Jews and Muslims in France: From accepting Diversity to Debating Multiculturalism.

Martine Cohen

Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR, New Delhi)
French Embassy in New Delhi
Maison des Sciences de l'Homme (MSH, Paris)
Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes (EPHE, Paris)
Groupe Sociétés, Religions, Laïcités (GSRL, Paris)

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martine.cohen@gsrl.cnrs.fr

Introduction

Since the four last decades, French society first knew a period of openness to its cultural diversity, then evolved to a new debate on "laïcity" (secularism?) in relationship to multiculturalism. This shift, as well as the more recent debates which emerged in other European countries on the same issues, is mainly due to the increasing globalization of our world, which can be characterised by two main features: 1) a world where secularised and non secularised societies do have very tight relations; 2) a world where who have to face the rise of a radical political Islam.

The specific forms of this actual debate are to be related to the specific history of France, the building up of the Republic and its failures or its restrictive applications, with regard to its most important non Christian religious minority: Jews and Muslims (whose populations can be estimated today, respectively, to 600.000 and 4-5 millions people). Actually, the memory of these failures will have effects in social life when religious identities develop into ethnic identities.

An overview of French Jews will allow us to highlight the recent shift from accepting diversity to debating multiculturalism, and its relationship to the memory of three main "failures" of the historical background : 1) in the colonial Algeria, the exclusion of Muslims from the religious pluralist system and from full citizenship, to the difference of the Jews; 2) the Dreyfus affair; 3) the Vichy Regime.

I. Jews in modern post-revolutionary France: a short History

I. 1. The legal organisation of a religious pluralism

The large majority of Catholics didn't preclude the installation of a legal system guaranteeing religious pluralism in post-revolutionary France – although it was limited to major monotheistic denominations. With their legal Emancipation in 1791, French Jews (40.000 people at that time) were no more considered as "a Nation within the Nation" and became full citizens of "Israelite faith"[1]. Their three main sub-groups were unified and organized under the central institution of the Consistory (installed in 1808 by Napoleon). But a full legal equality was not achieved before the midst of the 19th century: a Napoleonian discriminatory decree was taken in 1808 against Alsacian Jews and revoked only in 1818 (the "loathsome decree"); rabbis were paid as others clerics only in 1831, and a selective oath required from Jews was lift off in 1846. Besides, continuing social discriminations lasted until the end of the 19th century[2].

I. 2. The denominational pattern and the Jacobin model.

Being considered as a religious group, Jews (or "Israelites", as they were called at that time) were required to integrate on the basis of a "denominational pattern". This model can be characterised by three main features: **1°)** Religion constitutes just one sphere of the social reality : this was the case with the transformation of the global Jewish identity into a religious denomination; **2°)** Religion is organized within a separate institution : this was done with the creation of the Consistory; **3°)** Pluralism guarantees equality between religious groups - in

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[1] England lift civil disabilities of the Jews only in 1858 (Jewish admission to Parliament) and 1871 (their full access to the degrees of Oxford and Cambridge).
[2] See Hermon-Belot (1999).

fact only those who were acknowledged[3]. **A fourth feature** may be added: toward the end of the 19th century, when "social utility" of religion was questioned and a secular morality was independently elaborated, religion was more and more supposed to be confined to the private sphere, with limitation on its public manifestations (although no absolute legal interdiction was ruled) and on interference with political life.

This denominational pattern can therefore be seen as consistent with the "Jacobin model" by which the only public identity to be asserted by individuals or groups is the national one; religious affiliation or regional belonging being considered as "secondary" identities, not at all relevant in the realm of political life. There may be no intermediate body between the State and the individual.

I. 3. A limited religious Pluralism

However, if this disjunction between political citizenship and religious affiliation offered French Jews a pluralist framework for their social integration, later events contradicted the aim of equality. Three main events have to be mentioned now, which are relevant for the present debate.

1°) The "Crémieux Decree" in 1870: after the incorporation of colonized Algeria into the French State (they were constituted as 3 departments in 1858), only Algerian Jews were offered to become full citizens, as their "religious brothers" of France. The exclusion of Muslims contradicted thus the supposed religious pluralism, and we know that even their conversion to Catholicism didn't prevent them to remain inferior "subjects" instead of full French citizens[4]. If the majority of the Algerian Jews accepted their distinction from the other "indigenes", it was not without ambivalence. They were indeed close to Muslims by their strong communautarian religiosity, but they also cherished their new enfranchisement (from a "dhimmi"/protected condition). Besides, with the further reinforcement of a local European Anti-Semitism, Jews could have common interests with Muslims; but if a majority of them were close to left Republican parties, only a few fought frankly for equal rights for Muslims. Their own political fragility, as well as the evolution of the Algerian nationalism toward its Islamic specificity, might have determined this hesitation and their final choice in favour of France and its ideals, when France finally had to leave Algeria in 1962[5].

2°) The Dreyfus Affair (1894-1906) occurred at a moment of fragility for Republican Regime. Anti-Semitism could thus gather all together anti-modernist Catholics, anti-Germans Patriots (especially in the Army) and anti-Capitalist left movements. Fortunately for the Jews and for the Republican Regime, justice and equality ideals overcame the monolithic vision of a Catholic France. This victory led to a reinforced adhesion of the Jews to the Republican Regime. They continued to be involved in the building of a strong centralised State, whose authority was supposed to preserve them from the forces of Anti-Semitism[6]; and they accepted the Separation Law (1905) which didn't affect their status in a pluralistic situation.

3°) But the Vichy Regime succeeded to expel the Jews from the national realm during four years. Against the principle of pluralism, the Vichy crisis showed the continuing marks of a

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[3] I adopt here the conceptualization of Jean Baubérot (2000) about the "first threshold of laicisation".
[4] In the same way that Hindus and Muslims who converted to Christianity, in India, were not considered as real Christians. See Viswanathan (1998, chap 1).
[5] On this complex history, see Benjamin Stora (2006).
[6] See Birnbaum (1992).

racial-catholic conception of French identity[7]. For a second time, Republican values were at stake, but due to their common interest *with* the French Resistance and the final victory over Nazism and the Vichy Regime, Jews could continue trusting these values.

II. Accepting Diversity

Changes in French Political Tradition and within the Jewish Community

II.1. First steps toward changes.

Reintegration of the Jews into the after-War French society occurred along the former denominational pattern, preserving the exclusive legitimacy of a religious definition of Jewish identity and of the Consistory as its representative institution. However, some sociological and political processes led to a first and limited shift from this denominational pattern. The presence of East-European Jews with their numerous organizations, and the Jewish involvement in specific Resistance's groups led to the creation, in 1944 during the war, of a secular Jewish Institution, the CRIF (Representative Council of Jews in France). This institution *included* (encompassed ?) the Consistory but its spokesman was necessarily the President of the Consistory, and its role was limited to alert on Anti-Semitic attacks and to obtain reparations for returned deportees. Actually the CRIF became a real "representative" body for Jewish Institutions only during the 1970's.

Other social and intellectual processes prepared to a bigger shift from the denominational pattern, during the 1950's and the 1960's. We must mention first the intellectual Jewish revival which flourished then around the figures of the philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas, the Jewish thinkers such as André Néher, Léon Askenazi and other personalities who will access further to an institutional Jewish leadership[8]. Secondly, the arrival of close to 200.000 North African Jews involved a profound demographic change (Jewish population doubled), while the re-building of so many local communities implied a new Jewish visibility in French society.

II.2. The Jewish revival: a shift from the denominational pattern (toward ethnicity)

These three main processes – demographic, institutional and intellectual[9] – prepared the shift from the denominational pattern which occurred in the 1970's. Public expressions of solidarity with Israel, fight against a new anti-Semitism and the "negation" of the reality of the Jewish Genocide, Festivals of Jewish cultures or Israeli Films, new interest in Jewish History and folklore (music, languages, cooking, etc.), the development of Jewish studies at University and of a publishing sector, religious public expressions of Orthodox groups, all these processes can be summarised around three main features: **1°)** Jewish identity was no more exclusively a religious one, but it exists also along cultural or political identification; so that we can speak of "ethnicity" **2°)** Furthermore, although the Consistory remains till now the only official legitimate representative institution, *de facto* it is no more the truth: the CRIF

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[7] In Algeria, the abrogation of the Cremieux Decree was maintained until 1943, one year after the Allies Arrival. See Weil (2004, chap. « Les crises ethniques de la nationalité française »).

[8] Jewish thought was thus "translated" into modern languages of Philosophy, Psychoanalysis, Historical critics of religious texts, etc. The annual Conferences of "French-spoken Jewish Intellectuals" was the meeting place for a new public of Jewish students who were proud to discover this modernized Judaism. See Cohen (2000).

[9] We must notice here that these processes *are not limited* to the arrival of North African Jews, which contradicts the usual argument about the "sefardic" factor explaining the Jewish revival of the 1970's.

took its place by defending "Jewish interests" in all domains except religious affairs; **3°)** Finally the Consistory which was a mainstream religious institution gathering all the Jews in their diversity, began to be challenged by other religious groups – either more orthodox or more liberal. Consequently, although it remains the only official representative religious institution, other religious bodies **do have** their own contacts with French political partners.

Pluralization of Jewish Identity models, pluralization of Jewish representative institutions, pluralization of religious institutions: these changes which are effective till today within the Jewish organized community couldn't have occurred without a simultaneous change in French society and French political tradition.

II. 3. Changes in French society and in French political tradition

First moves toward an enlarged religious pluralism can be first noticed during the after-War period, with pragmatic and administrative arrangements (accommodation ?) facilitating religious practices for some minorities[10]. This was followed, like in other Western societies in the 1960's, by a deep shift to cultural diversity. Critics against "cultural uniformity" of the "Jacobin model" came from regionalist movements. An individualistic morality developed also with the refusal of all forms of authority (in family or at school) and with the continuing process of secularization, dismissing the Catholic norms in the domains of family and sexual life (laws establishing equality between men and women, permitting contraception, abortion).

Thus we can speak of a quiet evolution of French society toward an acceptance of its cultural diversity, and we saw how Jews' integration pattern has evolved along with this change.

III. Debating Multiculturalism:

From the 1980's to the 2000's: toward a fear of social fragmentation[11].

It is now necessary, in order to understand the following stages of this evolution, to enlarge our view on Jews and to take into account not only the presence of Islam and Muslims in France – and in Western societies in general – but also the increasing globalization of the world, which involves a greater intertwining between secularized and non-secularized societies.

III. 1. Religion and Politics intertwined: on the National and the International scenes

a. Persisting discriminations against Arabs and Muslims in France

The Eighties was the decade of the triumph of Left ideals (François Mitterrand was elected as President in 1981). The slogan of "Right to difference" was adopted by young Arabs during their first "March for Equality" in 1983 and by the anti-Racist association "SOS-Racisme" which was created in 1984 by socialist supporters, Jews and Maghrebians together. But persisting discriminations against Maghrebians (notably in the socio-economic and housing fields, notwithstanding police officers' blunders which led to recurrent urban riots since the summer 1981) cast doubts on this "right to difference", which gradually gave way to another slogan: the "right to similarity".

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[10] See in particular Messner (1993), Boyer (1993), and Basdevant-Gaudemet (1996).
[11] The analysis proposed by Wieviorka (1996) are here completed with other insights.

This first move back to the "Republican model" was associated with a new political objective: the building up and the integration of a "French Islam". By the end of the Eighties, religious affiliation appeared as a more legitimate collective identity, and a strict denominational pattern was thus proposed to the immigrants and their children[12]. However this pattern was at that time questioned among the Jews. Furthermore, "Muslims" were partly secularized and many didn't want to be ascribed to a religious identity[13]. So it appears that not all the "Muslim" population can be concerned by this frame as a suitable one.

As a matter of fact, the Islamic reference became for some a way of personal identity' search (several leaders of the "March for Equality" became religious activists as early as 1985) and newly created Muslim Associations took over the former fight against discriminations. But the French government didn't respect its appeal to a "French Islam" and often turned to foreign Muslim Governments (specially in North Africa) in order to get control over these new activists. Later on in 2003, these political interests still interfered with the creation of the first French Islam "representative" body. This process of "politization of Islam" increased with the growth of the extreme-right party (National Front) during the 1980's, denouncing the danger of Islam for French National identity. Until now, the theme of immigration/Islam still continues to be a political issue on the left and right sides of the French political spectrum, with political leaders looking after a "Muslim vote".

b. The emergence of a radical political Islam and its impact on European countries.

As we know, Islamic Parties succeeded to conquer State power in Iran (1978) as well as in Afghanistan at the same time. This gradually had internal political consequences for the European countries. The beginning of an Islamic international terrorism (closely linked in France to the Algerian authoritarian regime) showed the reality of a political violent Islam, which was "confirmed" by the Rushdie Affair (1989) and later on by the Al Qaeda terrorism and its struggle against "the Western world"[14].

In some countries, Muslim Diasporas are organised as communities which help develop a new sense of trans-national solidarity and a circulation of Islamic radical tendencies. On the contrary in France, the young generation aspires to its incorporation into French society but is sometimes considered with a fair amount of suspicion. Although the majority of them is secularised and individually integrated, the religious activism of some Islamic organisations or leaders among them triggers the fear of an ambivalent trans-national (global) community: is the "*Umah*" a spiritual "community of believers" or a political trans-national group which can contradict the loyalty toward the National frame?

c. French Jews: the impact of Israeli policy and religious radicalisation

During the 1970's and the 1980's, a similar intertwining between religious and political trends occurred in Israel and among French Jews, but not on the same scale and on the background of a democratic State (for Israel) and well integrated citizens (for French Jews). Besides, these evolutions, which implied an incomparable small Jewish population with regard to the Muslim demography, didn't involve neither the emergence of an international terrorism nor a threat on West-European countries.

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[12] The first attempt to organize Islam in an institutional religious frame was made in 1990 by the Socialist Pierre Joxe (who created the "CORIF")..

[13] See the last CEVIPOF survey by Brouard and Tiberj (2006).

[14] The Fall of the Berlin Wall, in 1989, ended a world polarization against Communist ideology, but it also opened the way to other expressions of ideological confrontations.

The recovering of "sacred" territories by Israel during the Six-Day war (1967) favoured there a religious revival focused on the new political-religious slogan of "Great Israel". Indeed, this new rightist Zionism, sometimes coupled with messianistic hopes, increased very slowly and impacted the political sphere only in 1977, with the first victory of a Right party (Likud) in governmental elections since the creation of the State. Then Zionism, although it has been founded mostly by atheist leftist activists coming from European countries, was partly recaptured by its religious sources, in closer affinity with the heritage of North African Jews.

The new political-religious themes of Israeli policy did have some echo among French Jews, although the vast majority of them didn't overtly take to the slogan of "Great Israel". The harsh political conflicts which developed there became more and more a matter of strong controversies *within* the organised Jewish Community *and outside of it*, in relation with French political life. Thus Jewish solidarity with Israel, which was previously consensual and was supported by a global sympathy from French society, became more complex and problematic, intertwined with national political issues[15].

Toward the end of the 1980's, changes within the French Consistory (a new Chief Rabbi was elected in 1988) and the relative growth of a messianistic group (the Lubavitch Hassidim) led to a religious radicalisation. Religious and institutional polarization enhanced the "sectarian" options of the Consistory, which led to the surge of groups belonging to a new generation of "secular Jews" (1989 and later on). One may analyse these evolutions on one hand as anti-clerical movements opposing religious radicalization, and on the other hand as a political step beyond cultural activism, toward ethnicity. A step further away from the French Political tradition which doesn't recognize any minority.

d. The headscarves' affairs: multiculturalism against laicity ?

The first headscarves' affair which occurred in 1989 arose several questions. An "old" debate first concerned contradictory principles both associated with French laïcity (respect of individual religious freedom *or* "religious neutrality" of public space such as in school?). But it triggered up new discussions, framed either in *gender terms* – does the headscarf mean a real free choice or inferiority of women? – or in *more general terms*: in an increasingly secularized society, how can individual choice lead to religious involvement, supposed to be contradictory to individual emancipation?

Thus, if former identity movements were based on individual choice *against "Jacobin uniformity"*, this new form of "differentialism" didn't appear clearly as a "progressive" step. As a matter of fact, choice of multiculturalism stressed the difficult question of possible *different ways of emancipation*. It challenges directly our modernization scheme based on an enfranchisement from religious values and norms, a continued secularization.

But the headscarves' affairs may also be analysed as a mixed political-religious issue. They were linked (with reason or not) with international Islamic political movements which tried to reinstall (or reinforce) the religious law (the *Sharia*) in Muslim countries. Then the renewed question of a "laicity" guaranteeing *individual* religious freedom came to the fore together with the reality of pressures practiced by religious-political groups on Muslims and on French society. A reality that hasn't been statistically studied as yet.

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[15] Between political and affective solidarity: the very striking poster of the UEJF (French Jewish Students' Union) which was displayed on Paris' walls during the summer of 1992 : a simple picture showing a French baguette with **two flags** stuck in it, French and Israeli, underlined with this simple sentence : "I have **two loves**".

III.2. A growing ethnic perception of French society (from end of the 1990's till now)

Politization of Islam and newly visible contradictions in multiculturalism aim *did question* our attitude toward celebration of diversity (differences). But this question was addressed at that time first and above all to Islam (and to the Arabs). Until the middle of the 1990's, Jews were not really concerned by the debate[16]. The negative opinion about religious extremism put into question only Muslims' integration into the Republic (and laicity) – which explained the support of some activists to young girls who were excluded from school, even if they didn't favour the wearing of the headscarf. French Jews were considered as well- integrated citizens and didn't retain much more attention; furthermore they were seen at times as a "model" or a good "partner" for Muslims' integration. So can we analyse the celebration of their good relationship by President François Mitterrand, at the outburst of the first Iraqi War in 1991.

But attacks against Jews began to multiply since autumn 2000, in relation to the dramatic second Intifada which broke out between Israel and Palestine[17]. Then social fragmentation of French society became an issue of worry. Following a former social debate about "uniqueness" of the Jewish Genocide, which was already analysed as a kind of "competition between victims"[18], an explicit comparison was made between this event (of WWII) and the Palestinian oppression by Israeli army, implying the possible qualification of the latter as "Nazis" when Palestinian became the new "Jews"[19]. Later on, the comparison went on with the French colonial period in North Africa, the memory of which Arabs/Muslims asked to be officially recognized as it had been done with the Jewish Genocide[20].

Was this Memory of the Jewish Genocide "privileged" by French society and public authorities, as it was felt by some Arabs/Muslims ? Could we speak of "jealousy" toward "well integrated" people?[21] An old, and probably not conscious, resentment may have nourished this jealousy with regard to the privileged status acquired by Jews during the colonial period. In this climate, many Jews thought that a new "judeophobia" was appearing, whatever were the results of scientific analysis[22]. In turn, Muslims invented the term of "islamophobia" to qualify their own numerous discriminations. The competition between victims thus continued (and it has been further enlarged to the period of Black slaves' traffic across the Atlantic Ocean, during the XVII-XIX centuries).

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[16] Although the Chief Rabbi publicly expressed its support to Muslims girls' right to wear a headscarf, which was perceived as a "clerical Alliance" by Intellectuals defending laicity. During the Eighties, a few leaders of Laïques Circles (principally the Education's League) tried to re-define the term "laïcité" by including the question of Islam, and by giving it a broader meaning, associating laïcité with cultural diversity in general. During that period, these leaders began to meet religious leaders of the Catholic Church and Muslim leaders, but didn't think at all that it was necessary to encounter Jewish leaders. Why? One of these leaders wrote on this historical period and explained it in very short terms: simply said, Jewish religion "was not a problem"! We may add to this remark that Jewish cultural renewal of the 1970-1980's was not visible for everybody, even for these activists of laicity who were trying to redefine it as closely related to multiculturalism. See Gauthier (2006).

[17] Jewish individuals were aggressed and synagogues vandalized in various French cities; cries of "Down with the Jews!" were sometimes heard during pro-Palestinian demonstrations.

[18] See Chaumont (1997).

[19] The world-wide broadcasting of the scene of a child who died in his father's arms reinforced this comparison (it occurred at the very beginning of the Intifada). The dying child image seemed to replace the well-known image of the Jewish child in the ghetto, hanging up his hands in front of Nazis soldiers.

[20] President Mitterrand decided in 1993 to establish a new national celebration related to the memory of the Jewish Genocide, which was thus incorporated into the French National memory.

[21] The murder of the young Jewish Ilan Halimi by a self-called "barbarian gang", in 2006, revealed such a "jealousy" toward "rich people".

[22] According to scientific data, the attacks were not all attributed to Arabs/Muslims, and they were not necessarily analysed as "anti-Semitism" (or "Judeophobia"); their close relationship to the time of strong Israeli assaults evoked more a kind of "revenge", based on an Arabs' identification with Palestinians. See Taguieff (2002) and Wieviorka (2005)

Of course, this climate didn't help stopping the fear of social fragmentation, which was implicitly confirmed even by positive initiatives such as the "Fraternity Bus" (created in 2005 by a Rabbi and addressed to Muslims). The growing social perception of ethnic differenciations seemed to have replaced the former socio-economic stratification[23]. This situation created a new debate among opinion leaders and social scientists about the necessity – or the danger – of establishing "ethnic statistics", forbidden by law in France (unlike in England).

The fear of social fragmentation along "ethnic" or religious differences has thus involved a new debate on multiculturalism, a term which has become a synonym of "separatism" for some activists of laicity (or a risky way to separatism), when others argue for a larger conception of laicity as a true "recognition" of religious and cultural components of French identity and History.

III. 3. Some consequences for Jews and for Laicity

The ethnic tensions were sometimes linked to new religious pressures which were here and there exerted on Muslims (specially young girls) to force them to practice. Religious "conspicuous signs", and specially the headscarf, then became the core of a political and ideological battle against ethnic quarrels and social fragmentation. This was one of the reasons which led the French Government to create the "Stasi Commission", whose most proposals were not adopted in fact except one: a new law published in 2004 which forbid any conspicuous religious sign at school.

The consequences of this law went far beyond its strict rule. Headscarf's ban in school was (is) often taken as a general ban, with several cases of women excluded from a City Hall during a wedding celebration or from places of work (private and public). As for the Jews, previous individual and pragmatic arrangements facilitating religious practice were requestioned (the wearing of the *kippa* at school, the permission not to come on Saturday). By making this parallel, it was implicitly assumed that Jews requests were similar to those made by Muslims: they could be ultimately a threat to Republican values as well as the Nation unity. Furthermore, recent cases occurred where other religious groups (Catholics, Protestants as well as Jews) were deprived of the financial State support previously given by civil Administration to their social activities (Religious Youth Camps). French Administration is now being sued by the Catholic Church, and the case is not over. Thus former processes of laicity's enlargement (enlargement of the scope of pluralism), are requestioned.

Conclusions

1. **Summary**.
The historical overview on French Jews first shows us a case of progressive enlargement of **religious pluralism** to the sole non-Christian religion which was present in France in the 19th century. But the non-respect of this principle in colonial Algeria, at the end of this same century, demonstrates the difficulty of its application for a culturally (religiously) Catholic France when the "others", the Muslims, were demographically in position to contradict the colonial power if they had been given full citizenship.

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[23] Numerous press articles and scientific ones have been published on this theme.

After two major crisis (Dreyfus Affair and the Vichy Regime) which seriously endangered or disrupted their place *within* the national frame, Jews were re-integrated and the principle of religious pluralism was confirmed and even enlarged to some other small groups. The continuing process of secularization (which extended since the 1960's to private norms of sexuality and family life), as well as economical welfare and moral individualism, allowed a new openness of French society to **cultural diversity**.

But the arrival of North African Arab immigrants, who were at first compared to previous immigrants in terms of capacity of integration through generations, didn't follow the same pattern. Persisting discriminations against them led to doubt about acceptation of visible differences as an effective way to their integration.

The wish to return to the "Republican model" (and its denominational pattern: considering the immigrants and their children as "Muslims") was then reinforced in public opinion (social debate) by new factors: the upsurge of a Political Islam (nationalist and trans-national), on the international and on the national scenes, and the growing impact on French Arabs and Jews of religious-political conflicts in the Middle East.

This is the context of our actual debate on multiculturalism.

2. **Multiculturalism in a global world : how it destabilizes secularization processes and "old" national identities.**

Let us now think about the recent debates which have arose in many Western countries (France, Italy, England, United-States, etc.), asking the question whether the Christmas tree was (is) a religious symbol, or a cultural one which may be appropriated by everybody (and the similar debate on the "merry Christmas" wishes which have turned into a "Happy end Year Festival").

Secularization implied not only the decline of religious practice but also the "culturalization" of religion: some religious symbols and celebrations have been transformed into secular festivals or patrimonial signs, which are by now largely appropriated by non-religious people.

But this secularization process has to face now **to two contradictory trends**:
1) the former limitation of "religion" to one specific sphere of the social reality (individual spirituality, specific practices) **coexists** now with a newly extended conception of religion as a "global identity", which can be either a simple component of a multi-belonging personal identity, or an exclusive identity.

2) The secularization process is questioned by globalization and by the rise of a political radical Islam.
  - In a global world, western societies have tight relations with non secularized societies.
  - Immigrants coming from these countries may either partake the secularization process of their new national frame (this seems to be the case for the majority of them) , or act as a bridge with these non secularized societies.
  - The political radical Islam which emerged in the **last decades may "exploit" these bridges, and thus threaten western societies from** within, specially when integration of immigrants faces difficulties or even fails (because of discriminations, economic crisis, or weakened integration's capacities of the State).
  - Global religious identities have thus become a possible competing frame to that of the National States.

In this context, if France **first** shift toward recognition of its cultural diversity (including secularized "culturalized" religious identities), it **now** faces a "mixed" debate on multiculturalism and laicity, where the secularized symbols of its cultural Christian background are put into question as "non neutral" – as it has more recently occurred in other Western countries. Thus, if French Jews were integrated during the 19th – 20th centuries on the basis of legal pluralism associated to a strong acculturation to the catholic majority (which didn't mean necessarily their disappearance), globalization and the rise of a political radical Islam now question this integration model and this former "compromise".

In a global world, multiculturalism destabilizes "old" national identities. It questions the supposed "neutrality" of the modern liberal States which were built up in the Western world. Especially in France, where the political model of a Nation built up on civic bounds (confirmed by the legal distinction between citizenship and religious affiliation) "covered" the social reality of a cultural catholic majority. Today the debate on "religious symbols" has turned into a debate on "national identity". Thus, if we pretend to preserve the existence of a national frame, how can we elaborate new cultural "compromises" in a context of a conflictual global world? How can Democracies continue to maintain and manage their existing pluralism – which includes the right for every individual to exit from his primary group – against radical identities?

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