# Preface

The main focus of this book is on Muslim French citizens during the 10-year period beginning on 16 November 2005 (the last day of the urban riots) and ending with the terrorist carnage that took place on 13–14 November 2015. One can speak of these 10 years as being a 'long decade' for Muslim French citizens. Never before then had the two terms 'Muslim' and 'Citizenship' been used as frequently in conjunction (CFCM 2014); never before had this collocation come across as being so ironic, so oxymoronic even, with its terms brutally sundered by the emergence of appalling acts of Islamist violence. It goes without saying that the focus on Muslim French citizens in the public debate is not a recent development in contemporary French politics. The history of the country is characterised by a long-standing relationship with Islam, which goes far back in time. Muslims feature in some of the most significant events of French history, whether as the indomitable enemies from whose grasp the French claimed to have saved all of Western civilisation during the battle of Poitiers in October 732, or as the most loyal forces fighting in the African Army against Nazi terror during World War II. Most importantly for this book, the link between Muslims and migration in France has long represented an important dimension of

French history, but one which began to change in the early 1900s as France embarked on a process of increasing nationalisation (Arkoun 2006). This journey from migration to citizenship therefore represents a crucial historical process with which any study of twenty-first century Muslims in France must engage. From the early 1980s onwards (well before the time frame of this study), France witnessed the final stage of the transformation of Muslim migrants (predominantly from a Maghrebi background) into a new generation of French nationals by birth. This generation attended French schools from their earliest years, served as citizens in the French Army, and, in the eyes of many, deserved the full praise of all republican citizens. To reflect this fundamental pathway from migration to citizenship, I will consciously use the term Muslim French citizens (henceforth, MFCs) rather than any other designation. This helps to constantly remind the reader that this study is primarily about French citizens (of Muslim background) rather than about Muslims living in France, an altogether vaguer category.[1] At the same time, this specific designation also allows me to consider, in the final, conclusive pages of this book, to what extent the full citizenship of MFCs has in fact been compromised during the months following the terrorist carnage of 13–14 November, now that time has made it possible to judge these events more dispassionately.

The long decade 2005–2015 has also represented a significant chapter in my own personal biography, since I settled in France at the very beginning of this decade, having obtained a permanent position at CEVIPOF-Sciences Po after a number of years spent in postdoctoral training in the field of 'ethnic relations and integration' at the University of Leeds and at the European University Institute in Florence. My scholarly background in 'Anglo-American literature' means that I can approach the study of MFCs more easily, without the bias of 'republican assimilation' (as Anglo-American scholars might call it). Most importantly, throughout this decade, I have observed the problematic integration of MFCs first-hand, as being one of the most compelling and politically explosive issues in France, and in the aftermath of the recent terrorist carnage, this has convinced me to gather together in a monograph the various research projects that I have carried out in the past ten years and which all focused on topics relevant to this debate.

As I am putting the final words to this book, French public discourse paints an unrelentingly dark picture of the many difficulties that MFCs face in their civic and political integration. This pessimistic outlook is also that of the government, as evidenced by the Prime Minister's call for Islam to fight 'its own pathologies' (France Inter, 17 November 2015),[2] or by the President of the Republic's pledge to support a constitutional revision that would make it possible to strip French terrorists with dual citizenship of their French nationality (Le Monde, 16 November 2015 and 9 March 2016).[3] This pessimistic outlook obviously has a much larger European and international resonance and has been further reinforced by the acts of terrorism in Belgium, the deadliest that the country has suffered in its entire national history, which occurred just a few weeks before the completion of this book.

Of course, the evolution of my own scholarly experience and the progress of my research over the last decade may have influenced my judgement. Yet the difference between the public reaction to the terrorist carnage of November 2015 and the debate 10 years ago could hardly be more striking. November 2005 marked the end of the worst wave of riots in French history, but on the whole scholars and public commentators consistently linked these events not to Muslims but to disaffected young people in the suburbs. At the time, only a handful of commentators linked the riots to the lack of political integration of MFCs, and a few French colleagues went in the opposite direction and argued that the riots in fact had a strong political dimension (Jobard 2005). In the discourse of many actors, the riots were linked to wider processes of marginalisation that depended on age, housing, and income, while on the other side of the political spectrum, the rioting was perceived as a form of 'wanton criminality' devoid of any deeper sociological justification.[4]

In fact, the French debate at the time focused specifically on social dumping—an issue that came to a head with the huge protests that followed the Bolkestein directive, with the heated debate surrounding the 'Polish plumber', and with the rejection of the treaty establishing a constitution for Europe—and it also focused on the liberalisation of the labour market (a controversy which raged particularly strongly at the beginning of 2006 with various protests over the CPE labour market reform). Meanwhile, having peaked in 2004 over the establishment of

the new French Council of the Muslim Faith, the debate about Muslims in France began to wane from 2005 onwards (Vanparys et al. 2013), most likely because of a general agreement that an institutional body representing Muslims could reasonably have a say when the direct interests of Muslims were affected. At the time, France was also relatively unconcerned about Islamic extremism, at least compared to many other European countries.

The France of 2005 was, broadly speaking, dominated by the traditional interpretations and concerns of left–right politics, even as the public debate focused on issues that could easily have taken on the inflammatory ethno-religious flavour of the time. Crucially, this pacification of the French political debate surrounding Islam took place at the same time as other countries were driven by increasingly emotional public disputes, for example, following the political killing of the extreme right-wing leader Theo Van Gogh in Amsterdam at the end of 2004, as well as the London bombings of 7/7, the publication of anti-Muslim cartoons in Copenhagen, and the beginning of the Swiss minaret controversy, which all three took place in 2005. By contrast, since last November, countless heated arguments suggest that France is, by now, at war with Muslims on its own soil. What I have personally observed is that over the course of one decade France has shifted from a situation in which MFCs *qua* Muslims were not perceived as representing a threat to democratic peace, to a wholly different situation in which a growing number of MFCs have become the object of a ruthless war pitting Islamic evil against republican virtue, and playing itself out both on French soil and in the international arena.

I have also observed that the long decade 2005–2015 have been characterised by a socio-psychological shift. France has dramatically changed from showing pride in its successful integration of Muslims at the beginning of the decade, to expressing its dismay at its failure to fully transform them into republican citizens. Curiously, this downwards spiral can be put in the context of broader trends in the rest of Europe. Ten years ago, at the time of the 2005 riots, many French officials, experts and academics rose up in defence of republicanism in answer to speculations that France had failed to integrate its own 'minorities'. In the direct aftermath of the murder of Theo Van Gogh and of the London bombings,

republicanism was seen as being in better health than multiculturalist systems. At the same time, governments and officials in multicultural states such as Britain and the Netherlands appeared—more or less consciously—to pay a tribute to French republican principles, lamenting their own poor results when it came to the political integration of Muslims citizens, and vowing to do better, by rejecting a model of 'separateness at the cost of unity' (The Telegraph, 13 January 2007), and by giving a new assimilationist flavour to their policies (Prins and Saharso 2010).

Simply put, ten years ago it looked as if multiculturalism was bowing to the superiority of integratory republicanism. Multicultural states then started to engage in policies that drew, more or less explicitly, on values that were at the basis of France's national framework of values, rights and responsibilities. In 2015, by contrast, France's former pride in its civic and political unity has been replaced by an exceptional level of scepticism and distrust about its ability to defend republicanism. Ever since the Charlie Hebdo shooting on 7 January 2015, few are those who have highlighted France's positive record in terms of civic and political integration. Critics, both in the public sphere and in the domain of the social sciences, have savaged France's policies, helping to spread the idea that France might soon collapse, allegedly, under the burden of its huge, poorly integrated Muslim population. The France of today bears very little resemblance to what it was 10 years ago, ravaged as it is by draconian measures of public emergency. It is also burdened by the economic and political legacy of the economic crisis and wars in Iraq, Syria and Libya, and it is worried by the rise of the extreme right which enjoys unrivalled levels of popular support, and which may stand out as a main anti-systemic challenger in the next Presidential elections of April 2017.

The France of today has been taken over by a discourse assimilating Muslims to radicalised criminals, and portraying them as engaged in violence against women, as supporting Daesh terrorists and, hence, as constituting a serious threat to the very existence of the French Republic. Meanwhile, the pendulum of Franco-British differences appears to have just swung the other way, with the election of a Muslim candidate as mayor of London. In fact, the supposed *continuum* between the radicalisation of ordinary Muslim citizens and the terrorist attacks in 'Londonistan' (Phillips 2007) appears as no more than

political instrumentalisation in need of new terrorist attacks to be once again revamped. Today more then ever, commentators feel that they can blame the strict enforcement of *laïcité* for many of France's problems, taking the ubiquitous debate over the head scarf as the ultimate evidence that the French rejection of 'ostentatious' religious affiliations amounts to a discriminatory practice.

The stark contrast between the beginning and the end of the long decade 2005–2015, however, may not be due to an overnight change following the wave of terrorist attacks in 2015. That would be an overly simplistic reading of these events, and of what happened in the interim. Accordingly, this book aims to analyse, in detail the major characteristics of this period, and the many developments which took place over the entire decade. In particular, this book will focus on two successive phases that widened the gulf between Muslims and non-Muslims in France, both from a civic and from a political perspective. The first phase began after the 2005 riots. Gradually, the idea began to prevail that there existed a significant gap between the civic status enjoyed by 'full' French citizens and that of the marginalised inhabitants of the '*banlieues* of the Republic' who were increasingly turning to a radicalised form of Islam (Kepel 1987, 2015). Simply put, it became a commonly held idea that Muslims had become excluded (and had *de facto* excluded themselves) from the community of citizens, and were not enjoying the full rights nor the prevailing welfare standards guaranteed by the French Republic to all its citizens.

The second phase began in the middle of the decade, at which point a lengthy debate surrounding 'migration, integration, and national identity' helped to shape the policy priorities of the government, as the symbolic creation of a specific Ministry put in charge of all these issues went to show. This debate was also fuelled by wider concerns about the Arab Spring of 2011 and about the continuing migration crisis unfolding in the Mediterranean. Since they were the implicit target of a large part this debate, which emphasised the link between Islam and migration, Muslims found themselves increasingly isolated, forced into a political divide that opposed 'full' French citizens, with access to politics and decision-making, to a group of new, 'untested' citizens who were French by virtue of their passports but who were relatively detached

from politics. Put simply, this second phase was mostly about the (missing) link between Muslim citizens and the policy domain of representation and decision-making.

In the 6 months between November 2016 and the final completion of this monograph, the civic and political gulf between Muslim and non-Muslim citizens has only widened, to such an extent that the idea that Muslim citizens cannot be successfully integrated has now become widespread. The very extremeness of this view tends to suggest that it is a short-term, emotional response to a horrific event; nonetheless, it is important to properly problematise it, before it takes root and becomes an integral part of the national understanding regardless of any systematic scrutiny. The closing line of this book is indeed that France stands at the crossroads: citizenship in France must promptly be made to live up to its republican commitments, before ethno-religious Restoration succeed to impose itself as in a new Congress of Vienna.

Paris, France                                                                 Manlio Cinalli

## Notes

1. Obviously, I might make vague reference to Muslims in France when it is impossible to be more precise. For example, it is hard to establish a watertight distinction between Muslim citizens and migrants when studying Muslim associationism and Muslim movements.
2. Available online at http://www.franceinter.fr/video-manuel-valls-il-faut-lutter-contre-l-islamisme-qui-est-une-pathologie-de-l-islam. Last accessed on 13th March 2016.
3. Cf. the article "Face au terrorisme de guerre, Hollande prône un autre régime constitutionnel". Available online at http://www.lemonde.fr/attaques-a-paris/article/2015/11/16/hollande-la-france-intensifiera-ses-operations-en-syrie_4811147_4809495.html. Last accessed on 13th March 2016; Cf. the article "Après les modifications du Sénat, la réformeconstitutionnelle est compromise". Available online at http://www.lemonde.fr/attaques-a-paris/article/2016/03/09/decheance-de-nationalite-les-senateurs-choisissent-de-la-limiter-aux-binationaux_4879324_4809495.html. Last accessed on 13th March 2016.

4. Cf. the words of Boris Johnson, Mayor of London, in UK Indymedia, 11 August 2011.

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