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Are French Muslims constructed as a "suspect community"?

A critical discourse analysis of French right-wing newspaper coverage of Islamist terrorism between 1995 and 2015

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Abstract

Muslims living in the West have become the center of interest for counterterrorism policies. Yet, rather than directing their fear toward terrorism, North American and European publics have come to distrust Islam itself as a potential threat to their security and way of life. The concept of the "suspect community" offers a compelling explanation as to why ordinary Muslims are made to bear the responsibility of terrorism committed in the name of their religion. It posits that the public discourses found in politics, civil society, and especially in the media prompt people to fabricate a threatening image of Muslims – one that is based on imagination and prejudice rather than on facts or rationality. Interestingly, research on suspect community creation has largely been confined to the United Kingdom. This dissertation examines right-wing newspapers in France, a country with the largest Muslim population in Europe, to determine whether Muslims are assigned to a suspect community, and how. It identifies three mutually reinforcing discourses: homogenization, enemification, and internalization. Homogenizing language erases the variations inherent to Islam and places all Muslims on a scale of suspicion, from terrorist to silent apologist. Enemification refers to the construction of Muslims as enemies who oppose French values such as democracy, secularism, equality, and progress. In turn, the discourse of internalization presents Islam as an ever-nearing danger. The dissertation concludes that the media is in part responsible for generating discourses that construct Muslims as an extremist community threatening society and security alike.

Contents

Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War and increasingly since the attacks of September 11, 2001, Muslims in the West have been the object of a national security obsession. Rather than being confined to state security services, however, this obsession has spread to the citizens of Western states, many of whom have come to view Islam as the greatest threat to their society. Multiple surveys find that between 40% and 60% of the United States' population harbors a degree of prejudice against Muslims and links Islam to violence (Brookings, 2015 ; New America, 2018 ; Pew Research Center, 2017b). Beyond being attributed to violent extremists, the threat of terrorism has been placed on Muslims at large.

In Britain, experts in Terrorism Studies have come to write about a "suspect community". The concept was coined during the Troubles to refer to the British state's official suspicion of Northern Irish citizens and their potential links to terrorism (Hillyard and Liberty, 1993). In the wake of the 2005 bombings in London, the concept gained popularity and underwent significant change. The source of suspicion toward the suspect community was broadened from the state to encompass the public. Importantly, it also shed its exclusive association to Northern Ireland and was applied to British Muslims. A theory was developed around the construction of suspect communities through media-generated discourse. I discuss this theory in the literature review below.

Suspect communities have political, moral, social, and security implications. Politically, their existence depoliticizes their supposed members, legitimizes the erosion of civil liberties, and allows democracy-threatening legal precedents to pass unchallenged (Choudhury and Fenwick, 2011 ; Hillyard and Liberty, 1993). From an individual's perspective, being publicly suspected has the psychological impact of instilling fear (Breen-Smyth, 2013). The Irish and Muslim participants in Hickman et al.'s study corroborate this experience and recount the impacts on their daily lives. They report adopting a "low profile", self-censoring, and restricting their own freedom of movement by fear of confrontation with the police (2012, p. 98). In addition to the psychological dangers of being labeled as suspect comes the risk of physical harm. In a study of anti-Muslim hate crime in London, a positive correlation was established between associations of words like "terrorism" and "jihad" with Islam in the media and attacks on mosques (Githens-Mazers and Lambert, 2010 ; Lambert, 2008). Of wider societal impact is the social degradation that comes with alienating a minority group. Indeed, the "suspectification" of a minority group leads to its social marginalization (Awan, 2012 ; Hickman et al., 2012). Lastly, as a threat to social cohesion, such alienation may actually be counterproductive to security. Fear and lack of confidence in the police undermines community engagement and cooperation in countering terrorism (Choudhury and Fenwick, 2011 ; Spalek and Imtoual, 2007). Nonetheless, support from the communities infiltrated by violent extremists is paramount for successfully countering violent extremism (Spalek, 2010). Some authors even warn that disproportionate counterterrorism policies and social marginalization could help promote terrorism by making individuals more susceptible to recruitment into extremist organizations (Duffy, 2009 ; Hillyard, 1993 ; Wiktorowicz, 2015). The range of negative by-products linked to the creation of suspect communities, whether expressed in political, moral, social, or security terms is a testament to the importance of studying the concept.

Suspect communities offer a valuable analytical framework for studying the relationship between security and society, and specifically the social impact of terrorism. Regrettably, however, the research on suspect communities, and particularly concerning the role of the media, has been largely confined to the United Kingdom (Ragazzi, 2016). This raises questions regarding the applicability of the theory of suspect community construction outside of the UK. For this reason, I seek to test its strength and generalizability in France. Similarly to the United Kingdom, France features a large Muslim population (the largest in Europe, according to a Pew survey from 2017), is aligned with the United States' "global war on terror" ("Text of George Bush's speech", 2001), and has recently been the target of deadly attacks by Islamist terrorists. While there is ample literature on French Islamophobia and the clashes arising between Islam and French republican values, the threat posed by Muslims tends to be discussed in terms of immigration and socio-economic integration rather than security. For all these reasons, France is a particularly strong candidate for testing the theory of suspect community formation.

To approach the case study of France, this dissertation examines French public discourse as found in the media. More precisely, it looks at the right-wing media's coverage of Islamist terrorism incidents over a period of two decades. After a preliminary survey of the French media between 1995 and 2015, I found that traditionally left-leaning and centrist news publications exercise a great deal of caution when reporting on issues relating to Islam. This led me to surmise that if there were evidence of the creation of a suspect community, it would be found in the increasingly popular right-wing media. Should there be no evidence in the right-wing media, I contend that the theory of suspect community cannot be applied internationally, thus limiting its

analytical value added to the UK. The focus on right-wing media is also justified by the wave of nationalist populism sweeping over Europe in the last decade. Thus, the questions driving this research are the following: How, if at all, does the French right-wing press construct France's Muslim population as a suspect community?

For the purpose of this dissertation, I refer to the terrorism perpetrated by violent Muslim extremists as "Islamist terrorism". The hotly debated concept of terrorism is taken to be the organized use of violence against non-combatants for political purposes (Coady, 2004).

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

At the turn of the century, the world's conception of security underwent a radical shift. In the absence of an ideological conflict on a global scale, and with the number of intrastate conflicts soaring in the 1990s, security policy priorities shifted from the international to the national stage. With September 11, 2001 marking the tipping point, national security became the most important form of security, and terrorism its biggest threat. Yet, the exact meaning of national security is vague, and what constitutes a threat was never clearly articulated. George Bush's global war on terror, as noted by Bruce Hoffman (2004), is a war devoid of clear objectives, enemies, or substantive, temporal, and geographic limits. This vagueness leads to different and sometimes competing understandings of security. Thanks to the work of some scholars, however, we can demystify the notion of security.

Securitization theory

In the early 1990s, the Copenhagen School emerged as a new school of thought within the field of International Security Studies (itself a sub-field of International Relations). At the core of the Copenhagen School are the innovative concepts of "societal security" and "securitization" (Buzan and Hansen, 2009, p. 212). The first is defined as "the ability of a society to persist in its essential character under changing conditions and possible or actual threats" (Wæver et al., 1993, p. 23). Here, a society's "essential character" is understood as the different elements of its identity, including language, cultural traditions, religion, and national identity. An emphasis should be put on the "possible or actual" nature of the threats facing a society. What constitutes a threat to society is thus a matter of perception. In Wæver's words, "societal security is about situations when societies perceive a threat in identity terms" (Wæver et al., 1993, p. 23). Securitization refers to the process through which an issue is discursively presented as a security threat. Rather than an objective state of being synonymous to safety, security is a "speech act" whereby the utterance of the word "security" allows a state representative to problematize something as a threat (Wæver, 1995, p. 54). The logic here draws on the work of discourse analysis scholars, which I expand on in the following section on methodology. To summarize, the Copenhagen school views the understanding of security as being malleable and chiefly concerned with identity. If security entails first and foremost the protection of national identity, then all threats to national security are, to varying extents, existential. Through discourse, state representatives can create a security agenda and claim a special right to block the identified threat through any means possible. For this reason, the process of securitization has a Schmittian[1] aspect to it, whereby existential threats require

[1] Carl Schmitt was a Nazi political theorist for whom a ruler's sovereignty culminated in their ability to protect a nation against a mortal threat by declaring a state of emergency and suspending the rule of law (Scheppele, 2004).

exceptional responses, and therefore serve to justify overriding civil liberties and the rule of law in the name of national security (Williams, 2003).

Exceptional security measures tend to disproportionately target minority or immigrant communities (Bowling and Phillips, 2007 ; Moeckli, 2008 ; Pantazis and Pemberton, 2008). When considering the concept of societal security, it becomes clearer *why* ethnic, racial, religious, and linguistic minority groups are perceived as threatening. They represent an existential threat to a society's "essential character", they are "enemies within" (Fekete, 2004). To explain *how* minority groups are constructed as threats to national security, the concept of "suspect community" is particularly helpful.

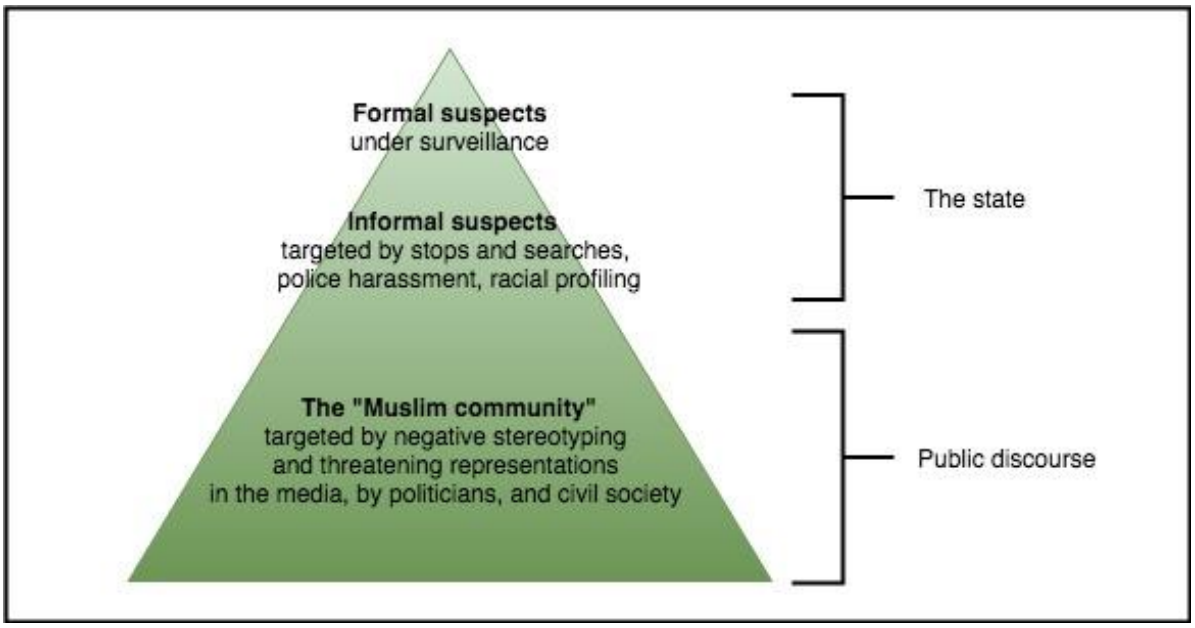
Suspect communities – concept and theory

Since its coinage by Hillyard in 1993, the concept and theories around the suspect community have greatly evolved. As mentioned in the introduction, British Muslims took the place of Northern Irish citizens after the July 7, 2005 bombings in London. Thanks to counterterrorism legislation such as the British government's 2006 Terrorism Act and its CONTEST and Prevent strategies, Muslims became the "new" suspect community (Awan, 2012 ; Choudhury and Fenwick, 2011 ; Pantazis and Pemberton, 2009). However, the concept remained undefined until Pantazis and Pemberton picked up where Hillyard left off, defining a suspect community as:

> "a sub-group of the population that is singled out for state attention as being 'problematic'. Specifically in terms of policing, individuals may be targeted, not necessarily as a result of suspected wrong doing [sic], but simply because of their presumed membership to that sub-group. Race, ethnicity, religion, class, gender, language, accent, dress, political ideology or any combination of these factors may serve to delineate the sub-group" (Pantazis and Pemberton, 2009, p. 649).

In addition to offering a definition, the two researchers later attempted a hierarchization of the suspicion held toward suspect communities, which I have transcribed into a diagram (Figure 1).

Figure 1
Areas of suspicion toward British Muslims according to Pantazis and Pemberton (2011)



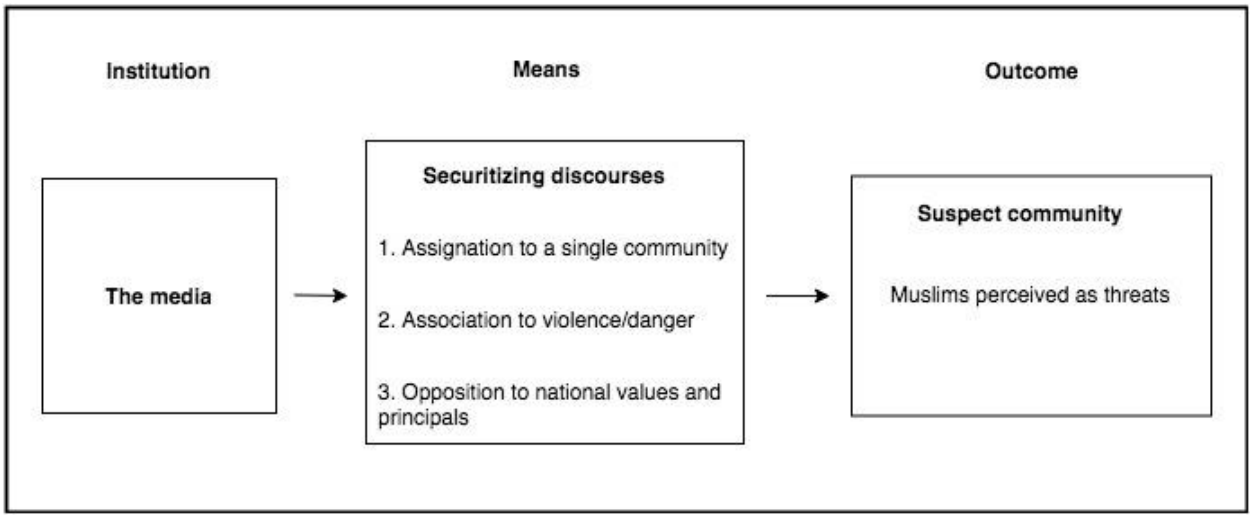
From their perspective, Britain's suspect community takes the form of a pyramid, with at the very top, a minority of formal suspects targeted by legally-warranted surveillance, in the middle, informal suspects targeted by stop and search orders, and at the bottom, the whole "Muslim community", targeted by media, political, and civil society discourses (Pantazis and Pemberton, 2011, p. 1057). Thus, the suspect community is created at multiple levels which can be classified into two broad areas: 1) the state (including intelligence services and the police), and 2) public discourse (including in political, media, and civil society discourses).

This articulation did not come without criticism. For Greer, the grouping of all Irish or all Muslims into a single community is a "conceptual error" (2010, p. 1172) – a criticism shared by Raggazi (2016), for whom the term "suspect category" is more accurate. Indeed, there are millions of Muslims in Britain, whose identities diverge across cultures, languages, ethnicities, religiosity, five major doctrinal traditions, and dozens of smaller sects (Jackson, 2007). Similarly, in light of their own cultural, religious, and political differences, Ulster nationalists and Irish nationalists hardly constituted a unified community (Greer, 2010). While Pantazis and Pemberton acknowledge the diversity among British Muslims, they claim that their "ummatic attachments" and shared experiences of oppression unify them into a single community (Pantazis and Pemberton, 2009, pp. 649). This logic is questionable, since for a state to construct Muslims as a suspect community, they would have to be explicitly mentioned in its laws (Greer, 2010).

It has been argued that while the state does not explicitly single out Muslims as a security threat, in practice, it tends to disproportionately target them (Awan, 2012). Thus, policemen, border patrol, and other security agents must be drawing their suspicion from another source. For Marie Breen-Smyth (2013) and Nickels et al. (2012a, 2012b), that source is the media. In Breen-Smyth's view, the diversity among a "suspect community" poses no conceptual or logical difficulty. Borrowing from Benedict Anderson's famous notion of "imagined community" (1983), Breen-Smyth contends that the suspect community is not physically embodied, but imagined, and existing only in the "suspicious public mind" as a "fantasy product of the securitized imagination" (Breen-Smyth, 2013, p. 231). She traces the creation of a suspicious public to the representation of Muslims in media outlets, who associate Islam (as they did Northern Ireland) with threat and

danger. This phenomenon was studied by Nickels et al. (2012a, 2012b), who identify the press as the main catalyst of suspicion in their comparison of Irish and Muslim suspect communities in Britain. In their analysis, Irish and Muslim communities were, either intentionally or through "discursive slippages" (2012a, p. 349), constructed as outsiders posing a threat to British values and principles. Pantazis and Pemberton allude to the press' responsibility in constructing a suspect community, though they identify it as one of many "social structures" (Pantazis and Pemberton, 2009, p. 649). For Nickels et al., the print media is the main breeding ground of those negative representations which lay the groundwork for the construction of suspect communities. I have illustrated Breen-Smyth and Nickels et al.'s theory of suspect community creation in a diagram (see Figure 2 below). The role of the media in the discursive construction of suspect communities is the specific theory I will be testing in the analysis section.

Figure 2
The role of the media in the construction of suspect communities



Note. Chart made according to theories by Breen-Smyth (2013) and Nickels et al. (2012a, 2012b).

Islamophobic discourse in France

Exclusive and Islamophobic discourses concerning Muslims in France already exist. However, as previously mentioned, they tend to revolve around immigration and socio-economic integration, lacking the securitized lens that this dissertation seeks to adopt. French scholar Thomas Deltombe came the closest to identifying the presence of suspect communities in France. His analysis of French television programs finds that word and image associations generate fears and fantasies among the French Muslim population to effectively create an "imaginary Islam" (2005, p. 7). In the author's view, to be Muslim in France has as much to do with the personal choice to believe in Allah as with the externally imposed views of the public, which tend to revolve around cultural customs, language, and race rather than the religious faith itself. As such, wearing certain clothing, speaking certain languages and having a dark complexion is enough to be typecast as a Muslim by the public. Not unlike Breen Smyth's conception of the suspect community, Deltombe's "imaginary Islam" refers to the multiplicity of vague and dissonant understandings non-Muslims have of the religion. Deltombe points out that reasons for reproach towards Muslims vary widely. Whether it be due to Islam's supposed sexism, racism, anti-secularism, or general incompatibility with French culture, television tends to portray Muslims as regressive and alien (Deltombe, 2005). However, the discourses pointed out by Deltombe pertain to the related but separate social phenomenon of Islamophobia, or the prejudice against Muslims. While Islamophobia as a societal phenomenon is a necessary component in the construction of suspect communities (Breen-Smyth, 2013), it is not explicitly related to terrorism or security.

With regard to Islamist terrorism, one of the most heated debates in French academic discourse is the popular, nearing three decade-long debate between Gilles Kepel and Olivier Roy. For the former, Islam is to blame for the surge in terrorist attacks on European soil. Salafi jihadism,

he argues, is corrupting Islam and becoming more acceptable as an ideology among Muslims. This view was endorsed by Manuel Valls, former French Prime Minister under President François Hollande, in the spring of 2016 when he declared that a small minority of Salafists were "winning the ideological and cultural battle over Islam" (cited in Daumas, 2016). At the polar opposite, Roy sees Islam as being peripheral to Islamist terrorism. For him, jihadism is a "nihilistic and generational revolt", whereby violent extremism in the name of Islam is merely an outlet for rebellious, violence-prone youth undergoing an identity crisis (Roy, 2015b). To support his theory, Roy points out that the overwhelming majority of French Islamist terrorists were not practicing Muslims before turning to extremism – in fact they routinely engaged in illegalities and activities prohibited by Islam (Roy, 2015a). The highly mediatized "radicalization of Islam versus Islamization of radicalism" debate, also referred to as the "Kepel-Roy duel" (Daumas, 2016), extends to the treatment of Muslims in Western media. For Roy, political and media discourses are responsible for the normalization of Islamophobia (Roy, 2015a). Kepel, on the other hand, denies the existence of Islamophobia, and contends that seeing Islamophobia in the media is playing into the hands of terrorists, whose posturing as victims is a strategy to mobilize supporters and detract from their violent goals (Kepel, 2013). For Jennifer Fredette, who studies Islamophobia in French media, the media is not a shaper of discourse *per se*, but a figurative megaphone for the French political and intellectual elite, who are the original shapers of discourses relating to Muslims in France. Nonetheless, her analysis of Le Monde articles about Muslims in France between 1990 and 2008 finds a widespread tendency to question their integration into French society. In a random sample of 524 articles, she finds that half are framed around questions of integration (Fredette, 2014, p. 39). According to her, the fact that one out of two mentions of

Muslims in the media are framed as such constructs Muslims at best as an incompletely integrated population, and at worst as an unassimilable Other.

On one hand, French publications concerning the negative construction of French Muslims in the media abound, but lack a securitized angle, remaining mostly confined to Islamophobia and the issues of immigration and integration (Adida, Laitin, and Valfort, 2017 ; Deltombe, 2005 ; Fredette, 2014 ; Laurence and Vaisse, 2006 ; Yavari-D'Hellencourt, 2000). On the other hand, the theory of securitization remains overly state centric. Thus, in addition to testing the theory of suspect community construction, this dissertation attempts to nestle the rich literature concerning the treatment of Muslim in French public discourse within the field of securitization. By conducting a discourse analysis of French newspapers, this dissertation aims to broaden the literature on suspect communities by applying it to a foreign case study and on securitization, by challenging its restrictive state-centric, top-down approach.

Methodology and research design

Critical discourse analysis

In order to analyze the securitizing discourses in French newspapers, I apply methods pertaining to critical discourse analysis (CDA). As the father of discourse analysis, Foucault conceived of discourse as using knowledge to exert power over people (Foucault, 1980). As such, discourse dictates power relations in a society. Some have traced the roots of discourse analysis to neo-Marxist theory, whereby power is not merely created and maintained economically, but culturally (Fairclough, 2013 ; Titscher et al., 2000). Fairclough draws on Gramsci and Althusser

to explain how discourses produce ideologies. These ideologies would empower a dominant group to maintain hegemonic power over subordinate groups and thus over society (Fairclough, 2013). As Wodak puts it, discourse analysis is concerned with social problems. It is not concerned with language in and of itself but uses language to study social and cultural processes and structures (Wodak, 1996). CDA holds that society and culture are dialectically related to discourse, in that society and culture both constitute and are determined by discourse. The main objective of CDA is, therefore, to expose those reciprocal influences of language and society which people are unaware of (Fairclough, 2013 ; Titscher et al., 2000). Thus, the choice of critical discourse analysis for this project is motivated by its aim to uncover the social realities behind the media's coverage of French Muslims. Specifically, I focus on the social identities, social relations, and systems of knowledge and beliefs that are simultaneously created by discourse (Fairclough 1993, p. 134). The inherent difficulty of analyzing complex phenomena such as identity, social relations, and culture has led me to opt for an in-depth qualitative method of analysis.

Research design

My analysis systematically examines the labels, assumptions, narratives, arguments, and literary devices found in the corpus of selected articles. The text-based analysis is used to identify trends in discourses, also referred to as discursive practices, and relate them to the social practices they influence and are influenced by. The trends teased out of the analysis will serve to confirm or disprove the presence of three discourses, which were extracted from the theory on suspect community construction as outlined in the literature review (see Figure 2 above). The three hypothetical discourses are:

• *D1: Muslims are grouped into a single community.*

• *D2: Muslims are associated to violence and danger*.

• *D3: Muslims are seen as contradictory or incompatible with French values and principles*.

To test these hypothetical discourses, it is necessary to look at public discourse over a period of time, as articles relating to one point in time may not be sufficient to credibly draw out discursive practices. In addition to its necessity for theory testing, a longitudinal analysis accounts for the evolution and potential changes in public discourse surrounding Muslims. In order to trace this evolution, I have selected four historical terrorist attacks: the July 25, 1995 Paris Metro bombing, the September 11, 2001 attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C., the March 19, 2012 shooting of an Orthodox Jewish school in Toulouse, and the "Bataclan shooting" of November 13, 2015 in Paris (see Table 1 below). Prioritizing in-depth analysis, I have chosen to focus solely on these four events. In spite of the numerous other noteworthy attacks on the French territory, the events selected represent the deadliest terrorist attacks since 1995, with the exception of the January 7, 2015 "Charlie Hebdo" shooting. The September 11 attacks were selected because of their international significance in permanently altering Western policy agendas. As such, the attacks were extensively covered in Western media. The attacks I chose in 1995 and 2012 are both links in chains of incidents all happening within weeks or even days of each other. I chose to focus on the deadliest events, however, because of their heightened impact on the French public. Following the same logic, I chose to focus on the Bataclan shooting instead of the Charlie Hebdo shooting in order to avoid analyzing two incidents in the same year. For the sake of numerical balance and to ensure that I gathered sufficient data to test the theory of suspect community construction, I selected 5 articles in *Le Figaro* and 5 articles in *Le Point* which immediately

succeeded each event, amounting to a total of 40 articles (refer to Appendix A for a complete list and English translation of titles).

Table 1
The four incidents used in my analysis

Attack	Date	Location	Casualties	Perpetrator
1995 Saint Michel RER bombing	25 July, 1995	Paris, France	Dead: 8 Injured: 117	Armed Islamic Group (GIA)
World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks	11 September, 2001	New York City and Washington, D.C., USA	Dead: 2,996 Injured: over 6,000	Al-Qaeda
Orthodox Jewish school shooting	19 March, 2012	Toulouse, France	Dead: 4	Islamist terrorist (individual)
Bataclan theater shooting	13 November, 2015	Paris, France	Dead: 130 Injured: 351	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)

Note: data collected from various sources: Boumediene, 2015 ; De Pracontal, 2015 ; Plumer, 2013.

The corpus of articles I use for my discourse analysis is drawn from daily newspaper *Le Figaro* and weekly newspaper *Le Point.* As a daily publication, *Le Figaro* provides a raw account of the day's news, with limited editorial polishing. The value of weekly newspapers lies, by opposition, in their relative distance to events. They provide a more contemplated reflection of the publication's editorial stance and provide insight into existing discourses. The choice of these two publications is motivated by their popularity and political orientation (both are notoriously right-leaning). *Le Figaro* has been France's most or second-most read daily publication since before

1995. With an average distribution[2] (number of individual subscriptions and sales) of 367,803 publications per month in 1995 to 311,325 per month in 2015 (ACPM/OJD, 2019), *Le Figaro* exerts a great deal of influence over public discourse. For reference, as of 2018, *Le Figaro* is the most widely read daily newspaper in France with 309,492 purchases per month (ACPM, 2019). From 1995 to 2012, *Le Point* was the fourth-most read weekly publication behind *L'Express*. However, accessing *L'Express* archives proved to be exceedingly difficult[3], and since 2012, its readership has been surpassed by *Le Point*, which reached 364,085 monthly readers in 2015 (against 325,744 for *L'Express*) (ACPM/OJD, 2019). Considering the difficulty in accessing *L'Express* and its prominence since 2012, *Le Point* was the best source of data for weekly right-wing news articles. The only two weekly publications enjoying a wider readership than *Le Point* or *L'Express* are *Paris Match* and *Le Figaro Magazine*. However, *Paris Match* is an unsuitable site for conducting discourse analysis of the news, as it is mainly picture-based and features mostly celebrity stories. While an analysis of visual representation of Muslims in France would certainly yield interesting findings, it is not the focus of my project. *Le Figaro Magazine*, as the weekly homologue of *Le Figaro*, had to be discounted to ensure a measure of variance in the articles analyzed.

I found the 40 articles through archival research as well as online database searches. Articles from *Le Figaro* dating back to 1995 are not available online. For the analysis surrounding the July 25 Paris Metro bombing event, I made use of archival collections in Paris at the Bibliothèque

[2] It should be noted that distribution numbers only account for the exact quantity of publications sold. As such, they are just a fraction of readership numbers, given that multiple people may read the same newspaper copy, as in the cases of an office, library reading room, or household.
[3] The only two libraries in London and Paris which have these periodicals on microfilm have gaps in their archives, and the online databases Nexis UK and Factiva do not go as far back as 1995.

Publique d'Information, as well as the British Library in London. For the attacks that took place in 2001, 2012, and 2015, I used the Nexis UK database. For these events, I used the search terms "*islam* OR *musulman* AND *terrorisme* OR *terroriste*" to find articles relevant to my research. To trim the number of articles showing up in the search, I discarded those which covered the topics of Islamist terrorism abroad. For the articles reporting on the September 11, 2001 attacks, I isolated those which covered France's own threats and security responses.

Background

The context in which discourse is produced is a necessary starting point for an analysis of the news coverage of terrorism in France. As discussed in the sections above, the importance of knowing the overarching socio-political climate is key to analyzing discourse, since it affects and is affected by it. The goal of this section is to situate the reader by retracing the demographic, cultural, and political contexts in France leading up to and during the period between 1995 and 2015. I start with the historical origins of France's aversion toward Islam before examining the symbolism of the veil as the parable of Islam's putative clash with French culture. I then look at how the articulation of Islam's threat in cultural terms fueled an increasingly Islamophobic political discourse, which I argue facilitates the construction of a suspect community.

Demographic context

Following the era of decolonization of the 1950s and early 1960s, successive waves of mass immigration hit metropolitan France. The majority came from France's North African colonies. In

the 1960s, hundreds of thousands of Algerians, most of whom professed Islam as their religion, came to France to benefit from government-granted asylum for having fought on the French side of Algeria's war of independence (1954-1962). Coupled with France's need for immigrant labor to sustain its booming economy, it is estimated that a million more Muslim immigrants were welcomed into the country (Viorst, 1996, p. 78). Despite a restriction on immigration between the 1970s and the 1990s, the Muslim population continued to rise due to high birthrates, illegal immigration, and France's immigrant family reunion policy (Viorst, 1996, p. 78). The 1990s saw a dramatic uptick in immigration due to the Algerian Civil War, which opposed the Algerian government to various Islamist groups between 1991 and 2002. Compiling estimates of the Muslim population size from various sources[4], Laurence and Vaisse (2006, p. 19) note an increase from approximately 3 million Muslims in 1993 to between 4 and 5 million in 2002. In 2016, the number of Muslims living in France was estimated at 5,7 million (Pew Research Center, 2017a, p. 4). In spite of their growing demographic weight, Muslims have been poorly integrated into French society. Studies of Muslim socio-economic integration in France show that Muslims are systematically discriminated against. Recruiters in French firms are three times less likely to call back Muslim candidates for an interview than Christian candidates with the same qualifications ; in 2009, Muslim immigrant households were considerably poorer than matching Christian immigrant households, with a monthly income difference of 13% (Adida, Laitin, and Valfort, 2017, pp. 22-27). The systemic discrimination of Muslims in France's economy denotes a clear social exclusion which is symptomatic of a larger public aversion toward Islam.

[4] France's prohibition of categorizing individuals by religious faith in official censuses makes finding exact population data nearly impossible.

Cultural context

The roots of this aversion, or more simply put, Islamophobia, have been attributed to some French citizens, whose mistrust of Islam derives from an Orientalist essentialization of the religion – a legacy of France's colonial era (Said, 1978/2003). Other studies point to Muslims themselves, who bear traits considered by the wider French public to be at odds with "Frenchness", namely, a higher religiosity, a poor mastery of the French language, and different gender norms (Adida, Laitin, and Valfort, 2017). The central tenet of Frenchness that Muslims are perceived to directly challenge is the principle of *laïcité*, or secularism. Whereas some impute the lack of integration of Muslims to orientalist mentalities or their inherent cultural characteristics, others condemn structural inadequacies. For Olivier Roy, republicanism and democracy in France are in conflict: republican values like secularism are being enforced in exclusionary and authoritative ways, while democracy in its pure sense requires the protection of diversity and the guarantee of universal religious freedom (Roy in an interview with Amghar, 2006). As such, the growing population of Muslims puts a strain on France's sense of identity. To illustrate this phenomenon, one can observe with the rising number of Muslims in France a commensurate increase in the frequency and intensity of debates surrounding the Islamic veil, or hijab. The first nation-wide controversy, the "headscarf affair" ("affaire du foulard"), happened in 1989 when a French school barred three students from attending classes due to their headscarves. Thanks to a barrage of sensationalist investigative news reports and stories, the hijab instantly became the dividing line between "moderate", acceptable Muslims and threatening, "fundamentalist" Muslims (Yavari-D'Hellencourt, 2000, Deltombe, 2005). Two decades later, and after a series of public debates on Islamic headscarves, a 2010 law prohibited certain hijab garments (niqab, burqa) in public spaces, declaring them to be a rejection of "republican values" (LOI n° 2010-1192, 2010). Still today,

debates concerning Islam's place in society persevere. In France, the veil has become the exemplum of and a pretext for the public's expression of anxiety toward a growing Muslim population. Over the last two decades, this anxiety was successively captured and capitalized on in a number of best-selling novels[5], all painting a dystopian image of France's future: a country where Islam becomes the main religion, shari'a law is applied in courts, and Arabic becomes the official language. The extreme popularity of such openly Islamophobic novels impacts the French public in two ways. First, they are a testament to the French public's fear of Islam. Second, as elements of discourse themselves, they contribute to justifying the parallel discourses being held in the press and by politicians.

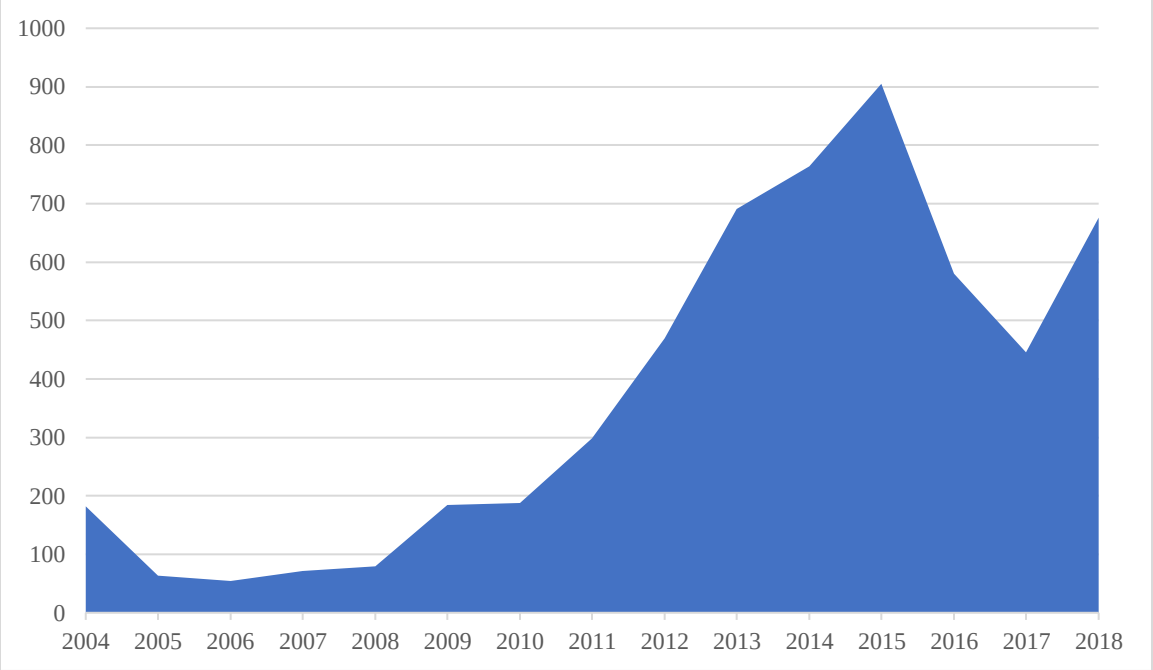
Political context

Two of the last four elections in France witnessed an escalating popularity of the Front National (now Rassemblement National), France's populist extreme right party. Led by the Le Pen family, the party has historically embraced xenophobia and racism. Considering their vitriolic rhetoric on immigration, national identity, and citizenship, the party led two exceptionally successful campaigns, reaching the second round of presidential elections in 2002 and 2017. In 2002, Jean-Marie Le Pen amassed 17% of the popular vote, a score that was doubled by his daughter, Marine Le Pen in 2017 (Ministère de l'Intérieur, 2019). A cynical reading of these numbers would suggest that a third of France's population endorses the party's unabashed Islamophobia. A more idealistic reading might indicate that a third of the French population feels impartial to such rhetoric. The truth lies somewhere in between. Alongside the rise of the Front

[5] See *La Mosquée Notre-Dame de Paris* by Tchoudinova (2009), *L'Identité Malheureuse* by Finkielkraut (2013), *Le Suicide Français* by Zemmour (2014), and *Soumission* by Houellebecq (2015). All four titles were highly popular best-sellers; some won literary awards.

National has occurred a steady increase in discriminatory or physical and verbal attacks against Muslims (Collectif Contre L'Islamophobie en France – CCIF, 2019). A clear trend in what the CCIF calls "Islamophobic acts" emerges (see Figure 3 below). Thus, the terrorist attacks analyzed in the following section are embedded in and contribute to a broader context of French Islamophobia.

Figure 3
The rise of Islamophobic acts between 2004 and 2018[6]



Note. Data compiled from CCIF's yearly reports (CCIF, 2019).

[6] It should be noted that attempts to measure Islamophobia remain difficult and grossly unrepresentative due to underreporting of incidents by victims.

Analysis

The critical discourse analysis of the 40 selected articles from *Le Figaro* and *Le Point* has led me to identify three securitizing discursive processes in France's right-wing press. These processes are homogenization, enemification, and internalization. Homogenization concerns the tendency to write about Muslims as if they were a uniform group, thus feeding the public's imagination of Muslims being a single community. Homogenization neglects the many differences existing within the Muslim population and implicitly equates their adherence to a certain religious faith with being violent extremists. Enemification is a term I use to qualify the construction of Muslims as enemies. The discourse of enemification entails creating an existential conflict expressed in binary – between Muslims and Western society. Whereas the first two processes are present consistently across time periods, internalization is a trend that develops chronologically between 1995 and 2015. Internalization refers to the evolution of the threat of terrorism from being discussed as exterior to increasingly internal. The attack of 2012 is identified as a turning point in the perception of Islamic terrorism as being locally-owned instead of coming from abroad. I argue that these three processes mutually reinforce and overlap with each other. Together, they create an overarching discourse that securitizes France's Muslim population, effectively constructing them as a suspect community.

Homogenization

The tendency of the press to homogenize diverse populations into monolithic blocs was first identified by Nickels et al. (2012a) in their comparison of the coverage of Muslims and Irish people in Britain. In their view, this process is achieved with the terms "the Muslim community"

or “the Irish” (Nickels et al. 2012a, p. 348). Such terminology neglects the many and profound differences among Muslims, illogically equating the nonpracticing with the devout, the Sunni with the Shi’a, the ideologically extreme with the violently extreme. By using homogenizing language in the coverage of terrorism, the press may securitize a population by implicitly linking the adherence to Islam to being an extremist. Evidence of such language is found throughout the analyzed articles, with reference to “the Muslim community” (Bavarez, 2015 ; Imbert, 2012 ; L. & Ma. 1995 ; Lévy, 2015 ; Pech, 2001 ; Suffer, 1995) and “the Muslim world” (Grenelle, 2012 ; Imbert, 2012 ; Lévy 2015) when speaking about Islamist terrorism, as if all Muslims were expected to answer for the actions of violent extremists.

Islam is also homogenized in the way it is talked about as a religion. Analyzing the cause of terrorism, regular columnist and founder of *Le Point* blames Islam, asserting it is a religion that is “allergic” to individualism and capitalism, and that therefore it breeds social exclusion and misery, which in turn lead to rebellion and eventually terrorism (Imbert, 2001b). His statement inscribes itself in the press’ tendency to make sweeping statements about Islam, most of which are negative. While anti-consumerism and communalism might appeal to some Muslims, the logic linking such lifestyle choices to terrorism is tortuous and hardly generalizable. The qualification of Muslims as a homogenous group is also found in the attempts to distinguish the “true” or “good” Islam from the “false” or “bad” version professed by Islamist terrorists (Paoli, 2015 ; Suffer, 1995). Such discourses contribute to constructing a suspect community in that they encourage the public to make their own determinations of which Muslims are threatening and which ones are trustworthy. The perpetrators of the 1995, 2012, and 2015 attacks had all been imprisoned with known terrorists or trained in jihadist camps abroad. In spite of these highly suggestive clues, the press prefers

people's lifestyle choices and physical appearances (all terrorists wear beards, according to Claude Imbert, 1995) as indications of their partiality for terrorism.

The main homogenizing discursive practice that emerged from my analysis is that of ambiguity. The terms used to refer to Islamist terrorism or the terrorists themselves come by the score (see Appendix B for a comprehensive list). The qualifiers, which vary widely from "Islamo-fascism" (Lévy, 2015 ; Sibony, 2001 ; Val, 2015) to Salafism (Askolovitch, 2012a and 2012b ; Imbert, 2012 ; Garat, 2015 ; Guénois, 2015a and 2015b) are ambiguous and consistently left undefined. Many of the terms are misused to associate orthodoxy with violent extremism. Terms such as "radical" (Garat, 2015 ; Leclerc, 2001 ; Oberlé, 1995) or "fanatical" Islam (De Belot, 2001, Imbert, 2001a and 2012 ; Sibony, 2001) and fundamentalism (D'Ormesson, 1995 ; Frat, 1995 ; Imbert, 2001b ; Paoli, 2015 ; "Terrorisme, le retour", 1995) are construed as extreme forms of Islam with a propensity for endorsing violence. Yet, in their original meanings, radicalism and fundamentalism are not negatively connotated. In fact, ironically, before being applied to Islam, "radicalism" in France was historically associated to the Radical Party (PRRRS), which is known to have established secularism in France. With respect to Islam, the fundamentalist or "radical" traditions call for a literal reading of original holy texts, and do not explicitly call for militancy. If the same terms can be used to designate both a peaceful Muslim whose religious practice involves a literalist reading of the Qur'an and a terrorist endorsing a violent, militant form of Islam, the words lose their meaning and the crucial differences between Muslims are once again ignored. A discourse of ambiguity around Islam is created, and as a result the religion becomes associated with violent extremism. For the overwhelming majority of Muslims in France who neither engage in nor condone violence, such ambiguity contributes to their stigmatization as security threats.

One term stands out as the most common designation of terrorism: “Islamism”. The use of this term, featured in over a third of all analyzed articles (see Appendix B), is highly problematic. First, it underscores a deep misunderstanding of its significance. Defined by scholars as “the belief that Islam should guide social and political as well as personal life” (Berman, 2003, p. 257), Islamism can be understood as a socio-political movement or an activist form of Islam (Bayat, 2005 ; Ismail, 2006). While having been endorsed by certain militant political groups like the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) in Algeria and the Hezbollah in Lebanon, its de facto equation to terrorism is no more justified than that of socialism or environmentalism. In fact, Islamist groups around the world also provide a variety of political, social, and cultural services, many of which have a positive impact on their communities (Ismail, 2006). Second, and more importantly, its use creates linkages between Muslims and terrorism. Not unlike the terms “fundamentalism” or “radicalism”, “Islamism” is used to refer to polar opposites. If it can be applied to moderate religious political parties like Tunisia’s Ennahda the same way it is applied to murderous terrorist groups like ISIS, the word loses its original meaning to take on a new one, imbued with violence. Thus, Islamism is made to be particularly threatening to the French public. Going beyond the threat it poses to French secularism, Islamism embodies a national security threat, and one which the French public is particularly sensitive to in the aftermath of terrorist attacks. In the midst of such ambiguity and inconsistent terminology, the word “Islam” stands out as the common denominator. Yet, the choice to focus on Islam rather than discussing the broader phenomenon of religious extremism, criminality, or the fallout of international conflicts is not obvious. In addition to involving known criminals or convicts, the attacks of 1995, 2001, 2012, and 2015 were reprisals for wars in Algeria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria respectively. Being the common denominator in

hundreds of articles replete with the sadness of bereavement and gory descriptions of massacres may subconsciously associate Islam with the negative emotions of disgust, outrage, and fear.

Securitizing discourses have as much to do with what is said as what is left out. Terminology such as "Islamic threat" ("Il y a 900 ans", 1995) or "Islamism" lack an important epithet relating them to violence. Without qualifiers like "violent", "armed", or "militant", references to an "Islamic threat" create dangerous linkages between all things Islamic and threats to national or societal security. The subtle differences in terminology analyzed in this section are not mere nit-picking. They have a crucial impact on the imagination or subconscious mind of the reader, who pays more attention to the content of the news than to its delivery. In this case, the news relating to terrorism is delivered through a homogenizing and ambiguous discourse, which associates Islam to violence, extremism, and threats.

Enemification

The process of securitizing Muslims is further developed through their construction as enemies. More important than what they oppose is the fact that they are an enemy. Muslims are constructed as enemies thanks to an omnipresent lexicon of war. War, by definition tends to be a zero-sum confrontation. Interspersed in this militarized discourse are a series of binaries, each posing Islam as existential threat to the different facets of French society. These binaries include but are not limited to violence versus peacefulness, democracy versus totalitarianism, religion versus secularism, Occident versus Orient, and savagery versus civilization.

Predating President Bush's remarks in the wake of the September 11 attacks (Office of the Press Secretary, 2001 ; "Text of George Bush's speech", 2001) but intensifying thereafter, parallels between counterterrorism and war, or even the crusades are recurrent. In *Le Figaro* and *Le Point*, the discourse of war is particularly direct, as exemplified by provocative article titles such as "A new war" (D'Ormesson, 1995 ; De Belot, 2001), "The war of the 21st century" (Imbert, 2001a), and "The war for civilization" (Giesbert, 2015). Many articles compare the war on terror to Huntingon's "clash of civilizations" (Huntington, 1993). This is in fact a critique of Islam, since as a tactic of political violence, terrorism cannot be called a civilization. At the heart of Huntington's commentary about Islam is the religion's propensity for violence and inherent incompatibility with Western culture. Mirroring the claim that Islam has "bloody borders" (Huntington, 1993, p. 35), Imbert opines that Islam is an "anarchical religion" that keeps a "missionary inclination by the sword" (2001b). Indeed, Islam is regularly depicted as backward and medieval – a salient orientalist trope (Said, 1978/2003). Muslims would still be searching for their Martin Luther (Imbert, 2001b). The idea that Islam has yet to be reformed or "enlightened" recurs frequently (Imbert, 2012 ; Lévy, 2015 ; Paoli, 2015, Sibony, 2001). In line with the idea of primitivity, Muslims are also often dehumanized. In a 1995 article ("La diagonale des fous", 1995), Imbert compares the French city suburbs, or *banlieues*, to "fishponds of terrorism" and fundamentalism to a "fermenting, rotten fruit". Six years later, he substitutes those terms by calling terrorists "Islam's rabid [members]" and "termites" (Imbert, 2001c), designations that are reminiscent of genocidal rhetoric. In another piece, Muslim countries, who are condemned for supporting terrorism are called "little devils" (De Belot, 2001). Throughout these references, an appeal is often made to the majority of Muslims who are "enlightened" or "good" to reform their religion or keep extremism in check. Failing to do so would be to ideologically back terrorism.

These attempts to mitigate the demonization of Muslims fail because they imply that terrorism is endemic to Islam as a religion, and that all Muslims are somehow accountable for the actions of extremists.

The recurrent reference to terrorists as soldiers is a way to depict them as the tip of Islam's spear. Terrorists are dubbed "soldiers in Allah's army" ("France; La menace", 2001 ; Sibony, 2001) and as the new millennium's "crusaders" (De Belot, 2001 ; "Il y a 900 ans", 1995 ; Imbert, 2001a ; Lévy, 2015). The recurrent comparison of counterterrorism with crusades pushes the discourse of enemification to its most extreme. Referring to the war on terror as Islam's holy war, the authors are clearly identifying Muslims as their enemies, rather than Islamist terrorists. Furthermore, it reiterates the image of Islam being antiquated and brutal. For one author, Islamism takes its roots in "a revisited version of the medieval crusades" ("Il y a 900 ans", 1995). Whereas the terrorists themselves would be the active militant side of Islam, the majority of Muslims who do not fight would be ideologically backing them. This conception of Islam as a stratified, unified foe is pervasive in Huntingtonian discourses. While acknowledging that the majority of Muslims to not endorse jihad, Claude Imbert blames them for remaining silent and complacent, thus incriminating Muslims as indirect supporters of terrorism (Imbert, 2001a).

Depicting terrorists as soldiers does not only reflect poorly on Muslims, but it is also counterproductive to security. Arguably, "soldier" can take on positive connotations, evoking for some the attributes of strength, courage, glory, and patriotism. If this is the case, the likening of Islamist terrorists to soldiers serves to legitimize their actions and justify a "war". But is waging war the best counterterrorism strategy? For some experts, war is the very cause of Islamist political

violence (Jackson, 2007). A war also entails having an enemy, or opposite sides. With such an undefined, ambiguous image of who is the enemy, the war may befall the wrong targets – in this case Muslims in general. With regards to the interpretation of the news by the public, a lexicon of war has further perverse effects. A comparison of headlines across daily newspapers on the day following the Bataclan attack reveals *Le Figaro* as the only publication militarizing terrorism. Among headlines such as the neutral "Plus de 100 morts à Paris" [Over 100 dead in Paris] by *Ouest France*, the visual "Carnages à Paris" [Bloodbaths in Paris] by *Libération*, and the blunt "Horreur" [Horror] by *l'Équipe*, *Le Figaro* declares there is a war in the heart of Paris: "La guerre en plein Paris" (all four headlines cited in "Le Jour d'Apres", 2015). Whereas the other headlines may elicit reactions of shock, sadness, disbelief, or disgust, *Le Figaro*'s headline is more likely to rouse feelings of revenge and spite. Such emotions arguably contribute more directly to the construction of Muslims as a suspect community.

The enemification discourse consists of discursively creating an existential conflict between two sides: that of the West, of democracy, liberty, French society, and French values against that of terrorism. While one side is relatively well defined and concrete, the other is largely undefined and confused with Islam. For philosopher Bernard-Henri Lévy, the enemy is not terrorism itself, but rather "fascislamism", a term he coins but does not explain (Lévy, 2015). The linkage between Islamism and fascism contributes to the binary image of Islam as being fundamentally at odds with democracy. In the author's view, the French public is at war with this Islam. Whether they know it or not, the reader is "a target, a soldier, a front" (Lévy, 2015). While this war is regrettable, he argues, it is necessary – a necessity he justifies citing Nazi theorist Carl Schmitt and Christian just war theorists Saint Thomas and Saint Augustine. Citing arguments based on racial and religious

superiority to justify waging war against the mysterious enemies that are "fascislamists" is problematic. Indeed, it provides a clear example of the intersection between Islamophobia and securitization in French right-wing discourse.

Internalization

The terrorist attack of 1995 involved two Algerian perpetrators, and those of 2001 happened abroad. Due to the perpetrators' distance to metropolitan France, the press covered Islamist terrorism as a foreign threat. Rather than being a problem in France, the French public would read about militant Islamism in Algeria, Iran, Lebanon, Palestine, Afghanistan, and Iraq. However, increasingly over the years, Islamist terrorism came to be covered by the press and understood by the public as an internal threat, one coming from within French society rather than outside of it. The attack of 2012 marks a turning point in this change. Aside from the 1996 metro bombing in Paris, there were only a couple of attacks claimed by Islamist group on French territory between 1995 and 2012, and neither of them were fatal. Thus, in 2012, for the first time, France was confronted with a perpetrator who had been born, raised, and educated in France. The blame could no longer be put on an outsider. The internalization of the terrorist threat is noteworthy because it has an amplifying effect on the securitization of Muslims in France. Arguably, proximity is more alarming than observing a threat from afar. The discourse of internalization has the effect of painting terrorism as closing in on French society.

The evolution of this discourse moving toward internalization can be traced chronologically. During the period of speculation in the days following the 1995 bombing, several authors guessed

at "unknown groups transposed at home" (D'Ormesson, 1995) and lamented the ease with which arms and weapon penetrated the country (Suffer, 1995), rejecting the idea that the bomb could have been made on French soil. Up until the identification of the 1995 bombers, almost all of the articles discussed Algeria and "Islamists" in the same sentence. Terrorism was seen as an outside threat making incursions onto French territory. After it was revealed that the perpetrators were Muslim, the press began to talk about the potential existence of "Islamic networks" ("Attentat: le filet", 1995) existing in the suburbs – a "rotten fruit" according to Imbert (1995), whose comparison internalizes the threat. The fear of networks resurfaces in 2001 ("France: la menace", 2001), but is dampened by the recurring subject of "permeable borders" (Imbert, 2001a), which suggests terrorism finds its roots outside of France's territory.

Unlike the 1995 attackers, the Toulouse killer was almost immediately identified. As a French Muslim citizen, the existence of locally-owned Islamist terrorism could no longer be ignored. The initial reactions by the right-wing press were muted. Some articles refer to the killer as a "psychopath", "mass killer" (Cornevin and Leclerc, 2012 ; Thréard, 2012), or "lone wolf" (Thréard, 2012). Generally, there was a notable relaxation in the Islamophobic and securitizing discourses found in past decades. One interpretation of this puzzle may attribute it to the attack coinciding directly with the 2012 presidential campaign[7]. In the month prior to the attack, voting polls ("13 mars", 2012 ; OpinionWay, 2012 ; "Sondage: Hollande conforte", 2012 ; "Un sondage", 2012) had overwhelmingly put the Socialist Party candidate François Hollande ahead of the right-wing UMP candidate Nicolas Sarkozy. It is possible that *Le Figaro* and *Le Point,* as right-wing publications, intentionally dialed down their discourse surrounding Islam to moderate their

[7] The attack happened on March 19. March 20 marked the first day of official presidential campaigning.

political standing and curry favor with more socially progressive voters. Indeed, claims that the attacks are "not about Islam, but about terrorism" (Guénois, 2012) were uncharacteristic of *Le Figaro*'s editorial stance thus far. The abatement of Islamophobic discourses notwithstanding, terrorism was heavily internalized during this period. In an interview, Islamic Studies expert Gilles Kepel blames Islamist terrorism on the "social dereliction" of the French *banlieues* (Askolovitch, 2012b), effectively sourcing terrorism to the French territory. In even more straight-forward language, another expert declares that "we [the French population] are facing local initiatives" (Nexon, 2012). In 2015, the local nature of Islamist terrorism is fully acknowledged. In the description of the only perpetrator identified so far, an author even resorts to calling him a "French terrorist" (Labbé, 2015). So far, the only time the nationality of perpetrators had been mentioned was when they were foreign-born. Reaching a zenith in the discourse of internalization, authors talk about full blown wars of "religions" and "civilizations" happening "within [France]" and "inside our very society" (Bavarez, 2015 ; Giesbert, 2015). The putative proximity of the "Islamist threat" combined with a lexicon of war as seen above imply there is a possibility that Islam will prevail over French civilization. Such terms serve to create an existential crisis of identity within France.

Findings

These findings confirm the presence of all three hypothetical securitizing discourses. *D1* (*Muslims are grouped into a single community*) is confirmed. Through a homogenizing discourse, the differences among the French Muslim population are glossed over. French Muslims are lumped together into one group individuals straddling a spectrum of suspicion: at worst they are violent terrorists, and at best they are complacent supporters. *D2* (*Muslims are associated to violence and*

danger) is confirmed with the framing of Islam in ambiguous and militarized terms, which directly associate Muslims with violence. *D3* (*Muslims are seen as contradictory or incompatible with French values and principles*) is substantiated with the evidence that the press tends to construct Muslims as the converse of "Frenchness". Here, Frenchness is tied to democracy, secularism, social progress, and non-violence – all values that are discursively constructed to be incompatible with Islam. Indeed, the enemification of Muslims may be a nationalist exercise whereby the press affirms French identity through negation, or the identification of what it is not. Such a negative coverage of Islam in the right-wing media provides the public with ample grounds to be suspicious, or even afraid of their Muslim co-citizens.

This section has thus provided convincing evidence that the right-wing media in France actively contributed securitizing language to public discourse for a period of at least 20 years. All in all, the discourses of homogenization and enemification serve to portray Muslims as generally fanatical, uncivilized, antidemocratic, and violent. It is through generalization and binaries that they are made to pose a threat to national security and societal security. The discourse of internalization amplifies these effects. With the threat of Islamist terrorism having penetrated French society, the question of Islam is turned into an emergency and a national identity crisis. All three discourses compounded together have the effect of constructing Muslims as an army of violent extremists closing in on the French way of life.

Conclusion

This dissertation has shown that between 1995 and 2015, the right-wing press in France has actively constructed its Muslim population as a suspect community. Through a variety of linguistic devices and discursive practices, Muslims have been portrayed as a menace to society and security. Through homogenization, the press has elided the vast diversity among the Muslim population to amalgamate the infinitesimal minority of extremists with the overwhelming majority of non-violent Muslims to form a single militant community. By way of enemification, Muslims are made to be antithetical to French values. By painting Islam as more violent and more political than it is, Muslims are conveyed as endangering French society. This dissertation has also traced the evolution of discourse surrounding Islamist terrorism over time. It argued that the discourse of internalization has served to amplify the discourses of homogenization and enemification by suggesting that France would be in the midst of an identity crisis and existentially threatened by an extremist Islamism that would have pervaded French society.

In addition to confirming the presence of media-generated suspect communities outside of the United Kingdom, this dissertation has sought to situate the literature on Islamophobia in France within securitization theory. It approached Islamophobia under the lens of security, an often-overlooked aspect of anti-Muslim discrimination in France, and challenged the notion that threats are generated predominantly by state representatives. By emphasizing the demographic, cultural, and political contexts in which the securitizing discourses take place, I have attempted to demonstrate that the effects of such discourse go beyond marginalizing Muslims. They feed into larger trends of Islamophobia, xenophobia, and nationalism.

The findings above should not be understood as an indictment of right-wing media, nor a condemnation of the French population. The relaxation of securitizing discourses in 2012 shows that there is a way to cover Islamist terrorism in neutral language while still catering to a right-leaning audience. As popular French newspapers, *Le Figaro* and *Le Point* produce hegemonic discourses but do not exist in a vacuum. Their influence notwithstanding, public discourse is also produced in other arenas such as politics, academia, and civil society. As such, my research provides a snapshot of French public discourse at large, and at a specific moment in time. Further research could look at French political discourse to see whether the same discursive practices are repeated or if other ones emerge. In the same vein, counter-hegemonic discourses within the left-wing media should also be analyzed to measure their potential dampening effect on the right-wing's construction of Muslims as a suspect community.

If the problem put forward by this research lies in discourse, its solution may also be a question of language. Just because the perpetrators of different attacks profess the same religion does not make that religion the cause of their violence. Most terrorist attacks in France were perpetrated by males – yet gender is not securitized. I therefore join the plethora of academics who question the usefulness of studying, discussing, and countering terrorism through the prism of religion (Cavanaugh, 2004 ; De Soysa and Nordås, 2007 ; Gunning and Jackson, 2011 ; Jackson, 2007 ; Pantazis and Pemberton, 2009). Terms such as "Islamist" or "Islamic terrorism" should be abandoned altogether in favor of more adapted terms like anti-imperialism, insurgency, political violence, and nationalism. Otherwise, we risk incurring the counterproductive effects of politicizing security and dividing society.

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Appendices

Appendix A
Discourse Data – List of articles selected for critical discourse analysis

Event	Article	English translation of title	#
1995 Paris metro bombing	Suffer, G. (1995, July 26). La Lèpre. *Le Figaro*, p. 1.	The Leprosy	1
	Richard, J.-A. and Oberlé, T. (1995, July 26). Lourds soupçons contre les Islamistes. *Le Figaro*, p. 22.	Heavy suspicions against the Islamists	2
	D'Ormesson, J. (1995, July 27). Une guerre nouvelle. *Le Figaro*, p. 7.	A new war	3
	L., M.-A. and Ma., E. (1995, July 27). Dalil Boubakeur: "Une menace pour la communauté". *Le Figaro*, p. 8.	Dalil Boubakeur: "a threat for the community"	4
	Frat, M. (1995, July 27). Didier Bigo: "La figure de l'adversaire". *Le Figaro*, p. 7.	Didier Bigo: "the face of the enemy"	5
	Terrorisme, le retour de la menace. (1995, July 29). *Le Point*.	The return of the terrorist threat	6
	Attentat: le filet se reserre. (1995, August 5). *Le Point*.	Terrorist attack: the net tightens	7
	Attentat: les terroristes frappent encore Paris. (1995, August 19). *Le Point*.	Terrorist attack: the terrorists strike Paris again	8
	Il y a 900 ans les croisades: L'héritage des croisades. (1995, August 19). *Le Point*.	The crusades were 900 years ago: the legacy of the crusades	9
	Imbert, C. (1995, September 16). La diagonale des fous. *Le Point*.	The diagonal of madness	10
2001 September 11 Attacks	Pech, M.-E. (2001, September 12). A Paris comme partout en France, ces attentats suscitent une intense émotion; La communauté arabe redoute l'amalgame. *Le Figaro*.	In Paris and the rest of France, these attacks trigger intense emotion: the Arab community fears for conflation	11
	Leclerc, J.-M. (2001, September 12). Mobilisation de l'armée et de la police: le gouvernement veut exercer son "devoir de précaution et de vigilance"; Jean-Louis	Army and police mobilized: the government wishes to exercise its "duty of precaution and vigilance"; Jean-Louis	12

	Bruguière: “Ne baissons surtout pas la garde”. *Le Figaro*.	Bruguière: “we must not let our guard down”	
	De Belot, J. (2001, September 12). Nouvelle Guerre. *Le Figaro.*	New War	13
	Cettina, N. (2001, September 13). La France, Vigipirate et les islamistes. *Le Figaro*.	France, Vigipirate [CT protocol] and the Islamists	14
	Sibony, D. (2001, September 14). Des fanatiques en rage contre leur propre foi. *Le Figaro*.	Fanatics enraged against their own religion	15
	Imbert, C. (2001, September 14). La guerre du XXIe siècle. *Le Figaro*.	The war of the 21st century	16
	France; La menace des soldats d'Allah. (2001, September 14). *Le Point.*	In France: the threat of Allah’s soldiers	17
	Lévy, B.-H. (2001, September 21). Le bloc-notes de Bernard-Henri Lévy. *Le Point.*	Bernard-Henry Levy’s opinion	18
	Imbert, C. (2001, September 21). Le châtiment. *Le Point.*	The torture	19
	Imbert, C. (2001, September 28). Le qui-vive. *Le Point.*	On our toes	20
2012 Toulouse shooting	Thréard, Y. (2012, March 20). Consternation et révolte. *Le Figaro*, p. 11.	Dismay and revolt	21
	Cornevin, C. and J.-M. Leclerc. (2012, March 20). Le tueur est entré dans l'école pour finir son carnage; Il a tué ses victimes avec la même arme que celle utilisée pour abattre les militaires à Toulouse et Montauban. *Le Figaro*, p. 4.	The killer entered to school to complete his carnage; he killed his victims with the same weapon used to kill the soldiers in Toulouse and Montauban	22
	Huet, S. (2012, March 22). Alain Bauer : “Le risque islamiste n'est pas sous-estimé en France”; Le criminologue souligne “le lien entre crime organisé et terrorisme”. *Le Figaro*, p. 10.	A. Bauer: “Threat of Islamism is taken seriously in France”: the criminologist stresses terrorism and organized crime are linked	23
	Guénois, J.-M. (2012, March 22). Juifs et musulmans dénoncent le risque d'amalgame entre islam et terrorisme. *Le Figaro*, p. 7.	Jews and Muslims condemn the risk of conflation between Islam and terrorism	24
	Moix, Y. (2012, March 23). Stagiaires djihadistes : une loi pour punir. *Le Figaro*, p. 23.	Jihadist interns: a law to punish them	25
	Askolovitch, C. (2012, March 29). "Il y a une aura des djihadistes dans les prisons."; Entretien Samir Amghar. *Le Point*.	“There will be jihadists in prisons”, interview with Samir Amghar	26

	Askolovitch, C. (2012, March 29). "Quand les salafistes croisent la déréliction sociale"; Entretien Gilles Kepel. *Le Point*.	"When Salafism meets social dereliction", interview with Gilles Kepel	27
	Grenelle, E. (2012, March 29). "Il faut faire comprendre à la France que l'islam radical est marginal"; Entretien Tariq Ramadan. *Le Point.*	"France must be made to understand that radical Islam is marginal", interview with Tariq Ramadan	28
	Nexon, M. (2012, March 29). Al-Qaeda a tout intérêt à revendiquer la paternité des tueries; Entretien Jean-Pierre Filiu. *Le Point*.	It is in Al-Qaeda's interest to claim responsibility for the killings; interview with Jean-Pierre Filiu	29
	Imbert, C. (2012, March 29). Après Toulouse. *Le Point*.	After Toulouse	30
2015 Bataclan shooting	Garat, J.-B. (2015, November 16). Bruno Le Maire: "Notre combat contre l'islamisme radical doit aller plus loin". *Le Figaro*, p. 11.	Bruno Le Maire: "our fight against radical Islamism must go further"	31
	Guénois, J.-M. (2015, November 16). L'expulsion d'imams radicaux ne suffit plus, assurent les experts; L'endoctrinement des jeunes se joue désormais surtout sur Internet, jugent plusieurs spécialistes. *Le Figaro*, p. 14.	The expulsion of radical imams is no longer sufficient, say experts: The brainwashing of youth is now happening on the internet, judge specialists	32
	Guénois, J.-M. (2015, November 16). L'islam de France démuni face à la puissance des réseaux sociaux. *Le Figaro*, p. 14.	France's Islam is powerless against social networks	33
	Bavarez, N. (2015, November 16). Faire la guerre sans l'aimer. *Le Figaro*, p. 23.	Waging an unpleasant war	34
	Perrault, G. (2015, November 16). Analyse; France: l'État de droit face au terrorisme islamiste. *Le Figaro*, p. 23.	Analysis: France: the state of emergency against Islamist terrorism	35
	Labbé, C. (2015, November 16). Attentas à Paris: sur la piste des tueurs. *Le Point*.	Terrorist attacks in Paris: tracking the killers	36
	Lévy, B.-H. (2015, November 16). BHL – Guerre, mode d'emploi. *Le Point*.	BHL – War, a handbook	37
	Val, P. (2015, November 16). Contre qui nous battons-nous?. *Le Point.*	With whom do we fight?	38
	Giesbert, F.-O. (2015, November 17). La guerre pour la civilisation. *Le Point.*	The war for civilization	39

Paoli, P.-F. (2015, November 18). Rémi Brague et Tahar Ben Jelloun : Y a-t-il un islam des Lumières?. Le Point.	Rémi Brague and Tahar Ben Jelloun: "Is there an Enlightened Islam?"	40

Sources: Nexis UK database and microfilm archives at British Library in London, UK and Bibliothèque Publique d'Information in Paris, France.

Appendix B
List of terms used to refer to Islamist terrorism or Islamist terrorists (20 total)

Term used [and English translation]	Source
Armée d'Allah [Allah's army]	Sibony, D. (2001, September 14). Des fanatiques en rage contre leur propre foi. *Le Figaro*.
Djihadisme islamiste [Islamist jihadism]	Moix, Y. (2012, March 23). Stagiaires djihadistes: une loi pour punir. *Le Figaro*, p. 23.
Fascislamisme [Fascislamism]	Sibony, D. (2001, September 14). Des fanatiques en rage contre leur propre foi. *Le Figaro*. Lévy, B.-H. (2015, November 16). BHL – Guerre, mode d'emploi. *Le Point*.
Fous d'Allah [Allah's insane followers]	Attentat: le filet se reserre. (1995, August 5). *Le Point*. Leclerc, J.-M. (2001, September 12). "Mobilisation de l'armée et de la police: le gouvernement veut exercer son 'devoir de précaution et de vigilance'; Jean-Louis Bruguière: 'Ne baissons surtout pas la garde'". *Le Figaro*.
Islam fanatique [Fanatic Islam]	Imbert, C. (2001, September 14). La guerre du XXIe siècle. *Le Figaro*. Sibony, D. (2001, September 14). Des fanatiques en rage contre leur propre foi. *Le Figaro*.
Fanatisme islamiste [Islamist fanaticism]	Imbert, C. (2001, September 28). Le qui-vive. Le Point Imbert, C. (2012, March 29). Après Toulouse. *Le Point*.
Islam radical [Radical Islam]	Garat, J.-B. (2015, November 16). Bruno Le Maire: "Notre combat contre l'islamisme radical doit aller plus loin". *Le Figaro*, p. 11. Leclerc, J.-M. (2001, September 12). Mobilisation de l'armée et de la police: le gouvernement veut exercer son 'devoir de précaution et de vigilance'; Jean-Louis Bruguière: 'Ne baissons surtout pas la garde'. *Le Figaro*. Oberlé, T. (1995, July 29). Quand le GIA apparaît entre les lignes. *Le Figaro*, p. 26
Islamisme/islamistes [Islamism/ists]	Attentat: les terroristes frappent encore Paris. (1995, August 19). *Le Point*.

Bavarez, N. (2015, November 16). Faire la guerre sans l'aimer. *Le Figaro*, p. 23.

Cettina, N. (2001, September 13). La France, Vigipirate et les islamistes. *Le Figaro*.

Garat, J.-B. (2015, November 16). Bruno Le Maire: “Notre combat contre l’islamisme radical doit aller plus loin”. *Le Figaro*, p. 11.

Guénois, J.-M. (2015, November 16). L'islam de France démuni face à la puissance des réseaux sociaux. *Le Figaro*, p. 14.

Huet, S. (2012, March 22). Alain Bauer : “Le risque islamiste n'est pas sous-estimé en France”; Le criminologue souligne “le lien entre crime organisé et terrorisme”. *Le Figaro*, p. 10.

Il y a 900 ans les croisades: L’héritage des croisades. (1995, August 19). *Le Point*.

Labbé, C. (2015, November 16). Attentas à Paris: sur la piste des tueurs. *Le Point*.

Moix, Y. (2012, March 23). Stagiaires djihadistes : une loi pour punir. *Le Figaro*, p. 23.

Perrault, G. (2015, November 16). Analyse; France: l'État de droit face au terrorisme islamiste. *Le Figaro*, p. 23.

Richard, J.-A. and Oberlé, T. (1995, July 26). Lourds soupçons contre les Islamistes. *Le Figaro*, p. 22

Sibony, D. (2001, September 14). Des fanatiques en rage contre leur propre foi. *Le Figaro*.

Terrorisme le retour de la menace. (1995, July 29). *Le Point*.

Val, P. (2015, November 16). Contre qui nous battons-nous?. *Le Point*.

Islamo-fascime/fascists
[Islamo-fascism/ists]

Val, P. (2015, November 16). Contre qui nous battons-nous?. *Le Point*.

Jihad Islamique
[Islamic jihad]

De Belot, J. (2001, September 12). Nouvelle Guerre. *Le Figaro*.

Jihadisme/islamistes
[Jihadism/jihadists]

Askolovitch, C. (2012, March 29). "Il y a une aura des djihadistes dans les prisons."; Entretien Samir Amghar. *Le Point*.

	Askolovitch, C. (2012, March 29). "Quand les salafistes croisent la déréliction sociale"; Entretien Gilles Kepel. *Le Point.*
	Val, P. (2015, November 16). Contre qui nous battons-nous?. *Le Point.*
Militiens islamistes [Islamist milita-men]	France; La menace des soldats d'Allah. (2001, September 14). *Le Point*.
Musulmans intégristes [Fundamentalist Muslims]	D'Ormesson, J. (1995, July 27). Une guerre nouvelle. *Le Figaro*, p. 7.
	Frat, M. (1995, July 27). Didier Bigo: La figure de l'adversaire. *Le Figaro*, p. 7.
	Imbert, C. (2001, September 14). La guerre du XXIe siècle. *Le Figaro*.
	Paoli, P.-F. (2015, November 18). Rémi Brague et Tahar Ben Jelloun : Y a-t-il un islam des Lumières?. *Le Point.*
	Terrorisme, le retour de la menace. (1995, July 29). *Le Point.*
Nébuleuse islamiste [Islamist nebula]	Imbert, C. (2001, September 14). La guerre du XXIe siècle. *Le Figaro*.
	Oberlé, T. (1995, July 29). Quand le GIA apparaît entre les lignes. *Le Figaro*, p. 26.
Radicaux islamistes [Radical Islamists]	Oberlé, T. (1995, July 29). Quand le GIA apparaît entre les lignes. *Le Figaro*, p. 26.
Salafisme/istes [Salafism/ists]	Askolovitch, C. (2012a, March 29). "Il y a une aura des djihadistes dans les prisons"; Entretien Samir Amghar ["There will be jihadists in prisons", interview with Samir Amghar]. Le Point. Retrieved from: www.nexis.com (accessed on July 10, 2019).
	Askolovitch, C. (2012b, March 29). "Quand les salafistes croisent la déréliction sociale"; Entretien Gilles Kepel. *Le Point.*
	Garat, J.-B. (2015, November 16). Bruno Le Maire: "Notre combat contre l'islamisme radical doit aller plus loin" [Bruno Le Maire: "our fight against radical Islamism must go further"]. *Le Figaro*, p. 11.
	Guénois, J.-M. (2015a, November 16). L'expulsion d'imams radicaux ne suffit plus, assurent les experts; L'endoctrinement des jeunes se joue désormais surtout sur Internet, jugent plusieurs spécialistes. *Le Figaro*, p. 14.

	Guénois, J.-M. (2015b, November 16). L'islam de France démuni face à la puissance des réseaux sociaux [France's Islam is powerless against social networks]. *Le Figaro*, p. 14.
	Imbert, C. (2012, March 29). Après Toulouse [After Toulouse]. *Le Point*.
Soldat's d'Allah [Allah's soldiers]	5) Sibony, D. (2001, September 14). Des fanatiques en rage contre leur propre foi. *Le Figaro*.
	France; La menace des soldats d'Allah. (2001, September 14). *Le Point.*
Terrorisme islamique [Islamic terrorism]	Richard, J.-A. (1995, August 1). Le double langage des sources. *Le Figaro*, p. 7.
	Cettina, N. (2001, September 13). La France, Vigipirate et les islamistes. *Le Figaro*.
Terrorisme d'Allah [Allah's terrorism]	Imbert, C. (2001, September 28). Le qui-vive. *Le Point*.
Ultramusulmans [Ultra-Muslims]	D'Ormesson, J. (1995, July 27). Une guerre nouvelle. *Le Figaro*, p. 7.