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BLANDINE CHÉLINI-PONT

# What Is the Relationship between Stereotyping and the Place of Religion in the Public Sphere?

This essay provides some insights and poses some questions about the link_between the role of religions in the public sphere and negative stereotyping. With a specific interest in the legal dimension of this role, we would like to see if the one system produces more or less stereotyping and prejudice than the other. We do not regard the topic in any other sense, for example the possible public role of religions in maintaining civil peace and reducing prejudice in the public space.

Let us say a few words on the notion of the public sphere, which is a very extensive notion and in the end quite vague.[1] The reason for this lack of precision is the differences between the traditions of western state philosophies. The public sphere is as much the space and the services directly under state responsibility and competence as the collective space, the common space of a society, distinct from both private space and individual privacy. For some traditions, the state is central to the public sphere's definition; for others, the public sphere is *par éxcellence* the space of the civil society and of its manifestations. It belongs to the society. For the French people, on the contrary, the public sphere is viewed more as the state sphere, where it manifests its power and responsibility.[2]

[1] See from the same author, "Religion in the Public Sphere: Challenges and Opportunities", *Brigham Young Law Review* 20 (2005), 105–115. For a philosophical point of view, see Jürgen Habermas, "Religion in the Public Sphere", *European Journal of Philosophy* 14:1 (2006), 1–25.

[2] For a discussion about the French sense of the State, see Ellen Badone, "Identity and Democracy", *French Politics, Culture and Society*, 121 (2002), 20, which comments on the meaning of Marcel Gauchet's essay *La religion dans la démocratie, Parcours de la Laïcité* (1998). This thought-provoking essay analyzes the changing

Let us now examine some cases: The first is the one where a sole religion is authorized or visible in the public space and where a system of an official public religion is at work. What is the result in terms of stereotyping others, and beyond stereotyping, in terms of intolerance for another who does not belong to the only public religion? Logically, the answer would appear to be that stereotyping will be very frequent or more frequent in this type of legal system. What if all religions are accepted in the public space? Logically, it should be a guarantee of less stereotyping and intolerance, but the situations are so diverse that it is difficult to diminish stereotyping. Even in a system of public freedom of religion, where law and state normally defend the rights of all, there are obstacles. Finally, is the system of state and church separation like the French or American systems, where there is no relation between the law, the State and any religion in the public sphere, the one system with less stereotyping? The answer is not quite unequivocal.

## I. When the State Prefers a Sole Religion in the Public Sphere

Let us begin with the system of a "public religion", when one special religion is favoured by the state and has the sole right to represent the entire society in the public space. Saudi Arabia is an extreme example, where Islam is not only a state religion, but also a source of law and the *only* religion authorized in public spaces. All other religions are forbidden in the public sphere and practised only in strict privacy.[3] Millions of Christians live in Saudi Arabia, as foreign immigrants;[4] they have no worship guarantees, and no possibility of practising their

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relationships between the French state and the individual. The author contends that French republican democracy originally developed as a bulwark against the hegemony of the Roman Catholic Church. However, in the secularized context of present-day France, such protection is no longer necessary. Hence, democracy has lost much of its original meaning. In the past, political actors saw the collective good as being above private interests and identities. Now, however, it is precisely these agendas that have come to dominate French political discourse. In the face of competing minority demands, government must remain neutral and can no longer serve as the moral arbiter for the collectivity.

[3] In Qatar, where Christian migrants represent 5% of the population, one church is permitted in Doha, thanks to the goodwill of Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani. In the Emirates, where they represent 9% of the population, a few Christian churches are tolerated in the emirates of Abu Dhabi and Dubai. In the Sultanate of Oman where Christian migrants also represent 9%, non-Muslim worship buildings are permitted under the authorization and protection of the Sultan Qabous Bin, *La Croix* newspaper (April 18, 2011), 18. According to the Gulf Council of Cooperation, 12 million foreigners live in this area, *La Croix* (April 21, 2011), 19.

[4] Among them 1.5 million Catholics.

religion-specific traditions. Their religious "deviance" makes them invisible, despite their importance for the economic survival of the Kingdom. In the dispute over defamation of religions, when the Organization of the Islamic Conference (henceforth OIC) was about to demand an international convention against defamation of religions in 2008 (proposed by Pakistan), Saudi Arabia's Shura eventually opposed the idea.[5] The reason for this opposition was the reciprocal nature of an international convention. If the Saudis signed, it would be impossible to speak ill of Christianity and Judaism as false religions any more, and it would be more difficult to defend the only authorized expression of religion, the Saudi Wahhabism, in Saudi public space.

The case of Pakistan is also very interesting. Islam is the state religion and declared as the first source of Pakistani law, but the state recognizes and protects the existence of religious minorities.[6] However, Pakistan, like Saudi Arabia, Iran and Afghanistan, is a country with an exceedingly repressive law on blasphemy, which carries the death penalty or life imprisonment. With the strong Islamization of the country by General Zia, including criminal penalties—life in prison for desecration of the Koran, and the death penalty for blasphemy against the prophet Muhammad—introduced into the penal code in 1986 article 295 C., what can we ascertain? There were only around ten cases of penalties reported between 1927 and 1985. The year 1927 indeed marked the first British law that made it a crime to deliberately offend religious sentiments by insulting religious beliefs. Since 1985, more than 400 cases have been reported. According to a 2009–2010 report by the *National Commission for Justice and Peace* in Pakistan—a catholic organisation—the distribution of blasphemers is not surprisingly non-Sunni:[7]

- 57 were Ahmadiyyas (Ahmadiyyas represent 0.3% of the population: this minority is specially targeted by the section 298 of penal Code that strongly restrains its day life.)
- 47 were Shiites (Shiites represent 25% of the population).
- 8 were Christians (Christians represent 3% of the population, with the very emblematic case of Asia Bibi.

[5] See www.gulfnews.com/news/gulf/saudi_arabia/10198648.html.

[6] Article 20 on freedom of religion, article 25 on equality of citizens, article 26 on legitimate minorities' interests, Fundamental Rights Chapter, 1973 Pakistani Constitution. Articles 28, 251 and 255, 1985, Federal Constitution of Pakistan.

[7] www.ncjppk.org/publication.html.

The promised and proposed revision of this law, requested by all international bodies and especially by the European Parliament in 2010,[8] only resulted in the death of Salman Taseer, Muslim Governor of Pendjab, who publicly defended the revision. In 2011, pressure from Islamic parties and radical groups led to the assassination of the sole Christian Minister of the Government, the Catholic Shabbaz Bhatti, Minister of Religious Minorities from November 2008, when the Ministry of Minorities was created for the first time. The Pakistani Government has announced a quota of 5 percent for minorities in public employment, and proclaimed August11 as the National day for minorities and recognized non-Muslim holy days in the calendar. Still, blasphemy carries the death penalty when it concerns the only official religion, which the State says is the source of its Constitution and which is *de facto* that of the super-majority of a population. This only serves to endorse discrimination, violence and stereotyping of minority religions.[9]

The case of Turkey is also very interesting for another reason. Officially, this country has no religion in its Constitution and its laws. For example, the equality of gender and citizens in civil law and the marriage and inheritance laws are no longer rooted in Muslim law. Yet, this country has an entire ministry to administer Islam in Turkey, a Sunni Islam taught in public schools, and the places of worship are maintained by officials who are paid by the State. This situation, which does not seem strange, given that the majority of Turks are Sunni, has much to do with the lack of assistance for non-Muslim worshippers in the country. Religious minorities lack financing for their places of worship, which are crumbling. They are seen everywhere, sometimes because of the litigious nature of administrative approvals. Finally, the administrative reluctance and weightiness allow the masses to resort to sporadic violence, aimed at individuals or groups of Armenian, Greek, Alevi or Catholic minorities, which, unfortunately, is tolerated by the police.[10]

Does this mean that the degree of intolerance and negative stereotyping of others is consistently higher when the state directly manages, due to historical reasons, a specific

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[8] *Resolution on Religious Freedom in Pakistan*, May 10, 2010 (2011C/ 161 E/21), *Official Journal of European Union*, C/161E/147–149. In this resolution, the European Parliament gives as indicative data for 2009: 76 accusations of blasphemy and 17 condemnations.

[9] According to a *Pew Research Center* poll made in July 2011, only 16% of Pakistanis have a good opinion on Christians and 94% think of themselves primarily as Muslim instead of Pakistani. See pewresearch.org/pubs/2066/muslims-westerners-christians-jews-islamic-extremism-september-11.

[10] See the International Religious Freedom Report 201 on Turkey, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, State Department of the United States, www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148991.html.

religion as a single public form of worship, which is also a mandatory subject in public schools? It is very possible.

## II. All Religions are Freely Present in the Public Sphere

What are the examples of state public worship in Europe? The truth is that there are no more. Sweden, for example, has now separated State and Church and mandatory teaching of the Lutheran religion in schools has been transformed. It has been under a regime of registered religious communities since January 1, 2000. The national Lutheran Church has already enjoyed relative autonomy in terms of organization and management, which has facilitated the transition. The Church of Norway is in favour of such an evolution, while the Queen is not opposed to the "disestablishment" of the Anglican and Presbyterian Churches in England and Scotland, which, although established Churches, do not take their financing or their organization from the hands of political power.[11] The internal autonomy of institutional religion in Europe is deeply rooted.

When an organic link to a historical religion exists in European countries, it is accompanied simultaneously by a much protected religious freedom within the law. Besides, if the state itself is non-denominational, the historical link does not provoke any stigmatization of people of another religion. The case of England is an extremely significant example. We can conclude that it is not the linkage of a state with a specific religion that is dangerous for the minority; it is the absence of freedom, particularly the freedom to publicly exercise one's faith which excludes people who are different from the majority. *The absence of freedom of religion in public spaces promotes stigmatization.*

Similarly, European countries that have expanded, with the growing religious diversity of their populations and their system of legal recognition, like Belgium,[12] or their system of bilateral agreement, like Germany, have recognized historical Churches as independent legal bodies governed by public law[13] and helped to prevent stigmatization. With important growing populations, states make the effort to integrate new or recent religions into their agreements or

[11] See the provisions on Sweden and Norway collected by the website Eurel, University of Strasbourg and French National Center of Scientific Research-CNRS, www.eurel.info.

[12] Jean-Yves Simon, *État et religions en Europe: les systèmes de reconnaissance* (Strasbourg: PUS, 2005).

[13] www.eurel.info, pages on Germany.

into the public law status of the major religions. This is the case in Spain[14] and Belgium with the growing number of Muslims.[15]

## III. Difficulties

Nevertheless, it is not the same for Germany or Italy, despite the fact that they have roughly the same number and composition of Muslims.[16] The difference is important. Germany and Italy use the argument that the Muslim associations are not sufficiently organized and integrated to reach a sufficient level of representation and to claim a protective Agreement with the state or obtain the status of independent legal body governed by public law. In the cases of Germany and Italy, we see that there is a correlation between the sense of cultural identity – including Christian roots – and the lack of a public legal entity for a national Muslim federation and the refusal to make public spaces "neutral", for example schools, by removing religious signs such as the crucifix. It is from the perspective of this paradoxical reality that one must look at the two diametrically opposed verdicts of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of *Lautsi vs. Italy*.[17] The first case law in 2010 considered that Italy should not allow explicit religious symbols inside public buildings, particularly in schools, because the Italian State should not manifest any religious bias towards its citizens or its permanent residents, who could become Italian citizens. For France and the United States, the decision appeared normal and proportionate, (the State is neutral and does not manifest any endorsement of any religion, especially in public schools). On the other hand, Italians and some other European countries, like Poland, Romania or Russia, felt that the decision was an unacceptable intrusion by the Court into Italian civil society, for which the symbol of the crucifix is part of its identity. The second jurisprudence, *Lautsi* of March 2011, incorporated the notion of people having a cultural identity and admitted that putting a crucifix in public schools, in a visibly Catholic country, did not seem abnormal. There was no evidence that

[14] www.eurel.info, pages on Spain. See also Joaquim Mantecon, "La liberté religieuse en Espagne trente ans après", *Annuaire Droit et Religions* 4 (2010–2011), 241–257.

[15] *Le statut juridique de l'Islam en Europe: Actes du Colloque de Fès, 14–15 March 2009, 2011* (Fez: Marsam, 2011), the chapter on Belgium by Felice Dasseto.

[16] *Le statut juridique de l'Islam en Europe*. Chapters on Italy by Francesco Zannini and on Germany by Mathias Rohe.

[17] *Case of Lautsi and others v. Italy*, ECHR 2nd Section, application 30814/06, Judgment (November 3, 2009). ECHR Grand Chamber, Judgement March 18, 2011. Available on the ECHR website.

placing such a symbol would constitute a violation of respect for the religious freedom of others.

So here we are at yet another difficulty regarding the place of religions in the public sphere. This time it is no longer the State as such which, with its one religion and refusing to share the public space with other religions, is provoking the discrimination. The civil societies themselves are seeking recognition of their historical religion and cultural identity in the public sphere. A *Kulturkampf* atmosphere can threaten, when religious pluralism or public neutrality seems to confront the historical and religious roots of the silent majority. This is indeed taking place before our eyes in Europe, because the mobilization of public opinion for the defence of a specific identity leads eventually to *de facto* exclusion of those who are removed from this identity.

## III. Is the Separation of Church and State a Better System?

Here is the opposite question: Does a public space, voluntarily freed from "religion", as in France which claims to put religion into the private space, produce less stereotyping?

In the case of the United States, the entire System of Separation and the whole notion of public freedom of religion do not reduce a majority feeling of a common religious belonging to Christianity, which is not, *per se*, a problem. But this feeling is intimately linked with the high level of negative stereotyping against Muslims in general, and inside the country in particular. Several surveys, especially those by the Pew Research Center, have shown a negative American opinion and fear of Islam.[18] The good news is that the System of Separation, coupled with the absolute faith in religious freedom is so strong that, despite the rejection, the development of Islam in the United States and the integration of Muslims into the American mainstream can be viewed as certain.[19]

In the case of France, because of the history of this country, the separation of Church and State conditions the neutrality of the public sphere in a very extensive manner. Public freedom of religion is perfectly protected, but manifesting religious differences too strongly in the public space is limited. Defending the non-religious identity of French citizens forces France to disallow any "conspicuous" religious expression—currently Muslim—in public

[18] Last available survey made in August 2010, see pewresearch.org/pubs/1706/poll-americans-views-of-muslims-object-to-new-york-islamic-center-islam-violence.

[19] See pewresearch.org/pubs/1706/poll-americans-views-of-muslims-object-to-new-york-islamic-center-islam-violence.

spaces and all State service buildings, not only for civil servants (which seems acceptable in terms of service to the population without discrimination) but also for people in general. It is not a very liberal solution. There even exists a new form of tacit Catholic-secular alliance to "fight-off" any signs of extreme forms of Islam within its own population.

In France, which does not allow the slightest display of one's religion in the public sphere—unless it is for a pre-announced specific event or old tradition like a Catholic procession—the Gaullist party in power has just launched a debate on Secularism,[20] not to reflect on its place in the society, but rather on the problems that the Muslim immigrants, as a whole, pose for society and French secularism. The French were indeed almost unanimous in endorsing the law on the full veil, which is now forbidden in the streets.[21] The head scarf has been forbidden in public schools since 2004. The French method is to raise the sword when the display of a particular religion enters into conflict with the population and with that which serves as its identity, that is, the Republican ideology, which is strong, unifying and without religion. It is a method that is clearly assumed, which could appear particularly repulsive to the outside. But the challenge of this method is, for the Muslims of France, to become French Muslims. Therefore, in discussing the problems that the Muslims pose and resolving them one by one, the idea is to resolve them within the sense of a Republican ideology and not vice versa, the respect of a religious particularity. This is the opposite of the English method. Thus, at school, the cafeteria does not serve different menus (*halal*), requested by practising parents who forbid their children to eat the meat provided; it proposes "neutral" menus, with omelettes and fish instead, or vegetarian meals, but not *halal*. Similarly, flexible opening hours for public swimming pools are not allowed in the name of equality between men and women, etc.

Seen from the outside, the French method can be considered strongly stigmatizing. Seen from the inside, it is considered a requirement for Muslims to take on a French identity.[22] There is a very strong media focus on the Muslims, and the rise of the *Front National* (an extreme right-wing party) electorate is essentially due to the fear of Muslims and Islam; so France has produced laws which determine strong symbolic limits to the expression of the difference of the Muslim religion. But at the same time, the French are seeing tougher

[20] Paris (April 5, 2011).

[21] 70% of them, according to the latest (March 2010) *Harris Institute* poll for the *Financial Times*, on the banning of the full veil. 72% of them according to the last (July 21, 2011) poll of the Pew Research Center, see pewresearch.org/pubs/2066/muslims-westerners-christians-jews-islamic-extremism-september-11.

[22] Franck Fregosi, *Penser l'Islam dans la laïcité* (Paris, Hachette Pluriel, 2011).

legislation against discrimination based on religious affiliation. They created an advisory high court, la HALDE, to deal with incidents of discrimination, and also held a public debate on the representation of diversity in the media (which resulted in the Mandatory Act of 2008 on representing diversity in the media).[23] The principle is to preserve a sense of unity, to the detriment of the manifestation of differences which, if they exist, must remain private. The entire public space is seen as a sanctuary of neutrality. We are waiting to see if this country will succeed, without jeopardizing its tradition of no religion in the public sphere, in its gamble with religious mixing to improve the diversity of ethnic, religious, or gender diversity in the media in order to lower the level of negative representations of religious minorities.

## Conclusion

What conclusions can we make? All systems have their shortcomings. To diminish the level of intolerance, prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping, it is preferable that the public sphere admits and equally protects the freedom of worship in public for anyone, and that the state is completely secular. This condition is a necessary but short-term solution. At least, it makes religious discrimination more difficult. The long-term solution is to effectively enhance the penal prevention of discrimination on the one hand, and to increase, on the other hand, the means of "true conversation" between groups. Specific laws and education on diversity are the solutions. For example, a more heightened awareness of the existence of silent or evident discrimination against Muslims in Europe is beginning to take place. The Council of Europe, with the help of the Venice Commission and its report, plus joint reports of its Parliamentary Assembly, has called for member countries to enhance penalization in cases of discrimination.[24] The European Commission has also successfully led two Directives against discrimination, including religious discrimination in general and at work. [25]On the whole,

[23] *La représentation de la diversité dans les médias*, *Conseil National de l'audiovisuel, rapport rendu dans le cadre de la oi du 31 mars 2006 relative à l'égalité des chances, 2008*. Available at: www.csa.fr/upload/dossier/Promotion_diversite_dans_medias.pdf.

[24] Report on the relationship between freedom of expression and freedom of religion: the issue of regulation and prosecution of blasphemy, religious insult and incitement to religious hatred adopted by the Venice Commission at its 76th Plenary Session (October 17–18, 2008), www.venice.coe.int/site/dynamics/N_Search_ef.aspL=E&Text=blasphemy&S=0&C=0&Search=Title+Search.

[25] Council Directive 2000/43/EC of June 29, 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment of people irrespective of racial or ethnic origin. Proposal for a Council Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment of people irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation (SEC [2008] 2180 and SEC [2008] 2181). Both texts are available at eur-lex.europa.eu.

various programs have been proposed and developed on the European and national level for some years, from advice on good media practices to programs of intercultural dialogue and citizenship education in diversity and tolerance, integrated into school curricula to teach ethics.[26]

The last question is whether the penalization of religious discrimination will include forbidding any criticism of religion in the media? The OIC has jointly denounced the virulence of criticism directed at Islam during the dispute over defamation of religions in recent years.[27] This organization has also denounced the discrimination and even quasi-persecution suffered by Muslims in Western countries. The problem is quite clearly stated; freedom of expression in the West is a screen to develop negative stereotypes of Islam and Muslims. Moreover, these stereotypes, according to the OIC, lead to the trivialization of racist, xenophobic and discriminatory statements and attitudes, while openly anti-Muslim political parties gain votes and notoriety. So, is there less negative stereotyping when religious vilification is strictly forbidden? In a report on this issue one interesting answer from the United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion in 2006, Mrs Asma Jahangir, was that, unfortunately, in countries where criminalization of defamation (blasphemy) is very active, discrimination and persecution of religious minorities are the strongest.[28] Completely reversing the perspective of the OIC, Mrs Jahangir also said that in many cases people are far more discriminated against, stereotyped and persecuted by authoritarian states than by the media. Hence, criminalizing religious vilification cannot be a solution in democratic countries, which should help the media to be aware of their power to influence the public mood and acceptance of a concrete religious diversity in public space.[29]

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[26] San Marino Final Declaration of the European Conference on "The Religious Dimension of Intercultural Dialogue" (April 23–24, 2007), www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/Source/sanmarinofinal_EN.doc50; *Toledo Guiding Principles About Teaching Religions and Beliefs in Public School*, Advisory Council of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief, OSCE-ODHIR, (November 2007); *Religious Diversity and Intercultural Education: A Reference Book for Schools: Council of Europe edition* (September 2007); *Encountering Religious Pluralism in School and Society. A Qualitative Study of Teenage Perspectives in Europe, Religious Diversity and Education in Europe* (REDCo), volume 5 (eds. Thorsten Knauth, Dan-Paul Jozsa, Gerdien Bertram-Troost & Julia Ipgrave; Berlin: Waxmann, 2008).

[27] www.oic-oci.org/home.asp.

[28] Report on religious freedom (September 2006), Human Rights Council 2nd session, A/HRC/2/3, www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/2session/documents.htm.

[29] Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly, Recommendation 1605 (April 15, 2008), assembly.ceo.int/maind.asp?Link=/documents/adoptedtext/ta08/fres1605.htm.

A lot of effort is required to accomplish this goal, especially at this moment in European history. Indeed, we can be quite concerned about the turn of events that is affecting the entire European continent. In some large sections of the European population, secularism is pointed to as the vilified vector of multi-culturalism and of de-Christianization orchestrated by elite liberals without conscience, and as the direct cause of the Islamization of the continent. In France the exact opposite gives equal results. Secularism is put forward as a protective shield against the fear of Islamization and the destruction of French culture. Secularism in France is now used as an argument for the same nationalist identity awakening, which has taken hold in parts of Europe. Faced with the global economic crisis and increasing immigration, particularly in countries that have never faced this phenomenon, like Scandinavia, and faced with a sentiment of loss of status, a dangerous anger is rising from the bowels of the old world.[30]

Thus, the originality of French secularism today is that it can be promoted by certain groups that are united against "Islamization", when this same secularism is denounced by many in Europe as one of the main causes of Islamization. In both cases, the "Muslim" is the metaphysical enemy. Having lived the historical experience, we in Europe know that the portrait of the metaphysical enemy, against the backdrop of the economic crisis, does not lead to political appeasement. Let us take just two very symptomatic examples of what is going on: In France, the *National Front* party has held the role of acting as a foil and repellent in its denunciation of the "Muslim invasion" that is caused by uncontrolled immigration. But it is now being joined in this denunciation by some of the Gaullist electorate and the formation of a sub-group in the Gaullist majority party, called the *People's Right*, pushing for a stop to immigration. A significant group of secular activists, normally more left wing, are also supporting this portrait of "Muslims" that endangers the historical values of France. The debate in 2011 sparked by Muslim "squatters" praying on the side-walks of certain cities in France (due to lack of space in the Mosques) like Paris, Lyon and Marseilles is a striking example of the way the media feeds on the political statements of these groups that ignite heated debates. At the same time, we are witnessing a rise in the popularity of right and left wing associations that define themselves as 'republican resistance' organizations, led by *Le Bloc identitaire* (the identity block)[31] (right) born in Nice, and the *Riposte laïque*[32] (Secular

[30] This text was written before the tragedy in Norway on July 22, 2011 when Anders Behring Breivik murdered 77 people in Oslo and on the island of Utøya.

[31] www.bloc-identitaire.com.

[32] ripostelaique.com.

Response) (left) born in Paris, whose websites are particularly popular. Other groups are also visited on the net, like *Bivouac* or *Résistance républicaine*.[33]

These new groups organized a public republican aperitif (sausages and wine) on June 18, 2010 in Paris—the day General de Gaulle called for the resistance—and again on June 18, 2011. They also organized the same type of aperitif on September 4, 2010, commemorating the 140th birthday of the Third French Republic. These new "Republican resistance" groups have recently come up with a slogan: *neither Shari'a nor burqa in the Republic!* The media has extensively covered every single one of these events.

We do not want to exaggerate the issue, but tensions are mounting in Europe and the thresholds of tolerance are giving way to the thresholds of saturation. In this context, and paradoxically, the legislative strictness in France on the issue of the *burqa* being forbidden in public, as well as the ongoing negotiations with Muslim associations to avoid prayers in the streets, with immediate effectiveness, can be considered as prevention rather than stigmatization. The development of French secularism over the past twenty years has vacillated between openness to religious pluralism and cultural strictness, and, in this balancing act, it is shifting today towards a reactive direction in the image of the political and cultural mood of the old continent.

[33] www.bivouac-id.com and www.resistancerepublicaine.eu.