



The 'Islamogauchiste threat' as political nudge

French Cultural Studies

1–16

© The Author(s) 2023



Article reuse guidelines:

sagepub.com/journals-permissions

DOI: 10.1177/09571558231152992

journals.sagepub.com/home/frc**Philippe Marlière**

University College London, UK

Abstract

What is 'islamo-gauchisme'? The word sparked heated debates in French academia and in public conversations in 2020–2021. This article endeavors to shed light on the origin of the notion, to look at its uses within and outside academia, and to reflect on the political ramifications of the controversy. Islamogauchisme is an unsubstantial notion which operates as political nudge in the public debate: it sounds sufficiently threatening and self-explanatory to be taken seriously. This study shows that the controversy on islamogauchisme has helped mainstream illiberal and right-wing policies, to make them plainly acceptable to the public.

Keywords

academia, France, islamogauchisme, Islamophobia, left, Republic

Introduction

In a 2016 article, the daily *Libération* inquired about the origin of the word 'islamo-gauchisme' (Faure and Durupt, 2016). The article pointed out that it was unclear when the notion was coined and who can claim ownership for it. The newspaper concluded that if islamogauchisme has high visibility in the media, it is not a scientific concept.

In February 2021, Frédérique Vidal, minister of higher education, mainstreamed a notion that, so far, had predominantly been used by far-right groups on social media. She declared on CNews television that French academia was 'gangrened by islamogauchisme'. The islamogauchisme tag is today used uncritically by members of the government, large sections of the media and some academics.

What is islamogauchisme? Does it tackle and describe a sociopolitical phenomenon in French academia and society? Or is it just a word to denigrate 'left-wing academics' and political opponents? Whatever the meaning of the notion and the intentions of those who use it, islamogauchisme became a buzzword in public conversations in 2020–2021. It sparked heated debates and dominated

Corresponding author:

Philippe Marlière, European and International Social and Political Studies, University College London, Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT, UK.

Email: p.marliere@ucl.ac.uk

domestic politics in France for a while. It is therefore worthy of a close examination. This article endeavours to shed light on the origin of the notion, to look at its uses within and outside academia and to reflect on the political ramifications of the controversy.

‘Islamogauchisme’: Origin of a notion

Islamogauchisme has been a popular notion in the media and on the fringe of mainstream politics. Yet, it is a French political theorist who has specialised in the study of racism and antisemitism, who promoted the word. In 2002, in a book devoted to the ‘new antisemitism’, Pierre-André Taguieff referred to islamogauchisme on multiple instances (Taguieff, 2002). Taguieff targeted a fraction of the ‘altermondialiste’ movement which had allegedly formed an alliance with Islamist groups. The neologism was originally forged to point to the alleged political convergence between leftist ‘alter-globalists’ and Muslim extremists fighting ‘Americano-Zionist’ partners. The two unlikely groups allegedly joined forces to fight imperialism and neoliberal globalisation. Furthermore, what seemingly united left-wing groups and Islamists was a virulent anti-Zionism. Reflecting on the notion years later, Taguieff claimed that he was the person who coined the word islamogauchisme in 2000. He further noted that the notion did not have a normative content but only served to describe the de facto alliance between Islamists and the far left. Taguieff argued that the two sides pursued a common fight for a free Palestine which he described as the ‘new universal cause’ (Taguieff, 2020).

French essayist Pascal Bruckner contended that islamogauchisme originated from Chris Harman, a political activist associated with the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP) (Bruckner, 2017). He posited that Harman, who was at the time one of the SWP cadres, floated the idea of a partnership between leftists and ‘extreme Islamists’ in an article published in 1994 (Harman, 1994). Harman’s argument was in fact far more nuanced and quite different from Bruckner’s assertion. Harman noted that the left has made two major mistakes with regards to political Islam from the 1970s onward. On the one hand, it has dismissed political Islam as a new brand of fascism. This has led the left to support dictatorial regimes which fight Islamist groups. On the other, it has been considered that political Islam was a progressive and anti-imperialist reaction on the part of dominated populations. In this second instance, this has led the left to uncritically support forces that are not progressive on the questions of individual rights and freedoms. Harman believed that both approaches were flawed and dangerous. However, he suggested that alliances with Islamists are, in some circumstances, possible when they aim to oppose authoritarian regimes. At the European Social Forum which took place in Saint-Denis in 2003, left-wing parties, trade unions and NGOs mingled with religious personalities, notably the Swiss theologian and academic Tariq Ramadan. This rather anecdotal rapprochement has often been quoted as evidence of a collusion between the radical left and Islamist movements. Political and academic observers have argued that this claim is largely exaggerated and unfounded (Peace, 2021). Harman concluded his essay by saying that such alliances should remain the exception because Islamists cannot be the left’s natural allies. According to him, the task of the left is to keep criticising and challenging the reactionary aspects of political Islam.

Such a nuanced viewpoint seems to have been lost in translation by Taguieff and Bruckner who both insisted that ‘the left’ (in general) has been engaged in a broad political relationship with Islamists. The authors describe a left in search of a ‘new proletariat’ as a replacement for the white blue-collar working class. Despite having been challenged countless times, this islamogauchiste myth still lives on today in the mainstream media and political punditry (Torrekens, 2020).

The above-mentioned examples show that islamo-gauchisme is a neologism that amalgamates in a seemingly coherent fashion political groups and ideas which are incompatible. 'Islamism' rather ambiguously refers to Islamism but also to Islam. The notion of 'Islamism' is fuzzy and has several meanings. It may designate a religious dogma that derives from Wahhabism, a political instrumentalisation of Islam, or even more vaguely, alludes to Jihadist terrorism (Hayat, 2020). Let us add to it that in no circumstances can islamo-gauchisme be described as an ideology. The notion is far too vague from a normative point of view and does not present the defining traits of an ideology: it lacks a core value, it does not offer a normative narrative or worldview and it is impossible to identify its overall morphology (Freeden, 1998).

Islamo-gauchisme is reminiscent of the antisemitic 'Judeo-Bolshevik' slur of the 1930s. This other neologism helped blame the spread of communism on Jews (Engelstad and Kristjánsson, 2019). It enabled Tsar partisans to mobilise Russians against the Red Army by exploiting deep anti-semitic feelings amongst the population before and after the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 and, in turn, foster anti-communist prejudices (Gerrits, 2009). The Judeo-Bolshevik slur would subsequently become popular in Western fascist movements as well as in conservative parties in the 1920s and 1930s (Hayat, 2020). Antisemitism was rife in the West in the 1920s and thereafter. Henry Ford, the American automobile magnate, was one of the main exponents of the 'Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy' in the United States at that time (Losurdo, 2015: 178). In 1920, Ford published an antisemitic booklet entitled *The International Jew: The World's Problem* which was instrumental in stirring up popular antisemitism in America (Ford, 2017).

What is more, the association of 'Islamism' and 'gauchisme' has a sinister ring to it. In the Western collective imaginary, the former alludes to political violence exercised in the name of Islam. The latter points to extreme left-wing politics on the fringe of or outside mainstream politics. Lenin used the adjective *levizny* (gauchiste, leftist) to refer to the attitude of die-hard communists who refused to take part in bourgeois elections in the name of 'revolutionary purity' (Lenin, 2012). The Bolshevik leader did not criticise some of his communist comrades because they were 'left-wing' but because they were too radically and uncompromisingly left wing. By suggesting an alliance between 'extremists' from different sides of the political spectrum, the islamo-gauchiste tag implicitly suggests a threatening and violent political association. Critics have argued that the association of political Islamism with leftism is nonsensical if not offensive. Islamism is seen by many on the left as intrinsically reactionary. Some note that leftists have been the first victims of Islamist regimes (in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey, etc.) (Ahmed, 2021).

In the end, the use of the word islamo-gauchisme fulfils a triple function: first, it stirs up Islamophobia which has somehow been 'fabricated' and instrumentalised by mainstream political parties and media over the past 40 years or so in France (Hajjat and Mohammed, 2013). Second, it warns about a so-called 'threat' and makes it easy to target and harass the academic left. Third, it feeds diffuse but real anti-intellectual feelings amongst various sections of the population. In other words, islamo-gauchisme is a controversial notion that helps foment trouble by demonising political opponents, by creating endless controversies and even by harming people, from a symbolic and psychological point of view (Marlière, 2020a).

From the French alt-right to mainstream politics

Although the word islamo-gauchisme has allegedly been coined by an academic, Pierre-André Taguieff in the early 2000s, the notion was hardly discussed or used in the media let alone in academic circles until 2020. Even then, academics only engaged with the terminology to debunk and dismiss it. They rejected it on the grounds that it had no heuristic value and did not tackle any social

phenomenon. They above all had to do so because political actors were naming and shaming French academia and portrayed it as a place under the tyrannical domination of so-called islamo-gauchistes. It was arguably a collective reaction of self-defence, and of defence of ‘academic freedom under attack’ (Fassin and Ibos, 2021).

It all started with President Macron who declared on 10 June 2020: ‘The academic world has been guilty. It has encouraged the ethnicisation of the social question, thinking that it was a niche. But the outcome of it can only be secessionist’ (Stromboni, 2020). Macron’s intervention targeted movements such as the Comité Adama Traoré. This group was named after the young black man who was killed in the hands of the police in 2016. It rose to prominence by organising successful anti-racist demonstrations in France in the aftermath of George Floyd’s assassination in the United States (Marlière, 2020b). This coincided with Macron’s disparaging comments on ‘racialised speeches and intersectionality.’ On 20 October 2020, he slammed ‘certain theories in the social sciences entirely imported from the United States’ (Onishi, 2021).

Jean-Michel Blanquer, then education minister, followed suit. On 22 October 2020, he declared in a Europe 1 radio interview: ‘Islamo-gauchisme wreaks havoc in academia’ (Le Nevé, 2020). Speaking on CNews, France’s equivalent to Fox News (Gontier and Sénéjoux, 2020) on 14 February 2021, Frédérique Vidal, the higher education minister, launched an unprecedented attack on the whole French academic community. She argued that French academia is ‘gangrened by islamo-gauchisme’ and argued that she would ask the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) to open an investigation into islamo-gauchisme ‘so that we can distinguish academic research from activism and opinion’ (Clavey, 2021).

The academic community promptly reacted and was generally dismissive of Vidal’s request. First, the Conférence des Présidents d’Université called islamo-gauchisme a ‘pseudo-notion’ lacking a rigorous definition and lamented the fact that the minister was launching a ‘sterile debate’ and was ‘instrumentalising’ the CNRS for political purposes (Conférence des Présidents d’Université, 2021). Over 600 academics signed a letter asking for Frédérique Vidal’s resignation that was published in *Le Monde*. They objected to the inquiry and argued that the minister was ‘defaming a profession which she is supposed to be protecting’ (Piketty et al., 2021).

Finally, the CNRS tersely rebuked Vidal by stating that ‘islamo-gauchisme, a political catchphrase used in public discourse, has no basis in scientific reality.’ The research institution noted that the current controversy on islamo-gauchisme, used as a ‘political football’, is ‘emblematic of a regrettable weaponization of science.’ The communiqué wryly stated that CNRS would be able ‘to conduct the study requested by the minister of higher education, research and innovation, with the goal of providing scientific insight in the fields of research concerned’ (CNRS, 2021). The rebuttal from the scientific community could not have been any clearer. With few exceptions (Bouvet et al., 2020), the French academic world gave the higher education minister the cold shoulder over an unwelcome debate which they regarded as an attack against their academic freedom and an insult to their professionalism. What is more, academics were baffled by the launch of such a polemic during the COVID-19 pandemic which was severely affecting teaching staff and students. Critics pointed out that it was a distraction from the real issues in academia: understaffing, poor working conditions and students’ poverty (Delaporte, 2021b).

Academia, in general, rejected the accusation of islamo-gauchisme and even ridiculed the notion by emphasising its unscientific nature. Yet, when the polemic broke out in the early days of 2021, the word had already acquired mainstream status. The media were instrumental in making the notion respectable and, somehow, credible. Indeed, national radio stations and newspapers were instrumental in framing an ongoing debate about an ‘islamo-gauchiste threat’ in academia and beyond. Acrimed, an independent observatory that monitors the French media, noted that the main media had endlessly discussed islamo-gauchisme over the past few years (notably RTL,

RMC, France Info, Radio Classique, France Inter, Le Figaro, Valeurs Actuelles, Le Point and Marianne). CNews, a 24-hour television news channel, played a pivotal role in popularising the notion notably after the first Islamic terrorist attacks in 2015 (Friot, Lemaire and Perrenot, 2020).

Vincent Bolloré, a media mogul and CNews owner, has used the channel to ‘build a right-wing media empire’ (Cassini, 2022). The channel has been airing the views of reactionary pundits who have mainstreamed racist opinions on French television (Chrisafis, 2021). He gave a platform to little-known media pundit Éric Zemmour who went on to run in the 2022 presidential on a far-right political platform (Marlière, 2021a). On CNews, racist commentaries (notably Islamophobic) and endless anti-left polemics (in the form of culture wars targeting ‘islamo-gauchisme’, ‘woke culture’, ‘cancel culture’, feminism, gender-inclusive writing, etc.), have inundated the channel’s talk-shows, and in turn framed the national political debate (Perrenot, 2020). Journalists from Valeurs Actuelles (a far-right publication that was several times condemned for incitement to racial hatred) are regularly invited on CNews (Hajjat, 2020).

Mainstream media and members of the government have undoubtedly mainstreamed the word *islamo-gauchisme*. They have given visibility to a notion that was unknown to the public just a few years ago. They have lent credibility to a terminology which did not feature in academic discussions or publications. By so doing, they have accomplished what the French alt-right had unsuccessfully been trying to achieve for a long time. The term *islamo-gauchisme* has occasionally been used in left-wing circles: for instance, Philippe Val, former editor-in-chief of *Charlie Hebdo*, employed it to disqualify the left that supports the Palestinian cause (Neffati, 2021). However, *islamo-gauchisme* is indeed a term that is essentially used by the French far right on social media, that is, the nebulous network of far-right groups on Twitter and social media (Albertini and Doucet, 2016). The recent mainstreaming of *islamo-gauchisme* marks a major ideological victory for the far right (Gouteux, 2021).

An academic study devoted to the use of the word *islamo-gauchisme* on Twitter has shown that the word was rarely utilised until 2020, and only as an ‘instrument of ideological struggle’ (Chavalarias, 2021). *Islamo-gauchisme* was associated with negative notions such as ‘threat’, ‘enemy of the republic’, ‘immorality’, ‘shame’ and ‘compromission with radical Islam.’ Further to the Bataclan murders in 2015, the people who used it aimed to polarise public opinion in two rival camps: on the one hand, the ‘defenders of the rule of law and of republican values’ and on the other, ‘traitors to French values and the allies to a violent enemy.’ From 2016 onward, the Twitter accounts that have mainly used the notion are positioned on the far right. Most are fake accounts, spams and trolls that eventually end up being banned by Twitter for violation of the rules (Chavalarias, 2021). Those who have promoted the notion on Twitter have attempted to discredit their left-wing opponents. Yet, the use of the notion remained confidential until 2020 and it was almost exclusively associated with far-right groups and individuals. Another quantitative study points out that by using the notion in the media, three government ministers helped mainstream it in the space of 4 months (between October 2020 and February 2021) (Smyrniaios, 2021). By adopting a word that belongs to the imaginary and ideology of the far right, Jean-Michel Blanquer, Gérald Darmanin and Frédérique Vidal have, voluntarily or not, legitimised it.

By framing the notion of *islamo-gauchisme* and treating it as a ‘threat’, the media have suggested that it is a serious issue. According to an opinion poll carried out on 17–18 February 2021, 58% of interviewees considered that the notion was a ‘widespread school of thought in the country’. Fifty-six per cent of them were of the view that ‘*islamo-gauchistes* ideas were prominent in academia’ (IFOP: see Smyrniaios article).

The word *islamo-gauchisme* appeared in the ‘*Fachosphère*’ (far-right social media) in the post-9/11 world. From 2015 onward, the term is associated with terrorist attacks on French soil (the *Charlie Hebdo* killing, the Koshher supermarket siege, the Stade de France explosions, restaurant

shootings and bombings and the Bataclan theatre massacres). In 2017, during the socialist party primary election in the run up to the presidential election, Manuel Valls, a former socialist prime minister, accused Benoît Hamon of being ‘complacent’ and ‘lax’ with *islamo-gauchisme*, of supporting ‘*communautarisme*’ (ethnic segregation) and of being indifferent to women’s discrimination in Muslim communities (Houaix, 2017). The line of attack came from a major centre-left politician and preceded Jean-Michel Blanquer’s use of the same rhetoric in the aftermath of Samuel Paty’s beheading in October 2020 (Willsher, 2020).

Academic freedom under attack

Intimidations and attacks on academics remain a rare occurrence in Europe but they have increased over the past years. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has retaliated against academics who have criticised his autocratic ruling and the acts of violence perpetrated against civilian populations. The judiciary has started criminal cases against critical academics. Some have been sent to jail. University administrations have investigated academics, and some have been suspended or have lost their job (Yildirim, 2016). Turkey or Hungary (Babraj, 2021) may be extreme situations in Europe but many academics have drawn a parallel with the situation in France (Perroud, 2020). They have pointed out that the *islamo-gauchisme* controversy in France is similar to the Turkish or Hungarian situations inasmuch as this is an attempt to curb academic freedom. The government is arguably trying to ‘influence what does and does not constitute being a critic and conscience of society’ (Heinemann, 2022). This is a serious development as academics’ independence and their freedom of speech are protected by the constitution. There is jurisprudence in that sense of the highest order: in 1984, the French Constitutional Court held that ‘teaching and research functions not only allow but require that the free expression and independence of staff be guaranteed.’ It also added that the ‘independence of university professors is a constitutional principle’ (Constitutional Council, 1984).

Emmanuel Macron has attacked post-colonial and critical theories and has presented them as a ‘threat to the Republic’ (Bessone, 2020a, 2020b). The French president has gone along an international tide of relentless stigmatisation of academic research across the world. Macron, together with Blanquer, Darmanin and Vidal as well as large segments of the media, have focused on alleged threats to academic freedom, and argued that discursive rules and scientific freedom are being eroded by ‘leftist’ and ‘politized’ researchers and lecturers. Academic concepts such as ‘intersectionality’, ‘gender studies’, ‘decolonial studies’, but also undefined and non-academic notions such as ‘cancel culture’, ‘political correctness’ and ‘wokeness’ have all been flagged up to denigrate academic research or argue that freedom of speech is under threat.

Using the notion *islamo-gauchisme*, the government is seen as attempting to interfere in academic discourse, and even silence anti-racist and post-colonial thought. When academic concepts become the object of public scrutiny and criticism, one may think that it is no innocent defence of academic freedom (Schubert, 2021). When such a thing happens, as it happened during the controversy on *islamo-gauchisme*, one may consider that it is part of a political agenda designed to discredit research that the government dislikes. The political power may indeed fear that its outputs will undermine its own discourse on class, gender or race-related issues. The irony is that post-colonial and de-colonial studies, race studies and intersectionality studies remain extremely marginal and underrated in French academia: only 2% of publications in French sociological journals have been devoted to those studies since the 1960s (Delaporte, 2021a).

In October 2020, Jean-Michel Blanquer, then minister of education, declared that antiracist intellectuals were ‘complicit’ in Samuel Paty’s murder. He accused them of ‘wreaking havoc’ in universities. He went as far as saying that those employing ‘ideas of intersectionality’ are ‘fragmenting’ French society and have ‘overlapping interests with Islamists’ (Aeschmann, De La Porte and Noyon, 2020). Few academics have spoken out in support of the government. Some have tentatively argued that since Islamophobia is considered by their peers as a scientific concept, why not accept that *islamo-gauchisme* also describes a social phenomenon? The notion should therefore be taken seriously (Raynaud, 2021). There is a big difference between the two terms though: Islamophobia may be an ‘emerging comparative concept in the social sciences’, and there may not be a ‘widely accepted definition’ of the notion yet (Bleich, 2011). This said, in articles and books or in conference panels, the concept has consistently been discussed and progressively accepted as a heuristic notion. The word is now used in academia to help describe a worldwide social phenomenon: it generally refers to ‘religious intolerance and anti-Islamic bigotry.’ It also defines ‘outright dread or hatred of Islam (...), social anxiety towards Islam and Muslim cultures’ (Husain, 2015). Conversely, the word *islamo-gauchisme* has not to date been accepted as a concept in the social sciences. The political controversy around the notion in France has led academics to debunk it. The CNRS and Conférence des présidents emphatically rejected the notion (Marlière, 2021b).

A minority group of academics has nonetheless supported the government. They initially expressed their support by publishing a tribune in *Le Monde* newspaper. The ‘Manifeste des 100’ (named after the 100 or so academics who signed the text) was published right after Samuel Paty’s murder and Jean-Michel Blanquer’s statement (Bouvet et al., 2020). The signatories are of the view that ‘*islamo-gauchisme* threatens’ French academia although they do not explain how it does so and the extent to which universities are affected by it. The article lists a mishmash of random concepts, notions, facts, authors and public personalities which allegedly embody the ‘*islamo-gauchiste* threat’ in academia: ‘indigenist, racist and decolonial ideologies’ (they stress that the latter originates from ‘American campuses’ as if this information would further discredit the notion); ‘the hatred of White people and of France’ ‘multicultural sermonizing’ and ‘Houria Bouteldja’. The mention of Bouteldja is interesting. She was the co-founder and spokesperson of the *Indigènes de la République* until 2020. *Indigènes de la République* is an antiracist organisation that turned into a political party. It aims to fight the ‘racist and colonial ideology which underpins the policies of the French state today’ (Bertrand, 2006). Bouteldja, a controversial personality in French political life (Corcuff, 2015), has been a ‘hate figure’ in republican and ‘anti-multiculturalist’ circles on the right but also on the left. Yet, Houria Bouteldja is no academic, she does not lecture at a university and her publications are not, per se, of an academic nature. It is surprising that some academics should credit her with an influence in academia which, clearly, she does not have.

All signatories are in senior positions in academia, some are retired. There are political scientists (Laurent Bouvet, Pascal Perrineau, Pierre-André Taguieff and Gilles Kepel), philosophers (Marcel Gauchet, Catherine Kintzler and Luc Ferry, a former education minister in a conservative government), a sociologist (Nathalie Heinich) and a historian (Pierre Nora, who is also a member of the French Academy).

An academic study has worked out the sociological characteristics of the full list of signatories (Estèves, 2022). Men are far more represented than women: 183 (71.5%) and 73 (28.5%). The average age of group members is 63.1 years old. The oldest member is Pierre Nora, who was 89 in 2021. The minority of academics which has taken the notion of ‘*islamo-gauchisme*’ seriously has plenty of time on its hands to write tribunes, set up ‘observatories of *islamo-gauchisme*’ and denigrate the research of their younger colleagues. The latter are often in precarious academic

positions and have heavy teaching and administrative loads. The question of spare time and availability has played a role in this controversial debate. Indeed, the minority, which had more time to spend on this public conversation, has been more vocal and more active than the majority. This is what Doug McAdam calls 'biographical availability' (McAdam, 1986).

What is more, this group of senior and well-known academics has benefitted from more media exposure than their younger colleagues under attack. C-News, but also *Le Figaro*, *Marianne*, *Le Point* and *Valeurs Actuelles*, have given them a platform to express their views (Estèves, 2022).

If there is a sub-field of academic struggle against *islamo-gauchisme*, this 'space of resistance' is small and rather unrepresentative of the academic field in general. Amongst the signatories of the 'Manifeste des 100', one finds many academics whose specialty is alien to the social sciences. Frédérique Vidal is a biochemist by training and Jean-Michel Blanquer is a law professor. Gilles Denis, lecturer at the University of Lille and the founding member of *Vigilance-Université*, an association set up to monitor *islamo-gauchisme* in academia, is an expert on the history and epistemology of vegetal pathology and farming sciences (Marlière, 2021c). Yet, those academics pass judgement on subjects that are remote from their field of expertise. Pierre Bourdieu argued that to understand how social actors position themselves in the field of class struggles, one has to locate their position in the class structure (Bourdieu, 1984). To understand why senior academics stigmatise intersectionality, gender and race studies, one has to understand that they denigrate a new sub-field in an expansion that they perceive as a threat to their own position in the academic field (Bouzelmat, 2019). Most of those senior academics come from disciplines in decline (Humanities) and are no longer research active. They reject subjects that they not only do not rate and dislike but that they above all do not understand. Those new subjects tackle and discuss racial and gender-related discrimination in society at large and in the private sphere. The signatories, as we saw it, are predominantly white, male and mature. They resent younger colleagues who are more entrepreneurial and who publish in English in peer-reviewed journals. To understand the meaning of this academic opposition, one may view it as an internal struggle for positions and recognition within the academic field (Estèves, 2022).

Together with the minister of higher education, academic critics contend that universities are 'gangrened by indigenist and racist ideologies' which are 'unscientific.' Those publications and this teaching allegedly represent a 'threat' to the students and the nation because they directly or indirectly support political and religious Islamism. They are 'unscientific' because this type of research is 'politically motivated' and 'ideologically-driven' (Roux and Shchukina, 2021).

Indeed, the academic minority which fights *islamo-gauchisme* inconsistently targets subjects and notions: gender and race studies, intersectionality ('the big three American imports' which are allegedly incompatible with France's republican universalism) but also 'cancel culture' and 'woke culture', 'hatred of White people', 'gender-inclusive pronouns' (Wagener, 2021a, 2021b) or 'freedom of expression'. Those accusations are vague and largely unsubstantiated. An academic colloquium organised at Sorbonne University in Paris was widely derided as 'fake academic conference'. The event was introduced by Jean-Michel Blanquer, minister of education and a main protagonist in the *islamo-gauchisme* controversy. Neither the background of most speakers, nor the content of their interventions, met the requirement of a rigorous piece of research delivered before academic peers (Delaporte and Goanec, 2022 and Fressoz, 2022). What is more, the 'Islamo-gauchisme threat' is characteristically fed by conspiracy theories (e.g. the collusion between academics and Islamic terrorists who are plotting against French democracy and its values). The accusations seem to boil down to a kind of 'cultural MacCarthyism' and an attempt to discredit left-wing academics (or perceived as such) (Roux and Shchukina, 2021).

'Woke culture' or 'wokism', presented as a coherent ideology, are terminologies that help define a newspeak inspired by 'Anglo-Saxon' theories: racialisation, 'anti-White racism' or

intersectionality. These concepts are allegedly illiberal and are presented as facilitating the dissemination of a racist discourse in academia (Wieviorka, 2022: 177–178). In fact, ‘wokism’ is not defined by its content but by its function: it aims to stigmatise and discredit colleagues, concepts and (political) opinions without having to engage with their work (Denis, 2021). It is used as a discursive instrument to distract from racial and gender discriminations, and delegitimize those who research those topics (Polcar, 2021; Wagener, 2021a, 2021b).

The debate on ‘wokism’ (which has largely supplanted the conversation on *islamo-gauchisme* from 2021 onward) is an avatar of a wider political attack on the left, its ideas and, by extension, academics who research discriminations and inequalities. The word ‘woke’ originated from Afro-American antiracist struggles in the 1950s. It had a positive connotation and referred to the political awakening of the Black community (Mirzaei, 2019). It is today used by conservatives across the world to disparage any form of research which identifies and discusses discriminations in relation to race or gender. The debate on ‘wokism’ may be seen as a kind of revival of the older controversy on ‘political correctness’ (Marlière, 2022). The ‘*islamo-gauchisme* controversy’ and ‘woke panic’ (a moral panic) may be understood as a wider ‘reactionary attack’ on the left in general (Mahoudeau, 2022).

A symptom of wider tensions

The *islamo-gauchisme* controversy was not restricted to academia. Despite being an unknown notion to the public, the debate was largely covered by mainstream media and commented on by politicians. The president and ministers were active in feeding the conversation at the risk of getting embroiled in endless controversies. The mainstreaming of the *islamo-gauchisme* debate coincided with the assassination of teacher Samuel Paty, but also with the reforming and reorganisation of the French university system (Lefauconnier, 2020). Commentators have pointed out that the *islamo-gauchisme* feud was a smokescreen for the higher education minister designed to divert attention from the traditional problems in French academia: an underpaid and understaffed workforce, poor working conditions, ineffective handling of the pandemic, students’ poverty (Rouget and Zerouali, 2021).

One can also appreciate the question from a wider political angle. *Islamo-gauchisme* alludes to terrorism and Islam, two thorny issues of late for French politicians (Dawes, 2020). If there is a cross-party consensus in France about the existence of an Islamic threat and the need to fight it (although there will be disagreements on how to fight it), the question of Islam and of the Muslim population has been a sensitive issue in French society over the past 50 years. Under Emmanuel Macron’s presidency, this issue has constantly remained in the news. On 28 October 2021, in response to the killing of Samuel Paty, the Senate introduced a new contentious provision that reads: ‘Academic freedom is exercised having regard to the values of the Republic’ (Lentin, 2020). This statement constitutes a direct interference with academic freedom and autonomy, but it also frames the debate in very political terms.

The whole *islamo-gauchisme* debate can be seen as further evidence of the right-wing drift of political debates which has been going on in France for the past decades. It is a symptom of wider tensions in French society: the transformation of the intellectual field, of the media and of political parties. It encapsulates the blurring of the old left-right divide in French politics and the cultural and political decline of left-wing ideas. During that time, the Front/Rassemblement National, a far-right party, has grown from being a marginal party to becoming the main parliamentary opposition to the current government (Matonti, 2021).

With President Macron's presidency, the shift to the right has continued. This was not a foregone conclusion when the young untested candidate was elected president in 2017 (Marlière, 2017). Earlier in his short political career, Macron had declared that he would be a pro-diversity president who would support inclusive values (Salvi, 2022). At a 2016 rally, he stated that 'no religion is a problem in France today', and that 'we have a duty to let everybody practice their religion with dignity' (Hanke Vela, 2016). Similarly, Macron expressed his opposition to banning hijabs in universities, arguing that 'personally, I do not believe we should be inventing new texts, new laws, new standards in order to hunt down veils at universities and go after people who wear religious symbols during field trips' (Le Figaro, 2021). Yet, in June 2020, a Macron collaborator acknowledged that a 'republican turn' had taken place. The president started embracing a hard-line republican narrative that over-emphasises the notions of universalism and national unity (Debono, 2020). This narrative dispenses with identifying the discrimination against minorities because, in the French Republic, all citizens are 'equal before the law'.

In November 2020, Emmanuel Macron asked the French Council of Muslim Worship (CFCM, created in 2003 under the Sarkozy presidency) to work with the government and come up with a 'Charter on republican values'. The bill was adopted by the National Assembly in August 2021. In the wake of several terrorist attacks, the charter is an attempt to tackle 'extremism' by fighting 'separatism' in French society (Khemilat, 2021). The document specifies that Islam in France is a religion and not a political movement and it marks the end of foreign involvement in French mosques. Imams are now to be accredited by a National Council of Imams. All associations were ordered to sign the charter as a condition to receive public funding. CFCM adopted the charter in January 2021. In March 2021, civil society organisations asked the European Commission to investigate France at the European Court of Justice over the charter. They argued that the document 'violates Muslims' rights to free speech and religious freedom' (MEE Staff, 2021).

In December 2020, the French National Assembly started discussing a bill aimed at tackling 'Islamist radicalism' and 'separatism'. The law was adopted by the parliament in February 2021 and is titled 'Strengthening Republican Values'. The new law contains constraining measures with regards to public freedoms such as restricting home-schooling, imposing hefty fines or imprisonment for 'threatening, violating or intimidating an elected official or a public sector employee', 'stricter financial controls on foreign money sent to religious organisations in France, closure of any place of worship for up to two months in order to stop hate preachers.' This legislation was compared by critics to a kind of 'Islamophobic witch-hunt'. (Syrah, 2021) In a televised address to the nation the day after a historic anti-racist march in June 2020, President Macron labelled the anti-racist demonstrators 'separatist' and 'communautaristes' (Couvellaire, 2020) – a very pejorative term implying that they reject the laws and traditions of the Republic and cultivate instead their own 'community-driven' values and lifestyles. In day-to-day political debates, the 'communautariste' tag is a tool used against minority groups (Muslims, notably) to disqualify them as 'real' or 'good' French citizens (Mohammed and Talpin, 2018). Macron celebrated 'republican patriotism' and 'republican order', expressions which traditionally pander to the French right and far right. The president's embrace of a hard-line republican narrative is part of a wider discussion. It is integrated into an ongoing debate about securitising immigration and Islam (Dück and Glassner, 2021), denying France's racial diversity (Mazouz, 2020) and the 'persistence of the colonial question' (Plenel, 2021), affirming a 'colourblind race-eliminativism' (Bessone, 2020a, 2020b), branding *laïcité* a 'Franco-centred value' (Bakir, 2019) and promoting a coercive interpretation of *laïcité* which departs from the liberal and inclusive spirit of the 1905 law (Marlière, 2020c). For having defended this liberal conception of *laïcité*, the Observatoire de la *laïcité*, an institution responsible for promoting *laïcité* to the public and in schools, was dissolved by the government in 2021. This

can be seen as further evidence that *laïcité* under the Macron presidency has increasingly been instrumentalised to meet coercive and illiberal objectives (Onishi and Méheut, 2021).

Both the ‘Charter on republican values’ and the ‘separatism’ bill should be understood in the context of developments that have been going on for quite a long time. They encapsulate the shrinking of the French public space with states of emergency coming one after the other (Hagueneau-Moizard, 2020) and now being complemented by the current situation (Platon, 2020). It is indeed hard to find evidence of ‘separatism’ in French society at large. In the same way as ‘islamo-gauchisme’ or ‘wokeism’, it is also hard to conclude its existence. Sociological research points on the contrary to ‘integrationist trends’ within French society (Dazey, 2019). If there is any ‘separatism’ in France, it is imagined and imposed from the top-down by political elites and the media (Geisser, 2021).

In February 2021, Gérald Darmanin, the interior minister, tried to outbid Marine Le Pen by being even more right-wing than the far-right leader herself on immigration. During a televised debate, he accused her of being ‘too soft on Islam’ (Salvi, 2021). He subsequently published a book titled: *Le Séparatisme islamiste: Manifeste pour la laïcité*, in which he argued that the Republic was ‘losing its transcendence’ by ‘losing faith in its universalist ideals’ (Darmanin, 2021).

Conclusion

The controversy on islamo-gauchisme and its avatars on ‘wokeism’ and ‘separatism’, have no theoretical or intellectual grounding. They have been manufactured by political actors and the media to literally act as ‘punitive spectacles’ which are part of ‘politics of repetition’ (Titley and Lentin, 2021: 298). They help securitise sensitive issues in French society, such as migration, Islam, *laïcité* and the ‘values of the Republic’. The frequent mention of republicanism in day-to-day public discourse implicitly expresses a form of nationalistic pride. Values and notions which were traditionally seen as progressive and were associated with republicanism (universalism, unity, *laïcité*) have now become discursive elements that shape a conservative and inward-looking political landscape (Marlière, 2020d). After defining the ideological horizon of the French left for decades, republicanism has arguably been kidnapped by the right and the far right (Escalona, 2021). The quarrel on islamogauchisme is part of an ongoing sequence of culture wars that targets an enemy within (Muslims and leftists) and an enemy outside (migrants and Islamic terrorists). It is the sign of an ‘Americanisation’ of French political life, that is, of the banalisation of far-right ideas and movements (Marlière, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c, 2021d). Islamo-gauchisme is an unsubstantial notion that operates as a political nudge in the public debate: it sounds sufficiently threatening and self-explanatory to be taken seriously. The controversy on islamo-gauchisme has helped mainstream illiberal and right-wing policies, to make them plainly acceptable to the public.

References

- Aeschimann E, De La Porte X and Noyon R (2020) “Thèses intersectionnelles: Blanquer vous explique tout mais n’a rien compris”. *L’Obs*. <https://www.nouvelobs.com/idees/20201026.OBS35242/theses-intersectionnelles-blanquer-vous-explique-tout-mais-n-a-rien-compris.html> (consulted on 2 September 2022).
- Ahmed S (2021) “Why islamo-leftism is just another conspiracy theory”. *LINKS. International Journal of Socialist Renewal*. 5 March. <http://links.org.au/islamo-leftism-conspiracy-theory> (consulted on 17 August 2022).
- Albertini D and Doucet D (2016) *La Fachosphère. Comment l’extrême droite remporte la bataille du net*. Paris: Flammarion.
- Babraj A (2021) “Orbán’s attacks on public universities as a preservation of power”. *Human Rights Pulse*. <https://www.humanrightspulse.com/mastercontentblog/orbns-attack-on-public-universities-as-a-preservation-of-power> (consulted on 1 September 2022).

- Bakir L (2019) “Réflexions autour de la laïcité axiologique”. *Revue du Droit des Religions* 8: 137–154.
- Bertrand R (2006) “La mise en cause(s) du fait colonial. Retour sur une controverse publique”. *Politique Africaine* 102(2): 28–49.
- Bessone M (2020a) “Antiracisme: la guerre des facts n’aura pas lieu”. *Hypothèses*. <https://academia.hypotheses.org/tag/emmanuel-macron/page/2> (consulted on 2 September 2022).
- Bessone M (2020b) “Racism and epistemologies of ignorance: Framing the French case”. *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 23: 815–829.
- Bleich E (2011) “What is Islamophobia and how much is there? Theorizing and measuring an emerging comparative”. *American Behavioral Scientist* 55(12): 1581–1600.
- Bourdieu P (1984) “Espace social et genèse social des classes”. *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* 52–53: 3–14.
- Bouvet L, et al. (2020) “Une centaine d’universitaires alertent: sur l’islamisme, ce qui nous menace, c’est la persistance du déni”. *Le Monde*. https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2020/10/31/une-centaine-d-universitaires-alertent-sur-l-islamisme-ce-qui-nous-menace-c-est-la-persistance-du-deni_6057989_3232.html (consulted on 18 August 2022).
- Bouzelmat I (2019) “Le sous-champ de la question raciale dans les sciences sociales”. *Mouvements*. <https://mouvements.info/le-sous-champ-de-la-question-raciale-dans-les-sciences-sociales-francaises/> (consulted on 8 September 2022).
- Bruckner P (2017) *Un racisme imaginaire*. Islamophobie et culpabilité. Paris: Grasset.
- Cassini S (2022) “Vincent Bolloré s’est taillé un ORTF de droite à sa main”. *Le Monde*. https://www.lemonde.fr/economie/article/2022/02/16/vincent-bollore-s-est-taille-un-ortf-privé-de-droite-a-sa-main_6113962_3234.html (consulted on 20 August 2022).
- Chavalarias D (2021) “Islamogauchisme: le piège de l’Alt-Right se referme sur la Macronie”. *Poliscope*. <https://politoscope.org/2021/02/islamogauchisme-le-piege-de-lalt-right-se-referme-sur-la-macronie/> (consulted on 26 August 2022).
- Chrisafis A (2021) “Popularity of far-right topics on France’s CNews sparks election concern”. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/28/popularity-far-right-topics-france-cnews-election-concern?utm_term=Autofeed&CMP=twt_gu&utm_medium&utm_source=Twitter (consulted on 20 August 2022).
- Clavey M (2021) “Frédérique Vidal annonce vouloir demander une enquête au CNRS sur l’islamo-gauchisme à l’université”. *The Sound of Science*. https://www.soundofscience.fr/2648?utm_medium (consulted on 18 August 2022).
- CNRS (2021) “Communiqué du Conseil Scientifique du CNRS”. 19 February. https://www.cnrs.fr/comitenational/cs/recommandations/19_fevrier_2021/CS-communique-declarations-ministre-islamo-gauchisme-19-02-2021.pdf (consulted on 19 January 2023).
- Conférence des Présidents d’Université (2021) “Islamogauchisme: stopper la confusion et les polémiques stériles”. *France Université*. <https://franceuniversites.fr/actualite/islamo-gauchisme-stopper-la-confusion-et-les-polemiques-steriles/> (consulted on 18 August 2022).
- Conseil Constitutionnel (1984) “Décision No83-165. Loi relative à l’enseignement supérieur”. <https://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/decision/1984/83165DC.htm> (consulted on 9 September 2022).
- Corcuff P (2015) “Indigènes de la République, pluralité des dominations et convergences des mouvements sociaux”. *Grand Angle*. <https://www.grand-angle-libertaire.net/indigenes-de-la-republique-pluralite-des-dominations-et-convergences-des-mouvements-sociaux-philippe-corcuff/> (consulted on 6 September 2022).
- Couvelaire L (2020) “Emmanuel Macron veut lutter contre les discriminations, mais refuse de déboulonner les statues”. *Le Monde*. https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2020/06/15/pour-emmanuel-macron-pas-question-de-deboulonner-les-statues_6042872_3224.html (consulted on 14 September 2022).
- Darmanin G (2021) *Le Séparatisme islamiste: Manifeste pour la laïcité*. Paris: Éditions de l’Observatoire.
- Dawes S (2020) “The Islamophobic witch-hunt of islamo-leftists in France”. *OpenDemocracy*. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/islamophobic-witch-hunt-islamo-leftists-france/> (consulted on 15 September 2022).
- Dazey M (2019) “Les conditions de production locale d’un Islam respectable”. *Genèses* 117(4): 74–93.
- Debono E (2020) “Avis de tempête sur l’universalisme”. *Le Monde*. <https://www.lemonde.fr/blog/antiracisme/2020/06/18/avis-de-tempete-sur-l-universalisme-2-7/> (consulted on 14 September 2022).

- Delaporte L (2021a) “En France, les recherches sur la question raciale restent marginales”. *Mediapart*. <https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/080221/en-france-les-recherches-sur-la-question-raciale-restent-marginales> (consulted on 9 September 2022).
- Delaporte L (2021b) “Islamisme-gauchisme: Vidal provoque la consternation chez les chercheurs”. *Mediapart*. https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2020/10/31/une-centaine-d-universitaires-alertent-sur-l-islamisme-ce-qui-nous-menace-c-est-la-persistence-du-deni_6057989_3232.html (consulted on 18 August 2022).
- Delaporte L and Goanec M (2022) “Un vrai-faux colloque à la Sorbonne pour mener le procès du wokisme”. *Mediapart*. <https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/080122/un-vrai-faux-colloque-la-sorbonne-pour-mener-le-proces-du-wokisme> (consulted on 8 September 2022).
- Denis V (2021) “L’agitation de la chimère wokisme ou l’empêchement du débat”. *AOC*. <https://aoc.media/opinion/2021/11/25/lagitation-de-la-chimere-wokisme-ou-lempechement-du-debat/> (consulted on 8 September 2022).
- Dück E and Glassner S (2021) “The enemy in my house: How right-wing populism radicalised the debate about citizenship in France”. In: Oswald M (ed) *The Palgrave Handbook on Populism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 629–648.
- Engelstad E and Kristjánsson M (2019) “The Return of Judeo-Bolshevism”. *Jacobin*. <https://jacobin.com/2019/02/antisemitism-judaism-bolsheviks-socialists-conspiracy-theories> (consulted on 16 August 2022).
- Escalona F (2021) “Un totem nommé République. Le rapt conservateur des principes républicains”. *Revue du crieur* 19: 6–29.
- Estèves O (2022) “Cartographier la vague réactionnaire dans les universités françaises”. *Mediapart*. <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/olivier-esteves/blog/140222/cartographier-la-vague-reactionnaire-dans-les-universites-francaises> (consulted on 7 September 2022).
- Fassin E and Ibois C (2021) “Ce qui (nous) arrive. L’anti-intellectualisme en campagne”. In: Fassin E and Ibois C (eds) *Défense et illustration des libertés académiques*. Paris: Le Club de Mediapart (e-book). <https://legs.cnrs.fr/dernieres-publications/defense-et-illustration-des-libertes-academiques-ebook/> (consulted on 18 August 2022).
- Faure S and Durupt F (2016) “Islamisme-gauchisme’, les origines d’un terme médiatique”. *Libération*. https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2016/04/14/islamo-gauchisme-aux-origines-d-une-expression-mediatique_1445857/ (consulted on 15 August 2022).
- Ford H (2017) *The International Jew*. New Delhi: Gyan Books (first published in 1920).
- Freedman M (1998) *Ideologies and Political Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fressoz J-B (2022) “Le colloque en Sorbonne adoube par Jean-Michel était à mille lieux des conventions universitaires”. *Le Monde*. https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2022/01/19/le-colloque-de-la-sorbonne-adoube-par-jean-michel-blancher-etait-a-mille-lieues-des-conventions-universitaires_6110055_3232.html (consulted on 8 September 2022).
- Friot M, Lemaire F and Perrenot P (2020) “Islamisme-gauchistes: une chasse aux sorcières médiatique”. *Acrimed*. <https://www.acrimed.org/islamo-gauchistes-une-chasse-aux-sorcieres> (consulted on 20 August 2022).
- Geisser V (2021) “Un séparatisme ‘venu d’en haut’. Rhétorique identitaire pour élites en mal de légitimité populaire”. *Migrations Société* 183(1): 3–15.
- Gerrits A (2009) *The Myth of Jewish Communism: A Historic Interpretation*. London: Peter Lang.
- Gontier S and Sénéjoux R (2020) “Comment CNews est devenu le Fox News français”. *Télérama*. <https://www.telerama.fr/television/comment-cnews-est-devenue-la-fox-news-francaise-6716083.php> (consulted on 18 August 2022).
- Gouteux B (2021) “Islamisme-gauchisme: l’offensive réussie de la Nouvelle Alt-droite française”. *Guerre Moderne*. <https://guerremoderne.com/islamo-gauchisme-loffensive-reussie-de-la-nouvelle-alt-droite-francaise/> (consulted on 22 August 2022).
- Hagueneau-Moizard C (2020) “Governing through fear in France. The pandemic, parliament and citizens’ rights in France”. *Verfassungsblog*. <https://verfassungsblog.de/governing-through-fear-in-france/> (consulted on 14 September 2022).
- Hajjat A (2020) “L’emprise de Valeurs Actuelles”, *Carnet de recherche Racisme*. <https://racismes.hypotheses.org/222> (consulted on 22 August 2022).

- Hajjat A and Mohammed M (2013) *Islamophobie. Comment les élites françaises fabriquent le problème musulman*. Paris: La Découverte.
- Hanke Vela J (2016) “Emmanuel Macron: No religion is a problem in France”. *Politico*. <https://www.politico.eu/article/emmanuel-macron-muslim-islam-no-religion-problem-in-france/> (consulted on 9 September 2022).
- Harman C (1994) “The Prophet and the Proletariat”. *International Socialism Journal* 64(2). <http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/isj64/harman.htm> (consulted on 16 August 2022).
- Hayat S (2020) “L’islamo-gauchisme: comment (ne) naît (pas) une idéologie”. *L’Obs*. <https://www.nouvelobs.com/idees/20201027.OBS35262/l-islamo-gauchisme-comment-ne-nait-pas-une-ideologie.html> (consulted on 16 August 2022).
- Heinemann J (2022) “What does academic freedom mean in practice? Why the Siouxsie Wiles and Shaun Hendy employment case matters”. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/what-does-academic-freedom-mean-in-practice-why-the-siouxsie-wiles-and-shaun-hendy-employment-case-matters-174695> (consulted on 1 September 2022).
- Houaix R (2017) “Qu’est-ce que cet islamo-gauchisme dont le camp Valls accuse Hamon?” *France 24*. <https://www.france24.com/fr/20170125-islamo-gauchisme-signification-manuel-valls-accuse-benoit-hamon-primaire> (consulted on 26 August 2022).
- Husain A (2015) “Islamophobia”, *Encyclopedia of Social Work*. <https://oxfordre.com/socialwork/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199975839.001.0001/acrefore-9780199975839-e-964> (consulted on 5 September 2022).
- Khemilat F (2021) “France’s new separatism law stigmatises minorities and could backfire badly”. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/frances-new-separatism-law-stigmatises-minorities-and-could-backfire-badly-162705> (consulted on 11 September 2022).
- Lefauconnier N (2020) “Parcoursup 2020: Tout ce que vous devez savoir”. *Le Monde*. https://www.lemonde.fr/campus/article/2020/01/22/parcoursup-2020-tout-ce-que-vous-devez-savoir_6026776_4401467.html (consulted on 9 September 2022).
- Le Figaro (2021) “Voile à l’université: Macron prend le contre-pieds de Valls”. *Le Figaro*. <https://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/2016/07/12/97001-20160712FILWWW00348-voile-a-l-universite-macron-prend-le-contre-pied-de-valls.php> (consulted on 9 September 2022).
- Le Névé S (2020) “Polémique après les propos de Jean-Michel Blanquer sur l’islamo-gauchisme à l’université”. *Le Monde*, 23 October. https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2020/10/23/polemique-apres-les-propos-de-jean-michel-blanquer-sur-l-islamo-gauchisme-a-l-universite_6057164_3224.html (consulted on 18 August 2022).
- Lenin VI (2012) *Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*. London: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform (first published in 1920).
- Lentin A (2020) “Open letter: The threat of academic authoritarianism – Solidarity with antiracist academics in France”. *OpenDemocracy*. https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/open-letter-the-threat-of-academic-authoritarianism-international-solidarity-with-antiracist-academics-in-france/?fbclid=IwAR03prVIzYaqlddsE01fvC5PYZHBueZ50gl2jTXIYfWdRkv54IHym39_3c (consulted on 9 September 2022).
- Losurdo D (2015) *War and Revolution. Rethinking the Twentieth Century*. London: Verso.
- Mahoudeau A (2002) *La Panique woke. Anatomie d’une offensive réactionnaire*. Paris: Textuel.
- Marlière P (2017) “French presidential candidate Emmanuel Macron’s ‘anti-system’ is a sham”. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jan/18/emmanuel-macron-anti-system-french-presidency> (consulted on 15 September 2022).
- Marlière P (2022) “Politiquement correct”. *Mediapart* 1 April. <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/abecedaire-des-savoirs-critiques/blog/010422/politiquement-correct> (consulted on 8 September 2022).
- Marlière P (2020a) “Islamo-gauchisme: un mot pour bastonner”. *L’Obs*. <https://www.nouvelobs.com/bibliobs/20201215.OBS37559/islamo-gauchisme-un-mot-pour-bastonner.html> (consulted on 17 August 2022).
- Marlière P (2020b) “Covid-19 and the surge of the anti-racist movement in France”. *PSA Blog*. <https://www.psa.ac.uk/psa/news/covid-19-and-surge-anti-racist-movement-france> (consulted on 18 August 2022).
- Marlière P (2020d) “Les ‘ennemis de la République’: le feuilleton de la France islamophobe”. *Middle East Eye*. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/fr/opinion-fr/france-ennemis-republique-islamophobie-musulmans-islamogauchistes> (consulted on 15 September 2022).

- Marlière P (2021a) “Éric Zemmour is no fascist He’s the creature of the political establishment”. *OpenDemocracy*. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/eric-zemmour-is-no-fascist-hes-the-creature-of-the-french-establishment/> (consulted on 20 August 2022).
- Marlière P (2021b) “Islamism: A word to smear and silence French academics”. *The New Arab*. <https://english.alaraby.co.uk/author/67587/philippe-marli%C3%A8re> (consulted on 5 September 2022).
- Marlière P (2021c) “La controverse sur l’islamo-gauchisme: un nationalisme universitaire”. In: Fassin E and Ibois C (eds) *Défense et illustration des libertés académiques*. Paris: Le Club de Mediapart (e-book). <https://legs.cnrs.fr/dernieres-publications/defense-et-illustration-des-libertes-academiques-ebook/> (consulted on 7 September 2022).
- Marlière P (2021d) “Guerres culturelles réactionnaires et ‘américanisation’ de la vie politique française”. *Middle East Eye*. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/fr/opinion-fr/france-guerres-culturelles-islam-musulmans-extreme-droite-macron> (consulted on 15 September 2022).
- Marlière P (2020c) “La laïcité, garante du pluralisme culturel et religieux”. In: Slaoui O and Le Cour Grandmaison O (eds) *Racismes de France*. Paris: La Découverte, pp. 339–353.
- Matonti F (2021) *Comment sommes-nous devenus réacs?* Paris: Fayard.
- Mazouz S (2020) *Race*. Paris: Anamosa.
- McAdam D (1986) “Recruitment to high-risk activism”. *American Journal of Sociology* 92(1): 64–90.
- MEE Staff (2021) “France: European Commission urged to investigate Paris over ‘imam charter’”. *Middle East Eye*. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/france-islam-imam-charter-european-commission-investigate-urged> (consulted on 14 September 2022).
- Mirzaei A (2019) “Where ‘woke’ came from and why marketers should think twice before jumping on the social activism bandwagon”. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/where-woke-came-from-and-why-marketers-should-think-twice-before-jumping-on-the-social-activism-bandwagon-122713> (consulted on 16 September 2022).
- Mohammed M and Talpin J (2018) *Communautarisme?* Paris: Seuil.
- Neffati I (2021) “Anti-sociologisme, Zionism, and Islamophobia in Philippe Val’s Charlie Hebdo”. *French Cultural Studies* 32(3): 280–295.
- Onishi N (2021) “Will American ideas tear France apart? Some of its leaders think so”. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/09/world/europe/france-threat-american-universities.html> (consulted on 18 August 2022).
- Onishi N and Méheut C (2021) “In a charged environment, France tackles its model of secularism”. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/20/world/europe/france-secularism-laicite-macron.html> (consulted on 9 October 2022).
- Peace T (2021) “Trois mythes sur l’islamo-gauchisme et l’altermondialisme”. *Mouvements*. <https://mouvements.info/trois-mythes-sur-l-islamo-gauchisme-et-laltermondialisme/> (consulted on 16 August 2022).
- Perrenot P (2020) “Chaînes d’info: l’extrême droite en croisière”. *Acrimed*. <https://www.acrimed.org/Chaines-d-info-l-extreme-droite-en-croisiere> (consulted on 22 August 2022).
- Perroud A (2020) “Academic freedom, the Republic and islamism-gauchisme”. *Verfassungblog on Matters Constitutional*. <https://verfassungsblog.de/academic-freedom-the-republic-and-islamism-leftism/> (consulted on 9 September 2022).
- Piketty, et al. (2021) “Islamism-gauchisme: nous, universitaires et chercheurs, demandons la démission de Frédérique Vidal”. *Le Monde*. https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2021/02/20/islamo-gauchisme-nous-universitaires-et-chercheurs-demandons-avec-force-la-demission-de-frederique-vidal_6070663_3232.html (consulted on 18 August 2022).
- Platon S (2020) “From one state of emergency to another. Emergency powers in France”. *Verfassungblog*. <https://verfassungsblog.de/from-one-state-of-emergency-to-another-emergency-powers-in-france/> (consulted on 14 September 2022).
- Plenel E (2021) “Refolement et persistance de la question coloniale”. *Mediapart*. <https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/culture-idees/151021/refoulement-et-persistance-de-la-question-coloniale> (consulted on 14 September 2022).
- Policar A (2021) “Le mot woke a été transformé en instrument d’occultation des discriminations raciales”. *Le Monde*. https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2021/12/28/alain-policar-le-mot-woke-a-ete-transforme-en-instrument-d-occultation-des-discriminations-raciales_6107535_3232.html (consulted on 8 September).

- Raynaud P (2021) "Islamogauchisme et islamophobie. Les mésaventures de la liberté académique". *Commentaire*, 2/174. <https://www.commentaire.fr/boutique/achat-d-articles/islamogauchisme-et-islamophobie-13465> (consulted on 3 September 2022).
- Rouget A and Zerouali K (2021) "Derrière la polémique sur l'islamo-gauchisme, la ministre Vidal plus isolée que jamais". *Mediapart*. <https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/220321/derriere-la-polemique-sur-l-islamo-gauchisme-la-ministre-vidal-isolee-comme-jamais> (consulted on 9 September 2022).
- Roux N and Shchukina V (2021) "L'islamo-gauchisme, une supercherie intellectuelle. Retour sur le Manifeste des 100". *Contretemps*. <https://www.contretemps.eu/islamo-gauchisme-manifeste-100-universite-vidal/> (consulted on 7 September 2022).
- Salvi E (2021) "Darmanin-Le Pen: un débat à front renversé". *Mediapart*. <https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/120221/darmanin-le-pen-un-debat-front-renverse> (consulted on 14 September 2022).
- Salvi E (2022) "Laïcité et 'wokisme': les métamorphoses d'Emmanuel Macron". *Mediapart*. <https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/310122/laicite-et-wokisme-les-metamorphoses-d-emmanuel-macron> (consulted on 14 September 2022).
- Schubert K (2021) "Defending plurality: Four reasons why we need to rethink academic freedom in Europe". *Henrich Böll Stiftung*. <https://eu.boell.org/en/2021/04/19/defending-plurality-four-reasons-why-we-need-rethink-academic-freedom-europe> (consulted on 2 September 2022).
- Smyrmaios N (2021) "Le rôle de la presse dans la diffusion du terme islamo-gauchisme". *Ephemerion*. <http://ephemerion.eu/2259> (consulted on 22 August 2022).
- Stromboni C (2020) "Comment Emmanuel Macron s'est aliéné le monde des sciences sociales". *Le Monde*. https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2020/06/30/comment-emmanuel-macron-s-est-alie-ne-le-monde-des-sciences-sociales_6044632_3224.html (consulted on 18 August 2022).
- Syrah L (2021) "Lutte contre le 'séparatisme': Un an de chasse aux sorcières". *Mediapart*. <https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/281021/lutte-contre-le-separatisme-un-de-chasse-aux-sorcieres> (consulted on 14 September 2022).
- Taguieff P-A (2002) *La Nouvelle Judéophobie*. Paris: Mille et Une Nuits.
- Taguieff P-A (2020) "Aux sources de l'islamo-gauchisme". *Libération*. https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2020/10/26/aux-sources-de-l-islamo-gauchisme_1803530/ (consulted on 26 August 2022).
- Titley G and Lentin A (2021) "Islamophobia, race and the attack on antiracism: Gavin Titley and Alana Lentin in conversation". *French Cultural Studies* 32(3): 296–310.
- Torrekens C (2020) "Le prolétariat et le prophète". *La Revue Nouvelle*. <https://www.revuenouvelle.be/islamo-gauchisme> (consulted on 16 August 2022).
- Wagener A (2021a) "Le wokisme ou l'import des paniques morales". *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/le-wokisme-ou-limport-des-paniques-morales-172803> (consulted on 8 September).
- Wagener A (2021b) "Tel: Itinéraire d'une polémique". *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/iel-itineraire-dune-polemique-172338> (consulted on 8 September 2022).
- Wieviorka M (2022) "Wokisme". In: Policar A, Mayer N and Corcuff P (eds) *Les mots qui fâchent. Contre le maccarthysme Intellectuel*. Paris: Éditions de l'Aube, pp. 177–182.
- Willsher K (2020) "Teacher decapitated in Paris named as Samuel Paty, 47". *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/17/teacher-decapitated-in-paris-named-as-samuel-paty-47> (consulted on 1 September 2022).
- Yildirim AK (2016) "Why Turkey's government is threatening academic freedom". *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/01/16/why-turkeys-growing-anti-intellectualism-is-a-threat-to-academic-freedom/> (consulted on 1 September 2022).

Author biography

Philippe Marlière is a professor of French and European politics at University College London. He researches the French Left and political ideologies. He is writing a book on the steady shift to the right of republicanism in France, from the French revolution until now, with an emphasis on the past 40 years. (To be published by Routledge)