan, 2004). Boubakeur, the then-president of the CFCM, reportedly advised against protesting against the law in order not to 'effrayer le bourgeois' (*L'Obs*, 2004). Oubrou, however, despite his ambivalence towards the headscarf, pronounced his opposition to any legal restrictions on Islamic dress as he believes this is contrary to the preservation of individual freedoms (Peter, 2014, p.74).

The Liberal European Reformists do not wish to undermine *laïcité* in their dealings with the state. Rather, these theorists are highly supportive and even protective of *laïcité*, and the *école laïque* above all (Boubakeur, 2004, pp.83, 93; Bencheikh, 1998, p.14). They are supportive of state-sponsored and state-implemented measures which would increase awareness and knowledge of religion (see particularly Boubakeur, 2004, p.90). Bencheikh has acknowledged the pressing importance of demystifying Islam (Bencheikh, 1998, pp. 12, 142). He has also suggested that, in some cases, Islam deserves the fear that some people hold towards it (Bencheikh, 1998, p.140), a sentiment that has more recently been echoed by Oubrou (2009): 'l'islamophobie est parfois développée par des musulmans eux-mêmes qui, par leur comportement et leur visibilité, peuvent faire peur à nos concitoyens non musulmans'.

The Liberal European Reformists assert that in order to be fully accepted into French society, Muslims, and the Islamic Faith itself, must adapt. Boubakeur supports a modernising reading of scripture: '[i]l faut lire les textes religieux d'une manière symbolique, intériorisée, comme de grandes leçons de sagesse éternelle. C'est le contraire d'une lecture littérale' (Boubakeur, 2004, pp.29-30). Oubrou argues that '[s]euls survivront spirituellement les musulmans qui savent modérer, adapter, et négocier leurs pratiques avec la réalité de la société française (Oubrou, 2009; see also Peter, 2014, p.74). Bencheikh is also of this position: Frégosi posits that '[p]our une partie de l'intelligentsia beur [Bencheikh] a pu apparaître comme un théologien moderne susceptible d'incarner un islam républicain' (Frégosi, 2008; see also Bencheikh, 1998,

p.147; Gresh, 2004, p.42). This view that Islam needs modernising, especially when combined with an acceptance of government interventions on Islam, implicitly reinforces the opinion that the French government is within its rights to make such stringent demands of French Muslims regarding their integration. The group's support for Europeanisation is, of course, linked to their reticence towards orthopraxy, but it also demonstrates their acknowledgement of the absolute necessity for French Muslims to be fully accepted into French society for their own benefit, as well as for that of the religion itself.

The Islamic Theorists II: The Staunch Defenders of Piety

I have called the second group within the Islamic theorist category the 'Staunch Defenders of Piety'. This group includes Tariq Ramadan, Amar Lasfar and Ahmed Jaballah. Ramadan, a Swiss academic of Islamic studies, is a very well-known but highly controversial figure accused of double speak, and is, at the time of writing, imprisoned in France awaiting trial following accusations of rape. He is close to, but not a member of the MF (Guénois, 2018). Lasfar is the current president of the MF and rector of a mosque in Lille. Jaballah is also an academic, has twice been president of the then-UOIF, and is a founding member of the European Council of Fatwa and Research (ECFR) (Bowen, 2010, p.89).

The Staunch Defenders of Piety consider Islam to be compatible with Western, non-Islamic nations and societies such as France. Ramadan fully supports the construction of a European Islam and, further, the development of the European Muslim (Ramadan, 2002, p.11). This sentiment is echoed by Jaballah who, with regard to the 'question of loyalty towards non-Islamic states [...] concludes that it is possible and licit' (Peter, 2014, p.70). However, the Staunch Defenders of Piety oppose limitations on Islamic orthopraxy within France and advocate the necessity of orthopraxy for developing one's faith (Ramadan, 2002, p.70). Ramadan opposed the 2004 law in defence of these religious duties and of *laïcité*, as he interprets it (Ramadan, 2003). Similarly, Lasfar implies that dogma is an intrinsic part of Islam (Lasfar, 2016), and has expressed his objection to the continued chasing of the religious from society (Lasfar, 2015). Jaballah, too, has

criticised the development of what he calls a 'laïcité d'exclusion' (Jaballah, 2013). These theorists therefore oppose the abandonment of orthopraxy and religiosity as a means of being accepted into French culture. According to Peter (2014, p.76), Lasfar has emphasised 'the obligation for Muslims to protect themselves and strengthen their religion', and suggested that 'Muslims should build a "fence" (*siyaj*) to protect their community'. This is evidence of a fiercer protection of the religion and those who follow it than that of the Liberal European Reformists. Ramadan has condemned the Western rhetoric which suggests that 'Muslims should be Muslim without Islam' in order to prove their integration (Ramadan, 2002, p.184).

As mentioned above, the theorists in this group are all close to the MF. The MF is perpetually linked to the Muslim Brotherhood by the media: when the MF or UOIF is mentioned, it is often followed by the phrase 'proche des Frères Musulmans' (see Guénois, 2017, for example). However, the Pew Research Centre, while acknowledging the UOIF's links with the Muslim Brotherhood in its early development in the 1980s, argues that 'national entities such as the *Union des Organisations Islamiques de France* are best understood as loose affiliates rather than as formal branches of the Muslim Brotherhood', especially as new, younger leadership is now taking over these organisations (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2010, pp.22-25). This departure from the ideology of the Brotherhood is further evidenced in the UOIF's decision to participate in the CFCM. The theorists themselves have also publicly distanced themselves from the Muslim Brotherhood (Lasfar, 2016; Ramadan, 2013). Overall, this suggests that the media may be exaggerating the links that the MF has today with the Brotherhood.

The Islamic Theorists III: The Literalist Conservatives

I have called the third group within the category of Islamic theorists the 'Literalist Conservatives'. Its most exemplary member is Mufti Yusuf al-Qaradawi, although the late Hassan al-Banna also merits inclusion in this group. While the Liberal European Reformists and Staunch Defenders of Piety groups contain theorists of a predominantly French outlook, Qaradawi and Banna represent a Middle-Eastern perspective. Banna

founded the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928 (Moussalli, 2013, p.130). Qaradawi was inspired to join the organisation in the early 1940s after hearing Banna speak (Gräf, 2013, p.222; Skovgaard-Petersen, 2009, p.48). The aim of Banna's Muslim Brotherhood was to reinstall Islam as a central tenet of the State, although it 'selectively accepted major Western political concepts such as constitutional rule and democracy as necessary tools for overhauling the doctrine of an Islamic state'. Banna did not advocate violence in order to achieve this (Moussalli, 2013, p.130). Qaradawi is not currently affiliated with any other Islamic mass movement, mosque or institution and is now perceived to be independent (Krämer, in Gräf and Skovgaard-Petersen, 2009, p.x; see also p.2). He currently leads the ECFR, making him relevant to the French context. He is involved in political Islam and he is seen as a 'representative of Islamism on a global scale' (Gräf and Skovgaard-Petersen, 2009, p.7), as is Banna¹.

Qaradawi supports a very close, literal reading of the holy texts and both he and Banna believe that Islam must be 'practised as a comprehensive way of life' (Gräf and Skovgaard-Petersen, 2009, p.5; Moussalli, 2013, p.133). Qaradawi is favourable to a separate legal system, '*Fiqh al-Qaliyyat*' (Law of Minorities), for Muslims in the West, different to that of Muslims living in Muslim-majority countries. That is not to say, however, that Qaradawi supports any reduction of the following of Islamic prescriptions for those living in the West: he goes as far as advocating observance of Qur'anic prescriptions at the expense of adherence to local norms and customs (Varon, 2013, p.64). Unlike the theorists of the Liberal European Reformists and Staunch Defenders of Piety groups, Qaradawi emphasises that the obligation to follow the Islamic prescriptions takes precedence over individual choice. He asserts that it is 'obligatory for the Muslim woman to cover her head, breasts, and neck completely so that nothing of them can be seen by onlookers' (Qaradawi, 2011, p.158). Qaradawi does, however, support women's engagement in the political sphere whereas Banna did not (Tammam, 2009, p.58).

It is therefore unsurprising that Qaradawi opposed the law banning religious symbols in schools. In December 2003 he wrote to President Chirac asking him not to

¹ Here, 'Islamism' should be understood as a political framework based upon Islam (see Hamid and Dar, 2016).

pass the law (Mikaïl, 2004, pp.40-41); he considers secularism to be unacceptable for Islam as, to him, it is akin to apostasy (Masud, 2005, p.372). Banna was similarly critical of the prospect of Muslims living under secular rule (Moussalli, 2013, p.136). Both theorists therefore see Islamic law as essential to life as a Muslim, wherever one may live.

From the European viewpoint, Qaradawi's Eastern perspective can appear somewhat extreme. In the West, his reliance on scripture to the point of legitimising violence in certain circumstances, has gained him a reputation as a terrorist sympathiser (Gräf and Skovgaard-Petersen, 2009, p.8). However, in the East, he is seen to be preaching 'a middle way between Westernism and neo-Salafism' (Gräf, 2009, p.218). Banna and Qaradawi's proximity to the Muslim Brotherhood has also led to criticism that they are extremists due to the Brotherhood's influence on groups such as the Taliban and the Algerian *Front Islamique du Salut* (FIS). However, these groups are more greatly inspired by the work of Sayyid Qutb than that of Qaradawi or Banna. Qutb, who gained influence in the Brotherhood after Banna's death, fostered a far more violent approach in his direction of the Brotherhood than that preached by Banna. Qaradawi opposed many of his teachings and distanced himself from him (Akhavi, 2013, p.166; Moussalli, 2013, p.131, Gräf, 2013, pp.229-230).

The Islamic Theorists IV: The Extremists

The final sub-group of Islamic theorists is the Extremists. Unlike the other groups, the Extremists thoroughly oppose any integration of Muslims into the West. This group contains the known terror groups Daesh, al-Qaida, and the *Groupe Islamique Armé* (GIA), which is affiliated with al-Qaida (United Nations, 2018). These groups predominantly rely upon Salafi-Jihadism for the basis of their theory (Thurston, 2017, p.414; Barrett, 2014, p.18). They interpret Islamic teachings in such a way that allows them to consider uprisings against the West or rival Islamic sects as just and holy warfare. This is exemplified in the statement released by Daesh after the November 2015 Paris attacks:

'In a blessed attack for which Allah facilitated the causes for success, a faithful group of the soldiers of the Caliphate, may Allah dignify it and make it victorious, launched out,

targeting the capital of prostitution and obscenity, the carrier of the banner of the Cross in Europe – Paris’ (Daesh, cited in SITE, 2015).

The Extremists also often preach a stringently orthopractic Islam. This is a key marker of the Daesh regime in particular (Barrett, 2014, pp.43-44).

Mahomet ou la République and *Mahomet et la République* Groups

Each of the groups described above represents a predominantly *Mahomet ou la République* or *Mahomet et la République* perspective, either implicitly or explicitly. The Nostalgics quite openly support the *Mahomet ou la République* view: They are willing to admit that they see a problem in Islam in France. Interestingly, the Nostalgics come together here with the Literalist Conservatives and the Extremists in an ‘unholy alliance’ owing to their acknowledgement of the incompatibility of Islam and Western, Republican values. The Extremists and Literalist Conservative reinforce the *Mahomet ou la République* perspective in their assertions that the Islamic values they preach must be maintained regardless of local laws. The Orthopraxy Sceptics and the Universalist Feminists both represent a more nuanced position whereby they claim to support a *Mahomet et la République* stance, but the causes they promote effectively further the *Mahomet ou la République* line instead. This is evident in their support for the prohibition of religious symbols in schools, a measure they apparently supported as an aid to the integration of French Muslims, but which arguably implies that France will not accept its Muslims population if it does not wish to adapt fully to the French way of life. The Liberal European Reformists, the Staunch Defenders of Piety, the Pragmatist Feminists and the Pro-Diversity Liberals, on the other hand, all openly preach policies of acceptance, cohabitation and integration, thus unequivocally asserting that a *Mahomet et la République* scenario is desirable, and ultimately possible in the right legal and political conditions. They have come to these conclusions for diverse reasons, however. The Pragmatist Feminists predominantly argue that accepting orthopractic Islam is the best way to ensure equality between men and women throughout society. The Pro-Diversity Liberals assert that the implicit discourse of threat that often accompanies analyses of Islam in France is wrong and unnecessary. The Liberal European Reformists and Staunch

Defenders of Piety, despite preaching rather different interpretations of Islam, converge in their support for the acceptance of Islam and its followers in France. However, it is the *Mahomet ou la République* perspective which has so far dominated intellectual discussion, as well as political policy and representations of the religion in the media. The majority of actors, both political and non-political, who further this position can nevertheless be seen to be paying lip-service to the *Mahomet et la République* rhetoric in their elaboration of it.

Mahomet ou la République: The Development of an Exclusionary Discourse Based on a Biased Interpretation of Islam

With the positions of the key theorists on the question of the integration of Islam into the contemporary French narrative now explained and these theorists grouped together according to trends in their discourses, this chapter will evaluate the reasoning behind the *Mahomet ou la République* perspective. It will consider its development and consolidation as it rapidly became the dominant effective position of the intellectual and political elite in contemporary France. It is thus elaborated implicitly by the majority in the political sphere, the Universalist Feminists and the Orthopraxy Sceptics, but more explicitly by the Nostalgics. These politicians and intellectuals see at least some aspects of Islam as incompatible with Republican values. Their discourses suggest that Muslims must demonstrate their respect for Republican tradition and French culture over any Islamic prescriptions in order to be fully accepted into the Republic. They effectively argue, therefore, that French Muslims must choose either *Mahomet* or *la République*, although these demands are usually framed in the terms of a *Mahomet et la République* position, such as improving the integration of Muslims into the Republican school system (Amiriaux, 2009, pp.278-279). Many see Islamic orthopraxy as contradicting values increasingly defended as Republican, such as *laïcité* and gender equality. This feeds into a view that Islam is capable of posing, or already poses, a substantial threat to French society.

The growth of neo-Republicanism only partly explains the development and consolidation of the *Mahomet ou la République* discourse. The perception of a threat from Islam also accelerated in the 1980s and has therefore consolidated over the same period as neo-Republicanism. French intellectuals from the different groups set out in the typology perceive different dangers in Islam. A threat is also variously perceived by the political elite and the media, as will be demonstrated further in this chapter. Geisser has noted that:

‘L’islamophobie contemporaine constitue un phénomène éminemment complexe qui se déploie moins à travers un énoncé explicite (racisme antimusulman) que sur un *registre latent*, participant à la formation d’amalgames, de préjugés et de sous-entendus à propos de l’islam et des musulmans’ (Geisser, 2003, p.95, original emphasis).

I suggest that the rhetoric which implies that Islam poses a threat to France is related to the Islamophobia noted by Geisser. It is therefore also latent, and often relies on conflation between the various Islamic groups and theorists. When mainstream intellectuals, the media and political elite do not acknowledge the heterogeneity of Islam and adequately differentiate the Extremists from those promoting the multitude of interpretations of Islam that advocate the acceptance of Islam in France and the respect of French laws and values, this threat may be perceived as greater than it is. This, in turn, is likely to create conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims which may emerge in discrimination. This appears to be a particular problem in France, as demonstrated in the above-average rates of discrimination by ethnic origin or immigrant background reported by Muslims in France in a survey by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). 35% of respondents in France reported having experienced such discrimination in the past five years, compared to a European average of 27% (FRA, 2017, p.27) ¹. The conflict resulting from a perception of a threat is therefore likely having a negative effect on the lives of the many French Muslims desiring full acceptance into the Republic.

This chapter will begin with a consideration of the link between the *Mahomet ou la République* position and the defence of French colonialism. This will be followed by an analysis of how the threat from Islam is variously perceived in extremist terrorist groups, Islamic theorists, and the broader French-Muslim population. This will lead to a consideration of how various aspects of Islamic orthopraxy are misinterpreted as evidence of the threat’s presence in France. The effect of this perceived threat on intellectuals’ discourses and the government’s initiatives relating to the organisation of Islam in France will then be considered, followed by a demonstration of the political capital available to the government in taking a firm stance against Islam. Lastly, it will be argued that as the *Mahomet ou la République* stance relies on a biased interpretation of

¹ Research was carried out in the 15 EU countries which are collectively home to 94% of the European Muslim population (FRA, 2017, p.8).

Islam, the relationship that this view fosters between France and its Muslims is untenable due to its antagonism.

Dealing with France's Colonial Past

As was demonstrated in Chapter One, the perpetuation of negative stereotypes and tensions which originated in the colonial period has had a sustained effect on France's relationship with its Muslim population. Chabal has noted the broad spectrum of views on France's colonial past that exist within the French nation. He suggests that there is:

'[...] d'un côté un intellectuel et ex-nouveau philosophe comme Pascal Bruckner, qui appelle les Français à en finir avec la « tyrannie de la pénitence », et de l'autre les historiens-militants du collectif Achac, l'Association pour la connaissance de l'histoire de l'Afrique contemporaine, qui insistent sur l'existence d'une véritable « fracture coloniale » au cœur du récit national' (Chabal, 2017, pp.117-118).

According to Chabal, then, there is a socio-political divide on the matter of how France should continue to respond to and deal with its imperialist past.

The Nostalgics group seems to be of the same opinion as Pascal Bruncker on how the colonial period should be viewed. In relation to the controversial law *2005-158 du 23 février 2005* (Légifrance, 2005), Finkelkraut argued in a highly provocative interview given to the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* that:

'[A]u lieu de combattre [le discours de Dieudonné], on fait précisément ce qu'il demande : on change l'enseignement de l'histoire coloniale et de l'esclavage. Désormais, on enseigne qu'ils furent uniquement négatifs, et non que le projet colonial entendait éduquer et amener la culture aux sauvages' (Finkelkraut, cited in Cypel, 2005)

The fourth article of this law, which Finkelkraut is referring to in this citation, notably ordered that '[l]es programmes scolaires reconnaissent en particulier le rôle positif de la présence française outre-mer, notamment en Afrique du Nord' (Légifrance, 2005). The article was formally retracted in early 2006 (Légifrance, 2008), having been condemned by many historians, including Gérard Noiriel (Van Eeckhout, 2005). Scott argues that the fact that the law was passed at all is evidence that 'the colonial legacy persists' (Scott,

2007, pp.85-7). Finkelkraut appears to have misinterpreted the about-turn made on the article. He attributes it to pressure from Dieudonné, a controversial comedian who has since been found guilty in Belgium of inciting hatred and using anti-Semitic language (AFP and *Le Figaro*, 2017). Finkelkraut's interpretation of events can be seen as a further example of his reinforcing of the *Mahomet ou la République* perspective as he mistakenly suggests that the government is pandering to the wishes of a single provocative comedian, well-known for his Muslim faith. He thereby implicitly likens all those who condemned Article 4 to Dieudonné. His use of the word 'sauvages' demonstrates his negative and offensive views of the native populations overseas before the arrival of the French. The issue recently came to a head in the political sphere. In the run up to the 2017 presidential elections, Emmanuel Macron described French colonialism as a 'crime contre l'humanité' and 'vraie barbarie' during a visit to Algeria. The statements were condemned by Francois Fillon and Jean-Pierre Raffarin of *Les Républicains* (LR), as well as Marine Le Pen (*Le Monde*, 2017). Similarly, Zemmour, another Nostalgic, asserted in response to Macron's speech that in colonisation 'il n'y a pas de crimes contre l'humanité, il y a des affrontements', and that 'la France a fait l'Algérie' (Zemmour, 2017).

These theorists and politicians appear to demonstrate a certain pride in France's colonial endeavours and are opposed to any condemnation of or apology for them. Combined with the negative views of the native peoples prior to France's intervention in their countries, this discourse likely enables the continuation of the damaging perceptions, and even colonialist stereotypes, of French Muslims which were prevalent during the second period of French imperialism. Much of mainstream contemporary political and intellectual discourse therefore continues to reflect the exclusionary *Mahomet ou la République* position regarding France's colonial history. Such a reading of France's colonial past can be plausibly linked to the continued perception of a threat in Islam today, both in France and abroad.

The Threat of Terrorism by Extremists

International events relating to Islam such as terrorism must be considered as a factor driving the development of the *Mahomet ou la République* outlook. The Extremists attack

la République, liberal democracy and other Western institutions in order to assert and protect their interpretation of Islam and the *Ummah*. France has been subjected to many attacks carried out by Extremist groups such as the Algerian GIA and Daesh over the last three decades. Al-Qaida's attacks against the USA also served to ensure the perception of a threat to the West was maintained between the 1990s and the early 2000s, and various wars in the Middle East have further contributed to the perpetuation of fears of Islam-related violence to the present day (Gresh, 2004, pp.108-115). These events, as well as various proclamations made by the Extremist groups behind them, prove that these organisations do indeed preach the type of staunchly anti-Western politics and policies that the French fear. This has been pivotal in enabling sections of the intelligentsia, the media and the political elite to promote their arguments suggesting that Islam represents a threat. Indeed, the perception of a threat from Islamic Extremist groups has been proven to be legitimate, and these organisations do, of course, need to be combatted. Policies demanding that individuals demonstrate their loyalty to the French nation and subordinate any religious beliefs to it are therefore seen as a valid way of protecting the French nation from this extremism. The *Mahomet ou la République* outlook is advanced as a result.

Kepel, an Orthopraxy Sceptic, is one of the intellectuals in the typology to focus most on the spread of the interpretations of Islam which, he argues, pose a threat to the West. To Kepel, the extremist threat is found in all politicised Islam. However, he fails to differentiate between movements expounding a politicised Islam ('islamisme') and those which are not necessarily political, but which follow more literalist readings of Islam such as Tablighi and Salafism (Durupt, 2017). The latter is a broad and diverse movement encompassing distinct political, puritanical and jihadi strands (Wiktorowicz, 2006, p.207). While Salafism is, of course, linked to much of the terrorism that has struck Europe in recent years, many Salafists are peaceful and opposed to the violence perpetrated by other variants of the movement (Amghar, 2006, pp.71-72). Kepel sees Salafism as an unavoidable step in the radicalisation process, however (Kepel in *L'Humanité*, 2016). He links increasing orthopraxy with Salafism and disloyalty to the Republic (Kepel and Jardin, 2015, p.114), and therefore comprehensively condemns the spread of Salafism in France (Kepel, 2016a). This association is dangerous as it blurs the lines between orthopractic

Muslims and terrorists and, in a climate fearful of Jihadi terrorism, such a homogenisation of Islam feeds the stereotype of the 'Jihadi next door' and serves to legitimise limitations on any orthopractic interpretation of Islam. Although Kepel is ultimately favourable to the presence of Islam in French society (Kepel, 1987, p.384), his failure to differentiate adequately between such a broad range of ideologies serves to further the *Mahomet ou la République* discourse and isolate the overwhelming majority of French Muslims who support the integration of Islam into the French nation. The pitting of Muslims and non-Muslims against each other that may result from the elaboration of a *Mahomet ou la République* discourse is an aim of several Extremist groups, as is, in fact, well-noted by Kepel (Kepel and Jardin, 2015, p.iv).

In the wake of the recent spate of terrorist attacks, the intellectual and political elite and mainstream media have reinforced the image of a dissenting Islam in France. For example, an article in *Le Figaro* stated that 'l'islam radical prospère dans certains quartiers de Seine-Saint-Denis' (Devecchio, 2015). The fact that many of the perpetrators of the November 2015 attacks orchestrated by Daesh were French nationals has been taken as proof of the existence of a fifth column movement. This has been noted by actors as disparate as Eric Zemmour (Hazareesingh, 2015, pp.306-307) and Emmanuel Macron, who labelled the violence 'terrorisme endogène' (Macron in *Ouest France*, 2018). A 'narrative of a war against the whole country by a fringe of its own citizens' has emerged (Samaan and Jacobs, 2018, p.4). As a result, there have been multiple calls from politicians to outlaw Salafism in France in the belief that the threat is encompassed in this variant of Islam (Hausalter, 2016; *Le JDD*, 2018a). Even the very discussion of a ban on a certain sect of Islam appears likely to lead to increased neurosis surrounding Islam, however, as it implicitly accepts the existence of a fifth column movement, and thereby reinforces the *Mahomet ou la République* position.

The Threat Perceived in Islamic Theorists

As a result of increased violence perpetrated in the name of Islam, anxiety has grown regarding Islamic theorists and leaders who are suspected of preaching an interpretation of Islam which is incompatible with Western and Republican values. In Chapter Two, it

was demonstrated that Qaradawi holds views which are considered in the Western context to be tending towards the extreme, although he considers himself to be moderate. Indeed, the French and British governments have taken the drastic decision to refuse him permission to enter their respective countries (Malbrunot, 2012; Moore, 2008). Kepel has linked Qaradawi's discourse with Jihadi extremism (Kepel and Jardin, 2015, pp.263-264). His views are seen, therefore, as posing a significant danger to the maintenance of Western ideals. However, it is debatable how much of an influence Qaradawi has on Western Muslims. The majority of his *fatwas* released through the ECFR are only available in Arabic and so 'most European Muslims have no direct access to them' (van Bruinessen, 2003 cited in Laurence and Vaisse, 2006, pp.130-131). Furthermore, other than his most famous works, such as *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam*, relatively little of his sizable oeuvre has been translated into French. He appears to be respected by theorists such as Boubakeur and the MF as an authority on Islam (Caeiro and al-Saify, 2009, pp.119-120), yet they do not closely follow or teach his interpretation of Islam, preferring instead to prioritise the accommodation of Islam in France. Furthermore, Qaradawi has reportedly responded to criticism from Ramadan and softened his stance regarding Islam in the West (Caeiro and al-Saify, 2009, p.117). As the situation currently stands therefore, although Qaradawi preaches values incompatible with Western rights and ethics, it seems he does not represent a significant, tangible threat to the French nation as his discourse does not reach many French Muslims and is tempered by Islamic theorists preaching *Mahomet et la République*.

The Staunch Defenders of Piety, meanwhile, are often accused by the media, politicians and intellectuals of posing as moderates while having links to the Muslim Brotherhood, and have been reproached for using doublespeak. It is of note that they endorse adherence to prescriptions of orthopraxy, as this is perceived as a link with literalist and extremist interpretations of Islam. Of all the Staunch Defenders of Piety, Ramadan is most commonly accused of doublespeak. Geisser proposes that the suspicion against Ramadan amounts to 'Ramadanophobie' (Geisser, 2003, p.53). Among the most influential criticisms of Ramadan is Caroline Fourest's 2004 work, *Frère Tariq*, in which she concludes that he:

‘[...] est un pur produit de l’idéologie bannaïste, sans doute l’un de ses émissaires les plus dangereux, assurément le plus efficace. L’illisibilité de ses objectifs n’est pas un effet collatéral de la complexité de son discours, mais un cheval de Troie rhétorique, savamment élaboré pour troubler et vaincre les résistances’ (Fourest, 2004, p.423).

Fourest here argues that Ramadan is continuing the work of his grandfather, Hassan al-Banna, whom I have categorised as a Literalist Conservative, unlike Ramadan. Such accusations have inevitably led to great suspicion of Ramadan: he is seen as using a *Mahomet et la République* discourse to mask a *Mahomet ou la République* outlook. Given the accusations made against Ramadan and the fear of a poorly defined Salafism in France, it is unsurprising that many see ‘Osama bin Laden lurking in the figure of Tariq Ramadan’ (Lynch, 2010, p.141). However, according to Ian Buruma (2007), Ramadan describes himself as a ‘Salafi-Reformist’. Ramadan defines Salafi-Reformism as aiming to ‘protect the Muslim identity and religious practice, to recognize the Western constitutional structure, to become involved as a citizen at the social level, and to live with true loyalty to the country to which one belongs’ (Ramadan, 2004, p.27). These are certainly not the political ideals of bin Laden, nor of Qaradawi or Banna. Furthermore, in a comparative study of Ramadan and Sayyid Qutb, MacDonald concludes that Qutb meets Ramadan’s criteria for being a political *literalist* Salafi, whereas:

‘[...] in claiming that the universality of Islam is pluralistic, in rejecting the reduction of the shariah to the penal sphere, and in arguing that, far from calling for the abolition of all religions and ways of life but Islam on the basis of a literal reading of the Qur’an, the Qur’an teaches that human diversity is divinely mandated, Ramadan clearly meets the criteria for being a Salafi reformist’ (MacDonald, 2014, p.405)

In his acknowledgement of the validity of ways of life other than Islam, and his rejection of overly literalist interpretations of scripture demonstrates, therefore, Ramadan actively differentiates and distances himself from hard-line, violent literalists such as Qutb. This was also demonstrated in his support for a moratorium on stoning in Muslim countries where the practice remains legal (*L’Obs*, 2003). In this position, he acknowledges the importance of Islamic scripture, but advocates re-evaluating and re-interpreting it for the modern context.

Similar accusations to those made against Ramadan have also been made against various key figures within the MF due to the organisation's debatable proximity to the Muslim Brotherhood. Mohamed Louizi, a defector from the Muslim Brotherhood, argues that the MF maintains loyalty to the Brotherhood through 'une fidélité absolue à l'idéologie d'Hassan Al-Banna'. Louizi is undeniably well-placed to make such judgements. However, the Staunch Defenders of Piety, who are closely linked to the MF, advocate Muslims' acceptance of and integration into the French political system. This will be demonstrated fully in Chapter Four. Further, they actively distance their political ideals for France from their Muslim faith (see, for example, Lasfar in Benjamin, 2017). This surely contradicts Banna's aims of developing an Islamic state. The link between the intentions of the MF and those of Banna during his lifetime are perhaps, therefore, less straightforward than Louizi suggests.

The media appears to be actively bolstering the suggestions that various Islamic theorists are preaching a double discourse and are therefore disloyal to France. In a television interview in the wake of the attack against the *Charlie Hebdo* editorial team, Jaballah explained the reasoning behind the anger of some Muslims, both in France and elsewhere, at the grotesque depictions of the prophet Mohammed printed in the magazine. Jaballah gave a nuanced argument: 'Je suis évidemment Charlie. [...] Être Charlie, défendre la liberté d'expression, cela ne veut pas dire que je n'ai pas le droit d'être en désaccord parfois avec certaines positions de Charlie' (Jaballah in BFMTV, 2015). However, he appeared on screen with the caption 'Je ne suis pas Charlie' (see Appendix) which inferred that, despite Jaballah's reasoned argumentation, he was on the side of the attackers. Such depictions of Islamic leaders, including Ramadan and Lasfar, who arguably support an Islam that is fully compatible with French law and values, reinforce the suggestion that the interpretation of Islam truly, albeit covertly, preached by these theorists is the same as that of violent, extremist organisations. This furthers the perception of a particularly insidious threat coming from within the nation.

The media and various intellectuals have therefore played a central part in expounding the notion of a fifth column movement developing within France through regular argumentation that Islamic theorists are promoting values and rhetoric which

may endanger the Republic. This is suggestive of a widespread bias against Islamic theorists who favour a stricter, more orthopractic interpretation of Islam, despite their overt promotion of obedience to French law and support for the dual-identity of Muslims in France. This suspicion makes the *Mahomet ou la République* stance appear as the only tenable position through the implication that any form of Islam that is not entirely subjugated to Republican values could represent a threat to the nation. The *Mahomet ou la République* discourse demands that loyalty to the French identity and values is maintained above, and at the expense of, loyalty to the Islamic identity and values. The tension surrounding the notion of a dual, French-Muslim identity is key to understanding the power, popularity and divisiveness of the *Mahomet ou la République* rhetoric and will be fully explored later in this chapter.

The Threat Perceived in the Broader French Muslim Population

This perception of a threat has been particularly pervasive during the various incarnations of the headscarf affair. In 2003, when the headscarf affair emerged for the third time, women's bodies became a veritable battleground in the debates on Islam in France. To explain this shift in discourse, a previous political debate must be considered. Eléonore Lépinard has convincingly argued that the *parité* discussions which spanned the 1990s legitimised the reasoning whereby gender difference could be considered as the 'universal difference'. Universalism was perceived to be under threat from the *parité* movement and so those supporting the proposed law were obliged to frame gender difference in terms of universalism (Lépinard, 2007, pp.388-392). This is the mechanism by which male-female equality was promoted to the status of Republican value and which, by extension, enabled the development of the contemporary universalist feminism which rapidly took over the headscarf debates of 2003 to 2004. This is seen, for example, in Vigerie and Zelensky's explanation for their support for the outlawing of headscarves in schools:

'La France est une nation qui respecte deux principes : la laïcité, qui suppose la séparation du religieux et du politique, et l'égalité des sexes. Ces principes sont l'aboutissement de longues luttes qui, *tout au long de notre histoire*, ont tenté de donner le pas à la loi

humaine sur la loi divine et de faire triompher la raison sur la foi' (see Vigerie and Zelensky, 2003, emphasis added).

This line of argument suggests a certain rewriting of history. Reinterpreting the past in relation to *laïcité* is, according to Chabal, emblematic of the development of neo-Republicanism (Chabal, 2015, p.26). It appears that a similar practice can be seen in relation to feminism in the citation from Vigerie and Zelensky as feminism and *parité* are relatively new phenomena. They were not priorities of the 1789 Revolution, and few substantial improvements were made to women's lot prior to the installation of the Third Republic. On this front, the hypocrisy of various feminist campaigners has been noted. Scott, for example, has commented that the debate on the headscarf in schools was carried out 'as if patriarchy was a uniquely Islamic phenomenon' (Scott, 2007, p.4).

Lépinard also suggests that the focus on the 'universal difference' during the parity debates led to the side-lining of other differences, such as race, as they could not be considered to be universal (Lépinard, 2007, pp.392-395). By extension, religious difference was surely also ignored. The emphasis on universalism, Lépinard argues, consequently asserted the opposition between feminism and the rights of ethnic minorities (Lépinard, 2007, p.395). The same dichotomy can be seen in the broader debates on the rights of women living in the *banlieues* which fed into the debate on the headscarf (see Deltombe, 2007, pp.308-310). It was during these discussions in late 2003 about the headscarf and the place of women in Islam, therefore, that the *Mahomet ou la République* position fully developed, taking into account traditional Republican values as well as *laïcité* and the new, universalist demands for gender equality. In this context, due to its gender-specificity, orthopraxy is perceived to threaten to Republican values.

Geisser noted in 2003 that a certain 'islamophobie intellectuelle' had been developing in France through 'la diffusion et la légitimation d'un certain nombre de préjugés sur l'islam'. Various intellectuals thus 'ont une responsabilité morale dans la banalisation de la *nouvelle islamophobie*' (Geisser, 2003, p.55). Extrapolating this proposal, I posit that the discourse of the Universalist Feminists gained so much momentum so rapidly in the media and the political sphere because their theories and arguments complemented the pre-existing neuroses regarding politicised Islam,

multiculturalism, and the *banlieues* already present in intellectual discourse. The arguments of the Universalist Feminists thus found a receptive audience. This is evident in the overwhelming public support for the ban on religious symbols in schools by 2004 (Tévanian, 2005, p.32).

It has been proposed by Heine that an increasing reliance on Republicanism in the context of a period of greater nationalism leads to the development of an exclusionary interpretation of *laïcité*, as well as of Republicanism more generally (Heine, 2009, pp.167-169). The discourse of the Universalist Feminists, and also that of the Nostalgics and Orthopraxy Sceptics to some extent, demonstrates this trend. These intellectuals, together with the French political elite, rely on Republican values as a means of legitimising the exclusion of Islamic orthopraxy to protect an insular community (French, non-Muslim, and usually of European descent) from a perceived 'outside' threat – that of Islam. As a result, the suggestion that Islam does not allow for the sufficient respect of *laïcité* is a common theme among theorists promoting a *Mahomet ou la République* socio-political framework. For instance, in *Soumission*, the character of Alain Tanneur argues that 'le véritable ennemi des musulmans, ce qu'ils craignent et haïssent par-dessous tout, ce n'est pas le catholicisme : c'est le sécularisme, la laïcité, le matérialisme athée' (Houellebecq, 2015, p.163). The same concern that *laïcité* and Islam are incompatible is seen in the 'Profs, ne capitulons pas' open letter (Badinter et al., 1989), and throughout the 2003-2004 debates on the headscarf (Tévanian, 2005, pp.50-51, 55).

A threat to the French identity from among the broader French-Muslim population is keenly felt by the Nostalgics. Finkelkraut is deeply critical of those who do not adapt sufficiently to the French way of life, instead maintaining links with their families' country of origin or bringing that culture to their neighbourhood in France. In a startling criticism of the growth of Islam in France and its effect on non-Muslims, he asserts that:

'Quand le cybercafé s'appelle « Bled.com » et que la boucherie ou le fast-food ou les deux sont halal, ces sédentaires font l'expérience de l'exil. Quand ils voient se multiplier les conversions à l'islam, ils se demandent où ils habitent. Ils n'ont pas bougé mais tout a changé autour d'eux' (Finkelkraut, 2013, pp.118-119).

He further condemns those whom he sees as refusing to accept the French way of life by suggesting that France is becoming an 'auberge espagnole' (Finkelkraut, 2013, p.111). The sentiment of Finkelkraut's words is clear: he views such behaviour as an attack on France's national identity. The (supposed) decline of the nation caused by Islam's grip on the country is also a key theme of Houellebecq's *Soumission*, and of Zemmour's *Le Suicide français* (see Zemmour, 2014, p.482, for example). These works hint at a neurosis that each compromise or concession granted to Islam increases the risk of an Islamisation of the Republic. The extreme case of this is proposed in *Soumission*, in which France is governed by Islamic laws and values. The positions of the Nostalgics echo the identitarian aspect of the politics of the far right. Indeed, the FN has recommended these works by the Nostalgics to its supporters (Ugolini, 2017). It is worth noting the immense sales figures of these books which demonstrate the broad reach of this discourse among the French population. Between the respective dates of their initial publication and mid-December 2015, 289,985 copies of Zemmour's *Le suicide française* were sold, Finkelkraut's *L'identité malheureuse* sold 112,809, and Houellebecq's *Soumission* sold a staggering 554,537 copies. By way of comparison, *Pour les musulmans*, a book by the Pro-Diversity Liberal Edwy Plenel which furthers the *Mahomet et la République* rhetoric, sold just 44,092 copies (Edistat, cited in Esteves, 2016, p.172). Although these figures cannot be taken as evidence of support for the *Mahomet ou la République* outlook, they do demonstrate high levels of interest in it.

A theme common to all three of the *Mahomet ou la République* groups of the French vantage point is an intense distrust of the *banlieues*. The larger cities and their *banlieues* are home to a larger proportion of Muslims than other areas of France (Laurence and Vaisse, 2006, pp.21-22, 36-37), and they garner particular suspicion. The Nostalgics see the *banlieues* as hotbeds of anti-French sentiment and ruled by Islam:

'L'islamisation des banlieues est totale ou presque. [...] Les caïds sont les patrons de nombreuses cités, ils déterminent la loi et l'applique aux contrevenants [...], tandis que l'islam sculpte le paysage mental et moral, mais aussi vestimentaire, sexuel, commercial' (Zemmour, 2014, p.502).

The Orthopraxy Sceptics see the *banlieues* as breeding grounds for the Salafi-Jihadism of the Extremists. According to Kepel, '[d]evant l'impossibilité de rejoindre le courant dominant de la société française, certains jeunes de banlieue populaire, en particulier musulmans, s'inscrivent en rupture'; hence their inclination towards a particularly strict interpretation of Islam (Kepel and Jardin, 2015, p.222). It is the *banlieues*, therefore, that are seen as the gateway to Extremist Islam, and the link between the violence of the East and the peace of the West. As Gresh has noted, '[c]e qui fait la spécificité de la menace islamiste en France [...] c'est bien cette idée de la « cinquième colonne » et du lien entre terrorisme et banlieues' (Gresh, 2004, p.226). The Universalist Feminists, meanwhile, see the *banlieues* as being largely run by young men devoid of respect for women's rights. Indeed, NPNS was created as a mechanism to counter the discrimination faced by women in these *quartiers sensibles* (Fayard and Rocheron, 2009, p.1). The *Mahomet ou la République* phenomenon is most strongly promulgated, therefore, in relation to the *banlieues* as it is from these areas that the threats to both the security of the nation and Republican values are perceived to originate most commonly.

The threat perceived in the broader French-Muslim population is also visible in El Karoui's report published by the IM. Despite its optimistic title, *Un Islam français est possible*, the report certainly does not paint a positive picture of French Muslims with regard to their integration and acceptance of French values. It is debatable whether this is an accurate picture, however, as those surveyed were asked leading questions which appear designed to shock those fearful of a Muslim population which does not accept Republican values. The study divided the respondents into various categories dependant on their positions on subjects including the headscarf, polygamy, whether they believe *laïcité* enables them to freely practice their religion, and whether, to them, 'la loi religieuse passe avant la loi de la République' (El Karoui, 2016, pp.26-28). These issues are all highly contentious, and answers to these questions defending such practises are therefore likely to be considered as evidence of disloyalty to the Republic and its values. The report suggests that a significant minority, 28%, of the French Muslim population is 'problématique', having 'adopté un système de valeurs clairement opposé aux valeurs de la République', as '[l]'islam est un moyen pour eux de s'affirmer en marge de la société française', (El Karoui, 2016, pp.27-28). Despite the study's name implying a message in

line with the *Mahomet et la République* position, as well as suggesting various credible and commendable policies to enable this, the typology created in the IM report gives what could well be taken as substantial evidence of how orthopraxy can be a sign of opposition and dissent against France and its values, and that Islam is indeed a 'problem' in France. This, in turn, could legitimise anxiety surrounding a threat from within the French nation. The IM report is therefore another example of the prevalence of the argumentation legitimising the *Mahomet ou la République* view through the implication that French Muslims are loyal to their religion before their country.

The Misreading of Islamic Signs

The common denominator in the threats perceived in the Islam practised by French Muslims appears to be orthopraxy. It is this, rather than one's mere belief in Islam, that appears to be most problematic with regard to the acceptance of Muslims into the Republican narrative. Geisser has argued that the Islam perceived by many intellectuals 'n'est [...] pas celui de milliers de musulmans ordinaires qui vivent paisiblement sur notre territoire, mais l'islam imaginaire, produit de leur vision alarmiste et catastrophiste quant à l'avenir de notre société' (Geisser, 2003, p.56). Similarly, I suggest that the perception of a threat in various elements of Islamic orthopraxy which ultimately reinforces the *Mahomet ou la République* discourse is based on a biased interpretation of Islam. The Nostalgics, the Orthopraxy Sceptics and some of the political elite appear to misinterpret Islamic signs such as the headscarf, linking them with the Islam of Extremist groups and a rebellion against Republican values. This has resulted in anxiety about a creeping 'islamisme' which is seen to be threatening the security and values of the nation (Geisser, 2003, pp.111-112). The passing of several laws affecting orthopractic Islam demonstrates the reach, political power and influence of this biased interpretation of orthopraxy. The *Mahomet ou la République* stance thereby accuses French Muslims of crimes they are not guilty of by second-guessing and wrongly assuming their beliefs. This position has become so prevalent as, like the neo-Republican views with which it is entwined, it is unique to neither the traditional political left nor the right. It has been subtly promoted as a means of protecting the Republic from threats, perceived in orthopraxy, to the

cornerstones of the nation's values which transcend traditional political divisions and oppositions.

The misreading of signs was evident in the burkini affair of the summer of 2016. The group *Le Printemps Républicain*, which was established in 2016 in the wake of the Paris attacks with the aims of reinforcing and protecting the values of the Republic (Le Printemps Républicain, n.d.), described the burkini as being 'le manifeste d'extrémistes religieux – précisément ici des salafistes – utilisé pour rendre visible et tangible, dans l'espace public, leur interprétation radicale de l'islam à travers la soumission de la femme' (Le Printemps Républicain, 2016). Women who wore the burkini were thus linked to the terrorism that had recently struck the nation. A similar position on the burkini was taken by Christian Godin who, in relation to that the outcry against it, argued that 'ce n'est pas céder à la « panique morale » que de dénoncer le démantèlement de l'espace public et du monde commun par le salafisme, mais manifester une franche et lucide inquiétude politique' (Godin, 2016, p.122). The burkini was viewed by many, therefore, as a symbol of the promotion of values incompatible with those of the Republic.

Almeida has produced a study of Muslim's interpretations of the burkini and argues that the:

'conflation of burkini-style outfits with Salafism is not only a telling illustration of the misrepresentations of Muslim life in French political debate deftly described by Hajjat and Mohammed (2016: 115–133); it is also, perhaps more importantly, revealing of the changing nature of *laïcité*' (Almeida, 2018, p.28).

I argue that it is neo-Republicanism that has been the force to change the 'nature of *laïcité*'. Almeida notes that among those who reported wearing the burkini, their decision 'appears as a carefully negotiated compromise between the religious belief in dressing modestly and the will to engage in social and leisure activities' and is also associated with a rejection of patriarchal norms in favour of women's rights to leisure and exercise (Almeida, 2018, p.28). It is not, therefore, an indication of religious extremism or the rejection of French values.

The recent case involving Maryam Pougetoux is evidence that a threat continues to be perceived in the hijab by many in 2018. Pougetoux, the president of the *Union*

nationale des étudiants de France, appeared on television wearing a hijab. This prompted the then-minister of the interior, Gérard Collomb, to describe Pougetoux's decision to wear a hijab as an act of 'prosélytisme' and suggest that Pougetoux wanted to demonstrate her difference from the rest of French society (France Info, 2018). Marlène Schiappa, the minister of state responsible for gender equality, condemned Pougetoux's headscarf as 'une forme de promotion de l'islam politique' (Schiappa, cited in Mestre, 2018). These accusations undoubtedly reinforce the view that French Muslim women cannot play an active part in French society and democracy while being an orthopractic Muslim: they must decide between *Mahomet* and the *République*. These attitudes are supported by the broader population: '77% estiment que « les critiques à l'égard de Maryam Pougetoux sont justifiées car un représentant politique ou syndical n'a pas à afficher publiquement ses convictions religieuses »' (Ifop, 2018). This episode demonstrates not only the invocation of *laïcité* beyond its legal demands and limitations, but also that Islamic orthopraxy is viewed not as a religious act but as a political manifestation. Further, as a political act, it is regarded as eclipsing any other political standpoint. The political stance perceived in the religious symbol is therefore seen as suggestive of the Islamisation of the country. This viewpoint is demonstrative of the neo-Republican interpretation and protection of values such as *laïcité* and ultimately furthers the *Mahomet ou la République* outlook.

If followed all the way to its logical conclusion, the line of argument which links Islamic orthopraxy with a threat to the values and security of the nation implies that following Islamic orthopraxy is evidence of prioritising and promoting Islamic values above French values. This implies that a rivalry between Republican values and Islamic orthopraxy is perceived by some non-Muslims in France. This rivalry between values-sets is closely linked with the perception of identity. Islamic orthopraxy is seen as a display of Islamic identity, as Bowen, using theory from Gauchet, posits:

'observers would assume that if a Muslim woman wore a headscarf in public, she did so in order to communicate to those around her something about her religion. Nearly all non-Muslim French writers on the headscarves do indeed refer to them as "religious signs," and such was the language of the law of March 2004. Even the most charitable

views of scarf-wearing [...] generally see it as part of an act of communicating an identity to others' (Bowen, 2008, p.160).

It appears to be true that, at least to some extent, a Muslim's religious beliefs are linked to their notion of identity. Françoise Gaspard, a Pragmatist Feminist, and Farhad Khosrokhavar note the link between the headscarf and identity; both an Islamic identity and an identity related to the country from which the wearer or their family have come (Khosrokhavar and Gaspard, 1995, pp.34-60). However, Bowen suggests that among French non-Muslims the proclamation of an alternative identity is 'received as a sort of public visual assault, [...] an "aggression" against them' (Bowen, 2008, p.160). This reaction to the evocation of an identity other than the French identity demonstrates that French and Islamic identities are seen to exist in competition with each other. Consequently, French Muslims are asked to put their French identity ahead of their Islamic identity in order to be accepted into the Republic.

The notion of prioritising one identity over another suggests that the two identities are perceived be unable to co-exist on the same plane. In his 2014 book which portrays the French Muslims of the *banlieues* as proudly anti-Semitic and as aiming to subvert the French Republic, Hussey voices this perception. He argues that:

'if Muslims want to be 'French', they must learn to be citizens of the Republic first and Muslims second; for many this is an impossible task, hence the anxieties over whether Muslims in France are *musulmans de France* or *musulmans en France*' (Hussey, 2014, p.9).

Hussey's line of argument ultimately infers that Muslims, even those who are born with French nationality, must make an active decision to demonstrate their French identity and their loyalty to it by elevating it far above their Muslim identity. French-ness, as well as moderation (as opposed to extremism) in one's faith, is mistakenly presumed to be encompassed in the rejection of orthopraxy. It is therefore those who are perceived to be putting their French identity ahead of their Muslim identity who are regarded as 'moderate' and 'integrated'. This is demonstrated in the testimony of Radia Louhichi on her experience of being demanded to 'integrate':

‘French people think that to “integrate”—and how I hate that word— you must drink wine and be like them, you have to lose your traditions, your religion, your values, and take on theirs. Either you assimilate, thus Fedala Amara [...], or you are like Saïda Kada [...] and wear the foulard, and you are perpetually an immigrant and an *intégriste*’ (Louhichi in Bowen, 2008, p.174)

The pressure felt by Louhichi to drink wine, which is arguably a central aspect of traditional French gastronomy, although her religion forbids it is evidence of the presumption that adherence to Islamic prescriptions is equal to rejection of the French national identity.

Despite often being framed in terms of ‘*intégration*’, a word which implies a certain blending of cultures, these assimilationist demands force French Muslims to face the question of *Mahomet ou la République*. Only choosing *la République* will allow for acceptance into the French narrative. This outlook legitimises legal restrictions on Islamic orthopraxy as it supposes that if French Muslims do indeed prioritise their Republican identity over their Islamic identity, such limitations on Islam will be accepted and even supported. French Muslims must therefore visibly acquiesce to Republican values by only following Islamic prescriptions in private. This demand has been seen in all the debates surrounding the headscarf, niqab and burkini. For example, Vigerie and Zelensky argued that ‘[t]ant que le port du voile restait dans la sphère de l'intime conviction personnelle, il ne contrevenait pas aux principes qui gouvernent la France’ (Vigerie and Zelensky, 2003). Islam is only acceptable, it seems, when it is invisible.

This logic is demonstrably misguided. To French Muslims, following Islamic prescriptions does not necessarily imply or cause any rejection of the French identity and values. Ramadan, for example, does not preach the primacy of the Islamic identity over the national identity. Despite his strong defence of the Islamic identity, he asserts that ‘Muslim’ and ‘European’, faith and citizenship, are different answers to different questions (Ramadan, 2002, p.163). Muslims do not necessarily believe that their Islamic identity must trump their French identity, and a strong Islamic identity is not necessarily a threat to the Republic. It is of course right that France protects itself from forms of deeply identitarian Islam that would separate the nation into insular communities by not

allowing mixing between Muslims and non-Muslims (Roy, 1999, pp.77-103). However, it is when such 'néo-fondamentalistes', as Roy names them (Roy, 1999, pp.42-43), are conflated with all orthopractic Muslims that the *Mahomet ou la République* discourse is used against orthopractic Muslims who support the full integration of Islam into the French Republic. The falsity of this biased interpretation of Islamic orthopraxy will be demonstrated fully in Chapter Four.

The Promotion of an 'Acceptable' Islam

In consideration of the fact that the intellectual and political elites regard various actors within French Islam with suspicion, it follows that these elites privilege other actors whom they perceive to better represent and protect values such as *laïcité*, equality and universalism. The Nostalgics, Orthopraxy Sceptics, and Universalist Feminists who, implicitly or explicitly, further the *Mahomet ou la République* position, generally tend not to make many, if any, pronouncements on particular Islamic theorists. However, the statements they do make on Islam implicitly favour certain discourses, theorists and actors within the faith. The preference bestowed, almost universally, upon certain theorists and interpretations of Islam has led to the development of a dichotomy of 'acceptable' versus 'unacceptable' Islam.

Kepel, as one of France's foremost experts on Islam, has made the most explicit pronouncements on various theorists. As a result of his belief that there has been an 'irruption du salafisme [qui] correspond à une rupture complète avec les valeurs d'une société française « désavouée »' (Kepel and Jardin, 2015, p.114), Kepel is deeply critical of any theorist or organisation that he perceives to be furthering an 'islamiste' or 'Salafiste' ideology. He links the MF to the promotion of such discourses because of its historic links with the Muslim Brotherhood and, like many other theorists who contribute to the *Mahomet ou la République* stance, he condemns Ramadan for the same reasons (Kepel, 2016, pp.172-175). Similarly, Kepel is critical of all organisations which aim to combat Islamophobia, including the MF and the *Collectif contre l'islamophobie en France* (CCIF), as he claims that the term 'Islamophobia' was invented by the Brotherhood as a means of criminalising any criticism of Islamic dogma (Kepel and Jardin, 2015, p.42; Kepel, 2016b,

pp. 221, 246-249). Kepel therefore infers that the Islam of these organisations and theorists is 'unacceptable' and implicitly promotes those less protective of orthopraxy.

The Universalist Feminists, not being students of Islam and the Middle East like Kepel, make few comments about specific Islamic groups and theorists. That is not to say, however, that they do not make clear which interpretations they support and oppose. Djavann is critical of Islamic theorists who advocate veiling. She frames her condemnation of these theorists in terms of *laïcité*: 'Je crains que la plupart des intellectuels musulmans n'aient pas vraiment compris ou pas vraiment voulu comprendre le sens du mot « laïcité » et ses implications' (Djavann, 2003, p.41). This position plainly reinforces the misguided belief that public shows of Islamic faith are, by nature, incompatible with *laïcité*, and is demonstrable of the weaponization of the value against orthopractic Islam. The position of theorists such as Bencheikh, who asserts that '[a]ujourd'hui, le voile de la musulmane en France, c'est l'école laïque, gratuite et obligatoire' (Bencheikh, 1998, p.116), and who sees Republican values as of greater importance and more liberating than Islamic prescriptions, is therefore implicitly reinforced by Djavann. Amara, another Universalist Feminist, has been found by Deltombe to welcome criticism of more orthopractic variants of Islam (Deltombe, 2007, p.314, detailed below). These views, advocated by two of the most prominent Universalist Feminists, imply that Muslims and non-Muslims who are not supportive of the law banning religious symbols in schools do not support French values (Tévanian, 2005, p.47). It is therefore the discourse of the Liberal European Reformists which is privileged as 'acceptable' as (Oubrou aside) they assented to the 2004 law. Other discourses are implicitly posited as 'unacceptable' in the Republican context. The *Mahomet ou la République* position is reinforced in these feminist theorists' positions through the suggestion that only certain Muslim groups and theorists who are deemed to be safe to the Republic deserve a voice.

Unlike the theorists mentioned above, the French government has been most explicit in demonstrating which theorists and Islamic discourses it would like to promote. It is acknowledged by Muslim and non-Muslim intellectuals alike that the lack of hierarchical organisation within Islam is a hinderance to its organisation and, in turn, its

integration into the French nation (Bencheikh, 1998, p.119; Gresh, 2004, pp.141-142). The political elite has worked to rectify this. Since François Mitterrand's re-election to the Élysée in 1988, there have been several attempts at creating a definitive leadership body to represent French Islam. The first, led by Pierre Joxe, was the creation of the *Conseil de réflexion sur l'islam en France*. It included several '« sages » musulmans' and aimed to 'conduire à l'unification des populations musulmans afin que le gouvernement puisse bénéficier d'un interlocuteur unique et « avisé »', although the Rushdie and the headscarf affairs had since made the need for it rather more pressing (Cesari, 1994, p.143). When Charles Pasqua became Minister of the Interior, he decided to take a thoroughly different approach in the organisation of French Islam, and made the GMP the exclusive interlocutor (El Karoui, 2016, p.93). With every change of government, there was a new approach to the construction of the Islamic representative hierarchy. Sarkozy finally established the CFCM in late 2002, based on a project begun by Jean-Pierre Chevènement (El Karoui, 2016, pp.94-99). Boubakeur was named as the first president of the CFCM owing to his long-standing proximity to the political elite from his position as rector of the GMP (Laurence and Vaisse, 2006, p.102).

Although the CFCM is a democratic, representative council of Islam in France, Boubakeur has had great influence on the stances the organisation has taken on key issues (Laurence and Vaisse, 2006, p.103). The government has prioritised, therefore, a Muslim intellectual whom it perceives to be moderate and Europeanised as its chosen interlocutor, and has deemed Boubakeur's interpretation of Islam 'acceptable'. Although the representation of a broad range of interpretations of Islam was a central aim when Sarkozy facilitated the establishment of the CFCM, the *Conseil* has been criticised for its failure to represent a large proportion of French Muslims: just 9% of those surveyed by the IM claimed to feel represented by the CFCM. Conversely, 37% claimed they felt 'proche' to Tariq Ramadan (El Karoui, 2016, p.40). This lack of support for the CFCM does not demonstrate a lack of support for the state, the French nation and its values among French Muslims. Rather, it merely suggests that the state has not chosen the sects of Islam, and the actors preaching them, which are preferred by French Muslims to represent them. By contrast, French Muslims more commonly feel an affinity with the actors least supported by the state, such as Ramadan. As was noted in Chapter Two, the

Liberal European Reformists group is composed of Islamic theorists who are, in various capacities, close to the CFCM. The promotion of this group's interpretation of Islam above all other variants through the CFCM has therefore greatly reinforced the dichotomising of French Islam into an apparently acceptable, modern, and moderate Islam against an unacceptable, excessively pious, and potentially extreme Islam.

Interestingly, this reductionist division is further reinforced from within the Islamic faith as certain Islamic authorities attack others. This phenomenon has been noted by Geisser who, in relation to the latent form of discrimination against Islam active in France, asserts that:

‘Encore plus révélateur de cette complexité de l’islamophobie contemporaine, le constat que ce phénomène est parfois encouragé par les acteurs musulmans eux-mêmes qui tirent d’une vision dualiste de l’islam une ressource de légitimation et un brevet de « laïcité républicaine ».’ (Geisser, 2003, p.95)

He labels the Muslim theorists involved in attacking certain strands of Islam ‘facilitateurs d’islamophobie’ (Geisser, 2003, p.96). Geisser suggests that these ‘facilitateurs d’islamophobie’ attack theorists and groups which have been particularly close to the youth of the *banlieues* such as the MF and the *Fédération nationale des musulmans de France* (FNMF), accusing them of being Islamists or fundamentalists (Geisser, 2003, p.96). This is seen, for example, in Boubakeur’s comments on the hijab: ‘Le port du voile est la partie émergée de l’iceberg de tout cette adhésion militante communautaire’ (Boubakeur, 2004, p.91). The GMP (and, surely, by extension, the CFCM), a well-known, long-term rival of the MF has ‘consistently portrayed the [MF] as part of the dangerous “Salafi-Wahhabi” trend while attempting to promote its own version of a “tranquil”, “Malaki” religiosity as the basis of a French Islam’ (Caeiro and al-Saify, 2009, p.120). A similar dynamic has also been noted by Deltombe of Bencheikh and Amara, among others:

‘Derrière leur dénonciation obsessionnelle de l’« islamisme », qu’ils qualifient allègrement de « fascisme » et dans lequel on retrouve indistinctement tous les musulmans avec lesquels ils sont en désaccord (Tariq Ramadan, l’UOIF, les lycéennes

voilées, etc.), ils font preuve d'une grande tolérance envers les critiques les plus radicales de la religion musulmane' (Deltombe, 2007, p.314).

This criticism from within Islam demonstrates the extremely elevated levels of tension surrounding the religion in France. The fact that some Islamic theorists denounce other theorists who preach a more orthopractic interpretation of Islam certainly confuses the field for those searching for an answer on what demands to make of French Muslims in order to further the integration of Islam into France whilst preserving the integrity of French values. The discourse of the Islamic theorists who attack groups such as the MF, relying on values such as *laïcité*, reinforces the notion implied by many non-Islamic theorists and the political elite that adhering to Qur'anic prescriptions demonstrates the elevation of Islamic values and identity above those of the Republic. As this is seen as suggestive of disloyalty to the Republic, these Islamic theorists paradoxically legitimise the *Mahomet ou la République* position.

Although it is undeniable that in the many and varied attempts to construct a viable hierarchy for French Islam the government has been trying to expound a *Mahomet et la République* discourse, through the repeated privileging of Islamic theorists who are deemed to be moderate, the government is implying that only a certain interpretation of Islam is acceptable and compatible with Republican values. Those of more orthopractic (and supposedly unacceptable) branches of Islam are thereby implicitly rejected from the Republican collective identity.

Political Capital to be Gained?

This chapter has so far demonstrated that there is a great deal of negative rhetoric in circulation about certain variants of Islam. It is advanced by various Muslim and non-Muslim intellectuals, and large sections of the political elite. The media publicises these discourses but is also guilty of adding its own through its editorials, choice of news stories and documentaries, and the spin put on them¹. The media, in this respect, acts as an amplifier of the suggestions made by politicians and intellectuals that Islam, in one form

¹ See Deltombe, 2007, pp.228-229, 277, for examples of this.

or another, represents a threat to France, especially when current affairs prove the reality of the extremist threat. As a result of the wide reach of the media, a large proportion of the population is exposed to material suggesting that there is a 'Muslim problem', that France is threatened by 'islamisme' and extremism, that Islam is an innately violent religion, and that the values that are upheld as emblematic of the Republic are at risk (see *L'Express*, 2017; Collectif Collectif, 2018; Deltombe, 2007, pp.332, 357; Hajjat and Mohammed, 2016, p.89)¹. The *Mahomet ou la République* view has undoubtedly been expounded via the media. Although causality cannot be confirmed, judgements similar to those furthered in the media are found to be prevalent in polls, which suggests that the *Mahomet ou la République* discourse, having featured prominently in the media, may have been absorbed by the public. In a 2012 poll, 63% of respondents cited 'rejet de valeurs occidentales' as one of the phrases 'qui correspondent le mieux à l'idée que vous vous faites de l'Islam', and 57% cited 'fanatisme' (Ifop, 2012, p.13). This distrust of Islam is itself reflected in the high levels of demand for the government to take decisive action to counter the threat, as was seen in the strong support for limitations on Islamic orthopraxy such full-face veils in public (*L'Obs*, 2010), and the wearing of headscarves in university (*L'Obs*, 2013) although it was never made law.

The French government is keen to be seen as promoting a *Mahomet et la République* position. France is regarded as a major world power and so successive governments have arguably ensured that they are not seen to be promoting any discourse that could be found in court to be racist or discriminatory. The government and the major political parties strongly condemn the statements and policies of the FN, for example, that overtly promote a *Mahomet ou la République* view. This was clearly illustrated in 2010 when Marine Le Pen described Muslims praying in the streets due to a lack of space in prayer rooms and mosques as 'une occupation de pans de territoire, des quartiers dans lesquels la loi religieuse s'applique' (Le Pen, cited in Baubérot, 2014, p.14). This statement was quickly denounced by many high-profile actors within the main political parties, including Jean-François Copé and François Baroin of the UMP and Benoît

¹ According to the *Alliance pour les Chiffres de la Presse et des Médias*, in 2016, 62% of the French population read at least one press publication ('titre de presse') each day (Ouest France, 2016).

Hamon of the PS (Baubérot, 2014, pp.14-15). However, the UMP and the PS have also been centrally involved in the promotion of implicitly *Mahomet ou la République* policies, such as the banning of religious symbols in schools, which have reinforced the suggestion that France is threatened by orthopractic Islam.

Heine has noted that:

‘Arousing fear of an enemy who is supposedly living within society, acting clandestinely and in an organised way, and whose sole purpose is supposed to be the destruction of national foundations, can prove itself useful for a political power wishing to reassess its authority and legitimacy’ (Heine, 2009, p.175).

Following Heine’s argument, it is plausible that the French government has sought to profit from the increasing fears related to Islam as there is political support to be gained from appearing to take action against those presumed to be threatening the Republic’s security or values. Indeed, the government risks being perceived as weak or lax on the issue if such action is not taken (see Hajjat and Mohammed, 2016, pp.103-106). Overall, therefore, the government has an arguably strong incentive to act. This appears to have first occurred in 1994: Beyrou has suggested that he implemented the circular because a survey had found that 80% of people supported a ban (Deltombe, 2007, pp.219-220). He therefore saw the circular as a means of gaining political support.

This trend continued throughout the 2000s. The 2004 law on religious symbols in schools also seems to have been an attempt to make an easy political win, as was noted in Chapter One. Six years later, the niqab appeared to have become the emblem representing all ‘islamisme’ and violence against and repression of women (see the discourse of Sihem Habchi in Assemblée nationale, 2009a; Gerin, 2010, p.25), and the law banning its use in public was passed with great public support for it. At that time, Sarkozy’s popularity was waning (TNS Sofres, 2011, p.3), and so it appears plausible that the 2010 law on the full-face veil was also seen as a way to regain some public support. However, by passing such laws that overwhelmingly affect (orthopractic) Muslims, various French governments have publicised, legitimised, and reinforced the *Mahomet ou la République* position in their determination to be seen to be taking a firm stance against the ‘islamisme’ so feared in the press and intellectual discourse. These actions are

generally perceived by the electorate to be valid, however, as they are framed in Republican terms and purported to further 'égalité', 'laïcité', and 'vivre ensemble'. This is the mechanism by which the alternative *Mahomet et la République* discourse is politically side-lined. The rejection of Islamic orthopraxy from the Republic implies that those who follow it, or even those who do not oppose its observance, do not sufficiently defend Republican values. These Republican values are thereby employed against orthopractic French Muslims by the political elite to gain political influence and power. Through this process, the *Mahomet ou la République* outlook is validated, and the *Mahomet et la République* perspective is framed as untenable.

Concluding Remarks

Many insidious threats to the security and values of the Republic are perceived in various Islamic groups, both inside and outside of France. In this context, Muslims' adherence to orthopractic prescriptions has been repeatedly misinterpreted as the prioritising of the Islamic identity and values above those of the Republic, sometimes even to the point of being regarded as a sign of support for politicised Islam or extremist ideologies. The threat is therefore acutely perceived in orthopraxy. This has legitimised laws limiting Islamic orthopraxy as means of protecting national values. Various intellectuals relying on neo-Republican interpretations of French values have implicitly reinforced this preference for modernised, non-orthopractic, liberal variants of Islam. Similarly, the threat perceived in some Islamic theorists has led the government to promote only the interpretations of Islam most compatible with its own outlook for the French nation in the construction of a French-Islamic hierarchy. Such interventions have also been variously carried out for reasons of political game-playing. These laws and public positions have all legitimised and reinforced the *Mahomet ou la République* position as they imply that only those who demonstrate that they prioritise the Republican values and identity above any Islamic values and identity they may hold are welcomed into the Republic. French Muslims are faced with the choice of appearing to accept a particularly identitarian set of Republican demands or appearing to prioritise Islam, and thus being excluded from the Republic. This discourse is ultimately based upon a biased

interpretation of Islam, however. For this reason, and because the *Mahomet ou la République* rhetoric essentially legitimises intolerance of certain aspects of Islam, these measures have had many negative effects on the lives of French Muslims.

The *Mahomet ou la République* position has only offered 'sticking plaster' solutions to problems which are often ultimately false, such as that Islamic orthopraxy demonstrates a rejection of Republican values. These solutions have been severely damaging to relations between French Muslims and non-Muslims nonetheless. Hopkins asserts that the violent racist attacks perpetrated by non-Muslims against Muslim women demonstrate how laws such as the ban targeting the full-face veil 'make public spaces unsafe for religious-dress wearing Muslim women' (Hopkins, 2015, p.160). 2012 saw a 57.4% increase in the number of Islamophobic acts compared to 2011, and 77% of the victims of these attacks were women wearing Islamic headscarves (CCIF, 2013, p.5). Hopkins links the outlawing of the niqab to this increase in Islamophobic discrimination and violence (Hopkins, 2015, p.159).

Conversely, Islam and 'islamisme' have been blamed for attacks carried out by young, supposedly Muslim, men in the *banlieues* against young women whom they reportedly deem to practice Islam insufficiently (Gemie, 2010, pp.75-78; Spohn, 2013, p.151). Amara and NPNS maintained that government laxity on Islamic orthopraxy could therefore risk violence against women (Garcia, 2012, p.151). This line of argument has, however, been strongly criticised by Nacira Guénif-Souilamas and Éric Macé as reinforcing an often-unfounded stereotype of young Arab men (Guénif-Souilamas and Macé, 2004, pp.61-63, 81-83). Gemie has argued that the link between Islam and such violence is far weaker than Amara had implied during her work with NPNS: 'however 'fundamentalism' is defined, it is a rigorous creed which demands extremely high moral standards from its followers'; those responsible for the harassment of young women are more likely to be 'a sub-elite of petty criminals [...] than linked to any religious group'. Furthermore, Amara admitted that she had not realised that sexual violence is far from unique to the *banlieues* (Gemie, 2010, pp.78-79). There is arguably insufficient evidence, therefore, that legal limitations on Islamic orthopraxy would reduce this type of misogynistic violence in the *banlieues*.

The spike in racist attacks against Muslim women, as argued by Hopkins, is not the only negative result of laws validating the *Mahomet ou la République* stance. According to the work by Chouder, Latrèche and Tévanian who used data provided by the government, over 60 *lycéennes* chose to leave school rather than remove their headscarf after the 2004 law was passed, and a further 50 or so were permanently excluded as they declined to remove their headscarves in school (Chouder et al., 2008, p.76). In addition to these pupils, it is estimated that over 220 more pupils simply never returned to school in September 2004 when the law came into force, and so are not included in official figures (Chouder et al., 2008, p.104). In total, therefore, over 330 pupils left school in 2004 as a result of the law. This will have undoubtedly had significant effects on their education and social development.

In a climate of increasing tension as limitations on Islamic orthopraxy have multiplied, those who have implicitly or explicitly reinforced the *Mahomet ou la République* outlook, including successive French governments, have not left themselves much room for manoeuvre. Having acknowledged that they perceived a threat within Islam and acted upon it in 2004, these actors have opened the way to, and indeed accepted, further limitations on Islam since. The political elite has effectively boxed itself into a corner as it surely will not be able to back-track from the status quo without being accused of being lax on the terror threat and insufficiently defensive of Republican values. The *Mahomet ou la République* discourse and its related laws are undoubtedly having a severely negative effect on the lives of many French Muslims and, as it is based on a biased interpretation of Islam, it may result in growing antagonism between those supportive of it and French Muslims. However, there is an alternative intellectual discourse based upon the belief that the overwhelming majority of French Muslims desire their full inclusion in the French narrative as French Muslims: the *Mahomet et la République* discourse.

Mahomet et la République: The Alternative Discourse

The previous chapter analysed the position of those convinced of the incompatibility of Islamic orthopraxy and Republican values. By contrast, this chapter will consider the *Mahomet et la République* outlook: the overall viewpoint of the Pro-Diversity Liberals, Pragmatist Feminists, Staunch Defenders of Piety and, to a large extent, the Liberal European Reformists. It will demonstrate that this position takes into account and accepts the heterogeneity of the views and beliefs of French Muslims and argues that this enables a viable and sustainable framework for France's relationship with its Muslims in the long term. By acknowledging that the overwhelming majority of French Muslims do not pose a threat to the values and cohesion of the French nation, the *Mahomet ou la République* outlook allows for a peaceful, constructive relationship between France and its Muslims, rather than the hostile relationship that the status quo facilitates.

Central to this chapter, therefore, will be the consideration of evidence that French Muslims overwhelmingly desire full inclusion and acceptance into the Republic in order to establish the invalidity of the claims that Muslims, or a significant component thereof, are a 'problematic' or dangerous contingent of the French population. This chapter will then demonstrate that the intellectuals promoting the *Mahomet et la République* position are deeply critical of France's colonial past and of all remaining colonial stereotypes and prejudice. Their advancement of a discourse that does not frame Islam as a threat to France will then be demonstrated. The chapter will subsequently consider the view that Muslim women are uniquely affected by a blend of discriminations, including that against their gender, following Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality. This will highlight the interplay between anti-discrimination and anti-sexism rhetoric. Finally, this chapter will consider the aspect of the *Mahomet et la République* stance which argues the need for representation of the many interpretations of Islam in France to advance the elimination of discrimination against orthopractic Muslims.

French Muslims' Desire for Acceptance into the Republic

The perception that Islamic orthopraxy correlates with a dissociation from French society has gained ground over the course of the last twenty to thirty years as Islamic orthopraxy has become increasingly common. It has been widely noted that there has been a return to religiosity among some younger Muslims, which manifests itself in a more intense devotion to and defence of orthopraxy (Geisser, 2004 cited in Laurence and Vaisse, 2006, p.75; Brouard and Tiberj, 2005, pp.30-32; El Karoui, 2016, pp.27-29). When mass migration from North Africa to France first began in the twentieth century, immigrants tended to give up many Islamic practises while taking on French ones in an attempt to win acceptance from the broader French population. This was often seen in the changing of one's clothes from North African and Islamic traditional dress to that in line with French norms (Joseph and Miské, 2009; Scott, 2007, p.53). By contrast, today, the children of immigrants are increasingly choosing not to reject the culture of their families' country of origin and are instead returning to more orthopractic interpretations of Islam, which is perceived as a sign of a growing rejection of French values for the reasons discussed above in Chapter Three. The study by the IM stated that the phenomenon of the youth return to religiosity was associated with the group in its typology of Muslims which it describes as 'le plus problématique' (El Karoui, 2016, pp.27-28).

However, various studies demonstrate that adherence to Islamic orthopraxy is rarely an expression of the rejection of the French identity and values. A 2005 study carried out by Brouard and Tiberj provides a valuable insight into the views, ideologies and perspectives of immigrants and the children of immigrants to France from Africa and Turkey. These people comprise the 'nouveaux Français', as the authors term them. The majority of this new population are Muslim, although the group also contains Catholics and people who do not have a religion (Brouard and Tiberj, 2005, p.23). It must be remembered therefore, that not all the data in this study provides an accurate reflexion of the views of French Muslims specifically. Nevertheless, the study is highly valuable to the field as several data sets compare the responses of 'nouveaux Français' Muslims with those of French citizens without links to immigration, who serve as a de facto control

group. Furthermore, the study asks a broad range of fair questions unrelated to French neuroses about Islam. This makes Brouard and Tiberj's study far more appropriate than the IM study for my present purposes. However, as the data used by Brouard and Tiberj was collected in 2005, there is a pressing need for a new, similar study as the next generation of French Muslims comes of age.

Brouard and Tiberj discovered that few Muslims consider Islamic faith and participation in the French narrative as mutually exclusive. This substantially lessens the risk of *communautarisme* and the problems which may result from it. The study found that 'l'idée que « plus on est intégré à la population française, moins on est musulman » ne récolte qu'un faible niveau d'adhésion chez les musulmans' (Brouard and Tiberj, 2005, p.35). A further factor which hints towards Muslims' readiness to be fully accepted into the French nation is their high level of identification with social groups other than their own. Although 71% of the 'nouveaux Français' (a group which comprises Muslims and non-Muslims) affirm to be 'très ou assez proche' to those of the same religion as themselves, this is also true of 59% of the 'control' French population. More tellingly, 85% of the new French population identify as being 'très ou assez proche' to the 'Français en général'. 84% of the control French population state the same. (Brouard and Tiberj, 2005, p.124). Although these results are not broken down by religion, the similarities between the results of the 'new' and 'control' populations, and the fact that the 'new' population is largely comprised of Muslims, suggest that there is no overall rejection of the French nation by its Muslim population. This is corroborated by a more recent study by the FRA. It found that, on average, Muslims in France rated themselves as feeling more attached to France than Muslims in other European countries did with regard to their attachment to the country in which they lived (FRA, 2017, p.20). These data indicate that suggestions that French Muslims reject *la République* are largely unfounded.

Respect for *laïcité* has been shown in previous chapters to be a central concern of non-Muslims with regard to the integration of Islam into the French identity. However, Brouard and Tiberj found that over 60% of 'new' French Muslims disagree with the statement 'en France, la laïcité est un obstacle à la liberté religieuse', while 80% of the control French population disagree with it. This difference of 20 percentage points may

concern those protective of the concept of *laïcité* and other Republican values. However, Islam is a particularly orthopractic religion, and the practice of Islam, such as wearing a headscarf, is indeed limited in some capacities in France in the name of *laïcité*. This could explain why a greater proportion of 'new' Muslims consider *laïcité* to be an obstacle to religious freedom than the broader French population do. However, over 80% of both groups consider the word *laïcité* 'très' or 'assez positif' (Bouard and Tiberj, 2005, p.37). This demonstrates the high levels of commitment to *laïcité* among the new French Muslim population despite these limitations. Further, it suggests that the widely-noted return to religiosity does not encompass a rejection of French culture and values.

At this point it is worth highlighting that there may also be factors which 'push' French Muslims towards greater devotion to and celebration of their religion. It is surely plausible that cases of racism in which it is suggested by the perpetrator that being Muslim means one cannot be French may push those affected, and their social circle, towards deeper integration into the community which celebrates the religious identity which was rejected elsewhere. Brouard and Tiberj found that those who self-identified as a victim of racism were significantly more likely to demonstrate a stronger identification with those of similar religious backgrounds. They suggest that in some cases this may be linked to a communitarian mindset (Brouard and Tiberj, 2005, p.131). This phenomenon has even been noted by Kepel who has linked increasing orthopraxy with socio-economic discrimination faced by those of North African descent, particularly in the *banlieues*. Kepel proposes that '[l]'engagement religieux offre la possibilité de recouvrer une dignité personnelle et une légitimité sociale' (Kepel and Jardin, 2015, p.221). It appears that in the face of discrimination, increasing religiosity can provide comfort and a reaffirmed sense of identity and belonging.

As will be demonstrated in detail below, a central line of argument of the *Mahomet et la République* intellectual viewpoint is that orthopraxy does not indicate a belief in values that threaten the Republic. Jean Beaman has also carried out a useful study on French Muslims' perception of their integration and acceptance into the French nation which demonstrates the validity of this view. Beaman's research reveals that Muslims who have passed the *Baccalauréat*, completed higher education, and have

gone on to find employment in the socio-professional category of 'cadre' – and are therefore likely to be perceived as having successfully assimilated and accepted French values – do not necessarily renounce their Islamic orthopraxy (Beaman, 2016, pp.50-54). Several of the volunteers interviewed by Beaman for this study who meet the criteria of 'middle class' define themselves as practising Muslims, aiming to carry out the prescriptions of the five pillars of Islam as much as they can (Beaman, 2016, pp.52-53). Although Beaman's work uses a very small sample, it does demonstrate the importance of orthopraxy to Muslims who are arguably well integrated into the Republic and in a position of relative socio-economic stability. This, in turn, reveals that orthopraxy is not purely the result of a lack of 'integration'. It also indicates that Islamic orthopraxy is not likely to disappear in France, even with increasing integration and acceptance of Islam. Furthermore, the fact that orthopraxy is carried out even by those who are likely to be regarded as well-integrated suggests that it is surely not only the most secular, non-orthopractic interpretations of Islam which are compatible with Western values.

Beaman's study further validates the argument that orthopraxy does not indicate beliefs threatening to the Republic through the finding that orthopraxy is, to some Muslims, a marker of cultural identity and a link with the country of origin of their families. Beaman notes that several respondents linked their religiosity to their cultural identity, including Nadia who:

'increasingly felt a need for an attachment to her Maghrébin culture; she sought out connections with other Maghrébin youth online and began to learn more. [...] Part of Nadia's cultural Muslim identity relates to her creating a social network of like-minded Muslim friends of Maghrébin origin' (Beaman, 2011, p.54).

This suggests that orthopraxy is not merely a sign of adherence to religious doctrine, but also of membership to an ethnic community. In turn, this demonstrates that the sense of cultural dislocation which likely affects many Muslims living in the West must also be considered as a factor which may cause greater religiosity among younger generations¹. French Muslims may feel that orthopraxy eases the conflicts they face with regard to how to honour and respect the culture of the country their relatives grew up

¹ For more on this see Ramadan, 2002, pp.1-2.

with, and which likely influenced their own upbringing in the West. Beaman goes on to posit that certain respondents from her study 'do not just have an ethnic or religious identity, but also an ethnoreligious identity, in which their Maghrébin origin and Muslim religion are inextricably linked' (Beaman, 2011, p.59). This has also been noted by Laurence and Vaisse (2006, pp.87-88) and in the IM study with regard to the consumption of halal meat (El Karoui, 2016, pp.32-33). However, the celebration of an alternative culture and community may unsettle those fearful of *communautarisme*, and could potentially be employed to legitimise policies which further the *Mahomet ou la République* rhetoric. The studies by Brouard and Tiberj and Beaman have nevertheless proven that the overwhelming majority of French Muslims share French values and desire complete inclusion in the Republican milieu.

The Liberal European Reformists' certainty of the compatibility of their interpretation of Islam with French laws and values is evident in their proximity to the state. However, even Islamic theorists who promote a particularly orthopractic interpretation of Islam affirm the compatibility of Islamic and French laws and values, which reinforces the notion that Islamic piety is compatible with integration into the French narrative. They assert that French and immigrant Muslims in France are able to, and indeed must, respect the law of the land, regardless of how highly they rank the ideologies and laws contained within Islam. Ramadan emphasises that 'Islamic law and jurisprudence *order* a Muslim individual to submit to the framework of positive law in force in his country of residence' (Ramadan, 2002, pp.171-172, original emphasis; see also Peter, 2014, pp.76-77). Ramadan and Bencheikh believe that it is vital to create *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) in order to aid Muslims to do this (Ramadan, 2002, p.102; Bencheikh, 1999, p.75).

Many Muslims have asserted that one has the right to criticise political and legal proposals. Indeed, the proposed law banning religious symbols in schools was greatly criticised by the UOIF (as the MF was called at the time) (Laurence and Vaisse, 2006, p.105). Once the law had been passed, however, the UOIF accepted it and ordered its subsidiary organisation which had organised protests against the law to stop their activity (Gemie, 2010, p.106). The UOIF made its position on the law clear through these actions:

it did not support the passage of the law, but it would not support the breaking of it either. Ramadan conveyed the same message through his involvement with CEPT (Gemie, 2010, pp.94, 120-123). The then-leader of the UOIF, Lhaj Thami Breze, condemned the shift from a 'laïcité tolérante ouverte et généreuse, c'est-à-dire une laïcité d'intégration, à une laïcité d'exclusion' that the ban on religious signs in schools symbolised (Breze, cited in Coroller, 2004). This suggests that when French Muslims demand their right to practise their faith openly, they are not seeking any kind of Islamisation of French law, as may be perceived by those who advocate the discourse of *Mahomet ou la République*. Rather, they are simply demanding what they consider to be a uniform application of *laïcité*, which treats and affects all religions equally. It is therefore evident that whilst the different theorists and organisations defend the right to Islamic orthopraxy to varying degrees, they nevertheless advocate total respect for French law. Moreover, the involvement of the UOIF and other French Muslims in the protests against the proposed law does not demonstrate separatism or a lack of support for the French nation. Rather, they show that French Muslims exercised their democratic rights, as is surely desirable of French citizens as it evidences integration into the socio-political system. French Muslims' protests against the 2004 law are therefore comparable with the lobby against the proposed legalisation of gay marriage, *La manif pour tous*, which gained great support from various Catholic groups.

Despite the various disagreements within French Islam on issues as diverse as halal meat, state involvement in the organisation of the religion, Islamic dress and Sharia, the Staunch Defenders of Piety and the Liberal European Reformists, together with the overwhelming majority of French Muslims, concur in their support for and advocacy of a *Mahomet et la République* outlook. They arguably believe that the interpretations of Islam that they promote and follow are entirely compatible with French norms and values, and therefore merit inclusion in the Republican narrative. In the case of the Liberal European Reformists, this is despite their criticisms of more orthopractic interpretations of Islam. The fact that Islam is particularly divided and weakly organised further suggests that accepting orthopraxy does not represent a risk of enabling an 'islamisation' of the nation (Gresh, 2004, p.41). These Islamic theorists seek to demonstrate that the perception that French Muslims are not, or cannot be, loyal to

Republican values as their 'own' values are supposedly opposed to those of the French, is demonstrably misguided.

Colonialism Reconsidered

Anti-discrimination is a key aspect of the *Mahomet et la République* position. Considering the origin of discrimination against Muslims in France, the intellectuals who promote this discourse support the notion that tensions which originated in the futile brutality of colonialism in North Africa remain and continue to impact upon France's relationship with its Muslims. Plenel, a Pro-Diversity Liberal, argues that 'la situation faite aux musulmans de France n'est pas dissociable de la longue durée de nos dominations coloniales.' (Plenel, 2016, p.66). Delphy, a Pragmatist Feminist proposes that:

'Cet antagonisme à l'islam, qui est le substrat de toutes ces affaires [du foulard], il faudra bien un jour cesser de le nier, et admettre sa consubstantialité avec le racisme lié à notre histoire coloniale, à la guerre d'Algérie et à l'exploitation du travail immigré en France' (Delphy, 2004, p.70).

Both theorists see a direct link of causality between the discrimination against Islam which exists in contemporary French society and the colonial period. Returning, for a moment, to consider Chabal's theory of a division between responses to France's colonial past which transcends the traditional left-right dichotomy (Chabal, 2017, pp.117-118), it is clear that a position of unrelenting condemnation of this past and any continuing discrimination related to it appears to be a central aspect of the *Mahomet et la République* outlook. This regret and criticism of colonialism contrasts sharply with the acceptance and even pride that the Nostalgics and some politicians demonstrated towards this era of French history.

French Muslims have testified to their perceptions that tensions and stereotypes originating in colonialism remain active. On the subject of the 2004 law on religious symbols in schools, Agathe-Chamous Larisse notes that '[c]'est un vestige de la pensée coloniale, qui conduit à maintenir en état de subordination toute une frange de la population, jugée inférieure, aux mœurs plus ou moins barbares' (in Chouder et al., 2007,

p.231, see also pp.53, 236-238). By recognising the brutality of the colonial regime and the discrimination linked to it that remains in French society, the Pro-Diversity Liberals and Pragmatist Feminists promote a discourse which allows for the acceptance of French Muslims and those with family ties to former French colonies, free from residual discrimination and animosity. However, it appears that this outlook has yet to gain sufficient political capital to displace the rhetoric defensive of French imperialism which is the status quo.

An Alternative Reading of the Perceived Threat

As part their resistance against discrimination, the Pro-Diversity Liberals and Pragmatist Feminists argue that the threat which is broadly perceived by those who further the *Mahomet ou la République* discourse is largely non-existent. In consideration of the current wide-spread fear relating to terrorism carried out in the name of Islam, Roy's argument that 'le terrorisme ne provient pas de la radicalisation de l'islam, mais de l'islamisation de la radicalité' (Roy, 2016, p.15) is all the more pertinent and important to highlight. Roy deals succinctly with the suggestion that Islam poses a threat to French society by highlighting the fact that 25% of Daesh recruits are recent converts to Islam. Furthermore, in general, those radicalised did not live piously before their radicalisation (Roy, 2016, pp.40-42). These observations, Roy argues, demonstrate that Islam in itself is not the innate cause of the violence, and disprove Kepel's theory of radicalisation via Salafism. Kepel has accused Roy of ignoring the link between Salafism and radicalisation, but in response Roy asserts that 'elles [la violence terroriste et la radicalisation religieuse de l'islam sous la forme du salafisme] sont insuffisantes pour rendre compte des phénomènes que nous étudions, parce qu'on ne trouve aucun lien de causalité à partir des données empiriques dont nous disposons' (Roy, 2016, p.16). Rather than ignoring the process of radicalisation which Kepel sees in Salafism, Roy suggests that Kepel is drawing false conclusions about the process. Roy also notes that the majority of French Jihadists are specifically of the generation to be born in France to immigrant parents. These Jihadists 'ne sont pas forcément en révolte contre la personne de leurs parents, mais ce qu'ils représentent : l'humiliation, les concessions faites à la société et ce qu'ils

perçoivent comme leur ignorance religieuse' (Roy, 2016, p.47). As was shown above in this chapter, those who immigrated to France themselves soon neglected many cultural aspects of Islam as part of their efforts to integrate. However, many would have been victims of racism nonetheless. It is this denial of their own culture whilst simultaneously being discriminated against that Roy argues has contributed to the radicalisation of the children of these immigrants.

Plenel, too, deals succinctly with the perception of a terror threat from Islam in France, arguing that '[j]amais les crimes commis par de prétendus musulmans ayant eux-mêmes sombré dans ces guerres sans fin ne justifieront qu'en retour, nous persécutions les musulmans de France' (Plenel, 2016, pp.129-130). This is demonstrative of the overarching discourse of the Pro-Diversity Liberals which suggests that as a host society, France must ensure that its policies and rhetoric do not lend themselves to the isolation of ethnic and religious minority groups, regardless of conflicts abroad, and even despite fears of increasing *communautarisme*. This includes misrepresentations of *laïcité*. The need for an inclusive stance was made plainly by Baubérot in his interview for the Gerin Commission in 2009. He stated that if a law banning the full-face veil was put in place:

'[l]'idée fausse selon laquelle une société laïque est antimusulmane se renforcerait chez beaucoup de musulmans [...]. Inversement, des éléments antimusulmans de la société française y liraient un encouragement et ne se priveraient pas de donner une interprétation extensive de cette nouvelle loi, comme certains l'ont fait de la loi de 2004' (Baubérot, cited in Assemblée nationale, 2009b).

This demonstrates the perception among these theorists that laws which effectively limit Islamic orthopraxy do not correlate with an interpretation of *laïcité* which is loyal to the law of 1905. They highlight the exclusion that has been and continues to be felt by French Muslims as a result of such laws which criminalise certain aspects of the practise of their religion, and which are often the result of fears of a gradual Islamisation of French society and the importation of foreign conflict. The Pro-Diversity Liberals argue, therefore, that such measures, which I have contended amount to policies furthering only a *Mahomet ou la République* position, are a threat to the values of the French Republic.

The Pro-Diversity Liberals have suggested that there has been a shift in how *laïcité* is understood and applied in France since 1905, linked, in part, to this perceived threat.

Roy states that:

‘La laïcité n’est plus un simple principe juridique de neutralité de l’état, elle est devenue un principe d’exclusion du religieux de l’espace public. On entend dire aujourd’hui que la religion doit rester au privé, ce qui est le contraire de l’esprit de la loi de 1905’ (Roy, 2016, p.115).

Plenel has echoed the sentiment of Roy but also taken his analysis a step further: ‘La haine de la religion qu’exprime envers l’islam et ses pratiquants un laïcisme intolérant, infidèle à la laïcité originelle, est l’expression d’un déni social : d’un rejet des dominés et des opprimés tels qu’ils sont’ (Plenel, 2016, p.107). The Pro-Diversity Liberals argue, therefore, that it is this shift which has enabled the passing of legislation which effectively limits Islam. This is problematic as it reproduces discrimination of French Muslims. British academic Jeremy Ahearne has also noted that the 2004 law prohibiting religious symbols in schools ‘embed[ed] an understanding across society as a whole of *laïcité* as a primarily repressive tool to be directed principally against Islam’ (Ahearne, 2014, p.325). Although he is a commentator on the French situation rather than a protagonist within it, Ahearne can therefore be seen to be echoing the socio-political position of the Pro-Diversity Liberals.

Baubérot is of a similar opinion but, as I demonstrated in Chapter One, he places the blame for this development with certain elements of the right wing. With regard to the increasing prevalence of this interpretation of *laïcité*, Baubérot posits that ‘[a]ffirmer que les musulmans sont stigmatisés est nécessaire, en rester là s’avère totalement insuffisant’ (Baubérot, 2014, p.46). He thereby acknowledges the specificity of the weaponization of this new interpretation of *laïcité* against French Muslims and insists on the reassertion of the traditional meaning and interpretation of *laïcité*, as Roy and Plenel do.

The Pro-Diversity Liberals favour, therefore, a more relaxed, less identitarian interpretation of *laïcité*, which they claim is the only interpretation of *laïcité* faithful to the letter of the 1905 law. They do not argue that a new interpretation of *laïcité* is

needed for the acceptance of French Muslims into French society, merely the correct interpretation and application of the original law. Plenel asserts that :

‘[i]nfidèles à la promesse de 1905, ces laïcistes sont à la laïcité ce que l’intégrisme est à la religion [...] et, pour les plus avertis, ce que le sectarisme est à la politique. Car la loi de 1905 [...] était bien plus une loi de libération [...] que d’interdiction ou de répression’ (Plenel, 2016, p.118).

It is evident that Plenel views the 1905 law as fit for purpose but sees the various additions which have since been made to the law that curtail Muslims’ freedom to practise their religion within the French territory as deeply damaging to the cause of the promotion of the acceptance of Muslims into the Republican narrative. Baubérot takes a similar stance, arguing that the ‘nouvelle laïcité’, as he calls it, ‘est le fruit d’histoires dont elle ne parle pas, ou très peu : l’histoire de la colonisation ou celle de l’immigration’ (Baubérot, 2014, p.85). There is consensus between the two theorists that events which have developed since the law of 1905 was put in place have caused this mutation of *laïcité* which has had highly problematic effects with regard to furthering a *Mahomet et la République* discourse.

The line of argumentation taken here by the Pro-Diversity Liberals allows orthopraxy to be interpreted first and foremost as a religious act, as opposed to one of political defiance. The negative *Mahomet ou la République* rhetoric reinforces the latter, which allows the limitations against the religion to be justified in the name of societal cohesion. This was the case during the 2010 Gerin Commission on the niqab. During the Commission, its president, André Gerin, stated that ‘la mission a pour tâche d’enquêter sur la réalité des dérives intégristes, communautaristes et [...] barbares, qui se produisent depuis quinze ou vingt ans sur certains territoires de notre pays’ (Assemblée nationale, 2009b). This negates all peaceful religious aspects of the full-face veil, reducing it to a symbol of an aggressive separatism. Although, as was demonstrated above through the data produced by Brouard and Tiberj in 2005 and by Beaman in her more recent study, Islam can play a role in the development and maintenance of one’s cultural identity as well as being one’s faith, the *Mahomet et la République* position infers that it is essential

that this is not over-emphasised to the point at which the religious aspect central to orthopraxy is forgotten.

The involvement of the Pro-Diversity Liberals and the Pragmatist Feminists in the present debate demonstrates the continued presence of an alternative to the hegemonic neo-Republican discourse. These theorists' lines of argument correlate with and reflect Beaman, Brouard and Tiberj's findings regarding French Muslims' views on orthopraxy and French values. The plea of these intellectuals to move away from identitarian interpretations of Republican values such as *laïcité* thereby promotes a socio-political framework which fully acknowledges and respects Muslims' desires to be fully accepted into the French narrative. These intellectuals maintain this stance irrespective of one's religious beliefs and levels of orthopraxy, including in cases where Islamic orthopraxy forms part of a cultural or ethnic identity which may run in conjunction with one's French identity.

Muslim Women, Intersectionality, and the Feminism Question

The Pragmatist Feminist position, like that of the Universalist Feminists, developed and consolidated during the 2003-2004 episode of the headscarf affair. It is the counter position to that of the Universalist Feminists, however, defending Muslim women's freedom to practise their faith openly and overtly through their dress, arguing that this protects their rights better than limiting orthopraxy in an attempt to protect male-female equality. Like the Pro-Diversity Liberals, the Pragmatist Feminists ground their argumentation in the assertion that Islam does not, in itself, represent a threat to the French Republic. They therefore campaign against the discrimination of Islam that may result from this perception of a threat, which they link to racism. It is interesting to note that while many academics and commentators in the media outside of France have remarked on the racism in the legal limitations placed upon French Muslims, this seems to have been a substantially less common position in the French intellectual, political and media spheres, the Pragmatist Feminists aside (Tévanian, 2005, pp.54-62). This is likely linked, as noted by Scott, to the view held by many French commentators that American multiculturalism is a scenario to be avoided at all costs (Scott, 2007, p.23). This, in turn,

reaffirms that there is a uniquely French phenomenon at work in framing such laws as acceptable and indeed desirable: neo-Republicanism.

Houria Bouteldja has reported that it was the accusatory discourse against Algerians and those of other nationalities living both inside and outside of France, such as comments made by Samira Bellil, author of *Dans l'enfer des tournantes*, which led her to become involved in the feminist anti-racism movement with theorists such as Tévanian. Through this she began to work with other feminists who also fall into my category of 'Pragmatist' (Bouteldja et al., 2006, pp.123-124). She notes the presence of racism in the headscarf affair, highlighting how many young Muslim women are denied a voice as 'par leur bouche, c'est le barbu intégriste qui parle' (Bouteldja et al., 2004, p.50). Countering racial and cultural discrimination is also a key part of Delphy's work. Delphy has demonstrated that the Islamic veil, a marker highlighting links with the East, is perceived as far worse than any other dress-related norm or demand which affects women, as the banning of Western garments which are too revealing of women's bodies has not been proposed (Delphy, 2006, pp.62-63). The status quo frames pious Muslim women deeply negatively, and so laws which ultimately limit their orthopraxy are considered necessary. They are seen either as a threat as a result of their supposed lack of commitment to the French nation, or as victims of an ethnicised patriarchy in need of saving (see, for example, Bloul, 1996, pp.258-260). The former case appears to be linked to international conflict involving Islam which has been imported to France. The latter case, meanwhile, has been attributed to the continuation of colonial gender-based stereotypes (Lépinard, 2007, p.396). The crossover between the feminist and the anti-discrimination movement in the promotion of the *Mahomet et la République* discourse is evident. The intersectionality of discrimination must therefore be considered as central in the debate surrounding the acceptance of France's orthopractic Muslims in the national narrative and identity.

Kimberlé Crenshaw has famously demonstrated the intersectionality of discrimination. She argues that what had previously been perceived as distinct types of discrimination in fact have a multiplying effect on each other (Crenshaw, 1989, p.140). Crenshaw devised the theory of intersectionality in the American context. She argues that

black women are subject to discrimination by both their gender and their race. However, when considering discrimination, focus is typically placed on 'the most privileged group members [which] marginalizes those who are multiply-burdened, and obscures claims that cannot be understood as resulting from discrete sources of discrimination' (Crenshaw, 1989, p.140). Key to her theory, therefore, is the assertion that 'the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism' (Crenshaw, 1989, p.140). In Chapter One I outlined how the focus of discrimination has shifted from the racial to the cultural, and that while both exist in French society today, it is cultural discrimination, the discrimination targeting Islam, that remains more prevalent (see also Hajjat and Mohammed, 2016, p.37 for more on this subject). Discrimination by gender also undeniably exists throughout contemporary French society. It is a more distinct phenomenon, but nonetheless fully implicated in the discrimination faced by French Muslim women. Following Crenshaw's theory, I therefore suggest that in this context where discrimination by both race and religion, as well as gender, are present, it is those who are female, of either North or sub-Saharan African origin and Muslim who may be victim to the greatest discrimination. Any combination of these discriminations is greater than and different to the sum of its contributory parts.

Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality provides a useful frame through which the Pragmatist Feminists' position may be seen. As combined discrimination is more significant than and distinct from the sum of its constituent parts, French laws which ultimately curtail Muslim women's orthopraxy affect those who already have some of the most substantial experiences of discrimination. In an article published in 2006, Delphy notes the cumulative effects of these discriminations in France, but she remarks that such theory has been far more greatly explored in the Anglo-American context and elsewhere (Delphy, 2006, p.73).

Delphy maintains that the 2004 law presumes that Muslim women (whom Delphy notes are perceived to be confined to the *banlieues*) are only subjected to the sexism of the Muslim men of the *banlieues*, that is the sexism 'de « leurs » hommes', and not that of the broader French socio-political context (Delphy, 2006, p.70 citing Guénif-Souilamas, 2004; see also Tissot, 2011, p.42). This misguided view implies that the Muslim women

can only be saved through measures which attempt to limit their ethno-religious difference and are therefore ultimately racist (Delphy, 2006, p.76). The perceived discrimination against Muslim women by Muslim men, of which the headscarf is presumed to be a sign, is seen as needing to be eliminated at all costs. Delphy argues that it is evident that countering sexism was prioritised over protecting against racism in the passing of the 2004 law. She notes that 'le dilemme entre lutte antisexiste et lutte antiraciste n'est pensable *que* si l'on suppose que les deux populations cibles du sexisme et du racisme sont différentes' (Delphy, 2006, p.69), emphasizing that this is not, in fact, the case. The erroneous logic prioritising gender equality demands that the women supposedly oppressed by their religion must leave behind their ethno-religious identity, including their male family and friends, in order to be emancipated. This was implicitly advocated by NPNS (Delphy, 2006, pp.70-71). When seen in these terms, the effective overlap between the racial and the gendered discrimination in such rhetoric is plain. Tissot (2011, p.42) questions the logic behind the punishment of women who are seen to already be alienated. Such legislation does not demonstrate that Muslim women should be welcomed in society as equals. Rather, it keeps the women affected in their racially-defined social milieu and ostracises them from broader society.

Bouteldja has emphasised the necessity of recognising that forcing women to uncover is as damaging as forcing them to cover themselves (Bouteldja, 2004). Similarly, Scott has criticised the rhetoric which condemns Islam for its strict rules regarding relationships prior to marriage. The study by Brouard and Tiberj found that Muslims are indeed substantially less sexually permissive than Catholics or those who cite having no religion (Brouard and Tiberj, 2005, p.89). However, Scott has likened the prevailing rhetoric which demands that Muslim women assume the supposedly French value of total sexual liberation to the *mission civilisatrice* (Scott, 2007, p.162). Indeed, there is surely a limit as to how far the state can intervene in one's private beliefs about sexuality. By pointing out the implications of such a discourse in terms of racial discrimination, the Pragmatist Feminists demonstrate and promote an alternative socio-political discourse for the integration of orthopractic Muslims into the French narrative. To this end, Dorlin has argued for the urgency to 'decolonise' feminism (Dorlin, 2007, cited in Spohn, 2013, p.157). The Pragmatist Feminist discourse necessitates the recognition of potential racism

in any measures proposed to improve gender equality. It is evident that a focus on preventing religious and racial discrimination is vital for improving ethnic minority women's lot as all discriminations interact. The *Mahomet et la République* stance therefore recognises women's right to be welcomed into the Republic without demanding that any racial, ethnic or religious difference is eliminated in order to demonstrate loyalty to the value of gender equality.

Despite their assertions that orthopractic women must not be discriminated against, the Pragmatist Feminists posit that it is nevertheless essential to question the extent of the compatibility of Islam, and religion in general, and feminism (Gaspard, 2006, pp.87-88, 90; Dorlin, 2010, p.435, cited in Spohn, 2013, p.151). This is a central aspect of the work of Asma Lamrabet. In her work entitled *Women in the Qur'an*, Lamrabet posits that it is not the Islamic holy texts in themselves which promote and reinforce the subjugation of women, merely the way in which they have often been interpreted. She argues that, when read literally, the word of God elaborated in the Qur'an frames men and women as equals, but that in:

‘a large number of *interpretive readings* of the Qur'an are found classic patterns of male domination where women are marginalised, even excluded in the name of the sacred. [...] Nothing in the Qur'anic text can justify or support any sort of discrimination against women' (Lamrabet, 2016, pp.3-4, emphasis added).

Lamrabet employs a wide variety of evidence to corroborate these assertions: she gives examples of the misinterpretation or mistranslation of gendered words, and she demonstrates that in the Qur'an there are many cases of women having essential, strong and independent roles and demanding greater rights (Lamrabet, 2016, pp.11, 22, 92-95 for example).

Although Lamrabet criticises the lack of protection of women's rights and even oppression in many interpretations of Islamic holy texts, she nevertheless denounces the assertion that is implicitly proffered by the Universalist Feminists that sexual liberation is a defining criterion of women's emancipation. She is critical of the way in which this Western feminist discourse only allows, and indeed desires, the freedom of women

according to Western norms. Further, she condemns the West's obsession with Islam as a result of the status of women within it. She notes of the West's view of Islam:

'it is no secret that the status of women, such as it is conceived currently in traditionalist and dominant readings of Islam, remains the *obligatory* breach through which a certain Western hegemony continuously seeks to interfere in order to discredit an entire system of thought' (Lamrabet, 2016, p.2).

She suggests, therefore, that many Western feminists are mistaken in their interpretation and homogenisation of Islam. The Western feminist position promoted here by Lamrabet correlates with the position I have identified as Universalist Feminist. Lamrabet goes on to argue that this specific interpretation of feminism enables discrimination against Muslim women as it ignores all other discrimination of women, framing Islam as the only vector of gender discrimination (Lamrabet, 2012, pp.22-24). Lamrabet therefore implies that to better aid the emancipation of women, one must not uniquely target Islam due to the intersectionality of discrimination which would result from this (Lamrabet 2012, p.25). Furthermore, Lamrabet's argumentation suggests that Islam is fully compatible with the feminism promoted by the Pragmatist Feminists. To exclude Islam from the Republic would only reinforce both religious and gendered discrimination. Lamrabet therefore promotes the *Mahomet et la République* outlook.

Despite demanding substantial reforms within Islam to improve women's lot, Lamrabet's ideals are not totally opposed to those of several key Islamic theorists active in France who do not suggest such deep reforms. If we first consider the Liberal European Reformists on the position of women in Islam, it is plain that they overwhelmingly advocate gender equality. Boubakeur (2004, p.30) argues that women have suffered as a result of male dominance and that women must be treated as equals, and Bencheikh (1998, p.116) has defended women's education as the route to their emancipation. When asked whether he recommended that women wear the burkini, Lasfar, a Staunch Defender of Piety and president of the MF which has famously defended Islamic dress codes, stated that 'je ne leur conseille rien du tout, ce n'est pas mon rôle. Si certaines femmes veulent le porter parce que ça leur permet d'être en accord avec leur corps, avec elles-mêmes, je ne les en empêcherai pas'. He went on to defend the burkini, saying the

issue was one related to women's freedom (Lasfar cited in Aballain, 2016). The defense of women's rights by these Islamic theorists contrasts with and undermines the prevailing rhetoric of the Universalist Feminists. Despite much disagreement within the religion with regard to orthopraxy, in the French Islamic milieu there is evidently widespread agreement that women's rights need to be protected. These assertions demonstrate a certain convergence between the desires of French society and those of Islam. This allows the debate to move away from the hysteria, such as that criticised by Lamrabet, which sees Islam as the '[r]eligion de l'oppression des femmes par excellence' (Lamrabet, 2012, p.22).

Those promoting the *Mahomet et la République* discourse therefore acknowledge the evidence that there is a level of compatibility between feminism and Islam. This position suggests that accepting Islam into the nation does not undermine France's own feminist credentials as Islam and Islamic orthopraxy do not necessarily curtail women's liberties and rights. The feminist intervention in debates regarding what is ultimately a religious issue linked to the changing racial landscape of France and the cultural dislocation of the Muslim diaspora implies that neither racial nor gender equality will be reached in France without the acknowledgement of the role that each plays in the other, due to the intersectionality of the discriminations.

A Full Representation of Islam in France

Throughout this work, I have demonstrated the heterogeneity of Islam through the consideration of the views of a broad range of theorists whom I have identified as having particular importance or influence in France. However, the heterogeneity of Islam in France extends even beyond these theorists. Bencheikh has highlighted the advantages of the lack of a rigid clerical hierarchy within Islam, emphasising the benefit of the direct relationship with God that this allows (Bencheikh, 1998, p.119). The importance of individual practice in Islam is demonstrated in the high rates of orthopraxy (see Chapter One). There are a great many ways of interpreting Islam and practicing and developing one's own faith, therefore. This adds to the heterogeneity of the religion and makes

representation more difficult. The French state's search for a sole authority to represent Islam in France is thus arguably a futile one.

The final central aspect of the *Mahomet et la République* position that this study will examine, therefore, is the recognition of the heterogeneity of Islam. Given that, as has been demonstrated above in this chapter, the overwhelming majority of French Muslims desire full acceptance into the French identity, and their views are in line with Republican values, there must, according to the Pro-Diversity Liberals and the Staunch Defenders of Piety, be a full representation of the many interpretations of Islam in order to enable all Muslims to be accepted into the Republic. Plenel is deeply critical of the prevailing state rhetoric which maintains Muslims 'essentialisés en bloc en dépit de leur diversité foncière' (Plenel, 2016, p.12). This is also seen in the denouncements made by the theorists furthering the *Mahomet et la République* position of the restrictive interpretations of *laïcité* that only allow non-orthopractic Muslims to be fully accepted into the Republican narrative that was examined earlier in this chapter and in the previous chapter. Ramdan has been particularly critical of the promotion of variants of Islam sceptical of orthopraxy via the CFCM (Ramadan, 1999, pp.24-26). It has been recognised, therefore, both within and outside of Islam that there is a need to ensure that the multitude of interpretations of Islam are fully represented, including those more defensive of orthopraxy, to enable the full integration of the religion into the national identity and thereby eliminate discrimination.

The CFCM is the organisation that currently represents the Islamic faith to the state and, by extension, to the nation. As was demonstrated in Chapter Three, however, the dominant *Mahomet ou la République* rhetoric has resulted in the promotion of the interpretations of Islam which the government mistakenly sees as being uniquely compatible with the values of the Republic – that of the Liberal European Reformists – through Boubakeur's long-term leadership of the CFCM. The *Conseil* therefore has a major representation problem as it does not represent those Muslims to whom orthopraxy, such as wearing the headscarf, represents an important aspect of their faith. Around 65% of Muslims declare themselves favourable to the headscarf (El Karoui, 2016, p.35), which suggests that the CFCM's minimalist defence of orthopraxy could isolate it

from a substantial proportion of French Muslims. The CFCM has been criticised by imams and other key Islamic theorists: Ramadan has described it as being perpetually broken and crippled by internal tensions (Ramadan cited in Bahri, 2006), and Fouad Alaoui, a former leader of the MF, has stated that it is in 'permanent crisis' (Gemie, 2010, p.101).

Despite the impossibility that French Islam can be represented to the state through a single interlocutor, there is broad support from the Staunch Defenders of Piety for a means of representation of Islam to aid the religion's integration into the French narrative. This is evidenced in their participation in the CFCM, even if they have been deeply critical of the stances the *Conseil* has taken on various issues. These theorists argue therefore that improvement of the current system of representation is sorely needed. Translated into policy, this would perhaps include greater representation of those who do not regularly attend mosques, but most importantly of those who practice a more orthopractic Islam¹. Ahmed Jaballah has posited that greater regional representation would allow an organisation of Islam that better represents the situation on the ground (Jaballah, 2018).

In response to the announcement made by Emmanuel Macron in early 2018 that he planned to reform French Islam, Kamel Kabtane et Azzedine Gaci, imams of the mosques in Lyon and Villeurbanne respectively, have argued that these changes ought not to be dictated by the government. Rather, 'la structure de représentation des musulmans de France, doit émerger d'eux-mêmes, d'en bas, au niveau départemental' (Kabtane and Gaci, cited in *Le Muslim Post*, 2018). This point has also been made by Jaballah (2018), and echoes statements made many years ago by other Islamic theorists: Boubakeur argued that whilst he appreciated the effort of the government in the establishment of the CFCM, it was the duty of French Muslims to continue this work and resolve its own problems in the future (Boubakeur, 2004, p.113). Ramadan went further, suggesting that the government's central role in the organisation of the religion is problematic with regard to *laïcité* (Ramadan cited in Bahri, 2006; see also Ramadan, 2002, pp.219-224). To date, however, both through the organisation of French Islam and

¹ See Hajji and Marteau, 2005, p.79 for more on the exclusion of Muslims who do not attend mosques from representation in the CFCM.

through the legislation it has passed, the French government has failed to promote a discourse that welcomes the full diversity of French Islam, as is demanded by Islamic and non-Islamic intellectuals alike who are striving to enable the development of a peaceful and sustainable relationship between France and its Muslims.

Concluding Remarks

Although the *Mahomet et la République* outlook is certainly far less common in political action and policy than the more exclusionary *Mahomet ou la République* position, it is nonetheless present, and perhaps even gaining strength. It has recently had some influence in political policy with new measures being taken to prevent discrimination such as those proposed by the *Délégation interministérielle à la lutte contre le racisme, l'antisémitisme et la haine anti-LGBT* (DILCRAH; see, for example, DILCRAH, 2018). The theorists supportive of a *Mahomet et la République* outlook recognise the incongruity of furthering a negative, exclusionary discourse while the vast majority of French Muslims share French values including support for *laïcité* and integration with the broader French community. In light of this, the proponents of a *Mahomet et la République* social and political framework recognise the discrimination at work in the status quo, and the continuation of colonialist stereotypes within this discrimination. Rather than framing all orthopraxy as a threat, they differentiate the piety of French Muslims from that of radicalised individuals inspired by or belonging to terrorist organisations. Being of the view that orthopraxy does not, in and of itself, represent a threat to French society, therefore, the Pro-Diversity Liberals demand an interpretation of *laïcité* that is true to the law of 1905, believing that the policy has been deformed in recent years to become increasingly exclusionary. The Pragmatist Feminists have highlighted the crossover between discrimination by race and religion, and that by gender, to demonstrate that the laws which effectively limit female Islamic dress are simultaneously racist and anti-feminist. Anti-discrimination is therefore a central tenet of the *Mahomet et la République* framework. Those promoting this position imply that, at a policy level, the broad range of interpretations of Islam which, I have argued, also promote a *Mahomet et la République* outlook, must be given equal representation in any system of communication between

Islam and the French state and nation. This will enable the *Mahomet et la République* discourse to develop throughout French society, which will ultimately allow for longstanding, peaceful *vivre ensemble* between France and its Muslims, regardless of their orthopraxy.

Conclusions

The subject of the accommodation of Islam in French society has received a high level of media attention and held significant political capital since the late 1980s. It remains a divisive topic within French nation, including among the intellectual and political elite, making it a highly relevant subject to study within French Studies. This thesis sought to analyse the development and consolidation of the two opposing discourses which I have identified (*Mahomet ou la République* and *Mahomet et la République*) and compare them with the views of the French Muslims at the centre of the debates to assess the validity of each discourse.

In this study, I have therefore combined analysis of French intellectual works which consider the question of the integration of Islam in France with a reflection on the socio-political situation. The latter was examined through a consideration of the laws affecting Muslims' ability to practise their faith in France and statistical and interview data concerning the prevalence and importance of orthopraxy amongst French Muslims, their views regarding Republican values, and their attachment to the French nation. This has shed new light on the correlation, or lack thereof, between the prevailing intellectual and political line of action, and the views of French Muslims.

Through the analysis of this range of sources, I have found that the *Mahomet ou la République* line of argument, while greatly varied in its reasoning, effectively dominates the socio-political sphere where it is certainly the status quo in terms of policy, if not always in terms of rhetoric. It is promoted most explicitly by the theorists whom I have grouped together under the label of the Nostalgics, but also implicitly by the Orthopraxy Sceptics and the Universalist Feminists. These theorists argue the existence of various threats in Islam. I have noted that these threats are most commonly perceived in Islamic orthopraxy, which is mistakenly interpreted as a marker of disregard or disrespect for Republican values. As the protection of Republican values has become increasingly stringent in the political sphere and some intellectual domains since the development of neo-Republicanism in the 1980s (Chabal, 2015, pp.7-9), the perception of a fundamental

incompatibility between Islamic and Republican values has grown and, consequently, so has the demand for limitations on religious orthopraxy in order to protect the Republic.

Orthopraxy is considered by the Nostalgics to be eradicating French culture and alienating the non-Muslim, native French population. These theorists fear, therefore, a creeping Islamisation of the French nation. The Orthopraxy Sceptics, by contrast, focus primarily on the threat of violence, politicised Islam and jihadi extremism. By linking this to orthopraxy, they blur the lines between radicalism and the moderate practice of many French Muslims. Accusations of the politicisation of Islam are often made against Islamic theorists, such as the Staunch Defenders of Piety, who promote more devout interpretations of Islam. Arguments, such as these, that Islam can represent a tangible threat to the nation have been reflected in the political sphere and used to justify criticisms of orthopractic Islam and the limitation of it.

I have also demonstrated that the dress-related norms within Islam, which typically affect women considerably more often than men, are often regarded as a sign of the oppression of women. The presence of female Islamic dress in France is therefore considered by the Universalist Feminists as an affront to gender equality. As a result of the rise of neo-Republicanism and, later, the parity movement (Lépinard, 2007, pp.388-392), gender equality appears to be regularly considered as a Republican value which warrants protection from perceived threats.

Restrictions on Islamic orthopraxy evidently hold, therefore, a great deal of political capital as they are framed in terms of protecting values which are now regularly seen as cornerstones of Republicanism. This has enabled the *Mahomet ou la République* discourse to become the status quo. That limitations on Islamic orthopraxy, perceived to be the outward sign of a threat to the nation, are seen as legitimate and necessary by powerful sections of the political and intellectual elite, as well as the broader French population, arguably demonstrates to French Muslims that they must choose between their faith and full access to the Republic.

On a deeper level, as Islamic orthopraxy is considered a sign of disregard for French values, it is seen to imply a lack of integration into the Republican project. This, in turn, suggests that Republican and Islamic identities are presumed to be unable to

coexist. The application of limitations on Islamic orthopraxy is therefore also seen as a means of enforcing the prioritisation of Republican values among those who, being orthopractic, are thought to be respecting Islamic values over Republican values. Those who are presumed to be sufficiently Republican as they are not orthopractic are expected to be unaffected by these laws. The assumption that a strong Islamic identity, evident in orthopraxy, precludes respect for Republican values is arguably misguided. I have reasoned, using poll and interview data collected by other theorists in the field, that French Muslims, for the vast majority, hold very similar views to those of the broader French population with regard to values such as *laïcité*, and integration into the rest of the population. This is evidence that the overwhelming majority of French Muslims do not pose a threat to French values.

I have proposed that the contemporary prejudice against French Muslims originated in colonial stereotypes which have perpetuated to the present day. Since the 1980s, the framework of discrimination has shifted from the racial to the cultural (Deltombe, 2007, pp.10, 47-51, 59-76), with the latter form being boosted by increasingly identitarian interpretations of Republican values and demand for their protection. Muslims in France, therefore, have been continuously discriminated against from the 19th to the 21st century.

The alternative, yet intellectually overshadowed and politically weak, *Mahomet et la République* discourse places great emphasis on the elimination of discrimination. This outlook is promoted by the Pro-Diversity Liberals, the Pragmatist Feminists, the Staunch Defenders of Piety and the Liberal European Reformists. The Pro-Diversity Liberal theorists have argued that in order to supposedly protect the nation from the threats perceived in Islam, *laïcité* has been deformed from its true, original meaning and application. This suggests that there is a level of state-fostered discrimination against Islam at work in the political status quo. The Pragmatist Feminists meanwhile, argue that the limitations on Islamic orthopraxy, through their racial specificity, are also ultimately anti-feminist as they apply to those already affected by a combination of discriminations by gender, race and culture as Muslim women often of African descent.

I have demonstrated that, consequently, a further central aspect of the *Mahomet et la République* outlook is the recognition of the heterogeneity of Islam in France, which is advocated by Muslim and non-Muslim theorists alike. The defence of Republican values has so far led to the privileging of only the Islamic theorists that the intellectual and political elite consider to be acting within the confines of Republicanism. It is therefore the Islamic theorists who are most critical of orthopraxy who are favoured by theorists effectively promoting the *Mahomet ou la République* perspective such as Kepel and Djavann, as well as the government. This dynamic further asserts that not all interpretations of Islam are welcome in the Republic.

I argue that the negative interpretations of orthopractic Islam elaborated through the *Mahomet ou la République* framework foster the development of an accusatory and antagonistic relationship between Muslims and the broader population and political elite in France. It is, however, based upon a biased interpretation of Islamic orthopraxy, not the views of the majority of French Muslims. The anti-discrimination focus of the *Mahomet et la République* position and its proximity to the views of French Muslims suggests it has the potential to construct a more peaceful and sustainable *vivre ensemble* between France and its Muslims.

A key contribution this study makes to the field is its comparison of voices rarely, if ever compared before. The broad range of theorists included in the typology and discussion chapters of this work goes beyond that included in existing literature which, in particular, rather tends not to consider the views of the more orthopractic theorists. Moreover, I have combined the various views and lines of argumentation of the intellectuals with the theory of the development of neo-Republicanism in order to consider the theorists' interventions in the present debate relative to the expansion and consolidation of neo-Republicanism. This has enabled a more thorough analysis of the intellectual discourse relating to the integration of Islamic orthopraxy into the French Republican identity and the perceived problems thereof in the contemporary context. Furthermore, the focus of this study on orthopraxy goes significantly beyond that of existing works. Given the legal restrictions on Islamic orthopraxy, this means that the

present study has practical implications for political theory and opens the way to further study to refine these implications.

As regards further research, this study could be expanded upon through the collection of new poll data specific to the study. This would allow comparison with the data sets collected by the *Institut Montaigne*, Beaman and Brouard and Tiberj to plot the development of French Muslims' attitudes towards orthopraxy, integration and French national values, and potentially uncover new trends. French laws limiting the collection of data regarding ethnicity and religion render the gathering of such data difficult, however.

The present study certainly demonstrates the development and consolidation of the oppositional *Mahomet ou la République* and *Mahomet et la République* discourses in the political and intellectual spheres, and that the dominant *Mahomet ou la République* framework cannot be leading towards a peaceful relationship between France and its Muslim population. However, owing to the constraints of length, the study has not examined the nature of the link between political policy and the views of French Muslims, nor the link between intellectual discourse, public opinion and political policy. It is therefore beyond the scope of this study to make specific policy recommendations. Further research to determine the extent of these links could demonstrate how best to promote the *Mahomet et la République* position and reduce discrimination against religious and ethnic minorities.

Another area where further study is necessary to determine the potential policy implications is the centrality of anti-racism in the feminist movement and vice versa. I found this to be a central aspect of the *Mahomet et la République* position. Due to the intersectionality of discriminations Muslim women face in France, and that it is they who are primarily affected by laws which effectively curtail religious orthopraxy, Muslim women are in a rather unique position in France. Further research, likely through interviews and surveys of French Muslim women, would produce theory on how to reduce the discriminations they might face.

In this study I have also contended that a fundamental barrier to the acceptance of orthopractic Islam in France is the line of argument, first elaborated by the Universalist Feminists but which has certainly spread beyond this group to sections of the political

elite and the public, which implies that France's feminist credentials are undermined by the presence of Islamic orthopraxy. It appears that this will remain a barrier to the promotion of the *Mahomet et la République* intellectual discourse and political framework unless it is accepted that participation in women's sexual liberation is not a prerequisite for general emancipation. This surely raises the question of how to bring about this shift in opinion.

I began this study by noting the deep-rooted perception among certain sections of the intellectual and political elite and broader population of a clash between Islamic and Republican values. Looking now towards the future, the scenario wherein the *Mahomet et la République* outlook becomes the prevalent narrative does not appear altogether impossible. Since the recent spate of terrorism, there has arguably been remarkably little backlash against the French Muslim community, despite extremist violence having been deeply feared for decades. Thanks to works by journalists, academics, such as Jean-Pierre Filieu, and organisations combatting Islamophobia, such as the CCIF, there is increasing understanding that Islam does not, in itself, pose a threat to the West. On the other hand, Emmanuel Macron's proposals for an overhaul of the organisation of French Islam could, however, pose a barrier to the continuation of this shift. Indeed, considering Macron's likely proximity to Hakim El Karoui in this project (Chambraud, 2018, *Le JDD*, 2018b), it seems doubtful that there will be a positive change in political rhetoric regarding orthopraxy. El Karoui is the author of the 2016 report produced by the *Institut Montaigne* which suggests that a large proportion of Muslims are 'problematic' for the nation. A further two reports by El Karoui have since been published, one of which is on the subject of the spread of 'islamisme' and dangerously links Islamic orthopraxy with Wahhabism and the Muslim Brotherhood (El Karoui, 2018, p.6). The report has been condemned by various Islamic leaders (LCI, 2018; AFP, 2018). This surely does not bode well for the future considering a central argument of those of the *Mahomet et la République* position: acceptance and representation of the broad variety of interpretations of Islam is essential for the elimination of discrimination, and to develop a harmonious and peaceful relationship between France and its Muslims.

Appendix



‘BFM Story : Ceux qui ne sont pas Charlie’ (BFMTV, 2015).

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