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**INSTITUTO
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**Human Rights Violations on Post-Terrorist Attacks Situations: A
Comparison of France and the United Kingdom**

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Master in International Studies

Supervisor:

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CEI_ISCTE – University Institute of Lisbon

October 2021



**SOCIOLOGIA
E POLÍTICAS PÚBLICAS**

History Department

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Resumo

Este estudo é sobre como os ataques terroristas em Paris e no Reino Unido nos anos de 2015 a 2017 influenciaram a violação dos direitos humanos em comunidades muçulmanas, com um foco especial nas mulheres muçulmanas.

As políticas adotadas pelos governos e a especulação mediática em torno do Islamismo, criaram um ambiente propício para um aumento de ataques islamofóbicos nestes dois países e outros fatores, que restringiam estas comunidades de alguns dos seus direitos e liberdades fundamentais.

O objetivo desta dissertação é então perceber, através de entrevistas realizadas a vários indivíduos relacionados com a área, de que forma é que alguns destes direitos lhes foram sendo retirados, quais as políticas que mais influenciaram e qual o papel da sociedade como um todo neste fenómeno.

Palavras-chave: França; Reino Unido; islamofobia; direitos humanos; políticas governamentais; *media*.

Abstract

This study is about how the terrorist attacks in Paris and United Kingdom between 2015 and 2017 influenced the violation of human rights in Muslim communities, with a special focus in Muslim women.

The policies adopted by governments and the *media* speculation revolving in Islam created a fertile environment for a rise in Islamophobic attacks in these two countries, among other factors, which contributed for a restriction of fundamental rights and liberties in these communities.

The main objective of this dissertation is therefore, to understand, with the help of interviews with various individuals related to this area, in which way some of these rights were being retrieved and by which policies, and what was the role of the society as a whole in the phenomenon.

Keywords: France; United Kingdom; islamophobia; human rights; governmental policies; *media*.

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List of Abbreviations

UDHR – Universal Declaration of Human Rights

ACTSA - Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act

Chapter One - Introduction

Terrorism has been a highly debated concern in our modern world. Many policies have been adopted by different countries with different, but somewhat the same goals in mind. Since 9/11 that the “Global War on Terror”, proclaimed by former U.S President George W. Bush, has been in the agenda of many governments and has truly defined the way terrorism is perceived in so many countries. The actions led by the American government in particular in Afghanistan and Iraq, countries in which the majority of the population follows the Islamic religion, changed not only the way the general population and media look at terrorism but also at a particular group in question, namely the Muslims. However, we cannot generalize Muslims and fit them in a single group because there are different branches inside the Islamic religion. The two biggest ones are the Sunnis (the majority of the Muslim population fits into this category) and the Shias. This divergence occurred when a successor for Prophet Muhammad, the Caliph, was chosen and it wasn’t accepted by all parties. Even inside the Shias there are different sects: the Twelver Shiism, the Ismaili and the Zaydis, among others (Khalili, 2014).

The aim of this thesis is specifically to understand how the rights of several Muslim communities across Europe have been attacked over and over again, especially Muslim women. I will specifically focus on two countries and the consequences of two major attacks in Europe: France and the United Kingdom with a specific look at the Charlie Hebdo and the Bataclan attacks in January and November 2015. I believe this to be the best spatial and time sample (from 2015 to 2020) for this study since these two countries have the biggest Muslim communities in Europe and represent recent events of our society. One of the foremost key points of this study deals with Islamophobia: what it is and how it can happen; the relationship between the Islamic religion, governments and media, the wearing of the *hijab* or other Muslim garments, and how it affects in particular Muslim women, relating to the period just following major terrorist attacks in both countries.

The time frame chosen is due to being such a recent and relevant event in our current generations’ timeline. Most of my peers were children when the 9/11 attacks occurred but were already teenagers and young adults when the attacks in France happened. This has altered minds, opinions and even lifestyles.

Under the light of the exposed above I present my research questions for this study:

- How do the policies adopted by governments in the aftermath of terrorist attacks violate human rights?
- How do the policies adopted by governments in the aftermath of terrorist attacks violate Muslim's rights, and more specifically, Muslim women's rights?

Chapter Two - Methodology

“The scientific method is the most powerful tool for discovering truths about the world, explore new theories and perform their empirical validation. Therefore, scientific research is the process of performing systematic and intensive inquiries, which aims to discover and interpret the facts that are inserted in a certain reality” (Flanagan, 2013, as cited in Queirós et al., 2017, p. 370). There are two main branches when it comes to methodological research: qualitative and quantitative.

2.1. Research Design and Case Study

The chosen method for the investigation of this thesis is the qualitative research. “Qualitative research is not concerned with numerical representativity, but with the deepening of understanding a given problem. (...) The objective of the qualitative methodology is to produce in-depth and illustrative information in order to understand the various dimensions of the problem under analysis. Qualitative research is therefore concerned with aspects of reality that cannot be quantified, focusing on the understanding and explanation of the dynamics of social relations” (Queirós et al, 2017, p. 370). Taking into account the problematic and the research questions of this study, the most significant approach is the qualitative instead of the quantitative, since it is a matter that cannot be numerically quantified. It is a social matter with social dimensions.

The thesis will be divided into two types of sources: the first one will be based on secondary sources, constituting a theoretical background based on various articles and essays to define a basis of theory from where I can then start the practical research of this study. The second approach will be via four interviews conducted through the video software Zoom, being the four interviewees my primary sources. The participants are activists and/or researchers dealing with the matter of this study: two of them are from France and the others two from the United Kingdom. In this way, I have been able to study the differences between the two contexts, but also get more insight in each of nation’s policies since I have more than one sample from each country. The first contact with them was made via email directly to various Muslim organizations in France and then in the United Kingdom. The interviews, which took place

between April and July 2021, were recorded and later transcribed for the following analysis of this study.

Both of the French interviewees are human rights and Muslim rights' activists working with different organizations. As for the United Kingdom, the first interviewee is a Muslim university student, and the second interviewee is a Counterterrorism PhD researcher. To facilitate the comprehension of my results in the Analysis and Discussion chapter, I will name the interviewees in the following manner to maintain their anonymity: French Interviewee #1 (F1), French Interviewee #2 (F2), British Interviewee #1 (UK1) and British Interviewee #2 (UK2). There was a gender balance in my sample of interviewees: F1 and UK1 were both women and F2 and UK2 were both men. This allowed for different perspectives during the interview process.

The questions addressed throughout the interviews touched various topics, such as the living conditions for Muslim communities in these countries, the most problematic policies adopted in each country, and in particular the wearing of the headscarf in France and the high surveillance in Muslim neighborhoods in the UK. In addition to this, I have also focused on the differences that the communities noticed in governmental and civil behavior after the Charlie Hebdo and the Bataclan attacks, and the 2017 attacks in the United Kingdom, such as the London Bridge and the Manchester attacks.

2.2. Limitations

Due to the Covid19 pandemic that started in late 2019 and spread through the world during 2020, I observed many difficulties in finding participants for my dissertation. My case study contemplates two foreign European countries that closed their borders for various months, so I had to try and make contact through emails and social media. I contacted many organizations who closely worked with Muslims and the defense of Muslims' rights, and I also contacted influencers and activists via Facebook and Instagram.

I found it very difficult to find positive answers to my invitation, especially in France due to the language barrier. Looking for the United Kingdom, the biggest problem was not to get a positive answer but to have an answer at all, which is why I could not find human rights activists in the UK to participate in the study. I do, however, want to clarify that the input of the British

participants is equally valuable and relevant as the French one, especially when we look at how different the social scenario is in the two countries.

2.3. Ethical Considerations

Following the ethical rules of my University ISCTE-IUL, I gave a copy of the questions as well as the Informed Consent and the Debriefing files, to all the participants before each interview. The anonymity of the participants has been also guaranteed since no mention of their names or of their organizations is made during the process. The interviews were recorded under generic names (for example, French Interview #1) so I could easily identify them during the process of transcription without the violation of anonymity, after which they were deleted for safety and data protection. All of the documents can be found on the final Appendixes.

Chapter Three - Theoretical Background

The concepts of terrorism, religious fundamentalism and violent extremism have been highly debated. The most commonly accepted definition for religious fundamentalism is the following: “The belief that there is one set of religious teachings that clearly contains the fundamental, basic, intrinsic, essential, inerrant truth about humanity and deity; that this essential truth is fundamentally opposed by the forces of evil which must be vigorously fought; that this truth must be followed today according to the fundamental, unchangeable practices of the past; and that those who believe and follow these fundamental teachings have a special relationship with the deity” (Altemeyer and Hunsberger, 1992, as cited in Koopmans, 2014). Even though the concept appeared associated with Protestantism in the United States in the early twentieth century and can exist in any religion, it is a concept that nowadays is highly associated with Islam. Even though many scholars have suggested a direct correlation between fundamentalism and violent extremism, it is not correct since fundamentalism is purely a set of religious attitudes, norms and ideals (Koopmans, 2014). Also violent extremism is another concept that does not have a straight drawn definition yet but it can be seen as an “ideology or a viewpoint” that does not necessarily “reach the threshold for an act of terrorism” and “is purely the ideology that accepts and justifies the use of violence to reach a particular ideological goal” (Striegher, 2015, p. 76).

Concerns of when and why the next attack might occur consumes people’s lives with fear and apprehension towards a huge part of the population. Muslim communities have been the most affected with this fear growing inside societies due to a biased media representation of Islam and Muslim communities or governments’ discourse and rhetoric towards these communities. Because of this permanent fear from others, they suffer of many forms of Islamophobia: verbal and physical attacks, loss of fundamental freedoms supported and approved by governments, lack of opportunities in school and at the workplace. However, there is even a more specific group that suffers from such occurrences: Muslim Women. Since they can be easily identified due to their clothing, like the *hijab* or the *burqa*, they become a more “obvious” target for people to spot and to lead these attacks against them. This literary review will be divided into three parts: a more general overview, a case study of France and a case study of the United Kingdom. Due to the different political natures of these two countries and how they understand and accept their immigrant communities and particularly their Muslim

communities, it is important to analyze their peculiar realities before going further with the investigation.

Also, both countries have a colonial past, even though very different from each other, and they have received many immigrants from their former colonies. While France has a history in Northern Africa in countries such as Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria, UK was colonizing other parts of the world, in particular South Asia. Nowadays, the United Kingdom has a large number of communities from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The concept of the Muslim “other” is also very important to take into account in this study. Before mass immigration from these countries took place towards Western nations, the opposite occurred. Except in some very rare occasions at the time, the Europeans came into contact with the Muslim faith (after the solidification of Christianity as the main religion) with the beginning of colonization in Northern Africa and the Middle East and the crusades with the objective of converting foreign communities to the Christian religion. Before this, for example in Spain, the country “was ruled by Muslims. After the Christian monarchy regained their power, it became necessary to re-establish the dominance of Spanish monarchy. This meant creating Islam as a cultural “other” that did not fit amongst their desired hegemony” (Grosfoguel and Mielants, 2016, as cited in Stephenson, 2017). With the spread of colonization, this concept spread as well in an attempt of maintaining a Christian supremacy. This can also be understood under Edward Said’s theory of Orientalism: “a way to come to terms with Orient that is based on the Orient’s special place in Western experience” (Said, 1978, p. 1). According to Said (1978) as explained by Kerboua (2016) “the West – Europe and the United States – looks at the countries of the Orient through a lens that distorts the reality of those places and the people who live there” (p. 9).

In the light of 9/11 attacks, the concept of Orientalism took on another shape called neo-Orientalism. While it was appearing briefly during the 1990s, the attacks led by Al-Qaeda in the United States in September 2001 definitely allowed for a rapid growth of its ideals: “It is a feeling of apprehension, discomfort, and to some extent fear and hatred about all that deals with Islam and the Muslims. While it is true that violent extremist movements acting on behalf of their peculiar and distorted view of the Islamic faith are one of the sources of some apprehension towards Islam and Muslims, the problem is exacerbated by some ideological re-conceptualisations of Islam and the Muslim world. Those constructions originate from some limited right-wing circles within Western societies, mainly belonging to the neoconservative school of thought” (Kerboua, 2016, p. 22).

3.1. General Overview

For two decades now, Islam has been linked to terrorism in many contexts. After the 9/11 attacks, former US President George W. Bush proclaimed a Global War on Terror. “A major goal behind the US-led “Global War on Terror” is to “...disrupt and destroy terrorist organizations of global reach and attack their leadership” in order to prevent further attacks against the US and the West (The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, 2002, as cited in Kattelman, 2019). The subsequent strikes and invasions led by the United States in predominantly Muslim countries, such as Afghanistan and Iraq, influenced global politics, as well as our social perception towards Islam and Muslim peoples. Societies did not see a specific terrorist group being targeted but a whole country fueled by Islam. However, this linkage made by governments and also highly transmitted and broadcasted by media has come with a social and human cost: the fundamental rights of Muslim communities. Countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan were invaded with the publicized purpose (one of the many) of freeing people of tyrant regimes, claiming that such nations didn’t follow the worldwide acknowledged human and women’s rights (Mir-Hosseini, 2019). What was failed to be understood, however, was how such people would deal with or even accept that supposed liberation, which was not solicited. There was no consideration if the citizens felt trapped or violated.

In the West, countries such as the United States of America, France and United Kingdom among others, were strengthening their counterterrorism policies. The irony in this situation is that while Middle East countries were being invaded in the name of human rights, the policies adopted in national territory were going against those exact same rights: “(...) the threat of terrorism has been used to justify not only detentions, but also torture and extrajudicial killings” (Wolfendale, 2007, p. 75). As Wolfendale (2007) states, there are “two interrelated assumptions in the claim that basic civil and human rights must be sacrificed in order to fight the threat of terrorism” (p. 75). These two assumption are that terrorism is a greater threat and the second assumption is that the only way to effectively end this threat is to go over fundamental rights and civil liberties.

The threat of terrorism has led governments worldwide to protect the most basic essence of humanity: life. Not just life as we know it, with the liberties we all are used to, but just plain and simple life. That was seen in the political discourses of many politicians, such as the German Interior Minister Otto Schily, in 2001, when he stated that the government had an

obligation of guaranteeing security for all German citizens or the Australian Attorney-General Phillip Ruddock, in 2005, that claimed that the government had a basic responsibility of protecting human life (Wolfendale, 2007). Nevertheless, what these claims and obligations cause sometimes is the violation of fundamental rights to potential detainees and suspects of such crimes such as “infringements of civil liberties such as the right to privacy, the right to due process, and the right not to be detained without just cause” (Wolfendale, 2007, p. 76).

Following the aftermath of the Paris Attacks, many European countries have developed their counter-terrorism policies based on more surveillance and control with efforts coordinated between the nations, Europol and Eurojust. However, what we learned from such events was that more information and more data weren't enough to prevent them from happening, since one of the terrorists was already known to the French police. The question here is not the number of tools that are at disposal of actors but how are they have been used, if correctly or not. Also, the excessive usage of surveillance and intelligence instruments can appear as a legal problem once they are in direct conflict with fundamental rights of citizens, including right to freedom, right to movement or right to privacy (Bigo et al., 2015).

For example, in the United Kingdom, it was designed a counter terroristic legislation denominated the Terrorism Act 2000 and later the Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act 2001 (ACTSA). Under the Terrorism Act 2000, the definition for terrorism became a very ambiguous one, allowing for a much bigger scope of who could possibly be a terrorist suspect to police forces. The country adopted a control order approach, that would restrain citizens of their rights, such as the right to liberty or to assembly, not for what they did but for what they could have done. Later, under the “[...] Part IV of the Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act 2001 non-British citizens could be detained without trial” (Fenwick, 2008, p. 261), which went against the right of non-discrimination. According to Fenwick, all of the actions above led by the UK's government have created forms of alienation of the Muslim communities.

This alienation can lead to a very real threat to these communities: Islamophobia. Even though people perceive Islamophobia as phobia, as fear of Islam, there is not an agreed definition of the concept yet. Despite what the name says, Islamophobia is much more a form of racism, than of fear. “Islamophobic experiences may include a range of actions (including violence against property and persons, verbal abuse and micro-aggressions, demonization both common and expert) that seek to deny Muslim agency” (Sayyid, 2018, p. 423). It is the continuous practice of intolerance towards a specific group of people where not only the

concept of the religion is a problem, but it also takes into account the way these people behave, dress, talk or even sense their religion. Islamophobia is, in its essence, intolerance.

In this scope, women can become a much bigger target of this form of intolerance. This is due to the easy identification of such individuals. Because of their dressing and clothing habits, such as wearing a *hijab* or a *burqa*, Muslim women are easier to identify than Muslim men. And also because of this, they are victims more frequently of Islamophobic acts or anti-Islam legislation than men (Freedman, 2007).

Governments, politicians, western feminists and media, all state that the *hijab*, the headscarf that Muslim women wear to cover their hair, can be seen as a sign of repression of the patriarchal ideal towards Muslim women (Freedman, 2007; Kapur, 2002; Mir-Hosseini, 2019). However, it is important to differentiate the way the different actors operate this subject. Governments have the power to allow or to ban certain liberties, even the ones that could be considered untouchable by Human Rights charter, as it is the case of the ban of the *burqa* in France. At the time, French President Sarkozy claimed that the decision was made to “prevent a community “closing in on itself” and rejecting French values” (Edmunds, 2012, p. 1181-1182). In addition to this, there are western feminists claiming that a covered Muslim woman is an oppressed woman by men and that the abandonment of such clothing practices would mean their emancipation/liberalization of such (Kapur, 2002). “In France, the headscarf is interpreted through a post-feminist lens as an archaic manifestation of fundamentalist male authority over women, an interpretation that reinforces the racialisation of an immutable Muslim identity, fixed in the past (...)” (Rootham, 2014, p. 972). Lastly, the media has the capability of spreading this message and the perception that not only a veiled woman is an oppressed one but also that the veil is highly linked to terrorism. In some contexts, they are portrayed as “tools of Islamic organizations” (Freedman, 2007, p. 30) to infiltrate Western nations. However, what many studies have demonstrated is that most of the times the headscarf is used because the woman made the choice to use it, to wear it as a symbol of her own identity (Glapka, 2018). In her paper, *Veiled or veiling? – Turning back the gaze on the Western feminist. Understanding hijab from the socio-culturally located positions of knowing*, Glapka (2018) describes the many reasons girls and women make this choice. Their motives went from a form of commitment to their religion and themselves, a feeling of belonging and reassuring their identity, a form of resisting objectification or simply just because they liked it. None of the subjects of the study by Glapka (2018) wore it because they were being forced to it. So, when governments decide to ban the wearing of specific pieces of clothing linked to one

specific religion, “the impact on their human rights is still the same in that it takes away the right or freedom of a Muslim woman to choose for herself” (Othman, 2006, p. 342).

This form of discordance between Western feminists’ beliefs opposed to Muslim women’ ones led to a new concept: Islamic Feminism. The appearance of this concept came from an historical patriarchal tradition that is the Muslim culture and a discordance towards the rise of feminist speeches and what was praised by them, as stated in Ziba Mir-Hosseini's work (2018). The author defines this concept as “(...) feminist in its demands and yet took its legitimacy from Islam. (...) They found an ally in feminism, and they were intent on resisting patriarchal interpretations of Islam’s sacred texts” (p. 112). The concept of Islamic Feminism does not try to separate feminism from religion but instead it tries to extend the ideas of tolerance, social justice and gender equality from the *Qu’ran* into the scope of feminism, leaving behind some patriarchal ideals of Islam (Kynsilehto and Badran, 2008).

What Islamic Feminism tries to show is that Muslim women do not need salvation from the wicked forces of Islam by Western saviors, as it is commonly shown by feminists. As Lila Abu-Lughod explained in her work, *Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and its Others* (2002), “Projects of saving other women depend on and reinforce a sense of superiority by Westerners, a form of arrogance that deserves to be challenged. [...] As anthropologists, feminists, or concerned citizens, we should be wary of taking on the mantles of those 19th- century Christian missionary women who devoted their lives to saving their Muslim sisters” (p. 789).

Fatima Mernissi was another pioneer in bringing feminism into Muslim women’s lives as well as one of the firsts to come up with the concept of Islamic Feminism. She saw “Islam as possessing the tools of women’s empowerment rather than putting the brakes on it” (Ennaji, 2020, p. 9). “Her ultimate aim was to push back the walls of oppression and to press for freedom of expression and gender equality preferring to do so from within Islam in order to have a positive impact on the youth and public opinion in general” (Ennaji, 2020, p. 10). This shows the true intentions of Islamic Feminism: to push gender equality forward and to not discriminate women’s rights, values and freedoms all under the light of the Islamic religion.

3.2. France

In Europe, France was one of the most attacked nations in terms of Islamic terrorism in the last decade. Only in 2015, they suffered two major terrorist attacks: Charlie Hebdo in January and

the November attacks that spread all over city, with the Bataclan being the most well-known since it suffered the biggest number of mortal casualties. This led to a response in counterterrorism all over the European Union aiming at a coordinated policy and strategy against terrorism (Bigo et al., 2015). However, many of these policies specifically affected Muslim communities since they were the ones directly associated with the attacks, and fundamentalism or extremism in general.

Under this subject, there is a key word for France: *laïcité*. It is a hard concept to define since it is not a proper concept but more a set of guidelines. In its core, *laïcité* is the separation of religion and state (Nielson, 2020; Judaken, 2018; Najib and Hopkins, 2019; Tonneau, 2016). In France, the sense of the national and of the Republic are the most important notions and need to be preserved. “Over time, the scope of *laïcité* has expanded to potentially require the removal of all elements of religiosity from the public sphere” (Syed, 2017, p. 309). France is conducted by the assimilation model: “(...) usually perceived as being very rigid and known to reject any recognition of groups on an ethnic, cultural or religious basis, and in the worst case interprets such a consideration as a fig-leaf to racist intentions” (Ajala, 2014, p. 128).

However, this concept affects many people, especially Muslim women, throughout the country with its policies that follow this line of thought. The three biggest and most polemic ones are the following: the 2004 law that banned the Islamic *hijab* from state schools (Abu-Rabia, 2006), the 2010 Law that forbidden face concealment in public spaces, streets included (Joly, 2017), and in 2016 when many mayors in French cities following the Nice attacks “banned swimwear that ‘ostentatiously’ showed one’s religion” (Nielson, 2020, p. 631), aiming specifically at the *burkini*. In relation to the 2010 face concealment ban, it is important to note that “this law added a provision to the criminal code that makes it an offense to force a person to conceal their face, by threat, duress, coercion, abuse of authority or of office, on account of their gender,” reflecting the perception that familial and/or community pressure forces Muslim women to wear the veil” (Syed, 2017, p. 306). As already approached above, in many times it is not the case of pressure by family members or even by the community, but it is based on women’s choice. As it is possible to note in the above legislations, all these laws have a specific target: Muslim women and girls. “Islam is viewed by policy-makers and influential intellectuals as a barrier for Muslims’ attainment of the status of republican abstract individuality and also of that of a *laïque* (secular) subjectivity” (Rootham, 2014, p. 972).

It is important to take into account that all these measures have in common an impediment of choice. Women are not able to choose freely what they want to wear, how they want to

portray themselves to the outside world and can't publicly display their faith and religious beliefs. These laws go against the right of freedom (Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) and the right of freedom of religion (Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights), which declare:

- “Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status” (Article 2 of the UDHR);
- “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance” (Article 18 of the UDHR).

Women, and people in general, should be free to practice and live their religion the best possible way for them (as long as they do not affect the wellbeing of others). However, this perception of Muslims in France as the “other” or “Muslim other” and the assumptions made towards such communities highly manipulate the way these people get to live. There are many French women who are also Muslim (and it is important to present it in this order since in most of the bibliography used I learned that most women firstly identify themselves as French and then as Muslim, but always as both), that prevent themselves of going certain places in France out of fear of suffering from xenophobia or Islamophobia. According to a study made by Kawtar Najib and Peter Hopkins (2019) “(...) the majority of the women who participated in the research feel safer in familiar spaces and especially in their own neighbourhoods” (p. 105). In a curious note, some of the research subjects even stated that they are better treated in the more privileged areas, such as the Champs Élysées, because they are considered wealthy tourists. than in more suburban or residential areas (Najib and Hopkins, 2019).

Another important point is the access the Muslims girls and women have to equal education and employment:

- Everyone has the right to education (Article 26.1 of the UDHR):
- Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups (Article 26.2 of the UDHR).

- Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment (Article 23 of the UDHR).

In terms of education, we can address the 2004 *hijab* ban in public schools. According to the UDHR, everyone has the right to education without being discriminated due to their religion. When the French government imposes such a law, it states that these girls must choose between their religion and their education, when they both should coexist without questioning. In other workplaces, many Muslim women have also come forward with discrimination complaints over their choice of clothing directly linked to their religion. In the article *Veiled Muslim women's strategies in response to Islamophobia in Paris* by Kawtar Najib and Peter Hopkins (2019), many interviewees claimed that they felt they were disguising themselves when going to their workplace or to job interviews in order to be accepted. One subject explains how “veiled Muslim women usually find jobs where they are not exposed to the public such as in telemarketing where they are hidden behind a phone” (Najib and Hopkins, 2019, p. 108). In another study, *Embodying Islam and laïcité: young French Muslim women at work* by Esther Rootham (2014), the author presents an interviewee who was a teacher and that after the 2004 law ban prohibiting the headscarf in public schools had to make a choice between keeping her job or respecting her religion.

Another significant theme to tackle is the way French media perceive communities. In the essay *The Representation of Islam and Muslims in French Print Media Discourse: Le Monde and Le Figaro as Case Studies* by Abderrahim Ait Abdeslam (2019) is studied the link that the French media made between the words Islam and Muslim. Even though it does not exactly tackle the human rights perspective, its findings showed that these words were highly related to other negative concepts such as faith, radical, fundamentalism. In a state such as France that “[...] adopts the principle of *laïcité* which bans the wearing of ostensible religious symbols in public” (p. 570), the Muslim community is negatively associated with the country, as not being considered as true citizens (even the ones who were already born in French soil). Not only can this lead to a feeling of displacement from one’s own country, but also that they are not welcome and that the entire country is against them.

3.3. United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, the perspective towards Muslim communities and women in general is a bit different from what can be observed in France. While in the French context one of the biggest issues is the use of the headscarf or other religious symbols in the streets or other public places, in the UK there are clear discriminatory policies that easily allow for the detention and conviction of Muslim individuals. There are various key turning points in the way the United Kingdom faced terrorism threats: the 9/11 attacks (which had a global impact as it was already mentioned above), the July 2005 subway bombings in London and more recently the attacks on the Westminster bridge (March, 2017), the Manchester Arena bombings (May, 2017) and the London Bridge attacks (June, 2017). All of them have had a deep effect in counterterrorism policies as well as the perception of Muslim communities by the rest of the society (McKenna and Francis, 2018).

In *Proactive counter-terrorist strategies in conflict with human rights*, Fenwick (2008) conducted her study by focusing on the United Kingdom case, and in particular what types of counterterrorism measures were taken in the country and how did they violate human rights. “Where a response is largely police-based and accompanied by the view that political negotiation is not possible, partly due to the nature of the terrorist groups concerned, and the possibility of suicide bombing, a very significant rise in the adoption of authoritarian powers tends to occur in the state in question, placing a concomitant and continuing strain on human rights” (p. 259). Under the Terrorism Act 2000, the definition for terrorism became a very ambiguous one, allowing for a much bigger scope of who could possibly be a terrorist suspect to police forces. The country adopted a control order approach, that would restrain citizens of their rights, such as the right to liberty or to assembly, not for what they did but for what they could have done. Later, under the “[...] Part IV of the Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act 2001 (ACTSA) non-British citizens could be detained without trial” (p. 261), which went against the right of non-discrimination. According to the author, all these actions by the UK government could lead to an alienation of the Muslim communities pushing some of its citizens towards terrorist activities.

There were two other acts after the ones mentioned above: the 2006 Terrorism Act that created a whole new set of criminal offenses (Brown, 2010) and the 2008 Act that allowed for “stronger asset-freezing powers, post-charge questioning of terrorist suspects, additional

powers of entry over ‘controlled’ individuals, restrictions on those who have been convicted of terrorism-related offences after they’ve served their criminal sentences, and powers to direct financial institutions to act against terrorism” (Brown, 2010, p. 173). This has led to a higher perception of Muslims as the criminals and that the majority of Muslim people are radical and extremist.

All these Acts were created under the counter-terrorism strategies, CONTEST in 2003 and CONTEST 2 in 2006. Their main goal has been to prevent radicalization and terrorism by trying to prevent the radicalization of individuals, working with institutions and other public organs, reducing the country’s vulnerability (Brown, 2010; Qurashi, 2018). In 2015, under the new Counter-Terrorism and Security Act, the PREVENT strategy was presented and it “has been used to develop infrastructures of embedded surveillance in Muslim communities” (Qurashi, 2018, p. 2). What Qurashi states is that under the PREVENT Strategy, Islamophobia has been normalized by disseminating their assumptions and prejudices with other institutions involved in the process. “In the strategy, the problem of extremism and terrorism is closely tied to Muslims and Islam, so that the terror threat is regarded as an Islamic threat” (Qurashi, 2018, p. 3).

While the United Kingdom is regarded as much more multicultural and acceptant country than France, these counterterrorism measures and the way they specifically target Muslim communities have led to a wedge between the British society and the Muslim communities, even the ones that were already born in British soil (Ajala, 2014). For example, in 2012, a Muslim woman saw her brothers being linked to a possible attack on the London Stock Exchange. In order to better understand their accusations and the case that was being built against them, she downloaded various information and a copy of the *Inspire* magazine used to radicalize Western audiences. Later, on a police raid at her house, due to some suspicions against her husband, the copy of such magazine was found and she was prosecuted and brought into trial. Even though the judge saw her as a “good Muslim” and understood why she had the copy of such magazine, he still convicted her and applied a 12 month sentence. In this way, he could impose licensing restrictions on her as well as extra monitoring under the PREVENT strategy (Qureshi, 2015).

In this framework, how does it feel to be a Muslim woman in such contexts of fear and suspicion, specifically after the 2005 London Bombings and the 2015 attacks in Paris? According to a study made by Skaiste Liepyte and Kareena McAloney-Kocaman (2015), after the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris many Muslim women in the United Kingdom reported “(...)

significantly higher levels of Islamic religious practices and significantly higher discrimination than those who completed the survey prior to the attack” (p. 792).

In this sense, there is an occurrence of events, a cycle to take into account. Many Muslim young women in Britain, when raised, are told to be both British and Muslim and this is how they identify themselves: British-Muslim citizens. Both happening simultaneously and not separate and independent from each other. However, the rest of the society does not see them that way and acknowledges the Muslim first, and only after (if it occurs at all) the British identity. This can lead to various forms of Islamophobia which can, therefore, drive these young women to seek refuge in their religion and portray an image to the outside of more Muslim than British indeed, leading them once again to be perceived as even more Muslim (McKenna and Francis, 2018). For this endless cycle to be broken there would be a need for a “revolution”, a moment where these girls and young women stand for themselves and show the rest of the society that there is a way for them to be equally British and Muslim and that they cannot follow due to third parties’ behavior. However, it is important to note here that research has shown that Muslim women have a better success rate in integrating British society than Muslim men. This is due to their ability to better “interpret and apply the teachings of Islam in a confident, articulate and well-informed way and consequently have been able to transcend ethnic and cultural divides in relating to other Muslims and non-Muslims” (Abbas, 2007, p. 292).

In the UK, the usage of the veil, or the *hijab*, is not as a breaking point as it is in France, because it is not illegal to wear it in any place. However, as in most Western countries, also here it is seen as a sign of oppression and of obedience. Once again, due to its differentiation factor and easy identification factor, it also turns these women into more recognizable targets for Islamophobia attacks in the crowd. Young Muslim women in Britain still have to defend their choice and their right to choose, most importantly, some even against their parents or wearing them to better fit the profile of a British woman. (McKenna and Francis, 2018).

In terms of education, employment and social acceptance, the situation is similar to the one observed in France. “A recent report from the Social Mobility Commission on outcomes for young Muslims found that they face barriers, in comparison to their peers, in achieving social and economic outcomes through a lack of social, cultural and financial resources” (Thompson and Pihlaja, 2018, p. 1331). There is also a debate concerning the role of Muslim women in the British society. On one hand, while the customary for non-Muslim women is to seek education and employment and to be as independent as the man in the household, Muslim women believe

that they do not have to prove that they are less women or less independent because they choose to care for their home and their children on a full-time basis. “Muslim women argue that Islam presents women with a choice whether to remain housewives or to seek employment, whereas non-Muslim women are forced into (any) employment because their partners are not religiously obliged to support them” (Brown, 2006, p. 424). On the other hand, women who choose to pursue a higher level of education claim that they feel accepted in universities since it is a place that embraces diversity and multiculturalism, but they also understand that is something temporary and specifically restricted to the spatial area and, when coming out into the world, they will not share the same opportunities than other women (Thompson and Pihlaja, 2018).

Chapter Four - Analysis and Discussion

The subject of human rights is always a sensitive one and, more than ever, it is a current one when, every day on the news, we can hear testimonies of these being violated. The focus of this investigation is based on four major points directly correlated to the violation of human rights in Muslim communities in France and in the United Kingdom: Islamophobia, the relationship with the government and the media, the wearing of the *hijab* or other Muslim garment, and what has happened in the aftermath of major terrorist attacks in both countries. During my interviews, I also tackled other subjects, such as the role of schools and education, employment, and, when possible, a first-person perspective coming directly from the interviewees on the meaning of being a Muslim, and in particular a Muslim woman in France and in the United Kingdom in today's society.

4.1. Islamophobia

As mentioned above, Islamophobia is a form of intolerance and racism. For both France and the United Kingdom, Muslim communities are in its majority living in big cities, like Paris or London. This fact translates these territories into two opposite extremes of a tolerance spectrum: they are more open and tolerant because of its diversity of people, but also more intolerant and racist because of its diversity of people. There, we can find the best and the worst.

In France, Islamophobia exists in every sphere of the society. As F1 said: "intolerance and Islamophobia are still present in French society, it's still present in all spheres whether it be at work, in business, in public spaces, in private sphere, Islamophobia is rampant everywhere". She claimed that whenever she goes out, she needs to put on a certain expression to make sure no one acts or makes an intolerant comment towards her, which still happens most of the time. Even in public services that should be neutral and provide the same level of service for every citizen, there are cases of Islamic discrimination. F1 told about a case where a *hijabi* woman was refused medical attention by the doctor itself stating that they wouldn't "deal" with someone wearing the headscarf. F2 gave a similar answer saying that "there is indeed a worrying level of anti-Muslim attacks be it verbal, by the police or the systemic discrimination Muslims face". For both of them, Islamophobia comes from above, the governments and the

adopted policies that can be considered Islamophobic and those policies spread a sense of intolerance for the general population. The logic behind this is that, if the government portrays that intolerant rhetoric, then it must be for a reason. And it creates an openness, a space, that allows for a rise of Islamophobia.

In the United Kingdom, the answers to this subject were a little more positive than the French ones. UK1 told me that she feels that, because she lives in London, there is more openness to Islam and its culture than she would feel, maybe, going more into the countryside. Since London is such a big metropole and has a really diversified population: “At this moment it depends on where you speak about in the United Kingdom. I would say that London itself, where I am from is a very multicultural, very diverse, very open to Islam and other religions. In that aspect I can be very comfortable if I walk to the mosque. Even the teachers, you have Muslim teachers who are accepted. Is very dependent on the area, I would say”. However, despite not being so latent as it is in France, Islamophobia still does exist in the United Kingdom. UK2 mentioned that the NGO he works for still monitors and accompanies Islamophobic acts every day and that this is a trend that has been growing for the last five years, approximately: “There seems to be increasing intolerance and Islamophobia towards Muslim communities in the UK. Certainly, this is around the rise in discussion of British values, of Muslims being a security threat, this kind of weaponization on migration and its concerns”.

The concepts of national values as well as of colonial past and the Muslim “other” are intrinsically linked and are fundamental to better comprehend this subject. The idea of the Muslim “other” still has a big role on how Muslim communities are perceived by others, even if it is in a very subtle and unconscious way. The two ideas seem incompatible because if they are the “other”, they are not similar, they don’t share the same nationalistic values and therefore cannot coexist. This is worsened by the trends in politics and movements of far-right that have been growing in the last years. In the UK, “certainly there’s more of a nationalist discussion and it’s very kind of a right-wing nationalist discussion over Muslims, over identity. And while there was Islamophobia before, and racism and inequality, it does seem now to be brought together with a kind of turbo charge nationalist reaction in the UK” (UK2). Just like in France as well: “[...] what did we had in France under Nicholas Sarkozy? The grand debate on national identity, which became a national platform to voice and vent off any anti-Muslim sentiment. And people used that to further normalize Islamophobia and to turn Muslims into the enemy within” (F2).

The historical past also plays a big role in this nationalist feeling. Both France and the United Kingdom had colonies: most of French colonies were in North Africa and the UK had a heavy presence in Southeast Asia where big Muslim communities exist. Nowadays, many of the immigrants in these two European countries are from former colonies, such as Algerian, Moroccan and Tunisian immigrants in France, and Bangladeshi and Pakistani in the United Kingdom. The rise of Muslim immigrants sparked the distance and differences between the two cultures, increasing and worsening accounts of Islamophobic acts, as F1 defended: “The very current situation in France has absolutely to do with its past, its colonial past. You can’t disassociate the colonial past of France with the current situation in France and its current behavior”.

Based on the testimonies from these four interviewees we can conclude that Islamophobia is still very present in these countries’ society, and, at some point, it even increased and worsened for Muslim communities. This increase was fed by many factors, one of them the terrorist attacks observed in France and in the United Kingdom, something that will be deeply explored ahead. The rise of far-right parties in both countries, along with its rhetoric, has also helped spreading this hateful type of speech and attitudes. London is shown to be somewhat more tolerant than Paris, something that was already theorized before, but nevertheless it still has problems of racist and Islamophobic acts.

4.2. The Relationship with the Government and the Media

Ever since the proclamation of the Global War on Terror, the Muslim faith has been in the scope of many governments and policies. There was always a slight tendency, both in France and in the United Kingdom, to strengthen the laws that would pertain to Muslim communities in comparison to other ethnic or minority groups in the country, even if those laws were violating certain human rights. However, to better understand the relation of each government to its Muslim community it is important to understand the different policies and approaches. French government’s policies lay on a more social basis, such as the concept of *laïcité* and the maintenance of balance between politics and religion, whereas British policies have been much more strategic and military, such as high levels of securitization in the country, specifically in Muslim neighborhoods.

In France, the concept of *laïcité* is central to its politics and everyday life, as it was already explained in the chapter regarding the theoretical background. F1 explained its meaning in the following form: “The secular republic, the republic based on *laïcité*, it rests on four pillars. The first one is freedom. According to this pillar, citizens are free to believe or not to believe, they are free to exchange their religion if they wish, they are free to not have any religion at all, free to express their religion at home but also in the public space within the limits of respect for public order. The second pillar of *laïcité* is the separation of the church and the state, religion and government. So, religion does not intervene in the management of the state and the state does not intervene in the management of religion. (...) The third principle of *laïcité* is the neutrality of the state. Basically, in France, civil servants cannot wear religious signs. The fourth principle of *laïcité* is equality. All citizens are equal before the law and before the public services regardless of their religion. We see that secularism in its purest definition is a law which protects religions, Islam and allows French citizens to practice freely their religion”.

However, while the concept in its essence is precisely what should happen for the balanced existence of an equal society between religion and politics, it is not always the observed case, as F2 stated: “The ones using *laïcité* are the ones who want to deny the right of Muslims to exist as such, to exist as citizens, to exist in the public sphere, to organize their cultural and religious events and they rig the game in order to make *laïcité* anti-Muslim”. Taking the second pillar, the separation of church and state, we already were able to observe that sometimes that pillar is broken, taking for example the banning of the *hijab* and the *burqa*. These laws not only went against one of the principles of *laïcité*, but they also go against the right to freedom and right to freedom of religion according to the UDHR.

Another example of a violation of the second pillar of *laïcité* was explained during my interview with F1. As she said, “the Charter of Islam is a document drafted by the government to describe what should be Islam in France and it was completely Islamophobic. They wanted the CFCM (French Council of the Muslim Faith) to sign this charter and in this document, they want to create an Islam of France [...] Here, we are in the second pillar of *laïcité* which implies the separation of church and the state and now we are in a context where the government imposes a Charter to Islam, to a specific religion, where a government intervenes in the management of a religion”. This Charter of Islam, or Charter of Principles, was in negotiation between the French government and the CFCM and it was finalized earlier this year, in January 2021. The main goal of this Charter is to remove any political agenda from Islam (which lines up with the principle of *laïcité*) as well as to create an Islam that aligns with French values and

rules. However, the manner this Charter was built violated the exact same principle that now forbids, and that was always in the essence of the Republic of France.

In the United Kingdom, the adopted laws were always in a much more security perspective, such as the Terrorism Act, the Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act and others, under the CONTEST and PREVENT strategies. Their vision was much more about fighting and preventing terrorism, with PREVENT being the strategy that is nowadays mostly in place in the UK. When UK2 was asked about the relationship of Islam with the country, the answer gave by the interviewee was under the light of these policies: “It has often been in recent years quite an antagonistic relationship from the governments towards Muslim communities partly, as it’s highlighted in this question, following 2001 and 2005 and the development of the War on Terror and PREVENT and subsequent counter extremism policies. There has been a tendency to frame Islam from a security perspective. So, certain elements of Muslim identity, Muslim practice have been continued to be framed as linked to more likely to be linked to terrorism”. According to UK2, the rise of a right-wing government also increased the gap between the government and its Muslim communities: “I think we continue to have the securitization of Islam since 2001 and 2005 and it’s now being coupled with this reactionary identity of the right and of the right-wing government which has framed Muslims as generally being in opposition to the British values, or at least some elements of the Muslim identity”.

The relationship with the media is also biased when it comes to Muslim communities. From the theoretical background, we understood the way through which the media related Islam to some negative concepts, such as extremism and radicalization. This linkage is not only heavily broadcasted in Western societies but is also influenced by the information passed through governments and politicians. Both parts play a role in recurrently associating Islam to many suspicions of terrorist attacks, as F1 stated when we were talking precisely about this topic: “They are putting in practice every day by portraying the whole Muslim community as a representative of extremism Islam or of radicalization, terrorism and so on... They are convincing people; they are convincing the French society and the international community too that the Muslims in general have to apologize for the crimes that are committed on the name of God. And they are creating this eternal amalgam between Islam and terrorism, Muslims and terrorists and it’s a conflation that is being created on purpose by the governments. [...] But in general, on an individual level, if you take the full, the ones who only document themselves through the media it is so easy for them to trust the government and to have the same rhetoric

as the governments. Meaning that the Muslims are the villains, the Muslims are the dangerous people in our community, and we have to ostracize them from the rest of the community”.

In addition to this, the media is quick to condemn a Muslim by a terrorist attack, but it does not attempt to explain why such attack happened, as they do, on the contrary, in a situation led by a non-Muslim attacker: “In April of this year [2021], a person from Tunisia who was an immigrant, he killed a police officer in France. They said it was a terrorist attack and they put the burden on the entire Muslim community, like usually, to create this amalgam between religion and terrorism. Later, it was proved that this person was mentally ill, he was in a mental institution, and they wouldn’t retain the argument that this person is just mentally unstable. But whenever it happens in a mosque, when a white person targets a mosque and kills people, as long as they find he has a record on a mental institution, it’s no longer a terrorist attack” (F1).

F2, from another perspective, explained how the French government and media have used Islam and Muslims as a scapegoat to divert the attention of the society from various internal social issues, introducing the concept of Islamodiversion: “In 2003 we had millions of people marching in the streets against the Jean Pierre Raffarin pension reforms. What was the main topic covered by the media: the Muslim headscarf. [...] And that influenced public opinion in order to switch from being neutral to being against it. In 2009 we are in the midst of the economic crisis. What do we have in France under Nicholas Sarkozy? The grand debate on national identity, which became a national platform to voice and vent off any anti-Muslim sentiment. And people used that to further normalize Islamophobia and to turn Muslims into the enemy within. In 2010 we the infamous pension reforms, a new one. What made the headlines? The full-face veil and they passed the law against 367 women, according to domestic intelligence. So, that law was passed against less than four hundred women, but no law was passed against tax evasion, against corruption, against the destruction of the environment, gender violence, etc.”.

Not only the media is influenced by the governments, it also does not give a voice to Muslim communities through the mainstream channels, as it was exemplified by both F2 and UK1. F2 gave the example of a book presentation called *An Imaginary Racism: Islamophobia and Guilt* written by a French author. At the time, the author was invited to a TV channel to talk about the book and spark a debate; however, no Muslim counterpart was invited to participate in the discussion directly related to the Muslim community. Another example was given by UK1: “Growing up I would see a lot more negative stuff than positive stuff about us. Even if it is positive, it will be not in the mainstream BBC media that’s across the UK. It would

be on this station that we have, BBC Asia Network, so just for the Asian communities to see that, “Oh, this are the Muslims that did good work”. But why are you not showing that in the mainstream BBC news where everyone can see that, not just our community? So then, the same way you are showing everyone the bad or what we’ve done that it wrong, show the other people who also done that you are trying to dilute in minority channels, if that makes sense”.

As based on these testimonies, we can assume that the political system and the media coverage is rigged against the Muslim communities. It is clear that there is a strategy to turn Islam into the inside enemy, the problem within society and, therefore, it should be handled as such, whether it be through the political discourse, through Islamodiversion and with the help of media and news outlets.

4.3. The Wearing of the Hijab or Other Muslim Garments

I want to clarify before starting the discussion on this topic that for this dissertation I did interview *hijabi* women, but I reassured them that they didn’t need to answer anything that made them feel uncomfortable, even at the slightest level.

The *hijab* can perhaps be considered the most sensitive topic in this matter, since the choice of wearing or not wearing it (being it the *hijab* or any other Muslim piece of clothing) is personal and individual. For many who have a Western point of view on this subject, there is this assumption that any Muslim woman who wears it does it because she is being forced by a family member, usually a man like a brother, a husband or a father. Nevertheless, what I discovered from my previous research, and was reinforced with these interviews, is that it is the complete opposite. Not only were the women I interviewed not forced, one of them even had to defend her choice of wanting to wear it.

In France, there were many banishments of Muslim garments since the beginning of the millennium: in 2004 when *hijabs* were forbidden in state schools, in 2010 when full face concealment was forbidden in public spaces and in 2016 when the burkinis were also forbidden in many French cities. This last political action was taken following the terrorist attack in Nice in that same year, as I present it in the theoretical background. As F2 stated, the conversation surrounding the *hijab* and the full-face concealment has been used as a diversion, a way to divert attention from more pressing social problems, such as pension reforms or economic

crisis. Also, in the beginning of the present year, in April 2021, following the Charter of Islam/Separatism Bill, the French Senate passed an amendment that, if passed by the National Assembly, will forbid girls under 18 from wearing the *hijab*. All of these banishments pertaining to a religious piece of clothing that the choice to wear or not wear it should solely recall on the ones wearing it. These decisions are strictly against fundamental rights, such as the right to freedom of religion and expression. Not only do these laws violate basic human rights, they are declared to being put in practice as a way of defending gender equality, when equality is to allow anyone to dress and wear what they choose to, and not what is chosen by them. By doing that, the government is precisely exercising the power that they condemn Muslim men of doing.

Both F1 and F2 defend that the relationship between France and the *hijab* has more to do also with its colonial past, the need to colonize and overpower the colonized, and the diversion of more pressing social issues than the need of turning France a more equal nation in gender terms. “And when we prove them that this particular woman has no father, brother or husband and still wears the *hijab* and still is completely free and goes out with her friends and go to the university? [...] It’s simply a way to draw attention towards Islam once more and to divert the attention of French citizens from the real issues like corruption in the French government, sexual scandals, etc. [...] In reality, terms like oppression, only translates the willingness, according to me, to go on with their colonial mission because France never accepted its defeat in Algeria. The very current situation in France has absolutely to do with its past, its colonial past. You can’t disassociate the colonial past of France with the current situation in France and its current behavior. By using words like oppression and the submission of women they are just trying to go on with their colonial mission, their civilizing mission” (F1). Always on this, “there is a national fantasy from many French people to uncover the Muslim woman because they want to see the former colonized in her intimacy. And what they don’t like is that she can see without being seen. Of course, she wears a full-face veil. Remember that in the colonies, in Algeria, the French government used to organize celebrations where indigenous women were brought on stage, and they would remove their headscarves” (F2).

In the UK, while this topic is not as polemic and sensitive as it is in France, it still does gather a lot of debate. As I explained in the theoretical background, Muslim women in the United Kingdom feel that they need to make a choice between being British and being Muslim, or even to find a balance between both to be able to present themselves without any of their identities being questioned. Part of this choice has to do with wearing, or not wearing, the *hijab*

or other piece of clothing linked to Islam. UK1 told me how she started wearing the *hijab* shortly before or after (she could not remember precisely) the Charlie Hebdo attacks, and how she had to defend her choice to her parents: “Two weeks before or after the Charlie Hebdo attacks, I had started wearing the *hijab*, so it was very fresh. I felt it most at the Charlie Hebdo attacks, with both actually, but because I made the big decision to wear the *hijab*, I was just focusing on what they [the media and politicians] were saying this about us. When my dad of found that I was wearing the *hijab* he said that I shouldn’t be wearing it at that time because of what was going on. [...] Like, some of my cousins ask why do I wear this or that. And that may just be, even though there Muslims as well, may just be the British side to it. I think the British identity does play into it because we’re right in the middle of it”.

However, due to the relationship that is still made today between Islam and terrorism, there is also a linkage of someone who wears the hijab or is more religious or follows more deeply some Islamic traditions, that they somehow may have an extremist point of view. This is something that both UK1 and UK2 agreed upon: “If you see a young person engaging more in traditional Islam, in certain aspects or tradition worship, and that is kind of out of the norm for them, then it’s implied that this is something to be worried about, this is some kind of security concern that may ultimately lead to terrorism” (UK2).

UK1 also told me about a friend who decided to dress more religiously, and, as a consequence, she was reported by her mother and was watched by teachers with more attention than her colleagues, they were afraid that she could be gaining a more extremist view on Islam: “My friend, at the same time I wore the *hijab* [...] she transitioned to wearing the *gilbab*, another type of Islamic clothing. So, we were 15 or 16 around that time and it was this huge difference, because she went from being this fashionista to dressing Islamically and using her own free will to become more religious. But her mom was the one who turned her in. She went through surveillance and a lot of teachers were conscious of her. Even though we always knew as her friends, there are teachers who are trained to ask certain questions and because she jumped from full makeup to no makeup at all, she wanted to be more religious and that was pure innocence, it was her choice. It was more suspicious to them and she had a PREVENT Officer or another *hijabi* sister who was older than us to see if she did have extremist views. But we knew, because she was our friend, she never did wanted to do that” (UK1).

4.4. Before and After: Comparison Relating to Major Terrorist Attacks in France and the UK

The main period of investigation for this study is between 2015 and 2020, a time frame that includes a few major terrorist attacks in France and in the United Kingdom. In France, there were the Charlie Hebdo attacks in January 2015 and the Bataclan attacks in November of the same year. In the United Kingdom, I will be referring to the attacks in the Westminster Bridge, on the Manchester Arena and on the London Bridge, all of which occurred during 2017. There were other attacks in these two countries, both before and after the ones mentioned above, but these represented the ones that were more debated and broadcasted in the media. Specifically, the attacks in France paved the way for a new counter-terrorism perspective and a whole new set of policies throughout the European Union. When conducting the interviews, I tried to first understand what were the life and social conditions of Muslim communities prior to these attacks, so that when I asked how things changed in the light of these events, I could better understand the differences at every point.

F1 was the first to tell me how was living during that period, especially right after the attacks in France, during the State of Emergency: “What is important is to understand what happened to Muslims during the state of emergency. Those measures have caused and continue to cause collateral damage to Muslims in particular. We noticed psychological, traumatic, financial and physical consequences felt by both adults and children. In France, during the state of emergency in 2015, the [NGO] recorded a large increase in Islamophobia compared to previous years because the Muslims were, and still are, considered a national threat. This precedent has been set by the media, by political figures in their daily speeches. We recorded a large amount of house arrests of systematic searches without warrants. The police would go in mosques or houses of people suspected of radicalization without a warrant”.

She also described how the attacks created a society of surveillance where one monitors the other, and how they highly increased the number of raids in Muslim households and violent attacks of Islamophobia: “In France, from 2015 it is a society of vigilance meaning that everyone is called to monitor everyone and to denounce everyone if they think they could be radicalized. And there have been speeches from the government describing what a radicalized person. Within the description of the government, you have the absolute regular Muslim. They would describe the radicalized person as a regular practicing Muslim. So, it was very confusing

for the society, because you have from the government a description of radicalization and then you look at your neighbor, he's Muslim, he wears a beard and she wears the hijab and she prays or he goes to the mosque and at the same time you have the government saying that those people are potentially radicalized. And if you see them, you have to denounce them and fill a denounce. And then, because you filled the denounce, those people would be searched at 6am, door destroyed, pulled at gun point, physically violented, children traumatized because you are in a society where the government said that we are clearly in a society of vigilance. People have to monitor and denounce people. This is the kind of process that led to these abuses, to those high numbers of raids”.

Apart from these examples, she also explained how an internet search of *fatwa* could lead to police raids. Also, in the mosques, the *Imams* had to be very carefully of what they said or how they said it because if someone in the government understood the speech as problematic, the mosque could be closed down and the *Imam* could be sent to his country of origin. All of these examples are clear cases of violations of human rights, in particular the right to freedom, to privacy, freedom of speech, religious freedom. “Those measures were no longer exceptional. In the beginning there was the state of emergency but now it has been enshrined in common law. It is very problematic because it is violation of rights, a constant one, but now it's authorized by the law. [...] Those counter terrorism policies were not efficient at all, they were very discriminating, violating, freedom destroying” (F1).

The analysis given by F2 was very similar to the one given by F1. The State of Emergency, a situation that should be an exception and only temporary, has turned into the permanent reality in France, with devastating consequences for Muslims' communities and neighborhoods: “After 2015 there was an open war against Muslims. Remember, the State of Emergency. Over 4000 raids ordered, 99% of them targeting Muslim families. And we saw the brutality of those raids. Ran sacked mosques, people sitting in restaurants and seeing the police intervene, Muslim homes being ran sacked, children being terrorized by the police. We're talking about families that broke apart because the wife was traumatized and she ran away, humiliated mothers and fathers. And that state of emergency has become permanent. What we saw is that there was a sense that they were still trying to conceal Islamophobia. Now, it became official, because there were indeed the other attacks, Mohamed Merah, we had other attacks in Madrid and London and 9/11 before that, but after 2015 it became an official state sponsored retaliation against Muslims”.

What it is possible to observe from the the responses given by the two French interviewees is that indeed the State of Emergency became the new normal for Muslim communities and that is now the reality they have to live in. A society of surveillance by the neighbors, where the right of religious freedom can also mean a potential raid to someone's house. What can happen is either the religion is freely practiced by an individual, resulting in him or her living in a state of permanent fear for a potential denounce, or they restrict their religious practices, something that should be assured by a fundamental human right, in order to be able to live a life without as much fear of the police forces or the government. These religious restrictions can include many things, such as: not going to the mosque as often as one would desire, women not wearing the *hijab* or other Muslim garment in fear of being judged. Not only this, but instances of Islamophobia have also increased significantly in the country after the attacks, fuelled by the rhetoric used by the government, political parties and media.

In the United Kingdom, the discrepancy of social behaviors towards Muslim communities has been not as evident as the one observed in France. The real difference has been in police and security measures. The most problematic question towards Muslim communities has regarded the level of securitization in Muslim's neighborhoods. After the 9/11 attacks and 2005 subway bombings, the government adopted a large number of counter acting and preventing terrorist attacks policies, as it was explained in detail in the theoretical background. These measures had a huge impact on how Muslim communities were perceived in the United Kingdom, which were later reinforced by the rhetoric used by far-right parties in the country. A big debate concerning the national/British identity versus the religious identity was always, and continues to be the center of the discussion.

UK2, who has a heavy background on studying counter terrorism policies in the United Kingdom, gave me a quite complete answer to this theme. As he said, "when it came to the Charlie Hebdo attacks, the Manchester Arena bombing and some of the London Bridge attacks in 2019 for instances, it shifted the debate a little bit more or even further onto values. So, there's been a huge rise on focusing on extremism, counter extremism, countering values, making sure the values are in line with national values or European values, essentially kind of Western/Christian/Liberal/Democratic values. Which wasn't really so much there before, but it was catalyst for this focus on extremism. It pulled the lens even wider as to what constitutes a security threat. So, before kind of 2015, there was lots of focus on terrorism and War on Terror, the rise of ISIS was coming into view, concerns about Al Qaeda, but from 2015 you really had this aggressive approach from governments on the individual having to display the right kind

of value and if they are not displaying this kinds of values, there is risk for engagement in this kind of terrorist attacks. [...] And that reframed the debate slightly and pushed security into more and more parts of life, on the individual, on reforming what or how the individuals think which I think it's quite a problematic element of counter extremism”.

When talking about specific measures, UK2 mentioned the 2015 PREVENT and how it was partly based on personal assumptions of what extremism and terrorism look like: “We had 2015 as well which is sort of linked up with this change, this kind of reframing and 2015 PREVENT duty started this discussion as well and that put a lot of focus on public institutions to monitor or report any instances of extremism or potential terrorism. That includes schools, prisons, social care, welfare... Any time an individual accesses services of the state, those public services are required to monitor in some way or keep a lookout on this individual and to report them if they see any signs of extremism. The discussion around extremism is incredibly complex, incredibly nuanced, and it's very difficult to figure out what extremism is. In the UK, there isn't a definition of extremism in law because it's too legally difficult to get there. And what's expected by the 2015 PREVENT duty is that a teacher in a classroom will be able to identify extremism and then report on it. In fact, they are legally obliged to do so. We have a lot of people who don't know about extremism and aren't engaged in these debates now being required to report on it and a lot of that is done on a basis of personal assumptions (what do I think is extremism, what do I think looks like terrorism), so much of the media narratives is around Islam, is around Muslims and chances are, of course this is what's playing out with the PREVENT duty, you have teachers, you have prison staff, people in the NHS, reporting on individuals who seem to be extremists in their minds, but they're actually just engaging in Islamic religious practice, or Islamic religious belief, or have certain aspects around their dress or their language that links them to Islam or Muslimness”.

We can relate this last part to what UK1 said about her friend who started to dress more religiously and how she rapidly was reported by her mother and her teacher and, then, had to be accompanied by a Prevent Officer to understand if she indeed had or not some extremist views. This is similar to France, in the aspect that the UK also has a society of surveillance, where one controls and surveils the other.

Following what UK2 explained, we can also make a linkage to the violation of human rights, many of them being the same which we already referred when discussing the French case. People are deprived of their right to freedom of choice and right to freedom of religion in order not to be constantly monitored by the police and Intelligence services.

As for UK1, since she is younger than the rest of the participants in this study, she couldn't recall that much of a big difference before and after the attacks mentioned during the interview. Also because she is part of a younger generation where social media plays a big role, she had a more positive perspective. She said: "I would say that even though this attacks happened, Muslims are more comfortable speaking out against these assumptions and the media. There's also different social media pages that counter what the mainstream media says. I think that's changed. There's Muslim youtubers, Muslim influencers who now speak up about this more, especially after this attacks and they can be kind of like a voice. And from what I see looking into France is a much different picture. It's more, especially with the hijab, they don't get freedom, they are not allowed to wear the hijab especially after Charlie Hebdo and everything, not everyone there is accepting".

Chapter Five - Conclusion

From my point of view, this study aims to show something that was missing in academic literature, at least in most of the Western perspective on the issue: how Muslim people have been affected and how they have been deprived of their fundamental rights for the past decade. I read many articles about government's policies towards Muslim communities, about Muslim's rights in general or, more specifically, about Muslim women defending their right to wear what they wanted despite their religion, but I could not find literature that joined all these themes together in one piece. And this is the reason why I believe this dissertation can be relevant.

To answer my research questions: "How do the policies adopted by governments in the aftermath of terrorist attacks violate human rights?" and "How do the policies adopted by governments in the aftermath of terrorist attacks violate Muslim's rights, and more specifically, Muslim women's rights?" I suggest that these policies have had a heavy Islamophobic perspective. However, it is important to note that it did not happen suddenly, it wasn't just right after the attacks tackled in this research that the society became Islamophobic. It can be seen as a process, a construct that happened ever since the colonial era of France and the United Kingdom. These most recent attacks only allowed for these Islamophobic policies to be adopted more openly, since both governments and societies started having a common enemy: Islam.

What we see later is a blatantly violation of human right in Muslim communities being that: their right to freedom, freedom of religion, freedom of choice, equal education and employment, right to assembly, right to fair trial and detention. My research focused on four major topics: Islamophobia and intolerance, the roles both the government and media (national and international) have in racism and the violation of rights, typical Muslim clothing and its effects on women's liberties and the differences before and after the Paris and London attacks between 2015 and 2017.

What I concluded from my analysis is that, although Islamophobia always existed, the terrorist attacks definitely had a role in rising occurrences of racism and xenophobia, because there was no clear distinction between the individual (the attack executor) and the group (Muslim communities as a whole). The measures adopted by the governments in the aftermath of such attacks not only fuelled the intolerance and stereotypes (community of surveillance based on racial and religious profiling) but also deprived citizens of some of their fundamental

rights. In both France and the United Kingdom, we observed detentions without warrants, limitations in freedom of choice and religious freedom (as it was the case of the prohibition of the burkini in Nice, France in 2016). Another example is the limitation of freedom of speech, when speeches in mosques in both countries if deemed to be problematic, in the governments' point of view, they would lead to serious consequences to the Imam, like deportation. When taking into account all of the above, we cannot leave out the heavy rise of extreme right parties in both countries, who have had a very nationalistic and strong position in immigration and, for the past years, have gained more power in national politics.

Combined with all these factors we have the media. Major networks and news outlets seem rigged against Islam. The information passed in the national and international sphere is usually biased against Muslim communities, who do not have a major platform to show their perspective, as it was exemplified by F2 in the book presentation mentioned above. When talking about specific terrorist attacks led by a Muslim, the fact that the attack was, at some point, influenced by the individual's religious beliefs, that information is reinforced many times, causing a powerful association between Islam and danger.

Moreover, for Muslim women the cost has been even higher. Not only they face all the same challenges of Muslim men, but they also often have to make a choice between their country and their religion because, most of the times, the two seem incompatible. Muslim women not only need to defend their choices, it almost seems that they have to prove their choice, their reasoning for it and that they are not in need of being saved by the West.

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Appendixes

Appendix I - France's Interview Script

Appendix II – United Kingdom's Interview Script

Appendix III – Informed Consent

Appendix IV – Debriefing

Appendix I – France’s Interview Script

1. How would you define the relationship between France and Islam?
2. Do you feel that intolerance and Islamophobia are still present today from the outside society?
3. Do you feel that it is possible to find balance between the practice of Islam in day to day life and the principle of *laïcité*?
4. The *hijab* and the *burqa* are somewhat a “polemic” topic in French’ politics because they seem to be associated by others with oppression and to a display of religion that *laïcité* does not allow. Could you please comment?
5. The Charlie Hebdo attacks and the November attacks in Paris in 2015 were a turning point for France as well as for the European Union. For you, as an activist, do you feel that a rise of intolerance and Islamophobia existed?
6. How was it to witness a rise in the securitization in the country and a biggest control especially in the Muslim communities and neighborhoods?
7. What do you think are the biggest challenges in France today, for Muslim women and communities?
8. What would you say it was the biggest differences before and after the attacks in 2015 for Muslim communities? And specifically for Muslim Women?

Appendix II – United Kingdom’s Interview Script

1. How would you define the relationship between the United Kingdom and Islam?
2. Do you feel that intolerance and Islamophobia are still present from the outside society in your life?
3. Much of my research associates the *hijab* and the *burqa* to the oppression of Muslim women. Could you comment?
4. The Charlie Hebdo attacks and the November attacks in Paris in 2015 were a turning point for France as well as for the European Union. Also in the United Kingdom existed various attacks in 2017 such as the Manchester Arena bombings or the London Bridge attacks. For you, do you feel that a rise of intolerance and Islamophobia existed?
5. How was it to witness a rise in the securitization in the country and a biggest control especially in the Muslim communities and neighborhoods?
6. How do you feel that the Terrorist Acts of 2000 and 2006 and especially the CONTEST and PREVENT strategy affected Muslim’s lives and rights?
7. As a Muslim woman, what do you feel are your biggest challenges in today’s society and in France?
8. What would you say it was the biggest differences before and after the attacks in 2015 and 2017 for Muslim communities? And specifically for Muslim Women?

Appendix III – Informed Consent

The following study is a Master Thesis in International Studies in ISCTE – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa. The goal of this study is to understand how human rights in Muslim communities and specifically with Muslim women are violated with the adopted policies by France and the United Kingdom after a terrorist attack.

The study is conducted by Inês Pereirinha (ines_pereirinha@iscte-iul.pt) that you can contact at any point with questions, suggestions or other comments.

Your participation, that will be highly valued for the transmission of knowledge and experience, will consist in an interview based on your experiences (professional or personal) and will last roughly an hour and half. Also, I guarantee complete anonymity of your identity and your organization and that the data retrieved from the interview will solely be used for the purposes of this study.

The participation in this study is strictly voluntary so if at any point you wish to exit, you can do so without any need of justification. The interview will be recorded so a transcription can be made but such video record will be deleted as soon as the transcription is concluded. Also, since this interview can touch upon sensitive topics you have the right to provide information only to the extent that you consider necessary, and you also have the right to refuse to talk on certain topics or answer certain questions. I also guarantee that I will be the only one with access to the written transcription and the video record of the interview. To guarantee the anonymity in the interview and transcription process your identity will not be mentioned.

If you feel that any violation of the above points existed, you are free to file a complaint to the *Comissão Nacional de Proteção de Dados* (National Commission of Data Protection in Portugal).

If you desire, you can ask for a copy of the transcription so there is a possibility of altering, adding or removing something you intend to.

The results of this study will be shared with the academic community and general public. I declare to have read and understood the objectives of what was proposed and explained by the investigator, that it was given me the opportunity to present all my questions and doubts about this study and for them to have clear answers, so thereby I accept to participate in this research.

_____ (location), _____ / _____ / _____ (date)

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Appendix IV – Debriefing

Thank you for participating in this investigation. As told in the beginning, this study is about Human Rights Violations on Post-Terrorist Attacks Situations, specifically on Muslim communities and Muslim women with a comparison between France and the United Kingdom.

The main goal of this study is to understand how after a terrorist attack the policies adopted by these countries can violate some fundamental human rights, such as the right to freedom, freedom of religion or freedom of privacy and assembly.

Your anonymity will be guaranteed as well as the anonymity of your organization. After the transcription of the interview, I will send it so you can change or alter any question if you pretend to.

If you ever want do clarify any subject, share a new comment or request access to the main findings or results of this study you can send me, Inês Pereirinha, an email to the following e-mail address: **ines_pereirinha@iscte-iul.pt**

Thank you once again for your participation.