Plus ça Change, Plus c’est la Même Chose: The Introduction of ‘Soft’ De-Radicalisation Policy in France

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Plus ça Change, Plus c’est la Même Chose:

The Introduction of ‘Soft’ De-Radicalisation Policy in France

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
of Bard College

by
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Abstract

This paper analyses the 2015 introduction of ‘soft’ de-radicalisation policies in France, which were intended as a departure from traditional security-based ‘hard’ policies, and assesses the role of the French government as an actor in de-radicalisation efforts. The paper will look at key facets of French political culture, including laïcité and communitarianism, and the experience of Muslim communities in France. In evaluating the ‘soft’ measures introduced in France, particularly the Numéro Vert and de-radicalisation centers, the paper identifies that ‘soft’ measures rely on the same security and police-based measures as ‘hard’ policies, and, in turn, have the same effect on the communities they attempt to influence. The paper concludes that the French government is an unfit actor to develop and enforce de-radicalisation policy because of their embedded political values and relationship with Muslim communities.
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Introduction

Since the late 20th century, French counter-radicalisation has been relegated solely to the realm of security and policing. Until recently, the French government did not consider Jihadi radicalisation as an issue distinct from terrorism at large, and had no specific policies in place to tackle this growing phenomenon.¹ Following the attack on Charlie Hebdo in 2015, France declared a state of emergency and expanded their traditional methods of counter-terrorism to include de-radicalisation efforts.² The majority were highly centralized policies, grounded firmly in legal structures, and considered ‘hard’ methods of de-radicalisation. In addition to these traditional counter-terrorism methods, France began to discuss the possibility of introducing ‘soft’ methods of de-radicalisation similar to those that have been practiced in other European countries such as Germany and the Netherlands.³ ‘Soft’ de-radicalisation measures seek to “undo the radicalization process by engineering the individual’s return to moderate society, usually by providing them with a stable support network, probing their original reasons for radicalizing, and divorcing them from their extreme beliefs and social contacts,”⁴ whereas ‘hard’ measures such as “(arrests, expulsions, freezing of assets, etc.) fall within the proactive and anticipatory logic of the fight against terrorism: whether it is through legal or administrative measures.”⁵ In the past,

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⁴Gabriel Hoeft. “‘Soft’ Approaches to Counter-Terrorism: An Exploration of the Benefits of Deradicalization Programs.” International Institute for Counter Terrorism, 2015.

⁵Ibid
these methods had not been considered by France in part because of *laïcité*, the French concept of separation of church and state. Since 2015, France has introduced several new ‘soft’ methods of de-radicalisation, including de-radicalisation wings in prisons, de-radicalisation centers, educational campaigns, reintegration of radicals, surveillance of jihadist websites, and a community support hotline. Many of these policies, meant to create a more comprehensive approach to countering extremism in France, have been met by criticism that they remain too firmly grounded in French traditions of legal and police based counter-terrorism, despite attempting to be distinct from these methods. This paper seeks to understand the difference between ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ methods of de-radicalisation in the French context, asking how French political culture and social dynamics impact the reception and efficacy of the policies. In light of the multiple terrorist attacks that have occurred in France since 2015, this paper also seeks to identify how social and political contexts have impacted the success of French counter-radicalisation policies, given that similar policies have been successful in other countries. The paper argues that the evolution of *laïcité* in France from the original concept of separation of church and state to state enforcement of freedom from religion and the impacts it has had on the lives of French Muslims has created a context in which ‘soft’ de-radicalisation policies have the same effect as ‘hard’ policies -- further alienating the communities they attempt to impact, and in some cases further contributing to radicalisation.

In order to evaluate the French de-radicalisation policies, it is necessary to first have an understanding of the meaning of radicalisation and the factors that contribute to it. While there is no one definition, the European Commission defines radicalisation as “the phenomenon of

6 Ibid
people embracing opinions, views, and ideas which could lead to terrorism.” It is important to note that radicalisation does not always lead to violent action. Similar to this conceptualization of the definition of radicalisation, there is no singular understanding of the causes of radicalisation. The European Union recognizes 111 factors that contribute to radicalisation, which can generally be grouped into identity and social factors. An individual’s identity (ethnicity, gender, age, etc) are seen to play a smaller role in the radicalisation process than social factors, such as poverty, lack of opportunity, and social exclusion. While there is no one path to radicalisation, it is important to analyze the role that social factors play in an individual’s path to radicalisation, and how de-radicalisation policies attempt to respond to these drivers. The paper will analyse each of the European Union’s recognized factors in a general context, and then move on to analyse the roots of radicalisation in Europe and in France, as well as provide a review of what it means for a de-radicalisation policy to be effective. The paper will provide a basis from which to analyse the French experience of radicalisation and de-radicalisation. It will do so by first giving background to key facets of French political culture, focusing on the principle of laïcité, separation between the public and private sphere, and French rejection of communitarianism. The paper will explore the evolution of laïcité in France from a principle similar to the Anglo-Saxon separation of church and state to a political value that extends to influence the ideals of French republicanism, citizenship, and policies that impact the daily lives of those living in France. When analysing the impact of de-radicalisation efforts, it is important to note how policies stemming from laïcité impact the same communities the measures seeks to effect. In the French case of de-radicalisation, the majority of the effort is focused on radical Islam, so it is important to look at the relationship between French policy and the Muslim community. For example, the 2004 ban

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on wearing religious symbols in public institutions disproportionately impacts the muslim population of France.⁸

Given the importance of analysing the relationship between the Muslim community in France and the French government when evaluating de-radicalisation policies, the paper will also illustrate the experience of Muslims in France, paying particular attention to their social and economic life, much of which is relegated to the massive concrete housing complexes that occupy the suburbs of major French cities. These suburbs, called banlieues, create a unique experience for many French Muslims who are physically separated from French economic, social, and political life. While it is not the case that poverty only exists outside city centers, those living within a city still have access to the resources metropolitan areas afford. It has been shown that residents of banlieues experience much larger rates of broken families, single mothers, dependence on welfare, and use of black markets. The unemployment rate in banlieues is often four times the national average.⁹ The paper will explore how this experience could lead French Muslims to have a fraught relationship with the French government, and the possibility that it could contribute to some instances of radicalisation. The paper will assess the idea that France has failed to create a vision of society where muslims can belong, and will seek to understand how French citizens become radicalised.

Next, the paper will shift focus to de-radicalisation policies, first by understanding common strategies and then by giving context to the evolution of French counter-terrorism policies in relation to the occurrences of terrorist attacks in France, paying particular attention to

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the shift in policy that occurred after the attacks of 2015. De-radicalisation falls under the “preventive” side of counter-terrorism, and is meant to reverse the process of radicalisation. De-radicalisation methods usually fall under two categories: ‘soft’ and ‘hard’. ‘Hard’ methods of de-radicalisation rely on the coercive nature of the state to monitor and police individuals. ‘Soft’ methods of de-radicalisation attempt to build trust within communities, to aid the flow of information that could prevent terrorism. French counter-terrorism traditionally relied heavily on hard methods rooted deeply in the security apparatus. The introduction of ‘soft’ methods began in 2013 with the White Paper on Defense and National Security and the 2015 announcement by former Prime Minister Manuel Valls of the expansion of counter-terrorism tactics to include de-radicalisation. Next, the paper seeks to understand the similarities and differences between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ policies, both in general and in the French context to provide a background from which to analyse whether soft and hard policies in France have unique impacts. The ‘soft’ policies to be analysed include: Police-community partnerships, de-radicalisation centers, reintegration of radicals, community policing, awareness campaigns, and community hotlines, with an emphasis on analysing the de-radicalisation centers and hotlines. Many of these policies are seen as systems of managing ethnic and religious diversity, which directly contrasts the French attempt to quell communitarianism. The ‘hard’ policies to be analyzed include: arrests, expulsions, freezing of assets, and isolation of radicals within prisons, and are all firmly rooted in the French legal system. In analysing the evolution of counter-radicalisation policies, the paper will give attention to role of the DST (Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire) and the DGSI (Direction générale de la sécurité intérieure) in counter-terrorism strategy that relies heavily on a security and police-based approach. It will look at the role of the Juges d’Instructions

(Investigative Magistrates) who have unique powers that enable them to identify and prosecute suspected terrorists, the laws that enable ‘hard’ counter-radicalisation approaches, and how a person becomes labeled as a “radical” in the French legal system.

Finally, the paper will take a critical approach to analyzing the ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ de-radicalisation programs used in France, placing them against the backdrop of the causes of French radicalisation, the communities they attempt to influence, and the political culture that impacts their efficacy. It will argue that as an actor in counter-radicalisation, the French government works within a theoretical framework that prevents the full efficacy of ‘soft’ methods, because they are by nature contradictory to the principles the French government seeks to perpetuate. It will argue that this dynamic has the potential to create further isolation of Muslim communities and create increased radicalisation, and that, until the French government evolves its conception of the role of Islam in France, it will be unable to effectively enforce de-radicalisation measures.
Chapter One: Causes of Radicalisation

In order to begin to analyse French counter-radicalisation methods, it is necessary to understand the meaning of “radicalisation” and the factors that prompt it; at large, in Europe, and specifically in France. This section will discuss leading theories of radicalisation in an attempt to create context surrounding the French measures. “Radicalisation” has no single definition, and is often used as a political buzzword with little precision. The European Commission defines radicalisation as, “the phenomenon of people embracing opinions, views, and ideas which could lead to terrorism.”\textsuperscript{11} In contrast, many other definitions of radicalisation expressly include the utilization of political and physical violence as part of the natural evolution of a radical. To attempt to solve this contradiction, it is helpful to look at the historical context of the conception of radicalisation and its root, “radical.” The use of the word “radical,” meaning support for an extreme section of a part, entered mainstream use in the 19th century.\textsuperscript{12} Many of the radicals in question were fighting for political reform and enfranchisement, and few resorted to the use of violence. However, “while in the 19th century, ‘radical’ referred primarily to liberal, anti-clerical, pro-democratic, progressive political positions, contemporary use – as in ‘radical Islamism’ – tends to point in the opposite direction: embracing an anti-liberal, fundamentalist, anti-democratic and regressive agenda.”\textsuperscript{13} This illustrates that the concept of what is considered “radical” is conceived in relation to what is considered mainstream. For example, we consider

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
western liberal democracies as mainstream, thus groups that take an opposing stance are seen as radical.

Just as there are multiple conceptions of radicalisation, there are multiple pathways to becoming radicalised. Many factors, both internal and external, contribute to radicalisation, and more often than not it is a combination of multiple factors that lead an individual to radicalisation. While the idea that poverty is a root cause of terrorism is often held and assumed to be true in the political sphere, it has been found that it is not a direct cause of radicalisation. Instead, economic deprivation in combination with other social and personal factors is often a contributing factor. One theory of the root of radicalisation is that of “relative deprivation,” or the discrepancy between the “ought” and the “is” in an economic context. This idea is similar to Alexis de Tocqueville's idea of the “revolution of rising expectations,” which “refers to a situation in which a rise in prosperity and freedom leads people to believe they can improve life for themselves and their families. It leads them to seek political changes that will allow them to pursue opportunity.”

This theory is important because it makes the distinction between poverty as a contributing factor to political violence (in de Tocqueville’s case, revolution), and a collective sense that a person or group ought have greater economic and social prospects contributing to the use of political violence. Furthermore, it is important to note that, in many cases, the concerns of radicals are not entirely separate from the concerns of the rest of society. This theory will be seen at play in the French context, which centers largely around muslim immigrant communities.

Having conducted a broad literature review, the European Union came to the conclusion that there are 111 individual factors that lead to radicalisation that can be grouped in the following categories:

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These categories can be further distinguished as “push” and “pull factors.” Push factors “involve social, political and economic grievances,” while pull factors are “a personal quest, a sense of belonging to a cause, ideology, or social network.”\textsuperscript{16} The first category, individual socio-psychological factors, can include feelings of alienation or exclusion, a sense of injustice, and other emotional factors. These feelings can culminate in a “quest for significance,” or “the fundamental desire to matter, to be someone, to have respect.”\textsuperscript{17} It is important to note that mental illness is not a necessary condition for radicalisation, as is often portrayed by popular media, and that as a society, we often view radicalisation as being caused by internal factors rather than external factors. With this in mind, it is still possible to analyze the psycho-social drivers that do exist for radicalisation on a more nuanced level than simply attributing the phenomenon to mental illness.

The second category, social factors, includes forces that lead to limited social mobility, such as discrimination, marginalisation, lack of education, etc. It is often assumed that radicalised individuals are unemployed and have low levels of education. This is often not the case, and in fact, many radicals are highly educated. A report by the USAID underlines the


\textsuperscript{16}Ibid.

shortcomings of the “underlying conditions” theory of radicalisation by explaining that the populations that experience poverty or educational gaps are so large, and the fraction of those populations who become radicalised so small, that it is illogical to claim that those conditions are strong causes of radicalisation. In fact, empirical studies have shown that individuals with high levels of education and employment are more vulnerable to recruitment by terrorist organizations. However, there is a nuanced relationship between education and radicalisation as expressed in the USAID report. “Sluggish economies and a disconnect between the educational curriculum and the needs of the labor market also make it harder for highly-educated individuals to secure jobs that provide them with the self-esteem, material compensation, as well as social respect and status to which they may feel entitled.”\(^{18}\) This idea harkens back to the idea of the Revolution of Rising Expectations. The relationship between poverty or lack of education and radicalisation isn’t always direct, but rather, when educated people feel they should have access to opportunities they do not have access too, they become susceptible to the forces of radicalisation.

The fourth category, ideological and religious dimensions, is perhaps the most important to analyse, and the most prone to bias and assumption. Counter-terror and counter-radicalisation policies are often billed as working against “radical” or “fundamental” Islam. Often, this is referring to two sects of Islam, Salafism and Wahhabism, which are frequently conflated. When removed from the political context, Salafism is simply an orthodox practice of Islam which many moderate Muslims practice. Wahhabism is a more recent practice and has its roots in Saudi Arabia and the madrassas of Pakistan, and is much more conservative. Neither sect teaches the use of political violence or in their pure form attempt to radicalise individuals. However, it is clear that religion plays an important role in the radicalisation process. Chatham House Fellow Maha Azzam writes that “these traditions constitute a conservative worldview onto which young

radicals graft their legitimization of violence.”\textsuperscript{19} The religion itself is not the cause of radicalisation, but is instead a symptom of an individual's rejection of mainstream politics, society, and religion. Wahhabism and Salafism, as extremely conservative frameworks of thinking, become a perfect basis for radicalisation in liberal societies. However, as will be addressed later in this paper, religion is still important once an individual has become radicalised and as part of the de-radicalisation process.

The fifth category, culture and identity crisis, refers to any cultural marginalisation that can lead an individual to feel alienated from a community. This does not only include the larger community in which they live in, but also the community of their parent’s cultures. This is often a concern for second and third generation immigrants who “have to manage a Western identity, while simultaneously inheriting an ethnic identity from their family.”\textsuperscript{20} With social and political pressures on these immigrants from the country they live in to adopt the country’s cultural values, and from their family to maintain their ethnic identity, it can be difficult to have a clear sense of self. Radicalisation enters the picture when the ability to strike a balance between two identities becomes impossible for an individual. In some cases, this leads to a “hardening of attitudes,” wherein an individual places a greater emphasis on one aspect of their identity, eschewing the other. In the case of some Muslim immigrants, this means pushing aside the culture of the country they live in and adopting more traditional religious beliefs, which can leave them vulnerable to radicalisation.\textsuperscript{21}


\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
The sixth category, trauma and other trigger mechanisms, refers to the influence of psychological trauma such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and other mental illnesses in the radicalisation process. This can also include traumatic experiences within a family, such as a family’s prior exposure to violent conflict. It is important to note that the media often portrays radicalised individuals as mentally ill, when this has not been empirically proven.\textsuperscript{22} While trauma and other psychological triggers have certainly played a role in the radicalisation of some individuals, it is important not to generalize or over emphasize the role that this factor plays in the overall radicalisation process.

Next is the important role of group dynamics in the radicalisation process. Often times this involves pre-existing friendships and relationships and a charismatic leader coming together to create groupthink, a phenomenon that is often observed in prisons. Research has shown that “identity fusion with a close family-like group is strongly associated with willingness to fight and die, fighters also claim they do so for a greater cause.”\textsuperscript{23} Even prior to the use of physical violence, a close-knit group structure allows for the radical ideas of one or more individuals to be easily disseminated to the group. When this occurs, an “individual's identity merges with the group’s,” allowing radicalisation to take hold. This goes hand in hand with the next source: radicalisers and groomers. This involves already radicalised individuals taking advantage of existing groups and their “vulnerabilities and grievances” to recruit and radicalise individuals. These groomers can be, but are not limited to, Imams, community leaders, and incarcerated individuals.


The final factor that leads to radicalisation is the vast entity we call social media, which has played a very important role in radicalisation since its inception and popularization. The pages of popular websites like Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, and encrypted chat apps create echo-chambers where like-minded individuals come together to share, and often strengthen, their ideas. These forums “accelerate the process of radicalisation; and increase opportunities for self-radicalisation.”

Having recognized the power of social media, terrorist organisations, most notably ISIS, have actively used it as a tool to recruit new members. This source of radicalisation is particularly unique in that it reaches all demographics, from age to economic status, religious conviction to political party. In this sense, it is an extremely important factor to consider.

The culmination of any number of these factors does not contribute to a uniform path to radicalisation. Just as it is impossible to paint a universal profile of a radical, it is impossible to generalize a pathway to radicalisation. It is, however, important to understand the stages that many radicals pass through, while recognizing that not all stages exist in each case, or exist in a linear order. In order for de-radicalisation policies to be effective, there must be some amount of understanding as to the process an individual goes through to become radicalised. In Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twentieth Century, former CIA officer Marc Sageman writes, “‘[o]ne cannot simply draw a line, put markers on it and gauge where people are along this path to see whether they are close to committing atrocities.’” This contradicts the “conveyor belt theory,” that an individual “moves from grievance, through radicalization, to violence.”

24 Ibid.


there are many different paths to radicalisation, both intentional and unintentional, that center around unique motivating factors.

**Causes of Radicalisation in Europe**

Given that the demographic of the radicalised population in Europe is so diverse, ranging from new immigrants to third-generation citizens, it is difficult to isolate a single root cause of European radicalisation. However, there are clearly both local and global roots of European radicalisation that influence different demographics in unique ways. For example, second and third-generation immigrants are both isolated from the traditional culture of their parents and grandparents, and the culture of their new European homes. Despite being born in Europe, they feel as though they are in between two cultures without belonging to either.28 It is impossible to analyse the causes of radicalisation in Europe without looking to the history of the integration and assimilation (or lack thereof) of majority-muslim immigrants and minority communities in Europe, as well as Europe’s colonial and political history in countries that have had large portions of their population emigrate and build new communities in European countries. These factors can combine to cause a “sense of alienation and isolation from the host community” that drive the adoption of radical ideology.29

Some scholars draw a connection between the success of the 9/11 attack and an increase in European radicalisation. Azzam writes, “Particularly appealing is al-Qaeda’s contention that western civilians are responsible for their choice of governments, which in turn are responsible for the plight of Muslims worldwide -- and that, therefore, Western citizens have exposed themselves to terrorist attacks, and can remove that threat by forcing their governments to pursue


29 Ibid.
different policies.” The relationship created between terrorism and Western foreign policy became a recruitment tool for al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations, which Azzam argues has contributed to radicalisation in Europe. This also represents the spread of a “global jihad,” which exists parallel to the “war on terror,” both existing outside the confines of time and place. For example, it is not just Palestinians who become radicalised, but also Muslims in western countries who feel a connection to the struggles of the Palestinians and fellow Muslims in general.

Another source of radicalisation in Europe can be found in a small percent of mosques under the control of radical leaders, some of whom are open in their advocacy for the use of political violence. While the vast majority of European mosques are moderate and harshly condemn the calls to violence from their radical counterparts, the presence of a few radical Imams causes a ripple effect that contributes to the European Union report’s 7th and 8th causes of radicalisation, group effect and groomers/radicalisers. Additionally, there becomes an issue even with moderate imams who still include in their sermons a “rejection of what is perceived as the materialistic values of Western society and in their expressions of anger at the perceived injustices suffered by Muslims, especially in their home country.” Attempts by European governments to quell this type of messaging can cause further radicalisation. Similarly, pressuring Muslim communities to remove radical imams can simply cause radicals to move underground, where they are harder to keep track of. In summary, the role of Muslim religious organizations in Europe is complicated and the way in which European governments attempt to interact with leaders of mosques, and conceive of Islam in general, can contribute to factors that influence radicalisation.

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30 Ibid.
Perhaps the largest contributing factor to European radicalisation is the lack of integration of immigrants in European society. It is important to note, however, that some of this lack of integration is self-imposed by the reluctance of some immigrants to integrate, though much of it is derived from the country’s policies and attitudes towards immigration.\(^\text{31}\) The lack of integration can be seen in multiple levels of society, from the physical location of majority-immigrant communities to the political parties who have entered the mainstream on anti-immigrant platforms, such as France’s \textit{Front National} and Germany’s \textit{AfD}. While polls indicate that 75\% of Europeans “welcome the development of multicultural society,” they also show that a majority of Europeans “believe that minority groups tend to abuse the social benefit system, and that their presence is a source of insecurity.”\(^\text{32}\) Other societal pressures that create a lack of integration include “the habit of indigenous Europeans identifying Muslims not by their new nationality, but rather by their families’ country of origin, and increasingly through pressures on Muslims to politically and culturally affirm their allegiance to Western secular society.”\(^\text{33}\) It is helpful to view the experience many immigrants face in Europe as the lack of an ability to integrate while simultaneously being pressured to assimilate. This phenomenon has led to a sense of alienation that serves as a contributing factor in the radicalisation process.


\(^{33}\) Ibid.
Causes of Radicalisation in France

One can draw upon the experience of radicalisation in Europe to inform radicalisation in the French context, which is particularly rooted in the country’s political culture and colonial history. It is also important to analyse the experience of immigrants in France, as well as the Muslim population of more than five million people, the largest in Europe. The combination of these three factors can help contextualize the roots of radicalisation in France. One of the most important tenets of French society and political culture is laïcité, the complete separation of government from religion, and absolute neutrality towards all religions. The 1905 law of Separation of Church and State reads, “the Republic guarantees liberty of conscience within the sole limits of public order...[it] neither recognises, nor remunerates, nor subsidises any religion.”

The concept of laïcité is now not only deeply rooted in the constitution, but importantly, it extends to influence the ideals of French republicanism, citizenship, and policies that impact the daily lives of those living in France. As Olivier Roy writes in Secularism Confronts Islam, laïcité “defines national cohesion by asserting a purely political identity that confines to the private sphere any specific religious or cultural identities.”

While originally contentious among French Catholics, tension between the government and religious establishments began again in the ‘80’s when the Muslim immigrant community in France grew sharply and again after 9/11, when multiple laws were enacted that limited religious expression in public. In the recent French presidential election, laïcité was used by the far-right Front National as a rhetorical weapon against French muslims. In law and in spirit, laïcité has contributed to the social experience of


muslims in France. For example, in 2004, France banned all wearing of religious symbols (burqas, yarmulkes, crosses, etc.) in public places such as schools and town halls. While this law did not specifically target Muslims, it was seen as doing so, as the practice of wearing headscarves is both more meaningful to Muslims and noticeable than crosses or the other religious symbols. The effect, for many French Muslims, is a sense of alienation from a society that has told them they cannot practice their religion openly. This sense of alienation plays directly into the factors of radicalisation discussed previously, specifically the 3rd through 5th categories. Furthermore, in *The French Intifada*, Andrew Hussey writes, “The most acute problem for recent generations of Muslim immigrants to France is that the proclaimed universalism of republican values, and in particular *laïcité*, can very quickly resemble the ‘civilizing mission’ of colonialism. In other words, if Muslims want to be ‘French,’ they must learn to be citizens of the Republic first and Muslims second.”

Roy echoes this idea when he writes, “the only thing that is specifically French is precisely the use of the system of *laïcité* to domesticate Islam.” In essence, the emphasis on *laïcité*, among other French republican ideals, enforces the idea that any other beliefs are inadequate and unable to exist in harmony with French society. This can reinforce the sense of alienation that contributes to many of the factors of radicalisation.

Another aspect of French political culture that impacts French Muslim communities is the state’s strong rejection of communitarianism, which is the idea that distinct communities are an important aspect of political life. France directly opposes this idea, instead placing an emphasis on the importance of the “French society” at large. The deep hostility towards communitarianism

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37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.
in France can even be seen in its first dictionary definition, which defines it as “a system that develops a formation of communities (ethnic, religious, cultural, social) that can divide the nation to the detriment of integration.” While “Anti Communitarian discourse upholds the image of a non-racial, colour-blind society and helps to distinguish French Republicanism as exceptional,” it often colors anti-immigration, racist, and anti-semitic discourse as well. The effects of the French emphasis on anti-communitarianism can be seen in French policy, from the lack of religious data taken in the census to the curriculum taught in schools about what it means to be French. Much like the effect of laïcité on French Muslims, the rejection of the importance of communities, be they cultural, religious, or ethnic, as distinct from “French society” creates a sense of disregard by the French government for any difference, and is seen as a tool to “delegitimise discussion about race-based institutional inequality and minimise minority political agency.” In The Archeology of Knowledge, Michel Foucault writes that discourse produces “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak.” This can be seen in effect in France, where the discourse of anti-communitarianism has informed knowledge of ethnic and religious minorities as a threat to state identity and interest, leading to policy that enforces a single French identity. This discourse, like the discourse of laïcité, leads to marginalisation of Muslim communities, contributing to factors that influence radicalisation.

To assess the roots of French radicalisation it is necessary to understand the social and economic experience of minority communities in France. Many immigrants and Muslims spend

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41 Ibid.
much of their lives relegated to banlieues, large concrete housing complexes that lay outside city centers across France. A report from Brookings found that “approximately 6 million people live in these areas, of whom 33 percent are under the age of twenty (only 23 percent of the general population fall in that category).”\textsuperscript{43} Many of these complexes are an hour-plus train ride to the city center, and have very few amenities. What originated as “utopias for workers” have become physical barriers preventing residents from participating in the social, cultural, political, and economic life of mainstream society. They are “the most literal representation of ‘otherness’ -- the otherness of exclusion, of the repressed, of the fearful and despised -- all kept physically and culturally away from the mainstream of French ‘civilization.’”\textsuperscript{44} Furthermore, residents of banlieues have a greater dependency on welfare, experience more broken families and single mothers, and rely more heavily on the black market. This high-level barrier to integration and social and economic participation directly aligns with many of the roots of radicalisation discussed previously.

Another large issue for Muslim communities in France, which is exacerbated by banlieues, is the high level of unemployment faced by immigrants of all generations. In the French job market, many Muslims face large amounts of discriminatory hiring practices. A study conducted by the \textit{Washington Post} found that Muslim applicants are 2.5 times less likely to receive a job interview than their non-Muslim counterparts.\textsuperscript{45} According to Brookings, “the unemployment rate of populations of immigrant origin is generally twice the rate of the overall


\textsuperscript{44} Ibid Hussey.

population, and that rate is even higher among youth of North African origin.”

Many immigrants and residents of banlieues have few employment options -- both because of discrimination and physical barriers of entry, and are forced to take low-skill jobs. This translates to a real economic impact: Muslim households in France take home 15% less than the average household income in France every month. Even second and third generation immigrants who are fully integrated into French society experience these effects, which creates a perfect breeding ground for a “revolution of rising expectation” and the possibility of radicalisation.

Given the underlying assumptions made in de-radicalisation centers, and the attempt to re-program individuals with French values, one might ask how one can be Muslim in France, and whether that is even possible. The answer to this question is complicated by France’s colonial and post-colonial experience, their policy towards immigration and integration, and the key components of their political culture. While on one hand, Muslims in France have the highest rate of trust for the government of any Western European country, it is impossible to avoid the clear tensions that exist between the Muslim community and the French government, and the inferior living conditions that many Muslims face. In Can Islam be French? Pluralism and Pragmatism in a Secular State, John Bowen asks what it means to be a Muslim in France, and whether Islam can become an accepted part of the “French social landscape.” Through tracking the French attempt to both assimilate and accommodate French Muslims, Bowen uncovers several tensions between the French government and French Muslims. While France has a long history of integrating religious communities (Catholics, Jews, and Protestants) into the republic, it is clear that they view the integration of Muslims as a unique challenge, most likely as a result

46 “Being Muslim in France.” Brookings.
of their colonial relationship with Northern and Western Africa, where the majority of French Muslims originate. Bowen writes, “Anxieties about security and integration underlie the series of state efforts to manage Islam.”

Unlike the “challenge” of integrating Catholics (who had, and still have, a large and important presence in France) into the newly-secular French republic, whose universal values are seen as not that unlike the French Republic’s, Muslims’ values are seen as a threat to French society, which has influenced the state’s efforts to manage their integration. For example, when France began enlisting large amounts of Muslim workers in the early 20th century, workers began demanding that places of worship be provided for them. This began decades of debate surrounding the building of mosques in France, and whether they should be “mosque-looking mosques” or simply buildings with spaces for worship. In the cases when the government supported the construction of a mosque (always through a private third party), it was because the support grew, in part, out of a desire to “strictly control “leakage” of religion into those domains where Republican unity requires secularism,” and to be able to “easily monitor” the mosque-goers.

In other words, when the French government supports Islam, it is to keep it contained to the religious sphere. In some cases, the government actively discriminates based on religion. In one case, the French State Council “refused to grant French nationality to a woman from Morocco on the grounds that her religious practices had led her to hold values that ran counter to the equality of men and women and caused her to suffer from insufficient assimilation to become a French citizen: she had an “assimilation defect.””

Despite meeting every criteria for being granted citizenship, she was denied because she wore a full hijab and stayed at home with her children. In another case, an annulment wasn’t granted to

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48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
a Muslim man whose wife had falsely told him that she was a virgin, even though similar cases involving sexual proclivities and orientations were granted and are clearly covered by the French civil code. These cases show a clear discrimination by the French government because of the perception that Islam is fundamentally incompatible with the French republic. In practice, Muslims are not actually equal under the law.

As an official of the Seine-Saint-Denis department said, “all religions have to evolve, and the Muslims need to do that in order to adapt to France.” To be Muslim in France means to adapt your religion and culture to the French norm, to be treated as different under the law, and to be economically and socially separated from mainstream society. It means to fight for places to worship, to be able to carry out traditions, and to be able to make personal choices about your dress and your education. In the aftermath of the 2015 attacks, France has implemented multiple measures that impact the ability of French Muslims to worship, including closing down 20 mosques suspected of teaching Salafism (which, as previously noted, is not in itself radical) and preventing Muslims in certain suburbs of Paris from praying in the streets. While these security measures are meant to prevent future attacks from occurring, they are not based on actionable intelligence of potential threats, but rather the association of a particular type of Islam as inherently threatening.

Public opinion polls of France and its Muslims show an interesting disconnect between how Muslims see France and how France sees Muslims. Compared to every other Western

51 Ibid.


European country with large a Muslim population, French Muslims have the highest amount of trust in their government. However, 57% of French Muslims feel they have been discriminated against based on their religion, and two-thirds of French respondents indicated that they believed there was a limit to the benefits of multiculturalism.\(^5\) Despite the fact that 58% of Muslims in Paris report that they regard themselves as French, Muslims face unemployment more than twice as much as non-Muslim French individuals, and are 8 times more likely to be stopped by the police.\(^5\) Additionally, Muslims experience disenfranchisement in local elections at a rate much higher than in other European countries. The Open Society found that “by contrast, only 41 per cent of Paris Muslim respondents were eligible to vote in national and local elections, and Muslim respondents in Berlin (51 per cent), Hamburg (57 per cent).” These statistics might indicate that the problem of French authority stems not from the Muslim community, but from the French government itself. While it is certainly true that many French Muslims are critical of the French government, and feel that the government fails to represent them, the majority of distrust stems from the government itself.

One can see evidence of the tensions between the Muslim community and the French mainstream in the rhetoric used in the most recent presidential election, most notably by Marine Le Pen of the far-right Front National. Building off of the fear caused by the recent terrorist attacks in France, Le Pen built her platform around anti-immigration policy and the strengthening of laïcité and traditional French values. For example, Le Pen proposed that all dual-citizens of non-European countries be forced to either give up their French or non-French citizenship. As *The Atlantic* reported, “This measure undoubtedly targets France’s large


\(^5\) Ibid.
population of Muslims, many of whom hold citizenship both in France and in a North African country.” Much of Le Pen’s rhetoric during the campaign centered around the idea that immigration directly leads to Islamism, which directly leads to terrorism. Much of her rhetoric also centers around the idea that Muslims pose a risk to French values. During the election, Le Pen referred to fundamental Islam as a “cancer,” saying, “Si on continue les comportements à risque, comme le communautarisme et l’affaissement de la laïcité, alors il y a un risque de métastase.” Or, “If we continue risky behavior such as communitarianism and collapsing laïcité, there is a risk of the cancer metastasizing.” While Le Pen lost the election, she still won 33.9% of the vote, indicating that a large portion of the population supported her and some, if not all, of her platform. It is important to recognize how this support could indicate to immigrant communities in France that they are not welcome, and further entrench the idea that they must give up key aspects of their identity in order to belong to mainstream French society.

References:


Chapter Two: De-Radicalisation Policy

In order to evaluate the French de-radicalisation strategy, it is necessary to have an understanding of what is meant by “de-radicalisation,” and the theories and best-practices that shape de-radicalisation policy. De-radicalisation as a field of study is still very young, and there is no single agreed upon definition of a de-radicalisation policy. To some, de-radicalisation is an exact reversal of the process of radicalisation. To others, it is the prevention of radicalisation in the first place. The UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force defines de-radicalisation as “programmes that are generally directed against individuals who have become radical with the aim of reintegrating them into society or at least dissuading them from violence.”\(^59\) In The Future of Terrorist De-Radicalization Programs, John Horgan writes that, “Broadly speaking, de-radicalization includes any effort to change or re-direct views that are supportive of-and thereby, the assumption goes, conducive to-violent action.”\(^60\) However, if one thing is clear, it is that one’s conception of what constitutes a de-radicalisation strategy is predicated on one’s conception of the causes of radicalisation in the first place.

The debates surrounding the nature of de-radicalisation tend to center around a few particularly important distinctions. For example, whether de-radicalisation is only the disengagement from a radical group or actions, or whether it is also the cognitive rejection of the values held by the radical individual or organization. Depending on one’s answer to this question, a distinction must then be made about whether both conditions are necessary for de-radicalisation, and, if so, what the sequential relationship is between the two. In a publication


from The Hague’s International Center for Counter Terrorism, Alex Schmid writes that, “In popular understanding, de-radicalisation is often assumed to be the same as disengagement from a terrorist group and its ideology. However, the term de-radicalisation refers primarily to a cognitive rejection of certain values, attitudes and views – in other words, a change of mind. While one is inclined to think that de-radicalisation comes first and disengagement – behavioural distancing from the violent terrorist modus operandi – comes afterwards, this is not necessarily so.”61 This is an important distinction to make because it necessitates that state-run de-radicalisation programs aim not only to disengage radicals, but also to create a cognitive and ideological shift. While one might assume that disengagement from a radical organisation naturally leads to a cognitive and/or behavioral disengagement, this is usually not the case. In Leaving Behind Terrorism: Individual and Collective Disengagement, Bjorgo and Horgan write that, “there is no clear evidence to suggest that disengagement from terrorism may bring with it de-radicalisation, nor (and perhaps more controversially) is there clear evidence to support the argument that de-radicalisation is a necessary accompaniment to disengagement.”62 After conducting dozens of interviews with former terrorists, Horgan found that “‘while almost all of the interviewees could be described as disengaged, not a single one of them could be said to be de-radicalised.”63 While many scholars believe that in order to become de-radicalised, one must first disengage, this is not necessarily the case. This assumption does not take into consideration the strong social forces that cause individuals to become radicalised, as discussed in the first section. One must consider the possibility that an individual who is part of a radicalised group might have familial or social ties preventing them from leaving the group, even if they have

61 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
become successfully divorced from the group’s ideology. It is also the case that it might be economically impossible for an individual to exit a radical group that acts as a support structure both socially and economically. In this case, the individual would be ideologically de-radicalised, but not fully disengaged. Given the context of French de-radicalisation programs, successful de-radicalisation would fit with Horgan and Schmid’s definitions of a cognitive disengagement from radical ideology, rather than disengagement from a radical group.

Another aspect of de-radicalisation that must be defined is the target of the policy: an individual, or a group. In most cases, individual de-radicalisation by the state refers to attempts to create a cognitive shift through psychological and social policy. Collective de-radicalisation by a state generally works to gain more concrete changes such as cease-fires and arms decommissioning (though whether or not this can be considered de-radicalisation is an important question). A large challenge of individual de-radicalisation programs is that it is very difficult to determine their success. One of the only ways to empirically prove the success of a de-radicalisation policy aimed at individuals is if the program takes place in a prison, and one can track the recidivism rates for crimes related to terrorism. In some cases, both collective and individual methods of de-radicalisation are combined in one strategy.

Once the scope of a de-radicalisation program has been defined, the goals and methods can be analysed. A UN report found that most national de-radicalisation programs have the following intents:

- Reducing the number of active terrorists;
- Reducing violence and victimisation;
- Re-socialising ex-members back to normal life;
- Acquiring intelligence, evidence and witnesses in court cases;
• Using repentant ex-terrorists as opinion builders;
• Sowing dissent within the terrorist milieu;
• Providing an exit from terrorism and ‘underground’ life;
• Reducing the dependency on repressive means and make more use of more humane means in counterterrorism;
• Reducing the economic and social costs of keeping a large number of terrorists in prison for a long time;
• Increasing the legitimacy of the government or state agency.

• Re-orientating ideological views and attitudes of the participants.

As can be seen, these strategies seem to take two distinct approaches to addressing de-radicalisation. It is from these differences that one can begin to solidify the distinction between ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ de-radicalisation policies. The latter category, ‘hard’ de-radicalisation policy, has roots in security-, military-, and police-based methods. Often times, ‘hard’ methods involve surveillance and policing. From the above list, one can see that “acquiring intelligence, evidence, and witnesses in court cases,” and “reducing violence and victimisation” might fall into the category of ‘hard’ de-radicalisation methods. Conversely, ‘soft’ methods of de-radicalisation seek “to undo the radicalization process by engineering the individual’s return to moderate society, usually by providing them with a stable support network, probing their original reasons for radicalizing, and divorcing them from their extreme beliefs and social contacts.”

From the above list, methods such as “Re-orienting the ideological views and attitudes of the participants.

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participants,” and “providing an exit from terrorist or ‘underground life” would fall under the category of ‘soft’ de-radicalisation methods.

### French Counter-Terrorism and De-Radicalisation Policy

Modern French counter-terrorism policy developed largely as a response to a number of failures by the French police and intelligence services to predict and prevent terrorist attacks. For many years, France had operated under a “sanctuary doctrine,” which allowed international terrorists to “operate without impunity, as long as they did not perpetrate acts of terrorism within France or against French interests.”\(^{66}\) This policy, created to protect France from international terrorists, ostensibly failed when, in 1980, bombs were set off outside a Jewish temple during Shabbat, killing four and injuring dozens. Among other flaws with the sanctuary doctrine, the influence it had in shielding law enforcement's ability to predict the Copernic attack was important in shifting French counter-terrorism policy. The doctrine was finally ended in 1986 after a wave of multiple terrorist attacks across Paris, and the modern counter-terrorism apparatus began taking shape. France began utilizing a series of security-based approaches to counter-terrorism, including identity checks by the police, bag checks at large stores and government buildings, and lengthening the amount of time a suspected terrorist could be held from one to four days.\(^{67}\)

The Act of 9 September, 1986, greatly expanded the French judicial branch’s capacity to deal with terrorism, creating new judicial procedures and processes for investigating potential terrorists. One of the most important aspects of the Act was the introduction of the *Juges d’Instructions* (investigating magistrates), who remain an important part of French counter-terror

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\(^{66}\)Ibid.

policy today. These magistrates are “charged with conducting an impartial investigation to determine whether a crime worthy of prosecution has been committed.”\textsuperscript{68} Once a magistrate deems a case worthy, it is passed on to a prosecutor and defense attorney who argue the case based on the magistrate’s findings. The magistrates have a large amount of power, in part because they answer to no political authority. For example, the magistrates can unilaterally order wiretaps, search warrants, and subpoenas. While the system of magistrates were not created only for counter-terrorism investigations, Shapiro writes for Brookings that, “the establishment of a small, specialised corps of anti-terrorism magistrates created, over time, a competency that almost amounted to an intelligence service in and of itself. The individual magistrates...became the type of expert[sic] on the subject of terrorism that is difficult to create within normal judicial institutions.”\textsuperscript{69} When combined with the French penal code that considers an “intention to commit a crime a crime itself,” the French legal system allows for much more power in investigating terrorists than most other Western democracies. In France, “an association de malfaiteurs (criminal association) charge may be leveled for providing any kind of logistical or financial support to, or associating in a sustained fashion with, groups allegedly formed with the ultimate goal of engaging in terrorist activity.”\textsuperscript{70} Suspects who are arrested can be held for up to six days before being placed under official investigation or being released, and are only allowed to see a lawyer after 3-4 days in custody.\textsuperscript{71} Sentencing practices vary, but terrorism is one of the few crimes that can warrant life-imprisonment in France.

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid.


A second stage of development in the French counter-terror apparatus took place after the attacks on the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. The most immediate responses were largely visible: armed guards on practically every street corner in Paris. Other less visible responses were the product of the state of emergency that was put into place immediately following the attack. While the state of emergency was only supposed to last five days, it ended up lasting for years after being extended five times, much to the protest of human rights advocates.\(^{72}\) The state of emergency introduced sweeping powers to the civilian government and police in the name of increased security. For example, the emergency powers granted authorities the ability to conduct raids and detain individuals suspected of terrorist activity without any form of search warrant. It also allowed authorities to “cancel public demonstrations and dissolve associations if the state believes they are a threat to public order (which has sometimes led to the closure of mosques); to place individuals suspected of threatening public order under house arrest; and to require those under house arrest to regularly report in person to the police.”\(^{73}\) One of the largest changes under the state of emergency was the vast expansion of the use of surveillance for counter-terrorism. The Intelligence Act of 24 July, 2015 “allowed intelligence services to hold communication data of potential suspects for up to five years (previously one year before the loi de programmation militaire), wiretapping and electronic surveillance were extended beyond just the suspect to include family and friends, authorized the use of keyloggers and other software to monitor and record computer use, and introduced IMSI catchers, or fake cell phone towers that capture mobile phone data.”\(^{74}\) During the extension of the state of


\(^{73}\) Ibid.

emergency following the 2016 attack in Nice, police officers began to be allowed to seize cell phones and hard drives as long as they could prove a connection to a crime or terrorist plot. The data from the seized property could be stored if a judge ratified the criminal connection, which occurred 90% of the time. In testimony given as part of a report conducted by the French National Assembly, Colonel Charles-Antoine Thomas, head of the gendarmes in the northern suburbs of Paris (where there is a large community of immigrants living in banlieues) said, when asked about how long a usual raid takes, “it depends on the amount of data that’s discovered; that’s what takes us the longest. For us, the best part is the data, because sometimes we can find signs of logistics networks, nobody sleeps with their AK!” Faced with such a large amount of data, the French government purchased a program from IBM called i2 Analyst Notebook, which mines large amounts of data from public and private sources and creates visual representations to illustrate potential connections. In the French case, the software is used to try and discover terrorist networks and the location of potential suspects, which would be largely impossible without the massive amounts of data captured in the raids made possible by the state of emergency.

The concentration of state power made possible by the state of emergency largely informs the current counter-terrorism agenda in France. While the state of exception ended in October, 2017, it was replaced by a new anti-terrorism law that solidified many of the powers created by the state of emergency. President Emmanuel Macron said the bill will “allow France

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76 Ibid.

77 Ibid.
to exit the state of emergency...while ensuring the security of our citizens.”

The security measures solidified by the law include “a vast security arsenal that includes daytime military patrols in major cities, a major investment ramp-up into domestic intelligence collection and the creation of a new anti-terrorism task force directly under Macron’s authority, in the Elysée presidential palace.”

It is clear that the realm of French counter-terrorism rests predominantly in security and police-based measures, and that great lengths have been taken to ensure the ability of the French government to carry out these practices that clearly fall into the realm of ‘hard’ de-radicalisation policy. Where, then, does the introduction of ‘soft’ de-radicalisation policies fit in to this framework? The first mention of ‘soft’ policies can be found in a 2013 White Paper that mentions a desire to “develop government counter-radicalization strategies.”

In 2015, following the Charlie Hebdo attacks, then Prime Minister Manuel Valls unveiled a new counter-terrorism strategy that listed many security and police-based tactics. Among these, however, were the beginnings of the introduction of ‘soft’ methods. For example, Valls lists the “professionalisation of Muslim chaplains” in prison, and the creation of an “internet site dedicated to informing the greater public on ways to fight Jihadist recruitment, especially among young people,” as well as the introduction of de-radicalisation centers and a helpline.

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79 Ibid.

80 Ibid.

Chapter Three: Assessing French De-Radicalisation Policy

In *De-)Escalating Radicalisation*, Tarik Fraihi writes of Europe’s radicalisation problem, “Muslim communities and diasporic communities with a muslim background are not monoliths. Emphasizing diversity will contribute to reducing the polarisation between Muslims and non-Muslims. This polarisation is the largest impediment to de-radicalisation.” Understanding this is crucial to approaching the French counter-radicalisation measures through a critical lens.

When asking whether ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ counter-radicalisation policies are distinct in practice, it will be necessary to return to Fraihi’s question of whether or not the policies lead to greater polarisation between Muslims and non-Muslims in France. Given that ‘soft’ policies are meant to work within communities identified as having members at risk of radicalisation, utilizing existing social structures and respecting customs and local authority, it would stand to reason that the ‘soft’ policies should not create increased polarisation. The impact of ‘soft’ counter-radicalisation measures on French Muslim communities can be attributed to two main factors: the deep tradition of security-based counterterrorism policy used by France, and the influences of French political culture. By analysing these two factors, one can see how the distinction between ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ counter-radicalisation policy is blurred in the French case.

The first force that impacts the success of ‘soft’ policies in France is the history of security and police-based counter-terrorism measures, as detailed in the previous chapter. The French counter-terrorism strategy has alway been overwhelmingly in the wheelhouse of the intelligence community, who utilized trademarks of security-based methods such as surveillance and policing. While the introduction of ‘soft’ methods was intended to be a departure from these

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methods, there is evidence that many of the ‘soft’ methods have utilized ‘hard’ tactics and served to increase the reach of the intelligence services. In Towards ‘Policed Multiculturalism’? Counter-Radicalization in France, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom, Francesco Ragazzi argues that “the concept of radicalization serves as an effective discourse to legitimize the extension of police action beyond its usual purview, by becoming involved in areas of diversity management such as education, religion, and social policy.”

In other words, in some cases, the discourse surrounding radicalisation that leads to the introduction of ‘soft’ methods to deal with diversity management is really a tool for the expansion of police action into more social spheres. Evidence of this can be seen in the French context when one evaluates whether the ‘soft’ methods used in France are truly distinct from traditional ‘hard’ methods. One example of the lines being blurred between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ policies can be seen in the Numéro Vert, the helpline introduced for community members concerned they might know someone in the process of becoming radicalised.

While the helpline was marketed as being a place where individuals could seek advice and learn about local resources and possibilities for assistance, it also serves as a way to channel intelligence to authorities. In a 2015 report on counter-radicalisation commissioned by Prime Minister Manuel Valls, Deputy Sebastien Pietrasanta writes of the Numéro Vert,

> It brings together a team of professionals, trained to listen and guide families. The collected reports are then retransmitted to each of the prefects concerned, depending on the location of signaling residence, with a view to appropriate care. Launched on April 29, 2014, the reporting platform was attached to the Coordination Unit Counterterrorism

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83 Ibid.

(UCLAT). The phone calls are handled by a dozen listeners, experienced reservists from the National Police. The listeners are supported by a clinical psychologist, whose mission is to both take over some complicated calls and bring them a psychological assistance as needed.85

This passage offers two insights into the securitized nature of the hotline. First, that the hotline is attached to the UCLAT, which is a security service that “centralises and coordinates all the administrative police measures designed to prevent acts linked to terrorism in close collaboration with the specialized services.”86 Second, that the phone lines are actually manned by former members of the national police. This indicates that the helpline is not only in the domain of the security services, but also that the methods used during calls are informed by the experience of policing. In response to a critique about the security-based nature of the helpline, Loïc Garnier, Director of UCLAT, claimed that the retired policemen “are people freed from their professional constraints, who have twenty-five to thirty years of professional experience. fifty-five years of life experience. [...] For me, they are not policemen. They were chosen for their listening skills and emotional sensitivity.”87 While it might be true that the former policemen are no longer acting in the same capacity as they once were, their 30 years of experience as policemen informs their experiences dealing with perceived threats. It is also important to take into consideration that in the French Muslim community, the police are not


known for their “emotional sensitivity” and “listening skills,” rather they are known for racial profiling and abuse. An Open Society Foundation case study in a Parisian arrondissement with a large Muslim population found that 59% of respondents reported their levels of trust for the police as “not at all” and “not very much,” compared to 40% who responded “a fair amount” and “a lot.”\textsuperscript{88} The motivating factors behind this distrust are twofold: first, many Muslims in France experience racial profiling and “Islamophobic insults,” (which the French police were recently convicted for by the High Court) and second, that despite having an aggressive presence in predominantly Muslim neighborhoods, the police do “too much repression and not enough prevention.”\textsuperscript{89} That is, they do not respond to the normal disputes that one might expect the police to respond to in a residential setting, but are overly aggressive about preventing violent extremism. Neither of these occurrences suggest that the police in France are known for their sensitivity or listening skills, particularly in the context of policing Muslim communities.

Furthermore, the idea that the helpline is completely divorced from policing is contradicted by Pietrasanta, who writes that the call center is “a breakthrough because it allows the management of the associates of radicalized people and identification of problematic situations requiring follow-ups by the authorities.”\textsuperscript{90} Even if the helpline workers are truly acting in a rehabilitative and educational capacity, the information taken from the calls is passed to authorities to bolster their investigative abilities. While a press release put out by the government regarding the Numéro Vert begins to advertise it as a means of providing assistance and support to families and individuals, it goes on to say that “In case there’s a risk of violent radicalisation,


\textsuperscript{89} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid.
the report is transmitted to the intelligence services and to the prefect of the individual’s department to permit for the care and support of this family.”\footnote{Ibid.} This is questionable not only because it does not specify how one is deemed to be at risk of violent radicalisation, but it also conflates an individual’s information being transmitted to intelligence services with care and support. Furthermore, when the government touts the success of the hotline, it is always in terms of how many people have been prevented from leaving to Iraq or Syria, not of how many families have been given support. For example, the Interior Minister touted that “a total of seventy to eighty people (approximately 12 percent of all calls recorded by the hotline) were thus prevented from leaving France within the first six months of the hotline’s existence in the latter part of 2014,” and that “The hotline was also deemed instrumental in preventing several French nationals from leaving for Syria in February 2015, as they became the first to have their passports confiscated.”\footnote{Ibid.} While the French authorities have not given details regarding the specific cases of individuals being prevented from leaving for Syria because of the hotline, one must assume that, based on precedent and French law, many of them faced legal punishment. This implies that the helpline, billed as a hallmark of France’s ‘soft’ methods of counter-radicalisation, is no different than the ‘hard’ methods of the past.

Having recognized that many of the ‘soft’ methods used in French counter-radicalisation aren’t distinct from ‘hard’ methods, it is necessary to return to the question of the impact these methods have in the communities in which they are being deployed, and whether they contribute to the polarisation of the French Muslim community. By looking at two of the main ‘soft’ methods introduced by the government, the helpline and the de-radicalisation centers, one can see that the Muslim community is simultaneously securitized and further marginalized from the...
“French community” at-large. This securitization can be seen taking shape in the questions asked by the helpline:

"What behavioral changes did you observe in this person?"

"Is this a person of Muslim faith?"

"Has she recently converted or is she a Muslim by birth?"

"Has she changed her discourse on faith and society?"93

These questions presuppose that the only factor influencing radicalisation in France is religion, specifically the Muslim faith, which this paper has already disproven by analysing the social and economic factors that influence radicalisation, such as cultural marginalisation and lack of access to education.94 The line of questioning also presupposes that the only terrorism that exists in France is Islamic, when, in reality there exists far-right and anti-Semitic terrorism as well. For example, ten individuals were arrested in July for planning to attack “blacks, jihadists, migrants and "scum."95 Focusing the hotline’s questions on Islam essentially securitizes French Muslims, turning them into a community that is a risk for the French population at-large. When an individual calls the helpline, they are immediately faced with this idea that the threat is of Muslims gone awry. Given that the helpline is intended to be a resource for Muslim communities, it is essentially attempting to mobilise Muslims against each other, sending a message that they are a part of a “suspicious community.” The introduction of the helpline which is so explicit in targeting the Muslim population adds to the effect of ‘hard’ measures that target “entire categories of the population who are not suspected of anything concrete liable to incur

93 Ibid.

94 Ibid.

legal action, but about whom a kind of general suspicion has been cast.”\textsuperscript{96} By creating this general suspicion of and in Muslim communities, France is effectively asking members of this community to police each other, for parents and siblings and friends to arbitrate who is radical and who is not. By having a “fight against radicalization that does not target the entire population,” but instead “one very specific community: the Muslim community,”\textsuperscript{97} French Muslims continue to be divided from the general French population, which can only lead to the increased polarisation that Fraihi warns against.

The impacts of community policing measures such as the \textit{Numéro Vert} have been better documented in the United States and the United Kingdom, where they have been in place for longer. In both cases, Muslim community members report that they feel the measures isolate and further stigmatize their communities. Robert L. McKenzie writes for Brookings that “Many American Muslims feel that these programs securitized their relationship with the U.S. government.”\textsuperscript{98} Furthermore, collaborative efforts between the police force and community” will only add to the growing belief that the government is deputizing Muslims to help provide surveillance on and build cases against other Muslims.”\textsuperscript{99} Similarly, researchers at Duke interviewed hundreds of Muslim Americans about their opinions on community policing, and found many expressed the same sentiments. Many of the individuals expressed “the feeling that Muslims are treated as “different and not fully American,” and resentment of the “sense of insecurity” wrought by community policing measures. One focus group participant remarked on

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{96} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{97} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{99} Ibid.
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the blurring of the distinction between ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ policies, noting “it was impossible to distinguish “positive outreach” from intelligence-gathering, because she believed that “even things that seemed positive” sometimes turned out to be “malicious in intent or dual purpose, for intelligence gathering.””¹⁰⁰ In a British study, one woman in London remarked that community policing measures have “created a climate of fear and suspicion, getting people to spy on each other. That’s not fruitful or productive in any society in terms of building community cohesion.”¹⁰¹ This supports the claim that the French Numéro Vert will securitize the French Muslim community by incentivizing them to surveille their friends and neighbors.

In addition to impacting the Muslim community’s relationship with the government, ‘soft’ de-radicalisation policies may also impact intra-relations within Muslim communities, creating ruptures that replicate the polarisation between Muslims and non-Muslims. The Duke report found that many de-radicalisation programs specifically target certain sects of Islam, particularly Salafism, and that this leads to divides within the greater Muslim community. Amna Akbar writes for the UCLA Law Review that “This was echoed by interviewees from Salafi mosques in this study, who feel that they have been unfairly singled out for attention. They focus on the context of counter-terrorism policing, and feel they are seen by other members of the Muslim community as the source of the problem. Some find this particularly painful, as they were often addressing issues around violent radicalisation and confronting violent extremism before


Similarly, Amna Akbar of the UCLA Law Review writes that, “as with community policing, community engagement efforts increase the presence of law enforcement in already overpoliced communities, and exacerbate intra-community inequalities.”103 By creating intra-community tensions, ‘soft’ de-radicalisation measures run the risk of contributing to the forces that lead to radicalisation.

The idea of Muslims, or the Muslim identity, as suspect, is further perpetuated by the introduction of another ‘soft’ measure: de-radicalisation centers, where one can see the influence of French political culture impacting the success of de-radicalisation measures. The centers, where radicalized individuals identified by authorities would go (voluntarily and not) to “develop critical minds and appropriate citizenship and republican values,” were introduced in 2016, and intended to serve each administrative region of France.104 Speaking of the centers, Prime Minister Valls said, “the sincerity and willingness to be reintegrated back into society for the long term” of “young people who have repented” will be tested.105 What does reintegration back into society look like? According to the lesson plans of the centers, reintegration begins with that Valls referencing, an education about “appropriate citizenship and republican values.” The main tenet of the centers’ programming, “distanciation,” involves “group discussion sessions on such themes as conspiracy theories, history of religion and society, republican values, and laïcité,” and

102 Ibid.


is meant to be a crash-course for French Citizen 101. These “republican values” all revolve around the core French principle of laïcité, which is intrinsic to the ideal French citizen. The centers go one step farther than simply educating individuals about these values. Pierre N’Gahane, a representative of the centers, stated at a conference that “Allegiance to the French conception of the state will be a leitmotif of the curriculum.”

A Washington Post article adds that at the centers, the day will begin at 6:45am with a salute to the French flag, followed by classes on French history, religion, and philosophy. Effectively, individuals in the de-radicalisation centers are being taught that their beliefs and identities are wrong, and that in order to participate and belong in French society, they have to ascribe to French values, such as laïcité. This is problematic for two main reasons. First, it doesn’t leave any room to explore aspects of Islam and Islamic culture that would be considered mainstream and constructive. Instead, it promotes the idea that Islam is the problem, and that it is impossible to be a Muslim and to be French. Second, it promotes the French political ideals that foster radicalisation in the first place, as demonstrated earlier, such as laïcité and the principle of one single French community. By treating these individuals as if they are second class citizens, these centers only perpetuate the forces that have led to marginalisation within the Muslim community, creating breeding grounds for radicalisation.

It is no surprise, given the methods used, that the first de-radicalisation center in France was a complete failure, and closed less than a year after it opened. Five months after opening, only nine people showed up for the program, three times fewer than the center was anticipating.

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107 Ibid.

When the center brought in a Muslim chaplain, the residents would not talk to him because he “didn’t keep halal and worked with the French government, which they regarded as secular.” One French politician, in response to the failure of the center, remarked “It’s a stupid idea to take young people from their homes. The problem is you need to re-socialize these people, not make them a bourgeois model.” Another, that “This failure fully illustrates the lack of evaluation of the mechanisms set up by the state in the area of taking responsibility for radicalization and the lack of a comprehensive prevention strategy.” Amelie Boukhobza re-iterates the idea that the methods used by the center are counter-productive and problematic, saying “They’ve built a program in total opposition to the particular mental universe of the individuals. I don’t think it’s the right solution. Rather, they should propose not a counter-truth but something that can coexist.” Until the centers are able to create a program that emphasizes coexistence, it is unlikely that they will be successful.

Furthermore, adding to the claim that the ‘soft’ policies are indistinct from ‘hard’ policies in the French context, it is intended that some members of the de-radicalisation centers would be sent as an alternative to being sent to prison. While the members at the Pontourny center were all there voluntarily, Valls’ announcement regarding the centers noted that some of the centers would hold “those deemed by a judge to be at risk of radicalisation but cannot be placed in

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111 Ibid.

112 Ibid.
This implies that sending individuals to the centers is considered a punitive measure, and is used when there is not grounds for sending them to prison. This means that, in practice, the ‘soft’ measure of de-radicalisation centers is in some cases no different than traditional legal-based ‘hard’ measures. Furthermore, given the already severe nature of detention practices for suspected terrorists in France, it is possible that the de-radicalisation centers could become a diversionary means of detention, allowing for the government to monitor suspects without actually placing them in legal custody.

Having demonstrated that there is little distinction between French ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ counter-radicalisation policies, it may be possible to identify other distinctions between security-based methods and newer ‘soft’ methods. One possible distinction is that ‘hard’ policies are targeted at individuals, while ‘soft’ policies are targeted at groups. If this is true, the development of ‘soft’ policies in the French case might be born from the inadequacy of security-based measures for targeting large groups of people and facilitating behavior change. The fact that French ‘soft’ measures still utilize security based methods of counter-radicalisation, at times aiding police investigations, suggests that they are simply a guise to be able to police larger group of people. When looking at the Numéro Vert, it is the case that the hotline is used as a tool to target Muslim communities in particular. By securitizing the Muslim community, as demonstrated previously, the government is essentially trying to create community wide behavioral change. By creating an incentive structure around informing the authorities of possible radicalised individuals, the authorities are able to more easily police an entire community. The fact that the ‘soft’ policies in France uniquely target Muslim communities emphasizes the difficulty of being a Muslim in France. The government could make a conscious choice...
decision to market the helpline as targeting all forms of extremism (after all, France has experienced many anti-semitic and far-right hate crimes), but instead chooses to target only Muslims.\(^{114}\) This further emphasizes that Muslim communities are seen as suspect, and makes integration that much more difficult.

Given the nature of counter-radicalisation programs, it is important to evaluate the relationship between the actor and the recipient, asking whether the actor in question is best suited to design and carry out the counter-radicalisation measures. This becomes particularly important with ‘soft’ measures, because they involve social, cultural, and economic issues that may lie outside the expertise and purview of the state, whereas it is hard to argue that ‘hard’ measures could be undertaken by anyone other than the government. The question of the importance of the actor extends beyond state vs. non-state, and included religious vs. secular and local vs. federal. Beginning with the former distinction in the French context is the question of whether or not the French government is the best actor to implement counter-radicalisation policies. Given that the majority of France’s ‘soft’ measures attempt to create an ideological shift, it is necessary to evaluate the authority the French government has in this context within the communities the policies attempt to interact with. *Deradicalizing Islamist Extremists*, a RAND report, states that in order for an ideological de-radicalization policy to be effective and “resonate with extremists,” “the message that the extremist ideology is flawed should come from a credible voice.”\(^{115}\) There are a few ways in which the authority of the state may be lacking in the context of ideological de-radicalization. The first is born of the nature of radicalisation, which Elisabeth


Zerofsky writes “is defined by a decisive rejection of the authority of the state in favor of the political identity of a new community.” As discussed earlier, the nature of Islamic radicalisation is not necessarily religious, but rather, religion becomes a framework that informs the rejection of mainstream politics and society. Religion is not “the basis of their rejection of the political order, but rather an expression of that very rejection, as well as their sense of alienation from the mainstream.” However, the adopted ideology is built upon a fundamental rejection of mainstream society, government, and republicanism. It does not make sense, then, that radicalised individuals would see the state power they have rejected as an ideological authority, or an actor that could change their way of thinking. It is more likely that any action by the state to influence the ideology of a radical will result in the solidification of said ideology.

The second reason the French state is a flawed actor for de-radicalisation policy is the nature of French political culture. As established, France has very strong views on the separation of church and state, and the role of minority communities in society. However, the role of laïcité in France has not always been this drastic and rhetorically tied to the identity of the French state. As Robert Zaretsky writes, “laïcité, the French term for secularism, today has acquired so much mystique as to be practically an ideology, a timeless norm that defines Frenchness. But in fact, laïcité began life as a humble law.” When the concept was introduced in the Third Republic as a way to keep the catholics in check by “ensuring religious pluralism,” it was no different than the American or British conception of the separation of church and state. The concept began to


117 Ibid.

118 Ibid.

evolve during the Fourth and Fifth republics, when large amounts of Muslims immigrated to France, when “it was transformed under the forces of political passion and mounting existential anguish into the defining French values, and any form of retreat from a fundamentalist interpretation was a failure to defend the republic.”¹²⁰ As the ethnic and religious landscape of France began to change, the French identity was seen to be challenged in ways it wasn’t in the past by Catholics and Jews, and thus, the concept of _laïcité _as the heart of the French identity was strengthened. Now, rather than being one aspect of French political culture, _laïcité _has become the state, as it is impossible to disentangle the principle and the actor. This relationship has made it so that _laïcité _has become weaponized in the public sphere, with public intellectuals and politicians using it rhetorically as if it is a universal truth, particularly as an argument against immigrations and for harder counter-terrorism measures.

Despite being so ingrained in French political discourse, many of these principles are in direct contradiction with the policies France has attempted to implement. Aziz Huq writes that “French notions of secularism (or _laïcité _) also preclude overt recognition of racial and religious heterogeneity, undermining the feasibility of many soft measures.”¹²¹ For example, two aspects of France’s ‘soft’ policies involve moderate religious education in de-radicalisation centers and in prisons. While in many cases this involves hiring moderate clerics, this still represents the French government attempting to educate a group about a religion that they hitherto had, at best, failed to recognize as an important aspect of the lives of many of their citizens, and, at worst, suppressed through policies such as the ban on religious symbols. Even without taking into consideration the actual political power of the Front National and their open Islamophobia, the

¹²⁰ Ibid.

French state is a suspect actor in anything involving minority religions and communities, not only because of policy but because of their lack of recognition of the existence and importance of these communities. In contrast, countries like Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and Iraq might be better suited to implement religious education because of their authority in the matter, as opposed to secular states “where limited capability and credibility constrain authorities’ ability to influence ideology.”\(^{122}\) The problematic nature of French involvement in religious communities as demonstrated previously in regard to the building of mosques can be further identified in the *Conseil Français du Culte Musulman* (The French Council for the Muslim Faith). Created by President (then Interior Minister) Nicholas Sarkozy in 2003, the CFCM was an attempt to, in the words of Sarkozy, to “fight against the danger of an Islam of basements and garages.”\(^{123}\) As described in *Securing the Sacred: Religion, National Security, and the Western State*, “the purpose of the CFCM is to provide a single interlocutor to represent all of the country’s main Muslim organizations...as well as France’s Tabligh, Turkish, and African Muslim Communities.”\(^{124}\) Even if the purpose of the CFCM was to give a voice to French Muslims, it fails to recognize the many differences between French Muslims both in faith and in culture. While the council was intended to represent all Muslims in France, in reality, it was used as a tool to give voice to, and promote, a particular brand of moderate Islam favored by the French government. As Bowen writes, “Sarkozy directed that the first president be the head of the Paris

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Mosque, Dalil Boubakeur. The Paris Mosque had long been a favored partner of the state.\textsuperscript{125} Rather than attempting to represent the interests of all Muslims in France, the council predominantly acted to regulate the practice of religion, or, as Sarkozy stated, to keep Islam out of the underground. Not only does this show an inability of the French government to recognize the differences in identity and interests that exist in French Muslim communities, but it also reiterates the normative judgment passed on Islam as being something dangerous that needs to be regulated. A member of the Security Services observed that the CFCM was created to “...encourage the Muslim community to organize itself with a clearly French identity.”\textsuperscript{126} While there is nothing inherently wrong with Muslims having a clearly French identity, this illustrates the same methods used in de-radicalisation centers to sculpt Muslims into ideal French citizens, and enforces the idea that Muslims have to give up something in order to exist in French society. The CFCM illustrates the problematic nature of French involvement with Muslim affairs, and demonstrates how they are a poor actor for the implementation of de-radicalisation policies.

Having established that the French government is a flawed actor for counter-radicalisation policy implementation, what are possible alternatives? Civil society organisations might provide the perfect solution, as they are able to act outside of the framework and ideology of the state. According to the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, “Civil society can be defined as the totality of voluntary civic and social organizations and institutions that form the basis of a functioning society as opposed to the structures of the state or the market.”\textsuperscript{127} In the context of counter-radicalisation policy, civil society organisations working in areas such as “development, 

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{127} “The Role of Civil Society in Counter-Radicalisation and De-Radicalisation.” \textit{Institute for Strategic Dialogue}. 
women’s rights, conflict transformation, governance building, freedom of the internet, interfaith
dialogue, and human rights” may be best suited, particularly to focus on the underlying causes of
radicalisation.¹²⁸ A paper from the European Policy Planners’ Network on Countering
Radicalisation and Polarisation suggests that civil society is an important actor in de-
radicalisation because “it can challenge the narratives of radicalisers and extremists and put
forward positive alternatives” which “are often more effective when they come from
communities themselves, rather than governments.”¹²⁹ Civil society organisations are a better
actor because it is able to put out these “positive alternatives” with more authority than the state,
especially when the organisation is a part of the community they are trying to impact. Because
they exist outside of the structures of the state, they aren’t as confined by the need to uphold
political principles and precedents. Civil society organisations have a strong presence in the
counter-radicalisation programs of other European countries, but not France. For example, in the
United Kingdom, Muslim charities like Islamic Relief have played an important role in setting
up the Humanitarian Forum that aims to strengthen the capacity of Muslim organisations in the
UK and in Muslim majority countries” to strengthen political participation and counter
radicalisation.¹³⁰ Civil society organisations also play an important role in PREVENT, the UK’s
counter-terrorism strategy.¹³¹ In Germany, organisations such as the Violence Prevention
Network have “successfully engaged in preventing violent extremism (PVE) and de-

¹²⁸ Ginkel, Bibi Van. “Engaging Civil Society in Countering Violent Extremism.” Terrorism and Counter-

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ “Civil Society Is a Key Actor in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism.”
preventing-and-countering-violent-extremism.html.
radicalisation efforts across Germany.”132 Perhaps the involvement of civil society organisations in France would provide a sensical alternative to state-sponsored ‘soft’ programs that potentially exacerbate the issue they attempt to solve. However, the possible role of civil society in French counter-terrorism is complicated by the role of civil society in France, which is influenced by the French values discussed in this paper. According to the French conception of democracy, “the increased involvement of societal groups in decision-making appears to make governing more democratic, but in reality it is seen as the appropriation of public power for the benefit of limited segments of society rather than for any more generalized public good,” and associations were only made legal in 1901, after forty attempts.133 Currently, “the attitude of the French state seems to be ambivalent: hostile towards those groups that show their disagreement too clearly, and potentially colonizing towards the others.”134 This could be problematic for the involvement of civil society in counter-radicalisation, particularly, especially given the history of the French government’s involvement in the building of mosques. If the government were to be involved in any way with civil society in the counter-radicalisation context, through funding or other means, it is likely that they would co-opt the the aspects of civil society organisations that would make them an ideal actor in the French counter-radicalisation project.

Having made these observations about France’s ‘soft’ counter-radicalisation policies, we may assess what it means for the programs to actually be effective. One thing all of the ‘soft’ strategies have in common is what must happen for them to be successful: behavioral change. In the case of de-radicalisation centers and educational campaigns, France is attempting to modify

132 Ibid.


134 Ibid.
the behavior of individuals to fit the profile of an ideal French citizen. The *Numéro Vert*, by creating a “suspect community” of securitized individuals, essentially transforms community members into investigators who are prompted to behave in a way that benefits the state. By engaging in behavior modification, ‘soft’ methods are no more benevolent than ‘hard’ methods. Furthermore, by insisting that the French political and cultural ideology is the only viable option, and attempting to instill this through behavioral modification, France is engaging in the same fundamentalist ideological discourse as the radical groups they are attempting to purge.

Recognizing that France has introduced ‘soft’ methods of counter-radicalisation to target large groups of people, still based in security and policing, and is engaging in this type of problematic behavior modification, points to the possibility that states should rethink de-radicalisation policy. This paradigm shift might begin with the actor. As demonstrated, the state is not always the best actor for de-radicalisation policy, for multiple reasons. Not only are the policies of the state a contributing factor to many of the underlying causes of radicalisation, but they may lack authority with the individuals they are trying to influence. States are also limited by their ability to act effectively in local communities, whether because of a lack of resources, or an inability to recognize that the communities even exist. In many cases, civil society would be an appropriate actor for counter-radicalisation policy, and it might be in the interest of states to support more involvement of civil society in counter-radicalisation strategy. Finally, instead of engaging in behavior modification, states may consider introducing more rehabilitative programs and initiatives to increase multicultural and inter-community dialogues to strengthen political participation and shed light on the social, political, and cultural factors that contribute to radicalisation.
The statistics regarding French Muslims views on France illuminate a bigger picture, a picture that might explain why the French ‘soft’ policies are problematic at best, and downright ineffective at worst. If there is one thing we can learn from the causes of radicalisation in France, the experience of the French Muslim community, and the beliefs of the French Muslim community regarding the government and vice versa, it is that French Muslims desperately want to belong in France, but in many cases, they simply cannot. When faced with a political culture rooted in values that preclude free expression of religion, the strength of the community, and diverse identities, and state policies of discriminatory surveillance and policing, it is difficult to see how any Muslim could feel they belong, let alone see a decrease in radicalisation. The problem with radicalisation in France is a French problem, not a Muslim problem. Until France can recognize the aspects of its political culture that alienate Muslims and prevent the full efficacy of ‘soft’ measures, they will be unable to significantly address their radicalisation problem.
Conclusion

The introduction of ‘soft’ de-radicalisation policy in France represented a potential shift away from traditional security based methods of counter-terrorism and ‘hard’ de-radicalisation policy. However, in practice, the ‘soft’ measures were bound by the forces of *laïcité* and republicanism, key tenets of French political culture, and failed to recognise and address the complex relationship between France and its Muslims. Two hallmark ‘soft’ policies introduced in France, de-radicalisation centers and the *Numéro Vert*, proved to be problematic in their conception and in practice. The de-radicalisation centers were based on the principle that radicals didn’t have a strong enough understanding of “French values,” and that educating them about such values would reset their ideology and turn them into proper French citizens. This methodology fails to recognize that the very values the radicals are told they should learn are those which contributed to their radicalisation in the first place. France’s history of *laïcité* and suppression of minority communities has contributed to the experience of French Muslims today: their physical and social isolation from mainstream society and urban centers, their high unemployment rates, and their sense of lack of belonging in France. Additionally, the centers demonstrate that the French state is a flawed actor for de-radicalisation policies, due to their lack of recognition of and support for French Muslim communities. The French government’s history of co-opting the construction of mosques and practice of Muslim holidays shows that they do not have the authority to educate radicals about the fundamentals of moderate Islam. This can be seen in the centers, where the Imams hired did not keep halal, and in the creation of the CFCM to promote a type of state-sponsored moderate Islam that reflects French values.
The Numéro Vert, a helpline advertised as an educational resource and support apparatus for communities, something that would usually be considered a ‘soft’ de-radicalisation measure, in reality relies on ‘hard’ methods and is used to inform the intelligence services. The hotline is manned by former police, and many of the calls get channeled to the authorities. By encouraging members of the Muslim community to utilise the helpline, and then treating it as a service to inform the authorities, the government is effectively securitizing the Muslim community, and asking friends and families to police each other. Not only does this create resentment in communities and promote the idea of Muslims as suspect, but it directly negates the principles of a ‘soft’ de-radicalisation policy.

It is clear that Muslims in France have a strong desire to be seen as French, yet they also want to be allowed to practice their religion without interference and judgment by the government. The introduction of ‘soft’ de-radicalisation policies in France, while meant to address a real problem in Muslim communities, illuminates the tensions between the French government and French Muslims that contribute to many of the radicalisation factors established by the European Union. While the involvement of civil society organisations presents an appealing alternative to government led de-radicalisation policies, the French government’s history of co-opting partnerships between the state and Muslim communities proves that their understanding and motives are flawed. As long as France continues to enforce political ideals that cast aside Muslims as ‘other’ and ‘suspect’ while preventing them from fully participating in French society, they will never be able to effectively enforce policies that rely on interactions with the Muslim community built on good faith and mutual respect.
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