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RESEARCH ARTICLE / ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ

Securitization of Islam in France: Everyday Lives of French Muslims

Fransa'da İslam'ın Güvenlikleştirilmesi: Fransız Müslümanlarının Gündelik Hayatları

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Abstract

Although many analyses of securitization focus on either speech acts and exceptional measures or bureaucratic practices, little research has been undertaken involving the logic of securitization. By shedding light on the impact of the securitization of Islam in France on the everyday experiences of French Muslims, this paper suggests that the securitization of Islam in France is not only an exception that calls for the adoption of emergency measures but also an everyday formation to define acceptable Muslims. Also, this article provides empirical evidence of securitization theory by illuminating how the securitization process is experienced by individuals. The findings show that analysis of the logic of securitization allows us to capture a more complete picture and understand how security practices are translated into everyday lives.

Keywords: Securitization, France, Muslims, Everyday life

Öz

Söz edimlerine ve istisnai önlemlere ya da bürokratik uygulamalara odaklanan birçok güvenlikleştirme analizi yapılmış olsa da güvenlikleştirmenin her iki mantığını içeren çok az araştırma yapılmıştır. Bu makale, Fransa'da İslam'ın güvenlikleştirilmesinin Fransız Müslümanların günlük deneyimleri üzerindeki etkisine ışık tutarak, Fransa'da İslam'ın güvenlikleştirilmesinin yalnızca acil durum önlemlerinin alınmasını gerektiren bir istisna olmadığını, aynı zamanda makbul Müslümanları tanımlamaya yönelik gündelik bir inşa süreci olduğunu öne sürmektedir. Ayrıca bu makale, güvenlikleştirme sürecinin kişiler tarafından nasıl deneyimlendiğini aydınlatarak güvenlikleştirme teorisine ampirik yönden yaklaşmaktadır. Bulgular, güvenlikleştirmenin her iki mantığı göz önüne alınarak yapılan analizlerin daha eksiksiz bir tablo çizmeye olanak sağladığını ve güvenlik uygulamalarının gündelik hayata nasıl yansıdığını göstermektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Güvenlikleştirme, Fransa, Müslümanlar, Gündelik hayat

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Introduction

"*Our challenge today is to fight against the abuse which some perpetrate in the name of religion, by ensuring that those who want to believe in Islam are not targeted and are citizens of our Republic in the full sense,*" said French President Emmanuel Macron (2020) while he was introducing the new Law reinforcing republican principles which had apparently a simple aim: fight against Islamic radicalism and concomitantly keep Muslim citizens from being dragged into this ideology. However, the law is the result of a long process that involves the securitization of Islam comprising both bureaucratic practices (since the 1990s) and exceptional measures (between 2015 and 2017) shaping French Muslims' everyday lives to become accepted Muslims. Thus, the securitization of Islam in France is not a new development that emerged with the terrorist attacks, but an ongoing process comprising different securitizing agents ((in)security professionals, political elite, etc.), different methods (routinized practices and exceptional measures).

By shedding light on the impact of the securitization of Islam in France on the everyday experiences of French Muslims, this paper suggests that the securitization of Islam in France is not only an "exception" that calls for the adoption of emergency measures but also an everyday formation to define "acceptable Muslims" which began in the 1990s. The aim of this process is to exclude "non-acceptable" Muslims whose primary belonging is not to the Republic but to Islam. The "non-acceptable" Muslim definition goes beyond the radical terrorists, it includes also ordinary people like my interviewees: One has been fired because of praying during his break time (Interviewee 20, 2021); the other, a daughter, was harassed by her teacher just for wearing a long skirt (Interviewee 23, 2021). This ongoing process has gained momentum with the series of terrorist attacks since 2015 which have been perpetrated or claimed by the radical Islamist terrorist group, ISIS, and have left more than 260 people dead (Cohen, 2020). Especially, the Charlie Hebdo attack in January 2015 and Paris attacks in November 2015 prompted the government to take exceptional measures, such as a state of emergency, to fight against terrorism. The exceptional nature of the measures has gained a permanent character by the promulgation of new anti-terror laws which have provided the state with enduring means for the exclusion of non-acceptable Muslims.

The Copenhagen School's "new framework for analysis", introduced in the mid-1990s, has continuously and significantly evolved, expanding beyond its initial focus on securitizing speech acts. This expansion encompasses various processes and factors related to, or directly involved in, securitization dynamics (Baele & Thomson, 2022). This broader perspective has illuminated crucial social and political matters, resulting in a more comprehensive understanding of the complex phenomenon of securitization. However, this evolution has also led to the fragmentation of securitization theory into distinct theories, each characterized by unique ontologies, epistemologies, and methodologies (Balzacq, 2015). Consequently, efforts have emerged to reconcile these divergent perspectives into unified frameworks, exemplified by several studies (Eroukhmanoff, 2015; Bourbeau, 2014; Mavelli, 2013). Bourbeau (2014) suggests that enhancing our comprehension of securitization requires investigation of both exceptional security discourses and routinized security practices across various periods and scenarios. Building on these works, this article undertakes a unified framework for analysis of the

securitization of Islam to account for the increasing tensions surrounding Muslims in France.

It is now well-established that Islam has been the religion most disproportionately impacted by securitization policies in Western countries (O'Toole et al., 2015; Fox & Akbaba, 2013; Cesari, 2009; Brown, 2008). In this context, the concept of the securitization of Islam has been used to explain different phenomena. These include the increasing perception in Western societies that Islam poses a threat to Western values (Mavelli, 2013; Croft, 2012; Edmunds, 2011), apprehensions arising from Islamic radicalization and how it has led to the adoption of emergency measures (Bonino, 2012; Silvestri, 2010), and the implementation of anti-terrorism and immigration laws that have disproportionately impacted Muslim minority communities (Cesari, 2009). Furthermore, it has been employed to comprehend endeavors to ban headscarves and/or burqas across Europe (Cesari, 2009), along with the discourse of danger surrounding women's involvement in British mosques (Brown, 2008). The securitization of Islam in France has also been the topic of academic debate (Cesari, 2021; Bosco, 2014; Barras, 2013; Fox & Akbaba, 2013; Mavelli, 2013). However, this literature has long been on security discourses and techniques and not much has been said about how security practices have been experienced by individuals and groups (Crawford & Hutchinson, 2015). Hence, what remains unanswered is how French Muslims have personally experienced the securitization of Islam in France.

The analysis proceeds in four stages. Firstly, I will explore both the Copenhagen School's and the Paris School's representations of securitization and how the combination of these approaches is relevant for analysis in the case of the securitization of Islam in France. It will suggest that the securitization of Islam is not only an exception but also an everyday formation of acceptable Muslims. This section is followed by an explication of the methodology. The article then shows that the securitization of Islam has emerged as a result of bureaucratic practices that have created a regime of truth in which the political elites' speech acts (after the various attacks) that legitimized the exceptional measures are recognized to be true. The final section turns to empirical evidence deriving from interviews with French Muslims which sheds light on the everyday lives of French Muslims.

Discussion of the literature

The relationship between religion and security is a developing field of inquiry within the theory of securitization, and its research implications remain to be explored. First developed by Wæver (1995) and Buzan et al. (1998) (referred to as the Copenhagen School), securitization theory provides a useful tool for analyzing this relationship. Securitization theory suggests that security is constructed by speech acts that introduce some issues and practices as existential threats which should be addressed with exceptional measures to be able to survive (Buzan et al., 1998). The Copenhagen School places strong emphasis on speech acts and asserts that "*by saying the words, something is done*" (Buzan et al., 1998: 26). In other words, when an issue is framed as a matter of security with the speech act, and the audience accepts it as such and the issue is securitized. Then it becomes possible to take exceptional measures to address the threat.

The emphasis on the speech act has been criticized by other scholars (referred to as the Paris School) who assert that the construction of security relies on bureaucratic decisions taken by (in)security professionals which create an insecure and uneasy environment in which technology plays a crucial role in surveillance and control (Bigo, 2002). Their understanding of securitization highlights "practices, audiences, and contexts that enable and constrain the production of specific forms of governmentality" (C.A.S.E. Collective, 2006: 457). According to the Paris School, security is a process of risk management in which in(security) professionals play a crucial role in constructing a "regime of truth" that seeks to establish what is deemed as legitimate sources of fear and unease (Bigo, 2008). Their authority is derived from their expertise, including specialized knowledge, skills, and access to various tools like data, statistics, biometrics, and sociological profiles. Thus, the process of securitization, intertwined with routine politics and bureaucracy, does not always rely on explicit speech acts but rather involves the continuous exercise of power by security professionals (Bigo, 2002).

Bourbeau (2014) labels the Copenhagen School's approach as "logic of exception" and the Paris School's approach as the "logic of routine". In an attempt to bring together these two approaches, he argues that focusing on only one theoretical stance does not allow the researcher to capture the whole picture of securitization. These two theoretical stances seem to compete or oppose, but the securitization of an issue might draw on insights from both (Eroukhmanoff, 2015; Bourbeau, 2014; Mavelli, 2013; C.A.S.E. Collective, 2006). Hence, this article seeks to understand how Islam is securitized in France at the individual and community levels with interventions conducted by bureaucrats and (in)security officials over the years, and at the exceptional level with discursive strategies of the political elite after the various attacks in 2015.

The securitization of Islam in Europe can be traced back to the 1990s (Cesari, 2012; for Danish example see Rytter & Pedersen, 2013) when Muslims gained visibility in Western societies as a result of immigration, family union, and high fertility rate (Fox & Akbaba, 2015). With particular focus on France, some estimations[1] suggest that 8.8% (5.7 million) of the French population is Muslim which makes the country the home of the biggest Muslim population in Europe (Pew Research Center, 2017). It is not therefore surprising that France had experienced tensions between the majority and the Muslim "minority" in the 1990s. This was manifested in the rise of the extreme-right *Front National* party which had high electoral support during the same period in some departments where Maghrebin and Turkish immigrants concentrated (Schain, 2006). Such electoral support led established parties to engage in anti-immigrant and anti-Islam policies. Thus, policies to control and scrutinize Islam cannot be reduced to some exceptional measures taken after the various attacks beginning in 2015, since there is an already existing "regime of truth" (Bigo, 2008). For example, as successfully shown by Mavelli (2013), France's famous burqa ban does not only consist of Sarkozy's speech act, but it also comprises (in)security professionals' definition of what a threat to the French version of secularism, namely *laïcité*, is. In this way, considering both, the logic of exception and routine (Bourbeau, 2014) is more relevant when analyzing the securitization of Islam (Eroukhmanoff,

1 The Law on Data Processing, Data Files, and Individual Liberties of 6$_{th}$ January 1978 does not allow the collection of personal data reflecting religion; therefore, official statistics are not available.

2015; Mavelli, 2013) in France. The attacks of 2015 changed the manifestation of the bureaucratic practices with the speech acts of government elites and the declaration of a state of emergency. After this exceptional process, new laws normalized (Bigo, 2002) and maintained the securitization of Islam in France in the logic of routine.

Existing research on the securitization of Islam mostly focuses on the post-9/11 period which has witnessed a scrutiny of Islam's position in Western public spaces, particularly manifesting in the curtailment of religious activities and practices (Cesari, 2009; Fox and Akbaba, 2013). Moreover, securitization processes may impact the religious group's identity formation by shaping dominant interpretations of identity while suppressing resistance to it (Brown, 2010). Mavelli (2013) contends that securitization contributes to the portrayal of Islam as the "other", deemed a menace to the liberal-secular order prevalent in Europe. This perspective has been expanded by numerous scholars, highlighting how this "otherness" is juxtaposed against Western liberal secular norms. Croft (2012) takes these notions of "othering" a step further, asserting that Britishness is constructed in contradistinction to a new Islamist terrorist Other. This Other is subdivided into "Radical Other" – one that must be feared of and eliminated – and "Orientalized Other" – one that must be disciplined and protected (Croft, 2012: 247). Croft (2012) claims that securitization produces different categories of Otherness which cannot be reduced to "us" versus "them". There are "degrees of difference and Otherness" (Hansen, 2006: 37). Within this context, Edmunds (2011) asserts that being a European Muslim now carries a higher social cost with governments often viewing individuals first as Muslims and then as citizens, thereby fostering a dichotomy between trusted and mistrusted Muslims.

Similar to this logic, I argue that by securitizing Islam, the French state dictates "the just and good way of life" (Huysmans, 1998) of a French Muslim in the *laic* public sphere. In other words, the French state requires that Muslims should live their religion privately and that no ostensible religious sign or practice is visible in public spaces (e.g., at school, at work, on the street, etc.). Accordingly, France welcomes "acceptable" Muslims – those who fully acknowledge French values and assimilate – while constructing "non-acceptable" Muslims – those who do not comply with the acceptable Muslim definition – as a security threat.

Methodology

The following analysis endeavors to understand first, how the securitization of Islam is exercised in France both in the logic of routine and exception, and second, how this securitization is felt and experienced by French Muslims. To show the involvement of both the logic of securitization, the period of analysis has been determined as between the beginning of the 1990s and today. Although I acknowledge that one of the reasons for the construction of the Grand Mosque of Paris in 1926 was to monitor the Muslim community (Bosco, 2014), the chosen time frame is more relevant since the Muslim "problem" was first politicized in the beginning of the 1990s (Cinalli & Van Hauwaert, 2021), after the famous *affaire du foulard* in 1989, and almost all the interviewees' experience with the securitization of Islam began during this period. The chosen time period allows the researcher to analyze routinized practices (i.e., the implementation of the *laïcité* principle, and construction of an *Islam de France*), and discursive strategies,

and exceptional measures after the various attacks in 2015. The latter part of the analysis relies on speech acts of the political elite (i.e., President Hollande's speeches after the attacks) and implications of exceptional measures (i.e., the state of emergency and promulgation of new laws). The critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995) method was applied for the analysis of the speech acts.

For the second part of the analysis, a qualitative approach is found useful for assessing the securitization experience of the Muslim community. This method provides a convenient analytical tool for understanding how securitization is felt and reflected in Muslims' everyday lives. Accordingly, the second set of data for this study was derived from twenty-nine semi-structured interviews (fifteen Muslim men and fourteen Muslim women aged between 20-47) with Muslims living in Île-de-France using snowball sampling. This region is home to a heterogeneous group of Muslims since it comprises both Paris (where 21 of the interviewees live) and some banlieues (where 7 of the interviewees live) with a dense Muslim population. First contact was made through Muslim associations and social media, and then the interviewee both suggested additional people and provided information to locate more potential interviewees. The interviews took place between the 1st of August – 28th February 2021, but because of COVID-19 restrictions, the interviews were performed remotely. Permission was obtained from the Istanbul University's ethical committee to perform this research. Interviews were recorded with informed consent and transcribed. All interviews were translated from French and Turkish to English by the author. The transcripts were anonymized and analyzed thematically. The selection of quotations was based on their pertinence to the argument and the specific processes under examination (Hammersley, 1990).

All interviewees identify themselves as Muslims, and they were born into Muslim families except for three who had converted to Islam – one originally a Congolese man and two women of French origin. The contribution of these two French-origin women to the study is important because their approach to the securitization of Islam is a little softer than other interviewees. (The Congolese man's views are similar to those of the interviewees born Muslim since he was already experiencing "otherness" because of his race). The Muslim-born interviewees highlight that Islam is not only a religion for them, but it also means family, community, culture, tradition, legacy, civilization, etc. while for the convert interviewees, it is a faith, a way of worship. As we shall see, they all experience discrimination and marginalization but convert interviewees do not feel their whole identity was attacked by the securitization of Islam, only their religion. They emphasize that they understand why Islam is perceived as a threat, and to them, there is a simple solution: the French state has to learn more about Islam and its peaceful character.

The interviewees consist of civil servants, journalists, representatives of non-governmental organizations, private sector employees and self-employed persons from the middle class. Historically, Muslim immigrants swelled the ranks of the working class and resided in the outskirts of major cities known as banlieues, which resulted in experiences of social, economic, and spatial marginalization (Galonnier, 2015). However, the background of my French-born interviewees reflects an upward social mobility over generations (most of them are third and fourth generation).

The sample consists of different origins: eleven of the participants have Turkish origin, eight of them have Algerian origin, five of them have Moroccan origin and two of them

have Tunisian origin. All participants are French citizens (seven of them were naturalized and nineteen of them are French-born) except for two Turkish participants who have permanent resident permits and whose children are French citizens. The interviews addressed a different array of issues that might affect the experience of securitization: the role of Islam in interviewees' lives; integration into France; experiences with the implementation of the *laïcité* principle; leadership of the Islamic religion; views about media and how it portrays Muslims; perspectives on terrorist attacks; the fear of backlash against Muslims; how the attacks affected interviewees' day-to-day lives.

There are several limitations to this study. First, this study does not speak to the experiences of Muslims from less privileged backgrounds. My interviewees define themselves as middle class, therefore this study is not able to address how social class could impact life in France as a Muslim. This is an important issue for future research. Second, this study does not claim to represent all Muslims in France. Since I have used snowball sampling, the sample cannot be generalized to the wider population. Third, as the sample consists of persons aged between 20-47, this study does not speak to how experiences of securitization differ between younger and older Muslims. Finally, the study does not address the experiences of Muslims living in different parts of France. Hence, how French Muslims' experiences of securitization are affected by living in rural parts of the country, or by living in southern or northern France are questions that cannot be answered by this study.

Towards a more complete picture of securitization

The French government's attitudes and actions towards French Muslims serve as a significant case of securitization, where the focus is on the perceived security threat affecting the French Republic and its values. While the non-acceptable French Muslims are the subjects in question, the securitizing actors include the French government and (in)security professionals such as bureaucrats and civil servants. In this context, I observe that the securitizing actors have employed both discursive strategies and non-discursive practices to frame non-accepted French Muslims as a security matter, which indicates that both the logic of securitization are applicable. The subsequent sections provide an exploration of routinized practices and speech acts in the context of the "Muslim problem" in France.

Laïcité: A means for securitization

The French constitution does not recognize any minority and ensures "equality before law of all citizens, with no distinction made on the basis of origin, race or religion" (Article 2). In this way, republican citizenship provides *de jure* equality and requires uniformity. Accordingly, individuals can be accepted as a part of French society if they are considered assimilated. Those who are perceived to be insufficiently assimilated are exposed to significant social exclusion and discrimination even if they have (Fredette, 2014) or have later acquired (Fassin & Mazouz, 2009) French citizenship.

The most important component of this republican universalism is the French *laïcité*, which has been weaponized since the 1990s to justify repressive and discriminatory policies, particularly targeting Muslims. French *laïcité* and Anglo-American

multiculturalism, albeit in distinct ways, both aim to address the question of difference and equality in society. As Kuru (2009) puts it, Anglo-American multiculturalism adopts a passive secularism that emphasizes the recognition of plural identities, whereby the state assumes a more restrained role, allowing for the public visibility of religion. In contrast, France follows assertive secularism in which the state actively works to exclude religion from the public domain (Kuru, 2009). For instance, in the United States, it is the religion that helps immigrants turn to Americans, while it would be inconceivable in France to become French by being Muslim (Foner & Alba, 2008).

As the experiences of my interviewees highlight, since the 1990s there has been a shift in the interpretation of *laïcité* towards a stricter and more illiberal stance. Regardless of political views, generally, the political elite have taken a combative approach, demanding that Muslims hide public expressions of faith, and confine them to the private sphere in the name of assimilation and national identity. According to Barras (2013), *laïcité* has been utilized as a tool to confront the visible manifestation of Islam and this has been done to validate a progressively less accommodating approach towards the demands made by French Muslims in various contexts. This modern interpretation of *laïcité* stigmatizes French citizens based on their religion, shifting the focus from state neutrality to the neutrality expected from certain citizens.

In fact, French Muslims enthusiastically embrace *laïcité* as a principle because it protects everyone's freedom of religion and conscience (Interviewee 4, 2021). "*When I was at school back in the 1980s, the implementation of the laïcité principle was not the same as today. All religions were respected and treated equally*" (Interviewee 14, 2021). However, the increased visibility of Muslims in the public space resulted in the mobilization of the *laïcité* principle to tackle the Muslim problem. The *affair du foulard* of 1989 and successive events provide a shining example of the securitization of Islam in France which shows how a regime of truth is established and who the acceptable Muslim is. The incident occurred when three Muslim girls were suspended because of their refusal to remove their headscarves at school. Then President, Jacques Chirac, commissioned several politicians, intellectuals, and civil society representatives to determine what constituted a threat to the founding principle of the French Republic (Stasi Commission, 2003). The members of the so-called Stasi Commission, acting as (in) security professionals, deduced that a veiled Muslim woman was a threat to the French state's republican identity and recommended the ban of "ostensible religious symbols" in schools (Stasi Commission, 2003) which was passed into law in 2004. Even if we consider that the *affair du foulard* was an incident that required emergency measures as suggested by the Copenhagen School, further analysis shows that it provides an incomplete picture.

The Stasi Commission itself may not have created this regime of truth. Until the formation of the Commission in 2003, about a hundred Muslim girls were expelled from school by headmasters (Blavignant, 2018) who acted as another group of (in)security professionals. The conversation between one of my interviewees and the headmaster illustrates vividly this regime of truth: "*When the ban became law, my daughters were in middle school. I went to school to see the headmaster and said to him, 'These girls' right to education is violated. You must be concerned as much as I am.' Pointing the school door he replied, 'Once you have your foot in that door, your god's law expires, and our*

republic's law begins. '" (Interviewee 27, 2021). The Commission has only consolidated the idea that *laïcité* is, in fact, a value rather than principle, and a "living practice" (Stasi Commission, 2003: 38). Also, it is suggested by Mavelli (2013) that this understanding of *laïcité* provided the basis for the famous burqa ban. Laurence and Vaïsse (2006) explain that this type of bans is the product of an effort to reduce the development of certain religious affiliations and to curb the potential development of bipartisanship (i.e., both to religion and to the republic) among France's Muslim population.

In a similar vein, two soft law charters, namely Charter of Laïcité in Public Services of 2007 and Charter of Laïcité at School of 2013, were issued to remind citizens of their rights and obligations and to structure everyday lives of public servants and students. These charters are followed by the "Great School Mobilization for the Republic's Values" which includes administrative, curricular, and disciplinary measures after the Charlie Hebdo attacks, to target perceived shortcomings in students' commitment to republican principles (Lizotte, 2020). Similar to the period after the veil ban, it is expected that teachers and headmasters act as (in)security professionals and systematically report students who question republican values in order to prevent Islamic radicalism (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale…, 2015).

Regarding the *laïcité* principle, the most important theme that emerged during the field study is hypocrisy. My interviewees observe that the French republic is more tolerant of other religions (e.g., Judaism, Christianity), and cultural symbols (Interviewee 12; 15; 24; 25, 2021). For example, one of my interviewees who works as a nurse in a public hospital explained to me that she cannot cover her hair during working hours, while her African-origin coworkers may wear a headscarf resembling the Muslim veil because it is part of their culture, not religion (Interviewee 16, 2021). It is also stated that the aggressive mobilization of the *laïcité* principle towards Muslims has only one purpose: "*to eradicate Islam and Muslim culture in France by assimilating Muslims*" (Interviewee 27, 2021) and "*by turning them into robots who don't have any belief except the belief in laïcité as a religion of the state*" (Interviewee 16, 2021).

All of these contributed to the construction of acceptable Muslims who would yield to the laic order (Mavelli, 2013) and to the delegitimization of the visible manifestation of religion perceived as undermining the republic. Therefore, to be accepted as a natural part of French society, Muslims must assimilate in a way that their religious belief stays only in their heart. Even though the 2015 Paris attacks made the government construct a discourse around *laïcité* as a threatened republican value, this process cannot be reduced only to speech acts. In other words, the securitization of Islam in France is a long-term process supported by both normal bureaucratic practices and political decisions, and exceptional measures.

Controlling Islam à la française

It is not a coincidence that the French state attempted to control and modernize Islam at the beginning of the 1990s. That period was marked by the debate about the Muslim problem both in the media and among policy-makers (Hajjat, 2013), and the government began to promote an *Islam de France* [Islam of France] instead of Islam *in* France (Fellag, 2014). To this end, in 1990, the Minister of the Interior, Pierre Joxe, established

the *Conseil de réflexion sur l'Islam en France* (CORIF), and following its abolition, successive governments also tried to establish other centralized organizations with which they could negotiate. Finally, *Conseil Français du Culte Musulman* (CFCM) was created in 2003 as the result of Nicolas Sarkozy's bilateral negotiations with three major Muslim federations and other smaller organizations, each of which represents the interests of different Muslim communities (Turkish, African, Moroccan, etc.).

The attempts to institutionalize and domesticate (Zeghal, 2005) Islam show that according to successive governments, some French Muslims' religious practices or behaviors are not compatible with republican values. Therefore, an institution is needed to form an Islam of France and to guide French Muslims to an acceptable way of living their religion. However, this does not resonate with French Muslims' understanding of Islam: "*What does Islam of France mean? Is it an Islam appropriate to the reality of life in France? If so, okay. Already throughout history, Muslim communities have kept Islam alive along with their local cultures. But if the Islam of France is a tool for the French state to impose on Muslims how to live their religion, it is impossible for anyone to accept it*" (Interviewee 17, 2021).

Although the main purpose of the CFCM was to act as the interlocutor of the public authority in Islamic matters (Zeghal, 2005), the institution was also expected to be a social surveillance tool since Sarkozy desired an Islam that fully respects the laws of the republic and does not develop a discourse against republican values (Sarkozy, 2003). CFCM's task of "disseminating a liberal doxa and marginalizing radical elements" (Caiero, 2005: 78) to form an acceptable Islam transforms CFCM's members into (in)security professionals who "[…] *control and regulate our way of life and practicing religion*" (Interviewee 14, 2021).

Competing federations within the CFCM combined with the government's "moderate" Islam agenda delegitimize CFCM's religious recommendations in the eyes of Muslims: "*For a while, they took Moroccan Islam as an example.* […] *If a secular government got elected in Türkiye, I think they would say that Islam of France is Turkish Islam*" (Interviewee 13, 2021). Further, it is also puzzling for Muslims that, on the one hand, the *laïcité* principle requires the removal of religion from what is public, and on the other hand the state establishes such an institution to adapt Islam to France: "*If the Islam of France is for the state to control how Islam is practiced, laïcité loses its meaning altogether. Worse still, if the state produces a new Islam, then Islam becomes the religion of the state in the sense that the state deals with worship*" (Interviewee 17, 2021).

Even though some scholars (Bosco, 2014; Fox & Akbaba, 2015; Cesari, 2012) relate these to the politics of exception that emerged after 9/11, I add that it is also part of a "regime of truth" (Bigo, 2002). For example, during the formation of CORIF in 1990, Joxe established a discourse on Islam through security and modernization. According to Joxe, it is necessary to fight against the establishment of "savage" mosques with radical, intolerant, and violent imams (Jouanneau, 2009). Jean-Pierre Chevènement, Minister of the Interior between 1997-2000, said that by creating an Islam of France, he gives Muslims a chance to modernize Islam (Chevènement, 1997). In this regime of truth, Sarkozy emphasized that he was afraid of clandestine Islamic activities because this secrecy led to radicalization (Coroller & Licht, 2003).

The control over Muslims' everyday life also manifests itself in matters related to imams and places of worship. This unease can be explained by their role in shaping Muslim identities. The field research revealed that mosques are community centers where Muslims not only gather for prayers but also for marriages, funerals, learning activities (Islamic history and tradition, Coran, etc.), distributing supplies to those in need, etc. Further, in those gatherings, the new generation socializes with fellow Muslims, and religious and cultural traditions are passed down. A representative of a religious association explained that Muslim children should learn their religion and civilization from a Muslim, since at school they are taught that Arabs were savages before France brought them civilization, and Islam is an oppressive and patriarchal religion that is not compatible with the republican values (Interviewee 13, 2021).

Imams also play a key role, both as guides and community leaders, and they could lead the worshipers with sermons. Realizing imams' influence on the Muslim community, French authorities adopted a security-centered approach to Muslim worship (Frégosi, 2008). Starting from Joxe's term as Minister of Interior in the early 1990s, bureaucrats began to refer to foreign imams as fundamentalist threats to France in administrative memorandums, creating a regime of truth. According to these (in)security professionals, the government should promote a moderate Islam and fight against uncontrolled mosques and imams (Jouanneau, 2018). The documents consulted by Jouanneau (2018) show that this security-centered approach has been consolidated throughout the years and not only bureaucrats and members of the government, but also civil servants and the media adopted a discourse that favors moderate imams who would lead Muslims to an accepted lifestyle.

After the 2015 Paris attacks, this perspective is still visible in a report presented to the French Senate (Sénat, 2016) which recommended school laic imams in France since the imams sent from some Muslim countries who shape Muslim identity according to their beliefs create a security problem. These bureaucrats and senators acted like (in)security professionals and determined what constitutes a threat to the Muslim identity in France. In this regime of truth, President Emmanuel Macron's electoral promises included the establishment of a National Federation of Islam of France (En Marche, 2017) which will be commissioned to fund the construction of mosques and schooling of French imams aiming to "integrate" Islam to France by forming imams who internalize republican values. In addition to this, a legally non-binding Charter of Principles for an Islam of France ("Communiqué", 2021) was created aiming to ensure that the religious organizations in France are aware that the republic's law is superior to God's law. In other words, the willingness to create an Islam of France which will guide Muslims to an acceptable way of life emerged in the 1990s and has continued until this day through a variety of instruments.

Securitization as an exception

In the regime of truth that I have tried to frame briefly above, France experienced various terrorist attacks in 2015 and in the later years. Once an issue is securitized, the securitization gets established at critical moments and then the securitization process becomes difficult to reverse or break (Bourbeau, 2014). At a critical moment, the most important component of securitization is the speech act which poses the issue as

an existential threat that requires extraordinary measures beyond the routine norms of everyday politics (Buzan et al., 1998). A brief analysis of President François Hollande's speech acts shows how the securitization of Islam was constructed around non-acceptable Muslims. In the speeches made after the Charlie Hebdo attack, it was emphasized that the threat was radicalism and obscurantism represented by non-acceptable Muslims (Hollande, 2015a). Freedom of expression, republican values, and gender equality were cited as reference objects (Hollande, 2015c). Securitizing moves aimed to ensure that the citizens are in unity and solidarity (Hollande, 2015b). The policy response in this context included increasing police forces to the extent permitted by ordinary law.

After the 2015 Paris attacks, the threat was defined as ISIS, a radical Islamist terrorist group, and a more aggressive approach was adopted by declaring war against it (Hollande, 2015d). Hollande acknowledged that the French killed the French on the night of the attacks, but he declared these terrorists as non-French, even though they were French-born citizens (Hollande, 2015d). While the enemy is described as barbaric, uncivilized, and a believer of anti-modern Islam, the French are represented as defenders of human rights and freedom. The discourse implies that there is an imagined clash between civilization represented by France, and barbarism represented by Muslims – who are perceived as non-modern. The official discourse served to strengthen French identity through the rule of law and human rights and to exercise power over non-acceptable Muslims through exclusion and/or discipline.

When the French public (the audience) is persuaded (for various polls see Clavel, 2016; IFOP, 2016) that there is an existential threat to the survival of republican values and identity, the implementation of exceptional measures is legitimized. In this context, a state of emergency was declared, more resources were allocated to all areas related to security, an amendment to the constitution was proposed, new antiterrorism laws were promulgated, and human rights were restricted in favor of security. However, to be able to sustain the securitization process, legislative changes that would outlive the state of emergency were needed and would give the state of emergency a permanent character (Agamben, 2005).

As laws represent the political elites' understanding of the values, interests, and qualities of the republic, they are of great importance for securitizing actors to achieve their goals. The amendment to the constitution – which envisaged deprivation of citizenship of a person who acts against national interests and commits terrorist crimes – aimed to establish what national identity is and who comprises it. Later, two new anti-terror laws[2] were promulgated to reinforce the fight against terrorism by making exceptional measures (e.g., stop and search, administrative closure of places of worship, house arrest, etc.) enter ordinary law. The Law reinforcing republican principles enacted in 2021 (after the end of the state of emergency in 2017), also known as the Law against Islamist separatism, makes part of the government strategy to counter non-acceptable Muslims by reinforcing the *laïcité* principle and imposing regulatory constraints on religious associations. These laws show how ideas about security are institutionalized

2 Law n° 2016-386 of 3 June 2016 Law reinforcing the fight against organized crime, terrorism, and its financing & Law n° 2017-1510 of 31 October 2017 Law reinforcing international security and fight against terrorism.

and how securitization is removed from the logic of exception and continued in the logic of routine (Bourbeau, 2014).

Construction of everyday lives

The focus on the everyday experiences of French Muslims is useful to understand the implications of security practices on marginalized communities. By doing so, we will be able to trace the impact of security practices on securitized communities, and reveal inequalities, abuses of power, and discrimination. Thus, the following sections focus on how securitization of Islam constructs and affects French Muslims' everyday lives.

Being Muslim in France

Earlier works (Fredette, 2014; Simon, 2012) and field research have shown that French Muslims do love France and feel French. Even though they speak Arabic or Turkish at home and prefer their cuisine of origin, they have adopted a French lifestyle besides their Islamic practices: "*In fact, Turkish culture is dominant at home, but when I am outside, I have no difference from a French person*" (Interviewee 3, 2021). Of the people I interviewed, many (Interviewees 5; 14; 15; 16; 19; 22, 23; 24, 2021) specifically clarified that they felt no conflict between being both Muslim and French: "*I am proud to be both Algerian Muslim and French. I think these identities complement each other*" (Interviewee 19, 2021). Those who have acquired French citizenship are also proud to be so since "*I have chosen this. God wanted me to be Tunisian, but I have chosen to be French. I am happy to be Muslim, French, and European*" (Interviewee 4, 2021). However, the securitizing environment created a prevailing narrative that seeks to categorize Muslims as either accepted or non-accepted. The media too, played a role in this as only two contrasting types of Muslims – or as Połońska-Kimunguyi and Gillespie (2016) put it, good other and negative other – can appear on TV channels: "*To speak for Muslims, the media hand a microphone to those who cannot speak proper French. In the contrary case, they find people who seem more French than the French and speak French very well. Those who do not deny their own identity, background, and culture cannot find a place on media platforms*" (Interviewee 24, 2021).

Building on these insights, the experiences of interviewees illuminate nuances of discrimination and challenges they face caused by securitization. Male interviewees stated that they did not face discrimination before or after the attacks because they do not seem Muslim taken at face value. (Discrimination towards my male interviewees is more subtle.) However, they emphasized that relatives and acquaintances who wear headscarves are usually discriminated against, even harassed verbally and/or physically. One male interviewee told me that his wife and he were dismissed from a dentist's office because his wife was veiled (Interviewee 23, 2021). All of my female interviewees who wear headscarves mentioned that they have been verbally abused. In line with this, some white French developed a sense of entitlement whereby they thought that they had the right to decide who did not belong in France and to pressure them to assimilate. One of my converted interviewees of French origin told me laughingly that a woman stopped her while she was buying groceries and said, "*'Take off your veil or go home. This is France.' But I was calm and said, 'do not worry madame, I am home'*" (Interviewee 18,

2021). The sense of entitlement includes also "micro attacks" (Interviewee 14, 2021) involving comments and questioning about religious practices: "*I do not go to lunch with my colleagues because they will understand that I am Muslim and start to ask questions about my religion*" (Interviewee 5, 2021). "*Why don't you eat pork? Why don't you drink alcoholic drinks? Why do you fast?*" (Interviewee 14, 2021). Within French society, where the regular visibility of religion is minimal, activities such as daily prayers, fasting, adherence to religious moral principles, and adhering to dress codes are immediately perceived as excessive. From this perspective, individuals deemed as accepted Muslims are those who avoid distinctive attire, do not fast, and refrain from public expressions of their religious beliefs.

If wearing a headscarf is the first conspicuous signifier of being a non-accepted Muslim, having a "Muslim" name is the second. Muslim and Arabic names have been identified as one of the main hindrances to employment and career progression in France (Naseem & Adnan, 2019; Valfort, 2017; 2015). Reflecting that, two of my interviewees left France because one could not find a job although being a healthcare professional (Interviewee 3, 2021) and the other could not advance her career (Interviewee 14, 2021). A correlation between Muslim names and discrimination is also documented in the housing market (Acolin et al., 2016), an issue raised by several interviewees. One interviewee made a test of her own and reached the same result: "*I called the real estate agent and said my name. Once he hears my name he said, 'Sorry, that apartment is not listed anymore'. But when my French friend called, he said that the apartment is available*" (Interviewee 19, 2021). An interviewee remarks that if one wants to avoid all these problems and "be part of the French community" (Interviewee 14, 2021) he/she can change their name: "*When I applied for citizenship (because my parents were not French citizens) the first question that they asked me was if I wanted to change my name. The officer said it would be easier for me*". This advice may entail requesting to conceal or tone down any religious association to gain acceptance.

These experiences show that first, my interviewees are happy to have diverse identities (e.g., Muslim, French, Algerian) and they claim themselves capable of balancing these. Second, being a securitized Muslim is mostly gendered and the way that Muslim women dress themselves has become a tool to mark out Muslim woman as being insufficiently French or a non-accepted Muslim. Finally, bearing a Muslim-sounding name is assumed to diminish the possibility to be perceived as an accepted Muslim. These insights illuminate the complex interplay of identities, the gendered nature of securitization, and the impact of names on perceived acceptance within the context of being a securitized Muslim.

Experiences with security and surveillance

According to the securitization theory, if a choice is to be made between security and freedom in favor of security, the audience should accept that there is a security problem and/or it must be persuaded by speech acts (Buzan et al., 1998). However, my interviewees do not believe that there is a security problem in France caused by Muslims (except for interviewee 9) which would legitimize exceptional measures. Therefore, it is pointless for them to waive their civic rights to tackle a problem that does not exist. Yet, the government points the finger at Muslims by saying "*You are responsible for*

what we are going through" (Interviewee 17, 2021). This creates a new social reality by securitization in which Muslims encounter suspicion, discrimination, and fear in their daily lives.

Especially after the Paris attacks, my interviewees' fear of terrorism went beyond the fear of physical harm due to a terrorist attack. Different from the majority of the French public, their loss of security included continuous anxiety related to the security of their environment. Many interviewees mentioned that they were afraid of going to the supermarket or taking the metro after the attacks because it is visible outside that they are Muslim. Some of the female interviewees wore a hat (instead of a headscarf), "*just to blend in as a normal French person*" (Interviewee 16, 2021). As this article suggests, they observed that before the attacks the situation was handled more insidiously (e.g., teachers acting as (in)security professionals at school). However, the attacks and the security environment created by political elites gave permission to hate (Perry, 2001): "*We have heard before that Muslims could not rent an apartment or get a job. They were finding an excuse to reject Muslims. But the attacks freed the discourse. Today, they say openly that they do not want us the way that we are*" (Interviewee 15, 2021). The post-attack security environment exposed a pronounced dichotomy between being an accepted and non-accepted Muslim, accentuating the visible markers of identity and the resulting anxieties while simultaneously emboldening explicit expressions of discrimination.

The state of emergency declared after the attacks granted various powers, including the ability to conduct searches of private residences, dissolve associations (resulting in mosque closures), and impose house arrest on individuals. When I asked about what they think of these exceptional measures, the most common reaction was that the aim of these measures was not to counter terrorism but to counter non-fitting Muslims: "*The government says that we take these measures because we have to take Islam and those Muslims under control.*" (Interviewee 13, 2021). "*My workplace is close to a housing estate where Muslims lived. They raided the houses several times. Many people were detained. But they had nothing to do with terrorism*" (Interviewee 9, 2021). An analysis of administrative court rulings regarding appeals made by individuals during the state of emergency revealed that more than half of the decisions refer to Islam and the level of risk is directly proportioned to the level of religiosity (Hennette-Vauchez et al., 2018). Muslims were targeted for their religious practices considered radical by the authorities, without proving how these pose a threat to public order or security (Amnesty International, 2016). "*They have raided the doner shops around the corner and found prayer rugs in the back. The owners were immediately labeled as radicals and detained.*" (Interviewee 24, 2021). The prevalent perception emerges that the exceptional measures were not primarily directed at countering terrorism, but rather at targeting Muslims whose level of religiosity is perceived as non-accepted.

Within this context, mosques were monitored to oversee the imams, pressuring them to conform to French values: "*If an imam preaches that homosexuality is forbidden in Islam, the ministry closes the mosque because this kind of anti-modern beliefs cannot be tolerated*" (Interviewee 18, 2021). This raises the question, "*Which religion does promote or does not forbid homosexuality?*" (Interviewee 25, 2021). Consequently, the closure of mosques is interpreted as a punitive measure affecting the entire congregation,

tantamount to what some describe as "collective punishment" (Interviewee 17, 2021), alluding to a strategy of enforcing the Muslim community to conform with French values, as highlighted by the phrase "*They want to keep Muslims in line*" (Interviewee 23, 2021). This practice seems to specifically target places of worship based on perceived alignment with French values, further underlining the criteria for being recognized as an accepted Muslim.

During the state of emergency marked by an encouraged vigilance against potential terrorism, surveillance of Muslims manifested on both individual and institutional levels: "*If your neighbor thinks that you are a religious person, he/she calls the police, and you find yourself under house arrest or if you do not let your child to go to the swimming pool at school for religious reasons, the teacher reports you and you end up on the blacklist*" (Interviewee 14, 2021). Other surveillance practices such as profiling, stop and search, etc. were also exercised to discipline Muslims (Interviewee 23, 2021). "*They carried out continuous identity checks in Muslim neighborhoods*" (Interviewee 24, 2021). "*They started to spy on people's phones, e-mails, and social media accounts. They blacklisted people who said, 'I am not Charlie'. They raided their homes, monitored every move, every day*" (Interviewee 14, 2021). These created fear among the interviewees, prompting self-censorship of phone conversations, and online interactions, as well as behaving themselves in public: "*Every person could make a mistake. But I cannot because I am veiled*" (Interviewee 16, 2021). Moreover, few interviewees revealed that they have agreed to the interview at risk of being blacklisted. These participants have also warned me about the risk of being blacklisted only because I am conducting research on them (Interviewee 20; 25, 2021). One interviewee drew a parallel to a historical precedent, likening the situation to a contemporary rendition of old Al-Andalus where the Christian rulers established institutions to monitor Jews and Muslims newly converted to Christianity because of suspicion over whether they had genuinely adopted the religion (Interviewee 27, 2021). In this regard, the French government appears to strive for assurance regarding Muslims' level of assimilation, their avoidance of public displays of faith, and their adherence to French values (Interviewee 27, 2021).

All in all, the trajectory of securitization in France, particularly in the aftermath of the Paris attacks, has underscored the complex interplay between security imperatives and the lives of Muslims. The exceptional measures have contributed to the emergence of a social environment in which suspicion, discrimination, and fear shape the daily experiences of Muslims. The security measures enacted have not only sought to regulate and mold religious expression according to French values but also fostered a divide between the accepted and non-accepted Muslim.

Conclusion

In recent years, the relationship between religion and security has been one of the important themes in the security studies field. The research conducted on the securitization of religion and religious identities highlights the diverse contexts in which securitization processes occur and sheds light on the various impacts on communities affected by these processes of securitization. Securitized religious groups face discrimination (Fox & Akbaba, 2015), human rights violations (Baker-Beall & Clark, 2021), marginalization

(Howe, 2018), and exclusion (Banai & Kreide, 2017). This article contributes to this literature by documenting French Muslims' everyday lives and by showing how securitization is experienced by securitized objects.

From a theoretical standpoint, this article contributes to the debate between the Copenhagen School and the Paris School on the securitization process within specific contexts. In response to Bourbeau's (2014) call, the evidence presented in this article demonstrates that while the non-discursive approach of the Paris School is valuable for understanding the implementation of institutional control and restrictive policies aimed at eliminating the perceived threat, the Copenhagen School's discursive approach helps in understanding how the government and political elite in France utilized speech acts and extraordinary measures to define non-accepted Muslims. The regime of truth surrounding the mobilization of the *laïcité* principle, and the idea of an "Islam de France" involves a narrative that frames certain religious practices and expressions as incompatible with the republican fabric, ultimately defining the criteria for an accepted Muslim. This regime of truth is reinforced by exceptional measures after the attacks that contribute to the ongoing construction of what is deemed an acceptable Muslim.

The accounts of the interviewees indicate a harmonious balance between their Frenchness and their Islamic faith, but this balance is challenged by securitization. The prevailing narrative of acceptance and non-acceptance seeks to fragment and label, using tools like clothing choices and names as arbitrary criteria for inclusion. The state of emergency invoked after the attacks ushered in an array of measures that ostensibly aimed to counter terrorism. However, as revealed through interviews, the effects were often felt disproportionately by Muslims who were not in alignment with the perceived norms of religiosity.

The underlying principles of securitization theory propose that placing an emphasis on security could necessitate a temporary surrender of specific freedoms. Nevertheless, the narratives provided by the interviewees call into question the validity of deploying such extraordinary measures in the French context (Interviewee 12; 17; 18, 2021). Yet, the French government proceeded with their implementation. Several participants are of the opinion that the ultimate objective of this process is to curtail their liberties (Interviewee 4; 6; 12; 14; 15, 2021), resulting in the deterioration of the balance of security-freedom to the detriment of Muslims. Further analysis will thus necessitate considering the incorporation of extraordinary measures into ordinary legal frameworks, along with the utilization of bureaucratic practices to analyze the balance between security and freedom in France.

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