In contemporary France, digesting and assimilating immigrants from North Africa has proven to be a major challenge. The country, like numerous Western states with high levels of immigration, is facing conundrums in equitable housing, inclusive workforces, and plural governance for ethnic communities. What distinguishes the French case from others in Western Europe, though, is the unusually high level of polarization between native French and North African Muslim citizens and residents in societal, economic, political, and cultural opportunity. The exceptional nature of the French colonial experience and the direct result it had on mass immigration into the country in the 1960s and 1970s, coupled with staunch values of laïcité and French exceptionalism, seem to have resulted in a remarkable degree of antagonism directed towards migrant communities. This has resulted in turn in increased animosity between the two groups as they try to reconcile their respective identities. My objective for this paper is to view the fundamental reasons why integration has been stunted to such a degree in the French case and why the ensuing polarization along the lines of co-habitation, economic inclusiveness, and religious identity has become so prevalent.

It is important to note at this preliminary stage of the paper that I will be focusing particularly on the North African Arab communities, which make up the most sizable and apparent group of Muslims in the country. These citizens and residents, originating in the contemporary states of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, present the most pointed group through which to view the myriad of factors contributing to the pervasive societal strain present in France as it shapes its post-colonial identity. While other predominantly Islamic groups experienced French colonialism or took part in the mass emigration from the Global South at the conclusion of the World Wars, particularly black Africans of the Sahel, Arabs of the Levant, and to a lesser extent, Turks, commentary and analysis of the North African Arab Muslim communities from the former French colonies there will be the focus here since that is where the assimilation problem is most severe. This is due in part to the divisive relation between a largely Islamic identity and French secular values, the sheer number of people from this region that have settled in France, and the deeply-engrained, even aggravated, nature of the French relation to the area and its people.

II. North Africans in France

In a mapping of where North Africans fit into the French social mosaic, there are several preliminaries that need to be set out. In the first place there are issues of nomenclature. In this regard, I will first differentiate between the terms citizen, resident, and immigrant, as all too often “the term ‘immigrant’ [has been] used to describe widely different populations, even groups that have been in France for generations” (Lloyd & Waters 51). When employing the term citizen I will be describing any French North African Arab who holds French citizenship, whether they are recent recipients of it or if they and their families have been citizens since North Africans first started coming to France en masse. Resident can be used to denote those that live and work in...
France, but still hold citizenship in the Maghreb nations of Morocco, Algeria, or Tunisia. Finally, immigrant will be utilized when delving into the historical sections of this paper, as they refer to a point when the majority of North African Arabs were neither citizens nor residents.

Additionally, I will attempt to avoid the use of the term “Muslim” outside of specific cultural and religious commentary, as it “can denote a myriad of socio-cultural, religious, and political connotations” (House) that if read in a manner different from what I intend, could affect the point that I am attempting to make. For specific social, economic, and political contexts, I will strive for a more much direct “North African Arab” or “North African community” and avoid as much religious connotation as possible.

Nomenclature aside, the second general point to make is that documenting the North African presence in France, their geographic and social distribution among other things, is not always straightforward. This is owing to a refusal on the part of the responsible government authorities to differentiate the population according to ethnic background. French authorities proclaim that race is not a factor in French society, thus historically marginalized racial groups are all-too-often neglected in the mechanisms of social welfare because their individual needs are not met. Occasionally there is reference to where immigrants came from, but if they are no longer immigrants but rather residents or citizens, it can be difficult to acquire statistics that comment on their social conditions. This void in provision of government services is often filled through the efforts of private organizations.

A History of Immigration

The fact that a very large number of people living in France trace their heritage back to the former French colonies of North Africa: Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, is significant. Taken collectively we can trace a history of immigration into France. For adequate spatial perspective, Figure 1 presents France’s geographic relationship to the three colonies, represented here as contemporary nation-states.

With domination firmly established over the majority of the Maghreb by the early 1900s, France began importing substantial numbers of North African laborers, which may be thought of as the “first wave” of immigration into the country. Part of the context for this was the limited work prospects at home spurred by the hegemony of settler communities and, particularly in the case of Algeria, French appropriation of land. However, the blatant animosity that the French held towards their Arab subjects was already developing. Despite Algeria being an integral part of France and Tunisia and Morocco as entities of Greater France, Frenchmen did little to understand the cultures of these “zones of departure,” meaning that the prospect of healthy assimilation was stunted from the outset (MacMaster, 1997, p. 9). The French simply looked scornfully and resentfully upon these subjects as commodities, as units of labor power, and not as participants in a common society. This feeling of superiority that the French cultivated in viewing North Africa left an indelible mark that would continue to plague their society as additional episodes of immigration commenced.

The outbreak of the First World War necessitated a more conscious large-scale migration strategy on the part of the French government so as to assist in the war effort, and this assistance was primarily in the shape of the colonial guest worker. These were laborers that arrived on temporary status who helped with war-damage reconstruction and the manning of industrial facilities. During the War, some 120,000 workers were shuttled in from the Maghreb, including 78,566 Algerians, 25,506 Moroccans, and 18,249 Tunisians who “were essentially brought in as forced labor” (Stovall 3). An important feature of this period in Maghrebi-Franco immigration was the institutional subordination of the North African. The government introduced a program of encampment, or regimentation, in which “All aspects of the lives of non-white workers in France were set by SOTC [the Colonial Labour Organisation Service], with an eye on keeping them as isolated from the French population as possible” (Stovall 7).

In addition to guest workers, and quite crucially, hundreds of thousands of North African and French West African subjects laid down their lives for the French cause in battle. These troops were viewed as largely expendable, used in wave attacks in-between trench encampments that saw thousands of them gunned down by machine gun fire. Additionally, they served in some of the harsher trench conditions of the war, succumbing to all manner of disease that the environment presented. It is approximated that Algeria alone fronted 173,000 soldiers, with tens of thousands of additional troops arriving from Morocco and Tunisia. The blatant disregard for the well-being of these troops serve as yet another example of the prevailing sense of North African inferiority, “viewed through [the] prism of backwardness... considered insolent and incompetent” in the eyes of the French (Laurence 50).

The onset of the Second World War also necessitated a mass transfer of workers and soldiers from North Africa. During the early years of the war, the French government ordered the governors of Algiers, Oran, and Constantine to each contribute 10,000 laborers for work in France in the production of war material (Hunter 2). In total, about 80,000 North Africans troops also fought on the side of the French. While this was considerably less than their contribution to the First World War effort, Algerians, Moroccans, and Tunisians still played a key role in staving off the German incursion and occupation. By 1947, Algerians working in France were granted the status of ‘French Muslims’ and stripped of most of the rights they had previously been denied “the same rights as Frenchmen” (Schneider 11). This sustained subordination would only see itself exacerbated as North Africans, particularly Algerians, contributed to the post-war rebuilding initiatives.

The violence and carnage of the Second World War left France a “devastated country with respect to both human resources and material circumstances” (Witte 80); a situation which necessitated a comprehensive rebuilding effort. This came partly through Algerians serving as ostensibly temporary labor, with their numbers in France increasing from approximately 100,000 in 1945 to 250,000 in 1950. This growth rate was the most sizable of any colonial people group tasked in the rebuilding effort; indeed by 1954 their annual rate of increase of 32.5 percent dwarfed the overall immigration rate of 1.3 percent (Shen 21). This influx of workers, however, was poorly facilitated and managed. As more and more North Africans were shoveled into France, housing accommodations became scarcer, giving rise to shanty towns referred to as the bidonvilles. The conditions of these areas were very poor, with ramshackle construction and poor plumbing. Social and hygienic necessities were placed by the wayside to keep down social welfare costs. Figure 2 shows the dilapidated state of these bidonvilles.

By 1970 there were some 900,000 North Africans in France, with Algerians constituting about 650,000. Seasonal immigration took place, with additional long-term settling primarily by Algerians. By 1973 the Algerian population rose to about 800,000 (Witte 85). The nature of immigration dramatically changed, however, in the wake of the global 1973 oil embargo ushered in by OPEC nations. France experienced a series of economic downturn, meaning that their economy, at least for the time being, could not absorb North African employment. As a result, by July 1974 in response to this global oil crisis, immigration of non-European workers was prohibited. This ceasing of migration arose in part from the notion of seuil de tolerance or “threshold of tolerance”, and the assertion “that racism and racist conflicts (i.e. racial violence) could be prevented only by (1) stopping immigration and (2) dispersal policies with respect to the immigrant population” (Witte 90).

The primary dispersal technique was placement of immigrants on the periphery of the French cities. Along with the discontinuation of immigration, the French also worked towards repatriation of North Africans currently in France; however, these efforts were largely
The 1974 decree for halting immigration backfired on the French. This manifested itself in two primary ways. First, the seasonal workers in France at the time of the policy decision remained in France subversively in the fear that they might never be able to return to France if sent back to North Africa. It also resulted in increased instances of illegal entrance into France during 1974 and subsequent years. The second way in which the immigration policy decision had an adverse effect was the massive arrival of the families of these formerly ‘turnover’ migrants, “which raised new issues of multiculturalism” as the non-French population increased (Pauly 36-37). The French state strove “to discourage reunification of these immigrants’ families, [thus] immigrants’ access to housing projects was severely restricted” (Verdugo 8). This resulted in placing these families in housing projects on the periphery of French cities, a geo-societal phenomenon that would have long-lasting implications.

Immigration flow once again increased due to the political turmoil in Algeria during a civil war in the 1990s. In addition to the fleeing from conflict, this “third wave” of immigration also included migrants seeking family reunification and searching for the flexible, low-skilled labor positions that were blossoming in France. The population boom from across North Africa during that time was something France was ill-equipped to handle, resulting in further relegation of new arrivals into the isolated housing projects that lined the outskirts of French cities. As the Algerian Civil War continued to rage on, immigration numbers swelled. As presented in 1996 by the Archdiocese of Paris, there were approximately 4 million Muslims in France, with 1.5 million from Algeria, 1 million from Morocco, and 350,000 from Tunisia (Hunter & Leveau 6). The rates of immigration to France since 1945 are represented in Figure 3. Note the leveling off of Algerian, Tunisian, and Moroccan immigration in 1999, a direct result of conflict in North Africa.

North African Geography

Documenting exactly where North African immigrants and their descendants live in France today is difficult in considering the French government’s aversion on collecting statistics on the basis of race. However, there is data on the distribution of the Muslim population at large. While this information is far from ideal, it does present a strong survey of the North African settlement pattern in general due to the fact that a vast majority of French Muslims are indeed North African. In Figure 4, we see that there are certain departments where Muslims make up more than 30 percent of the population, coinciding with historic migration patterns. When coupled with Figure 5, it is clear that urban centers stand out as destinations for North African settlement. Paris, indicated in number 75 of Figure 4, Lille, number 59, Lyon, 69, Marseilles, 13, and Nice, 6, all house persons at a rate of 5,000 persons or more per square kilometer. Important to note is the dense set-

![Figure 3](image)

**Number of foreigners living in France since 1945 (in millions)**

Source: INSEE

![Figure 4](image)

**The Distribution of the Muslim Population in France; Source: Le blog de Abdellali Hajjat**

Economic and Social Conditions

The seeds of animosity that were sown in various waves of historical immigration have culminated in various forms of societal strain. North Africans face disadvantage in labor markets, which tends to translate into disadvantage in housing. Difference in labor market outcomes have been apparent early on, with immigrants relegated to unskilled, low-paid labor with high turnover and minimal prospects of advancement. This practice of labor subordination exemplifies the economists’ idea of a “dual labor market” in which jobs are segmented into the primary “established position[s] in society” (Piore & Doeringer 246) and secondary “low-status jobs... filled by ethnic workers” (Peck 51). The dual labor market is characterized by a dichotomy between the prospects of job security and upward social mobility. The primary sector represents attractive, white-collar jobs, while the secondary represents blue-collar, menial labor. According to the Observatoire des Inégalités, 46 percent of foreigners in France are of the working class, as compared to 25 percent of Frenchmen (Dechauffour 7).

This duality is evidenced in the sectors in which Native French and North Africans are working. Simon and Steichen present sectional variation in employment (2014). As evidenced by Figure 6, the bulk of native French from 2009-2011 worked in Public Administration, Education, and Social Work at 31.1 percent, as compared to 12.6 percent of North African residents. Additionally, the field of Construction was comprised primarily of North African labor at 10.8 percent as
migrants reside in North African immigrant areas. Near-social segregation leaves them spatially disconnected from sizable populations’ adequate school-and-recreation options for long-term housing in France. Additionally, they were grossly overcrowded as presented in figure 7, housing some 20,000 people. An opportunity arose to place these migrants in the aforementioned HLM as French families moved into more traditional, one- or two-story houses. As presented by Dubet and Lapeyrone, HLM became “repositories for all France’s social ills and unwanted populations” (Shen 58), areas where France could cast migrants with little accountability and no cognition of assimilation procedures. What has resulted in France is a runaway growth of North Africans settling in these structures. The rates of North African residence in HLM has increased, and it is the way it spatially segregates its residents from mainstream France, and the ensuing social and economic deprivation that this segregation fosters. Of these areas, usually ten kilometers from the centers of their adjacent cities, most “lacked amenities such as shopping, metro lines, schools, or recreational spaces, increasing residents’ sense of social isolation” (Mitchell 12). This inability to break into the greater French economic and social sphere results from a “residential sorting process” wherein social stratification is exacerbated by the lack of social worth that residing in the banlieues entails (Cox 14). The segregation of French society and policy makers is the hijab, the veil that many Muslim women wear. There has been a long rhetorical and legal battle over the hijab in France. Thus, it serves as a strong example of the French fervor of suppressing the Islamic identity of the nation.

The French have long viewed the veil “as a symbol of Islam’s primitive backwardness” (Mishra), a tangible representation of Islamic and Arab society as inherently inferior to that of the French. A watershed moment occurred in September of 1989 in Creil, France.
when three Muslim girls were expelled from school for refusing to remove their head covering. This affair du fouillard ushered in a decade and a half of debate on the role of the veil in violating France's policy on separation of church and state. In 2004, the Statut Commission declared a ban on the hijab in "state primary and secondary schools" for its “witness to a pupil's religious affiliation” (Raymond 9). Conservative politicians such as Jacques Chirac and Jean-Pierre Raffarin were adamant that the ban would appease the urgent demand of the public sphere for a return to "traditional" values. The vacuum created in the lives of North African youth has been filled with a void of a more religion-based identity. It is not uncommon for growing children to identify with their community and seek group identity, meaning, and purpose. It is not uncommon for them to present a nucleus through which they may find group identity and belonging.  

Some of the North Africans most hard hit by social marginalization are second and third generation French citizens of North African descent. These youth and their families have a difficult time reconciling between their French and the very real Algerian cultural identities. All too often they are confronted with exclusion—from mainstream French with the stunted prospect of stable middle-collar employment and living conditions and by their North African relatives with dispositions of them being too western or disconnected with their mother language and religion. The racial discrimination and scorn, primarily from native French, that they confront on a daily basis drives their push towards dis-assimilation at best and fundamentalism at worst.  

V. An Interpretive Framework for Explanation  

What are we to make of this fissure in French society in terms of its interactions between native French and North African residents and citizens? On the one hand, it may be that the French view their social condition in the context of an inherent inferiority decreed from their strong Republican laicism. The North African “Other” is merely a residual holdover from the glorious colonial experiment, possessing little more than the burden of cornerstone characters of France with its odd cultural practices and charged religious disposition. It could also be that native French are simply alarmed by a growing formalization of presence in France, a force that challenges the very meaning of home. It is likely, though, that the situation falls somewhere between the two, where French notions of racial and cultural superiority impact policy decisions which disenfranchise North Africans, leading to increased episodes of backlash.  

Some Historical Background  

First of all, in trying to understand this relationship between the native French and those tracing their origins back to North Africa, one cannot ignore the importance of the old colonial relationship and the attitudes it spawned. In that regard it is important to review some of that history. Algeria was the first of the three colonies. By 1848 it had been subjugated and divided into what would be three départements of the French state, Algiers, Constantine and Oran, even while the political rights of the indigenous peoples were severely limited. This was something that would become more and more apparent as European settlers moved in and monopolized those rights. The French authorities quickly discovered the agricultural and commercial value of their new territory, and subsidized land sales for European purchase. This resulted in tens of thousands of settlers, referred to as colons or pieds noirs, arriving from working-class communities not just in France, but also Spain and Italy. The new arrivals quickly found themselves in a privileged position, including exemption from many colonial taxes, living conditions that were exponentially more attractive and sanitary than those of native North Africans, and hefty education allocations.  

These benefits represented the pronounced dichotomy in the "dualistic society of the colony" that would continue to impede social cohesion (MacMaster). Coupled with the preferential treatment of Europeans was the stifling of Algerian opportunity, including crippling limitations on social mobility, employment prospects, and adequate schooling. Resultant differences in occupations, education, and material circumstance would then reinforce the notion of a mental superiority among the French and a view of the colonized peoples as "backward and lower down the scale of human prog-

1200 French citizens have been reported as traveling to Syria and Iraq to fight (Radio Free Europe). This figure is only surpassed by the numbers reported from Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and Tunisia. The governments who carried out the Charlie Hebdo attacks had known connections to al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula that were cultivated while in a French prison.

French aversion to North Africans has manifested itself not only as a social and political phenomenon. The French are increasingly adverse to extensive foreign presence in France, a force that challenges the very meaning of home. It is likely, though, that the situation falls somewhere between the two, where French notions of racial and cultural superiority impact policy decisions which disenfranchise North Africans, leading to increased episodes of backlash.

Alongside religious aversion to North Africans is a sentiment of an ostensibly more radical North African populace, one that cannot ignore the importance of the old colonial relationship and the attitudes it spawned. The new arrivals quickly found themselves in a privileged position, including exemption from many colonial taxes, living conditions that were exponentially more attractive and sanitary than those of native North Africans, and hefty education allocations. These benefits represented the pronounced dichotomy in the “dualistic society of the colony” that would continue to impede social cohesion (MacMaster). Coupled with the preferential treatment of Europeans was the stifling of Algerian opportunity, including crippling limitations on social mobility, employment prospects, and adequate schooling. Resultant differences in occupations, education, and material circumstance would then reinforce the notion of a mental superiority among the French and a view of the colonized peoples as “backward and lower down the scale of human progress” (Lloyd & Waters): a phenomenon that would continue to shape the French attitude to North Africans. By 1881 Tunisia was added to the list of French colonies in North Africa. The French colonial authorities implemented reforms in the courts and education practices, ushering in more western practices. The absorption of Tunisians into mainstream French society was treated as a progressive step, but also meant that Tunisians relinquished possession of the land, continued to dominate commerce, and experienced less stigmatization. The colony nevertheless served as a critical source for colonial labor, particularly the ubiquitous seasonal migration to the French mainland. The protectorate survived the two World Wars, and Tunisia was able to claim independence on March 20, 1956. After acquiring Tunisia, France faced growing concerns about the protectorate and the Spanish population in Morocco. France faced growing concerns about the protectorate and the Spanish population in Morocco.
ed traditional Moroccan religious and political leaders more power in conducting their affairs. This would later play a role in the current dilemmas confronting French society in relation to Islam as it has become a favored source of imams who are relatively fundamental in their views. Ultimately, Mohammed V negotiated an end to the French protectorate and Morocco formally gained its independence on April 7, 1956.

In some respects the experience of decolonization deepened the divide between the indigenous peoples who were not only inferior, they were ungrateful too for all what French colonialism had supposedly brought them. This was particularly the case with Algeria. Both Morocco and Tunisia had acquired independence by 1956 relatively peacefully. But as a result of the presence of a highly privileged settler minority amounting to about ten percent of the population and anxious about retaining those privileges, Algeria would be different and there would be a protracted war of independence lasting from 1954 to 1962.

The war of independence left a searing wound in the psyche of both the French and Algerians, as the war ultimately claimed 150,000 Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) fighters and about 25,000 Frenchmen, along with upwards of 30,000 Algerian sympathizers. When the referendum for Algerian autonomy was completed in 1962 a mass exodus commenced, leading to 900,000 settlers or so-called pied-noirs fleeing their home of one-hundred-plus years for France. While 100,000 initially decided to stay, FLN violence, summed up in the propaganda campaign La valise ou le cercueil ("Suitcase or coffin"). This made it clear that they were no longer welcome.

The connection between the abuse endured by North African migrants and subjected them to much greater disciplinary controls than any foreigners. This was particularly the case with Algeria. Both ples were not only inferior, they were ungrateful too for all what French colonialism had supposedly brought them. This was particularly the case with Algeria. Both Morocco and Tunisia had acquired independence by 1956 relatively peacefully. But as a result of the presence of a highly privileged settler minority amounting to about ten percent of the population and anxious about retaining those privileges, Algeria would be different and there would be a protracted war of independence lasting from 1954 to 1962.

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Many French subordinate North Africans through relegating them to the status of an “Other.” This designation has arisen due to a supposed “threat to the cultural values of the ‘host country’” (Ferjani 4) that North Africans represent in their language, religion, and presence in the job market. The very concept of ‘home’ for many French is being attacked. In interacting with North African physical landscapes (halal butchers and mosques), as well as social ones (religious garb and the Arabic language), some native French feel as though the French they grew up in no longer exists. In order to safeguard Republican values, mainstream French society strives to create a national community of “we” that can be safeguarded from the “you” that North Africans represent (Ferjan 4, Vaïsse 33). The prevalence of inequality of opportunity in the workplace for North Africans has widened, as 26.5 percent of university graduates of North African descent do not hold jobs. This figure would seem to indicate an unwillingness of French companies to hire these prospective employees, suggesting racial or cultural bigotry.

In trying to understand this, I rely upon the concept of the politics of difference. This is aimed at explaining the dichotomy found in societies where a superordinate group works towards constraining the rights and privileges of an “Other,” as a way of reinforcing and sustaining its own dominance and realizing certain material interests in the way of employment and housing. I also work towards addressing the pervasiveness of racism in France and strive for a more thorough comprehension of the various social outlooks in the country.

Many French people are adamant that North Africans are inherently inferior. This notion arises primarily from the colonial period when the French sought to understand their supposed social advancement and rationality vis-à-vis the barbarism and Islamic “superstition” of the colonized. In viewing themselves as intellectually and socially more advanced, the French could justify colonialism through their so-called “civilizing mission.” Privileged segments of society work towards validation of preexisting advantage, by “[d]efining others as different, as lacking, and [through] disparaging them” (Coxt 145). This creation of a dichotomy in society is important for French hegemony: due to the deep-seated, fundamental inferiority that North Africans supposedly exhibit, as well as contemporary notions of North Africans representing an uneducated, violent under class, they will, it is argued, never assimilate fruitfully. Some French even go so far as to perpetuate racially offensive and demeaning stereotypes of North Africans as backwards and radicalized, further rooting their second-class status in society.

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North African access to the labor market is further inhibited by French labor unions, largely native French in their membership, and their exclusionary practices. Many French unions deem an influx of foreign workers to be a threat to their job security and as such subordinate North Africans in work projects. This trend is seen clearly on construction industry, where the majority of hard labor is carried out by immigrants. Unions receive their justification for subordination of North Africans from the larger frame of French law where “their exclusion from the political and labor-union world is confirmed” (Dechauffour 6) on the basis of their status as foreigners. In this manner, the French can continue to ensure that North Africans are placed at the fringes of the job market, ensuring that they pose little threat to the French privilege there.

French policy response to the plight of North Africans in the labor market has been particularly pernicious, laying the majority of the blame upon the North Africans and a supposed unwillingness to adjust to the demands of the economy. Sociologist Olivier Roy stated that “a self-fulfilling sense of exclusion prevents many of these [migrant] youngsters from entering the new economy” (Schneider 6). Here, there is the assertion that North African defeatism and unwillingness to mold to the economy” (Schneider 6). Here, there is the assertion that North Africans reside in the suburbs are indeed marked with a layer of generalized poverty. The grands ensembles in which many North Africans reside are indeed marked by the prevalence of drugs, violence, and poverty, which in turn induces a larger police presence. The issue that has arisen is the notion that North African immigrants in their entirety represent criminals with whom French security services must engage. This stereotype has resulted in a shift from ‘social development to ‘security’ and has exacerbated the everyday harassment of non-white youth” (Mitchell 14). With arrest quotas in place, interactions between police and North African youth have become more charged. Indeed, Arab youth are disproportionally singled out in police operations, prone to unreasonable instances of police verbal harassment, random identity checks, and even physical brutality.

Police brutality is an unfortunate reality in polarized communities, and the cities of France are no different. In societies where ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities are present, police often perform their duties “cruelly and with violence” (Schneider 7). It is not readily apparent why many police departments prefer punitive strategies of high arrest counts and physical confrontation with those suspected of criminal acts. Community policing characterized by an interpersonal relationship with the residents of a certain housing complex is one response to the domineering presence of French police in the banlieues, North African youth have lashed out. This antagonism, spurred on by a lack of mutual understanding, results in increased rates of violent crimes and further mitigates any possibility of societal cohesion.

Institutional mechanisms condition racist policies and actions. At the level of policy decisions, racism is denied as a social problem because in the economic context of the Republic are viewed as equal. This has negatively affected the prospect of social improvement in cases where genuine racism is found, for bills against discrimination rarely pass the National Assembly and racist acts are seldom prosecuted. What has resulted from this negligence of viewing racism in its proper socio-economic context has been a strong shift from “prevention and rehabilitation toward individual accountability, restitution and retribution” (Terrio). Sarkozy cut funding for social programs servicing the banlieues and was unenthusiastic about the idea of community policing. He also instituted a “zero-tolerance” policy on “quality of life crimes”, namely, loitering, begging, and jumping of metro turnstiles (Schneider 16-17). This led to non-violent, misdemeanor crimes now carrying felony sentences of upwards of six months, showcasing in effect a different type of justice governs North African youth.

This push to criminalize non-violent behavior has led to abnormally high rates of incarceration for North African males. Throughout metropolitan France, Muslims, most of whom are North Africans, make up about seven percent of the population yet constitute upwards of 70 percent of the French prison system (Mahamadali). The banlieues are particularly affected by high incarceration rates. As sociologist Farhad Khosrokhavar states, “prisoners with a North African father outnumber prisoners with a French father by 9 to 1” for youth eighteen to twenty-nine (Laurence & Vaïsse 41). The primary point that must be emphasized is that North Africans are six times more likely than native French to become incarcerated. As sociologist Farhad Khosrokhavar states, “prisoners with a North African father outnumber prisoners with a French father by 9 to 1” for youth eighteen to twenty-nine (Laurence & Vaïsse 41). The primary point that must be emphasized is that North Africans are six times more likely than native French to become incarcerated. This has been justified by French businesses and citizens, justifying these actions on the basis of the systemic inequality they face. The angst of North African communities only serves to enhance the mainstream French notion that beurs, as North African youth are called, present a “violent opposition to society” through “criminality and provocative behaviour” (Roy 65), at odds with the civil rationality of France. The 2005 riots, as well as smaller episodes of 2007, have only led to an expansion of xenophobic notions in mainstream France.

Plagued by exclusion in French social networks and general lack of respect, North Africans have exhibited a move towards communalism that distances them from broader French society. Rather than continue exposure to French racism, and animosity, they frame their social interactions among themselves exclusively. As presented by Smolar, “[s]ometimes cultural isolationism is combined with the rejection of western values to construct a negative identity that mixes home-land culture and neighborhood values” (Laurence & Vaïsse 94). This poses difficulty for the prospect of sociability, the concept of “deeper contracts, even intimacy, between people of different cultures” (Caldwell 130), due to the fact that ideological walls are constructed as North African citizens and residents revert into their own parallel societies within France. This problem is only worsened by the technology of today and how it enhances the ability of French North Africans to connect to a broader Arab culture.

Facing general societal racism, police aggression, and high incarceration rates, North Africans have reacted, often violently. The primary case is that of the French riots of October 2005 that arose from the racial profiling of two youth of North African descent as they hid from police in a power transformer. The deaths led to a two-week period across major French cities that presented “the worst and most widespread civilian violence Western Europe had seen in decades”, with some “eight thousand cars burned and 2,900 people arrested” (Caldwell 137). Youth, largely of North African descent, targeted French businesses and citizens, justifying these actions on the basis of the systemic inequality they face. The angst of North African communities only serves to enhance the mainstream French notion that beurs, as North African youth are called, present a “violent opposition to society” through “criminality and provocative behaviour” (Roy 65), at odds with the civil rationality of France. The 2005 riots, as well as smaller episodes of 2007, have only led to an expansion of xenophobic notions in mainstream France.

In an effort to find a place of their own in French society, many North Africans find solace in connecting with the media of their mother tongue: Arabic. Hundreds of thousands of North African apartments and households beam in sitcoms from Algeria, news
North Africans are hostile to the values of the republic is only exacerbated by their Islamic character.

In this instance, the politics of difference has a deep-seated lineage in European imperial identity creation. The French mission civilisatrice shares key tenets with the British imperialist notion of the "white man's burden," namely the critical role that European nations hold in bettering the social and economic conditions of societies deemed stunted in their lineal development. The fundamentalist notion that accompanies any instance of social dichotomy is heightened in the French case due to the bloody battle for independence that played out in Algeria. The war left an indelible mark on the psyche of many French and North Africans serve as an adequate release point for much resentment of the French. This manifests itself in many forms, from economic discrimination to outright racism.

As articulated throughout this paper, North Africans have reacted to French exceptionalism by reverting to their own forms of counter-culture. This allows them to search for an identity that dreads some self-worth out of a social milieu that is particularly disadvantageous for social and ethnic diversity. On means in which Arab youth seek to counteract the hardships of an imposed otherness is reject mainstream French culture, as showcased in their utilization of verlan. This is a range of French that incorporates morphological and lexical elements from Algerian Arabic that serves "as a verbal rebellion against French as the language of colonization" (The Economist). In this way, as in others, North Africans are able to proclaim their rightful place with the British imperialist notion of the "white man's burden". While xenophobic notions of a North African incursion on the French 'home' are almost certainly a factor in these rates, it is certainly a reality that they will as- sert and defend French values like after watershed moments such as Charlie Hebdo. In the end, though, they will not use laicism as a tool for discriminatory fervor.

The same cannot be said for those who are usually less educated, what may be thought of as locals. This social group is characterized by predominantly working class native French from smaller industrial towns and rural areas who feel that North Africans, and immi- grants in general, represent a grave threat to the French 'home'. Many devote their support for the Front National, which heed's their rallying cry of expelling anti-Republican sentiment from France. As evidenced by Figure 10, "White collar" jobs, Employés in French, refers to clerical workers or retail staff. They support- ed the Front National in 2015 departmental elections at a rate of 38 percent. However, it is certainly a reality that they will as- sert and defend French values like after watershed moments such as Charlie Hebdo. In the end, though, they will not use laicism as a tool for discriminatory fervor.

The Politics of Home

The concept of 'home' for a people group is of paramount importance. This term does not refer to the domestic hearth of family and friends, but rather the broader frame of societal shared experiences and symbols. These factors, such as national holidays and popular culture norms, shape the psyche of people on an individual level. The concept serves as a defining pe- rimeter for the national community. 'Home' is a demar- catory mechanism to determine who is included, thus, who may benefit from the privilege of being a part of the exclusive French community. Immigrants, North Africans in particular, are deemed to be outside of this frame of belonging due to the sense that their language, social practices, and physical manifestations of religion are incurring on the French 'home'. Many in France feel as though North Africans represent an alien presence of sorts that threatens the entire existence of the France they once knew.

This is not to say that all in France even believe in a monolithic sense of a French 'home', let alone the notion that it is being destroyed. Moderate middle class French citizens, who could be thought of as thinking in a particularly cosmopolitan fashion, typically possess nuanced insight on cultures other than their own. In- deed this cosmopolitan "surrender[s] to the alien cul- ture, [which] implies personal autonomy vis-à-vis the culture where he originated" (Hannerz 240). Through the ability to disengage with irrational fear towards a people group, these largely bourgeois French are able to be more pragmatic in their dealings with North Afri- cans. However, it is certainly a reality that they will as- sert and defend French values like after watershed moments such as Charlie Hebdo. In the end, though, they will use laicism as a tool for discriminatory fervor.

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"Workers" supported the Front National at a rate of 49 percent. These Ouvriers, as they are known in French, serve primarily as work hands in industrial, ag- ricultural, and distribution sectors. As evidenced by the right column of Figure 10, FN support increases heavily as social prominence decreases, pointing to the strong influence that the group holds over impressionable minds. Appendix A explains the nuances of each job category as understood in France. While xenophobic notions of a North African incursion on the French 'home' are almost certainly a factor in these rates, it seems likely that they are also a by-product of concern over North Africans claiming the jobs and wages for less wages. In this way, locals lash out against North Africans for both sentimental and pragmatic reasons.

In addition to the professions of locals, their stunted level of educational exposure also manifests itself into increased support for the Front national. A uni- versity degree, with its common focus on a cross-cul- tural perspective, will generally present to a pupil the importance of respect for other social groups. Thus, a largely void in the ranks of locals, as they comprise primarily blue-collar economic and social conditions which rarely facilitate a college degree. As such, lower levels of education typically lend to much stronger sup- port for the Front National. As evidenced by Figure 11, those with no diploma support the FN 50 percent of the time. Those that have obtained a CEP or BPEC (see Ap- pendix B) support the FN at a rate of 35 percent. This is important because it showcases the strong impact that...
of limiting deportations and expanding family reunification. Where they must improve, though, in their connection with North Africans is their inability to acknowledge the racial dimension of social inequalities” (Murray 38). In working towards countering geo-social discrimination, whether in housing, labor, or healthcare, they have been largely ineffective in addressing the racial components of social disparity. They have a difficult time understanding that a great deal of inequality stems from racialized notions of North African inferiority. This oversight, in part, allows institutional racism to persist.

Juxtaposed to the liberal French outlook is that of conservative French ideology. The Right uses ideology and rhetoric to ensure that native-born French continue to hold preference over immigrants in housing and jobs. The primary weapon in persuading the electorate of this position is to assert the threat of “encroachment of Islamic fundamentalist ideas harboured within Muslims” (Mahamdallie). The primary target of this claim is North Africans, who make up the majority of Muslims in France. The bastion of rightist France, the Front national, long found success in their fire-brand approach towards decrying Islam and North Africans. In the wake of leadership transition from founder Jean-Marie Le Pen to his daughter Marine, however, the FN has worked towards a “de-demonizing” effort to ensure that they assimilate into French culture and society. This comment of the Republicans shows that the Right is having a difficult time of limiting deportations and expanding family reunification. Where they must improve, though, in their connection with North Africans is their inability to acknowledge the racial dimension of social inequalities” (Murray 38). In working towards countering geo-social discrimination, whether in housing, labor, or healthcare, they have been largely ineffective in addressing the racial components of social disparity. They have a difficult time understanding that a great deal of inequality stems from racialized notions of North African inferiority. This oversight, in part, allows institutional racism to persist.

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As discussed above, the emotional distance that native French exhibit in the notion of France as a ‘home’, incurred upon by North Africans, varies drastically. More leftist, bourgeois segments of France, the aforementioned cosmopolitans, characterized by “an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experiences” (Hannerz 239). They typically present a more thorough sense of awareness of the effects of French colonialism, and while holding firm to French social values of secularism, do seek a more pluralistic voice in France. On the other hand, those who are significant factors from socially conservative and rural departments of France largely comprise the aforementioned locals. Their view asserts that French values face a genuine threat from North Africans that must be quelled through more pronounced interpretations of secularism.

We have already seen that certain educational and occupational norms lend to a particular constituency representing the Front national, namely industrial laborers with minimal advanced schooling. In Figure 12, we see that the majority of FN support is focused in the Northeast and Southeast of the country, areas that are marked by a downturn in industrial production over the years. In a comparison with Figure 13 we see a clear correlation between FN support and Muslim population percentages, particularly in the North East of the country and the French Riviera.

In this regard, Figure 14 provides a cross-tabulation of departments according to the level of support for the Front national compared to the proportion of the population that is Muslim. If FN support increases with the Muslim presence, then the larger percentages should gravitate to an axis moving from bottom left to top right and there is some clear tendency in that direction. But interestingly, there are some obvious deviations from this, particularly in the bottom right of the cross-tabulation, where the asterisked entries correspond to areas with lower rates of FN support, but a high Muslim presence.

Figure 14 – Correlation between FN support and Muslim population
A significant number of departments that for the most part are in the Paris region, Lyon and Grenoble. All of these areas are characterized by an overrepresentation of native French workers in professional, technical, and white collar occupations. These are the members of the social strata which tend to register low rates of support for the FN.

Variation in views of the North African question is not just a prerogative of the native French. North African positions are also diverse on numerous levels, and level of adherence to Islam is a primary distinguishing factor. Many North Africans are what might be called ‘cultural’ Muslims who are relatively secular and aim towards “[creating] a synthesis between Islam and modernity.” These moderates constitute the largest group of North African Muslims and exhibit the highest degree of upward social mobility as compared to other Muslims. A more zealous disposition is that of the fundamentalists whose “primary goal is to encourage a revival of Islam and Islamic principles.” The most ardent of groups are the Islamists, and it is they who incite the most animosity among the native French. This segment aims to form an ideal Islamic society in France. In many cases, this ideology “appeals to a segment of Muslim youth who feel frustrated and excluded” (Hunter & Leveau 10), which furthers the notion that, due to their cultural faith, North Africans are inherently radical and violent.

There are groups attempting to counteract this notion. These groups have emerged from the moderates who, with their higher level of social integration, are able to promote civil discourse to improve conditions for North Africans. Their strategy is to try to show that French antagonism against Arab communities runs counter to the values of the Republic. The group SOS Racisme was created in 1984 as one of the first means through which bear youth could organize themselves and cultivate “greater acceptance of our Arab origin” (Laurence & Vaïsse 70) in mainstream France. Another group founded in the 1980s, France Plus, was also formed around winning acceptance of North Africans. These groups, along with others, strive to ensure that the North African grievances are addressed. Indeed, these organizations “have joined together in what have become known as new social movements in order to achieve some moral equality, some equality in terms of a sense of social worth” (Cox 163). The social position which North Africans occupy is precarious, accentuating the importance of these organizations.
VI. Internationalizing the North African Question

Viewing France’s North African dilemma in the broader frame of European politics is useful in understanding its dimensions. There is deep-seated, anti-Muslim sentiment throughout the European Parliament, a situation that is only exacerbated by contemporary en masse migration from the Middle East and North Africa. In June a coalition referred to as “Europe of Nations and Freedoms” was formed by Front national leader Marine Le Pen and includes members from the Dutch Party for Freedom, Austria’s Freedom Party, and Italy’s Northern League. A mere 39 members represent the coalition, the smallest bloc in the European Parliament. With such low membership, the group is unlikely to galvanize heavy support. However, their more unified stance on terrorism and the fight for North African social assimilation, whether as a result of social, economic, and cultural marginalization, North Africans galvanize themselves, either along the positive lines of social mobilization or the dangerous phenomenon of fundamentalist violence. The situation is convoluted by the myriad of social factors at play in the fight for North African social assimilation, whether the right-wing Front National, the liberal Parti Socialiste, or groups sympathetic to the North African cause, notably SOS Racism. In the end, the quest for genuine social inclusion must arise through a nuanced negotiation among all groups with a vested interest in the question. For the time being, particularly in light of fundamentalism spurring in all levels of France and increased quotas on migration, it seems that the “North African Question” will be perplexing as ever.

Appendix A

1. Liberal Professionals – Professions libérales
   - A type of professional that includes lawyers, doctors/surgeons, notaries, locksmiths, etc.

2. White-collar Positions – Emplois blan
collars
   - A category of white-collar workers, such as teachers, accountants, social workers, middle managers, etc.

3. Intermediate Professions – Professions intermédiaires
   - Includes workers such as teachers, accountants, social workers, middle managers, etc.

4. CEP - Certificat d' études Primaires
   - A primary education diploma

5. IUT - Institut Universitaire de Technologie
   - A type of technical education institute

6. CAP - Certificat d' Aptitude Professionnelle
   - A vocational diploma

7. Retired – Retraités
   - Includes retirees who no longer work

References


