

## Laïcité and Discontents: Understanding Islamophobia in France

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### ABSTRACT

Islamophobia has grown significantly in France since President Emmanuel Macron permitted caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad, which outraged Muslim communities. These events have contributed to the perception that Islam threatens French secular values (*Laïcité*). While France upholds a secular system where state affairs must remain separate from religion, the presence of Muslim immigrants has become a major concern for the French government, which worries about threats to the principle of secularity, as Islam is often viewed as incompatible with liberal French culture[A1]. This research examines the impact of Islamophobia on Muslim communities in France during President Emmanuel Macron's administration, using Constructivism and National Interest theories to analyze how Islamophobia influences Muslim society under Macron's leadership. The study employs qualitative methods and descriptive analysis, with data collected from secondary sources, including news outlets, official websites, and prior research related to Islamophobia in France. The findings indicate that Macron's statements and policies have significantly affected Muslim communities in France, leading to social discrimination, racism, violence, and international boycotts, though the long-term effects of international boycotts require further investigation. The research concludes that the reinforcement of *laïcité* has been instrumentalized in ways that disproportionately target Muslims, undermining social cohesion and human rights. The findings highlight the need for policy reforms that balance secular principles with religious freedom and inclusion, as well as greater international awareness of systemic Islamophobia in France.

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**Keywords:** French Muslims, Islamophobia, Laïcité

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### INTRODUCTION

France has the largest Muslim population compared to other European countries, and Islam is the largest minority religion in France. Several factors contribute to the widespread Islamophobia in France, including media participation in anti-Muslim movements and the absence of policies to counter anti-Muslim sentiment (Al Jazeera, 2022; Sabah, 2020). Anti-Muslim actions continue to occur frequently, predominantly online. Discriminatory practices are common in the education and employment sectors. For instance, Muslims are prohibited from wearing religious symbols or ornaments, particularly the *hijab*. Failing to adhere to this can result in dismissal and difficulty finding jobs due to religious affiliation (Beaman, 2021). International human rights organizations must take significant action to confront discrimination and negative perceptions of Islam in Europe (Pervaz & Asad, 2022).

Islamophobia in France is not a new issue. It resurfaced after controversial statements by French President Emmanuel Macron concerning the republishing of Prophet Muhammad's cartoons in *Charlie Hebdo* magazine. Additionally, the murder of Samuel Paty by a Muslim individual, who was angered after Paty showed cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad during a class on freedom of speech, worsened the situation. The president's remarks sparked global protests from Muslims, leading to boycotts of French products, as seen in Turkey. The boycott, led by several Muslim countries, affected France's economy.

Suspicion towards Muslims intensified following the attack that killed Samuel Paty, compounded by President Emmanuel Macron's statements aimed at 'cleansing' Islam in France from extremists, using the term "Islamic separatism." According to Macron, as cited by Faridah et al. (2021), "Islam is experiencing a crisis in many countries, not just France." Measures prepared by the French government, to be proposed to parliament by the end of the year, included several initiatives aimed at addressing the issue (Faridah et al., 2021).

Tighter supervision of sports organizations and other groups is being implemented to prevent them from being used as platforms for teaching Islam. Additionally, *imams* are not allowed to be brought in from outside France, mosque funding is under increased scrutiny, and there are restrictions on home-schooling. In response to this situation, French President Emmanuel Macron took decisive action by proposing a draft law to amend existing laws to reinforce *laïcité* (Iza et al., 2022). The global community and academics are divided in their response to Macron's initiatives. On one side, Olivier Roy, as cited in Kaplan (2016), argues that Islam is not a radical religion; instead, it is fundamentalists or terrorists who misuse Islam to justify their actions (Kaplan, 2016). These extremists should be treated as ordinary criminals. Roy also noted that Muslims are striving to become French citizens but face challenges during identity negotiations. On the other side, Gilles Kepel, as cited in Islamy (2021), believes the fundamentalist issue's root cause lies in Islamic doctrine (Islamy, 2021).

Macron has been actively seeking cabinet support to pass the anti-separatism bill swiftly. He believes that this bill will restore France's secular system and combat religious radicalism and extremism (Al Jazeera, 2022). The bill has both supporters and opponents. Critics argue that the bill adds to the negative perception of Islam and that President Emmanuel Macron himself exhibits Islamophobic tendencies (Peace & Cabal, 2019). However, there are few studies that specifically examine *Laïcité* enforcement in Emmanuel Macron's administration. Iza et al. (2022) found that Macron's attempt at the Anti-Immigration Law affects the perception of Muslim immigration to France. Meanwhile, this study focused on securitization theory rather than discovering the value reasoning behind the policy (Iza et al., 2022). In other studies, Fajrina & Suwandono (2021) also analyzed how Islamophobia affects Muslim community resilience in France. However, this study also did not clearly explain how *Laïcité* affects or amplifies perceptions towards Muslim immigrants in France (Fajrina & Suwandono, 2021).

The issue of Islamophobia in France is a well-documented phenomenon in academic literature, with scholars often framing it through the lens of post-colonial legacy, security policy, and national identity. Previous research, such as the work of Hajjat and Mohammed (2019) in "Islamophobia: How French Elites Construct the 'Muslim Problem'", meticulously details how political and media discourses systematically frame Muslim citizens as a threat to republican values. This is further supported by studies like those of Bowen (2007) and Kılınc (2019), which analyze how the principle of *laïcité* has evolved from a doctrine of state neutrality to an assertive form of secularism used to justify restrictive policies targeting religious visibility, particularly the *hijab* ban. These studies effectively establish that Islamophobia is not a fringe sentiment but is embedded within institutional structures and elite rhetoric, creating a pervasive environment of discrimination for French Muslims.

Despite this robust body of work, a significant research gap persists in specifically analyzing the distinct escalation and qualitative shift in state-led Islamophobia during President

Emmanuel Macron's administration. While existing literature effectively covers the historical and sociological roots, there is a lack of focused inquiry into how Macron's specific policy initiatives—most notably the 2021 "Anti-Separatism" law—and his public legitimization of blasphemous cartoons have actively reconstructed Muslim identity as incompatible with French citizenship in a new, more institutionalized way. This gap underscores the urgency of this research; the Macron era represents a critical and recent intensification of this conflict, with tangible consequences including a documented 53% surge in Islamophobic attacks in 2020 and significant international diplomatic friction. Understanding this contemporary phase is therefore crucial to grasping the evolving nature of religious intolerance in Europe and its implications for social cohesion and human rights.

The novelty of this research lies in its targeted examination of the Macron presidency as a pivotal case study in the securitization and institutionalization of Islamophobia. It moves beyond broader historical analysis to investigate the direct causal relationships between presidential discourse, specific legislation, and their socio-political impacts on the Muslim community. By employing a constructivist theoretical framework, this study will uniquely illustrate how Macron's government has actively reinforced and weaponized the *laïcité* norm, not merely as a passive historical principle, but as an active tool for national identity formation that excludes Muslims. The benefit of this research is twofold: it provides a timely and critical analysis for policymakers and civil society organizations advocating for inclusive policies, and it contributes a nuanced academic understanding of how state actors can instrumentalize secularism to exacerbate social division, offering lessons that extend beyond the French context to other multicultural societies grappling with similar tensions.

This study aims to examine the complex relationship between the reinforcement of *Laïcité*, France's principle of secularism, during Emmanuel Macron's presidency and its potential impact on Islamophobia towards the Muslim community in France. *Laïcité*, a cornerstone of French political and social life, has been increasingly emphasized and reinterpreted in recent years, particularly in response to perceived challenges to national identity and security. The research will explore how this renewed focus on secularism may inadvertently contribute to or exacerbate existing tensions and discrimination against Muslims in French society.

## **METHOD**

This article employs a qualitative research method with a descriptive-analytical approach. This approach is commonly used to provide in-depth explanation and interpretation of phenomena in various social sciences and politics, including international relations. Data collection is conducted through literature review. The data are gathered from credible news sources, journals, proceedings, and books, as well as online resources. Additionally, important data can be obtained from France's official government websites. These literature studies constitute secondary data. The results of this literature review will complement the analysis using Constructivism and National Interest theories. The analysis employing Constructivism and National Interest is descriptive-analytical, as this process involves techniques for selecting[A1] and rationally assessing data. The results of the analysis using constructivist theory and the concept of National Interest will be presented at the end of the discussion to

address the impact of Islamophobia on the lives of Muslims in France during President Emmanuel Macron's administration.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Development of Islam in France**

Muslims have been present in France since the 8th century AD. The spread of Islamic proselytization reached France during the Umayyad Dynasty in the 8th century, led by General Abdurrahman Al-Ghafiqi. At that time, Islamic forces settled in Septimania. The arrival of Islam in France was closely linked to the fall of Andalusia (Spain) to Arab rulers. From this point, the Umayyads expanded their conquests into France. Gradually, Abdurrahman Al-Gafiki also gained control over the regions of Politiye and Tul. This marked the beginning of Islamic settlement in the area (Adryamarthanino, 2022).

Islam held sway for 40 years; however, in the 10th century, attempts to expand its influence failed due to the challenges posed by the Crusades during the medieval period, leading Islam to retreat from France. John L. Esposito noted that the presence of Islam in France became significant alongside the colonization of North Africa, which began in 1830. Immigrants from Algeria came to engage in trade, followed by Moroccan immigrants who worked in the Southern Marseille docks (Esposito, 1995).

The process of Islamization in France started through warfare and trade. In later periods, Islamization continued through marriage and proselytization. The Muslim population in France has been steadily increasing each year, leading to a significant quantitative rise in the number of Muslims in the country (Faridah et al., 2021; Iribaram, 2018). With the growth of Islam in France, Muslims face quite complex issues. Today, Muslims represent the largest immigrant group in Europe. The Muslim community in Europe has transitioned from being invisible to becoming highly visible. The increase in the number of immigrants to Europe from majority-Muslim countries has resulted in a significant growth in the Muslim population in Europe (Pradana & Ramadhon, 2019; M. S. Putri & Imaduddin, 2021). Data collected by the UN in 1999 indicated that between 1989 and 1998, the number of Muslims in Europe rose by more than 100 percent. Below is a table showing the development of the Muslim population across Europe.

**Table 1. Estimated Population of Muslims in Europe from 1950 to 1990**

<b>Year</b>	<b>1950</b>	<b>1960</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>
<b>Total Population</b>	547,424,812	604,423,268	655,996,572	692,899,864	720,758,128
<b>Muslim Population</b>	10,765,329	13,426,084	19,918,426	24,726,900	31,939,289
<b>Percentage (%)</b>	1.97%	2.22%	3.04%	3.57%	4.43%

Source: (Kettani, 2010)

The table above demonstrates that the Muslim population continually increased every decade. These figures are expected to grow in line with the ongoing developments in Europe. At the same time, immigrants who initially did not settle have gradually formed a large community. They began providing educational services to Muslims, building mosques, and addressing physical needs. The existence of the Muslim community as settled immigrants presents a social reality at the center of debate, where neighborhood security is threatened due to animosity towards Muslims from certain individuals who disapprove of their presence (Basri, 2022).

The subsequent migration process includes the political refugee conflict from Turkey following the military coup. According to France's secular principles, an individual's religion is private, so the government does not collect information about Muslim immigrants. Below is a table of Muslim population information by geographic origin published by the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) (Insee, 2020).

### **The Early Emergence of Islamophobia in France**

In France, Islam is a controversial subject. Many people believe that criticizing Islam is difficult. Islamophobia in France began in Algeria during the French occupation in 1830 (Ameli, Merali, Shahghasemi, 2012). For example, the Code de l'indigenat program in 1865 granted French citizenship to Algerians but forced them to abandon their religion to receive citizenship (Lebourg, 2016). Anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim racism became hallmarks of French politics in the 20th century. Misunderstandings regarding faith increased French hostility toward Islam. Multiculturalism in France began to take shape after World War II, with many immigrants coming to France in search of employment (Anisa, 2020). Most immigrants brought their families to settle in France, many of whom were of Sub-Saharan descent and practiced Islam. The number of immigrants continued to rise over time, influencing social, political, and cultural life. The social gap between the French community and immigrants created social friction, leading to conflicts characterized by discriminatory and racist actions.

In the 1980s, immigrants began to build mosques, sell halal food, and claim burial grounds specifically for Muslims. This caused concern among the French population regarding the "rise of Islam," recalling a historical period when Islam once dominated Europe. Additionally, the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center in New York led to the perception of Muslims as the cause of all terrorism (D. L. Putri, 2022). Since then, Muslims have been seen as a threat to France (Fadiga, 2021). Despite the rapid growth of Islam in France, Muslims do not live in peace due to the country's secular nature. The pluralism of external communities is a triggering factor for conflict within society. The French government's fears are evident in attempts to portray Islam negatively, often viewing it as a religion that oppresses women with stringent religious rules. The prohibition of wearing the hijab in France poses a challenge for Muslim women. The hijab ban enforced by the French government aims to compel Muslims to violate their religious teachings (Bounaga & Esmili, 2020). However, French Muslims continue to practice Islamic law and remain unafraid of the policies issued by the French government. Islam persists in France despite the challenges posed by the secular system and ongoing democratization (Fadiga, 2021).

### **Muslim Population in France During President Emmanuel Macron's Administration**

Islam is one of the fastest-growing religions in Europe. The influence of foreign immigrants has contributed to the steadily increasing Muslim population in France each year. In addition to the mass immigration of Muslims to France, this growth is also due to native French citizens converting to Islam. There are various estimates regarding the number of Muslims in France. According to the World Encyclopedia and the U.S. Department of State, the Muslim population in France was about 10% in 2006. Meanwhile, the French Ministry of the Interior estimates that there were 4.1 million people born into Muslim families, and

approximately 40,000 native French citizens converted to Islam in 2009 (Abdul & Sherazi, 2023).

Emmanuel Macron was officially inaugurated as President of the French Republic in 2017, serving a five-year term. For the first time in 20 years, a President of France was re-elected for a second term, with Macron's second inauguration taking place on May 7, 2022. Following his re-election, the Muslim community in France has become increasingly concerned about its future, fearing that Macron may continue the policies implemented during his previous term (Al Jazeera, 2022; BBC, n.d.-b, n.d.-a; Iza et al., 2022). The "War on Terror" campaign has exacerbated Islamophobia in France, leading many French Muslims to migrate to safer environments away from discrimination. Therefore, this article will present data on the increase or decrease of the Muslim population in France since 2017 (Statista, 2022).

**Table 2. Population of France and the Muslim Population (2017-2022)**

Year	Total Population of France	Muslim Population in France
2017	66,992,000	5,720,000
2018	67,258,000	-
2019	67,442,000	6,744,200
2020	67,635,000	6,763,500
2021	67,843,000	-
2022	68,043,000	-

Source: Statista (2022)

Based on the findings above, various sources provide different estimates regarding the Muslim population in France. INSEE reported in 2019-2020 that the Muslim population in France is around 10%, while Statista estimated the Muslim population in 2020 to be approximately 4%. From these findings, it can be concluded that there has been an increase in the Muslim population in France between 2017 and 2020 (Insee, 2020).

### **Incidents of Islamophobia Affecting Human Rights of the Muslim Community in France Discrimination**

Valfort (2015) explains that discrimination is a complex issue characterized by its intersectionality, often influenced by multiple factors such as ethnicity, religion, and socioeconomic status. In the case of the Muslim community in France, experiences of discrimination are further impacted by factors like urban poverty (Adida et al., 2013). Discrimination based on religion can manifest in various ways, including verbal harassment, physical violence, and denial of employment or housing opportunities. Moreover, the discrimination faced by Muslims in France due to their faith not only affects their religious practices but also other aspects of their lives, such as job acquisition or participation in athletic activities.

Studies have found that 42% of Muslims in France report feeling discriminated against, a figure that rises to 60% for women wearing hijabs. This indicates that discrimination against Muslims is a significant issue in France. A study by Dille (2023) also found that Muslims are underrepresented in the French government and prison system. Muslims constitute only 0.08% of the Senate and the National Assembly (Assemblée nationale), despite representing

approximately 6% to 10% of the national population. This shows that Muslims are not granted equitable representation in governance (Dille, 2023).

On the other hand, the Muslim community in France faces several economic challenges, including disproportionate incarceration rates. While specific statistics on religious affiliation are not available in France, it is estimated that around 40-50% of prisoners in the country are Muslims, compared to an estimated 8-10% of Muslims in the general population. This means that Muslims are imprisoned at a significantly higher rate than their share of the population (Bowman, n.d.). In contrast, Muslims in the UK make up only 5% of the total population, yet they comprise 15% of the prison population. This indicates that Muslims in the UK are not imprisoned at disproportionately high rates as those in France. The high incarceration rate among Muslims in France represents a significant hindrance to the community's economic prospects. It complicates their ability to secure employment and can lead to social stigma and discrimination. The reasons behind the high incarceration rates among Muslims in France are complex and varied. This is a major issue that must be addressed.

### **Racism**

The social and cultural recognition of the Muslim minority in France has revealed institutional subordination and cultural racism against them. This indicates that Muslims in France are often treated as second-class citizens. Recognizing the contributions of this minority during the pandemic is not only crucial for social cohesion but also necessary to improve their circumstances. Discrimination against Muslims in France negatively impacts society as a whole. There are several barriers faced by the Muslim minority, such as unfavorable conditions in the banlieues, scarcity of employment, and ethnically targeted laws (Beaman, 2021; Fadiga, 2021). These obstacles make it difficult for Muslims to succeed in France and contribute to the socio-economic discrimination they experience. Many of these barriers are imposed by the French state and its elites against citizens and residents of Arab descent, particularly North African Muslims (Ismoyo, 2017).

In 2015, Muslims constituted approximately 6% to 8.5% of the total population in France, with most of them living in impoverished areas. While most European immigrants enjoy high employment rates, those from North Africa struggle with unemployment. This creates a different situation where 4.4 million individuals of Arab or African descent live in banlieues, or slum areas - poverty and crime are rampant. Findings by Abdelkader (2017) indicate that 3 out of 5 children in these banlieues grow up in poverty, illustrating the dire situation of Muslims in France (Abdelkader, 2017).

After attacks on Charlie Hebdo in 2015, a French satirical magazine that ridiculed Islam and Muslims, Prime Minister Valls described the banlieues as a "territorial, social, and ethnic apartheid." This highlights the critical state of the Muslim community in France, equating it to apartheid, a system of racial segregation practiced in South Africa (Shebaita, 2021). Evidence shows that Muslims in France face significant discrimination. According to Abdelkader (2017), Muslims are more likely to live in poverty and experience unemployment compared to other groups in France. Furthermore, Abdelkader noted the existence of regions in France where Muslims are segregated from the rest of society (Abdelkader, 2017). In summary, the situation for Muslims in France continues to deteriorate, with rising Muslim numbers coinciding with

increasing unemployment rates. This suggests that issues of discrimination against Muslims in France are likely to persist.

### **Violence**

According to the National Observatory Against Islamophobia, there was a six-fold increase in anti-Muslim actions starting in the first quarter of 2015, following terrorist attacks in January during the year. This indicates a backlash against Muslims in France after the attacks. In that quarter, there were 222 recorded Islamophobic incidents, up from 37 in the first quarter of 2014. These attacks included grenades thrown at mosques and gunfire near places of worship. Furthermore, statistics show that the number of attacks against Muslims in France has risen in recent years. In 2020, there were 235 attacks on Muslims, a 53% increase from the previous year, reflecting a worsening situation.

Following various clashes between the French government and Muslim groups, particularly after the beheading of Samuel Paty, the French government introduced legislation to increase oversight of Muslim schools and mosques. This law was framed as an effort to combat Islamic separatism. However, under this legislation, 75 mosques are now under increased scrutiny, raising concerns about discrimination against Muslims. Some French Muslims feel stigmatized by this law, and Amnesty International has expressed concern that it could be used to discriminate against Muslims.

The implications of these legislative efforts have fueled a more massive backlash against the government's stance towards Muslims, as well as escalating anti-Islam sentiment. Pew Research found that while anti-Muslim attacks increased after the Charlie Hebdo shooting, so too did favorable views of Muslims in France. However, they also noted that this did not negate the real negative effects of racial violence or the impact of surveillance laws enacted by the government (Wike, 2015). Therefore, the implementation of surveillance laws against Muslim schools and places of worship exacerbates terrorist attacks and has harmful effects on the Muslim community. Anti-Muslim sentiment surged in France after the Charlie Hebdo shooting. Additionally, the French government passed laws that increased oversight of Muslims, raising concerns about potential discrimination (Israel, n.d.).

### **The Influence of Islamophobia in France from Constructivism**

The rise of Islamophobia in France is rooted in President Emmanuel Macron's statements regarding the Charlie Hebdo cartoons of Prophet Muhammad, which he framed as an expression of freedom of speech. This also ignited conflict between the Muslim and non-Muslim communities in France. The resulting tension has fostered hatred against the Muslim community, leading the Macron administration to enact the Speech Act and the Anti-Separatism Law (Iza et al., 2022).

Based on researchers' findings, the securitization efforts through the speech act and the Anti-Separatism Law initiated by President Emmanuel Macron create a constructed view of Muslims as a threat to France. This securitization does not differentiate between closed and open Muslim groups, thus discriminating against the entire Muslim community in France. Furthermore, these efforts reinforce the "Laïcité" norm as a foundational principle of the French state. The "Laïcité" norm, which underpins Macron's speech act regarding the Prophet

Muhammad's cartoon incident and the Anti-Separatism Law, is influenced not only by historical backgrounds but also by international political dynamics.

One of the most significant factors shaping the construction of "Laïcité" is the 9/11 attacks in 2001. Although this event occurred before Macron's presidency, it has reinforced the construction of "Laïcité" as a norm in France. Consequently, the strengthening of the "Laïcité" norm as part of the unit norm of the French state has constructed Islam as a common enemy, not only in France but globally. This indicates that Islamophobia in France is not solely a product of domestic factors.

Nonetheless, the construction of Islamophobia in President Macron's administration clashes with norms recognized by the international community, particularly among Muslims. Macron's remarks concerning the murder of Samuel Paty incited widespread condemnation and calls for boycotts. Reactions from governmental actors include condemnation from Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The wave of boycotts has been an international response to solidarity against the French government's discrimination toward its Muslim population. This illustrates an effort by the international Muslim community to oppose Islamophobic views and exert pressure on President Macron's government (Fernanda et al., 2022). However, further findings are needed regarding the impact of the international boycotts on Macron's policies. Nevertheless, it can be concluded that there are efforts within the international system, specifically from the Muslim community, to push Macron's government to halt Islamophobic views reflected in the speech act and the Anti-Separatism Law directed at Muslims in France.

### **Assumptions Related to the Influence of Islamophobia on the Lives of Muslims in France During President Macron's Administration**

Several fundamental assumptions can be related to the influence of Islamophobia on Muslims in France. These assumptions can be categorized into three factors: discrimination, racism, and violence. Regarding discrimination, the assumption is that discrimination against Muslims in France is prevalent and varied. This is influenced by factors such as ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, and urban poverty. Muslims with names associated with Islam may face discrimination even if they are not devout practitioners (Dille, 2023). Under Macron's presidency, Muslims are increasingly depicted as a threat to French society. This is reflected in examples of Islamophobic posters and limited airtime provided to certain candidates, indicating an unfriendly environment for Muslims. Discrimination affects various aspects of their lives, including employment opportunities and participation in athletic activities. The high percentage of Muslims who feel discriminated against, particularly women wearing hijabs, signifies that discrimination against Muslims is a significant issue in France. Additionally, the implementation of the separatism law in 2021 is perceived as directly linked to Islamophobia during Macron's presidency. Peace & Cabal argue that while the government claims the law aims to reinforce secularism, it unfairly targets the Muslim community and restricts religious freedom, further supporting assumptions of discrimination against Muslims in France.

Concerning racism, the assumption is that Muslims in France face institutional subordination and cultural racism, resulting in their treatment as second-class citizens. The Muslim minority in France encounters obstacles such as unfavorable conditions in impoverished areas, job scarcity, and ethnically targeted laws. These barriers hinder their

success and contribute to social and economic discrimination. The situation of Muslims in France has been likened to apartheid, indicating severe discrimination. The rising Muslim population alongside increasing unemployment rates among Muslims suggests that discrimination issues are likely to persist.

Finally, regarding violence, the assumption is that there has been a significant increase in anti-Muslim actions and attacks in France, particularly following terrorist attacks. The introduction of laws targeting Muslim schools and places of worship has raised concerns about discrimination and stigmatization. The impacts of these laws have led to terrorist attacks and heightened anti-Islam sentiment. Some activists and experts argue that Macron adopted Islamophobia as an electoral strategy leading up to the presidential elections in April 2022 (Pervaz & Asad, 2022). This perspective indicates that Islamophobia is utilized as a political tool during his presidency. Despite some potentially favorable views of Muslims in France, the negative effects of racial violence and surveillance laws cannot be overlooked.

While there are alternative perspectives to the assumption that Islamophobia significantly influences the Muslim community in France, these counterarguments include:

- 1) **Challenges with the Term "Islamophobia":** In France, there is reluctance to use the term "Islamophobia," even among those who acknowledge racism and discrimination against Muslims. Critics argue that this term is seen as an attempt to stifle criticism of the religion or as a political tool for Islamists.
- 2) **Marginalization of the Muslim Minority:** Some contend that the economic, social, and cultural exclusion faced by the Muslim minority in France results from their marginalized position in society rather than solely from Islamophobia. They argue that this exclusion is part of a broader issue of economic inequality and social marginalization.
- 3) **Intersection of Racism and Islamophobia:** It is argued that the religious marginalization experienced by French Muslims reflects the existing racial and ethnic disparities within society. This perspective highlights the interconnection between racism and Islamophobia in the French context.
- 4) **International Context:** The rise of Islamophobia globally and across Europe, including increased pressures on Muslim populations following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, is seen as a crucial factor in understanding the Muslim situation in France. This suggests that Islamophobia in France is not merely a product of domestic factors.

Several inferences can be derived from these assumptions regarding the impact of Islamophobia on the Muslim population in France:

- 1) **Marginalization and Exclusion:** Assumptions indicate that Muslims in France face economic, social, and cultural exclusion, contributing to their marginalization within society. This marginalization affects various facets of their lives, including employment opportunities, living conditions, and access to resources and services.
- 2) **Discrimination and Racism:** These assumptions highlight the presence of discrimination and racism against Muslims in France. Muslims may face discrimination based on their names, religious practices, and appearances. Such discrimination not only affects their daily lives but also hampers their participation across various domains, such as politics and government representation.
- 3) **Violence and Backlash:** The assumptions suggest an increase in anti-Muslim actions and violence in France, especially following cases of hate speech, such as the Charlie Hebdo

incident and the murder of Samuel Paty. This violence creates an unfriendly environment for Muslims, leading to fear, insecurity, and social isolation.

- 4) International Response: President Macron's actions in addressing Islamophobia in France have elicited negative responses from the international community, particularly among Muslim populations. Macron's statements related to Samuel Paty's murder sparked condemnation and threats of boycotts, highlighting solidarity against the discrimination faced by Muslims in France. Reactions from state actors, including Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, underscore the international concern regarding the treatment of Muslims in France.

However, the influence of Islamophobia in France, as viewed through a constructivist lens, illustrates how governmental actions and societal attitudes contribute to the marginalization and discrimination of the Muslim community. The assumptions outlined provide insight into the complex interplay of discrimination, racism, and violence that shape the experiences of Muslims in France under President Macron's administration and highlight the broader implications for social cohesion within the country.

## CONCLUSION

From the various presentations and analyses in the preceding chapters, it is concluded that Islamophobia during President Emmanuel[A1] Macron's administration has had a significant impact on the Muslim community in France. The increase in Islamophobia during Macron's tenure is rooted in efforts to reinforce the construction of the '*Laïcité*' norm as a foundational principle of French society. The '*Laïcité*' norm embodies the separation of religion and state and has become an integral part of France's identity for centuries. President Macron's speech acts regarding the blasphemy of the Prophet Muhammad through the cartoons published by *Charlie Hebdo*, as well as the establishment of the Anti-Separatism Law, are also grounded in the '*Laïcité*' norm. Macron argued that the incident of blasphemy constituted a violation of the '*Laïcité*' principle and that the Anti-Separatism Law was necessary to protect this norm. The efforts of President Macron's administration have sparked a rise in Islamophobia in France, and this increase has had detrimental effects on the living conditions of the Muslim community. It is found that Muslims face discrimination in employment, housing, and education, and frequently become targets of violence, leading to fear and insecurity among Muslims. While the French government has taken several steps to address Islamophobia, these measures have not yet been fully effective, and Islamophobia remains a serious issue in France. The influence of Islamophobia on the Muslim community in France needs to be mitigated to create justice, which is a right for all members of society, including Muslims. The concept of '*Laïcité*' promoted by the Macron government should be reevaluated to ensure that it does not give rise to policies that discriminate against the Muslim community in France. To address these challenges, several recommendations emerge: first, the French government should implement comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation with stronger enforcement mechanisms; second, educational reforms should promote intercultural dialogue and understanding of religious diversity within the framework of republican values; third, civil society organizations and interfaith groups should be supported to foster social cohesion; and finally, international monitoring bodies should continue to assess France's human rights obligations regarding religious freedom and minority protection.

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