The French policy of immigrant integration - return to laïcité

Xuedan YAO*

Abstract

After the 2015 European refugee crisis, immigrant integration has reemerged as a pressing issue endangering France's social and political stability. France is one of the main asylum host countries in Europe. In the past few years, terrorist attacks have become more frequent in France, and the spread of xenophobia has led to a social crisis that threatens the country's national security. It has prompted France to consider returning to Laïcité in response to this situation. So the purpose of this paper is to analyze France's immigrant integration policy in 2020 and reveal the discourse of Laïcité and republican values in France.

Keywords: Secularism, French Muslims, Immigrant integration

Introduction

After the 2015 European migrant crisis, France has become one of the most important asylum host countries and has taken in many migrants from Islamic countries, including Afghanistan, Sudan, and Syria, making up around 5.7 million Muslims (8.8 percent of the French population) (Pew Research Center, 2017). With the growing numbers of Muslim immigrants in France, the conflict between secularism and Islam, or multiculturalism, is becoming more evident. Furthermore, the rise of Islamophobia in the country has exacerbated confrontations, especially in light of the country's recurring attacks by Islamic terrorists. Anti-Islam sentiment has contributed to a stronger identity with Islam among Muslim immigrants (Kaya, 2021, p.213). To accomplish this, France promotes a return to Laïcitéin order to strengthen French cohesion.

What is Laïcité?

Laïcité, also known as secularism, provides a place for a secularism state to be religiously neutral. Secularism (Lacité) separated the Republic from religion, making room for religious plurality

---

* Xuedan Yao is a graduate student at the Academy of International and Regional Studies in Beijing Language and Culture University, Beijing, China, e-mail: cynthiayao1019@gmail.com.

and supporting religious freedom (Jansen, 2006). The goal is to provide a place for a Secularism state to be religiously neutral, to guarantee that state power does not take a position on religion and instead maintains a "hands-off" approach toward religion in the realm of "individual conduct." Thus, secularism has been viewed as a place where the government does not take a position on religion. Consequently, secularism is also utilized to guarantee freedom of conscience, defend the right to believe or not believe, and guarantee that everyone can peacefully and freely express and practice their views without endangering others (Gunn, 2004, p.475).

Based on the Law of 1905, this principle calls for secularism that respects freedom of religious belief. Nevertheless, even though secularism appears in several relevant social and legal practices to find its way into the text, its meaning remains ambiguous (Sajó, 2008, p.616). This is also true in France, where the meaning of secularism still remains ambiguous.

Discourse in policy analysis

Recent years have seen a great deal of interest in new forms of discourse analysis. Discourse theorists have drawn on the work of Foucault, Derrida, Lacan, and Žižek to emphasize both the contingent and historical nature of objectivity as well as its relationship to politics and power (Jason, 2009, p.7).

An important component of integrating discourse analysis and political science in policy analysis. The term policy can generally be defined as a "policy statement," "policy release," or "policy initiative." Such a policy is intended to outline an exemplary position, with the language chosen primarily to attract or persuade. It rarely invites or accepts rebuttals, especially when taking a stance with high ethical standards. But public policy and analysis regularly adopt "polar words" and then make judgments based on elements of dualism that appear to have importance. (Gasper and Apthorpe, 1996, p.7) For example, Lazar Annita analyzes President Bush's speeches since 11 September through an intertextual analysis. Rather than distinguish between these different kinds and degrees of threat, she believes that dualism accommodates the fudging between them, constituting a largely undifferentiated enemy. What's more, binarism further makes it possible to sketch a clear, simple, and unidimensional picture of 'them' and 'us' by strategically omitting words (Lazar Annita, 2004, p. 239).

Discourse analysis has dramatically changed the way policy-making is analyzed. We tend to give more weight to what the story itself has to say rather than what can be inferred from the "coding" of the story in discourse analysis. In policy analysis, the stories themselves are considered more

important than what can be inferred from the "coding" of the stories. (Hajer, 2004, p.62) Foucault posits that government rules are not defined by traditional notions of sovereignty, the rule of law, and political dominance, which are themselves integral parts of a universal discourse of the state, but rather by the rules of knowledge and power that govern the practice of government. Institutions and academic disciplines are governed by norms of behavior, roles, structures, and hierarchies. The phenomenon of social construction is considered real in discourse. (Hewitt, 2009, p.6) Murray Edelman refers to Foucault's analysis of madness, crime, and sexuality to "trace changes in discourse that constitute a problem." In his view, problems are rarely solved, except when they are sometimes removed from common discourse or discussed in different legal, social, or political terms as though they were different problems. (Bacchi, 2010, p.48)

Numerous excellent papers have been published exploring the relationship and contradiction between secularism and religious freedom in France (Jean, 2003) and the factors that influence the integration of Muslim immigrants in France (Adida, 2010). Despite this, only a few studies exist in the field that examines French policies of migrant integration during Macron's presidency. So the purpose of this paper is to take into account policy discourse theory to contextualize and explain these events, focusing primarily on the return of secularism and the requirement that Muslims must embrace republican values in France in 2020, as well as to analyze Emmanuel Macron's anti-Islamic separatist speech.

1. Macron's approach toward Muslim immigrants has shifted

Macron founded La République En Marche (Republican Forward) in early 2016, positioning it as a moderate emerging party to meet the demands of the French people at the moment. La République En Marche surged to prominence in just two years and achieved unprecedented electoral success. In 2017, Macron and his party adopted relatively liberal immigration and economic growth policies (Floren, 2017, p.304). In contrast, Marine Le Pen, who has been President of the National Rally, is a vehemently anti-immigrant candidate. She has proclaimed her commitment to more robust border controls and resistance to dual nationality (Berdiyev and Can, 2022, p. 6). Ultimately, Macron and his party won the French presidential election, defeating France's conventional left and right-wing parties.

However, Macron did not follow through on his promise to embrace liberal policies. The murder of Samuel Party by an 18-year-old pupil in October 2020, followed by the violent murder of a French citizen in a Nice church, resulted in a considerable shift to the right in attitude against

Muslim immigrants in France. These two heinous acts of religious extremism have shattered France's social stability. Macron has shown his willingness to fight against religious extremism by advocating for anti-religious separatist legislation to enhance state secularism and protect republican values ((Minister of the Interior, 2020). After weeks of heated discussion, French Muslim leaders backed a "Charter of Republican Values," also known as "Charte des principes pour l'islam de France" on 18 January 2021. Subsequently, the French Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM) that will train imams preaching in the country was created. And French anti-separatism strategy has therefore reached a watershed moment.

2. Return to secularism: reasons and background

France returns to secularism due to the intensification of social tensions in France today. The prevalence of Islamic terror and the spread of Islamophobia in society have led France to seek to reinforce republican values to glue French society. France has made it clear that it aims to reinforce French society's cohesiveness by sticking to French secularism and republican values and combating religious fanaticism.

2.1. The Rise of refugees and terrorist attacks

The Arab Spring resulted in political upheaval, economic collapse, and population relocation in the Middle East. As a result of its proximity to the Middle East, Europe has emerged as one of the destinations for Middle Eastern and African refugees seeking asylum. According to Eurostat, asylum applicants in EU member states peaked in 2015, with 1,326,000 people seeking asylum. Since 2014, the number of first-time asylum applicants in France has increased every year, reaching a high of 138,000 overall applications in 2019. Due to the pandemic, the number of first-time asylum applicants in the EU declined in 2021. France placed third with 81,800 first-time asylum applicants, representing 20% of the overall number of first-time asylum applicants (Eurostat, 2021).

During the early phase of the European migration crisis, France saw a high rate of terrorist incidents. The influx of migrants seeking asylum in France in 2015 was incompatible with the ideas and lifestyle of French culture, resulting in a series of collisions and a more radical refugee feeling at the time. In 2015, there were 36 terrorist acts in France, with the Paris attacks in November being the deadliest and most injured. The number of terrorist incidents in France dropped after adapting from

2017 to 2020. However, terrorist assaults in France continued in 2020, including the beheading of a teacher, which was a horrible atrocity.

Because Islam is the most common religion among asylum applicants, the enormous number of migrants threaten France's national security. Islamic extremism and Muslim assimilation have emerged as a pressing concern for French society. To combat the spread of extreme terrorist attacks and Islamophobia in France, France hopes to promote France's secular principles in order to resist the growth of Islamic radicalism, thereby promoting the social integration of French Muslim refugees, in addition to taking necessary measures with the European Union to deal with the refugee crisis.

2.2. The facilitation of distribution channels enables the spread of religious extremist ideology

Religious extremists have endangered the security of society with their ruthless techniques in recent terrorist incidents. According to Macron's speech, the problem of religious extremism in France is due to "Islamic separatism," which has caused French society to stray from republican norms and undermine the lawful order. (Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, 2020) So would reinforce secularism based on the "The Law of 1905" and develop a bill to combat "Islamic separatism" in the country because the Islamic extremist organizations have strayed dramatically from French republican values and are incompatible with France's national identity.

Additionally, the emergence of media such as the Internet has facilitated the spread of extremist religious ideas. Social media, such as Youtube and Twitter, are used by terrorist groups to spread extremist ideas and recruit members. There are already several terrorist groups making use of new media and messaging tools, hoping to appeal to believers and recruit new members by spreading extremist ideas (Scrivens and Conway, 2020, p. 305).

France is concerned about Islamic extremists' ability to polarise the thinking and conduct of French Muslims, particularly the younger generation. In addition, France is a modern country founded on the separation of religion and state. Fundamentalists who promote "orthodoxy" and a return to Islamic religious traditions will undoubtedly significantly influence the secular principle. Radical Islamist groups promote separatism and extremist ideas, and their influence enters French society through refugees and immigrants, jeopardizing France's national security and social stability. If religious extremism is not combated, violent clashes between religion and secular politics will undoubtedly arise, causing instability and a severe threat to national security.

As a result, the French National Assembly enacted a bill on 16 February 2021 to "strengthen respect for the Republican values." The Republican Values, or French Republican Tradition, are

encapsulated in the French motto of liberty, equality, and fraternity. As a legacy of the French Revolution, Republicans establish collective sovereignty and representative powers. (Cohen-Almagor, 2022, p.9) In the aftermath of the Revolution, republicanism gained popularity as its advocates argued for strong egalitarian, anti-clerical (laïque), and opposed monarchy. These values have become part of the republican values of France today (Hollifield, 2010, p.3).

2.3. Domestic disputes have erupted as a result of the development of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim attitudes

France is a historically Catholic country, with 37.94 million Catholics making up about 58 percent of the population. However, following several large waves of Muslim immigration from the Middle East, Islam has become France's second most common religion. According to the Pew Research Center, there were 5.7 million Muslims in France in mid-2016, accounting for 8.8% of the population, making it the country with the highest Muslim population in Europe. In the future, the number of Muslims in Europe might more than double to 11.2 percent or more by 2050 as a result of increased Muslim immigration seeking asylum and education (Pew Research Center, 2017). Muslims' social integration has become a more important political and social issue in France as the country's Muslim population has grown.

At the same time, because of a rise in terrorist assaults in France, Islamophobia in French society has grown since the Charlie Hebdo shooting. Despite academic cautions against indiscriminate Islamophobia, stigmatization of Muslim immigrants has increased in France since 2015 (Mondon and Winter, 2017).

In France, on the other hand, there has been a continuous increase in violence against Muslims. According to the French Ministry of the Interior, anti-Muslim incidents increased by over 54% in 2019 compared to 100 in 2018. Most of these actions involved incursions on the religious property (Minister of the Interior, 2020). Anti-Muslim assaults are on the rise, despite being statistically less common than anti-Jewish (687) and anti-Christian (1,052) attacks. According to the French Council of the Muslim Faith's (CFCM) annual report for 2020, there will be a 53 percent rise in attacks and anti-Muslim activities in 2020 compared to 2019, i.e., 235 events, with three-quarters of these being "threats" (CFCM, 2021). The rise of it indicates that the growing number of Muslims, Islamists' religious behavior in public (shared space), and the visible nature of Islam contradict the secular values in France that regard religion as a "private activity," which has led to a rise in anti-Muslim sentiment. This has sparked widespread fear that Islamic culture may erode French values in France

and abroad. The "mutually reinforcing" rise in Islamic terrorist attacks and anti-Muslim violence in France is a sign of the country's rising societal tensions brought on by religious extremism.

3. The political and cultural significance of laïcité

France is the only country in Europe that declares secularism as the foundation of its national identity, and secular values have long been ingrained in French culture. Secularism in the French Republic means that all French citizens have the freedom to practice the religion of their choice and the space not to practice any religion, as long as it is based on maintaining social order and compliance with the Law. For France, secularism is a manner of expressing the principle of the state's neutrality concerning religious belief. Still, it does not imply the total eradication of religion from society and the public arena.

3.1. Historical origin of Lacité

French society has traditionally stressed that only through respecting universal human equality and rationality can people of various races, ethnicities, languages, and faiths live together in harmony in the same community, as influenced by the Enlightenment and the French Revolution of 1789. Rousseau, an Enlightenment thinker, advocated that the monarch acknowledge only the state as a whole without distinguishing between any of the state's components. This indicates that under a secularist state and society, national identity is established by each individual's citizenship, and no differentiation between ethnicities, faiths, or other peculiarities exists or should exist. Secularism arose from the French Enlightenment's anti-clericalism, which liberated the person from enslavement and led to the foundation and prosperity of the modern French state (Daly, 2012, p.584). The secular, non-religious nature of the French national identity was revealed because the French Republic was formed on an anti-clericalism foundation.

The legislative embodiment of this was the Law of 1905 on the Separation of the Church and State (la loi sur la séparation de l'Église et de l'État). Secularism is a constitutional idea that separates political authority from religion from the standpoint of the legal system. The Republic's laws retain a "hands-off" approach to religion, ensuring that religious activities and manifestations are protected as long as they respect public order and authority. To put it another way, the secularism administration values religious freedom. The secular Republic ensures religious plurality by guaranteeing freedom of opinion and religion.

According to the official interpretation of the French government (French Government, 2015), secularism consists of the following four aspects: first, it guarantees freedom of conscience, the freedom to express one's convictions or beliefs based on respect for public order; second, it guarantees believers and non-believers the same right to freedom of expression of their beliefs or convictions, and it ensures that citizens have the freedom to believe or not to believe in a religion and the right to change and renounce their religious beliefs; third, implies the separation of the state and religious organizations; and fourth, it is not an opinion among others but the freedom to have one. It is not a belief but the principle that authorizes them all, subject to the respect of public order. In conclusion, the present French government's definition of secularism is to respect people's right to religious freedom while guaranteeing the state's neutrality toward religion; and the basis of citizens' freedom of religious belief is to protect public order.

3.2. The specific content of the principle of the French Republic

The national motto of the French Republic is liberty, equality, and fraternity (Liberté, égalité, fraternité) according to the French Republic's Constitution. The present Constitution of the Fifth Republic defines the content of the Republic's principles, stating that "France is an indivisible, secular, democratic, and social republic." These four principles constitute the French Constitution's first solemn proclamation and sum up the four foundations of the Republic's principles. The "secular Republic" is based on religious freedom and equality principles before the Law. Only the separation of church and state allows this to be achieved. As a result, no religion is given special treatment in the Republic, and everyone can express their beliefs and views. Secularism is the cornerstone of a harmonious society and the coagulant of the French Republic, as well as one of the essential foundations for the Republic's preservation and the shared value framework of the French national identity.

The major immigration model in France is the "Republican model of integration." This model is based on republican, secular, and equal citizenship values. As a result, being a French citizen necessitates identification with French republican principles. Furthermore, this model is founded on Rousseau's national idea of citizenship, which rejects the use of specific factors (such as ethnicity, race, or religion) to designate and classify people as distinct groups. So it means that everyone is treated equally. (Oberti, 2008, p.57) So secularism has long permeated all French culture and political elements, and it has served as an important basis for both the French national value system and the French Republic.

3.3. The ambiguous space of secularism's neutrality principle

However, in terms of particular definition, connotation, and scale of implementation, the concept of secularism's neutrality has been more contentious in actual policy implementation. Public opinion and left-wing forces have criticized Macron's government for adopting a series of policies in recent years to combat religious extremism and strengthen public power (state power) to restrict and interfere with religious behavior, particularly the Muslim headscarf, which has completely deviated from the principle of secularism's original connotation of state neutrality only. However, Secularization is evolving from a process to a movement, and it is now a dominant reality that has demolished secular illusions (Baubérot, 2003, p.458). Secularism was formed and defined in reaction to political requirements rather than having a solid and well-developed theoretical base(Daly, 2012). As a result, secularism is a notion with a lot of leeways. That leeway allows it to be exploited to support the policies of those in power (especially those related to religious beliefs).

According to Jean Baubérot, a leading French specialist on secularism, the year 2003 marked a turning point in the idea of secularism in France. Since then, the principles of secularism in force have been known as "neo-secularism." Jean-Pierre Raffarin, the French Prime Minister at the time, commissioned a report titled "Pour une nouvelle lacité" (For a New Secularism). The report, according to Jean-Bobrot, deviates from the principle of liberal secularism developed from the Law of 1905. Unlike the 1905 secular law, "neo-secularism" was designed to be anti-Islam rather than anti-clerical. In truth, it is a reflection of the globalization-induced fear of Islam. The concept of "neo-secularism" broadens the meaning of the principle of religious neutrality, which was established in the Law of 1905 limit religious activity in public spaces. This has created a dispute about whether modern secularism wants to preserve the principle of official neutrality toward religion as well as the fundamental right to religious liberty. However, public opinion and left-wing groups have criticized the French secularism-based scarf ban, which has been in place since 2004, for violating this definition, resulting in not only a further blurring of the principle of secularism's neutrality. But also, opponents claim, an overemphasis on secularism is a violation of individual religious freedom, a desecration of the French liberal tradition, and a contribution to Islamophobia in France. On the other hand, the present secularism policy of the French government meets its goals of imposing national integration and solidifying republican values and identity. The ambiguity of its neutrality principle allows for some flexibility in the execution of its religious policy. The historical heritage of secularism has rendered a sizable portion of the French public sensitive to religious speech and practice. As a result, French culture has reacted strongly to the blatant religious conduct and

expression of French Muslims in "public space." For the French government and supporters, secularism does not imply that the government is anti-religious; it is built on the idea of preserving a certain level of religious freedom. Secularism does not mean that the French government is anti-religious; instead, it is built on maintaining a certain level of religious liberty, separating the state from religion, and ensuring its neutrality toward religion (Minister of the Interior, 2020).

In conclusion, secularism has penetrated all aspects of France, which is why secularism's historical and practical significance has been emphasized several times in the 2020 policy reform. Additionally, French Muslims have become more active in the public space, resulting in a problem with identity for some French citizens. It has become the discourse about the potential Islamization and Islamization of the French state through this segment of the population. As the debate on the "identity crisis" goes on, the topic of Lacité is resurfacing. (Firmonasari, 2020, p.146) Former French president Hollande mobilized French citizens through the Republic. Hollande implemented a perpetuation strategy by basing the shared purpose of the national self on the traditional Republican model, with its stress on the state, a Republican education system, and secularism. He emphasized the fighting and unyielding spirit of the French Republic's national identity in the significant historical context of the French Revolution. As Hollande used the core elements of French republicanism as weapons against the terrorists, this discursive approach further empowered the Republic. (Bogain, 2018, pp.13-15) The integration policy in Macron's presidency is similar to Hollande's. France claims secularism is a cornerstone of the Republican values and that the bill is justified by the Law of 1905. And it strongly emphasizes secularism and republican values in its strategy to counter religious extremism. It demonstrates France's direction in increasing the legitimacy of immigrant integration through secularism.

4. Initiatives to promote social stability and development in France

Returning to secularism is meant to mend the schisms developed in French society, strengthening the French Republic's foundation. However, in terms of religion, the French integration policy appears to be more iron-fisted and hard-line, with a propensity to prioritize individual interests over collective assimilation goals. According to the French parties' governing ideology, living together in a community necessitates agreement on essential principles. Even though France's ruling parties have shifted over time, the notion of the general interest of the public space over the individual's interest and variety, which is the policy manifestation of French secularism, has remained constant (Webster, 2007, p. 5)

The French government explicitly establishes appropriate constraints on religious activity within schools - the institutions that educate future citizens - in locations of public education. In addition, encouraging the integration of French Muslim society requires addressing the problem of how to deal with the assimilation of French Muslims. Since Macron's presidency, France's immigration policy has been reformed to make it a requirement for newly naturalized French citizens to identify with the country's republican values to integrate into French society fully. Schools are at the core of returning to secularism policy. They are where future French citizens are taught to be educated to develop educated French citizens who have a strong sense of patriotism and can choose their destiny. Secularism was an indelible characteristic of French republican identity throughout the Third Republic, and it played a memorable part in the development of the French nation-state. The French government standardized the curriculum of public schools during the Third Republic's secular Revolution to create "secular" citizens (Kılınç, 2020). The republicans of the period were serious about education. At the time, Republicans were dedicated to producing "republic lovers" to reinforce the Republic's basis by pushing a "free, compulsory, and secular" national education. The contemporary French civic and moral education, which emphasizes the classroom as a vehicle for republican principles, received this characteristic from the Third Republic. On this battlefield, the public school is also employed as a battleground against the forces that threaten France, with the teacher serving as the "embodiment of the Republic." (Wesselhoeft, 2017, p.626)

France believes that pupils acquire republican ideals at school rather than religious values, so he supports secular education. Furthermore, being a public place shared by pupils from many backgrounds, the insistence on secular schools is also a defense of the majority's general interest. Secular education in France began in the second half of the nineteenth century when the government formally took back control of educational policy from the church. In 1905, the formal separation of church and state reinforced educational secularism, and unified secular education was the primary way to prepare a new generation of citizens (Freedman, 2004, p. 10). The Fifth Republic's current Constitution declares that "For children and adults, the state ensures equitable access to education, culture, and vocational training. The state is responsible for organizing free and secular public education at all levels." However, the initial goal of secular education in schools was to ensure students' freedom of thought. It is stressed that schools should create a neutral and peaceful environment for civic education.

As can be observed, the strategy of secularising education is similar to the past policy, but it broadens its scope. The French Parliament agreed in early April 2021 to change the anti-secession statute to make it illegal for Muslim females under the age of 18 to wear the headscarf in public.

Furthermore, the amendment expressly forbids parents from wearing religious attire on school excursions and functions with their children (WSWS, 2021). The French government insists that the concept of secularism in schools prohibits religious items from being worn in classrooms. The Muslim headscarf has been a source of contention in France since 1989. Still, it was not until 2004 that the scarf was officially banned, requiring Muslim girls in France to refrain from wearing it in public, such as in schools. In 2010, the Sarkozy government banned the veil and all other face-covering clothing in public, citing anti-terrorism measures.

However, the French scarf ban policy is divisive because France has become a multi-ethnic society, and immigration has made the country increasingly religiously diverse. In reality, the increase of the 2010 scarf ban's limits goes against secularism's heritage since the ban allows no place for public expression of differences or tolerance for the subjective beliefs of women who wear the headscarf (Hunter-Henin, 2012, p.628). According to left-wing organizations, implementing the French scarf ban has resulted in the infringement and interference of liberties rights. Furthermore, post-2015 secularist narrative education has been securitized, and secular education does not disguise the reality that its primary focus is Islamic radicalization (Peker, 2020).

Conclusions

In France, where most of the population believes in secularism, most of them consider secularism to be a liberal concept that emphasizes religious freedom, equality between religions, and the separation of religion from politics. (Baubérot, 2010, p.62) However, due to the ambiguity of the principle of secularist neutrality and the overly rigid attitude toward immigrants, left-wing forces and some international opinion have criticized French policy as hostile to Islam and in violation of the French principle of religious freedom. France adopted a strong position throughout the Charter of Republican Values development, leaving no space for dialogue with local French Muslims.

The contradiction between French multiculturalism or Islam and secularism has a long history. France banned the use of conspicuous religious symbols in public schools as early as 2004 by banning the hijab. Although the ban was considered an effort to defend the secularism of French public schools, it also caused some female students to drop out of school due to the rigorous constraints put on them (Abdelgadir, 2020).

It is clear that Muslims are portrayed in French policy discourse as a threat to secularist values and the security of French society. This exacerbates the problem of stigmatization of Muslims and hurts immigrant integration policies. As a symbol of the French "common purpose," secularism can

be regarded as a unifying element. The concept is used as a symbol of humanity and civilization as well as a means of countering the imagined emergence of Islam. Consequently, secularism unifies populist identity structures and anti-Muslim discourse into a single political identity. (Nilsson, 2015, p. 13-14) On the other hand, the shadow cast by French secularism over French Muslims provides insight into the limitations of the concept of civility. Secular republicans criticized Islamic civil obedience to clear norms and "right" behavior, inadvertently putting the dominant idea of individual autonomy into question. In the past, Laïcité has been associated with a form of government, alongside practices, discourses, and institutions meant to create specific types of social and ethical values. (Fernando, 2010, p. 30)

France should refrain from taking an overly assertive stance on religious matters to maintain a balance between religious freedom and secularism. First, the multi-ethnic trend in France has become irreversible, and over-intensifying the disagreement between religion and secularism would instead contribute to further separating Muslims from French society. Secondly, France has repeatedly asserted its support for religious freedom in the current bill; however, in practice, the policies, such as the ban on scarves in schools, have already deviated from this principle. Lastly, the survey indicates that the most significant determinant of Muslims' integration into French society is not what most people consider to be a religious factor. It has been identified that disparities in ethnic identity are a critical component of immigrants' integration (for example, French citizenship, French birth, and fluency in French). (Maxwell, 2014). The French government must continue to take steps in this direction.

References

Abdelgadir, A., and Fouka, V. (2020), Political Secularism and Muslim Integration in the West: Assessing the Effects of the French Headscarf Ban, *American Political Science Review*, 114 (3), pp. 707–723.

Adida, C. L., Laitin, D. D., and Valfort, M. A. (2010), Identifying barriers to Muslim integration in France. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 107(52).

Mondon, A. and Winter, A. (2017), Articulations of Islamophobia: from the extreme to the mainstream, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 40(13), pp. 2151-2179.

Bacchi, C. (2000), Policy as discourse: What does it mean? Where does it get us?. *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education*, 21(1), pp. 45-57.

Baubérot, J. (2003), Secularism and French Religious Liberty: A Sociological and Historical View, *BYU Law Review*, 2003 (2), pp. 451.

Baubérot, J. (2010), The Evolution of Secularism in France: Between Two Civil Religions. in: Cady, L.E., Hurd, E.S. (eds.), *Comparative Secularisms in a Global Age*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 57-68.

Berdiyev, A. and Can, N. (2022), The revival of nationalism in Europe and the immigration challenges in France, *International Migration*, (00), pp. 1–13.

Bogain, A. (2018), Terrorism and the discursive construction of national identity in France, *National Identities*, pp. 1-25.

Cohen-Almagor, R. (2022), *The Republic, Secularism and Security: France versus the Burqa and the Niqab*, German: Springer.

Conseil français du culte musulman (the French Council for the Muslim Faith, CFCM) (2021), *Observatoire National de Lutte contre l'Islamophobie*, (retrieved from https://www.cfcm-officiel.fr/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/28-01-2021-BILAN-ACTES-ANTIMUSULMANS-ANNEE-2020.pdf).

Daly, E. (2012), The Ambiguous Reach of Constitutional Secularism in Republican France: Revisiting the Idea of Laïcité and Political Liberalism as Alternatives, *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, 32 (3), pp. 583-608.

Gasper, D. and Apthorpe, R. (1996), Introduction: Discourse analysis and policy discourse, *The European Journal of Development Research*, 8(1), pp. 1-15.

Edelman, M. (1988), *Constructing the political spectacle*. University of Chicago Press.

Eurostat (2021), *First-time asylum applicants down by a third in 2020*, 24 March (retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/ddn-20210324-1?redirect=%2Feurostat%2Fweb%2Fasylum-and-managed-migration%2Fpublications).

Fernando, M. L. (2010), Reconfiguring freedom: Muslim piety and the limits of secular Law and public discourse in France, *American ethnologist*, 37(1), pp.19-35.

Firmonasari, A., Udasmoro, W., and Mastoyo, Y. T. (2020), Understanding Secularism and National Identity in French Political Discourses, *Humaniora*, 32(2), pp.135-150.

Freedman, J. (2004), Secularism as a Barrier to Integration? The French Dilemma, *International Migration,* 42 (3), pp.5-27.

French Government (2015), *Qu'est-ce que la laïcité?*, 07 May (retrieved from https://www.gouvernement.fr/qu-est-ce-que-la-laicite).

Glynos, J., Howarth, D., Norval, A., and Speed, E. (2009), *Discourse analysis: Varieties and methods* (retrieved from https://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/id/eprint/796).

Gougou, F. and Persico, S. (2017), A new party system in the making: The 2017 French presidential election, *French Politics*, (15), pp. 303–321.

Gunn, T.J. (2004), Religious Freedom and Laicite: A Comparison of the United States and France. *BYU Law Review*, pp.419-506.

Hajer, M. (2002), Discourse analysis and the study of policy making, *European Political Science*, 2(1), pp. 61-65.

Hewitt, S. (2009), Discourse analysis and public policy research, *Centre for rural economy discussion paper series*, 24, pp. 1-16.

Hollifield, J. F. (2010), *Immigration, Integration and the Republican Model in France*. APSA 2010 Annual Meeting Paper (retrieved from: https://ssrn.com/abstract=1642214).

Hunter-Henin, M. (2012), Why the French don't like the burqa: laïcité, national identity and religious freedom, *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, 61 (3), pp.613-639.

Jansen, Y. (2006), *Laïcité or the Politics of Republican Secularism*, New York: Fordham University Press.

Kaya, A. (2021), Islamist and Nativist Reactionary Radicalisation in Europe, *Politics and Governance*, 9 (3), pp. 204–214.

Kılınç, R. (2020), *Alien Citizens: The State and Religious Minorities in Turkey and France*. Cambridge University Press.

Lazar, A. and Lazar, M. M. (2004), The discourse of the New World Order: 'out-casting' the double face of threat, *Discourse & Society*, 15(2-3), pp.223-242.

Maxwell, R. and Bleich, E. (2014), Muslims National Identification in France: What Makes Muslims Feel French, *Social Forces*, 93 (1), pp.155-179.

Minister of the Interior. (2020), *Ministre de l'Intérieur, Statistiques 2019 des actes antireligieux, antisémites, racistes et xenophobe*, 26 January (retrieved from https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/ Actualites/Communiques/Statistiques-2019-des-actes-antireligieux-antisemites-racistes-et-xenophobes).

Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. (2020), *Fight against separatism - the Republic in action: speech by Emmanuel Macron, President of the Republic, on the fight against separatism*, 10 February (retrieved from https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/coming-to-france/france-facts/secularism-and-religious-freedom-in-france-63815/article/fight-against-separatism-the-republic-in-action-speech-by- emmanuel-macron).

Nilsson, P. E. (2015), 'Secular Retaliation': A case study of integralist populism, anti-Muslim discourse, and (Il) liberal discourse on secularism in contemporary France, *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, 16(1), pp.87-106.

Oberti, M. (2008), The French republican model of integration: The theory of cohesion and the practice of exclusion, *Youth, Violence, and Social Disintegration*, 2008(119), pp. 55-74.

Peker, E. (2020), Right-Wing Populism and the Securitisation of Laïcité Narratives in French Education Policy, *Social policy and Society*, 20 (2), pp.326-339.

Pew Research Center (2017), *5 facts about the Muslim population in Europe*, 29 November (retrieved from https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/11/29/5-facts-about-the-muslim-population-in-europe/).

Sajó, A. (2008), Preliminaries to a concept of constitutional secularism, *International Journal of Constitutional Law*, 6(3-4), pp. 605–629,

Scrivens, R. and Conway, M. (2020), The roles of 'old' and 'new' media tools and technologies in the facilitation of violent extremism and Terrorism, in: Leukfeldt, R. and Holt, T. J. (eds.), *The Human Factor of Cybercrime*. London: Routledge, pp. 286-309.

Webster, J. (2007), *French Identity, Muslim Identity: Universalism, Laïcité, and the Islamic Challenge, Department of Political Science*, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Wesselhoeft, K. (2017), On the 'front lines'of the classroom: moral education and Muslim students in French state schools, *Oxford Review of Education,* 43 (5), pp.626-641.

WSWS (2021), *French Senate amends anti-separatism Law to ban hijab for youth under 18*, 07 April (retrieved from https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2021/04/07/veil-a07.html).