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The Contradictions of Sought Safe Havens: The Difficulty of Immigration and Integration for Muslim Maghrébins in France

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine the effects of laïcité and government trends to the right in France affect immigration and integration policy in France as it pertains to Muslim Maghrébin migrants. To do so, I conducted interviews with five experts with experience in some facet of Muslim North African migration, followed by using secondary sources to identify current trends, policies, and practices pertaining to migrants in France. The paper is broken into five sections that build on each other to contextualize and explore how the lives of Muslim Maghrébins are affected, including historical migrant trends, laïcité as a French principle, the current French political trend to the right, immigration policy, and integration policy. The evolution of laïcité and its role in affecting right-wing anti-immigration rhetoric is explored, in addition to the examination of discriminatory immigration policy against Maghrébins. The paper concludes with the determination that both laïcité and French right-wing policy has substantially affected the trajectory of immigration and integration policy in recent years and has contributed to the targeted discrimination of Muslim Maghrébins in both France and French immigration practices.

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conversations with these experts was incredibly eye-opening and allowed me to understand and engage with the material in a much deeper way than I had thought possible.

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Abbreviation List

RN: Rassemblement National

FN: Front National

OQTF: Obligation to Leave French Territory

MIPEX: Migrant Policy Index

OECD: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

<u>Introduction</u>

Migration is an issue that seems to be ever present in the world's purview, from millions of refugees seeking asylum every year– a fact that the Ukraine War has reminded the world of– to millions of immigrants seeking new lives around the world every year– be it for an escape from a difficult life or the search for a new, beautiful one. This issue touches everywhere, but for France in particular, migration never seems to fade from political discourse and continually raises concerns. When looking at the 7.0 million immigrants living in France in 2021, it's no surprise that 47.5% of those immigrants living in France were born in Africa with the country's colonial history and proximity to the North African coast. From all 7.0 million immigrants, 12.7% were born in Algeria, 12% were born in Morocco, and 4.5% were born in Tunisia (INSEE, 2022). Although this region, deemed the Maghreb and which includes Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Mauritania, historically brought in many workers and has past colonial ties to France, there seems to be a discrepancy between the way Maghrébins– particularly Muslim Maghrébins– are treated and discussed versus the way migrants from the Global North are treated. With the current gradual rise of the political far-right, in both France and the greater European continent, in addition to the increasingly relevant discussion concerning the discrepancy between how Ukrainian migrants have been treated across Europe versus migrants from the Global South, this subject has become an incredibly topical, important issue. Globally, the differing treatment of groups of migrants have become more apparent, requiring increased attention on why this is occurring and how it can be addressed.

In this paper, I will explore why exactly there seems to be a discrepancy in the treatment of Muslim Maghrébin migrants and analyze the ability for these migrants to integrate into society by analyzing French governmental immigration and integration policy. This research will

observe what the effects of laïcité– a controversial French principle which has evolved over many years– and recent political trends to the right in France are on governmental immigration and integration policy in relation to Muslim North Africans/Maghrébins. It will discuss both immigration and integration policies as they have evolved as well as how those policies are discussed and executed in practice. Both laïcité and recent political trends to the right will be addressed since they've evolved to oftentimes be connected, with the principle of laïcité continually coming up in political discussions on migration. Because laïcité in relation to Islam is a topic that has already been explored by many, I opted to include the current political trajectory of France as Marine Le Pen, the Rassemblement National (RN), and even Eric Zemmour have gained favor and influence in France's political sphere. Their rise has been accompanied by many controversial discussions and policy points concerning migration– particularly in relation to targeting Maghrébins coming to France.

Literature Review

Due to the multifaceted and increasingly relevant nature of my research, there were many different literary sources I was able to analyze concerning different facets of my paper. The literature, however, is often less multi-disciplinary than this research, meaning that many different sources and types of works were used to create my comprehensive analysis. In addition, since this paper addresses such a current issue, many works that had to be used were either reports updated regularly like the Migrant Policy Index (MIPEX) or current news articles regarding French political updates. Works discussing laïcité in regard to Islam such as "Muslims in Perspective: Nationalism, Post-Colonialism and Marginalisation Under the Republic" by Joseph Downing and "Secularism Confronts Islam" by Olivier Roy and George Holoch helped flesh out the experience and difficulty of Islam in France as the principle of laïcité is constantly

used against the religion and its followers. Both works explore the nuances of Islam and its compatibility with laïcité, not only including the French perspective compatibility, but also the differing Muslim perspectives. They both address the way in which laïcité's weaponization have hurt Muslim communities in France historically, providing a look at the evolution of laïcté against religion and the way it has been used to marginalize the communities.

One piece of literature used to explore Marine Le Pen and the Rassemblement National's usage of laïcité in their speech and policies entitled "Le Rassemblement national et la Laïcité: Retour sur des Usages Contradictoires" by Sylvain Crépon proved to be essential in my research. In this work, Crépon explores how Marine Le Pen and the RN ties laïcité together with discussion of supporting French morals and values in order to garner support for and justify their discriminatory and xenophobic policies. The book, published in 2020, served as a helpful and current aid in exploring the links between the political far-right and laïcité. It explains how the right weaponizes the secular concept and uses it to pull the left to support some of their policy points, which can be viewed in the exploration of the evolution of immigration policy in relation to Muslim Maghrébins. Another essential piece of literature that helped provide more quantitative data regarding integration policies was the research study entitled "Integration of Muslim Immigrants in Europe and North America: A Transatlantic Comparison" conducted by Saltanat Liebert, Mona Siddiqui, and Carolin Goerzig. This research gave insight into the integration process of Muslim North African migrants and how discrimination against their communities affects their ability to work, live, and learn in France. The piece of literature revealed the weak spots of French integration policy and practice, demonstrating the discrepancies in the way Muslim Maghrébin migrants are treated compared to those from the Global North due to their religion.

Research Methodology

For this research, there were two primary approaches used to answer the research question and further understand the subject on a whole. The first approach was collecting primary source data through interviews with experts in the field of North African and/or Muslim immigration and integration in France. After the primary source research was collected and directly used, the interviews were all further analyzed and interpreted further by myself to ensure that I gathered as much information as possible from each individual. In order to ensure uniformity and consistency in my research, every expert was asked the same or a very similar set of questions created by me after conducting preliminary research about North African immigration and integration policy. The research question itself was simultaneously refined to ensure that the questions being asked and the topic itself were succinct and clear enough for the experts to answer with ease relative to their area of study. Experts were sought from a variety of fields, including but not limited to education, journalism, and politics. Each expert was from a field with ties to my research, although those contacted had a range of academic focuses, from anthropology to political science to history. Each interview ranged from 20 to 30 minutes with four of them being formal interviews and the fifth being informal.

The second significant approach to collecting data was an analysis of a variety of secondary sources, including news articles from reputable sources, peer-reviewed journal articles, and other peer-reviewed research on similar subjects. All these secondary sources were collected from a variety of sources but were primarily found online through varying databases–both academic and free to the general public. These sources supplemented my primary source research, both when the primary source answers were taken at face value or needed to be

interpreted deeper. Secondary sources also supplemented all my primary sources as further research on the context of a primary source answer was often necessary.

Most ethical considerations needing to be taken into account concerned the primary sources as interviewing people requires a thorough understanding of appropriate and ethical conduct. To begin, each interviewee was informed of their ability to remain anonymous, should they desire their name to be kept out of my paper. Each interviewee was also informed multiple times, both verbally and in writing, that they could decline to answer any question they did not feel comfortable answering or simply did not feel as though they were well-versed enough in the subject matter to answer. For my personal resource list, I asked each interviewee a number of demographic questions that I reminded them they could decline to answer. Before entering every interview, I received verbal consent once again that I could ask them all the questions outlined in my question document, and I also requested to take notes in writing. In three cases, I also requested to record the interview for transcript and notetaking purposes, which I received consent for in all cases. All School of International Training (SIT) ethical guidelines and measures were taken into account with each interview and appropriately adhered to.

Definitions and the Analytical Framework

In this research, definitions are of utmost importance as there are many broad facets of the research that cannot be overgeneralized and must be conceptualized to appropriately make any claims. The first concept that must be understood is the term 'migrants,' which is defined in this paper as "all people moving across international borders to live in another country" and which is refined further in this paper to only include "people who legally move to Europe [in this case, France,] for any reason other than seeking asylum– e.g., for economic, educational, or family reasons" (*Europe's growing muslim population*, 2017). This research seeks to only

include migrants who move legally and are legally defined as being able to remain in the country to mitigate any legality issues that may act as a potential extraneous factor affecting the external perception of the migrant. This paper also identifies these migrants as not only North African, but Muslim North African or Maghrébins, due to the fact that not all Muslim migrants may be North African and not all North African migrants may be Muslim in France. In addition to this, this paper defines all these migrants as those who were born in the Maghreb and migrated to France, instead of being a descendant or later generation of another who migrated.

This paper also touches upon 'governmental immigration and integration policy,' which will be clarified at the beginning of each of their respective analytical sections based on the secondary sources used but are both seen under the larger umbrella of immigration policy. Immigration policy, in this case, is defined as "a government's statement of what it intends to do or not do (including laws, regulations, decisions or orders) in relation to the selection, admission, settlement and deportation of foreign citizens residing in the country" (*Migration policies and governance*, 2022). Integration policy refers to the term 'settlement' in the previous definition and will be defined and discussed in relation to multiple types of policies created concerning "labour market mobility, family reunion, education, political participation, long-term residence, access to nationality, anti-discrimination and health" (Solano & Huddleston, 2020). These definitions of immigration policy will be used to analyze the treatment and attitudes of French nationals towards Muslim Maghrébins and to further clarify and understand French nationals' perception of Islam, especially in relation to themselves and their values.

<u>Effects of Laïcité and the Political Right on Immigration and Integration Policy</u>

Historical Migrant Trends in France

To look at the role of laïcité and the political French right's effect on government immigration policy in the current day, an understanding of historical migrant trends is required for proper contextualization. In analyzing the demographic changes of a nation and what issues arose during after their migration, one can begin to understand how the current attitudes towards migration in the host country have evolved. It allows us to further understand why and how laïcité and political trends might have played a role previously in immigration policy in the past, which helps us understand how they may change in the future.

Post-WWII, France created their first formal immigration system, welcoming in hundreds of thousands of migrants to help "accommodate the increased need for labor following" the war (Boubtane, 2022). Many of these migrants were Muslims Maghrébins as the countries had colonial ties to France, in addition having a wartime connection as Maghrébins fought alongside the French during both World Wars (Seljuq, 1997). These migrants, more often than not, fulfilled the multitude of blue collar factory positions open at the time, simultaneously supporting the postwar boom and aiding in France's demographic struggles (Byrnes 2008). However, despite their aid demographically and economically, the migrants experienced housing issues and socioeconomic struggles. Furthermore, issues began to arise during the "economic crises following oil shocks of the 1970s [that] led to drastic restrictions including suspension of the entry of new foreign workers, payments to encourage immigrants already in France to voluntarily leave, and tightened border controls," all which were primarily targeted towards North African individuals (Boubtane, 2022). Many migrants pushed back against these terms, refusing to return to their former colonies or giving up access to their incomes and livelihoods, despite the fact that many faced poor, exploitative conditions (Boubtane, 2022).

These poor conditions-- coupled with increasing religious awareness and racism of French nationals-- persisted as time progressed coupled, leading to heightened tensions into the 1980s (Seljuq, 1997). Many Muslim Maghrébins were made to live in poor conditions and underfunded banlieues (suburbs), brought on by the incredibly visible "housing crisis [with] overcrowded slums, dilapidated hotels, and mushrooming *bidonvilles* (shantytowns)" (Byrnes, 2008, pg. 8). Despite the housing problems and the lack of access to welfare or appropriate facilities, the French government was more concerned with "providing employers cheap manual labor, with the creation of a reserve industrial army, with the goal of weighing down salaries and creating a certain détente in the labor market that can resist social pressure" (Byrnes, 2008, pg. 232). Migrants began to protest the discriminatory conditions they faced, all the while religious intolerance and discrimination continued to rise in France. The desire to maintain French secularism began to appear more in discussion, taking head on October 22, 1989, "when thousands of Muslims staged a demonstration in Paris in support of the Muslim girls who were expelled from their school…for wearing the head scarf," prompting the first head scarf ban in France (Seljuq, 1997). This protest marked a significant point in the evolution of modern-day laïcité, as it began the more significant and topical conversation concerning the French's perspective of laïcité's incompatibility with Islam.

These historical trends, along with spikes of Muslim North African migration around 2015 and rising islamophobia in Europe, helped set up the foundation for much of the laïcité discourse against immigration and Muslim integration in current times. They demonstrate a legacy of Maghrébins in the country, revealing the migrants' ties with France and the community, while also detailing the historical origin of right-wing anti-immigration arguments still used today. While countless experts have analyzed the current usage of the principle of

laïcité, it's important to understand that the concept continues to evolve and is ever-present in the development of right-wing politics into the present day.

Laïcité as a French Principle

     A key point of this research is actually understanding the French term 'la laïcité.' Laïcité directly translates to "secularism," but this definition is often not a proper translation of what laïcité now means in French society. For example, secularism is defined often as "the strict separation of church and state," but in the French case, this separation of church and state extends beyond this simple definition, as "the secular state constantly interferes in the religious domain to regulate it" (Arslan, 2021). The original law incorporating laïcité into French principles-- created in 1905 and "'known as 'the Separation Act[--]' remains the basis of all relations between religions and the state and has been the principal piece of legislation outlining French laicisation" (Öztürk, Serdar, & Nygren, 2022). This original law, as explained by Professor Grzybowski, was debated at the time to determine what the role of religion was in education and ownership of institutional buildings (S. Grzybowski, personal communication, November 18, 2022). Laïcité's purpose at this time was primarily to reconcile a divided nation, rather than create a French value that would permeate political discussion in the years to come. Despite its origins, with the arrival of Muslim migrants in France prompting events such as the headscarf ban and Islam's place in education, laïcité began to evolve and began to be presented as an essential universal principle– despite the inconsistencies in the discussion of religion which to this day allow discourse about Christianity in France (M. Mohamedou, personal communication, November 15, 2022).

     With the changing understanding and manifestation of laïcité has come a more nuanced version of the concept found only within France. It no longer simply means secularism and is no

longer as straightforward as it once was, instead transforming into a French principle and representation of the "cornerstone of a national identity based on French values" (Alouane, 2020). These French values have remained undefined in nature by many, which has contributed to the weaponization of laïcité against differing religious groups– most notably Muslims (Alouane, 2020). It has become a principle that has only truly raised issue against the Muslim community in France, with the constant adoption of laws and policies that attempt to prohibit any sign of Islam in public, despite the same care not being taken to address other religions and their adherence to laïcité (M. Mohamedou, personal communication, November 15, 2022). While the concept of secularization is not inherently bad, the French have taken it to an extreme by defining "national cohesion by asserting a purely political identity that confines to the private sphere any specific religious or cultural identity," creating a militant version of laïcité (Roy, 2007, pg. ix).

The completely separative nature of laïcité has brought the concept of Islam to attention often in political discussion, as politicians and the public debate whether it is possible to reconcile Islam with the separative nature that laïcité promotes. In truth, compatibility of French laïcité with Islam is not necessarily agreed upon by all experts. However, regardless of the stance of experts on Islam's ability to be completely privatized, all agree that laïcité has often been used to conceal xenophobic policy, especially as French citizens themselves have recognized their own racism and xenophobia (I. Ajala, personal communication, November 11, 2022). There is a clear, documented double standard between the way the French address laïcité with Islam versus other religions, shown even through concepts as seemingly insignificant as the fight against supporting halal options for students while maintaining the policy that all students eat fish every Friday–a distinctly Christian tradition (J. Goodarzi, personal communication, November 15,

2022). Furthermore, some right-wing French politicians have claimed that laïcité is dangerous to the Christian heritage of France, using this double standard of adhering to laïcité to team up with the French left who often passionately support the complete secularization of French public life (Roy, 2007, pg. 3). This has led to the adoption of the idea that Islam is completely incompatible with laïcité for many who view "an open (but not necessarily ostentatious) affirmation of Islam [as] the harbinger of a dangerous fundamentalism" (Roy, 2007, pg. 4).

The only attempts for claims of laïc compatibility with Islam have come from political actors who claim that there may be a completely 'reformed' sort of Islam that is itself 'laïcisé.' French President Emmanuel Macron has supported this secularization of Islam with an attempt in 2017 and later in 2020 to institute a Reform Project which "counter[s] foreign influences on Islam in France by ending seconded imams, training imams in French values, and controlling Muslim schools and mosques" (Arslan, 2021). The President declared support for an 'Islam des Lumières' or 'Englightened Islam,' which he claims was the same kind of reform that allowed Christianity to conform to laïcité (Arslan, 2021). Marine Le Pen, the current head of the Rassemblement National (RN) (formerly the Front National (FN)), also declared support for this completely reformed Islam, answering "L'islam est-il compatible avec la République ?" with "Moi, je crois que oui. Un islam tel que nous l'avons connu, laïcisé par les Lumières comme les autres religions" (Crépon, 2020, pg. 37). However, the claims and requests of these political actors for a completely reformed and Westernized version of the religion demonstrate their colonial mindset, close-mindedness, and misunderstanding of not only Islam, but also the potential for democracy and secularism to exist in harmony with non-Western tradition (M. Mohamedou, personal communication, November 15, 2022). This reformed Islam is only raised due to the lack of nuanced understanding of the religion. It comes from the same thought process

as those who seem to make a "connection…between women wearing the veil and halal meat and somehow the loss of a national identity–" with this national identity relating to the French way of life (Downing, 2019, pg. 7).

This is not to say that compatibility of Islam with the strict French version of laïcité is simple for Muslims as well. Islam, for some, is not just a religion, rather a way of life and may take form in cultural practices expressed in everyday activities (J. Goodarzi, personal communication, November 15, 2022). In fact, there is a relatively large sect of Muslims who find trouble with the French requirement to completely adhere to laïcité for the very reason that "it *is* a culture" for them (Roy, 2007, pg. ix). At the same time, Islam as a religion is said by some to not be inherently incompatible with laïcité, as it is, at its core, simply a relationship between the individual and God (M. Mohamedou, personal communication, November 15, 2022). Dr. Mohamedou brings up that the conversation concerning compatibility of laïcité with different religions is almost exclusively brought up in relation to Islam, despite other religions having their own associated ostentatious cultural practices (e.g. Jewish kippahs or Christian nuns) (M. Mohamedou & I. Ajala, personal communication, November 2022). Regardless of the stance of the Muslim community itself who has had to justify Islam in terms of laïcité in an attempt to fight for their acceptance in French society, the issue of compatibility has been weaponized against Muslims and made to justify their exclusion from France through immigration policy and increased difficulty to integrate into the community.

French Identity

As explained beforehand, much of the threat of Islam within the discussion of laïcité and often within the French right-wing immigration discourse is that Islam is not aligned with this perceived 'national French identity.' Islam is perceived by some as a "fundamentalist religion,"

and to some, presents "not only an existential threat to physical security through terror attacks, but also a far wider and diffuse threat to the liberal democratic order of things in a Europe that still struggles with home-grown, nativist facism" (Downing, 2019). What's interesting is that despite the idea that Islam is incompatible with French identity, about 76% of French Muslims perceive themselves and each other as wanting to adopt national customs and identities (Schain, 2010). In France, more Muslims also identify themselves as French first than Muslim as opposed to Muslims in Britain, despite Britain's stance as being more accepting of multiculturalism within society (I. Ajala, personal communication, November 11, 2022). However, even though French Muslims overwhelmingly feel drawn to adopt the country's values, "l'adhésion à la citoyenneté est reliée négativement aux préjugés envers les minorités, l'adhésion à la laïcité y est relieve de façon positive" [adhesion to citizenship is negatively related to prejudice towards minorities, the adhesion to laïcité is positively related] (Nugier et al., 2016). This demonstrates that although French Muslims or Muslim Maghrébins may assimilate, if they're not necessarily adhering to the version of laïcité supported by French nationals, nationals still may not view them as adopting French customs. The principle ends up overtaking the perception of Muslims in France and putting them at a disadvantage as their expression of religion may mark them as not adhering to societal standards.

Two of my interviewees identified this perceived threat by the French as– quite plainly– racism (M. Mohamedou & J. Goodarzi, personal communication, November 2022). The arguments of laïcité and a 'French identity' have also been found to be used more often by those "who are high in prejudice in order to legitimize negative attitudes towards North Africans" (Nugier et al., 2016). The preservation of French identity through the adherence to laïcité has become an excuse against unfamiliar 'foreign' communities coming into France, leading to the

demonization of Islam (J. Goodarzi, personal communication, November 15, 2022). Many right-wing politicians have also simply used this veiled racism and nationalism to counter Muslim Maghrébin immigration, with Eric Zemmour being a notable extreme figurehead due to his associations of laïcité and French identity. The radical far-right candidate has plainly stated that "'l'islam n'est pas compatible avec la France,'" and that "'l'islam ne repose pas uniquement sur la foi[,] il y a des injonctions très précises qui avant tout relèvent du contrôle social,'" in addition to going so far as to compare Islamism with Nazism (Henni-Moulaï, 2021).

Trends to the Right in France

One of the key factors that also naturally affects immigration policy is the political platform of those who either are in or vying for power in the government. Migration has been a topic of constant debate for many years in France. It's been so contested that "since 1945, France has passed a formal law on immigration every two years on average, in addition to multiple directives, circulars, and other regulatory instruments" (Boubtane, 2022). Issues of migration often become some of the most divisive conversations, with constantly evolving policies put in place as "many…Western Europeans relate immigration to the rise in economic inequality, loss of jobs, and spread of international terrorism," all factors which invite fear and often nationalist rhetoric (Galbreath, 2017, pg. 7). Right-wing and populist parties thrive under these immigration pressures and fear as

> "citizens want a strong reassurance that their current governments are in control of immigration; any apparent loss of that control gives other leaders a populist message and the chance to gain power under the platform of blocking immigration…restoring both economic and physical security to the people" (Galbreath, 2017, pg. 7).

Right-wing parties in France have often taken control of these narratives and fed into the fears, both historically and presently using nationalist and discriminatory rhetoric in migration discourse. This took clear form in the 1970s with the emergence of the far-right party, le Front

National (FN), with Jean Marine Le Pen at its head. The FN linked France's worsening economic problems in the 70s to the arrival of immigrants, touting logos like "'Stop unemployment, jobs for the French people'" and "'1 million unemployed is 1 million immigrants too many'" (Boubtane, 2022). The right only has persisted to promote this rhetoric to this day with "xenophobic discourses of religion and immigration," targeting immigration as not only causing issues for the working lives of 'true' French nationals, but also regarding it as "the greatest danger for the survival of France's cultural identity" (Crisetig, 2022). Despite the discriminatory nature of their discourse, the French right has gained considerable favor in France politically, with Marine Le Pen, Jean Marie Le Pen's daughter, coming closer than ever before to beating Macron, and her party finally rising to become the biggest legislative opposition party in June (Abboud, 2022). In addition to their rise, the left has continued to shift towards right-wing immigration policy to gain some of the support garnered by the far-right, as well that of the general French public (M. Giugni, personal communication, November 18, 2022).

With time, the actual policy of the far-right laid out by Le Pen has only seemed to become increasingly restrictive, especially targeting Muslim Maghrébins with no softening in sight. Her and her current party's stance on immigration has been laid out to "prioritize French citizens over immigrants …, to ban Muslim women from wearing headscarves in public, toughen asylum rules and to sharply curtail immigration" (Pedram, 2022). This discussion surrounding headscarves is not new, as referenced earlier in the paper, with headscarves and other visible religious symbols having been banned in 2004, in addition to a 2010 ban on burqas (Kamal, 2021). Policies outlined by the far-right to help with integration and inclusion of migrants have been and are predicted to continue to be essentially non-existent (J. Goodarzi, personal communication, November 15, 2022).

While policies like the headscarf ban mentioned previously had been a relevant issue promoted primarily by the right, laïcité-based policy dependent on the desire to remove Islam from the public sphere has also taken form in left-wing party policy-- particularly through Macron's 'Separatist Bill' passed in February 2021. The bill itself

> "expands the 'neutrality principle' forbidding not only civil servants but 'all private contractors of public services' from sharing political opinions or even wearing physical representations of their religion…allows French authorities to temporarily shut down places of worship to stop preachers from spreading hatred [and] lastly, French associations with specific religious ties that receive any 'foreign funding will have to provide a strict accounting'" (Griffin, 2021).

While at first glance the bill does not indicate an issue with Islam in particular, all the articles created within the bill only seemed to target behavior linked in French society to Islam and threatened mosques with an overly broad scope and overwhelming ability to allow the state to deem which religious institutions were properly adhering to French principles and values (Pedram, 2021). Not only did the Muslim community within France take issue with the bill, protesting and calling out the French government for their biased policies, but even "Pakistani resident Arif Alvi called the measure a 'dangerous precedent' and urged the French government not to 'entrench these attitudes into laws'" (Griffin, 2021). This was not the first time that Macron had introduced legislation that unfairly targeted Muslim institutions, as a law that "extended the government's right to search people, conduct surveillance, control movement and shut down some schools and religious sites in the name of fighting extremism" was created in 2015 in response to the numerous deadly terrorist attacks in France (Pedram, 2021). Without government officials needing considerable evidence to consider a mosque 'radical,' the bill opened mosques up to unsubstantiated shut down, harming Muslim communities. These bills, in addition to the overly generalizing and anti-Muslim immigration rhetoric, demonstrate discriminatory generalizing attitudes of even the left against Muslim Maghrébins. These

discriminatory– and more nationalist, right-wing– policies continued to isolate the Muslim Maghrébin population and generated increased fear of the communities, putting them at a disadvantage both in the case that they wanted to migrate to the country and when they actually had migrated. It further proves that under the guise of supporting laïcité and the French identity, politicians in France have continued to shift to and promote right-wing immigration policy that ultimately aims to hurt Muslim Maghrébins more than anyone else.

Immigration Policy

With these external factors and principles actively working against Muslims integrating and being accepted into French society, there is a clear attempt to make migration more difficult for some. Heavily impacted by both laïcité and the political trend to the right, these factors affect immigration policy concerning "the selection, admission, and deportation of foreign citizens" (*Migration policies and governance*, 2022). In simpler terms, debates about whether a migrant can actually come to France have increasingly involved more discussion concerning religion and regional origin – particularly impacting Muslim Maghrébins.

For example, one of the most well-known and visible types of immigration policy involves the granting of VISAs to potential migrants abroad. Since 2021, there has been "une réduction des quotas de visas de 50% pour le Maroc et l'Algérie, et de 30% pour la Tunisie" [a reduction of VISA quotas by 50% for Morocco and Algeria, and by 30% for Tunisia], on account of many of those who had been given obligation to leave French territory orders (OQTFs) refusing to return to their home country (Exler, 2022). The VISA ban severely hurt many Maghreb citizens, extending so far as to negatively affect tourism– particularly family visits– but also "les professionnels en voyage d'affaires, [et] les étudiants" (Exler, 2022). It sparked outrage within the Maghreb region, particularly with Morocco and Tunisia, causing 28 organizations

from in and around France, Belgium, Morocco, and Tunisia to speak out against the VISA

reduction, calling it "a collective, unfair punishment, indiscriminately targeting all Algerians,

Moroccans or Tunisians" made "on the pretext of fighting against irregular immigration"

(*Statement on French visa policy*, 2022). Since their statement, the number has extended to 115

North African and European– particularly French– organizations, associations, and political

groups that have supported the statement countering the harmful discriminatory policy of the

French government (Exler, 2021). One of the primary issues with the targeting of this region in

terms of the reduction of VISAs, which has sparked recently, is that politicians use the

restrictions and OQTF system to target Maghrébins in their fight against immigration (I. Ajala,

personal communication, November 11, 2022). The recent murder of a young girl in Paris by an

Algerian woman with an OQTF serves as an example of this phenomenon, with her immigration

status highlighted primarily in most discussions and news stories concerning the crime (Kirby,

2022). With every event involving Maghrébin migrants violating the law, the current French

government and political right uses it as an excuse to tighten immigration even further and

continue to keep it exclusive, targeting North African migration first and foremost (I. Ajala,

personal communication, November 11, 2022).

This immigration issue extends further when analyzing one of the relatively recent

immigration bills created by the French government. One can also see the issues that lie beneath

the seemingly unbiased policies created by the French government, while also observing the far-

right push to make immigration even more restrictive. The bill was created with the intention of

easing "the integration of migrant workers in France, while giving the government greater power

to deport undocumented individuals…it purports to give undocumented immigrants already in

France a chance to acquire legal status" (Mohamed, 2022). When it was proposed, the bill raised

issues for both the left and the right, but for drastically different reasons. The left, on one hand, claimed the government– which is led by a theoretically 'left-wing' politician– exploited the workers for their complete removal of housing and welfare benefits in order to push them to leave if they'd been given an OQTF order (Mohamed, 2022). On the other hand, the far-right, specifically Marine Le Pen, described the bill as a "'campaign for the regularization of illegal immigrants,'" claiming that France would open "'to legal immigration in unprecedented proportions'" (Mohamed, 2022). Despite both the left and the right being opposed to this bill, Macron and his government have and currently seem as though they will continue to appease the far-right on immigration issues, stressing that their bill is not a "'massive regularization plan'" (Mohamed, 2022). This demonstrates the firm grasp that the right has on the current and future landscape of immigration policy, which can only mean continued restriction and exclusion for the Maghrébin migrant community.

Regardless of the perception of the left, Muslim Maghrébins recognized that this bill would be overwhelmingly detrimental to their communities, as many migrants issued OQTFs have come from the Maghreb region. With Maghrébins already strugglingg to come into and stay in France in recent years due to the reduction of VISAs accepted and given, some members of the community believe that all further immigration policies will simply continue to harm any remaining legal migrants in the country, with some believing that "migrant workers will be 'used' and 'thrown on a plane like a reject at the end of the day–'" conduct which has historically been seen in France (Mohamed, 2022).

Beyond issuing VISAs, many different types of immigration policy have also been reconsidered by the gradual shift to the right in France, such as the potential removal of the (double) droit du sol, which allows migrants to gain citizenship based on where they were born–

a policy that has particularly aided those from former French colonies, notably Algeria (I. Ajala, personal communication, November 11, 2022). The attempt to avoid the migration and extended stay of Maghrébins in France ties into the French public's reluctance and fear to allow Islam in their country. Considering the majority of Maghrébins who migrate are Muslim, coupled with the fear of radical Islam and violence which has affected the country through events such as the 2015 terrorist attacks on Charly Hebdo or the 2020 decapitation of Samuel Paty, immigration restrictions against North Africans are often purposefully discriminatory with no end in sight (M. Mohamedou, personal communication, November 15, 2022).

Integration Policy

Immigration policy does not simply extend to what is typically understood as immigration policy– such as the provision of VISAs or the literal process of immigrating to another country. An incredibly important part of being a migrant is being able to integrate into the community of the nation that you've migrated to: socially, economically, and politically. To understand this concept better, integration policy must be defined. The MIPEX puts integration policy and how well a country integrates migrants into a country into empirical terms to help understand integration better (Solano & Huddlestone, 2020). In order to analyze France's capability of integration, policy groups and information gathered by MIPEX will be used, which include data concerning "labour market mobility, family reunion, education, political participation, long-term residence, access to nationality, anti-discrimination and health…[identifying] the highest European and international standards aimed at achieving equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for all residents" (Solano & Huddlestone, 2020). With these factors taken into account by MIPEX, the determined score of France was a 56 on the 100-point scale. This means that France's integration measures are comparable to other Organization

for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Western European countries, but their approach falls flat as "non-EU citizens can benefit from basic rights and some support for equal opportunities, but not the long-term security they need to settle permanently, invest in integration and participate as full citizens," which lends to the French public seeing migrants "as their equals, but also foreigners" (Solano & Huddlestone, 2020). This does not take into account the discrepancies between how different communities of migrants in France are treated, particularly Muslim Maghrébins. According to all my interviewees, the reality is that while France may have some adequate integration policies put in place, Muslim Maghrébins are often discriminated against compared to other migrants– notably those from the Global North– and do not receive the same access to these integration services, in addition to experiencing religious intolerance and racism (Ajala et al., personal communication, November 2022).

According to Dr. Ajala, integration of Muslim Maghrébins has not been particularly effective since the 1980s, demonstrating that this failure to integrate migrant Muslims has been a long-lasting issue with little solace in sight, especially as immigration policy continues to harden with the political shift to the right (I. Ajala, personal communication, November 11, 2022). As mentioned when discussing historical migrant trends, the 1980s brought riots and carried a perception of integration failure "with the beginning of cycles of urban violence that culminated with nationwide riots in November 2005" (Schain, 2010). These protests and debates focused more "on the failure of the school system to effectively integrate new waves of immigrants as effectively as it had previous waves" throughout this period, although many factors, including but not limited to education, contributed to the difficulty for migrants to assimilate (Schain, 2010).

Grzybowski simplifies integration further into categories of "studying, living, working, and moving" and explains that migrants require different types of basic access and opportunities in order to be properly integrated into society (S. Grzybowski, personal communication, November 18, 2022). Without access to these, it becomes much more difficult for an individual to become a working and active member of society. In the case of Muslim Maghrébins, there is agreed upon unequal access to these aspects of life, which has not only affected their integration, but the integration of their families. This is seen with the "descendants of [North African] immigrants in France.. fac[ing]challenges in educational advancement due to low socio-economic status of parents, residential segregation leading to concentration in immigrant majority schools, guidance toward vocational programs, and lower graduation rates for those entering universities" (Liebert, Siddiqui, & Goerzig, 2020, pg. 203). In addition to educational disparities for Maghrébin migrants, there are significant disparities in access to work and acceptance in the workplace for Muslim migrants. A comparative study contrasting immigrant integration in France, Britain, and the United States revealed a five percent difference between the unemployment rate for immigrants in France (13.8%) compared to the unemployment rate for nonimmigrants (8.0%) (Schain, 2010). In addition, youth unemployment of these communities is much higher in France compared to the US and Britain, with the French immigrant youth unemployment level "almost three times the level…in the United States" (Schain, 2010). Muslim migrants in particular also face employment discrimination in the job application process seen through another comparative study conducted in 2020 that found that those with Muslim-sounding names are at a disadvantage during application periods (Liebert, Siddiqui, & Goerzig, 2020, pg. 204). To demonstrate this phenomenon in France, "a recent study found that Muslim male applicants are four times less likely to receive a call-back than their

similarly qualified but presumably Christian counterparts" (Liebert, Siddiqui, & Goerzig, 2020, pg. 204). Even once within the workplace, additional discrimination is experienced due to "the perceived limited acceptance of visible minorities in European societies as being… 'fully French'" (Liebert, Siddiqui, & Goerzig, 2020, pg. 205). By simply visually presenting as a minority– which is unavoidable in these cases– there is an automatic gap perceived by the French people between themselves and the minority. In the case of Muslim Maghrébins, migrants are often profiled as foreign and even as dangerous in some cases simply for their religion (M. Mohamedou, personal communication, November 15, 2022).

In addition to general trends concerning Muslim North Africans' economic integration and inclusion into society, there was the consensus among each of my interviewees that there is a distinct difference in the treatment of Muslim Maghrebins compared to the treatment of migrants from the Global North. Professor Grzybowski in particular pointed to the trend to the right as affecting the treatment of these individuals, as many right politicians have vocally made assumptions about these communities, claiming that "'Arabs equal Muslims, Muslims are the moderate version of Islamists, Islamists are the moderate version of jihadists, all the migrants came for money, Islam– even if it's modified– is potentially violent'" (S. Grzybowski, personal communication, November 18, 2022). All these statements from those in political power in the country push the nation and the French people to fear not only the religion, but the people and the migrants, making it more difficult to be accepted into society. The discrimination of Muslim Maghrébins extends so far that it even has a violent legacy in France. This violence has such a poignant place in France's recent history that the death of about 300 Arabs, primarily North Africans, has been recorded in a book called "Arabicides- Une Chronique Française" by Fausto Giudice in order to detail the violence committed against these communities from the 70s to the

90s (M. Mohamedou, personal communication, November 15, 2022). This legacy and history did not end with these deaths, however, as police brutality in France currently remains highest against Arabs and Africans, continually plaguing these migrant communities (M. Mohamedou, personal communication, November 15, 2022).

Political ideology plays a significant and continued role in the creation and support of integration policy, especially in France as Professor Giugni notes that the French right already holds quite a tough stance on immigration policy. They carry a much greater emphasis on regulating migrant flows and pay little to no actual attention to migrant integration policy (M. Giugni, personal communication, November 18, 2022). For the left, integration policies have not adapted or evolved to try to actively become more inclusive, rather the assimilationist and nationalist stance perpetuated by the right has overwhelmingly held fast, straying further and further away from multicultural integration that originally was put in place to try to support the increasing diversity of the nation (M. Giugni, personal communication, November 18, 2022). The current administration with Macron has focused primarily on ensuring that the values of French identity and nationality are taught in schools, while ensuring that migrants are taught French in order to properly assimilate into French society, demonstrating that becoming a true 'French citizen' is at the forefront of their integration policy as opposed to creating a more multicultural society focused on anti-discrimination and acceptance of all cultures and religions (Yao, 2022). Laïcité has also remained at the center of most integration efforts and policies, and even with revision of educational processes, "schools are at the core of returning to secularism policy" and creating "secular citizens" (Yao, 2022, 79). Much of these educational revisions have come in the wake of a fear of Islamic studies and teachings affecting Muslim North African

migrants which could potentially harm the national 'French identity' attempting to be protected by so many current politicians (Arslan, 2021).

Conclusion

Through this research, I found that laïcité and the French trend to the right substantially impacts immigration and integration policy in relation to Muslim Maghrébin migrants in France through promoting rhetoric that alienates and attacks the migrant communities. Laïcité isolates Muslims through the promotion of militant secularism that deems them not appropriate or true French citizens if their religion is visible to or affects the public in any way. This makes it much more difficult for migrants to integrate into their broader communities as they are solely seen as foreigners if they do not adhere to the strict laïcité of the French, regardless of their attempts to assimilate or active participation in the community. The policy of laïcité also permeates much of the discourse of French far-right politicians as they oppose immigration of those from the Maghreb and, with the current administration, attempt to halt migration flows and make it more difficult for Muslim Maghrébins to receive VISAs. This supports my research's additional findings that the far-right anti-immigration rhetoric has affected the political landscape so severely that many left-wing political parties and the current center-left administration have adopted and supported the same anti-immigration perspectives, incorporating it into their own policies and overall stances. Laïcité and the political trend to the right has not only attempted to dramatically slow the movement of migrants but has also made integration efforts much more difficult for Muslim Maghrébins, contributing to their lack of access to services or opportunities that would allow them to easily and successful study, work, and live in France, in addition to encouraging xenophobia and racism against these communities.

Based on my research and discussions, it appears as though these negative effects on the lives of Muslim Maghrébin migrants are not slowing at any point and may only worsen as time progresses. The trend to the right in France and Europe in general has contributed to exacerbated discrimination against these communities, and the integration of more inclusive measures for migrants is continually avoided in political discourse. Laïcité does not seem to be disappearing from the political sphere, and many have very little hope for the promotion of immigration in the future, especially as much of the left continues to support right-wing immigration policies.

Throughout the interview process of this research, many additional questions were found as I analyzed questions concerning the present-day landscape of French politics in order to understand their future evolution. One of the most impactful areas of further research considered was the progression of immigration policy as time progresses and as the French political landscape continues to evolve. Understanding the evolution of the political parties may allow one to predict trajectory of future immigration policy and observe whether it becomes more inclusive for Muslim migrants. Another area of study that could be beneficial would be observing how French colonial perspectives impact immigration policy. This question and idea arose during my interview with Dr. Mohamedou, during which I noted the current unique French perspective on their colonial history as not necessarily having accepted their end as an imperial power. This research question coupled with observing the interplay between French and Algerian migration relations may be interesting as the two countries have recently discussed the issues concerning illegal migration from Algeria to France. Finally, another study that may be beneficial and could stem from this research would be a comparative analysis of France accepting Ukranian versus Muslim Maghrébin or Middle Eastern refugees. This comparative analysis would be incredibly topical and may be able to serve as empirical evidence demonstrating the discrepancies between

the treatment of migrants from differing regions of the world, a problem which has begun to

raise concern on the global stage.

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