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## P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. LE CORRE: Good morning, everybody. Welcome to Brookings. Delighted to see so many of you on a Monday morning, which is unexpected as I was hearing Dominique talking about it but, you know, Washington is always up and running. And on behalf of the Foreign Policy program and the Center on the United States and Europe in particular, I'm delighted to introduce our guests for a long overdue event on Islam in France at Brookings. And I thank the Institut Montaigne for that and the director, Laurent Bigorgne, who is sitting here with us. And this has been made possible by the publication of that report here, "A French Islam is Possible," which you will find outside if there are still copies available, but you'll also find it online in French and indeed in English. There is also an executive summary for those who want to have the shorter version.

I also want to thank Andy Moffatt of CUSE, who has made this event possible and who is going to be with us a bit later.

But before we start, let me say, of course, that France is a particular case as its Muslim population is probably the largest in the West, but as we'll find out there is no pre-sized figure as the French Constitution does not allow specific religious identification in this relationship between the French state and France's Muslim community. A relationship somewhat different from cases in the U.S., in the U.K., or in Germany.

Secondly, France has been, of course, subject to a considerable wave of violent and terrorist attacks for the past two and a half years, but even longer than that if you recall events in the '90s and in 2012, Muhammad Meral. And also the issue of the veil has been well reported, including in this country, and I'm sure we'll address this in a minute, as well as the issue of the burkini last summer. But one thing that we will try to find out today is whether there is a specific French issue as opposed to the U.K., which has also been targeted by jihadist terrorists just a few days ago, but also Belgium and Germany and even the U.S.

And just like in most of these countries, there are two Muslim groups in France. One that is practicing its religion and faces no conflict with French societal norms and the other one, a minority drawn to fundamentalism using Islam as a form of rebellion. Just one figure that you'll find in the report, only 29 percent of the people interviewed in this survey said they made a weekly visit to the mosque.

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It's worth saying that a majority of French Muslims are born in France and three-quarters of them are French nationals. The majority of them are blue collars or employees, but contrary to a somewhat distorted view, there is also a new well-educated elites emerging. All these groups will play a role in less than four weeks when the French electorate goes to the polls for the first round of the French presidential election. And one question I hope we can address is whether there is a Muslim vote in France.

At Brookings, we don't specialize on Islam and Europe, but we have respected scholars on Islam and the Muslim words, and I should say that this event is cohosted by the Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic Words, which is represented here by my colleague, Shadi Hamid, who has written extensively on Islamic identity, Islamic movements, and U.S. policy towards political Islam, a subject that has become almost as common here as in Europe. Shadi is the author of a new book, "Islamic Exceptionalism: How the Struggle over Islam is Reshaping the World," which is short listed for the 2017 Lionel Gelber prize. Shadi will bring a U.S. perspective to our debate, and I hope a critical view on how France should handle its Muslim minority.

Other panelists, Dominique Moisi needs no introduction, but he's the senior counselor at the Institut Montaigne, the cofounder of E3, the French Institute of International Relations, author of many books, including the world-renown "Geopolitics of Emotion: How Cultures of Fear, Humiliation and Hope are Reshaping the World," translated in 15 languages. Dominique has been teaching geopolitics at Harvard, Kings College London, and the College of Europe in Warsaw.

And finally, Hakim El Karoui, the lead author of this report. Again, "French Islam is Possible." A geographer by training, served in the prime minister's office, and has worked as an investment banker and a consultant, but he's also a writer, an intellectual, and the author of several essays. And he's also the founder of several NGOs, including the 21<sup>st</sup> century club, which promotes integration of second and third generation immigrants in France.

So without further ado I'll just give the floor to Hakim for a short presentation of the report and then we'll have a discussion, and then I'll open the floor for Q&A. Hakim?

MR. EL KAROUI: Thank you, Philippe. Thank you all.

As you said, I've been actively engaging in diversity issues for over 15 years right now.

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As founder of the XXI Century Club, and during all these years I have decided to always follow one rule: never get involved in religious issues. Never. For the NGO, which gathers Muslims and non-Muslims, and for myself, because from my point of view, religion is a surely private matter.

That's all changed since one cold January day in 2015, Charlie Hebdo, and all the jihadist attacks which followed. I thought it's just impossible for people like me not to do something. Islam is no longer a private matter. Islam is a political matter, and French Muslims must act. So I'm talking to you, both as an intellectual and both as a French Muslim. So I go to the Institut Montaigne. I met Laurent, and I knew the Institute involvement in social cohesion matters and I told him we must work on it. And working on Islam means measuring the situation. Because there are a lot of people who are talking about Islam with no figures and a very strong representation of the reality.

So we made this survey, this report, which is possible according to the French law, and we tried to understand, too, the ideological landscape. What is the market share of Daesh? What is the market share of the Muslim Brotherhood? What is the market share of secular Islam? It's a "red" issue for us because we have to know to understand the reality. And of course, we have to design solutions, both for the government and both for the Muslims themselves, because I think -- this is my core message. I think we can act. Not only talk, we can act. And it's not the subject of the Arabs. It's the subject of the Muslims. It's our subject for all of us -- the French, the Europeans, the Westerners.

So what is the reality today? Muslims in France -- when you ask French people how much Muslims is there in the French population they tell you 30 percent. Thirty percent. The reality is only six. We launched a bid to perform the survey which shows -- IFOP. The survey was done by phone. We called over 15,000 people to find 1,000 Muslims. What is a Muslim? A Muslim is a people who say "I'm Muslim." But are you Muslim if your parents are? If your parents were? It matters because we need to understand who is Muslim in France today, but also who was but no longer practices Islam, and who wasn't but has converted to Islam.

Here is what we learned. About half of the French population 15 and over identify as Catholic; 40 says we don't have -- we have no religion; 6.5 percent says we are Muslim; 2 Protestant; and 1 Jewish.

There are three surprises in these results. So there are only 4.2 to 4.5 Muslims in France

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and not 6 million or 10 or 15. There are twice as many people living in Islam than entering Islam, converted people, twice as many people. And 75 percent of Muslims are French national with half French borne. So there is no big replacement of Christian people by Muslim people, nor an incredible attraction for Islam within the French population. This is the first takeaway.

Second takeaway, it's not an issue for foreigners only. It's a French issue. It's a French reality. It's a European reality. When we go through demographics, we can see one key finding. Muslim people are much younger than the rest of the population. The average age in France is around 48. For the Muslims it's around 65. You don't have 6 percent of the population under 25; you have 10. So there is a generation gap.

Second gap, inside the Muslim group, a social gap. Muslims are more educated and probably richer than we think. Ten percent of Muslims in France have a master's degree or higher. A third of all Muslims in France have completed two years of post-high school education. And 5 percent of them are management-level employees, against 9 percent for the rest of the population.

What does it mean? It means that we do have right now in France a French Muslim elite. And we do have a growing Muslim middle class. And at the same time, we have a Muslim not only working class but a Muslim not working class. This is another takeaway of our survey. These people are inactive, unemployed. About 30 percent of all French Muslims above 18 are not part of the French labor market. Who are they? Two categories. Women, housewives. We know them. And much more complicated, young people. Some are graduates but most of them are high school dropouts. Thirty percent of 6 percent of Muslims in France do not work, are totally inactive. It means 2 percent of the French population is out of the society. And there is a huge gap within the Muslim population.

When we have a look through geography now, we have this map, which explains a mistake about 30 percent of the population which could be Muslims. Muslims in France are not spread out all over France. They are highly concentrated in very specific areas. The North, the Ile-de-France, Paris and its region, Lyon, the South of France – Bordeaux, and Toulouse.

What does it mean? It means that when you have 6 percent of the population on only a quarter of the territory. When you have 10 percent population under 25, not 6 percent but 10 on the same quarter of the territory, it means that in a lot of suburbs you have not 20, 30, 40, 50, but 60 to 70 percent

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of the young population which is Muslim. As this population has a lot of problems and we have a lot of them in prisons, in jails, the representation of the subject is, of course, very far from the reality.

Now, when we have a look on their face and religious behaviors, we have several issues, several ideas. First of all, there is no Muslim community in France. No feeling of being Muslim and being part of a religious community. When we ask them would you vote for a Muslim because he's Muslim, only 15 percent say yes. Are you part of a Muslim organization? Only 5 percent say yes. But at the same time we have a very observant population, much more than Catholic population, around two-thirds, 70 percent, 75 percent say we are eating halal. We don't drink alcohol. We don't eat pork, et cetera. The Catholics, only 5 percent in France of the Catholic groups go to church.

And to another takeaway is when we try to understand what are the penetrations of Islamist behaviors, we can measure it through the veil and halal food. Halal food is not mandatory according to the Quran. You have to eat food from the people of the book, the Jews and the Christians. It is possible. But the Islamist group said no, it is impossible because we have to be pure. We have to be separated from the rest of the population. Now it is in France, 70 percent of the Muslim population, they eat only halal food. Eighty-three percent say we want halal food at school for our children.

Regarding the veil, it is more or less the same situation. Two-thirds of the population says we are favorable of the veil for the women, even if only a third of the women wear the veil. So we can see a huge penetration not only of observant behaviors but observant behaviors following Islamist rules.

Now we can go through the typology, what we can see. We have group one and group two. We can gather them. It's around half of the Muslim population. They are on the way of secularization. The only difference with the rest of the population is the level of observance. We have another group, around 20 to 25 percent. They are much more conservative than the rest of the population. They don't understand why sometimes it's forbidden to express religion, for example, at work, but I mean, this group is in the middle.

And you have the last group, the rebuild Islam secessionists and sectarian rigorists. This is, of course, the most problematic group. It is made of Muslims who have adopted a system of value clearly opposed to those of the French states. One of two people from this group considers Islamic rules

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and laws more important than French rules. Seventy percent are favorable, have favorable opinions about women wearing not the veil but the niqab. Seventy-five percent don't understand why polygamy is prohibited in France, and only half feel that French secular laws allows them to live their faith fully and freely.

Who composes this group? Very young people. Half of people under 25, living in the suburbs, and very often low educated. This is the group which is at stake. In this group, with a mix of violence, rebellion, and behaviors against society you will find the terrorists. Of course, not 28 percent of the French Muslim population is terrorists, but you will find terrorists in this group.

How can we interpret the situation? First, let's have a look at the French integration model and its impact on Islam because it's a quite challenging model. It's based on the paradox. On the one hand you have a sweet and sometimes a hard operation of the majority and the minority. You have to be like us as fast as possible, and there is no alternative. It's an order. Be like us. Us, the French. And at the same time, the French model says if you look like us then you will be part of us. The proof is that we will give you our daughters to marry. France has the highest percentage of interracial marriages, all over the Western world, much higher than in the U.S. between blacks and whites. Around 25 to 30 women with North African origin lives with non-Muslim men, even if it's strictly forbidden by Islam and by Arabic culture. The figures are very high.

We are at the heart of the French paradox. Xenophobia on the one hand, openness on the other hand. Why are French people so angry against the veil? Because it interprets a head scarf as a contestation of the equality between men and women. And if there is a big difference between men and women, for them it means that universality does not exist and universality, this is a French challenge. So a young French women who wears a veil contests the French project of global equality between men and women. Therefore, the French intolerance for the veil is not a surprise.

We can go through three more explanations and I don't want to be too much longer. First, there is a challenge for identity for young French people with North African origin, knowing that North Africa it's around three out of four parts French Muslim. We have 10 from sub-Saharan Africa, and 10 from Turkey.

When you ask French people, are French people of North African origin just as French as

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the French, 30 percent say no, they are not French like the rest of the French. Institut Montaigne performs another survey about discriminations. If you have a first name, a Muslim first name with exactly the same resume than people who would have a Christian first name, you have four to five times less likely to get to the next stage. Four to five times less. If you have a Jewish first name, you have two times less. You are not the same with the Christian first name and the Jewish first name. People with North African origins, they are not really considered as French.

If you make the links with what I said earlier, the sweet oppression, you understand the situation. Until you are not like the rest of the French, you will be oppressed. You will suffer from discrimination. And of course, these people, they are on longer from their country of origin. No longer. They are not Algerian, Moroccan, Tunisia. So who are they? They are Muslim. And they are not Muslims with the same religion as their fathers. Why? Because their fathers feel that they have been humiliated by colonization, by the economy, by poverty, by their job. If they have been humiliated, Islam will be different. And what kind of Islam will they choose? The Islam which is pushed by Islamists with a level of rebellion, with a level of identities affirmation, specificity. The veil, halal, a number of behaviors against the general value of the French society seems normal. So this is really a challenge for identity.

Second explanation is we have to look at anthropology. It's a very fundamental (phonetic) organization of the North African family. The North African family is based on two or three realities. First, endogamy. Traditionally, North African families, they used to marry their cousin. A son used to marry his cousin. Second characteristic, inequality between men and women. Nowadays, in the most advanced country in the Arab world, Tunisia, the daughter inherits half of what inherits the son. There is a fundamental inequality between men and women.

In the French system, French girls in the French school system, French girls succeed much more than French boys, and French girls with North African origin succeed much more than boys of foreign origin. The French society values more girls with North African origin than boys. Girls are seen as victims and boys as a threat.

There is inside the family a global turmoil. The path to modernity with a change. The role of the women is changing and it's changing very, very fast. In the context of this challenging identity and in the context of Islamist group pushing their ideology, and in this ideology, of course, men have a



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very specific role and it's not a hazard. Islamists is by a certain way a response of this global turmoil which is not specific to France, which is at stake in the rest of the Arab world. The specificity of France is that it's growing very, very fast because France is urging the immigrants to be like the other French.

So we can discuss after maybe what we could do but I think it's high time now to stop.

MR. LE CORRE: Okay. Thank you very much, Hakim. I think that was very helpful to understand what the issues are, and I don't think we hear that sort of presentation very often in Washington so this is very welcome. And I'll keep my questions for now and I will turn it over to Shadi to perhaps give us, first of all, some comments on what we just heard and maybe a U.S. perspective perhaps.

MR. HAMID: Yeah, thanks, Philippe. So let me first say I recommend that anyone who is interested in this topic read the paper. I read it last night and it was very thought-provoking, challenging, and also, and this is what I'll talk about and I guess this is why I'm on the panel, I felt a little bit uncomfortable in certain parts of the report, but that only makes it more worthwhile for more of us as Americans to read a French perspective on this very important question.

So while I was reading the report, I really felt like I am really American in the sense that I have just a very different set of starting assumptions when I look at these issues. So it was almost as if I was reading, even as someone who has done, you know, I've thought a lot about these issues in the European context. It still felt very foreign to me and that was the challenge that I had in reading this report.

And just one example, and we'll talk a little bit about the recommendations later, but in the recommendation section of the report, the authors use -- Hakim and his team, they use the word "state" referring to the French state, but they put state in capital letters. And I almost felt kind of threatened by that, this idea of a state with capital letters. It's a strong state and the French state has a very proactive role in managing the French Muslim community and integrating them, and it's not something that's left up to local communities but it's a very state-centric model of integration, and the French authorities are involved very intimately in questions of religious production. And as someone who is born and raised in the U.S., this is very much anathema to how I think a lot of us see the role between the American state and local religious communities. So that was interesting.

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So I think that in having this conversation we should be very straight up about where we're coming at these issues from and how -- I'm certainly not objective and I should be very forthright with you as the audience that it's hard for me to read a report like this and be objective to the extent that anyone can really be objective about anything. I'm not sure that I can and I have to be, I think, self-conscious about that.

Now, so a couple more specific things. What's clear and something that I've written about in the past, and I think this is where we agree, is that we have to speak frankly about the fact that there is a clash of cultures in France between French Muslims and French non-Muslims. Not all of them, and of course, it's a very diverse community, but just the polling numbers that we see here, the gap in religious observance is very, very large. And I was actually struck, and if you look at some of the previous polls on French Muslim observance, it's still pretty high but in some ways the numbers here are even a little bit higher. So it really underscores this point. So, for example, 65 percent of Muslim respondents in France favor the hijab. Twenty-eight percent favor the niqab. Now, we can debate what favor means, and I wasn't entirely sure what that means in practice, but to have 28 percent of Muslims in France favoring the niqab, even though the vast majority wouldn't wear it I think is a very striking number. The majority of French Muslims seem to try to pray at least a couple times a day, up to five times a day. That's significant. So on and so forth.

And there are two issues, again, coming at this as an American Muslim, that are in my view very much nonissues here in the U.S., and I was very struck by how much -- two of the three central issues that Hakim underlines in his report. This idea of halal food. I'm like, what is going on here? Well, halal food is an issue I would say for American Muslims from the subcontinent. Speaking now as an Arab Muslim American growing up in the Arab Muslim community in Pennsylvania, we had the local mosque, we had Sunday school, so I was part of the scene. I don't have any recollection until I got to college of anyone making halal food an issue. So I don't even understand what's going on here because what my parents told me is as long as it's not pork it's halal. (Applause) Go to McDonald's, go wherever you want. This idea that you have to, you know, it's changed maybe a little bit in recent years but that was my own experience. And to this day, most of my Arab friends, Arab Muslim friends, even if they are practicing, even if they are serious, the halal food thing isn't a strong identity marker. Some of them do it

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but it's like, yeah, we like eating halal. We go out of our way to find that but it's not a big deal because no one has a problem with them doing that. So that was one thing.

But also the head scarf. Now, it's true that American Muslims tend to live in urban areas which are more liberal and more Democrat as opposed to Republican, but I think in a lot of ways the head scarf has become, at least in the Trump era, a rallying cry for liberals and Democrats to say we are with you as American Muslims. We support what you're going through, and that includes women who wear the head scarf. So to be a member of the liberal elite in America today is to go out of your way to like the hijab, which is interesting.

I was just at the coffee shop the other day on 14th Street, one of the places that I go, and there was like a little picture at the entrance of a woman wearing hijab saying everyone is welcome. And I can't imagine that coffee shops in France would have that. Do you know what I mean? So those are two things I think which really stood out to me, and we have to ask ourselves why are these two issues, headscarf and halal food, why do they play such a different, discursive role in the French context than they do in the American?

Now, I think the big question that underlies a lot of the report and our conversation here today is this question of whether someone can be both fully French and fully Muslim without there being a contradiction or even forget a contradiction, just attention. And I think we're all trying to find ways from our own perspectives to limit those contradictions. But I honestly don't know how you get there in a context where the starting assumption -- and the starting assumption in this report is that there is something called French secularism, laicite, which is the more kind of let's say aggressive interpretation of secularism. Sometimes in a French perspective they'll call it neutrality, so there's different ways to talk about this, right? But I think for a policy report where you're trying to reach out to French policymakers, obviously, you're going to accept that this is the starting point. You're not going to question the basic foundations of French secularism, but what I would argue is I don't know how we can really make progress, not just in France but in Europe, and I think also here in the U.S., unless we can really talk about how do we become more comfortable with public expressions of religiosity. So if a woman is wearing hijab, that shouldn't be seen as a threat to the very foundations of the French state because essentially what you're saying to a French Muslim woman who wears hijab, the very fact that you've

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chosen to wear this piece of cloth means that you are threatening our founding ideology. How would someone feel if that's essentially what's being told to them either implicitly or explicitly?

So really the question for me is are we able in the French context to at least try to challenge the starting assumptions of laicite and to say is it possible to broaden the conception of laicite where it becomes more accepting of this 50 percent, this 40 percent, however we want to define this group that is more outwardly practicing. And I also respect that the French majority, because it is a democracy and you have to respect democratic outcomes, the majority of French citizens feel very strongly about laicite. They don't want to get rid of it. They don't want to question it. They don't necessarily want to broaden it in a significant way, so if that's what the majority of French voters believe in, then we also have to respect that that's very important to their self-conception. So I'm also not comfortable telling the majority to of French voters, hey, you guys are doing it wrong. You have to have a more Anglo-Saxon or American conception of secularism. And that's also my bias. I really believe in the American model. But is that because I'm objective or because I'm a product of that American model? So that complicates it.

And I'll end there. And I just wanted to sort of offer some provocations for discussion. I don't think that I can really offer a solution to this problem, and that is why it's such a challenging conversation is because deep down I'm not sure there is a solution to the problem.

MR. LE CORRE: Thank you very much, Shadi. That's very helpful.

Just three very quick points. I think first, in the U.S. it's only about 1 percent of the total population that is Muslim versus, as we heard, 5, 6 percent. Some people say more but it's not more than 6 percent according to Hakim's figures.

Secondly, it is true that the laicite concept is working but mainly in public space. I mean, in sort of state schools, not in private environments, not in private schools, and that's something people sometimes forget here.

And thirdly, and then I'll turn to Dominique, I think your first point was really interesting about the states. You know, the state managing Islam or managing religion when, in fact, there is a clear separation in France between the state and religions, all of them, for a long time. But as you know, France is a very centralist country unlike the United States which is a Federalist country. And the fact that

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you have 50 states and the territory is much more massive makes it a very different system all together. And of course, the history of the two countries is hard to compare.

But let me turn to Dominique Moisi. Glad to have you here.

How can we put that in a sort of broader political context in Europe in particular, and one question I'm going to ask already but I'm really wondering whether this group or these groups perhaps will turn into voters on April 23<sup>rd</sup> and May 2<sup>nd</sup> -- sorry, May 7<sup>th</sup>, the two rounds of the French presidential election?

MR. MOISI: Well, first I find quite ironic that I should be concluding the debate. I come from a different background. And in fact, I arrived yesterday in Washington with Hakim, and there was some nervousness about the issue of visa in the new Trump America, so we decided to enter together the United States. And the policeman in charge says, "Are you family?" And I said, "No, but we are good colleagues." And in fact, it's a joke, but it's a very serious one because it places the accent on a word that has not been used so far, which I think is key to the problem of Muslims in France. And it's the word "fraternity." A French Jew and a French Muslim came together as family and entered together the United States of America. And I found it as quite a strong symbol.

I've been working, Philippe said that, for a long time now on the issue of emotions, and initially working on the meeting between the culture of humiliation and the culture of fear. And if you look at the specificity of the situation of the Muslim community in France, it looks like another illustration of the encounter between humiliation and fear. There's probably more fear in France than in many western countries and there's probably more humiliation in the French Muslim communities than in many others. And if you want to understand those two specificities there's one word I used, fraternity, which is so much placed ahead. We are the land of liberty, equality, and so little fraternity, unfortunately.

Then there is the issue of laicite, which cannot be translated into English simply by the word strong secularism because to some extent laicite is the fourth religion of France. You have Christianity, you have Islam, you have Judaism, and you have laicite, which tends to present itself nearly in a religious manner. And I think it explains why an Anglo-Saxon is so surprised. And then there is history. And history is in the specific case of France's relation with its Muslim, the history of the Algerian War, which has never been faced properly, never transcended properly. And when you see in the

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electoral campaign the candidate of hope, Emmanuel Macron, touching on the issue of colonization as a crime against humanity which may be described as that, but doing so in Algeria in front of the Algerian president could only be received in the most negative manner.

And I think if you add all these elements, they're constituting pillars of interpretation behind what I found as an extremely fair, subtle, and objective study done by Hakim and the Institut Montaigne on this subject.

Now, personally, and it may be good that I should conclude this debate because I was the product of Harvard University as much as the Sorbonne, I have integrated into my mind some kind of Anglo-Saxon values. When I'm checked at the St. Pancreas in London by British policewoman wearing thin, light, elegant veil, I'm not shocked whatsoever. I see that as a declaration of identity. I'm a British citizen, I'm a policewoman, and I happen to be a Muslim. And I am not at all shocked by this demonstration of difference. But it must be because I've been spending too much time in an Anglo-Saxon context.

At the same time, and I want to do that balancing exercise, when I hear in the United States neoconservative comments such as Europe is the continent where the churches are empty and the mosques are full, I also resent it because it's so much more complex than that, and this is what I think the plea that Hakim has made is a plea for complexity. And that plea for complexity is a plea for moderation, is a plea for tolerance.

Now, to answer your question because I want to come to it, could we look at the Muslim community in France as the black community in the United States? Is Marine LePen going to be elected tomorrow the way Donald Trump was elected yesterday, in part because a lot of the black voters did not mobilize for Hillary Clinton the way they mobilized for Barack Obama? We will know the answer soon. My intuition is that it's not going to take place that way for reasons which can be explained as follows. First, Emmanuel Macron is a much better candidate than Hillary Clinton was. In fact, in American terms, you can say that in less than four weeks from now the French will have the choice to vote like the Americans in 2008 or like the Americans in 2016. And my guess today is that they will vote for the candidate incarnating America in 2008. And this, again, for a combination of hope and fear. They are afraid of the adventure which the national front could represent and they are slightly hoping for a better

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future. And I think the Muslims, the young Muslims who have integrated into French economic life are going to play that role. And in the figures that you can see in Hakim's report there are hints indication that we are going to go in that direction.

I think I've spoken too long. I have really no legitimacy whatsoever.

MR. LE CORRE: They've let you in so --

MR. MOISI: Given -- well, I was protected by Hakim.

MR. LE CORRE: Well, in fact, the reality is that Hakim did have some worries about his visa. I have to say that officially here.

Let's just very quickly go back to the lead author of this report, Hakim. First of all, if you have comments on what Dominique just said and on what Shadi said earlier. And also, I'd like you perhaps to give us a few of your policy proposals that are contained in this report. Obviously, we could go on for perhaps a few more hours on this because I have a long list of questions which we won't have time to cover and I do want to give you a chance to ask questions for at least the last 20 minutes. But please, Hakim, go ahead and give us some more food for thought.

MR. EL KAROU: First of all, defining a policy. We must know, we must choose a goal. For 30 or 40 years right now, the government -- I will explain the role of the government, the Islamic organization in France. The only goal was to have a representative organization. From this goal is the battle against Islam. It's not exactly the same thing. We can imagine a top-down approach and a bottom-up approach. Top-down deals with organization and with education. The organization is a bit tricky. In the name of laicite, everything should be separated. Laicite is a neutrality of the government. This is the case for all the religions except Islam. For decades now the Minister of Interior is running Islam along with certain Muslims. We need a deep liberalization from the French government, but also from the government of the French Muslims origin -- Algeria, Morocco, and Turkey. Nowadays, Islam is run by Muslim people. Most of them are French but they are immigrants. Muslim people with very strong ties with their countries of origin, and specifically, Morocco and Algeria and Turkey.

Our proposal is to cut the tie between French Islam and these countries. Why? Because the agenda of these countries is not France's interest. Their agenda is to control their population and to have an influence on France by controlling this population. Our proposal is to set a new agenda with the

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top of the agenda fighting against Islamism, and second, organizing Islam with what is the heart of an organization, money. There is a lot of money around Islamic conception -- halal food, around five billion euros. The market is around five billion euros. The business of the pilgrimage. You pay around \$1,000 when you go to the pilgrimage to Mecca only to the travel agency, and travel agencies have strong links with the mosques. And the third business is donations. Nobody knows what is the amount of money with religious donations but it's probably more than 10, 15, 20 million euros a year.

Today, all this money goes to the mosques with strong links with the countries of origin. Our proposal is to cut the tie by setting up a new national organization run by French Muslims, independent French Muslims. I mean, no ties with origin countries. And run by professionals. Today, people in charge, they have very strong ties with their country of origin. I mean, they are not professional. Their professional background is, for most of them, very low. Their business is to run the mosque, and our proposal is to help French, the new elites. I mean, to build a contract between the new French elites, Muslim elite, and people in charge on the local ground to help people with strong ties with their countries of origin to go out.

This is a political battle. This is a battle within Islam, a political battle. And there is another battle which is not for the organization, which is for the ideology. And this is probably the most important one because this is not a French one. This is a European one. This is a western one. Today, who is on the battlefield? Islamists. In front of them there is no one. Secularized Muslims, they are not on the battlefield. They are in society. They want to be as integrated as is it is possible. We work a lot on the offer of Islam on the net. The reserves were tremendous. Ninety percent of the traffic to theological sites in French are going to Salafi sites. Ninety percent. Why? Not because they are very powerful or very rich. No. They are the sole player, the only one players to Salafi.

The government can do a lot of things. Teaching Arabic. In France, it's quite impossible to learn Arabic in the public school system. Why? Because for social reasons and ideological reasons the central government says no. If you learn Arabic you will not learn French values. The result is that if you want to learn Arabic you go to the mosque. You have probably 80,000 to 90,000 young children who learn Arabic in the mosque. In the French public school you have 8,000. So France decided to send its children to the mosques. We think we have to relaunch Arabic as a very powerful language and as a way



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to prevent, of course, radicalization. Because if you learn Arabic you will learn the history, the culture, the anthropology, and you will have intellectual tools to go against Islamism.

Second is chaplains. According to the French law it's possible for the government to fund the chaplains but there is no Muslim chaplains. I mean, there are some in the Army. Not at school, not in jail, not in the hospitals. They could be real soldiers for French Islam.

And the bottom-up approach is probably much more important. We have to build a theology, a French theology, a western theology, a western Muslim theology. This is a key point, a very important point, because without the theology, we can go against Islamism. If we have the theology, we have to spread it out on the Internet with websites, with speakers, with stars. There are a lot of Islamist stars, televangelists. I think you have a lot in the U.S.

MR. LE CORRE: Not Islamists.

MR. EL KAROUI: Not Islamists, Christian. But in the Arab world there are lot promoted, for example, by major Arabic broadcasts -- Al-Jazeera, NBC, Iqraa, Saudi channels. We need to spread out our theology and we need people on the ground because all over the Arab world, how is it the Islamists did to spread out their ideology by charity? Social charity, educational charity, et cetera, et cetera. And we have the same in France in our suburbs, so the theology, a digital strategy, and people on the ground to spread it. With the help of the government, to let the newcomers run Islam.

MR. LE CORRE: Thank you. I think this idea of the use of digital is particularly exciting and I'd love Shadi to comment. I'm sure you have a lot to say on this particular.

MR. HAMID: Yeah, yeah, just a very quick response.

MR. LE CORRE: I mean, if you could.

MR. HAMID: Yeah. So my problem in this discussion is that I'm very uncomfortable with this idea of, again, going back to this question of the role of the French state, this idea that France has to create a new westernized or French-compatible theology. So -- but I think to myself, why is the French state involved in promoting the correct understanding of Islam? And that's not just because American but also that is what every single authoritarian Arab regime has done. They say Islamism is the problem and we are going to have state-appointed clerics and a very managed clerical system and we're going to enlist those people in this battle against ideas that we don't like.

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Of course, France is different because it's a democratic country so there's democratic legitimacy in doing that. But that said, I just wonder do we really have any models of western countries using a state-centric approach to create a more modern understanding of Islam? And even that kind of language is problematic. Why should there be a supposedly liberal secular modern understanding of Islam? What if Muslims don't want to believe in that kind of Islam in their particular context? What if they want to be more outwardly religious or more comparable to Christian Evangelicals here in the U.S. or Orthodox Jews? I don't know where that starting assumption comes from but it only comes from this idea that liberalism or secularism is the norm and we take it for granted that everyone else has to do whatever they can to meet that pre-established norm. And we could try that and it could be an improvement upon what we've had before in France because obviously, as you lay out in the report, it hasn't gone well up until now so we have to try something new. That said, I don't have any models that I can point to of Western nations doing this effectively and doing it well because when the state is telling you what kind of Islam to believe, there's oftentimes a tendency to say, hey, I want to rebel more against whatever the state is proposing.

So that's my general concern but, you know, and it's also interesting that I think -- and I don't know if there is any way that we can avoid this, but I feel like we as Muslims, whether it's in the U.S. or France, we have sort of become an object of other people's debates. We've become a problem to be resolved. That is how we're talked about now. Now, I don't know how else we can talk about it because in France it is actually a problem and no one can deny that. Maybe it's less of a problem in the U.S. but I feel like this is the future of our debates about Islam and Muslims in the West. We are a problem to be resolved. And I don't know if that can ever really be good in the long run.

Now, on the digital side, which you wanted me to comment on, you know, I'm skeptical of a lot of the counter messaging and let's use the Internet. The U.S. is not good at using the Internet or Twitter to promote moderate Islam. As some of you know, there were some initiatives where we would tweet and name things. Oh, moderation. Fluffy Muslim stuff like that. So again, a bunch of random people in the State Department who unfortunately were maybe very well intentioned but don't really know a lot about the Muslim community, are they ever going to be good at designing Twitter campaigns? I'm being a little bit facetious here but I think we have to be aware of that problem as well. Can French state

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institutions or French-funded institutions actually do a good job on the counter messaging in the way that we might like?

MR. LE CORRE: Okay. Just one word. Dominique?

MR. MOISI: One word. If you look at the fight against Islamic fundamentalism as it is in particular incarnated by organizations such as ISIS or Al Qaeda, three words are coming to mind. The first one is security in the military sense of the term. Haka and Mosul at some point, hopefully within this year, are going to fall. And the idea of the caliphate will collapse with the fall of those two cities. Then you have intelligence, which is the second key word. How do you through intelligence make sure that less terrorist attacks will come? And then there's the word "education." How do you make sure that through education you succeed in integrating those who could one day turn to become terrorists? And those three dimensions are in some way totally intertwined. And because they are intertwined, they justify the centrality of the role of the state because if those are elements of integration, who else can really do that, can master the variations on the word security, intelligence, and integration through education? So it doesn't seem so absurd given the nature of the problem and the combined nature of the answer which we have to give.

MR. EL CORRE: On top of the fact that, I mean, anybody who has gone through the U.S. presidential campaign here would have noticed that Islam sounded like a problem as well. It may not be at the community level but certainly, I mean, Donald Trump made Islam a big issue which was not the case really before. But --

MR. HAMID: That's kind of why I think, I mean, the American Muslim community here is increasingly concerned precisely for that reason. So in some ways, we talk about how -- the question of integration of American Muslims, there was the pre-Trump era and now we're entering this new phase where we might change as a community as a result of certain attacks on who we are and our role and so on but we'll have to wait and see how much that seeps into the broader society.

MR. LE CORRE: Okay. Just one word and then we'll go to --

MR. EL KAROUI: To be precise, we never proposed that the government spread out on its name a new theology. Never. We want the government to step back in the Islamic organization, not only the French government but the North African government, step back, to let the new French Muslim to

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run the organization. To organize it, to fund it with one goal, Islamism. And the bottom-up approach spreading the ideology, spreading the theology, not in the name of the government, in the name of Muslims, of imam, of theologians, exactly like Islamism does. Exactly. So this is not the French government who will promote its Islam. This is the French Muslims. This is completely different. Completely.

MR. HAMID: But the French government --

MR. EL KAROUI: But we need the help of the French government to cut the ties inside the organization rules and probably to fund the ideological battle because French Muslims, they are not rich. And how do you want to fund this battle outside the government in France? Very complicated.

MR. LE CORRE: Okay. I think we've got about 15 minutes so I will ask you to ask very short questions and real questions and to please identify yourselves. So the gentleman here. Yes, just right here. Thank you.

MR. GOODFRIEND: Thank you. My name is Andre Goodfriend. Just a quick question. Can you draw any parallels between the policies you're promoting and looking back in French history, in the French Enlightenment, the move to the Jewish emancipation, the hope that that would separate and integrate that population more effectively into French society giving up the traditions of the past, ultimately leading to the Dreyfus affair and the continued sense of being a separated community so that looking at a parallel in French history, I'm wondering if there are lessons to be learned from that experience.

MR. LE CORRE: We'll take two more. The gentleman here. Yes?

MR. GLUCK: Thank you. Peter Gluck (phonetic). I've seen several video clips of Marine LePen saying that she would ban the hijab if she were elected. I haven't heard her make any reference to the fact that sheiks and Orthodox Jews also wear head coverings. So is her ban exclusive or inclusive? Thank you.

MR. LE CORRE: Okay. One last one, the gentleman here.

SPEAKER: (Inaudible) Verdi from the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy.

Some of the terms are a little bit confusing for me especially when you started talking about the suggested policies. You were talking, indications, for example about the hijab and the halal food as indication of maybe tendencies or the influences of Islamism. But at the same time you are

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suggesting in your policy to kind of have the Muslim elite be the ones who are managing these Islamic organizations and institutions. What would they be advocating for? Like, Muslims don't wear halal and don't wear hijab? And how much credibility that's going to have in Muslims in general?

MR. LE CORRE: Okay. So we'll -- who wants to start? Dominique, do you want to start?

MR. MOISI: Well, not on the last question but on the two first ones very quickly. Marine LePen has also suggested that Jews should not wear kippah in public because that would not do well with the rest of French society. And on the first question, enlightenment is teaching us ambivalent lessons because through the philosophy of enlightenment you wanted to integrate the Jews but you wanted them to become like others. And so there was forced normalization as well as welcome integration. This is something which we have to keep in mind. The logic of enlightenment is twofold. You want to integrate the other as long as they become and look like you.

MR. LE CORRE: Hakim?

MR. HAMID: If I could just say something very quickly before -- Hakim will probably want to address it more. On the second question about Marine LePen and the fact that she's focusing on Muslim religious symbols, so I think in some ways French culture is suspicious of all outward expressions of religion. So I think when people make the case, when people, my French friends tell me, Shadi, it's not just about Muslims. It's about anyone who is being very publicly visible in their religious observance, which is true. But the problem or the issue is that it just happens to be the case that in the entirety of Europe it's Muslims who are more visible with their religious symbolism. And it's also Muslims who are in every single European country with maybe one or two exceptions according to the polling we have who are more practicing than their Christian counterparts, many of whom who don't even self-identify --

MR. EL KAROUI: They are more numerous.

MR. HAMID: Sorry?

MR. EL KAROUI: They are more numerous, too. There's a question of --

MR. HAMID: No, no, I mean in per capita, in percentage terms. So in that sense I can understand why many in the West on the further right, they see Islam as unusually assertive. They see Islam as different, in part because Islam is different in this particular respect. Muslims do seem to be

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more religiously observant especially in Europe. So that's why I think it is more in that sense a European problem than a U.S. one because we can always say, hey, well, there isn't -- like Christian Evangelicals, there is something that we can compare with when we try to talk to American audiences and say, well, hey, you know, Muslims might be quite conservative in X, Y, and Z way but you probably might feel the same way about Christian Evangelicals who don't want people to sell cakes to gay couples. Right? So that's why I feel like we have to be -- even though I'm very critical of it, I also want to make the effort to be understanding of the context that for someone who is an atheist, someone who is suspicious of religion, they will see Islam as a bigger issue because they see Muslims more assertive in their religious identity.

MR. LE CORRE: Hakim?

MR. EL KAROUI: Yeah. To answer your question, the new alliance between the elite and the local managers is not to ban the veil or the halal food. It's to run the cult. To pay the imam. Nowadays, the imam are paid by foreign countries or they are not paid at all. The idea is to build mosques and to help imam theologians to do their work, what they have to do. The question around behaviors is another challenge and of course you can be in front of people who do believe that veils are mandatory or that halal food is mandatory. You have to respect it. For me it's like a market. You have to understand your market. You can't be against the market. But it doesn't mean that you don't have to help theologians to think the new Islam, modern Islam, liberal Islam.

MR. HAMID: Sorry, I just have to -- this idea of this project of people encouraging a liberal Islam where maybe the idea that would be promoted is that, hey, you don't have to eat halal food or, hey, it's totally fine to not wear hijab. That's fine if Muslims believe and they have that debate internally. But I guess what I still am having a lot of trouble with is why does a French Islam have to promote the idea that hijab should not be necessarily observed? Like, I just --

MR. EL KAROUI: Because our French integration model. I tried to explain. Hijab as seen as a tool, as a sign of inequality between men and women.

MR. HAMID: But maybe that's the --

MR. EL KAROUI: That's a very deep sign of inequality between men and women. And French people, they do reject it. That's reality.

MR. HAMID: But maybe that's -- maybe that's the problem.

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MR. EL KAROUI: That's a political reality. And we will not change France. We will not.

MR. HAMID: Okay. But maybe that's the problem that the hijab is viewed as a political tool. I mean, that's a personal decision about what people wear. If they believe that that's how they build a better relationship with God and it's something very personal to them, you're telling them that what they're wearing is a political tool. I mean, why can't that be questioned? I just want to pose, why can't -- is it impossible for at least some people in France to question that basic assumption?

MR. LE CORRE: But I think the idea is really, it's not for the states to promote one model or the other. It's the idea to have a choice between different options.

Let's have three more questions. The lady there.

MS. BOURBON: Hi. Thank you for this informative panel. My name is Contessa Bourbon from The New York Times. I'd like to ask what factors have pushed Muslims in France to be radicalized as evidenced by the attacks in Paris and France?

MR. LE CORRE: Very good. The gentleman in the front?

MR. CAMPBELL: Hi. Leonard Campbell.

A number of times the panelists have mentioned, I guess, the comparison between French Muslims and black Americans, and I'm wondering if when you look at integration and assimilation, or the attempted integration and assimilation of black Americans in society and how that has worked, if you are encouraged by essentially what you're proposing.

MR. LE CORRE: The gentleman here?

SPEAKER: I was born in Morocco so I know a lot about Muslim civilization culture. I have lived in France also for eight years.

In my opinion there should be a major, major affirmative action and effort with regard to jobs. When a Muslim has an interview with IBM France and he says his name is Mohammad, he will not be hired. So a lot of efforts have to be deployed with regard to employment.

Number two, a parallel effort should be undertaken to move toward showing the Muslims and other minorities in France that they are loved. I believe in the power of capital L, Love. If they are loved, if they are welcomed, if they are seen as equals, they will not be a Bataclan disaster. They will not be their reactive efforts to say France will become Muslim in 50 years. Notre Dame de Paris become the

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greatest mosque in Europe. So employment, love, and yes, featuring and cleaning of religious documents to remove any anti-Semitism, any cause for jihad and violence. All this will go a long way to improve the situation.

Regarding the kippah, the kippah occupies less space than a hijab or a veil. I have a kippah. It's red. If it were black and much smaller, nobody would see it if I had black hair. So there is a distinction between the veil or the burka and the miniskirt. Kippah, this one is very visible, I agree, but again, if I had very dark and black hair you would not see it at all. Marine LePen is wrong to say that veils should be banned as well as the kippah. I think the kippah is less provocative and more innocent and more threatening.

MR. LE CORRE: But we can't ask Muslims to wear kippah. (Laughter)

MR. EL KAROUI: I can wear my kippah?

MR. LE CORRE: And just a point of information, I believe that if you look at the Pew Research Surveys, the French actually don't view Islam negatively. You should really look at the last surveys. They are very clear on that. Compared to other countries in Europe, France is actually one of the least anti-Muslim countries.

We don't have time anymore, so I'm going to ask Hakim to try to round this up. Perhaps I'll ask if Dominique and Shadi want to say a final word and then I'll ask Hakim to round up.

Dominique, anything to add?

MR. MOISI: Well, I go back to that issue of the veil and integration given what France is. I have a slightly different view personally. You can't accept proclamation that are against French values in the sense that they are signs of violence of intolerance, of rejection of difference. But affirmation of your own difference is very different from the fact that you refuse the difference of others. And from that standpoint, I have a difficulty to say that the veil is against French identity and culture. What is against French identity and culture is the teaching of hatred, the teaching of violence. This is completely different from my standpoint.

MR. LE CORRE: Shadi?

MR. HAMID: Yeah. So just very quickly. On the question of black identity here in the U.S., I think the way that we've, at least liberal elites, and I can't speak for the rest of the country because



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do I even know my own country anymore? But in kind of major urban centers I feel like liberals have gone out of their way to accommodate very affirmative expressions of Hispanic identity, black identity, Muslim identity. Now, maybe it goes too far and that's the backlash against identity politics, but the way that I think a lot of Americans have dealt with this is by not telling black Americans or Hispanics that they have to be more like everyone else. It's by saying that at least, no, at least in the liberal parts of --

SPEAKER: I live here.

MR. HAMID: Okay. Look, that's the whole debate between liberals and conservatives in the U.S., the idea is that liberals accept that minority groups have their own identities. Now, it's not perfect but I'm saying it's a very different model. Very rarely do you hear liberal commentators in the New York Times saying that blacks have to be more like whites. It's very, very rare to hear that kind of discourse.

But on the other -- one more thing, I guess, and I would just maybe pose this to Hakim and it'll be an ongoing conversation and debate, is this idea of are French values static or can they evolve? I mean, that's a debate that we have in our own country. What does it mean to be American? And I think that conception of Americanness has always been fluid. And I think that fluidity can sometimes be a good thing, sometimes be a bad thing, but all countries evolve based on changing circumstances. So it seems to me to be a little bit concerning if a country cannot have a national conversation about what it means to be what they are. What it means to be French, what it means to be American, and God knows the next eight years in our own country, that is going to be the primary debate that we have as a country. It's not going to be about tax policies or the details of universal healthcare. It's going to be what does it mean to be an American?

MR. EL CORRE: Shadi, you should run for election. Good luck for that.

Hakim, a final word?

MR. EL KAROUI: I would say the same thing as Shadi. Islam raise the point, the subject, what is French now? What does it mean to be French now? Could you be French and Muslim? With the specificity of Islam, with the issues of Islam, including violence. Violence is a topic. We can't say there is no issue with Islam here in France and probably in the U.S. Our idea is to tackle the issue knowing the cultural roots of France. Of course, the answer will be different in France and in the U.S. and

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in Germany. In German, the issue for them is, okay, Turkey will run Islam. It's not our problem. It's a Turkish problem. It's no longer possible. And in France it's no longer possible to rely on North African countries. We have a new generation. We have to invent a new management, but it's also a new face. A new face which is compatible with French values. Like the tremendous turmoil of Islam right now is linked to the treatment this summer of Arab Society, which are inventing something between tradition and their modernity. They are inventing their modernity and Islam is a part of that modernity. Islam is a part of the French modernity. We have to invent it.

MR. LE CORRE: I think we could go on for another two hours and I'm sure you'd agree that this was a tremendous panel. And I thank the three speakers.

(Applause)

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