LAÏCITÉ AND THE RISE OF RADICAL ISLAMIC

TERRORISM IN FRANCE: HOW AN EXCLUSIONARY

NATIONAL IDENTITY PUSHES FRENCH MUSLIMS

TOWARDS EXTREMISM

by

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In the past twenty years France has seen a sharp increase in radical Islamic terrorist attacks committed by its own citizens unparalleled by its neighbors in Western Europe. This study aims to address reasons for which French Muslims are radicalized at a significantly greater rate than Muslim citizens of other European nations. Three dominant theories exist to explain the phenomenon of radicalization: low socioeconomic status, external radicalization by existing terrorist and extremist cells, and secular identity politics which exclude French Muslims from French identities. Drawing from secondary sources regarding key features of the life histories of fourteen French Muslim terrorists between 1985 and 2018, we may address the extent to which these three theories explain the increased radicalization in France, and what sets France apart from other European nations. Founded on staunch republican values, the unique structure of French *laïcité* creates a French identity which conflicts with religious identities amongst Muslim communities. Through tacit and explicit secular laws- supported by the cultural acceptance of *laïcité*- which unequally target Muslims, Islam is externalized from French society thus increasing feelings of isolation and anger among French Muslims and facilitating radicalization by external catalysts. This study works towards furthering understanding the underlying causes of radicalization and the recent rise in radical Islamic terrorism.

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Introduction

The past three decades have seen a sharp rise in Islamic terrorism around the word, both in conflict countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan, but also non-conflict nations in Western Europe and North America. Following the entrance of the West into the Gulf War Theater and the attacks on 9/11, Islamic terrorism has become the dominant concentration of security and terrorism studies in the United States and Western Europe. No Western country has been more frequently targeted than France. In the last 5 years alone, France has experienced some of the most deadly and mediatized terror attacks in its history: the Paris Bataclan attacks, the shootings at the Charlie Hebdo office, and the 2016 Nice Van attack to name a few. These attacks represent a specific type of terrorism: that of radicalized Islamic terrorism committed by French citizens. I attempt to answer the question of why radical Islamic terrorism is so prolific in France and why surrounding nations have not experienced the same levels of extremism.

In this paper I will first contextualize the phenomenon with regard to four key subjects: Islamic terrorism in Western Europe, French reactions to terrorism, the unique French structure of *laïcité*, and the complex historical relationship between France and Muslims, and in particular France and Algeria. I will then explore the predominant theories that exist in the literature, as well as the gaps in research at the moment. Finally, taking an empirical approach to the case of 14 terrorists, I will test the roles of socioeconomic factors, external radicalizers, and identity politics in the radicalization process in France to ultimately demonstrate the way in which French cultural and political practices of *laïcité* push French Muslims towards radicalism.

Islamic Terrorism in Western Europe

      The UN defines terrorism as "criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public,"[1] citing political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or other similar motivations. The Global Terrorism Database, whose data is used in this paper, takes the definition of Bruce Hoffman, adding that terrorist attacks must be committed by subnational actors "*in the pursuit of political change.*"[2] For the purpose of this paper, we will take the definition of terrorism from French penal code 421-1 wherein an act is intentional, connected to either an individual or a collective enterprise, and intended to gravely disturb the public order by way of intimidation or terror including deliberate assaults on life or on personal integrity, hijacking of means of transport, and destruction and degradation.[3] Furthermore, this paper will limit itself to acts of terror that occurred in metropolitan France and were successfully executed.

      With the success of the 1983 Beirut bombings by Islamic Jihad, which killed 300 American and French forces and lead to the withdrawal of international forces from Lebanon, terrorist attacks were increasingly perceived as an effective tactic against Western forces, particularly in the eyes of radical Islamic groups. Terrorism globally peaked in 1992 before reaching a modern low in 1998. Since 2000, however, rates of terrorist attacks globally have steadily increased. Between 2000 and 2017, the number

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[1] Security Council Resolution 1566, *Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts*. S/RES/1566 (2004)
[2] Our World in Data. *Terrorism*. 2018. https://ourworldindata.org/terrorism
[3] Gouvernment Francais, "Code Pénal," Art. 421-1

of annual terrorist attacks increased over 600%[4]. Over the same period, terrorism in

Germany increased the most, followed by France and the UK, while the Netherlands

experienced only 13 terrorists attacks between 2000 and 2016.

Figure 1: Number of Terrorist Incidents in Western Europe

This Graph from Our World in Data shows the comparative change in terrorism in the
United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, and France. Between 1970 (or 1990 in the
case of Germany) and 2017.

Much of the global increase in terrorist attacks in the 2010's can be explained by

the increase in terrorist attacks in the Middle East, particularly in Iraq, Afghanistan, and

Syria. In the post 9/11 periods through till 2008, Iraq alone represented 25% of all

terrorist attacks in the world.

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[4] "Terrorism," *Our World In Data*
https://ourworldindata.org/terrorism#global-terrorism-database-gtd-and-bruce-hoffman

In France, terrorist attacks peaked in the late 70s and again in the mid 90s thanks to Armenian and Algerian groups respectively. A large portion of the terrorism in France particularly in the 1980's is explained, however, by tensions with the French department of Corsica. Outspoken secessionist groups in Corsica such as the Corsican National Liberation Front (FLNC) and the Corsican Revolutionary Brigade represent a quarter of all terrorist attacks in metropolitan France. Of the 2963 terrorism incidents reported in the Global Terrorism Database 1970-2016, 769 are attributed to Corsican nationalist groups. Similarly, Algerian independence movements like the Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA) and pro-Armenian groups were heavily active during the 80's and 90's as a result of French foreign policy decisions in Algerian and Armenian democratic processes and represent large spikes in the number of terrorist attacks during this period. These include the series of subway bombings in Paris and Lyon in 1995 claimed by the GIA, and the bombing of the Orly airport in 1983 by the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia.

The issue of radical Islamic terrorism in France as we know it arose equally in the 1980's and 1990's with prominent attacks such as the attacks in Paris in 1985-1986 committed by Hezbollah, and the 1995 Paris Metro bombings claimed by the Armed Islamic Group. Groups such as the Armed Islam Group (GIA) began a series of attacks in the late 1990's to pressure France to stop supporting the Algerian Government against the GIA and other groups' attempts at establishing Islamic states in North Africa. Although the GIA presents itself as an Islamic organization, I have categorized it's actions as political terrorism rather than radicalized religious terrorism. This is to say that the actions of the GIA, such as the attacks on Paris metro stations in 1985-86,

were motivated by distinct political strategies, in this case the release of Algerian and Lebanese political prisoners. The rise in radical Islamic terrorism also aligns with the increase in immigrants from North Africa and the Middle East following the end of the Algerian War in 1965. Between 1960 and 1980 almost 500,000 Algerians immigrated to France,[5] along with 400,000 Moroccan and Tunisian immigrants.[6]

During the mid 2000's France experienced relative calm in comparison to global terror trends, particularly in the Middle East, where the US was conducting the War on Terror against Al-Qaida and the Taliban. As seen in figures 1 and 2, radical terrorism picked up again in the 2010's with the most deadly terrorist attacks in French history happening in Paris and Nice respectively in 2015. Since 2010, there has been a sharp increase in radical Islamic terror attacks in France, making it the non-conflict state most affected by terrorism in the world according to the Institute for Economics & Peace's Global Terrorism Index.[7] Events such as the shooting of the Charlie Hebdo offices for their caricature of the prophet Mohammad have sparked debate in France on the nature of Islamic terrorism and given rise to sensationalist representations of Islam and its incompatibility with the French republic. Figures 2 represents the number of fatalities and number of terrorism-related incidents in four Western European countries. Both figures 1 and 2 show terrorism in France spiking in the 1980s and 1990s as well as in recent years, though all four countries represented have had increases in terrorism related incidents and terrorist related deaths since 2010.

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[5] Jørgen Nielsen. *Muslims in Western Europe*. Edinburgh University Press. 2016. 8.
[6] Nielsen, 8.
[7] Institute for Economics & Peace. Global Terrorism Index 2018: Measuring the impact of terrorism, Sydney, November 2018. 8.

Figure 2: Number of Fatalities from Terrorist Attacks in Western Europe

This graph from Our World in Data tracks the deaths from terrorist attacks in four
Western European Countries between 1970 and 2016.

While the French rise in total terrorism broadly parallels trends in other Western

European countries, the frequency of Islamic terrorism in France far outpaces its

neighbors. Since 2000, Islamic related terrorism in France increased by over 1000%

compared to a 500% in the United Kingdom. Since 2015, there have been 23 terrorist

attacks in France, of which 18 may be attributed to Islamic terrorist groups and Islamic

extremism. Furthermore, Islamic terrorism represents 6.6% of all terrorism in France in

the 1970-2016 period, whereas it represents less than 1% of all attacks in the United

Kingdom. Even adjusted for populations of Muslims[8], France has a significantly

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[8] Muslims make up roughly 6% of the populations in Germany and the UK, and 7% of the
population in the Netherlands according to the Pew Research Center.

elevated number of fatal terrorist attacks, inconsistent with global trends in radical Islamic terrorism.

French Reactions to Islamic Terrorism

As a result of the Paris terrorist attacks in November 2015, President François Hollande declared a state of emergency in France that granted sweeping powers to French counter terrorism forces, including increased rights to search the homes of anyone with links to suspected terrorists. The state of emergency further allowed French police to "detain persons and private resources"[9] as deemed necessary for assuring the security of the state. As a result, the government conducted 4,500 warrantless searches, and closed 19 Islamic centers for promoting radical Islam.[10] Under the state of emergency, in 2017 France lead the EU in number of suspects arrested for suspected jihadist or religious motivated terrorism. As shown in figure 3, France arrested more than four times as many suspects as any other country in Western Europe. Many groups, including the United Nations High Chair for Refugees have called out the state of emergency as a breach of human rights, and anti-islamaphobia groups like the *Collectif Contre l'Islamaphobie en France* have accused the French government of making French Muslims "pay for their own incompetence in not protecting the French people."[11] Human Rights Watch has further criticized the state of emergency for racial

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[9] "State of emergency in France: what are the consequences?" Gouvernement Français. https://www.gouvernement.fr/en/state-of-emergency-in-metropolitan-france-what-are-the-consequences

[10] Louise Nordstrom, "In Numbers: Behind France's two-year state of emergency," *France 24.* October 31, 2017. https://www.france24.com/en/20171031-france-anti-terror-law-numbers-record-long-state-emergency-macron-civil-liberties

[11] Amar Toor, "France's anti-terrorism laws leave Muslims in a state of fear," January 29, 2016. https://www.theverge.com/2016/1/29/10860964/france-state-of-emergency-muslim-paris-attacks

profiling and using the extended powers in "abusive, discriminatory, and unjustified ways,"[12] which unjustly target Arabs and Muslims.

Public discourse surrounding Islam in recent years has centered on its compatibility with French values, and the dangers it may pose to society. Furthermore, 61% of French citizens are opposed to immigration from predominantly Muslim countries,[13] and immigration featured heavily in the 2017 presidential elections between Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen. The dissemination of xenophobic rhetoric in response to terrorist events has manifested itself in vast increases of Islamaphobic attacks. From 2015 to 2016, Islamaphobic attacks increased by 130% to nearly 600 cases of violence targeting Muslims.[14] The presence of anti-Islamic media has also increased significantly, with online news outlets such as FDesouche and Réposte Laïque posting about the fight against how Islam destroys French values[15]. Figure 3 shows the comparative activity of European countries in arrests made for people suspected of religiously inspired terrorism. France notably outsizes the rest of Western Europe in the number of arrests made.

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[12] "France: Abuses Under State of Emergency," Human Rights Watch, 2016.
[13] Enes Bayrakli, and Farid Hafez, "European Islamaphobia Report 2016," *Foundation for Political Economic and Social Research*. Istanbul, 2017. 6.
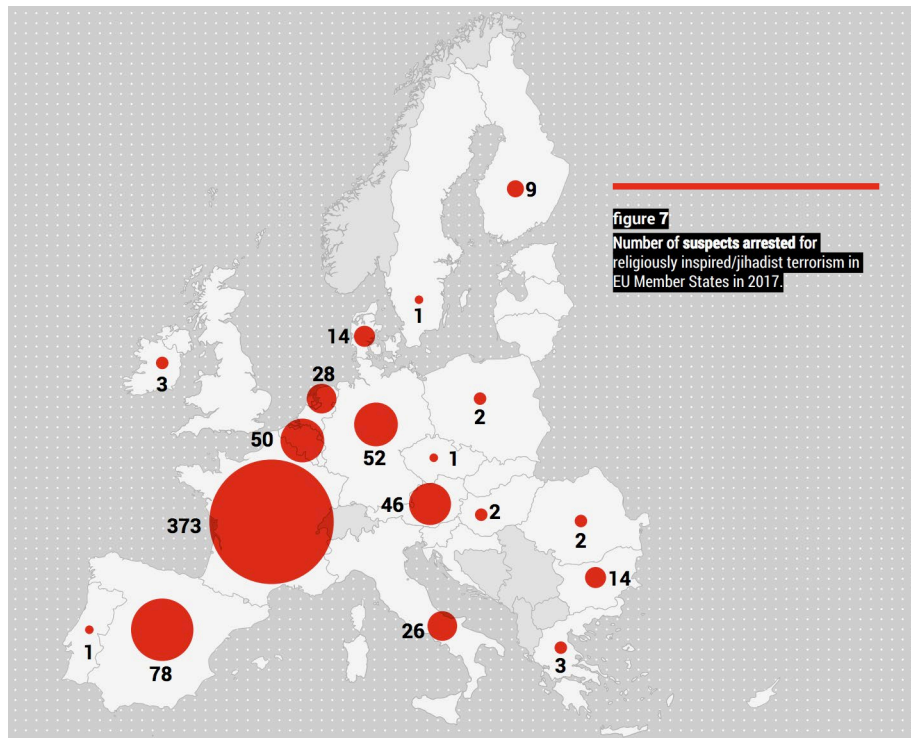[14] Bayrakli, 190.
[15] Bayrakli, 202.

Figure 3: Arrests for Jihadi/Religious Terrorism in EU Member Countries

This map shows the number of people in EU member states who were arrested for religiously inspired or jihadist terrorism in 2017. (Source: Institute for Economics and Peace)

Laïcité: Une Singularité Française

To understand the role of Islam in French society, it is important to contextualize the historical relationship between France and religion, and in particular, the distinct institution of *laïcité*. The unique French concept of *laïcité* represents the accumulation of enlightenment republican ideals in the face of the perceived corruption and outsized influence of the Catholic Church on French politics. Following centuries of religiously empowered monarchs and emperors, radical policy changes in the late 19th century pushed back against the power of the Catholic Church in the affairs of the French government. These changes, headed by Jules Ferry, made schools

undenominational, abolished public prayers, forbade army participation in religious procession, legalized divorce and secularized hospitals among other things[16]. *Laïcité* became codified in French law with the 1905 Law on the Separation of Church and State, which guaranteed freedom of religious practice, but stated that the French government did not recognize nor support any religion. As such, funding of clerical staff and upkeep on religious buildings was removed from the government, and public buildings for worship were declared the property of the French government, though still open to use by religious groups[17]. Lobbying from religious institutions, primarily the Catholic Church, saw the creation of laws of 1907 and 1908 which abrogated the law of 1905 to allow the French government to pay for the upkeep of existing public religious buildings, comprised almost exclusively of Christian churches. Furthermore, these laws allowed for public funding of religious schools on the condition that they be open to any persons, and that their curriculums are pursuant to French national education agendas.

While policies of *laïcité* are held up to be *"be apolitical, timeless, and stable"*[18] by proponents, the changing demographics of France in the past century have lead to opponents calling the policies unfairly targeted at non-Christian sects, particularly Muslims and Jews, who benefit significantly less from government support of religious historical monuments. While no official figures exist, it is estimated that 29% of the state funded protected monuments in France are religious institutions, with as much as 90% of Churches in France being owned and supported by regional commune

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[16] Othon Guerlac, "The Separation of Church and State in France." *Political Science Quarterly* 23, no. 2 (1908): 259-96. 262.
[17] "Loi du 9 décembre 1905 concernant la séparation des Eglises et de l'Etat," Gouvernement Français
[18] 8 Amélie Barras, "Secularism in France," in *The Oxford Handbook of Secularism,* ed. Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 149.

governments[19]. In comparison, the majority of the approximately 2500 Muslim houses of prayer in France must be funded through private associations[20] or via foreign donations. Although the law of 1905 was initially created as a financial separation between the church and the state, it has since evolved into a backbone of the French identity and been expanded in use to a number of religious domains beyond religious funding, and is cited in support of further secular policies such as restricting religious clothing and performance of religious practices in public.

Since its entrance into force, the law of 1905 has lead to a number of controversial affairs regarding the "overt" display of religion in public. Overwhelmingly, these affairs center on Muslim practices and displays of faith, most notably *l'affaire du voile* in the 1990's and 2000's and the so-called "burkini ban" in 2016. Secular French values and Islamic traditions clashed prominently in 1989, when three Muslim girls were banned from their school for wearing hijabs. The ban sparked debate over the extent of the public sphere, and the influence of religion in school, France's "republican sanctuaries"[21] The controversy continued into the mid 1990s when François Bayrou, the minister of education, declared that ostentatious signs of religion were inherently proselytizing and banned them in public schools. Though the ban was overturned, similar ideological veins continued into the 21st century. In 2003 the

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[19] Nick Haynes, "Research Report On Church-State Relationships In Selected European Countries," Historic Environment Advisory Council For Scotland, June 2008. 16.
[20] James McAuley, "To Curb Radicalism, France targets foreign funding for mosques," *The Washington Post*. August 14, 2016. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/to-curb-radicalism-france-targets-foreign-funding-for-mosques/2016/08/14/788ec7e6-5ef9-11e6-84c1-6d27287896b5_story.html
[21] Jacques Chirac in Soper, J. Christopher, Kevin R. Den Dulk, and Stephen V. Monsma. *The Challenge of Pluralism: Church and State in Six Democracies.* Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017.

controversy over *la voile* regained the spotlight when a number of secondary-school girls in Creil, France, converted to Islam and began wearing headscarves to class. Headmaster Eugene Cheniere banned the veils, and went so far as to ban clothing that was not secular and French, effectively rejecting any expression of cultural variation in schools. As a result of the controversy, President Jacques Chirac passed a law banning "ostentatious" displays of religion in school such as turbans, yarmulkes, and headscarves in public primary and secondary schools. These affairs target the French republican institution of schools, which have been critical to "disseminating and stabilizing republicanism, to creating France as a nation one and indivisible"[22]. The banning of religious clothing, and particularly of Muslim symbols of faith set up a structure wherein religion, and more pointedly, Islam are implied to be incompatible with the values of the French republic. In contrast, the rich historical presence of Catholic symbols in France are not only accepted but held up as sources of pride for the French people, creating a schism between accepted republican religions, such as Catholicism, and unacceptable foreign proselytization, such as Islam.

It is difficult to argue, however, that the politicians during the creation the Law of 1905 foresaw the critical role that Islam has come to play in French secularism in the coming years. Though France had a colonial presence in Islamic countries beginning in the early 19th century, the effects of these relationships did not come into force until the mid 20th century.

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[22] Scott, Joan Wallach. *The Politics of the Veil*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010. 107.

L'Algérie C'est la France: **Post Colonial Immigration and the Rise of Islam in France**

The role of French colonization in Africa is critical in understanding the relationship between France and Islam, as well as the role of Muslims in France. In particular, we may consider Franco-Arab relations to be the history of Franco-Algerian colonization and conflict. The arrival of French colonizers in the early 19th century signaled the start of a programme of what Edmund Burke has called *Kulturkampf* wherein the colonizers waged war against local traditions and institutions. Most notably, French colonizers and troops destroyed Mosques and libraries, and appropriated land and funds from Muslim foundations[23]. At the same time, the discourse surrounding Muslims placed them at the bottom of the ethnic hierarchy, with no right to vote or right to any representation locally or in mainland France. Even as French politicians preached the Frenchness of Algeria, its inhabitants were not recognized as French citizens until the early 20th century[24]. This complex dichotomy made Algeria a part of France but its people remained foreign, and codified distinct us-them mentalities between French of European decent and French of North African decent.

Labour pressures in the First World War set the scene for mass immigration from Algeria to supply cheap factory labour in French wartime industries. Between 1914 and 1930 roughly 100,000 Algerians immigrated to France to work[25]. Even as the French economy benefitted from the cheap foreign labour, however, public discourse

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[23] Wallach, 48.
[24] Wallach, 50.
[25] Wallach, 50.

continued to espouse the otherness of Muslims. As Charles De Gaulle simply stated,

"Arabs are Arabs, French are French"[26]. In the two decades following Algerian

independence in 1962, an estimated 450,000 Algerians, not including the *pied-noire*

descendants of French immigrants in Algeria, immigrated to France, alongside an

almost equal number of Tunisian and Moroccan immigrants[27]. With the influx of

immigrants, makeshift housing projects developed on the outskirts of cities, often

without electricity or plumbing, to cater to growing housing needs. Almost half of the

350,000 Algerians in France in 1962 lived in these *bidonvilles*[28]. *Bidonvilles* turned into

housing projects in the 1970s and 1980s as a result of rent fixed housing agendas,

becoming what now constitutes the *banlieues*. A 2011 study of *banlieues* around Paris

found that rates of unemployment were double those of city centers, and that three

quarters of the minors had at least one parent born outside of France[29]. As Fredette

suggests in *Constructing Muslims in France*, the *banlieues* have become the center

point of French intellectual discourse on Islam at a national scale. Cases of violence and

misogyny in *banlieues* are held up as proof of the dangers of introducing Islam into

French society and its inherent incompatibility with the values of the *République*. This

discourse further links banlieues with violence and lack of education, and links

banlieues to Muslims, thus conflating public perception of banlieues with perception of

Islam, which creates geographic and socioeconomic divides between Islam and French

values.

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[26] Charles De Gaulle in Thomas Deltombe, L'Islam imaginaire: La construction médiatique de l'islamophobie en France, 1975-2005 (Paris: La Découverte, 2005), p. 232.
[27] Nielsen, 8.
[28] Jennifer Fredette "Constructing Muslims in France: Discourse, Public Identity, and the Politics of Citizenship." Temple University Press, 2014, 128.
[29] Gilles Kepel, "Banlieu de la République," Institut Montaigne, October 2011.

Currently, Islam is the second largest religion in France, making up an estimated 8.4 million people of Muslim origin, representing the largest Muslim population in Europe. These populations are unequally represented in all levels of administration, legislation, and employment. Making up 8% of the population, North Africans, predominantly from Algeria, represent an estimated 30% of unemployed adults in France[30], despite having comparable levels of education to the rest of the French population[31]. Many French Muslims are thus employed in low-skill and low-wage jobs, with a quarter of the Muslims in France working as manual laborers[32]. Muslims are further overrepresented in French prisons, where conversion to Salafist Islam is common. Of the estimated 67,000 prisoners in France, as many as 47,000 are thought to be Muslim, making up 40-70% of the population of French prisons.[33] In comparison, the United Kingdom, where the Muslim population makes up roughly 5% of the population, 14% of prisoners are thought to be Muslim[34]. French Muslims are similarly overrepresented on the French high security watch list, *fiche S,* which consists of individuals who are considered ideologically dangerous to the French state. According to reports by the Ministry of the Interior, there are 25,000 *fiches S*, of which 9,700 are religious extremists "essentially linked to the Islamic terrorist movement."[35] Of the Muslim population in France, the vast majorities are of immigrant descent and born into

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[30] Wallach, 82.

[31] Emmenuel Todd, Qui Est Charlie: Sociologie d'une Crise Réligieuse, Editions Points. 2016, 331.

[32] Hakim El Karoui, *A French Islam Is Possible.* Institut Montaigne, 2016, 14.

[33] Harriet Alexander, "What is going wrong in France's prisons," *The Telegraph.* January 17, 2015. https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/11352268/What-is-going-wrong-in-Frances-prisons.html

[34] Alexander.

[35] "Sortie de l'État d'Urgence: Un bilan et des chiffres clés," *Ministère de l'Intérieur.* November 2, 2017.

culturally Muslim families, with only 100,000 French Muslims being converts.[36] By sect, most French Muslims are Sunni, though in recent years fundamentalist Salafist movements have gained traction, particularly in prisons, where Salafism is the predominant faith practiced as a result of terrorist cell recruiters who intentionally propagate fundamentalist Salafist Islam. According to French police, the number of Salafist houses of prayer in France has doubled in the past 5 years to 90 houses of prayer, out of the 2,500 in France,[37] which has raised public concerns and has lead figures such as former Prime Minister, Manuel Valls, to call for the total exclusion of Salafism in France in 2018.[38]

As a result of increased Muslim populations in the late 20th century, then Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy began a policy of integrating Islam into French society in a similar fashion to Christianity or Judaism. In 2003 the *Conseil Francais du Culte Musulman* was created as a representative body to interact with the government in the interests of Islam in France. As Jonathan Laurence has pointed out, despite being an organization intended to weigh in on issues of the practice of Islam in France, the CFCM has become the de facto interlocutor for the entire French population and has been asked to intervene in a number of controversies such as the wearing of veils in 2003, the urban riots in 2005, and radical terrorist attacks in recent years.[39]

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[36] Maïa de la Baume, "More in France Are Turning to Islam, Challenging a Nation's Idea of Itself," *The New York Times.* February 3, 2013. https://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/04/world/europe/rise-of-islamic-converts-challenges-france.html

[37] "Appel à Projet de Recherche 2018 'Islam Religion et Société,'" *Ministère de l'Intérieur*. May 27, 2018.

[38] "Attentat en Isère – L'auteur présumé était fiché "S": en quoi ça consiste?" BFM TV, June 26, 2015.

[39] Jonathan Laurence, "Introduction." *French Politics, Culture & Society* 23, no. 1 (2005): 1-6. 6.

Literature Review

While the myriad goals of terrorism including gaining publicity, destabilizing polity, and the redistribution of power, wealth and influence[40] are fairly transparent, and expounded upon by terrorist groups, the mechanisms behind radicalization remain in debate. The bases of radicalization are numerous, and frequently act upon individuals concurrently. Similarly, radicalized terrorists are not all alike in their influences and motivations. However, in the case of Franco-Islamic terrorism it is helpful to take a broader look and examine the commonalities between radicalized individuals, and particularly the role of the wider exosystems and macrosystems in France that may encourage religious extremism.

Popular historic rationales for terrorism are the inherent violence in terrorists, or insanity. These explanations have proven to be categorically untrue, and additionally prevent constructive dialogues surrounding terrorism prevention by removing agency from individuals and ignoring external influences. Nor is Islam an inherently dangerous or violent religion as former French Presidential Candidate Marine LePen stated along the campaign trail[41]. What we can agree on is that widespread radical domestic terrorism does not occur in isolation, but is rather caused by some external catalyst, which *radicalizes*. It is therefore helpful to highlight the conditions that increase vulnerability to ideological radicalization. What is causing the increase of radical Islamic terrorism in France? The most prominent explanations of this trend are

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[40] Krieger Meierricks, "What Causes Terrorism," *Public Choice*, 2011. 4.
[41] "L'islam compatible avec la République?: Les militants du FN ont leurs avis," RFI, September 18, 2016. http://www.rfi.fr/france/20160918-islam-compatible-republique-fn-estivales-marine-le-pen-frejus

socioeconomic disadvantage in the Arab and Muslim community in France, identity politics and societal externalization, and external agents beyond the reach of French society. These factors are all intimately linked, and a distinct unambiguous answer to what radicalizes may be an unreasonable expectation, however this paper aims to examine to the extent possible the prevalence in each of these factors in terrorist attacks to investigate the particularity of domestic Islamic terror in France.

Socioeconomics of Radicalization

Socioeconomic standing has long been held up as an indication of likelihood of criminal activity and violence as a result of long-term negative impacts. Socioeconomics impact a variety of factors such as education, lifespan, likelihood of domestic violence, and mental illness[42]. In their study, *Psychology of Radicalization and Terrorism*, Koomen and Van der Pligt isolate socioeconomic circumstances as the largest contributing factor to the process of radicalization. Taking examples from countries in Western Europe including France, Germany, and the Netherlands, Kooman and Van der Pligt found that, "groups affected by economic and social deprivation and by discrimination or inequality and that are faced with a government disinterested in their plight perceive these factors as threats…[giving] rise to a process of religious and ideological radicalization."[43] In the case of France, poor socioeconomic standing is particularly present amongst Muslim communities in the *banlieues*, with 20-22% of

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[42] "Violence & Socioeconomic Status," American Psychological Association. https://www.apa.org/pi/ses/resources/publications/violence
[43] Wim Koomen, and J. van der Pligt. *The Psychology of Radicalization and Terrorism*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016, 8-9.

Muslim men ages 19 to 50 being unemployed.[44] These socioeconomic stressors create further separations between the in-group and the out-group, in this case French Muslims and the rest of society. Those of poor socioeconomic standing are seen as antisocial, stupid, and lacking in ambition[45], which causes such communities to draw together, engendering lowered views of those outside of the community. This us-them mentality then translates into increased hostility towards the other. Akerlof and Kranton further argue that communities self regulate behavior that is harmful to their economic interests, however, that when discontent is widespread throughout a community, communities homogenize their discontent and tend to focus actions on community issues over personal issues.[46] Faced with poor economic futures for many Muslim communities, "re-asserting one's religious identity is a way of taking a stand against this"[47] and stabilizes their identity in the face of perceived socioeconomic threats. In a study of 126 French citizens incarcerated for terrorism related offenses, Hecker found that 40% of terrorists came from "economic priority zones", noting a distinct link between poverty and likelihood of radicalizing[48]. However, separating poverty from geographic location and thus community is incredibly complex, making the isolation of economic motivations for radicalization highly difficult.

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[44] Todd, 331.
[45] Koomen, 24.
[46] G. A. Akerlof and R. E. Kranton, 'Economics and Identity', Quarterly Journal of Economics 115/3
(2000) pp.715–53.
[47] Hakim El Karoui, *Islamist Factory*. Institut Montaigne. 2018, 27.
[48] Marc Hecker, "137 Nuances de Terrorisme: Les Djihadistes de France Face à la Justice," Centre des Etudes de Sécurité, April 2018.

Prisons represent another pillar in the theory of socioeconomic-based radicalization. In his book *Prisons de France. Violence, radicalisation, déshumanisation : surveillants et détenus parlent,* Farhad Khosrokhavar argues that the nature of prisons causes an "overatribution of malice" between the guards and prisoners, where the prisoners see guards as "the figure of evil."[49] Combined with the disproportionate number of incarcerated Muslims, (accounting for an estimated 40-60% of the inmates) prisons create an environment in which inmates radicalize out of anger against the society which imprisoned them, out of a need for protection from Muslim leaders in prison, or in an attempt to gain prestige in a heavily religious community. Radicalization is then a direct result of prison systems where religious ideologies and hostility are heavily prevalent.

External Radicalization

In their study of the reasons behind global terrorism, Krieger and Meierrieks identify another form of radicalization independent of socioeconomics and identity, which is what they term, « contagion, »[50] which refers to exposure to terrorism spatially and temporally. They argue that terrorism begets terrorism, calling transnational terrorism « autoregressive and infectious. »[51] The phenomenon of Islamic terrorism in France then could be seen as a result of a long history of terrorism in France, which has

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[49] Farhad Khosrokhavar *Prisons de France. Violence, radicalisation, déshumanisation : surveillants et détenus parlent,* Paris, Robert Laffont, coll. « Le monde comme il va », 2016, 103.
[50] Tim Krieger and Daniel Meierieks, "What Causes Terrorism," *Public Choice* 147, no. 1-2 (2010): 3-27. 5.
[51] Krieger, 14.

encouraged the propagation of domestic terrorism. Furthermore, the contagion

hypothesis argues that targets of terrorism are frequently decided by spatial factors

including distance between nations and the presence of « regional hotspots »[52] of

terrorism that attract further terrorist attacks. Media sensationalism may also be to

blame for the creation of such hotspots, which provide powerful images that may be

used to radicalize individuals. Heavily publicized attacks such as the Charlie Hebdo

shooting and the Nice van attack clearly demonstrated the efficacy of terrorism. The

publicizing of these attacks and the subsequent public debates that resurged concerning

the violence of Islam may also be seen to draw attention to France as a focal point of

Islamic terrorism. Media sensationalism additionally facilitates the process of self-

radicalization[53] through the normalization of violence, which mirrors techniques used

by terrorist groups such as Al-Qaida to radicalize recruits.

In contrast with the theory of alienation leading to reality, many prominent

French figures have criticized Islam as inherently contradictory to French society, and

point towards strong religious beliefs and global political motivations as the source of

rises in terrorism. A survey by the socialist party affiliated Jean Juarès Foundation

found that 60% of French consider Islam incompatible with French values.[54] Former

French Interior Minister Claude Guéant (2011-2012) stated in 2015 that "not all

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[52] Krieger, 18.

[53] Mark Alfano, J. ADAM CARTER, and MARC CHEONG. "Technological Seduction and Self-Radicalization." *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 4, no. 3 (2018): 298–322. 299.

[54] Gilles Finchelstein and Brice Teinturier. *Entre France Insoumise et Front National, de Solides Divergances.* Fondation Jean Jaurès, 2017.

cultures, in regard to our Republican principles, have value"[55] citing two examples, wearing headscarves, and praying on the street, directly criticizing Islamic traditions. The idea of Islam as an oppressive, violent religion is additionally supported in popular works such as Michel Houellebecq's best selling, *Submission (2015)*, portraying an authoritarian dystopia where Islam takes over France to impose its ways of life on the West. Although this argument forms a powerful political discourse that features heavily in the rhetoric of many right-wing European politicians, no data exists to support such claims and these perspectives fail to recognize any complexities either in Islam or in terrorism.

Yves Lacoste counters the idea of religious ideology being central to Islamic terrorism, and separates religious motivations from geopolitical motivations that are under the umbrella of a religious rhetoric. Taking the example of Fouad Ali Saleh, who bombed several Paris locations in 1985 and 1986, Lacoste posits that religious rhetoric is a strategic tool to cover up political motivations. Had Ali Saleh truly carried out the bombings because of the "miscreants" of Jesus and Israel,[56] as well as the need to create a world of Islam as he claimed in his court hearing, Lacoste argues that he would have left France and lived among similar devout Muslims. In contrast, at the time of the bombings, political Islamic terrorism was on the rise in Afghanistan during the Soviet War in Afghanistan, and figures such as Osama Bin Laden came to prominence with their anti-western political rhetoric. Lacoste uses these geopolitical aspects in Ali Saleh's bombing of a Paris metro station in 1986 to argue that his acts were politically

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[55] "Claude Guéant persiste et réaffirme que "toutes les cultures ne se valent pas." *Le Monde.* 2012.
[56] Lacoste, Yves "Géopolitique des religions" in *Hérodote* 2002/3 (N˚106), 5.

motivated as part of radical Islamic political strategy. Levitt similarly contends that Ali

Saleh's attacks were masterminded by the Lebanese Shi'a party, Hezbollah as a

political tool to prevent French involvement in the Iraq-Iran War[57], as well as to assure

the release of Lebanese prisoners in France[58]. Similar attacks throughout Spain and

France ostensibly demonstrate political motivation behind the 1985-86 bombings.

During his trial, Saleh stated that he was a "fighter advocating for the Islamic cause"[59]

against French support of Iraq, and that Iran is the true seat of Islamic power. These

statements would imply a level of political or ideological reasoning behind Saleh's

radicalization.

French politicians additionally point to external radicalization via the Internet

through extremist forums and on line recruitment for extremist cells. The French

government program Stop Djihadisme calls the Internet, "the place of radicalization for

fragile people,"[60] and the French government has committed itself to combatting online

radicalization. Improvements in digital communications have made the dissemination of

radical ideologies through websites and online magazines significantly easier. The

internet then acts as a vehicle for the "contagion-like processes based on the spread of a

radical ideology."[61] Khosrokhavar further contends that most Islamic terrorists are not

ideologically Muslim, but rather born-again Muslims converted by gurus, friends, or

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[57] Matthew Levitt. *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of Lebanons Party of God*. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2013. 58.
[58] Levitt, 59.
[59] Levitt, 60.
[60] "Quel est la Rôle d'Internet dans la Radicalisation Djihadiste." *Stop Djihadisme*. Stop-djihadisme.gouv.fr
[61] Cristina Archetti, "Terrorism, Communication and New Media: Explaining Radicalization in the Digital Age." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no. 1 (2015): 49-59, 49.

online. Radicalization then is influenced by socioeconomic factors such as history of imprisonment, or economic class, but requires an external catalyst such as on-recruiters.

El Karoui identifies a number of factors in the radicalization of Muslims in France, including the dependency of Muslim religious organization on private funding, which frequently comes from staunch Islamic countries such as Saudi Arabia who use religious funding abroad as a type of soft power political manipulation. Figure 3 shows the findings of the report regarding Saudi funding of mosques throughout France. El Karoui also point to Wahibist and Salafist traditions that value pure interpretations of the Koran, and anti-western rhetoric as potential factors in the radicalization process. Khosrokhavar further highlights the particular strain of fundamentalist Salafism that has become pervasive in the French penal system, which creates strict dichotomies between Muslims and non-Muslims. While Islam is not inherently any more anti-western or violent than any other religion, "Salafi-jihad identifies the alleged source of Islam's conundrum in the persistent attacks and humiliation of Muslims on the part of an anti-Islamic alliance of what it terms "Crusaders," "Zionists" and "apostates."[62] Adherents of Salafism may then be ideologically radicalized against what they see as threats to Islam through modernization and globalization. The particular danger of Salifi-Jihadi Islam is "'the over-literalistic manipulation and exploitation of the Qur'an… by 'pied-piper preachers,'"[63] which uses religious rhetoric to incite ideological radicalization that does not necessarily involve socioeconomic or identity

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[62] Assaf Moghadam, "The Rise of Salafi Jihadism and the Al-Qaeda Ideology." *Religious Ideology and the Roots of the Global Jihad*. February 2008.
[63] Ian Sansbury, "Enough is Enough: Addressing the Root Causes of Radicalization," *Oasis Foundation*. April 2018. 12.

factors. Sansbury highlights the lack of religiosity in the majority of terrorist attacks in Western Europe, calling many terrorists "religious novices,"[64] who are more susceptible to external radicalization via religious extremists.

Figure 4: List of Mosques in France whose Construction was Partly Funded by Saudi Arabia

List of mosques in France whose construction was partly funded by Saudi Arabia[69]			
Name	Address	Aid amount	Year
Grand Mosque of Mantes-La-Jolie	78200 Mantes-la-Jolie	€981,720	2010
Grand Mosque of Strasbourg	67000 Strasbourg	€910,676	2011
Grand Mosque of Saint-Denis	93200 Saint Denis	€800,000	2012
Grand Mosque of Givors	69700 Givors	€291,600	2012
Al Hidayah Mosque	92600 Asnières	€201,612	2012
Othmane Ibn Affane Mosque	78200 Mantes-la-Jolie	€191,274	2014
Grand Mosque of Cergy	95800 Cergy	€191,274	2014
Okba Ibnou Nafaa Mosque	92000 Nanterre	€191,274	2014

Secularism and Identity Politics

Though socioeconomic status is inherently linked with identity, particularly in the intellectually elite stratification in French society, a distinction may be made between poverty and its subsequent impacts on education and employability, and political exclusion based on religious ideology. Kreuger and Malecková have posited that, "any connection between poverty, education, and terrorism is indirect, complicated, and quite weak."[65]In contrast, terrorism is a "response to political

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[64] Sansbury, 12.
[65] Alan, B. Krueger, and Jitka Malečková. 2003. "Education, Poverty and Terrorism: Is There a Causal Connection?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 17 (4): 119-144. 119.

conditions"[66] stemming from sentiments of indignity and frustration. In France, the

ideological separation can be viewed through the discourse surrounding the

compatibility of French values and Islamic values, which isolates Muslim communities

ideologically as well as geographically. The question of Muslims in France and a

'French Islam' has a long history in France particularly in the years during and

following the French colonization in North Africa. The relationship between secular

French society and its large Muslim population has equally been frequently addressed

by a number of modern political theorists such as Hakim El Karoui and Emmanuel

Todd. The trans partisan think tank, Institut Montaigne's 2016 report *A French Islam is

Possible* constitutes the most extensive survey of Muslim populations in France, which

surveyed 15,000 people to look into socioeconomic, religious, and identity trends

among Muslim populations. Among the findings in the report was the lack of political

participation in the Muslim community, lack of community support for Muslims from

the French government, and French laws that are inherently contrary to Muslim faith.

Combined, these cause many French Muslims to feel that "while they may be citizens in

the eyes of the law, they lack all cultural and social recognition,"[67] which in turn makes

them more susceptible to radical Islamic ideologies such as the world community of

Dar al Islam and *Hizb al Tahrir,* which provide them the recognition they want. El

Karoui cites the implementation of the 1905 Law of Separation of Church and State in

regards to the veil controversy in the 1980s and 1990s as well as the application of

secular politics on the burial of Muslims to further demonstrate the lack of acceptance

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[66] Krueger, 119.
[67] Hakim El Karoui, *A French Islam Is Possible.* Institut Montaigne. 2016, 54.

of Muslim communities. El Karoui argues that policies that ban the wearing of hijabs in public schools as well as the refusal to allow religious segregation in cemeteries prevent French Muslims from being able to claim a French identity and fosters a "denial of Frenchness"[68] from society.

El Karoui's 2018 report entitled *Islamist Factory* posits that a French Islam is entirely possible, given a supportive political structure that incorporates Islam into the republican French society, respecting both peoples' right to their religion, and at the same time the staunch secular ideologies of *La République. Islamist Factory* also provides insight into the reasons for the increase of radical Islam in France, noting increases in level of devotion amongst Muslim populations in France over the past 30 years.[69]

Emmanuel Todd highlights the specific nature of French secularism based in Catholic culture, which he called the "catholic zombie."[70] This "catholic zombie" represents the secular republican French citizen who considers catholic traditions to be non-religious. The latent Catholicism of the majority of the population has historically played heavily into political campaigns such as the Front National which portrayed immigrants as inherently different than and other from the rest of France, and which promoted the idea of radical Islam. Todd's theory highlights the difference in acceptance of Muslim and Catholic heritage- Catholicism being allowed to be secular, whereas any and all form of Islam is inherently radical and in opposition with secular policies such as the superiority of state law over religious law. Todd's *Qui Est Charlie?*

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[68] El Karoui, Islamist Factory, 31.
[69] El Karoui, Islamist Factory, 65.
[70] Todd, 333.

critiques the "total fantasy"[71] of the belief in secular homogeneity and calls for France to uphold its base of *égalité* by treating Catholicism in the same manner as Islam, rather than treating Catholicism as the default and Islam as an outlier to the norm. The impacts of long traditions in France are then considered cultural aspects rather than religious Jewish or Christian ones. Todd claims that these remnants of Catholicism such as the presence and continued funding of Catholic churches as cultural heritage cites, juxtaposed with the ban on public funding of mosques further engrains the idea of acceptable religion and unacceptable religion, placing Islam in direct confrontation with the French republic.

Beyond economic inequalities, French Muslims are further separated from the rest of society and grouped together by virtue of their perceived religiosity. Edwy Pledel critiques the French government and French society in her 2016 book, *For the Muslims: Islamaphobia in France* that addresses the culture of Islamaphobia and racism in France, which alienates Muslims and creates an adversarial rhetoric between Islam and France. Pledel argues that French society encourages a "self-fulfilling prophecy,"[72] wherein Muslims are reduced to their religion and associated with radical Islamic terrorists and political unrest in predominantly poor immigrant suburbs, which in turn pushes Muslims towards radicalization and political unrest. The idea of cultural homogeny wherein 'French' is the only identity is then "a way of desiring that the Muslims of France, in whatever degree they are Muslim, should no longer be so."[73]

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[71] Todd, 396.
[72] Edwy Plenel, and David Fernbach. *For the Muslims: Islamophobia in France*. Verso, 2016, 65.
[73] Plenel, 45.

Murshed and Pavan's work also supports the self fulfilling prophecy idea, pointing to

the link between Islamic symbols and anti-western ideologies that are present in France.

They further argue that the reduction of French Muslims to their religion creates "an

imperative to act on the basis of their Muslim identities,"[74] which potentially alienates

them from a French identity. Murshed and Pavan further argue that by defining

Muslims primarily in terms of their religious identity, France encourages "increased in-

group identification and a distancing from the majority group,"[75] creating a vicious

circle of identity group segregation and isolation. Koomen and Van der Pligt found that

social identity processes, including attribution of religious identity, are both the result of

and cause of stereotypes and prejudices, which propagates group alienation and thus

increases the risk of radicalization.

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[74] Syed Mansoob Murshed and Sara Pavan. "Identity and Islamic Radicalization in Western
Europe" *Civil Wars* 13/3 (2011) pp. 259-279, 261.
[75] Murshed, 261.

Methodology

What is causing the increased radicalization among French Muslims? To answer this question I have selected the cases of 14 French Muslims between 1995 and 2018 who perpetrated terror attacks. In this context, Muslim terrorist refers to individuals who grew up culturally or religiously Muslim. Given the breadth of terrorism in France, I have limited these cases only to fatal terrorist attacks committed in mainland France, thus excluding incidents such as the Thalys Train Attack which occurred en route from Amsterdam to Paris[76], and non fatal attacks such as Farid Ikken's assault of a police officer outside of Notre Dame in 2017[77]. Using news reports written following the attacks I compiled information regarding the socioeconomic status of the individual, where they lived, what nationalities they possessed, how religious their upbringing was, how religious they were as adults, whether they spent time in predominantly Muslim countries, whether they were incarcerated, and information on proclaimed reasons for their attacks. In order to assess the role of socioeconomics, external radicalization, and identity politics in radicalization, incidents such as the 2014 Tours stabbing committed by Bertrand Nzohabonayo that lack adequate information have additionally been excluded. Additionally I have taken information from international news outlets where possible such as BBC and Reuters, as well as mainstream French media such as Le Monde and France24. In choosing sources, I chose reports that limit editorializing as

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[76] Claire Hache, "Attentat déjoué du Thalys: Ayoub El Khazzani 'disposé à parler'?" l'express, December 14, 2016. https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/societe/justice/attentat-dejoue-du-thalys-ayoub-el-khazzani-dispose-a-parler_1860175.html

[77] Iris Peron, "Asaillant de Notre-Dame: Farid Ikken, un doctorant 'fragile' et 'très pratiquant'," l'express, June 7, 2017. https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/societe/fait-divers/assaillant-de-notre-dame-farid-ikken-un-doctorant-fragile-et-tres-pratiquant_1915344.html

seen in certain sources like *Laïcité République* and *Minute.* Table 1 lists the 14

perpetrators and 10 incidents identified for this paper. This list is not exhaustive, and

merely represents the most expansively covered acts of terror in France.

Year	Name	Incident
1995	Khaled Kelkal	Paris Metro Bombings
2012	Mohammad Merah	Toulouse and Montauban Shooting
2015	Ismael Omar Mostefai	November 2015 Paris Attacks*
2015	Samy Amimour	November 2015 Paris Attacks*
2015	Foued Mohammad Aggad	November 2015 Paris Attacks*
2015	Yassin Salhi	St-Quentin Fallavier Attack
2015	Amedy Coulilaby	Montrouge Shooting
2015	Cherif Kouachi	Charlie Hebdo Shooting
2015	Karim Kouachi	Charlie Hebdo Shooting
2016	Abdel Kermiche	Normandy Church Attack
2016	Abdel Malik Petitjean	Normandy Church Attack
2016	Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel	Nice Van Attack
2017	Karim Cheurfi	2017 Champs-Élysée Attack
2018	Redouan Lakdim	Carcassonne/Trebes Attack

Table 1: Individuals Studied

This table shows the 14 individuals studied, the year of their attack, and what attack

they perpetuated. Asterisks note attacks carried out in cooperation with individuals not

shown in this table

Socioeconomic Disparities

Socioeconomic inequality within Arab, Muslim, and immigrant communities rose to the front of French consciousness with the 2005 Banlieux riots in Paris. Over the course of three weeks, cars and buildings were burned, thousands were arrested, two people were killed, and a state of emergency was declared. Drawing from this event, it's understandable to try and establish a causative link between the socioeconomic conditions of the Banlieues with the violence coming out of the riots. To investigate the role of low socioeconomic status and violence, we may look at the occupational background of radical terrorists as well as their residence, which may be seen as indicative of the financial and social status of these individuals. In his work with incarcerated Muslims in France, *Quand Al-Qaïda Parle*, Farhad Khosrokhavar, interviewing suspected terrorists, has argued that social class, culture, and geographic location are not sufficient explanations of radicalization on their own[78]. His interviews include French Muslims born in France and abroad; college educated individuals and people without secondary education; those from good families in well off neighborhoods as well as those from the lowest socioeconomic classes. Reading these interviews, one would be likely to agree with his assessment. Though radicalization is undoubtedly a complex process, influenced by multiple interconnected factors, we may look at the backgrounds of these 14 individuals to find certain trends in the profile of the domestic radical Islamic terrorist in France. Are these terrorists truly from every strata of society, or is there a commonality between their socioeconomic statuses.

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[78] Khosrokhavar, *Quand Al Qaïda Parle,* 20.

Broadly speaking we may understand socioeconomic status to be the occupation, financial status, education, and living situation of a given person. Though it is difficult to find exact data on income and living situations, we may take the occupation of the individuals and their families, as well as their neighborhoods to assess financial stability and social class. Listed below are the occupations and residences of the 14 subjects.

Name	Age	Residence	Occupation
Khaled Kelkal	24	Vaux-En-Velin*	None
Mohammad Merah	23	Izards*	None
Ismael Omar Mostefai	29	Chartres	Bakery assistant
Samy Amimour	28	Drancy	Bus driver[79]
Foued Mohammad Aggad	23	Le Meinau*	None
Yassin Salhi	35	St-Priest*	Delivery driver
Amedy Coulilaby	33	Essonnne*	Factory worker[80]
Cherif Kouachi	32	Rennes*	Various short-term
Karim Kouachi	34	Rennes*	Hotelier
Abdel Kermiche	19	St-Etienne-de-Rouvray*	None
Abdel Malik Petitjean	19	Aix-les-Bains*	Part-time salesman
Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel	31	Nice*	Delivery driver
Karim Cheurfi	39	Livry-Gargan*	Various short-term
Redouan Lakdim	25	Ozanam*	None

Table 2: Socioeconomic Data

This table shows the ages, residences, and occupations of the 14 individuals, and denotes via an asterisk those habitations that are considered *habitations à loyer modéré*, or rent controlled housing.

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[79] Bouhlel was fired from his position in early 2016 before the attack
[80] Coulilaby was fired from the factory and began working sporadically prior to his attack

Of the 14 individuals, 12 lived in low-income housing projects across France. We see a typical childhood across the majority of these cases growing up in immigrant families in poorer neighborhoods on the outer banlieues of large cities. The Kouachi brothers were orphaned in their teens and sent to a state run school for children with special needs until they aged out and returned to Paris[81]. Living in the XIX arrondissement, the brothers, having no professional qualifications, worked odd jobs such as delivery drivers in order to survive. Figure 5 demonstrates the socioeconomic segregation seen in predominantly Muslim arrondissements in Paris, with neighborhoods such as the XIX, St. Denis, or Drancy having lower average salaries compared to other neighborhoods in the South Western parts of the city.

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[81] Scott Bronstein, "Cherif and Said Kouachi: Their path to terror," CNN, January 14, 2015. https://www.cnn.com/2015/01/13/world/kouachi-brothers-radicalization/index.html
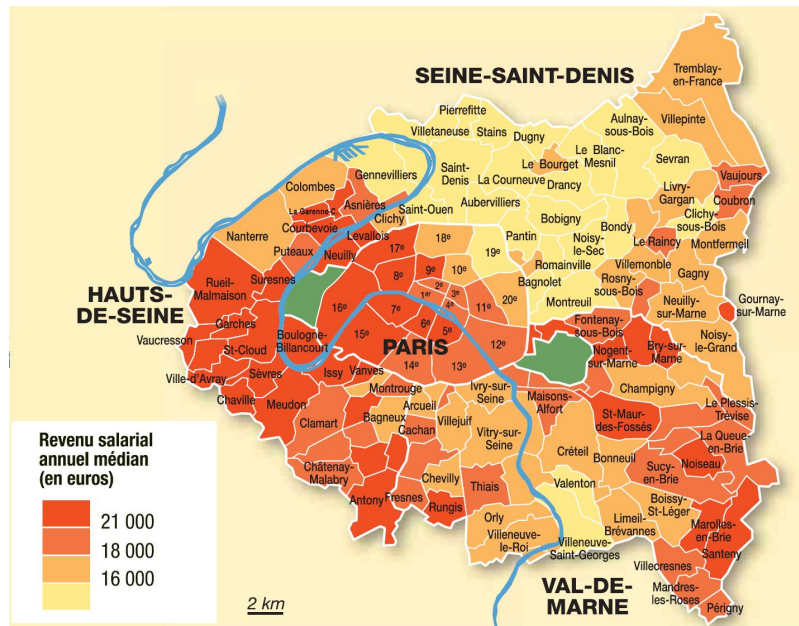
Figure 5: Average Median Salaries in Parisian Arrondissements

Similarly, Khaled Kelkal, unemployed and living in the housing projects to the north east of Lyon, described the difficulty of living in the Banlieux and going outside of his neighborhood as "plus chez moi".[82] The neighborhood where Foued Mohammad Aggad grew up and was radicalized has long been considered a "no-go zone"[83] with an unemployment rate as high as 30% compared to the national average of 9%. As a result of low socioeconomic statuses, the majority of these individuals did not complete their secondary educations and were ill equipped to join the work force. Of the 14, only Mostefai, Amimour, Salhi, Coulilaby, and Bouhlel held steady jobs. However, even

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[82] "Khaled Kelkal 'Moi j'espère, Inch Allah, retourner dans mon pays'," Libération, October 7, 1995. https://www.liberation.fr/france/1995/10/07/khaled-kelka-moi-j-espere-inch-allah-retourner-dans-mon-pays_147678

[83] "Who was the third Bataclan attacker Foued Mohamed-Aggad?" BBC, December 9, 2015. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35055304

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looking at the jobs held - factory worker, delivery driver, and bus driver - we see lower

income occupations with limited economic mobility. As a result of the few

opportunities for education and employment in these neighborhoods, we see high rates

of petty crime among the cases, leading to high rates of incarceration, and furthering

socioeconomic separation.

In contrast to these cases, Ismael Omar Mostefai and Samy Amimour, both

perpetrators of the 2015 Paris Bataclan Attacks, are outliers, having grown up in

relative stability and comfort. Mostefai grew up in a middle class family to a mother

who worked in the local government and volunteered in a North African community

center as a staunch self-proclaimed feminist.[84] Mostefai also reportedly held a steady

job as a bakery assistant in the Le Canal neighborhood in which he lived. Despite this,

he was convicted of multiple crimes from petty theft to driving without a license.

Amimour also grew up in a stable family with parents who worked for the city of

Drancy. Though described as an excellent student, Amimour did not pursue higher

education, and found work as a bus driver until being radicalized in 2012.

As we can see, socioeconomic status is not a perfect indication of

radicalization, however, amongst these 14 cases of domestic French terrorism there is a

trend of low levels of education and employment. Indeed, none of them completed any

higher education, so we make take education and financial stability as ostensibly

significant impactors in radicalization in France. However, 14 cases represent a very

limited scope of data to statistically support a theory of socioeconomic status increasing

[84] Jay Newton-Small, "Paris Attacker Is an Example of France's Homegrown Terrorists," TIME, November 15, 2015. http://time.com/4113864/paris-attacks-isis-homegrown-terrorism/

feelings of helplessness and in turn encouraging radicalization. Looking at national

GDPP as well as human development index rankings, James Piazza argues that

financial status is a poor indication of propensities for terrorism.[85] NATO reports that

roughly 2/3 of British terrorists come from comfortable backgrounds, and states that

"evidence suggests that terrorists are not any more likely to come from an economically

deprived or uneducated background."[86] Is socioeconomic status then a red herring for

Islamic radicalization in France? While Piazza's research demonstrates the

unrelatedness of wealth and terrorism on an international state basis, it fails to address

domestic terrorism and socioeconomic inequality. As Ted Robert Gurr argues in his

book *Why Men Rebel*, it is not objective inequality but rather the *relative deprivation*[87]*,*

which inclines individuals towards violence. With regards to French Islamic terrorists,

we see low relative socioeconomic status from the rest of the population for many

Muslims, placing further distance and contrast between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Socioeconomics then are an aspect of the larger issue of perceptions of alienation within

the Muslim community. John Rosenthal suggests that in the case of Mohammad Merah,

radical Islam "merely provided a conduit, giving legitimacy and a higher meaning to

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[85]James A. Piazza, "Rooted in Poverty?: Terrorism, Poor Economic Development, and Social Cleavages1." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 18, no. 1 (2006): 159-77. doi:10.1080/095465590944578.

[86] "The economic downturn: a boon for home-grown terrorists?" NATO, 2012. https://www.nato.int/docu/review/2012/Threats-Within/homegrown-terrorism-socio-economics/EN/index.htm

[87] Gurr, Ted Robert, and Woodrow Wilson School of Public International Affairs. Center of International Studies. *Why Men Rebel*. Princeton, N.J.: Published for the Center of International Studies, Princeton University [by] Princeton University Press, 1970.

violent impulses that had their roots in the frustrations and resentments and dysfunction that are so typical of life in French urban ghettos."[88]

The phenomenon of low socioeconomic status among Muslims is not a uniquely French occurrence however, and can be found in the majority of Muslim populations in Europe, likely due to the high number of immigrants within the Muslim community. In Germany for example, the Council for Economic Education reports that 80% of Muslims are on welfare,[89] while an estimated 46% of the Muslim population in the UK falls into the 10th percentile of most deprived in the country.[90] Low socioeconomic status for Muslims is then a broader, European concern that is not particular to France. While socioeconomics certainly play into the radicalization process, they do not fully explain the reason behind elevated levels of radicalization in the French Muslim community. We must then turn towards other catalyst to address the rise in the phenomenon.

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[88] John Rosenthal, "MERAH: The 'Untold Story' of a French Jihadist Icon." *World Affairs* 178, no. 4 (2016): 50-60. 60.
[89] Spencer Morrison, "1 in 7 Germans 32 & Younger Are Muslim- 80 Percent On Welfare," *National Economics.* February 19, 2017. https://nationaleconomicseditorial.com/2017/02/19/german-economy-immigration/
[90] Sundus Ali, "British Muslims in Numbers," *The Muslim Council of Britain.* January, 2015. 18.

Online Extremism and Foreign Radicalization

Contrary to anti-Islamic rhetoric painting Islam as inherently violent and incompatible with French values leading to terrorism, radicalization is catalyzed through contact with extremism, either through personal contact or via contact with extremist media. That is to say that the phenomenon of auto radicalization via readings of the Qur'an and adherence to the Muslim faith is not radicalizing, but rather that extremist recruiters search out vulnerable subjects whose personal experiences and grievances they reframe through a larger religious lens. Khosrokhavar has pointed to the high levels of Muslim inmates in France, pointing to incarceration as a significant factor in French Islamic terrorism. However, looking at the profiles of these 14 French terrorists, we see that only half have spent time in French prisons. Of these 7 cases, 4 of them were in prison with suspected Islamic extremists and terrorist cell recruiters: Amedy Coulilaby, Cherif and Karim Kouachi, and Karim Cheurfi. Notably, all four were incarcerated in the same Fleury-Mérogis prison in Essonne, where Coulilaby and the Kouachis met Djamel Beghal,[91] and where Cheurfi reputedly encountered the recruiter Slimane Khalfaoui.[92] It is difficult then to argue that prisons are the breeding ground of radical terrorism in France. In fact, of the 7 incarcerated, 5 are described as becoming radicalized after having been in prison. Nonetheless, we do see a correlation between incarceration and religious fervour. Khaled Kelkal cited prison as where his

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[91] Henry Samuel and Patrick Sawer, "Charlie Hebdo attack: the Kouachi brothers and the network of French Islamists with links to the Islamic State," The Telegraph, January 8, 2015. [91] https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/11334249/Charlie-Hebdo-attack-the-Kouachi-brothers-and-the-network-of-French-Islamists-with-links-to-Islamic-State.html

[92] Julien Constant, "Le terroriste des Champs-Elysées, Karim Cheurfi, était radicalisé depuis quinze ans," Le Parisien, October 18, 2017. http://www.leparisien.fr/faits-divers/le-terroriste-des-champs-elysees-karim-cheurfi-etait-radicalise-depuis-quinze-ans-18-10-2017-7338804.php

learned his religion, learning Arabic as well as the Qur'an.[93] Merah similarly states that, "the first time I entered [prison] it brought me faith in ALLAH and this time wallahi [by Allah] it opened up my faith even more and I don't regret anything, since now I will know very very exactly what I have to do when I get out."[94] Only Cherif Kouachi and

Name	Incarceration	Geographic Radicalization	Radicalizer
Fouad Ali Saleh	N/A	Party of God (Lebanon) Qom (Iran)	
Khaled Kelkal	Yes	N/A	"Khelif"
Mohammad Merah	Yes	Al-Qaida (Pakistan)	
Ismael Omar Mostefai	N/A	ISIL (Syria)	
Samy Amimour	N/A	ISIL (Syria)	
Foued Mohammad Aggad	N/A	Syria	Mouad Fares
Yassin Salhi	N/A	N/A	
Amedy Coulilaby	Yes	N/A	Djamel Beghal, Buttes Chaumont
Cherif Kouachi	Yes	Al-Qaida (Yemen)	Djamel Beghal, Farid Benyettou, Anwar al-Awlaki
Saïd Kouachi	N/A	Al-Qaida (Yemen)	Djamel Beghal, Farid Benyettou, Anwar al-Alwaki
Abdel Kermiche	Yes	N/A	Internet, Telegram, Rachid Kassim
Abdel Malik Petitjean	N/A	N/A	Rachid Kassim, Telegram
Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel	N/A	N/A	Internet, Omar Diaby

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[93] Liberation, Khaled Kelkal.
[94] Rosenthal, 55.

| Karim Cheurfi | Yes | Algeria | Slimane Khalfaoui |
| Redouan Lakdim | Yes | N/A | |

Table 3: Incarceration and Foreign Radicalization

This table denotes history of incarceration and engagement with foreign terrorist groups. It additionally notes relationships with know extremists or terrorist recruiters.

Cheurfi radicalized before entering prison, through an extremist Salafi mosque in the case of Kouachi and via his father and other extremists in the case of Cheurfi. Unlike radicalization in some Islamic countries such as Pakistan[95], religious educations and *madrassas* do not play a role in radicalization in France. The exception to this is the notable case of the 1985-1986 bombings in Paris committed by Fouad Ali Salah, a French citizen who studied at an Islamic university in Qoms in Iran, and spent time studying and training with Hezbollah and the Party of God in Lebanon[96].

It is important, however, to keep in mind the role of French society and political rhetoric in elevated rates of incarceration amongst citizens of Muslim heritage. As I have already noted, Muslims are disproportionately represented in the banlieues in France, and 12 of the 14 subjects in this research grew up in, or lived in, housing projects. Macdonald (2015) has explored the relationships between crime and the 'built environment' and argues that, "construction of public housing that concentrates poor

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[95] Salim H. Ali, "Pakistan's Madrassas: The Need for Internal Reform and the Role of International Assitance," Brookings Doha Center, August 2009. https://www.brookings.edu/research/pakistans-madrassas-the-need-for-internal-reform-and-the-role-of-international-assistance/

[96] Given the specific political prisoner release goals declared by Saleh, and his long term activism with Hezbollah and the Party of God, I classify Salah as an agent of a radical political group, rather than a radicalized Islamic terrorist.

people in segregated neighborhoods generates crime."[97] Thus we may view to some

extent the incarceration rates amongst French Muslims as resulting from of geographic

segregation in banlieues, as created by historic relations between France and its Arab

colonies. Furthermore, in political rhetoric as well, the link between delinquency and

poverty is seen as "la réalité sociologique de certains quartiers,"[98] which creates an

expectation of delinquency in these predominantly Muslim areas. France is arguably

creating a self-fulfilling prophecy through its preconception of the sociological nature

of the banlieues, and the perpetuation of geographic segregation. Thus socioeconomics

and incarceration cannot be taken as mutually exclusive both in their relatedness, and in

their conception of relatedness in France. The Banlieux are viewed as apart from the

rest of France, with events such as the 2005 riots seen as a conflict between the ghettos

and the rest of French society. Interior Minister Manuel Valls (2012-2014) called this

separation, "un apartheid territorial, social, ethnique,"[99] which isolated French Muslims

and Arabs rom the rest of society.

     With the development of digital media and communications, the Internet has

become an important tool in radicalization and recruitment for terrorist cells. Three of

the French terrorists' radicalization may be attributed to digital media. Firstly let us

address Abdel Kermiche and Abdel Malik Petitjean, responsible for killing a priest in

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[97] John MacDonald. "Community Design and Crime: The Impact of Housing and the Built Environment." *Crime and Justice* 44, no. 1 (2015): 333-83. doi:10.1086/681558., 336.
[98] Eric Pellétier, "Attentats: les filières djihadistes puisent dans les milieux de la délinquence," Le Parisien, April 8, 2016. http://www.leparisien.fr/attentats-terroristes-paris/attentats-les-filieres-djihadistes-puisent-dans-les-milieux-de-la-delinquance-08-04-2016-5696919.php
[99] "Manuel Valls évoque 'un apartheid territorial, social, éthnique' en France," Le Monde, January 20, 2015. https://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2015/01/20/pour-manuel-valls-il-existe-un-apartheid-territorial-social-ethnique-en-france_4559714_823448.html

the Normandy church attack in 2016. Following the 2015 Charlie Hebdo shooting, Abdel Kermiche began browsing jihadist websites and making contact with extremists.[100] Using the messaging app Telegram, Kermiche began communicating with up to 200 other jihadis[101] including Rachid Kassim, a known recruiter for the Islamic state. Petitjean similarly radicalized through contact with extremists using Telegram, ultimately attempting to travel to Syria to join the Islamic State. Using Telegram, Kassim connected Kermiche and Petitjean, facilitated their meeting and encouraged them to orchestrate an attack.[102] The second example is that of Mohamed Lahouajej Bouhlel, who in 2016 rented a van and drove it into a crowd in Nice, killing 86 people. A month before the attack, Bouhlel began making daily Internet searches for jihadist *nasheeds* as well as searching Quranic verses and prominent terror attacks such as the Paris attacks, Charlie Hebdo shooting, and Pulse nightclub shooting in the US.[103] None of these radicalizing agents, however, are unique to France. Although France has a higher rate of incarcerated Muslims when compared to its surrounding neighbors, and has a prison culture that is much more saturated with radical Islam, the disproportionate levels of radical Islamic terror in France cannot be attributed to prisons alone. Neither are radical websites and technologies any more or less accessible in France than in other

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[100] "Abdel Kermiche," Counter Extremism Project.
https://www.counterextremism.com/extremists/adel-kermiche
[101] Victor Garcia and Jérémie Pham-Lê, "'Tu vas donc dans une église: tu fais un carnage': l'enregistrement glaçant de Kermiche," l'express July 20, 2016.
https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/societe/justice/tu-vas-dans-une-eglise-tu-fais-un-carnage-l-enregistrement-glacant-d-adel-kermiche_1816446.html
[102] "Abdel-Malik Petitjean," Counter Extremism Project.
https://www.counterextremism.com/extremists/abdel-malik-petitjean
[103] "Attack on Nice: Who was Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel?" BBC, August 19, 2016.
https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36801763

nations. We should then turn towards unique French constructs that may explain the

alienation perceived by the Muslim community.

Ni Arabe ni Francais: Constructing an Exclusionary French Identity

The rise in terror attacks claimed by French citizens acting in the name of terror groups such as the Islamic State and Al Qaida indicate that more and more individuals are identifying with these extremist groups. This begs the question as to what conditions lead to identifying with foreign terrorist cells, and why these individuals are perpetrating attacks on their fellow countrymen. We may view radicalization amongst French Muslims as a rejection of French identity and an acceptance and intensification of religious identity. Of the 14 researched here, only Redouan Lakdim grew up regularly practicing Islam- attending mosque, adhering to dietary restrictions, and keeping a beard. The others may be categorized as culturally Muslim, attending mosque on religious holidays or observing Ramadan, but otherwise not demonstrating any engagement in their faith[104]. Rosenthal describes Mohammad Merah as an "inner-city 'gangster',"[105] who regularly drank and took drugs. Cherif Kouachi described himself as not a good Muslim[106] admitting to eating pork, drinking, and smoking cannabis, while Bouhlel regularly took drugs and partook in a "wild" sex life.[107] Before being radicalized, many of them were described by those close to them as "not serious"[108]

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[104] Alexandre Dhaussy, perpetrator of the 2013 La Défense attack was born and raised in a Catholic family, before converting to Islam as a teen. Not enough information exists, however, to include him in this paper.

[105] Rosenthal, 58.

[106] Bronstein

[107] BBC, Who Was Mohamed Bouhlel

[108] Angelique Chrisafis, "Life of Paris attacker Omar Ismail Mostefai: from petty crime to radicalization," The Guardian, November 16, 2015. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/15/paris-attacker-omar-ismail-mostefai

about religion, "perfectly *laïque,*"[109] or disinterested in Islam. Petitjean's mother called

him a "good French citizen."[110] I contend that the societal conflict between Muslim

identities and French identities pushes French Muslims away from national identities,

which causes them to turn towards religious identities and in certain cases towards

extremist ideologies, facilitating radicalization. Furthermore, this process creates a

perceived loss of dignity and respect in their community, causing French Muslims to

turn towards external sources of validation and respect, a problem for which extremist

cells are all too willing to prescribe and facilitate violent reaction. Khosrokhavar

describes the phenomenon as "a duality between a desire to be part of French society…

and the feeling, contradictory to the first, of belonging to another world, that of faith,

distanced from society and susceptible to entering into conflict with it."[111] We may see

the impacts of this clearly in the interviews Khosrokhavar conducted with incarcerated

French Muslims in 2002-2003. Subjects described how they are taken for beasts[112] by

French society, and the lack of respect that France has for Islam as a religion[113]. One

prisoner, Moussa, a Franco Algerian man in his thirties, said that *laïcisme* "is a religion

foreign to oriental religions and to Arab culture."[114] Interestingly Moussa described

himself as having grown up in a loosely religious family which "occasionally" observed

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[109] "Attentats de Paris: qui est Samy Amimour, le jeune homme 'sérieux et apprécié' de Drancy, devenu kamikaze?" France TV Info, November 17, 2015. https://www.francetvinfo.fr/faits-divers/terrorisme/attaques-du-13-novembre-a-paris/enquete-sur-les-attentats-de-paris/attentats-de-paris-qui-est-samy-amimour-le-jeune-homme-serieux-et-apprecie-de-drancy-devenu-kamikaze_1180207.html
[110] Counter Extremism Project, Abdel-Malik Petitjean
[111] Khosrokhavar, *Quand Al Qaida Parle,* 41.
[112] Khosrokhavar, *Quand Al Qaïda Parle,* 31.
[113] Khosrokhavar, *Quand Al Qaïda Parle,* 44.
[114] Khosrokhavar, *Quand Al Qaïda Parle,* 46.

Islamic doctrine, yet 7 years after arriving in France and gaining French citizenship he was arrested for suspected participation in an Al-Qaida terrorist plot and for association with members of the GIA, and further described his faith in the one true religion of Islam and his support of suicide bombers attacking the Occident.[115] This template is seen in the cases of other interviewed inmates, Ahmad, Ousman, Abubakr, and Majid[116], who all described non-religious upbringings followed by discovery of their faith in France, and finally their arrests for supporting various Islamic terrorists. Of the 8 inmates, 5 not only became radicalized in France, but also became practicing Muslims in France. Abubakr describes turning towards his faith as a "refuge" in France, and Ousman recounts his attempts to fit the image of the average Frenchman, but that he felt that it was "more or less impossible: they don't want me… this distrust killed me… I constantly alternated between what I was and what I wanted to be."[117] Another prisoner likened his identity to schizophrenia.[118] French Muslims are pushed to accept either a completely secular, republican French identity and eschew their religion, or become isolated from society by accepting their cultural identity heritage. In such circumstances we can see how many French Muslims, particularly those of low socioeconomic status who are already socially and geographically alienated from French society, are drawn towards a shared identity and sense of belonging through religion. In contrast with the French experience, three quarters of Muslims in Britain identified "British" as their sole

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[115] Khosrokhavar, *Quand Al Qaïda Parle,* 53.
[116] Karim and Mahdi similarly grew up culturally Muslim before finding their faith in France, however, neither are seemingly involved with Islamic terrorism nor extremist religious views
[117] Khosrokhavar, *Quand Al Qaïda Parle,* 130.
[118] Khosrokhavar, *Quand Al Qaïda Parle,* 166.

identity.[119] The schism between French and Muslim identities can then be seen as a unique construction representative of the history of French-Muslim relations rather than an ahistorical phenomenon.

Let us return to the case of prison radicalization. A repeated sentiment in the interviews of *Quand Al-Qaïda Parle* is dehumanization by the French penal system. Inmates describe meetings with Imams that must be requested months in advance to accommodate the limited number of imams travelling between prisons. In footage secretly taken of the Fleury-Mérogis prison by Coulilaby and four other inmates, prisoners are seen sleeping in bare cells with broken windows in the middle of winter and showing in dangerously unclean facilities.[120] While these experiences alone are unlikely to radicalize an individual, what we do find is a collective experience shared amongst many French Muslims, and an opportunity to engage in conversation as to how to address the abuses they face. Prison recruiters such as Djamel Beghal then offer solutions to these disenfranchised individuals through not only the sense of community offered by their brand of Islam, but a way of expressing their anger towards the way they are treated at the hand of the French government and its people, and by extension the West. Terrorist cells use similar rhetoric that highlights the "humiliation" and "subjugation" of Muslims in France at the hands of the government and French Jews.[121]

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[119] Sundus Ali, 17.

[120] Luc Bonner, "Fleury-Mérogis filmée de l'intérieur," Le Monde, December 18, 2008. https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2008/12/18/la-prison-de-fleury-merogis-filmee-de-l-interieur_1132482_3224.html

[121] "Crimes of France in Algeria" *Inspire Magazine.* https://jihadology.net/wp-content/uploads/_pda/2017/02/abucc84-marwacc84n-al-jazacc84_iricc84-22crimes-of-france-in-algeria-reggane-bombings-memories-refuses-to-forget22.pdf

As we see in the statements of the individuals in this paper, as well as the interviews conducted by Khosrokhavar, unifying all of the terrorists is not only a dissatisfaction and anger towards the French government and French society as a whole, but also a separation or alienation from the rest of society. At the center of their dissatisfaction is the way in which France as a country, and as a society, has treated and continues to treat Muslims domestically and internationally. In an interview with the German sociologist Dietmar Loch in 1992, at the age of 22, Khaled Kelkal stated that "total integration is impossible"[122] and that leaving his neighborhood he was confronted with a sense of not belonging. Driving through Samy Amimour's neighborhood, Alexander Smoltcyzk accounts meeting with residents of the neighborhood.

> "France never apologized for the war in Algeria," Azad says through the steam of the espresso machine. That's why some of his customers would never fly the French flag, he adds, no matter how horrible an attack might have been. "There's no longer any labor movement. The conservative bourgeoisie has conquered the banlieues. Because there are no longer any workers. Because everything is a mess. I even saw for myself, how men wearing beards posted signs for the conservative candidate Thierry Meignen (of the Union for a Popular Movement, or UMP, party) because he had promised them a mosque."[123]

We can see a certain disconnect between the French aegis of *égalité* and the realities of life in the banlieues, representing in sharp contrast the relative deprivation present in French Muslims communities. In the face of national tragedy

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[122] Liberation, Khaled Kelkal

[123] Alexander Smoltcyzk and Maurice Weiss, "A Trip on Samy Amimour's Bus Route," Spiegel Online, March 9, 2016, http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/a-trip-through-the-paris-banlieue-of-terrorist-samy-amimour-a-1079033.html

seen here, the community remains removed because of historical grievances. As a result, French Muslims may reject a French identity, even as they continue to be members of that society. Speaking with a French Muslim in Lyon, I was told that he was not French, despite being born and raised in France, and rather self identified as an Algerian citizen in diaspora. Discontent continues as a result of the French involvement in Algeria, as well as French involvement in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Fouad Ali Salah cited the French sale of weapons to Iraq in the Gulf War as the motivation for his attack,[124] Mohamad Merah desired retaliation for French military action in Afghanistan[125] and treatment of Palestinians, and Beneyouttou used the French participation in the Iraqi theater as a means of radicalizing and motivating the Kouachi brothers[126]. Note that in each of these cases, the perpetrators have no personal ties to Iraq: Salah has a Tunisian citizenship, and Merah and the Kouachis are Algerian. Thus we can see the importance of the Islamic *ummah* playing a role in the actions of these individuals who react in the name of Muslims everywhere.

Despite rhetoric from prominent figures such as President Emanuel Macron touting the compatibility of Islam with the French *République[127]*, the profiles of French Muslim terrorists indicate a sense of alienation from French society that requires one to

[124]Youssef M. Ibrahim, "Trial of Accused Mastermind In Bombings Begins in Paris," The New York Times, Janaury 30, 1990. https://www.nytimes.com/1990/01/30/world/trial-of-accused-mastermind-in-bombings-begins-in-paris.html?mtrref=www.google.com&gwh=D1812023FA5CE8EE3D2B9AE44005CA8E&gwt=pay
[125] Rosenthal, 58.
[126] Bronstein
[127] Ambre Lefeivre, "Emmanuel Macron: 'L'Islam est Compatible Avec la République'," Non Stop Politique, October 5, 2016, http://www.non-stop-politique.fr/actu/presidentielle-2017/emmanuel-macron-lislam-est-compatible-avec-republique-19506

claim either a religious or national identity, and not both. Given the treatment that many

Muslims face in French society, either through Islamaphobic attacks, elevated rates of

stop-searches, and inability to represent their faith in public, many reject a French

identity, and strengthen their sense of Muslim identity. Kelkal said regarding his

identity, "Je ne suis ni arabe, ni français, je suis musulman,"[128] and Lakdim claimed to

have acted for his "brothers" in Syria.[129] This transnational nature of the Islamic *ummah*

is central to radicalization in France because as French Muslims are rejected from a

French identity, they turn in reaction towards religious identities that places them within

a larger Muslim community that is similarly disenfranchised or attacked, such as

extremist groups in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, or Palestine. The equation between the

experience of French Muslims in France and Muslims in active conflict areas

normalizes the concept of violent retaliation in the name of Muslims around the globe.

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[128] Liberation, Khaled Kelkal
[129] Angelique Chrisafis, "Redouane Lakdim: profile of the France supermarket gunman," The Guardian, March 23, 2018. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/24/france-supermarket-gunman-radouane-lakdim-what-we-know-so-far

Conclusion

What do we learn from these cases of radicalized Islamic terrorism in France? Taking all 14 individuals, we see a trend emerge in the profile of a radicalized French-Muslim terrorist. They are young, lack extensive education, are poor, and grew up in the *banlieues*. The typical case is that of the child of immigrants from a Muslim country, growing up with a distant relation to religion that turns towards radical ideologies and encounters an extremist figure that puts them on the path of violent retaliation. While ascribing a singular variable to the complex process of radicalization is an impossible task, I argue that beyond globalizing terrorist networks and increases in extremist proselytization in France, singular concepts of French identity that exclude Islam push French Muslims towards religious identities that expose them to radical Islamic ideologies and facilitate radicalization by extremists and terrorist recruiters.

The scope of this thesis does not cover an exhaustive list of aspects that lead to radicalization in France. This research would benefit from a psychological approach to these cases to further elaborate on the individual thought processes that prelude radicalization. Given the time and resource constraints of my research, I have limited this thesis to the particularities of terrorism in France, however, it would be helpful to expand this methodology to individuals throughout Western Europe to better contrast the experiences of Muslims in France and the surrounding countries. Furthermore, I have taken a removed approach to the phenomenon, which could be expanded through personal research with French Muslims regarding their sense of identity and their role in French society, as well as through personal research with individuals who have turned to radical Islamic terrorism to better understand their personal motivations as well as to

investigate their perception of the key factors that I have identified as playing into the radicalization process.

With regards to the socioeconomics of radicalization, what we see happening in France is lower socioeconomic statuses amongst Muslims and Arabs, which is indicative of the particular history of Franco-Algerian relations as well as the continued propagation of these systems. It is impossible to address Muslim identity without taking into account the geographic separation that is present within many Muslim communities, wherein French Muslims and Arab immigrants are pushed to the outskirts of cities into *banlieues* where inhabitants are not only isolated physically from French society, but are also less likely to find stable employment or receive complete educations. As we see through statements such as Khaled Kelkal's unease at leaving his neighborhood, cultural dissonance between Muslims and non-Muslims enforces the separation between the groups. Furthermore, since the areas are less likely to have quality education or employment opportunities, French Muslims tend towards the lowers socioeconomic strata. That is to say that broadly speaking, low socioeconomic status and religious identity are closely linked, and contributes to sentiments of alienation within the Muslim community.

Similarly, external sources of radicalization through exposure to extremist ideologies online or in prison are, on their own, not seemingly critical in the radicalization process. We may however take the high rates of incarceration as another facet of the relation between the French state and Muslims. Coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, these 14 individuals are more predisposed to turning towards criminal activities and thus incarceration. Inequalities in the treatment between Muslim prisoners

and prisoners of other faiths highlight the 'otherness' of French-Muslims in prison,

which is used by extremist recruiters to turn individuals towards the community offered

by the Muslim communities and the Islamic *ummah.*

The particular history of Franco-Algerian relations and the institution of *laïcité*

in France create a French identity that excludes French Muslims from claiming a French

identity. Further historical relations have manifested in social and geographic separation

between French Muslims and the rest of French society, seen through socioeconomic

separation in work, housing, and education opportunities. The 14 cases explored in this

paper highlight the way in which French Muslims are tacitly and explicitly excluded

from French society, which causes dissociation between their French and Muslim

identities. While the rejection of French identity through adherence to extremist Islamic

ideologies is certainly not the norm among French Muslims, the high rate of

radicalization amongst French citizens compared to surrounding countries points to this

issue of identity exclusion as a powerful catalyst in pushing individuals towards radical

Islam.

Importantly, these cases of radical terror highlight the perceived targeting of the

Islamic faith by Muslims in comparison to the accepted for of secular republican

citizenship that allows for culture adherence to Christianity. Not only are Muslims

excluded from French society, but also they are done so in a way that juxtaposes the

acceptance of more "French" religions. The controversy of the veil, funding of existing

churches, and permissibility of Christian practices and not Muslim practices in prison

all serve to demonstrate the otherness of French Muslims. Disillusioned with the

hypocrisy of the French state and French society as a whole, extremist ideologies that

aim to restore respect and power to Muslims through violent retaliation have a strong appeal to these individuals. As one French Muslim prisoner stated, "France is pushing people to extremism. They suspect the worst of us and so we finish by doing what they blame us for."[130] The belief in Muslims as extremists incompatible with French values works as a self-fulfilling prophecy by excluding them from society, and thus making their identity incompatible with a French identity, in turn pushing them towards radicalism.

An *Islam Français* is certainly possible, however, given the rejection of Muslim integration by French society and the continued unequal implementation of secular law, it is unlikely that France with be able to resolve the divide it has created with it's Muslim communities. Radical Islamic terrorism is a response to unique French experiences that must be specifically addressed in order to span the perceived otherness of French Muslims and to reduce the appeal of extremist ideologies amongst French citizens. This phenomenon cannot be isolated from the particularities of Muslim experiences in France, and must be contextualized within the distinct historical and social factors present in France. In the case of France, the unique construction of *laïcité* is "foreign to oriental religions and to Arab culture"[131] and is thus directly responsible for alienating French Muslims from French identities and pushes them towards violent radicalization.

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[130] Khosrokhavar, *Quand Al Qaïda Parle*. 87.
[131] Khosrokhavar, *Quand Al Qaïda Parle,* 46.

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