

Translating security

**How right-wing and left-wing political parties
have securitized Islam in the UK, France, and
Italy**

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Abstract

This thesis contributes to research in critical security studies and to current debates on Islamophobia by exploring the historical trajectory and the intra-party dynamics that brought three centre-left parties (the British Labour Party, the French Socialist Party, and the Italian Democratic Party) to securitize Islam. Western governments have securitized Muslims in the last decades. Yet, securitization theories have not sufficiently explored the ideas, tropes, and policies through which securitization manifests across and inside different parties. While there is abundant research on right-wing Islamophobia and on the right-wing adjustment of liberal and left-wing themes, the securitization of Muslims by left-wing parties has been mostly neglected, including by existing securitization theories. Both the Copenhagen and the Paris Schools of securitization provide a shallow account of security politics because they pay limited attention to the way tropes travel across the political spectrum, and the process through which they are adapted and acquire meaning for specific constituencies. Whereas both Schools are methodologically focused on the state as the primary unit of analysis, this thesis provides an original contribution by showing that political parties translate security in the name of various referent objects. This is a necessary step to explain why the same securitized threat (Muslims) is interpreted in different ways by political parties of various political ideologies. Hence, my research question asks: *How does securitization travel across and inside parties?*

I argue that securitization travels across and inside parties through a process called *translation*, that occurs throughout the appropriation of tropes traditionally belonging to the other political pole. Translation is *active*, because the tropes are translated into a language coherent with partisan ideologies to make them intelligible for the target audiences, such as party members. Translation is also *collective*. If the securitization audiences are not persuaded by translation, the process might be rejected, and such rejection can lead to de-securitization. Translation is also possible because of different *contextual* elements: the party history, the interaction between Right and Left, and significant critical junctures that increased the perception of insecurity raised by Muslims. Building on this analytical framework, the chapters on the UK, France and Italy show that parties translate both inter- and intra-linguistically in the name of different referent objects: balanced race relations, for Labour; secularism (*laïcité*) for the Socialist Party; human security and gender equality, for the Democratic Party. Moreover, the empirical chapters illustrate that the bulk of translation happens on the Left, as centre-left parties have translated both tropes and policies from the Right, as well as a conservative meaning of security.

Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that Western governments have securitized Muslims in the last decades. Yet, little attention has been paid to the ideas and policies through which securitization manifests across and inside different parties. Since the Al Qaeda terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington DC (11 September 2001) and in Europe (Madrid, 11 March 2004; London, 7 July 2005) and the consequent “war on terror”, some politicians belonging to left-wing parties have increasingly represented Muslims through tropes established and deployed by right-wing parties. For instance, in 2002, Labour Home Office secretary David Blunkett refused to apologize after claiming that asylum-seekers were “swamping” British schools (Goodwin, 2011, p.57)¹. The word “swamp”, previously used by Margaret Thatcher (Favell, 1998, p.112), insinuated the idea of a demographic invasion, as often suggested by far-right parties. In 2006, Labour MP Jack Straw described the *niqab* as a “visible mark of separation and difference” (Moosavi, 2015, p.655). This utterance implied that Muslims are ethnic communities who refuse to live according to British values: an idea widely circulating in right-wing nationalist circles across Europe and the US (Marzouki et.al., 2016; Lean, 2017; Bracke, Hernandez Aguilar, 2021). The Islamophobic tropes² travelled from Right to Left but they were adjusted into another semantics, more aligned with the ideas and the legacy of the Left. Straw’s comments show that Labour tried to securitize Islam in the name of liberal and left-wing ideals, despite using right-wing narratives.

The association between Muslims and insecurity has intensified after the wave of terrorist attacks committed by Al Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in the 2010s. When French President François Hollande (2012-17) proposed to revoke citizenship to dual-national terrorists in 2016, his party fellow, the Socialist Party’s secretary Jean-Christophe Cambadélis, replied that this was an idea born on the Right and flagged by the National Front (Quinault-Maupoil, 2015). Nonetheless, Hollande condoned the reform of counterterrorism in the name of secularism and human rights, issues that the Socialist Party historically “owns”³ more than its right-wing counterparts. In Italy, the centre-left-Cabinet led by the Democratic Party recurred to right-wing tropes and policies, such as halting the immigration flows coming from North Africa. The PM Matteo Renzi reiterated one argument previously stated by Matteo Salvini, leader of the right-wing party North League: the Left should stop behaving like do-gooders and admit that immigrants must be firstly “helped in their countries” (Il Fatto Quotidiano, 2017). Likewise, the Minister of Interior Marco Minniti came under harsh criticism for the methods arranged to halt immigration, such as building inhumane detention camps in Libya. To those accusing him of being right-wing, he answered that he governed the sense of fear and lawlessness “not because he was the minister of the interior, but because he was a man of the Left” (Minniti, 2017a). To justify his policies, Minniti selected

¹ In that period, refugees came mostly from Muslim majority countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, and Bosnia. See Walsh (2023, p.7).

² By trope, I mean “a common or overused theme or device”.

³ By issue ownership I mean “the link between specific parties and issues in the minds of voters. The party that is most strongly linked to a given issue by the voters is said to ‘own’ the issue” (Walgrave et.al., 2015, p.778).

arguments that would convince the progressive electors of his party, such as that preventing immigrants from leaving Libya meant saving them from human smugglers (Minniti, 2017d).

These illustrations point to a left-wing appropriation of right-wing tropes about Islam as a security threat, predicated on the assumption that repressive counterterrorism policies and restrictive policies on immigration and citizenship can reduce the insecurity of citizens. This appropriation is surprising because left-wing parties have been frequently more prone to defend Muslim minorities, who in turn have voted more for progressive than conservative parties (Dancygier, 2013; Jones, 2013; Kepel, 2013). However, Islamophobia is not absent from left-wing ideologies and history, where Islam is described in stark opposition to principles such as gender equality and freedom of speech. Securitization theories underline that mainstream right-wing and left-wing parties have reached a bipartisan consensus in the fight against jihadist terrorism, seen as a national security threat by ruling parties on the centre-right (e.g. the US Republican Party, the Italian *Forza Italia*, the Spanish Popular Party) and centre-left (e.g. Labour in the UK).

Yet, this shared consensus does not create a uniform and amorphous securitizing discourse. There are significant differences in how securitization is articulated in specific political settings. There is little reflection in securitization theories on the specific position of the governing party or parties and the ideology they put forward to explain securitization to their electors. While there is abundant research on right-wing Islamophobia in the US and Western Europe (Zúquete, 2008; Busher, 2015; Esposito, Iner, 2019; Kaya, 2019) and on the right-wing adjustment of liberal and left-wing themes (Akkerman, 2015; Brubaker, 2017; Farris, 2017; Foster, Kirke, 2022), the securitization of Muslims by the Left has been mostly neglected, including by existing securitization theories. The latter, as I shall discuss, provide a shallow account of security politics because they pay limited attention to the way tropes travel across the political spectrum, and the process through which they are adapted and acquire meaning for specific constituencies.

This thesis thus contributes to current debates on Islamophobia, Islam and security by exploring the historical trajectory and the intra-party dynamics that brought three Western centre-left parties (the British Labour, the French Socialist Party, and the Italian Democratic Party) to securitize Islam. My research question asks: *How does securitization travel across and inside parties?*

One dominant answer to this question suggests that mainstream parties today share similar security policies since they have converged towards centrist positions that leave the electors without clear alternatives (Katz, Mair, 2009; Evans, Tilley, 2017; Berman, Kundnani, 2021). This is what happened in economic and fiscal policymaking as neoliberalism, globalization and European integration have been mutually endorsed by centre-right and centre-left parties. What about other issues, such as immigration and relationship with Muslim minorities? While numerous scholars have illustrated the mainstreaming of racist ideas from the fringe to the centre-right (Bale, 2003; Kallis, 2013; Akkerman et.al., 2016; Brown et.al., 2021), less scrutinize how the process unfolds in left-wing parties (Bale et.al., 2010; Hinnfors et.al., 2012; Odmalm, Bale, 2015; Abou-Chadi, Wagner, 2020). Among these, some scholars argue that social-democratic parties sometimes try to copy the radical right on its own turf,

with unfruitful results (van Spanje, 2010; Bale et.al., 2013; Mudde, 2019). These concepts do not adequately capture the process because they miss how agents and contexts transform the borrowed language, thereby creating specific and differentiated manifestations.

By contrast, I argue that securitization travels across and inside parties through a process called *translation*. In the case of Islam's securitization, translation is possible because most Western right-wing and left-wing parties have often spread Islamophobic prejudices in their past, although their hostility against Islam is due to different ideological reasons.

What is translation?

Translation means that political parties appropriate tropes traditionally belonging to the parties on the other side of the political spectrum and adjust them into a language coherent with own partisan ideologies and legacies. This transformation makes the tropes intelligible for their interlocutors, such as party members and electors, who otherwise would not be persuaded. The process is relational, as it happens from Right to Left and from Left to Right. However, it is not symmetrical, as the bulk of translation has happened on the Left.

To understand how parties condone the use of unfamiliar language and policies, I engage with the notion of translation. Translation has two meanings:

1. a linguistic meaning, related to the activity of changing a set of words or a speech from one language into another language, or, within the same language, from one register into another one, as it happens with circumlocutions, paraphrasing, and rewording. The focus in both cases is on the language, whereas content and substance are left unaltered. Regarding Islam, linguistic translations happen in the choice of the lexicon used to securitize Muslims.
2. a non-linguistic meaning, related to the modification of a thing into a different form. For instance, transforming abstract knowledge into a practical or material shape - theories into policies, or a hypothesis into an experiment⁴. This second meaning also refers to body language, cultural-rooted practices, and all the semiotic repertoire involved in communication, that could need to be "translated" to fit comfortably in another context. Regarding Islam, non-linguistic translations happen in the production of concrete policies and practices that discriminate against Muslims.

This thesis approaches translation both in its linguistic and non-linguistic meanings. When it comes to the linguistic meaning, it builds on the distinction provided by Jakobson (1959, pp.232-233) between *intra-lingual* (rewording by verbal signs of the same language), *inter-lingual* (interpretation through verbal signs of another language, sometimes through the incorporation of totally different code-units), and *inter-semiotic* (transmutation of verbal signs by using non-verbal sign systems) translations. While the inter-linguistic transfer of the meaning that "Islam" acquires across countries is an international political dynamic worth

⁴ On this point, see also Freeman (2009).

taking seriously, the bedrock of this thesis is the intra-linguistic translation that takes place between right- and left-wing parties within the same political community.

The thesis explains that translation is a process consisting of three dimensions.

First, parties translate in *active* ways, which means that the tropes borrowed from their competitors must be adjusted to the expectations and ideals of their electors. When left-wing parties adopt a language historically associated with the Right, they couch it into a version that sounds attuned with progressive values. Likewise, right-wing parties hijack progressive battles like LGBTQ+ rights, but couch them in nationalist narratives about how the liberal West is threatened by misogynistic and homophobic Muslims, rather than for the commitment to ensure gender equality.

Second, translation is *collective*. Since translation incorporates positions that sound far from typical partisan vocabulary, it raises the dissent of other party members, who accuse the translator of dissolving the group's identity. Hence, for translation to work it needs the consensus of party factions.

Third, translation is *contextual*. Translation is embedded into three *contexts*:

- 1) The *critical junctures*, namely a series of events that call political parties to urgently face an issue that may prompt a securitized response. Each critical juncture provokes a moment of uncertainty that may give political parties the opportunity to translate.
- 2) The *distal context*, that focuses on the “socio-cultural embeddedness of the text” and refers to factors like “social class, the ethnic composition of the participants, the institutions or sites where discourse occurs, ecological, regional, and cultural environments” (Wetherell, 2001, p.380).
- 3) The *proximate context*, that includes “the sort of occasion or genre of interaction the participants take an episode to be” (Wetherell 2001, p.380)⁵.

Since translation is a relational movement achieved by parties on both sides of the political spectrum, Islamophobic language also travels from the left to the right. This happens when the radical right reframes tropes traditionally bred in a social-liberal political background into its distinct nativist policies, that protect its referent object: the idea of “people” as ethnically and culturally homogeneous entity (Mény, Surel, 2002, p.7). The reverse movement from Left to Right is quite significant because it led many radical right parties to adopt positions that are alien from their history. Therefore, the concept of translation better captures the bi-directional travel of tropes than other notions like “mainstreaming” (Mondon, Winter, 2017), “drift” (Bale, 2017, p.297), “copy” (Mudde, 2019) and, as mentioned earlier, “convergence”, that do not acknowledge the ideological adaptation of the language by the Left, where, as I illustrate in the following pages, the bulk of translation happens. Centre-left parties have translated right-wing Islamophobic tropes and policies, as well as right-wing connotations of security, interpreted as protection of the “law-and-order” of the nation, and insecurity, connected to identitarian and cultural concerns rather than socio-economic ones. Conversely,

⁵ Both references to Wetherell are in Balzacq (2011, p.37).

the Right has translated some tropes but not changed its conservative policies on cultural issues⁶. Hence, there is no convergence towards an undifferentiated agenda on immigration and Islam.

Defining Right and Left and the importance of political parties

It is important to define what I mean by Right and Left. Although the right-left axis has been supplemented by other ways to define the political spectrum (such as authoritarian vs libertarian, Green-Alternative-Libertarian vs Traditionalist-Authoritarian-Nationalist, populism vs anti-populism⁷), Right and Left are a reality of domestic politics and international affairs and still a powerful shorthand to discuss party politics. Although the two concepts carry a fluid and relational meaning, in this thesis Right and Left are contextualized in recent Western European political history, in which it is possible to retrace a stable semantic content and a core set of meanings in right-wing and left-wing parties' agenda on immigration and integration of ethnic minorities. While my units of analysis are political parties, my case studies are three parties currently described as centre-left (De Waele et.al., 2013; Manwaring, Kennedy, 2018) or mainstream Left (Meguid, 2005): the British Labour Party, the French Socialist Party, and the Italian Democratic Party, that have been the three major parties on the Left in their respective countries in the period examined by the thesis. The thesis also provides illustrations from other centre-left parties that have subscribed to social-liberal agendas, showing that the argument can be generalized to other countries. By social-liberalism I mean a hybrid version of social-democracy that accepts elements of political liberalism (individualist anthropology, recognition of individual fundamental rights, pluralism, belief in the limitation of state powers, the institutional balance of power, and the valorisation of civil society) and cultural liberalism (recognition of equal rights to ethnic and sexual minorities, and gender equality) (Rioux, 2016).

The category "Left" encompasses centre-left and far-left parties. The most evident difference between centre-left and far-left is that centre-left parties have abandoned anti-capitalist agendas, instead valorising market virtues, accepting market competition and the principle of equality of opportunities. This blended ideology became globally known as "Third Way" (Giddens, 1998) and turned into a sort of "governing philosophy for the global centre-left" (Leggett, 2010, p.54), espoused by the US Democrats under Bill Clinton and then by the "new" Labour under Tony Blair. By far-left I mean two types of political parties. First, radical left parties, who situate themselves "in the tradition of the 'class left', a historical tradition determined to reform or overcome capitalism from the standpoint of universally conceived working-class interests" and identify themselves "as a separate tendency from and to the left of mainstream social democracy" (Chiocchetti, 2017, p.10). Secondly, populist radical left parties, who share many principles of the first type but wrap them in populist rhetoric. By populist, I mean based on the opposition between "virtuous people" and "corrupted elite"

⁶ A partial exception can be found in the Christian Democratic Union of Germany, that, specifically under Angela Merkel (PM from 2005 to 2021), has showed some instances of more liberal and left-wing policies on cultural issues and on immigration (Mushaben, 2017; Berman, Kundnani, 2021). However, the German case study falls beyond the scopes of the thesis.

⁷ See for instance Kitschelt (1994), Hooghe et.al. (2002), De Cleen et.al. (2018).

(Mudde, 2007, p.23), that in case of the Left are economic elites (Katsambekis, Kioupkiolis, 2018). Despite not being at the core of my argument, far-left political parties (such as the French *La France Insoumise* and the Italian Communist Refoundation) are also mentioned in the thesis because they have frequently proposed alternatives to the centre-left's securitization of Islam.

On the other side of the political spectrum there is the Right, comprised of centre-right and far-right parties. In turn, the category "far right" refers to extreme-right and radical right: while the extreme-right is essentially anti-democratic, the radical right recognizes the procedural essence of democracy and advocates more frequent democratic consultations (Mudde, 2007, p.23). This thesis mostly addresses the securitization of Islam started by radical right parties such as the National Front in France (Ivaldi et.al., 2017) and the North League and Brothers of Italy in Italy (Zulianello, 2020; Griffini, 2022). The main ideological tenets of the radical right are nativism and authoritarianism, while populism is an additional feature that it is frequently but not always present (Mudde, 2007, p.23-24). However, my analysis also includes right-wing politicians - from the Conservatives and United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) in Britain, French centre-right parties like the Union for a Popular Movement, and from Italian centre-right parties like *Forza Italia* - who have employed Islamophobic language. The following chapters also recall the role of extreme-right parties (e.g. British National Party) and movements (e.g. *CasaPound Italia*, English Defence League) in normalizing Islamophobic tropes.

This thesis argues that securitization is differently translated by political parties. Why focusing on political parties in a historical period in which they are facing an enduring crisis, especially in the West? The gradual decline of political parties has been provoked by many factors, such as the professionalization of politics, increased partisan dealignment, spiking rate of abstentionism, erosion of traditional functions (e.g. formation of militants) and other signs of dissatisfaction and frustration towards representative democracy (Katz, Mair, 1995, 2009; Mair, 2013). While I acknowledge these factors, I suggest that they do not compromise the fact that political parties elected in national and supranational institutions are still significant vehicles to effectively transform political ideologies into concrete laws and policies, for example regarding cultural and religious themes. Following Leader Maynard's definition (2014, p.824), this thesis considers ideology as:

"a distinctive system of normative, semantic, and/or reputedly factual ideas, typically shared by members of groups or societies, which underpins their understandings of their political world and shapes their political behaviour".

Although the names and numbers of political parties is often changing (as we will see for instance in the Italian context), what is immutable is that such parties embody ideas that can be traditionally positioned on a Right-Left spectrum and associated to ideological "families" such as conservatism, socialism etc. As the rest of the thesis explores, these ideologies influence the securitization of Islam (by deciding if Muslims are security threats or not) and its translation (by justifying securitization through distinct tropes and policies).

Beyond the state-centrism of securitization theories

In this thesis, I employ the concept of securitization to indicate the political process that constructs Islam (religion) and Muslims (migrants or second generations) as threats to the physical safety and values of the Christian-secular population. Here securitizing actors produce tropes, policies and practices aimed at controlling Muslim minorities. Securitization theorists address how some issues can be framed as urgent and threatening such that the state is required to intervene, through either exceptional policies (Buzan et.al., 1998) or routinised administrative procedures (Bigo, 2002). In both cases, security threats appear “state-centric”⁸ and “de-politicized”, by which I mean that there is little attention to inter- and intra-party debates about what security means. Although securitization theories agree that the discourse on “national security” changes according to the history and identity of states, analyses of the national fabric are not followed by the contextualization into party ideologies. Whereas the literature on securitization is methodologically focused on the state as the primary unit of analysis, this thesis provides an original contribution by “deepening”⁹ the field of critical security studies and showing that political parties translate security in the name of various referent objects. This is a necessary step to explain why the same securitizing threat (Muslims) is interpreted in different ways by political parties of various political ideologies. Although the securitization of Islam has been widely discussed (Croft, 2012; Mavelli, 2013; Eroukhmanoff, 2015), current studies do not explore enough how securitizing tropes take multiple forms and justifications when they travel across the political spectrum.

Research on security and terrorism is mostly concerned with the actions of Governments, Ministries (e.g. Home Office, Defence), and security agencies dependent on the executive (Intelligence, Police, Military, etc.). This is a consequence of the division of labour across different academic disciplines. The unbalanced emphasis on the executive power has been a feature of mainstream and critical security studies and of international relations (IR) theory, which left the research on professional politicians to the discipline of political science - that, in turn, relegated the study of security to International Relations (Neal, 2012a, p.110). Hence, security management is framed as a prerogative of the state, independently from the governing political party or parties. This analytical posture presents some pitfalls because it precludes a comprehensive understanding of the partisan endorsement and contestation of securitization and Islamophobia. Therefore, it cannot capture the specific ideological justification that left-wing parties use when debating issues that are usually vocalized by conservatives. By focusing on parties, it is possible to problematize the translation from the Right and using it as a frame of the ideological crisis of centre-left parties, trapped in a conundrum between defending Muslims from racism and enforcing harsher counterterrorism, immigration, and citizenship policies. In exploring the left-wing securitization of Islam, the

⁸ A powerful argument on the state-centrism of both Schools has been made by Neal (2012a, 2019).

⁹ A key concept in critical security studies, the “deepening of theoretical approaches relates to the idea that the state is not the only referent object of security” (Wyn Jones, 1999, p.166; Peoples, Vaughan-Williams, 2010, p.4).

thesis addresses the more general question of how the social construction of insecurity changes across parties.

The traditional securitization Schools do not answer this question. The Copenhagen School (Buzan et.al., 1998) argues that only state actors, have the power to securitize an issue through a “speech act”¹⁰. However, state actors are represented as if they did not follow any political ideology, because these are not significant when it comes to governing matters of national security and the survival of the state (Williams, 2019). This approach de-politicizes security, by which I mean that it silences the voices of parties who select the people running for institutional positions (e.g. President of Republic, Prime Minister). The Paris School of securitization amends the state-centrism of the Copenhagen School by scrutinizing the technocratic and bureaucratic activity of other securitizing actors that are not key state agents, such as the police, intelligence services, and the military (Bigo, Tsoukala, 2008; Bigo, 2014; Eroukhmanoff, 2015). However, the Paris School falls into the same analytical pitfall of the Copenhagen School: both reiterate the idea that national security is a prerogative of a de-politicized executive power. The importance of right-wing and left-wing ideologies is underestimated. This is problematic because parties furnish an ideological interpretation of what security is and to whether Muslims should be securitized.

Why Islam?

Islamophobia has its roots in the genesis of European modernity. It harks back at least to the Middle Ages when Islam was a military enemy that represented the “other” in the self-other polarity elaborated by the Christian elites of Medieval Europe (Salvatore, 1996). Islam was an existential threat because of its military taking over of Christian lands (e.g. by the Arabs and the Ottomans) and, worse still, its success in converting people (Kumar, 2012, pp.16-17). The successive development of Islamophobia is tied to the heritage of European colonialism, that consolidated forms of political and economic oppression and racial hierarchies. Especially from the 18th century, European intellectuals and artists have framed Islam through a Eurocentric epistemic lens that Said (1978) defined as “orientalist”. This brought many scholars to portray Muslim societies as wild, irrational, and essentially alien to European secular norms (Mavelli, 2012; Salvatore, 2016). While the European ruling elites of the past considered Islam as a competitor coming from outside, contemporary Islamophobia in the West targets Muslims who either migrated or were born and raised in Western countries. European Muslim minorities still appear as “others” in a public sphere based on secular norms and on the lingering presence of the Christian heritage (Göle, 2015). Islamic symbols, shops, and places of worship have raised important political debates about their alleged cultural dissonance with Western culture. The orientalist bias is still quite resilient among Western societies (Meer, 2014) and across the political spectrum, where many parties and politicians on the Left started to use a right-wing vocabulary to securitize Islam.

¹⁰ An utterance that “is not of interest as a sign that refers to something more real: the utterance itself is the act” (Waever, 1995, p.35).

The securitization literature underlines that not every problem can be securitized: the threat must be bounded to a context that is historically marked by hostility and troubles between the securitizing agents and the threat (Ciută, 2009; Balzacq, 2011). Securitization is co-dependent on the context, which eases the social mechanism of persuasion and propaganda against an enemy. Otherwise, the evocation of threats would fall on deaf ears. The translation of securitization works when the party agents involved in the process securitize the same threat, albeit for different ideological concerns. Hence, the translation of a specific issue – the securitization of Islam – is possible because many Western right-wing and left-wing parties consider Islam as a “rival system based on religious affiliation” (Kumar, 2012, pp.9-10). Motivated by two alternative images of the enemy, anti-Islamic hostility has grown on both sides of the political spectrum, eased by the fact that left-wing parties have an own legacy of Islamophobic discourses.

To better understand this dynamic, it is necessary to clarify the meaning of Islam, Islamophobia, and securitization of Islam. My understanding of these notions is inevitably conditioned by the secular framework that Westerners use to discuss religion. By “secular” I mean a specific regime of knowledge (Asad, 2003, pp.1,192; Mavelli, 2012, p.12)¹¹ that accepts religion by confining it to the private sphere – and thus excluding it from public affairs. This separation has been considered essential to the formation of modern sovereignty and international politics (Mavelli, Petito, 2014, p.3). In the secular episteme, religion becomes a discursive category lacking autonomous essence, whose definition is contingent to political and historical purposes (Asad, 1993, p.29). Islam is conventionally seen as a religion, although the meaning of the Latin word *religio* adopted in the West differs from the Arabic term *dīn* (Marranci, 2008; Salvatore, 2016). Islam is divided into four juridical schools, spread across five continents, and translated in very diverse ways depending on local specificities. If one ascribes a unique connotation to the signifier “Islam”, there is the risk of reproducing an essentialist view and ignoring its multiple meanings. Thus, when the thesis analyses how parties securitize Muslims, “Islamism”¹² and “jihadism”¹³, it does so by acknowledging the semantic confusion and the negative stigma usually associated with them.

Regarding Islamophobia, the thesis adopts the definition provided by the Runnymede Trust, which defines it as:

¹¹ Asad distinguishes the meaning of “secular” from *secularism*, that is a political doctrine, and *secularization*, that is a historical process.

¹² “Islamism” is a quite broad category where scholars locate political movements and groups active in Muslim majority countries that have tried to “substitute secular states with Islamic states” with the purpose to eradicate injustice (Badran, 2015, pp.112-113). In this respect, Islamism is also considered as “religious nationalism” (Cesari 2018, p.2). While many terrorist groups have justified their actions in the name of political Islam, other scholars have underlined that Islamism is a political discourse that is not necessarily violent (Jackson, 2007, p.414) and can also generate possibilities for emancipation and resistance in the fight against Western imperialism and secular authoritarian regimes (Buck-Morss, 2003, pp.49-50).

¹³ The Arabic word *jihad* is conventionally translated as “striving” and firstly relates to a religious and spiritual struggle, rather than to an offensive war (Cook, 2005, p.1). The redefinition of jihad as fight against unjust ruling was preached only by radical Muslim authors such as Sayyid Qutb, Abdullah Azzam and Abul Alā Al-Mawdūdī (Cook, 2005, pp.99-128) and is espoused only by a minority of Muslims. Yet, the thesis uses “jihadism” to refer to “a sub-category of militant Islamism characterized by the use of violence” against a wide spectrum of targets, both Muslims and non-Muslims (Stenersen, 2018, p.3). These groups try to meet their political ends by recurring to “revolutionary Islamic doctrines” that “provide legitimizing scripts for jihadist violence” (Cottee, 2017, p.440).

“Any distinction, exclusion, or restriction towards, or preference against, Muslims (or those perceived to be Muslims) that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life” (2017, p.1).

This encompassing definition came after decades in which the concept of Islamophobia has spurred much disagreement among researchers¹⁴. Despite existing different views, I follow this definition because it zooms in on the intersection between the racial question and the hostility against Islam. The analytical separation between the two discourses (Islam as *fundamentalist religion* and Muslims as *immigrants*) is troublesome, as the two are empirically entangled in overlapping dimensions of “otherness” (Fekete, 2004; Casanova, 2006; Meer, Modood, 2009a).

Yet, Islamophobic tropes are differently shaped by the Right, historically more focused on ethnic and cultural discrimination, and the Left, traditionally more hostile against religion due to the liberal, socialist and communist legacies. The thesis identifies four Islamophobic tropes – two on the Right and two on the Left - that circulate across Western ruling elites. The first right-wing trope is based on the idea that Islam is a different and violent civilization that will inevitably clash with the West. The second right-wing trope is predicated on the assumption that Muslim immigrants are a demographic threat, since they are “invading” Europe and substituting white Europeans. The first left-wing trope considers Islam as incapable of separating the political sphere from the religious sphere, which from a secular perspective should be confined to a private domain. The second left-wing trope stresses that Islam is a patriarchal religion that poses obstacles to gender equality.

I discuss such tropes through the theoretical framework of securitization. Islamophobia nourishes the process of securitization, that occurs through narratives that essentialize Muslims as potential Islamists/jihadists/terrorists, policies that contrast the presence of Muslims in the public sphere (e.g. surveillance of mosques, ban of headscarves and *halal* food), and practices (hate speech, violent acts, protests) that directly target Muslims. As I aim to show that securitization changes according to the political vision of parties, I illustrate that the Right and Left securitize Muslims in the name of referent objects that align with their party historical legacy.

Methodology and research design

This thesis explores how the circulation of Islamophobic tropes across parties is embedded in structural relations of power, that establish the borders of what can be or cannot be said about Muslims in Western Europe. It adopts an interpretivist epistemological perspective and employs a methodology based on critical discourse analysis. Interpretivism is

¹⁴ Two years after the first study of the Runnymede Trust about the definition of Islamophobia, Halliday (1999) argued that Islamophobia was only used to express the “fear of Islamic religion” without any references to the racial dimension. Another author that stresses the analytical shortcomings of the notion is Bowen (2005), who considered Islamophobia more as a normative concept than an analytical one, since it is motivated by polemical purposes and by the aim to introduce proper legislation to punish anti-Muslim hate crimes and speech (see also APPG, 2017).

a research philosophy that can be successfully employed by scholars of securitization theory, which has been even described as an “interpretivist approach to security” (Lynch, 2014, p.44). According to Schwartz-Sea and Yanow (2012, p.40):

“the differences between research approaches that are informed by positivist philosophical presuppositions and those informed by interpretivist ones hinge on whether the scientist treats research and the theories it ‘tests’ or generates and supports as an exact replication mirroring the social-political world, which the researcher studies from a position external to that world, or sees research findings as resulting from intersubjective, meaning-focused processes that themselves interact with and potentially shape the worlds we study”.

While discourse analysis is generally understood as a range of approaches to study written, vocal and sign-based communication, and other semiotic expressions, I follow Jackson who defines discourse analysis as a “form of critical theorizing” that “aims primarily to illustrate and describe the relationship between textual and social processes” and that is concerned with the political effect of choosing some words instead of others (2007, p.395).

As illustrated by Stritzel (2014, pp.39-40), reflectivist approaches in International Relations theory and critical security studies usually subscribe to one of the following two connotations of discourse. On the one side, scholars inspired by post-structuralism investigate how discourses have the power to constitute subjectivities and shape human experience, that in turn is embedded in and saturated by discourse (Laclau, Mouffe, 1985, pp.87-94; Foucault, 2004). This approach tends to deny the presence of powerful agencies within the overarching discourse and buys instead into a relational ontology that ties the construction of the Self to its opposition to one or multiple others (Jackson, 2005). It assumes that the historical discourse engages subjectivity, and that human agency, desires and beliefs should not be overplayed (Glynos, Howarth, 2008). This approach, which gives analytical centrality to contextual discourses and to subjective interpretations, has been quite influential in critical security studies: as argued by Campbell (1992, p.1), “danger is not an objective condition. It is not a thing that exists independently of those to whom it may become a threat”¹⁵. Likewise, the importance of the context has been underlined also by scholars of linguistics, who argue that translation is a social practice attached to the contextual cultural conditions in which translated concepts are nested, reproduced, and understood (Wolf, Fukari, 2007; Paloposki, 2009).

On the other, a post-Marxist approach that incorporates socio-linguistic methodologies in political studies and that goes by the name of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This is a specific version of critical discourse analysis associated with prominent scholars trained in linguistics (Wodak, Meier, 2001; Wodak, 2015). CDA is used to identify the linguistic character of social and cultural structures and detect the ideological drivers that constitute texts and words. In critical security and terrorism studies, CDA is used to uncover the discursive regularities used to justify counterterrorism practices and military operations (Bogain, 2017; Martini et.al., 2020). Like post-structural social scientists, CDA considers language as strictly tied to the political and socio-economic structures, that are in turn based on precise hierarchies. Thus, Islamophobic discourse should be analyzed within the sedimented heritage of Western colonialism and discrimination against Muslims. Further, CDA rejects the positivist claim for

¹⁵ See also Hansen (2006); Croft (2012).

objective social science because it is predicated on an “attitude of opposition and dissent against those who abuse text and talk in order to establish, confirm or legitimate their abuse of power” (Van Dijk, 2001, p.96). CDA treats discourse as a type of social action that cannot be formulated outside of established power asymmetries. Nonetheless, CDA does not treat subjects as mere “representations of broader hegemonic discourses” (Stritzel, 2014, p.41). Society and culture are shaped by discourse, but at the same time agents modify and constitute the discourse in a mutual enriching relation (Keller, 2013, p.26). Hence, CDA can be potentially utilised to interpret how ideas and narratives travel and gain traction.

While I share the post-structural emphasis on language and context, as well as the emancipatory purposes of CDA, I ultimately opt for a discourse analysis that is inspired to interpretivism and that gives equal importance to structural factors and to the subjective interpretation of multiple agents. My purpose is to catch the intricate constitutive meanings of social phenomena rather than trying to assess a relation of causality, in agreement with the arguments that “political life is messy” (Salter, Mutlu, 2013, p.2) and contingent (Bevir, Rhodes, 2006, p.3). Accordingly, the thesis engages with one concept, security, that can be defined as “absence of threats”. However, the way it is conceptualized and operationalized is quite contingent (Booth, 2007, p.101). Security has multiple meanings, adjusted to historical, spatial, and “vernacular” experiences (Bubandt, 2005; Jarvis, 2019). It sounds like a codeword evoked in various situations to cope with military and non-military issues that threaten individuals, groups or formal institutions. However, as I will show by discussing Islam, securitization rests on a moment of political agonism (Balzacq, 2015, p.3) and on an exclusionary logic that brings out authoritarian and coercive practices¹⁶.

By drawing upon interpretivism and critical discourse analysis, this thesis interprets how agency can impact on the surrounding discourse by translating words and tropes. I employ the distinction between “autonomy” and “agency” made by Bevir and Rhodes (2006). Social actors cannot act outside of a structured context that influences how they give meaning to reality. In other words, they do not have full “autonomy”. However, lacking autonomy does not equate to lacking “agency”, since “agents can reason and act in novel ways, although they can do so only against the background of the contexts that influence them” (Bevir, Rhodes, 2006, p.4). In this respect, agency means the decisions taken by individuals to achieve their goals given multiple opportunities and obstacles. Although the linguistic and social background is a powerful factor, the right- and left-wing arguments about Islam are not an automatic consequence of such contexts. The meaning is situated and produced through inter-subjective interactions across a network of actors who are both “agents” and “audiences” of securitization (Balzacq, 2005). My analytical framework strikes a balance between the importance of agency for translations and the structural constraints imposed by distal and proximate contexts and the critical junctures. Hence, it differs from other approaches like Actor-Network-Theory (Latour, 2005; Best, Walters, 2013a) and post-structuralism (Campbell, 1992).

Another important point to clarify is how I analyse my data through critical discourse analysis. The thesis retraces the translation of Islamophobic tropes which are located into a broader discourse, meant as the repertoire of linguistic and non-linguistic communication

¹⁶ For a wider debate on the logic of security, see also Krause, Williams (1997), Huysmans (1998a), Booth (2007), McDonald (2015).

means that political parties can draw upon. The discourse hinges upon a long heritage of orientalist and Islamophobic tropes. Yet, it does not impede party agents to adjust the discourse through their beliefs and traditions and potentially changing dominant narratives when they are in front of dilemmas, like the ones posed to left-wing parties when right-wing parties securitize identity and cultural issues (Bevir, Rhodes, 2006, pp.6-11; Abou-Chadi, Wagner, 2020, p.248). Translation is carried out by agents who add something new to the original text. The imprinting given by translators serves to avoid the mechanical reproduction of exogenous linguistic codes, that would sound unpalatable to the selected audience. Hence, the embeddedness in a specific context does not obscure the perimeter of action conceded to the translator. Conversely, it strengthens the role of some “translation entrepreneurs” who try to graft foreign notions into concepts resonating with local sensibilities (Wolf, Fukari, 2007). My analysis unpacks the development of Islamophobia within the parties, the ideological elaboration behind it and the translation of other’s tropes, policies, and practices. What I propose is a balance between studying the general Islamophobic discourse and the distinct ways in which political parties fuel such discourse by exploiting tropes that are partly their own, partly translated. Thus, I investigate the securitization of Islam through a top-down approach that emphasizes the process of agenda-setting by decision-makers, more than a perspective that blames the mainstreaming of racism and xenophobia on a generic will of the “people” (Brown et.al., 2021, p.8).

To retrace how securitization is translated across political parties in different tropes, the case studies’ chapters provide data retrieved from texts related to the activities of parties in the institutions (Parliament: official debates, laws, draft laws; Government: decrees, papers) and on the ground (political manifesto, official interviews, formal statements and informal speeches, newspaper articles, books). Among the agents of translation, I consider party members who occupy relevant positions in the Government (Presidents, Prime Ministers, Home Secretaries), in the Parliament, as well as other party members who influence the agenda-setting regarding Islam, as done by other scholars (Hansen, 2006, p.64; Croft, 2012, pp.99-100) who have disclosed the meta-narratives used by ruling elites to securitize foreigners. Chronologically, the bulk of my chapters engages with translations that happened in the periods when centre-left parties led the executive in the UK (1997-2010), France (2012-17), and Italy (2013-18). In line with my interpretivist research design, the data supports my claim that securitization changes because of its translation across specific contexts and courses of actions.

Case selection

The thesis selects as cases three countries, the UK¹⁷, France and Italy. Since I follow an interpretivist approach, I aim to compare these countries to gather a deeper knowledge of the meanings that concepts like security and Islam acquire for the parties under scrutiny. Thus, I do not compare to establish mechanical causality between variables, but I look for constitutive causality, namely the “explanations that rest on the ‘interweaving of codes [of meaning] in

¹⁷ Despite choosing the United Kingdom, the project does not take into consideration party politics in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

particular situations’ rather than being ‘logically derivable from the codes themselves’ (Yanow, 2014, p.149). That said, the cases are fit for comparative analysis because they share important affinities but also different articulations of the translated securitization. Throughout the thesis, I am going to show that this is due to the unique features of the parties’ ideological legacy and the national contexts they are embedded in.

Regarding the similarities, it is important to remember that Islam is the second-largest religion in the three countries. The estimated presence of Muslims in the UK was 3.3 million in 2018, slightly more than 5% of the population (Office for National Statistics, 2018). In France, it was between 3 and 4 million according to the *Institut Montaigne* (El Karoui, 2016). Instead, 2.7 million Muslims were estimated in Italy in 2021. Yet, 1.5 million among them do not have the Italian nationality (Ciocca, 2023). The three countries have also been colonial empires that occupied Muslim-majority colonies. Specifically, Britain and France share a long colonial legacy that explains why Muslim immigration predates the waves that have interested other Western European countries like Italy. Muslims have belonged to the British and French socio-political landscape for centuries, despite being racially targeted and discriminated (Ansari, 2004; Bancel et.al., 2017). This makes the comparison more relevant because France and the UK are “two paradigmatically old nations, with perhaps the closest family resemblance in Europe, even if they spend much of the time denying it in the name of national distinctiveness” (Favell, 1998, p.94).

Another relevant factor that the UK, France and Italy share is their involvement in the “War on Terror” and different military operations in Muslim-majority countries. This factor matters because counterterrorism campaigns abroad can bedevil the relationship with Muslim minorities at home (Hill, 2013). Italy was not hit by jihadist terrorism and has seen fewer affiliates to the Islamic State (129) compared to France (1910) and the UK (850)¹⁸. However, the threat posed by the possibility of returning foreign fighters has put Muslims under the spotlight of politicians and national security agencies, as showed by the “Relation on the Information Policy for Security” drafted each year by the Italian Government.

Finally, the three countries have recently seen centre-left governments. This happened especially during some of the critical junctures that pushed parties to securitize Islam: namely, the jihadist terrorist attacks in 2000s and 2010s and the refugee crisis of 2015. Labour, the Socialist Party, and the Democratic Party enacted tougher counterterrorism reforms, as well as stricter entry and integration policies against individuals of Muslim background. All of them have been influenced by right-wing parties (such as the British Conservatives; the French National Front, that became National Rally in 2018; the Italian North League and Brothers of Italy). This makes the countries comparatively fit to analyse whether the translation of Islamophobic tropes happens distinctly in national contexts that share similar political dynamics.

Nonetheless, the three countries present one crucial difference that must be considered to interpret the articulation of the translated securitization. The UK, France and Italy have distinct national cultures or “models” that shape the relations with Muslim minorities. Britain

¹⁸ In Cook, Vale (2018).

has developed a distinct conception of its society as a multi-racial and multicultural one (Leach, 2009, p.186; Uberoi, Modood, 2013). In 2019, 78% of Britons held a favourable opinion about Muslims, which puts Britain in the first place in Western Europe for positive attitude towards Muslims (Pew Research Center, 2019). The idea of a multicultural society has received broad cross-party consensus, but was tightly bounded to strict immigration control, never sufficiently denied by Labour (Favell, 1998, p.97). However, such consensus has faded in the last twenty years (Meer, Modood, 2009b; Kundnani, 2012). Differently from the UK, all French parties accept the idea of a centralized Republic and consider the British model as “minoritarian, differentialist, and race-obsessed” (Favell, 1998, pp. 94-95) because of its focus on minority rights. As I will explain in chapter four, the French Republican model (and its central values such as *laïcité*) are historically associated with the Left, while the French Right fully embraced Republican principles only under Charles de Gaulle (Chabal, 2015, p.17). The left-wing stress on Republican homogeneity - that was revitalized in the Eighties by Socialist Party President François Mitterrand (Chabal, 2015, p.57) - hinders a fully inclusive attitude towards gendered, ethnic and religious diversity. Thus, French progressivism is rather defensive and reactionary if compared to other European left-wing traditions (Lazar, 2010, p.68; Chabal, 2015, p.70).

Italy is a unique case study, where the debate on immigration resembles “a house designed without an architect” (Allievi, 2014, p.725). Immigration towards Italy happened more recently compared to other Northern and Western European countries (De Cesaris, 2018). Therefore, Italy lacks the familiarity that its European neighbours have with ethnic minorities, which can be a factor explaining why Italians have the least favourable opinions of Muslims in Western Europe - only 41% (Pew Research Center, 2019). Italy’s status as a latecomer among immigration countries made the Italian parties less ready to reflect on the new cultural and religious pluralism that exists across the country. The results are a diffused distrust against multiculturalism, despite the absence of true multicultural policies, and the mainstreaming of Islamophobic narratives fuelled by right-wing parties and media even before 9/11 (Triandafyllidou, 2006; Allievi, 2014, pp.724-730).

Therefore, the comparison across three cases allows stressing the multiple situated meanings of the securitization of Islam by British, French and Italian political parties, as well as identifying the different ideological references that political parties put forward during translations.

Methodological and normative concerns

To conclude this section, some methodological and normative concerns should be addressed. First, it is important to clarify that, while most of the thesis is driven by analytical purposes, there is also a normative point that I make throughout the chapters and in the conclusion: namely, that de-securitization should be preferred to securitization, specifically when it comes to Muslims. In this respect, I acknowledge the “bias” of this research. The concept of bias “implies that emotional and cognitive detachment have been breached” (Schwartz-Sea, Yanow, 2012, p.96). Thus, it undermines the positivist model of objective research based on distance and neutrality between researchers and their objects of research. Many scholars drawing upon interpretivism (Schwartz-Sea, Yanow, 2012; Lynch, 2014) and

on feminist epistemologies (Lather, 1991) believe in the impossibility to be purely objective in social sciences and in the need to reflect on our own positionality and values while doing research. In doing so, I have written this thesis from the perspective of a white European scholar normatively sympathetic with the de-securitization of Muslims. The latter are not a homogeneous community who threatens Western security, but represent different groups who are still structurally discriminated, despite the considerable level of civil liberties enjoyed in Western society. This normative position has not undermined the rigour of the critical discourse analysis and the quality of my findings. I study my data by always using the same criteria and standards to retrace Islamophobic tropes, without assuming that such tropes are always present in some parties and absent in others (showed for instance by the ambivalent position of radical left parties).

Second, I acknowledge that an important gap of my thesis is the absence of Muslim voices. This represents an empirical limitation and a normative concern of my analysis, that implicitly silences Muslims as they only “speak” through the portrait made by British, French and Italian political parties. However, this limitation stems from my main research interest in the translation achieved by securitizing parties, who are frequently represented by white European men in the cases analysed later. This gap should be filled by future research looking at the role of Muslims as possible audiences of securitization of Islam, as potential agents of de-securitization, and even as securitizing agents – as it happens when Muslims or former Muslims become critical towards Islam.

Outline

The thesis is divided into five chapters. The first and second chapters provide a theoretical and analytical framework for the translation of securitization, while the other three chapters employ this framework to explore the translated securitization of Islam in Britain, France and Italy. The thesis combines deductive and inductive approaches by observing some trends (Islamophobic tropes travelling across parties) and simultaneously reading them through my analytical framework, based on the concept of translation¹⁹.

The first chapter spells out the context in which the travel of Islamophobic tropes across conservative/right-wing and liberal-progressive/left-wing parties occurred. It argues that the Right and Left have securitized Islam by appropriating each other’s Islamophobic tropes, starting from 9/11 but more intensively in the 2010s. However, the Copenhagen and Paris Schools do not explain how securitization can travel, while I do so by using the notion of translation.

The second chapter explains the meaning and dimensions of translation. It argues that translation is active, collective, and contextual. It locates parties on a “chain of agents” wherein they craft securitization through a circular movement of collision, appropriation, and reformulation of words. Through this process, parties interact as both agents and audiences involved into the translation of securitization and in its rejection, which can lead to the de-securitization of an issue. The three dimensions of translation are explored in the empirical

¹⁹ On the combination of deductive and inductive approaches and its conceptualization as “abduction”, see Schwartz-Sea, Yanow (2012).

chapters, that apply the notion of translation to interpret how centre-left parties securitize Muslims.

The third chapter argues that the British Labour party has securitized Muslims in the name of “balanced race relations”. This securitization has happened through a translation of the right-wing meaning of security and the trope that Islam can raise cultural and demographic concerns for British society. Translation is grounded in Labour’s historical ambivalence towards immigration and influenced by authoritarian and populist tropes coming from the British Right. The chapter takes particular issue with the Copenhagen School of securitization because this approach would consider securitization only as an “exceptional” move above and beyond politics. I build on the literature that theorized a post-Copenhagen approach. Yet, I integrate this scholarship by engaging with the travel of securitization across and inside political parties.

The fourth chapter argues that the French Socialist Party has securitized Islam by using the French version of secularism, *laïcité*, as a referent object. This securitization has happened through a translation from the Right of securitarian and Islamophobic tropes, as well as a reaction to the right-wing translation of secularism. Rather than interpreting the Socialists’ counterterrorism agenda as an emergency reaction to jihadism, securitization was part of routinised discussions already animated in the party. This chapter explicitly engages with the Paris School, whose subscribers have written more about the French case. The Paris School authors rightly claim that securitization is normal rather than exceptional. However, in doing so it underplays the partisan debates that drive translation and shape the way securitization is articulated.

The fifth chapter argues that the Democratic Party has securitized immigration by actively translating from the Right the tropes that some Muslim immigrants might be “radicals” and ultimately a problem for national security. The Democratic Party has securitized by flagging liberal-progressive and left-wing referent objects, such as the respect of human security and the defence of gender equality. This linguistic choice is missed by both Copenhagen and Paris Schools since both would focus on the Italian Government as a de-politicized actor, without questioning party ideologies.

By selecting three countries, the thesis discloses the plural dimensions of the securitization of Islam by Western European centre-left parties. In the UK, Labour securitizes Muslims in the name of a discourse on race, specifically on “balancing race relations”. In France, the Socialist Party is concerned about Muslims’ challenge to secularism, that we do not find neither in the UK nor Italy. In Italy, the ideological references of the Democratic Party are less clear but mostly revolve around liberal-progressive language.

To conclude, it is important to remember that this thesis mainly contributes to the sub-field of critical security studies. It challenges the Copenhagen and Paris securitization Schools by highlighting their methodological state-centrism and builds a new framework that shows how securitization travels across political parties, which translate tropes according to specific agencies and contexts. The thesis also speaks to two other fields of academic research, that I engage to create an original contribution to securitization: firstly, the research on Muslims in Europe and on Islamophobia; secondly, the research on the crisis of centre-left parties in Western Europe. By mobilizing cross-disciplinary resources, I aim to reflect more broadly on

how the securitization of Muslims is normalized even among parties who have traditionally supported more progressive agendas on immigration. I do so by arguing that these parties translate unfamiliar language in forms that can be easily understood by their audiences.

1. The travel of tropes across the Right and Left: a dynamic missed by securitization theories

The securitization of Islam in the West is common to both right- and left-wing parties. According to a widespread interpretation in political science and security studies (Neal, 2012a, 2019), this common hostility is a sign that all governing parties converge towards the same policies when they must protect national security. However, this thesis illustrates that right-wing and left-wing parties are not undifferentiated entities. They articulate the securitization of Islam to safeguard their own “referent objects”, namely the “things that are existentially threatened and that have a legitimate claim to survival” (Balzacq, 2011, p.35). As this thesis will show, right-wing parties consider Islam as a threat to the white ethnic homogeneity of the West and its Christian religious and cultural legacy. On the other hand, centre-left parties consider Islam as a threat to civil liberties, secularism, and gender equality. Right-wing parties stress that Islam is in stark opposition with the Western religious and cultural traditions it would like to preserve, while left-wing parties see Islam as a relic of a backward mindset that constrains human emancipation (Norton, 2013, pp.22-23,65). For example, regarding immigration, centre-left parties have securitized by using arguments aligned with its legacy, such as the balance between newcomers and local workers and the humanitarian emphasis on the protection of immigrants from smugglers, rather than suggesting right-wing arguments like the “great replacement” of white Europeans by Muslims.

What is surprising is that both right-wing and centre-left parties have increasingly employed Islamophobic words, slogans and practices that do not traditionally belong to their repertoire. Many centre-left parties have started to take seriously issues related to identity and cultural differences between the West and Islam, while posing an emphasis on security as the absence of threats to the “law-and-order” of the nation. Restrictions on immigration and tough counterterrorism laws have accompanied this semantic shift. In borrowing right-wing tropes and policies, centre-left parties like Labour, the Socialist Party and the Democratic Party have adapted them in vocabulary and forms familiar to left-wing audiences. Conversely, right-wing parties have adjusted some liberal-progressive tropes in a new ideological assemblage. Thus, right-wing leaders flag themes cherished by some left-wing parties - e.g. the emancipation of LGBTQ+ minorities – only when functional to discriminate Muslims. This mutual adaptation invites us to think that the borders between Right and Left are porous and undifferentiated. Nonetheless, rather than converging towards a set of consensual measures, right-wing parties have kept loyal to their traditional policies: halt immigration and curtail the freedoms of Muslim individuals to fight against terrorism. Instead, part of the Left has moved closer to the Right in the definition of insecurity and regarding immigration and Islam.

This chapter argues that right-wing and left-wing parties have appropriated each other’s Islamophobic tropes to better justify the securitization of Islam. It aims at explaining the context in which the travel of such tropes across conservative/right-wing and liberal-

progressive/left-wing ideologies occurred. As I mentioned in the introduction, the four tropes are:

- 1) “Islam is a different civilization that violently clashes with the West”.
- 2) “Muslim immigration is a demographic threat”.
- 3) “Islam is incapable to separate the political sphere from the religious sphere”.
- 4) “Islam is a patriarchal religion that poses obstacles to gender equality”.

The first and second tropes sit comfortably with right-wing conservative ideologies, whereas the third and the fourth tropes with liberal-progressive and left-leaning ones – at least in the Western European context under scrutiny. The identification of stereotyped views on Muslims matters to provide an ideological background to the current forms of securitization of Islam.

This chapter is structured as follows.

The first section foregrounds the two tropes that I schematically associate with conservative ideologies. Then, it explains how these tropes have travelled from Right to Left. The second section introduces the left-wing tropes and explores the reverse travel from Left to Right. The two sections display that both sides have grafted tropes traditionally belonging to their competitors after a series of critical junctures - namely “the trigger events that set processes of institutional or policy change” (Hogan, Doyle, 2007, p.885) - that stoked fear about Muslim minorities. The third section maintains that the Copenhagen and Paris securitization Schools do not provide a suitable framework to understand why the same threat (Islam) is securitized in different ways by parties of various political families. To do so, we need the concept of translation, that explains how securitization moves inside and outside parties. The notion is foregrounded in the conclusion and then explored in the second chapter.

1.1 Right-wing tropes that travelled to the Left

This section discusses two Islamophobic tropes that travelled from Right to Left. Then, it describes some significant critical junctures that posed the Left in front of a dilemma: securitizing or de-securitizing Muslims. The jihadist terrorist attacks committed against the US (9/11) and Europe (in the 2000s and 2010s) set up the first critical juncture, a moment of urgency when the feeling of insecurity towards political Islam rapidly escalated. The second critical juncture follows the European refugee crisis (2015) and the EU referendum on Britain withdrawal, or “Brexit” (2016): two events that triggered xenophobic reactions among Western public opinions. In front of the two critical junctures, the leaderships of some relevant centre-left parties seemed to endorse the arguments that Muslims are potentially violent extremists, and that immigration should be curtailed.

1.1.1 “Violent civilization” and “demographic threat”

Let me firstly analyse the trope that Islam is a different civilization that violently clashes with the West, which sits comfortably with conservative and far-right political ideologies (Jackson, 2007). For instance, in 2015 Giorgia Meloni (leader of the far-right party Brothers of

Italy and current Italian PM from September 2022) argued that Italy should stop immigration, especially from Muslim countries, and accept only a small necessary quota of immigrants who can be better integrated because coming from cultures that do not have the same degree of fundamentalism and violence inherent to Islam (Il Fatto Quotidiano, 2015). In an interview to the TV channel Europe1 in September 2021, French journalist Éric Zemmour (far-right candidate to the 2022 Presidential Elections) overtly claimed that “Islamic civilization is incompatible with French principles” (Europe1, 2021). The argument that Islam is radically diverse has become normalized in the discursive repertoire of most mainstream parties. As the next chapters show, centre-left parties have also raised concerns about the possibility of behavioural and cognitive radicalization of Muslims against values connected to left-wing history. However, since the Right has been more assertive in supporting the argument on the conflictual nature of Western - Islamic relations, I consider this as the first Islamophobic trope that has travelled from Right to Left.

The expression “clash between civilizations” was firstly coined by historian of Oriental studies Bernard Lewis in 1957. The argument about a conflictual nature between the Christian West and the Muslim East has been then reiterated by Lewis in other two famous publications, “*The Roots of Muslim Rage*” (1990) and “*What went wrong?*” (2001), in which Lewis conveys an image of Islam as monolithic, driven by the radical agenda of Islamism, and unfit for democracy (Lockman, 2005, p.65; Kumar, 2012, p.58). The assumptions made by Lewis chimed in with the neoconservative foreign policy promoted by George W. Bush, who invited Lewis to several meetings with prominent members of its Cabinet after 9/11 (Lockman, 2005, p.85). Also, we can notice some affinity with the arguments made by political scientist Samuel Huntington. Despite being member of the US Democratic Party and opposing the neoconservative agenda for the Middle East, Huntington popularized the expression “clash of civilization” to interpret international relations after the fall of communism. Huntington (1996, pp. 45-46) divided the world into eight distinct civilizations, whose boundaries have been contested (Salter, 2002). Similar to Lewis and to many neoconservative intellectuals, Huntington claimed that the Islamic civilization was determined to regain its relevance in the international arena, which meant a potential violent challenge against the West (Haynes, 2019, p.15).

Huntington’s arguments strike a chord with the American and European Right, which frequently highlights the agonistic encounter with Islam. In this respect, symbolic references to past conflicts against Muslims, such as the battle of Lepanto, animate the propaganda of radical right parties like the Italian North League (Betz, Meret, 2009, p.334) and the Spanish Vox (Vox, 2020). The Italian Right has frequently framed Islam as a civilizational enemy, drawing frequently on the theses advanced by conservative journalist Oriana Fallaci. The latter was particularly famous for her Islamophobic stances, such as arguing that Islam had waged a “holy war” against the West (*Jihad*) and that this war was promoted by millions of Muslims, not only by a fanatical minority (Bialasiewicz, 2006, p.711). According to Haynes (2019, p.20), one of the most evident signs of Huntington’s success is the anti-Muslim rhetoric spurred by Donald Trump (US President in 2016-2020), who overtly stated that “Islam hates us” in 2016. The development of this trope led to the construct of Muslims as a dangerous category,

inherently racialized because dark-skinned minority groups have more possibility of being targeted as potential terrorists (Kumar, 2012, p.139).

Although some of the most lethal terrorist attacks against the West have been recently committed in the name of jihadism, the association between Islam and terrorist violence is simplistic. Religion is a multifaceted signifier that can be filled with different meanings (Asad, 2003). The option between, say, the use of religion to justify behavioural violence or to arrange peaceful agreements may depend on the decision of authorised political leaders and confessional representatives. In this respect, the problem of Islam is not an intrinsic predisposition to violence, but rather the presence of a minority of preachers and militants who promote horrific crimes to protect what they claim to be the normative orthodoxy of Islam and secure its referent objects. The adherence to rigid normative schemes, nonetheless, is not a mechanic vehicle to embrace physical violence - as studies on quietist Salafism show (Githens-Mazer, Lambert, 2010; Maher, 2016) - and believe in offensive versions of *jihad*. That said, Western ruling elites fear that the anti-Western ideology preached by some jihadist groups might potentially resonate with European Muslims. Conversely, it is less frequent to hear party leaders recognizing that the percentage of Muslims who commit terrorist attacks is indeed quite low (Kurzman, 2011).

Another argument that sits comfortably with right-wing agendas is predicated on the assumption that Islam has gone through processes of ideological radicalization (Kepel, 2015; Rougier, 2020;). According to Kepel, the wave of jihadist attacks during the 2010s is ideologically distinct from the previous ones. Along with the different tactics employed, the irruption of Salafism in France has radicalized many homegrown Muslims, pushed them to reject the French Republican values, and in many cases to embrace terrorism. These arguments lend themselves to be politically exploited by the Right as it was done with the “clash of civilization” thesis decades ago. The emphasis on the “radicalization of Islam” shifts the burden of jihadism upon Muslim minorities and their vulnerability to fundamentalist narratives. Salafism is deemed to be the gateway to terrorism (Boily, 2019). This interpretation downplays other ones¹ that stress how socio-economic inequalities, structural racism, the French colonial heritage and its contemporary foreign policy, and psychological factors also contribute to radicalization, that is in turn a rather contested concept (Sedgwick, 2010). Significantly, this argument has grown into a dominant framework to study jihadism and has received warm welcome from the right-wing French newspaper *Le Figaro*, which defined him as the winner of the academic quarrel on jihadism (DeVecchio, 2020).

The second trope that I locate on the Right is the image of Muslim immigrants as a security threat from a cultural and demographic perspective. This trope is connected to the previous one as it assumes that Islam is a distinct civilization that conflicts with the West. Although left-wing parties have also used racist narratives (Lunn, 2000), I consider this trope as belonging to right-wing phraseology because conservative, nationalist and fascist parties articulate a vision of society based on the defence of the status quo regarding ethnic, cultural, and religious order. Historical evidence shows how prominent far-right thinkers overtly

¹ For further debate see Roy (2016a), Burgat (2016), Bancel et.al. (2017), Truong (2018).

embraced racism and xenophobia to address ethnic and religious minorities (Goodliffe, 2012; Sedgwick, 2019). Hence, the parallelism between 19th and 20th century anti-Semitism and current Islamophobia are easy to find in the literature (Meer, Modood, 2009a; Meer, 2013). Some of the first manifestations of anti-Muslim racism from the Right emerged after thousands of immigrants moved to Western Europe in the aftermath of decolonization (e.g. to the UK, France, Belgium, etc). The far-right had not regarded Islam as a threat so far. Indeed, scholars noticed some ideological affinities, particularly the common antisemitism and the rejection of secularization, and a certain interest that fascists and post-fascists nurtured towards Islam (Mezran, 2013:59; Frigoli, Ivaldi, 2016; Camus, Lebourg, 2017). Nonetheless, the right-wing attitude towards Muslims changed as soon as they permanently settled with their families.

Right-wing parties have traditionally ostracized the groups considered threats to European white demography, from Jews and Gypsies in the past to Muslims today (Wodak, 2015; Shilliam, 2021). Muslim immigrants represent the quintessential “other” whose skin colour, religion, and daily routines are at odds with what the Western civilization stands for. This trope is connected to the previous one about Islamic violence and was already discussed by Huntington, who anguished over the mass arrival of non-Western immigrants that risked diluting Western identity (1996, pp.199-200). Yet, instead of restricting the notion of violence merely to terrorist attacks and international conflicts, it rests upon the assumption that the mere presence of foreign people with their norms is indeed a form of violence usually imposed by liberal elites on native people. Many right-wing politicians and intellectuals are concerned about an alleged demographic replacement of white Europeans by brown and black Muslims (Betz, Meret, 2009). The “great replacement theory”, formulated by the French essayist Renaud Camus (Bracke, Hernández Aguilar, 2021, p.14), has gained traction in white supremacist and far-right groups. This argument was made also by Fallaci, who claimed that the “Islamic reverse crusade” against the West was mostly carried out on a demographic strategy of conquest (Bialasiewicz, 2006, p.712). Against this, the far-right calls for a European “reconquest”, that even became the official name (*Reconquête*) of the party created by Zemmour. Nonetheless, these claims are part of a conspiracy theory that is debunked by data and predicated upon racist assumptions (Buncombe, 2022; Taguieff, 2022).

The left-wing reaction to these two right-wing tropes is quite an uncharted territory in critical security studies. It must be interrogated because the relations between the Left (parties, movements, trade unions) and anti-racism has not always been of mutual solidarity and cooperation (Slavin, 1991; Gerstle, 1993; Lunn, 2000). Some research explored this relation by showing that Labour has normalized nationalistic and orientalist narratives about Islam (Kundnani, 2007, 2012; Moosavi, 2015). Additionally, much research on Islamophobia has been published since the Nineties by the Runnymede Trust (2017), Parliamentary groups (APPG, 2017), and scholars (Meer, 2014; Saeed, 2016). The debate on Islamophobia is insightful because it highlights that religious, ethnic, and gendered discrimination against Muslims finds fertile ground in Western institutions, mass media and mainstream liberal parties (Lean, 2017; Mondon, Winter, 2017). Little do they say, however, about the Left’s answers to the racialization of Muslims and the essentialization of Islam in counterterrorism and border policies.

The next sub-section reflects on this theme by looking at the linguistic and policy changes in centre-left parties after some relevant critical junctures.

1.1.2 The critical junctures

The first critical juncture occurred after the wave of terrorist attacks inspired and often planned by individuals affiliated with jihadist militant groups, such as Al-Qaeda and the ISIL. Particularly, we cannot understand the contemporary backlash against Muslims without mentioning the tremendous impact of 9/11, the “most lethal act of non-state terrorism in history” (English, 2019, p.79) that provoked nearly three thousand victims in New York and Washington DC. In his analysis of the discourse surrounding 9/11, Jackson (2005, pp.31-32) explains that the attacks were constructed as an exceptional national tragedy, or “a terrible national shock and an act of evil”, as declared by George W. Bush. The discursive emphasis on 9/11 as a “temporal rupture” (Toros, 2017, p.205) and an event that “changed everything” (Blair, 2002) served to mobilize enough support for the war on terrorism and the military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. This strategy silenced other possible responses to terrorism (e.g. negotiations, dialogue) as well as a wider critique of Western foreign policy in Muslim-majority countries. 9/11 was interpreted by conservative voices as a sign that the “barbaric” Islam had waged a gruesome war against the “civilised” West (Salter, 2002). Such fear-mongering rhetoric was coupled by intense surveillance, restrictions and discrimination of brown people essentially targeted as “Muslim others” (Croft, 2012).

The securitization of Islam became even more pervasive after the attacks that Al-Qaeda waged against Madrid and London. The Madrid bombings (that killed 191 people) happened on March 11, 2004, exactly three days before the general elections that saw the Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party obtaining more seats than the centre-right Popular Party. The centre-left party led by José Zapatero managed to persuade the public that the attacks were a direct consequence of the government’s foreign policy operations (Alonso, 2013, p.119). Despite its criticism of Popular Party’s support for war on terror, the Socialist Workers’ Party harboured many concerns about radical Islam too. In the following years, the party elaborated an anti-terrorism plan (approved in 2010) that “supported sanctioning the recruitment, training and radicalization of individuals, and deporting foreigners found to be actively promoting radical Islam, acts of violence and unconstitutional behaviour” (Duva, Rodriguez, 2015). Yet, the document also argued to fully recognize the Muslim community in Spain and combat the social exclusion that drives to radicalization.

On July 7, 2005, four suicide-bombers carried out a series of attacks on the London’s public transport system, killing 52 and injuring more than 700 people (Pantucci, 2015, p.159). Not only were the 7/7 events the deadliest terrorist incidents for two decades. Also, the biography of the suicide-bombers (three British-born sons of Pakistani immigrant and one Jamaican-born convert) raised severe doubts on the success of multiculturalism and on the security threat that Islamist groups (from Al Qaeda, Hizb-ut-Tahrir, etc.) posed to minorities’ integration in British society. The attacks of 7/7 in London further drove the securitization of Islam by the Left, as the policies enacted by Blair and Labour show. The war on jihadism

profoundly affected the everyday lives of thousands of British Muslims who suffered from violent abuses and surveillance (Croft, 2012, p.2). Likewise, Labour securitized the mosques because of an ideological understanding of Islamist terrorism, of Muslims' supposed reluctance to accept British way of life, and of failure of Islamic institutions to halt the radicalization of young Muslims (Brown, 2008, p.476).

During the 2010s, another series of terrorist attacks revamped the trope of Islam as a violent religion going through a process of ideological radicalization. These attacks targeted many European cities and were mostly carried out between 2015 and 2017, in parallel with the establishment of the ISIL between Syria and Iraq. The attacks committed by the Algerian French citizen Muhammad Merah in Toulouse and Montauban in 2012 (that killed 8 people and wounded 5) embody a watershed moment in jihadist terrorism: the attacks committed since then have been mostly perpetuated by homegrown European Muslim citizens, rather than militants of foreign jihadist groups (Kepel, 2015; Roy, 2016a). Among the most lethal incidents, I should recall at least the attacks in Paris and its suburbs (7-9 January 2015; 15 November 2015); the Brussels bombings (22 March 2016); the truck attacks in Nice (14 July 2016) and Berlin (19 December 2016); the Manchester Arena bombing (22 May 2017); and the Barcelona attacks (16-21 August 2017). Along the Right, several centre-left parties (in UK, France, Italy, Spain) have substantially endorsed less inclusive policies about immigration, counterterrorism, and citizenship, as the following chapters will show.

Some centre-left parties like Labour, the Socialist Party and the Democratic Party have normalized the argument that Muslims who do not subscribe to liberal and secular Western norms might potentially embrace radical behaviours. However, the fact that many people from Muslim majority countries show a more intense practice of their religion compared to Westerners does not imply a rejection of European secularism, but instead new assemblages and re-alignments between the secular and the religious (Göle, 2015, p.1; Hassan, 2018). Still, centre-left policymakers have accepted Muslims insofar as they are "moderate", which means conforming to liberal norms and actively speaking out against what alleged expressions of radical Islam. This was the strategy of the Blair Cabinet, that after 9/11 co-opted moderate Muslim "community leaders" to promote a version of Islam coherent with British values and opposed to radical interpretations (Archer, 2009; Jones, 2013). The institutionalization of moderate Islam emerged also in the "Pact with Islam" that the Italian centre-left government signed in 2017 with 70% of the Italian Muslim associations. As further explained in chapter five, the Pact is a step towards the signing of the "Intesa" (a form of concordat) between the government and the Muslim associations. However, the Pact requires Muslims to cooperate with the state to "contrast phenomena of religious radicalization" (Ministero dell'Interno, 2017). The Pact is part of a broader strategy that the Democratic Party has envisioned to prevent terrorism. The centrality given to security preoccupations seems to jar with centre-left parties' commitment to support ethnic minorities.

This atmosphere of suspicion has targeted both native Muslims and foreign Muslim immigrants after the second critical juncture, that was triggered by the European refugee crisis in 2015 and Brexit in 2016. These events sowed the seeds of divisions within the European Left. The concerns raised by immigration eased the circulation of the trope that Muslims

immigrants are security threats. In the first half of the decade, Western European countries such as Italy, Greece, Spain, and Germany registered a tremendous spike in the number of asylum seekers and economic immigrants coming from Muslim-majority countries (Tunisia, Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan). Under the pressure of consistent arrivals of immigrants and of the far-right, centre-left parties witnessed some internal splits between supporters of restrictive entry policies against irregular immigration and partisans of a more inclusive approach. The success of the harder line has brought such parties to implement a tougher migration management in a language that echoed right-wing tropes. In 2010, a member of the German Social-Democratic Party², Thilo Sarrazin, published a book significantly entitled “*Germany abolishes itself: How we are putting our country at a risk*”, in which he lashed out at Muslims for their cultural incompatibility and called to halt uncontrolled immigration (DW, 2010). In 2018, the Danish social-democratic government approved a controversial “No Ghetto Plan” that bases the definition of “ghettos” not only on crime, unemployment, and education rates but also on the percentage of non-Western residents (O’Brien, 2022). The Spanish Socialist Workers Party has also resorted to harsher measures against asylum-seekers (Santaaulalia, Martín, 2020). Admittedly, most of the Left has not bought into the trope that Muslims are demographically replacing white Europeans, which is instead a leitmotiv of many parties on the Right. Nevertheless, too little have centre-left parties done to propose a genuine counter-discourse and to untie the discursive articulation between immigration and insecurity.

The inclusive language of left-wing parties is not free from contradictions. Several parties have alternated either generous or restrictive immigration policies, in the name of referent objects that resonate with their electors: finding a balance between minority emancipation and protection of local working-classes. For instance, the French Communist Party (one of the most successful communist parties in Europe) adopted a controversial stance on immigration already in the early Eighties. The communist leader George Marchais claimed limits on the admissions of immigrants because the oversupply of low-wage workers could undermine the rights and the conditions of the French working-class and create more unemployment. Hence, in 1981 Marchais claimed to stop both official and illegal immigration. Marchais’ arguments aligned with what the far-right said in the same period (Mamadouh, 2012, p.386; Stockemer, 2017, p.29). However, he denied any form of racism (“all workers are brothers, independently from where they come from”³), that would not resonate with the proclaimed universalism of communism. Similarly, the French Socialist Party securitized immigration during the second Presidency of Mitterrand (1988-1995). The Prime Minister Michel Rocard declared in famous speech that France “was not anymore an immigration country” and that they “could not welcome all the misery of the world” (Bourbeau, 2011, p.65). His successor as PM, Édith Cresson, even proposed the organization of charter flights to speed up the deportation of irregular immigrants (Bourbeau, 2011, p.66).

The narratives that alert on the risks of overcoming a putative tolerance threshold in admitting immigrants are rooted in the previous historical legacy of some left-wing parties. The expression “tolerance threshold” emerged in the French public discourse in the Seventies.

² See also Pérez (2011, pp.273-276), Bale et. al. (2013, p.103).

³ In Laurent, Marchand (2015).

In October 1974 the state secretary charged of immigration⁴, Paul Dijoud, recommended to lower the threshold to keep immigration under control rather than “suffering” it (Debono, 2016). This hypothesis is problematic since it can be used to naturalize forms of racism as soon as the arbitrary threshold is exceeded. Yet, the expression was reiterated on the Left by both the Communists and by Mitterrand (Deltombe, 2007, p.118). A similar point was made by the Labour party under the leadership of Ed Miliband: keeping immigration under a certain threshold is necessary to balance race relations and protect the national working-class from unfair competition on the job market (Labour Party, 2015, p.49). Likewise, the former Italian Minister of Interior Minniti (Democratic Party) declared that a threshold was needed to prevent immigrants from causing more unemployment and increasing the possibility of their radicalization (Minniti, 2017d). The balanced relations between locals and immigrants are a relevant referent object that the centre-left wants to secure, as chapter three specifically examines.

Some centre-left parties have securitized Muslims in the name of other concepts such as human rights and human security. Human rights have been hijacked to justify counterterrorism practices and military operations abroad. In France, despite the Socialist Party being for long opposed to militarism and to restrictions on human rights, the former President Hollande legitimised the war on terrorism as necessary to uphold human rights, jeopardized by militant jihadism, both in France and in Mali, where the French troops intervened in 2013 (Bogain, 2017). Connected to human rights is the concept of human security, defined by four characteristics: it applies universally to all the people; it is based on inter-dependent components (i.e. military and non-military); it emphasises prevention rather than intervention; it is people-centred (UNDP, 1994, in Peoples, Vaughan-Williams, 2010, p.122). In the name of human security as a referent object, we have seen the emergence of a humanitarian discourse that casts immigration management as “rescue politics” (Tazzioli, 2016, p.4) finalised firstly at saving immigrants’ lives because they are “humans worthy of being saved” (Vaughan-Williams, 2015, p.2). Frequently, centre-left parties have concealed a logic of exclusion and securitization behind their plea to establish a humanitarian governance of immigration (Barnett, 2013; Vaughan Williams, 2015; Mavelli, 2017, 2022). For instance, the former Italian prime minister Renzi (2014-16) argued that immigration is a long-term structural risk that requires multilateral solutions (Council on Foreign Relations, 2016). Renzi also supported the military operation *Mare Nostrum*, presented as a mission that was both humanitarian, both securitarian, as it aimed to rescue migrants in distress in a sea zone comprised of Italian and Libyan waters. However, the Italian navy also responded to security concerns as the ships were used to identify people, detect smugglers, and as “floating” detention centres (Cuttitta, 2018). Moreover, Minniti was blamed for the creation in Libya of inhuman structures aimed to detain immigrants mostly coming from Muslim majority countries (Wintour, 2017).

The travel of tropes from Right to Left emerged also in the debates about Brexit, electoral workhorse of the euro-sceptic right-wing party UKIP (Ford, Goodwin 2014; March, 2017), which outscored (26,6%) mainstream parties in 2014 EU Parliamentary elections. Persistent demands to take sovereignty back from the EU resulted in the Brexit referendum,

⁴ In the first Cabinet led by Jacques Chirac (1974-1976).

ended with the victory of the “Leave” (51.89%) on the “Remain” (48.11%). Many of the key leaders of Leave EU campaign articulated a narrative about British nationalism that resonated with racist and populist slogans. Hence, immigrants were constructed as both economic and security threats (Virdee, McGeever, 2018, p. 1806). Brexit was a critical juncture that exposed deep social divisions and discomfort with globalization and European integration. Indeed, the national-populist right mirrored and scaled up the circulation of racist discourses. It further legitimized the argument that white working-class’ deprivation stemmed from immigration and multiculturalism. While Miliband maintained Labour’s longstanding commitment towards racial equality, he admitted an existing socio-economic risk of immigration in the trade-off between white British and immigrants’ interests, shared across working-class electors (Shaw, 2015, p.6).

Since his acceptance speech as Labour’s leader, Miliband stressed that electors worried about the impact of immigration upon their communities. Community cohesion could be weakened by foreigners working for lower salaries and scrounging public welfare – another Thatcherite trope (Shaw, 2015, p.7). To this extent, Miliband (2012) bolstered a vision of social patriotism based on “shared destiny, shared endeavour and common life”. Immigrants might be an asset if their admission does not override a tolerance threshold - necessary to manage the risks to “wages, public services, and shared way of life” (Labour Party, 2015, p.49) and if they conform by British values. Old Labour politicians had grasped the electoral currency of the immigration card since the Sixties, as chapter three will further illustrate. The tougher turn in governing entry policies was justified to protect the British working-class from unfair competition. Hence, this is the ideological reservoir Miliband drew upon. Differently from Blair’s openness to wealthy and high-skilled immigration (Somerville, 2007), Miliband claimed that “by focusing exclusively on immigration’s impact on growth, we lost sight of who was benefiting from that growth - whose living standards were being squeezed. We became disconnected from the concerns of working people” (BBC, 2012). The nub of Miliband’s argument was that immigration needed to be controlled because it could undermine workers’ living standards by undercutting wages. Thus, Labour actively translated right-wing panic about unfettered immigration into a version congruent with some of old Labour’s referent objects - protecting the British working-class through balanced race relations.

After foregrounding the right-wing tropes that travelled to the Left, it is time to assess how right-wing parties subscribing to conservative ideas on gender and on religion in the public sphere have deflected two liberal-progressive tropes in a nationalist version that discriminates on ethnic and religious grounds.

1.2 Left-wing tropes that travelled to the Right

The two tropes that this section analyses are: the trope that Islam is incapable to separate the political sphere from the religious sphere and the trope that Islam is a patriarchal religion that poses obstacles to gender equality. According to such tropes, belonging to cultural and religious communities is a factor that might drive to oppress individualism and civil liberties such as freedom of speech and sexual freedom. This oppression grows into a matter of national security because some Muslim practices are presented in contrast with Western constitutional

principles. Hence, the possibility of extreme behaviours against the state is always possible. The trope is thus instrumentalized to justify restrictions on the admission of Muslim immigrants and upon practices like wearing the headscarf and eating *halal* food. As the section explains, some right-wing parties have appropriated these claims to attack Muslims and other ethnic minorities, not for genuine commitment to liberal values and gender equality. This is functional to the protection of a central referent object for the far-right, namely the nation as ethnic, cultural and religious homogeneous entity.

1.2.1 “Not secular” and “patriarchal”

The trope about Islam’s incompatibility with secularism can be broadly associated with liberal and socialist ideas. The argument that religion should be confined to the private sphere and excluded from politics has been historically more supported by parties of liberal, republican, and socialist inspiration (Colarizi, 2007; Julliard, 2012; Sirinelli, 2014), although it is today shared by most Western European parties on the Right. Conversely, the advocates of a more visible place for Christianity in public affairs usually come from conservative and Christian-Democratic ideological traditions (Freeden et.al., 2013) and from far-right groups and parties that are ideologically close to the counter-revolutionary Catholic tradition (Camus, Lebourg, 2017; Minkenberg, 2018). However, some right-wing parties and conservative intellectuals - like Bernard Lewis - usually praise secularization only to stress its exclusive European origins (Kumar, 2012, pp. 82-85), while they make exceptions for Christianity, like public funding for Catholic schools (Kuru, 2009, pp.109). Hence, in right-wing discourse it appears even more evident that secularism is a political regime that excludes non-European religions from the public sphere (Mavelli, 2012, pp. 2,10). Conversely, the Left plunges “its roots in secular modernity” (Jabri, 2007, p.69) and in decades of anticlerical battles against the Catholic Church, that were promoted by liberals, republicans and socialists (Howorth, 1977; Lyttleton, 1983)⁵. This explains why many liberal and left-wing parties have been reluctant to the penetration of religious beliefs into the political dimension.

Traces of the trope that equates Islam to a religion incapable of accepting secularization can be found among many liberal and left-wing Western philosophers. Max Weber built a comparative civilizational framework for understanding religions that became quite influential among European social theorists. Yet, his research is pervaded by orientalist biases and by the inclination to essentialize Islam (Salvatore, 1996). Among the tropes used by Weber, Islam was depicted as a religion spread by warriors; based on a legal and administrative system not suitable for rational economic activity; dominated by charismatic authority (Turner, 1974). Likewise, John Rawls, whose works are a milestone of contemporary political liberalism, depicts Muslims as an antithesis of liberalism and as “violent, warlike and imperialistic” (Norton, 2013, p.96). The liberal and left-wing anti-Islamic narratives are also fruit of the general hostility that both ideologies have against religion. In this respect, the anticlerical battles against Christian institutions carried out in the last centuries anticipated the current

⁵ Instead, Labour harboured less hostility against religion compared to social-democratic, socialist and communist parties in continental Europe. British socialists balked at Marxist atheism because it could conflict with the religious beliefs diffused in the working-class (Worthington Smith, 1957, p.357).

discourse against Islam. Intellectuals and politicians of different ideological sensibility, from republicans to the far left, agreed on their opposition to Catholicism, often predicated on the assumption that it was irrational, politically reactionary, and bigoted. These tropes mirror what is said today against Islam (Kuru, 2009, p.145)⁶.

A more virulent hostility against religions lies at the core of Marxism - despite some forms of Marxism (such as liberation theology) have found inspiration in religious preachings. Orthodox Marxism is incompatible with religion on two grounds: it contains a materialist metaphysic, and it dismisses religion as an “instrument of class rule” and “opium of the people” (McLellan, 1987, pp.2,7). Therefore, part of the Left keeps its ideological leaning to marginalise religion from political and public life. The relationship between Marxism and Islam has prompted interesting debates since the 1970s. In International Relations theory, many scholars underlined that Marxism was as an outgrowth of the European Enlightenment and as such shared the confidence in the superiority of Western civilization (Linklater, 2013, p.127), racist assumptions (van Ree, 2019) and orientalism. Despite its universal message of emancipation from capitalist exploitation, Said considered Marxism as another Western import that was unfit to fight Western imperialism (Achcar, 2013, p.73). This argument has been discredited by intellectuals such as Bryan Turner and Gilbert Achcar, who highlighted that the concept of orientalism is itself based on an essentialist opinion about the West (Achcar, 2013, pp.75-81)⁷. The communist intellectual Maxime Rodinson, who cautioned that, if pushed to the extreme, Said’s theses “could lead to the development of a dogmatic doctrine that dismissed a priori any findings labelled ‘orientalist’ in the name of an ‘anti-orientalist outlook’”. Against Said and other scholars who adopt orientalism as frames to study Muslim minorities (Amin-Khan, 2012; Meer, 2014; Saeed, 2016), Rodinson seems to claim that the emancipation of Muslims should not stop legitimate criticism of Islam because religion is a reactionary superstructure. Hence, there is a risk of being too much indulgent toward some rather conservative religious practices in the name of solidarity with Muslim minorities⁸.

Many scholars problematize the supposed reluctance of Muslims to accept European secular and rational modernity. The main reason lies in the arbitrary distinction between “secular” and “religious” that cannot be standardized as a universal meter of comparison because it carries a Eurocentric bias that has massively shaped the way we understand international politics (Pasha, 2012; Mavelli, Petito, 2014; Göle, 2015, pp.31-32). In this regard, Salvatore (2016, p.8) maintains that:

⁶ In Italy, Leonida Bissolati (one of the first exponents of the socialist movement in the late 1800s) stated that “once God has been abolished in the practice of daily life”, through Socialist organization, “it would be easy to abolish him in the field of abstract thought” (Lyttleton, 1983, pp.236-237).

⁷ According to Achcar, Said’s “critique of Western essentialist views of the Orient is itself essentialist at its core, premised as it is on upon an essentialist definition of the West” (2013, p.81).

⁸ Other left-leaning intellectuals share this view. Michael Walzer states that “One reason for the failure of the many leftists to acknowledge and confront Islamic zealotry is the fear of being called Islamophobic” (2019, p.143). Jacques Derrida published a controversial book (“*Rogue*”) in which he argued that Islam tends to refuse democracy: according to Norton (2013, pp.118-121), his position echoed the thesis peddled by Samuel Huntington.

“The difficulty in endorsing either an outright privatization or a rigorous confinement of religion in the case of Islam does not disprove the existence of secular trends and processes of differentiation of religious authority within Muslim-majority societies at several stages of their transformations”.

Similarly, Eisenstadt (2000) argues that there are multiple ways to achieve the principles of modernity. Some International Relations scholars proposed to read the revival of religion beyond the lens provided by European secular modernity: for instance, Hatzopoulos and Petito argue that “the exploration of religious traditions does not imply the substitution of reason with faith or irrationality as the grounding principle of a system of thought” (2003, p.15)⁹. Other authors show that the antinomy between Western modernity and Islam is contradicted by the historical achievements of Muslim countries – in terms of industrialization, modernization of values, and secularization (Zubaida, 2011).

The trope “Islam as anti-secular” is connected to another trope, stating that Islam is patriarchal because it clashes with the emancipation and parity of women and LGBTQ+ minorities. This argument has been traditionally upheld by feminist intellectuals. By feminism, I mean a vast array of political ideas that advocate for women’s emancipation and gender equality. Although it encompasses several varieties (e.g. liberal, socialist, radical, intersectional, conservative), parties on the Left have been more receptive of feminist ideas compared to the Right. While conservative and far-right parties are more prone to maintain the patriarchal status quo, feminism has historically shown an inescapably reforming or revolutionary nature and a demand for change (Chambers, 2013). I consider these aspects as ideologically more aligned with left-wing rather than right-wing parties, although European colonial powers and far-right authoritarian regimes have historically exploited the protection of white women as a referent object to flag a racist discourse against the “outsiders” (Muslims, Jews, Black, etc.), characterized by the “lack of control over their passions” (Mosse, 1985, p.134)¹⁰. However, the relationship between the Left and feminism has been controversial. Retracing such a long historical trajectory falls outside of my scope¹¹. Suffice it to say that a moderate convergence of interests exists between feminist movements’ requests (e.g. on abortion, divorce, and fight against discrimination) and the “the collective political project of egalitarian ethos” promoted by the Left (Alexander et.al., 2019, p.973).

Left-wing parties and intellectuals have been staunch defenders of women’s rights and freedom against some Islamic practices considered submissive. Particularly, the question of the headscarf has raised important debates because considered by many as a sign that Islam is grounded on a “disavowed femininity” and on the “inexistence of the feminine”, as argued by the left-wing philosopher Slavoj Žižek (Norton, 2013, pp.45-46)¹². In this narrative, the headscarf becomes a sign of radicalization and of political militancy. In 1989, three Muslim students were excluded from their high school in Creil (France) because they wore a *hijab*¹³.

⁹ See also Kanwal Sheikh (2014).

¹⁰ See also Abu-Lughod (2002, p.784)

¹¹ For further analysis, see Hartmann (1981) and Walters (2005).

¹² For a wider discussion on the “new orientalism” by philosophers usually considered left-leaning (e.g. Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida) see Almond (2007).

¹³ By *hijab*, I adopt the definition of Fadil (2011, p.85), who differentiates between “veil and headscarf”, which refer to a sartorial practice that has become a social practice, and “*hijab*”, that instead describes a religious conduct or religious prescription.

[As chapter four will discuss](#), the Socialist government gave the schools the responsibility to establish on a case-by-case basis whether veiled girls should be admitted to classes. A group of left-leaning intellectuals, including the feminist philosopher Élisabeth Badinter, wrote that this represented the “Munich” of the Republican school, arguing that Islam was patriarchal and as illiberal as Nazism (Badinter et.al., 1989). The same arguments are still spread among other allegedly progressive intellectuals, such as Caroline Fourest, feminist journalist and longstanding gay rights militant who has frequently opposed the Islamic practice of veiling in the name of an intransigent version of *laïcité*. The claims that Islam patronizes women, who then should be “rescued” by Western men, drive to securitization and hate speech (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Perry, 2014; Saeed, 2016). This perception is denied by empirical studies that demonstrate that wearing the headscarf is a conscious choice made by Muslim women, whose choices are justified for several reasons that might have little to do with religion (Gaspard, Khosrokhavar, 1995; Afshar, 2008; De Féo, 2020). Other research pinpoints that Islam is not inherently misogynistic because the Koran also includes egalitarian passages that call for gender equality (Kumar, 2012, p.47). Nonetheless, the trope is still widespread among liberal, feminist and left-wing intellectuals.

1.2.2 The critical junctures

The Creil affair is part of what I interpret as a third series of critical junctures that raised important debates about Islam and gender. This trope transmits the idea that Islam hampers women’s equality and freedoms. More recently, the discourse has encompassed the rights of LGBTQ+ minorities, who, according to some right-wing and left-wing parties, are endangered by the diffusion of Islamist propaganda (Foster, Kirke, 2023). What happened in Creil pushed some left-wing politicians and intellectuals to warn about Muslim practices deemed at odds with secularization. Additionally, the Creil affair also matters to grasp how right-wing parties instrumentalized the debate on the Republican school only with the purpose of attacking the headscarf, considered as a symbol of Islamic invasion and unmatched identity differences (Peker, 2021, p.330). Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the National Front, stated that “when you go to other people’s house, you conform to their norms”; similarly, Nicolas Sarkozy (future centre-right President of the Republic) declared that when he went to the mosque, he “took his shoes off and did not impose the use of French language”, in line with other centre-right politicians who defended the neutrality of the Republican school (Ferhat et.al., 2019, p.52). This was the first step of the right-wing appropriation of *laïcité* into a benchmark of French way of life, as the fourth chapter illustrates.

A similar debate on Islam and gender emerged after the night of New Years’ Eve 2015-16, when more than a thousand sexual assaults were committed in Germany by men that were mostly identified as “North African” and as “refugees” (Ilgit, Klotz, 2018). These scandalous assaults equipped the far right with fertile ground for Islam-bashing and xenophobic refrains. The far-right party Alternative for Germany took advantage of the assaults and experienced an upturn in support in the following months (Fangen, Lichtenberg, 2021). Many studies show that extreme-right movements (e.g. PEGIDA, the English Defence League, the Soldiers of Odin) and right-wing parties have frequently claimed to “save” native and Muslim women

from dark-skinned, hypersexualised foreigners (Ho, 2007; Aharoni, Féron, 2020). This powerful narrative has also gained momentum during the war on terror (Bhattacharyya, 2010). To this extent, Jasbi Puar (2007) has defined this narrative “homo-nationalistic”, to indicate that gay rights are hijacked for xenophobic purposes. For instance, Nigel Farage (former leader of the right-wing populist party UKIP, and then founder of the Brexit Party in 2019) has maintained that similar mass sexual assaults could happen in the UK if it remained part of the EU and blamed people coming “from countries where women are at best second-class citizens” for the attacks, buying into the trope that Islam is a patriarchal religion (Stone, 2016). This asymmetrical conception of feminism has gained unprecedented traction amid right-wing groups, who use it to underline the lag between the Islamic and European civilizations.

Another episode that sparked debates about the alleged patriarchal nature of Islam followed in August 2016, when several French mayors imposed a ban on wearing the *burkini* (traditional swimsuits designed for Muslim women). The prohibition has sparked international controversy and spurred Islamophobic reactions inspired by a gendered frame, typical of the Left but then reproduced by the Right. Indeed, this decision was endorsed by members of both conservative and progressive French political parties. In the French Socialist Party, the ban was justified because of the party’s historical and ideological attachment to secularism and women’s emancipation. Manuel Valls (who was then French PM) declared that the *burkini* indicated the idea that “by nature, women are immodest, impure, and should therefore be completely covered” (FranceInfo, 2016). The Socialist government’s position was also validated by Badinter, who argued that women should boycott the brands engaged in “modest fashion”, and thus in the commercialization of the *burkini* (Zerofsky, 2016). However, what should catch the attention is that part of the Right has used liberal tropes to justify further restrictions and control on Muslims.

While the Right appropriates liberal, secularist, or feminist rhetoric, it wraps them in an identitarian version that differs from the left-wing one. For example, Marine Le Pen, leader of the National Front claimed that the *burkini* symbolized an attack on “French soul, because France does not cage women’s body” (Le Point 2016b, Bayoumi, 2017). Similarly, in the UK, a negative and orientalist view on the *burkini* was advanced by the UKIP (Watts, 2016), which is in line with the previous proposal of Farage to ban the face veil in schools, airports and banks (Moseley, 2013). Far-right rhetoric tactically flags gender emancipation, but the norm is not equally promoted when it comes to discussing other women’s rights such as the gender pay gap, as Morgan (2017) shows regarding Le Pen. Likewise, the commitment to women’s emancipation does not seem to be a priority for conservative factions of the French far-right that support traditional family models and oppose LGBTQ+ rights and abortion (Cremer, 2021). A similar trend can be spotted in the agenda of right-wing parties that are rather conservative on family issues such the North League in Italy and Vox in Spain, all of them calling to ban the *burkini* (La Repubblica, 2016b; Vox, 2021).

The approval of anti-veil bans through a liberal-progressive register allows Western radical right parties to securitize Muslims in a different way. They accept such register to the extent that it meets their xenophobic beliefs and rhetoric: gender emancipation serves insofar as it stresses that only Islam is a backward religion. Some parties acknowledge that values like

the protection of gay rights are nowadays shared by large parts of the public opinion, including right-wing electors (EU Commission, 2019). Thus, it would be tactically inconvenient to ignore them. The progressive turn of right-wing parties is criticized by some internal reactionary factions but resonates with the way of life of many younger electors - as testified by fieldwork research on how the National Front has weaponized gay rights to attack Islam and attract new voters (Crépon, 2012). Nonetheless, the protection of gender rights in front of Islam jars with how the same parties turn a blind eye in front of domestic violence and femicide committed by white Western men (let alone condemning homophobia and transphobia) and with the support that some right-wing leaders give to foreign politicians who issued discriminating laws against the LGBTQ+ community, such as Viktor Orbán, Hungarian PM since 2010 (Hungary Today, 2021).

In this respect, the comparative analysis of distinct national contexts shows that the right-wing appropriation of gender issues varies in time and space. Defending gay rights is a litmus test in the appropriation of liberal-progressive themes that not all radical right parties have passed hitherto (Akkerman, 2015). According to Foster and Kirke (2023, pp. 281-282), this “alter-progressive” ideology thrives on the inclusion of some categories (white LGB individuals who feel menaced by religious radicalism) and exclusion of other marginalised subjects: not only Muslims but also transgender and other gender identities that fall outside the cis-hetero-normative framework. Hence, they propose the acronym “LGB” as more accurate than “LGBTQ+” to discuss the left-to-right appropriation of gender equality. Many radical right parties securitize Muslim men to protect native women. However, the most conservative ones (the North League, Brothers of Italy, Alternative for Germany, Vox) do not mention foreign Muslim women, native LGB minorities, let alone transgender individuals, as categories to be protected from Islamic fundamentalism. These asymmetries deserve further research because they mark a difference in what the Right and Left think about gender equality in Islam.

A fourth category of critical junctures is related to the trope that depicts Islam as an “anti-secular” religion that clashes with principles like the freedom of expression - and, particularly, of blasphemy. Historically, the philosophical and political arguments for free speech resonate more with liberalism than with conservatism (Mondal, 2018). Specifically, anticlerical, and blasphemous speeches are more found on the Left than on the Right. Left-wing parties often seep into ideological references that call to privatize religion or even eradicate it from public life. One consequence of this is stretching the boundaries of freedom of speech insofar to include blasphemy, vindicated by liberal and left-wing circles as a political and philosophical legacy linked to European tradition. However, some right-wing politicians accepted and encouraged to mock Islam in the name of freedom of expression, but they did not do the same when Christianity was object of blasphemy.

The first controversy that portrayed freedom of speech as a “Muslim question” was the publication of the book *The Satanic Verses* by the novelist Salman Rushdie in 1988 *The Satanic Verses* (Norton, 2013, p.16). Since the book was partly inspired by the life of Muhammad, Rushdie was accused of blasphemy by other Muslims. Several states (India, Bangladesh, Sudan) banned its publication after loud outrage erupted within their Muslim communities. Thousands of British Muslims arranged street-level manifestations against the book in Bolton

and Bradford (Pantucci, 2015, p.81). The affair escalated after the Iranian Ayatollah Khomeini dictated a *fatwa* that sentenced to death Rushdie and all those involved in the volume's publication. Since then, Rushdie has been victim of death threats and assassination attempts - the last one on August 12, 2022, when a man stabbed him at a public event in New York, when Rushdie was invited to deliver a lecture. However, what most British Muslims reckoned as particularly vilifying was not the success of Rushdie, but that British law prohibiting blasphemy (although not enforced and abolished in 2008) was not expanded to other religions but Christianity. Moreover, the Conservative British Cabinet securitized the protests by using a fear-mongering language that depicted Muslims as fanatics, peddling the trope that Islam is anti-secular and irrational. A series of warnings against violence were issued to British Muslims, albeit "no arrests or injuries had occurred as a result of the demonstrations" (Asad, 1990, pp.455-456, in Norton 2013, p.18).

The Rushdie affair - [further discussed in chapter three](#) - was the first event that catalysed the re-articulation of liberal and secular language by right-wing parties. The trope of Muslims as anti-secular and illiberal has been widely used by the Right too, who adjusted it into a xenophobic and securitarian register. Many far-right politicians have for long instrumentalized "free speech" to justify Islamophobic arguments and the publication of visual material that some Muslims consider blasphemous (Castelli Gattinara, 2017b). Theo Van Gogh was a Dutch filmmaker murdered in 2004 after being criticized from some Muslims because of the film *Submission*, that blamed Islam for misogynistic practices and mistreatment of women. His legacy has been praised by the Dutch far-right leader Geert Wilders, who instrumentalised the assassination of Van Gogh to advocate a five-year halt of immigration from non-Western countries, arguing that the Netherlands "had been too tolerant to intolerant people for too long. We should not import a retarded political Islamic society into our country" (Deutsch, 2004). On the heels of Van Gogh, Wilders also produced a short film, *Fitna*, aimed to portray Islam as a religion of hate that punishes whoever violates its doctrines.

In 2005, the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* printed 12 editorial cartoons that depicted Muhammad to encourage the debate about criticism of Islam. The wide circulation of the drawings in the following months gained media attention and sparked vivid protests across Muslim-majority countries. However, one of the most violent episodes (the death of 11 Libyan rioters protesting outside the Italian consulate in Benghazi) was triggered by the Italian Minister Roberto Calderoli (North League) who had worn a t-shirt displaying the cartoons during a television appearance (Norton, 2013, p.27). The far-right Danish People's Party would lately instrumentalize the affair during the 2007 electoral campaign in a poster claiming that "freedom of speech is Danish, censorship is not", followed by "we defend Danish values" (Fouché, 2007).

A more recent episode linked to anti-Islamic cartoons is the terrorist mass shooting in the office of the French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo. On 7 January 2015, the French brothers Saïd and Chérif Kouachi, affiliated with *Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula*, killed 12 and injured 11 people to attack Charlie Hebdo since it had published several offensive cartoons about the Islamic Prophet Muhammad. The impact on French and Western societies was massive, leading to many demonstrations throughout the country and a mass gathering in Paris

with many world leaders attending (Bogain, 2019, p.241). Global solidarity was expressed through the hashtag #jesuischarlie. Although this event can be considered part of the first critical juncture, it deserves more attention because the target, Charlie Hebdo, soon turned into the symbol of “what is right about liberal values and what is wrong with religious fundamentalism” (Downing, 2019, pp.1-2) - despite not being the first media to publish blasphemous cartoons about Islam (Norton, 2013, pp. 15-44). Marine Le Pen condemned the Charlie Hebdo mass shooting by instrumentalizing “freedom of speech” and condemning radical religious narratives (Rassemblement National, 2015). Le Pen weaponized secular values to construct Muslims as an undifferentiated category of fanatics unable to privatize religion.

This marks a difference with the attitude shown towards Christianity, especially in parties that have good relations with catholic movements, like the North League and the National Rally (Almeida, 2017; Ozzano, 2019). The respect of religiosity cherished by conservative politicians in front of their Christian electors is sacrificed in the name of freedom of speech and blasphemy only if it is Islam to cause a public uproar. This double standard emerges in the discourse of radical right leaders. In 2010, Marine Le Pen compared Muslims praying in the streets to the “Nazi occupation” (Le Point, 2010). Still, she adopted a more indulgent attitude when some Catholic groups decided to pray in public during the restrictions imposed by the COVID19 pandemic (Le Monde Juif, 2020). In 2011 some French Catholic groups outcried against two artworks that depicted Christ in a blasphemous manner: the play *Golgota Picnic* and the sculpture *PissChrist*. Nobody from the National Front defended the artists from the public condemnation, as the party is still close to ultra-catholic associations. During the “Pride” of June 2021 in Milan, one man disguised himself as a LGBTQ+ version of Christ wearing high-heels and miniskirt. Right-wing leaders Salvini and Meloni defined this action as a blasphemous and awful provocation (Libero Quotidiano, 2021).

The ambivalent protection of secular values by the far-right rests on two arguments. First, religion is interpreted as a civilizational marker, extolled in its dimension of common cultural and identitarian “belonging”, rather than “believing” (Davie, 2006; Roy, 2016b). The securitization of Islam thrives on the alleged common belonging to a community of shared horizons of meanings and cultural Christian heritage, erected as a bulwark of civilization. In a narrative much influenced by Huntington, Islam is depicted as a political ideology that carries a violent and backward culture (Brubaker, 2017). For instance, the British National Party “wants to see the return of a bygone age where cultural Christianity acts as a unifying element and moral compass” (Peace 2016, p.104), while complaining that the effects of immigration and the presence of Islam are threatening British traditions and history. However, the weaponization of Christian themes by right-wing identity politics is based on a reified conception of the sacred and an immanent and culturalized understanding of religion, hollowed out of ethical principles and transcendental claims (Joppke, 2018).

Second, far-right parties maintain that the European Christian heritage does not jar against secularization. The latter equipped the West with the conditions of possibility to achieve the separation between Church and State and the coexistence between reason and faith, while such development is portrayed as a missing element in Islam, as Bernard Lewis has also

argued (Mavelli, 2012, p.63; Göle, 2015, p.56). Hence, the far-right conveniently adheres to secularism as an ethnic regime of exclusion of non-Judeo-Christian religions, chief among them Islam¹⁴. This is possible because secularism is a conceptually rich and contested notion (Calhoun et.al., 2011), dependent on historical conjunctures. Hence, it is easy for political parties to manipulate the boundaries between the religious and the secular, which I interpret as discursive categories and frameworks of knowledge imposed by political elites (Asad, 2003; McCutcheon, 2007; Cavanaugh, 2014). The approach to secularism that accommodates religion insofar as it is the Judeo-Christian tradition at the core of Western civilization was defined by Hurd (2008, pp.29-45) as “Judeo-Christian”, whereas the “laicist” approach rests on the assumption that religion should be excluded from politics. These two trajectories of secularism are the most used by Western political elites to approach international affairs, including Muslim minorities. These two modalities broadly mirror left-wing (“laicist”) and right-wing (“Judeo-Christian”) interpretations of secularism. Accordingly, the Right claims that religion should not be ultimately receded out of modern spheres of authority, whereas left-wing parties usually follow a laicist perspective (Hurd, 2008, p.42).

Although the critical junctures presented above show that the boundaries between Right and Left have blurred, there are still differences in the securitization by the Right and Left. Although governing parties act in the name of state sovereignty and national security, jihadism and Muslim immigration are not objective threats independent from party ideologies. Indeed, each party securitizes Islam to protect its referent objects and its concept of what should be secured to protect the nation. As the next section shows, the established securitization Schools do not provide suitable tools to understand the movement and adaptation of tropes across parties.

1.3 Engaging with political parties in securitization

Specific manifestations of anti-Islamic securitization cannot be understood without engaging with right and left-wing partisan ideologies. Since the Copenhagen and Paris Schools privilege state institutions and agencies as the main unit of analysis, this section shows that both Schools leave a gap regarding the mobilization of ideas, tropes and policies that right and left-wing parties deploy to justify the securitization of Islam when they lead the state institutions (e.g. Government) and agencies (e.g. intelligence, police, military)¹⁵. The discourse on national security is widely understood as dependent on national cultures and on structural conditions that constrain the influence of political parties (Kirchner, Sperling, 2010; D’Amato, 2019). This aspect is underlined by security scholars who recognize that immaterial factors (culture, identity, ideas) impact national security (Katzenstein, 1996; Krause, Williams, 1997; Sjöstedt, 2013; Hayes, 2016). Still, little attention has been given to how these factors interplay

¹⁴ This holds for the radical right, whereas some extreme right movements keep on spreading anti-Semitic hate and violence (Castelli Gattinara, 2017b).

¹⁵ This is an interpretation that is quite spread in critical studies on terrorism, that, like securitization theories, is analytically centred on the executive power. For example, Neal recalls that “research on counterterrorism pays little attention to the role of legislature. Most focuses on government policy, the nature of security threats, or the letter and function of the law. Indeed, there is no existing theory of security that takes the legislature seriously” (2012b, pp.357-358).

with right- and left-wing political ideologies. This thesis' analytical framework incorporates such ideologies since they help policymakers to interpret the Muslim question as a security issue.

1.3.1 The Copenhagen School

The Copenhagen School has produced rich insights to the critical investigation of security, chiefly the elaboration of securitization theory. According to the Copenhagen School, “security is the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the games and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics” (Buzan et.al.,1998, p.23). In this respect, state agents naturalise security as necessary and extraordinary, which is a way of silencing the realm of politics (Villumsen Berling et.al., 2022, p.7). Security threats are identified by their outcome: the enshrinement of exceptional policies to protect some “referent objects”, namely “things that are seen to be existentially threatened and that have a legitimate claim to survival” (1998, p.36). State representatives enact emergency measures of containment through a speech act. State officials are privileged units of analysis because the referent object of security is the invulnerability and survival of the State (1998, p.21). This analytical choice owes much to the realist tradition of International Relations Theory¹⁶. Despite the influence of realism, the Copenhagen School has rightly argued that state security is not made up only by the military sector, but also by other four ones: societal, economic, political, and environmental (1998, p.119). In doing so, Buzan and the other authors chose to partially move beyond state-centrism: for instance, the referent object of societal security is the survival of the identity of a community, whose boundaries are not necessarily congruent with the state's ones. Larger groups – nations, tribes, civilizations, religions, and races – can be treated likewise as referent objects (1998, p.123).

Nonetheless, the question that the Copenhagen School leaves unaccounted for and that this thesis answers is how alternative agents on the political spectrum conceptualize the security of such groups, that does not correspond to the survival of state institutions. Despite opening the possibility that “some group, movement, party or elite acts with reference to the nation and claims to speak or act on behalf of the nation” (Buzan et.al.,1998, p.41), the Copenhagen School's analytical framework reifies the identity of the securitizing actors, considered only as state agents, while such identities mute along divergent ideological and partisan lines¹⁷. This is explained by the Copenhagen School's authors as an attempt to reach theoretical parsimony rather than empirical richness because they aimed to study securitization as “power politics of a concept” (Buzan et.al., 1998, p.32; Waever, 2015).

What I contend instead is that political parties securitize according to their beliefs, norms, and identities, which in turn change across the political spectrum and across intra- party factions and individual members. Parties affect the discourse and policies on security when they face highly contested and politicized security issues such as the governance of ethnic

¹⁶ This was necessary, according to Waever (1995), to retain the standard codes inherent in the field of traditional security studies.

¹⁷ For a critique against Copenhagen School's reification of identity, see McSweeney (1999).

minorities and immigrants. This happens because national security is not merely the protection of what physically lies within countries' borders, but also of an intangible legacy of culture and values (Caudle, 2009). Such legacy changes according to the governing parties or party, who hijack it to claim that Muslims cannot be integrated and thus represent a security threat. While this discourse is historically a leitmotiv of right-wing parties, what needs further problematization is why part of the Left buys into this narrative. Yet, the Copenhagen School framework lacks sufficient engagement with partisan ideologies, so it cannot explain how the securitization of Islam has travelled across the Right and Left.

1.3.2 The Paris School

Regarding the Paris School, many authors maintain that securitization does not involve a shift from normal politics to an exceptional security realm as the Copenhagen School theorizes (Balzacq, 2005; Huysmans, 2006). On the opposite, national security agencies construct security threats and manage them through institutional processes and normalized practices of exclusion. Thus, bureaucratic activities based on risk-management, statistical analyses, and use of big data have more analytical currency than the exceptional suspension of law (Aradau, van Munster, 2007; Amicelle et.al., 2015). Through a methodological approach that owes more to sociology than to philosophy and linguistics, Paris School scholars claim to show how politics and security are two dimensions constantly embroiled on the same analytical level rather than being different realms (Balzacq et. al., 2015a, p.13). This thesis partially builds on this argument. As the following chapters show, each party securitizes Muslims because Islamophobia has long been rooted in its legacy. Hence, securitization is not a consequence of emergency situations but gradually takes shape through ordinary political dynamics.

In claiming that security is normal and routinised, the Paris School considers security bureaucracies as pivotal in the fabrication of security issues, even more than the agency of political decision-makers. Bigo investigates how law-enforcement agencies (military, police, intelligence) are the very artisans of security threats such as the securitization of immigration (2002, p.76; Rigouste, 2011). Immigrants are diagnosed as a threat fabricated by security bureaucracies to preserve their socio-cultural capital and expertise. Following this framework, the securitization of immigration is analysed as a set of administrative practices of exclusion performed especially along national border. This diagnosis emerges both in Bigo (2002, p.66) and in other authors who proposed to go beyond the Copenhagen School (Huysmans, 2006; Neal, 2009). In this regard, the nexus between migration and criminality is considered as a framework of knowledge that is mostly manufactured by state bureaucracies. Little is the emphasis on how this discursive articulation has been also produced by other political factors such as the widespread diffusion of racist narratives and the electoral rise of the far right.

This argument downplays the possibility that security threats are connected to the way parties articulate them. Like the Copenhagen School, the Paris School shifts the focus away from the agency of professional politicians and the role of political ideas in the fabrication of ethnic minorities as security threats. Bigo explicitly denies that the securitization of immigration stems from the ideological struggle between conservatives and liberals (2002, p.64; Neal 2019, p.26). He argues that:

“The securitization of immigration is not only an effect of, even if it contributes to, the propaganda of the far-right political parties, the rise of racism, a new and more efficient rhetoric convincing the population of a danger, or successful “speech acts” performed by actors coming from the state or from the society. Securitization of the immigrant as a risk is based on our conception of the state as a body or a container for the polity” (2002, p.65).

While it is indisputable that parties need the expertise of security professionals, what is underdeveloped in the Paris School is a reflection on how different political ideologies shape the very conception of the state and the polity, which shows different degrees of inclusivity across the political spectrum. The Paris School’s focus on security professionals gives the impression that parties are indifferent units in the securitization of state borders, that they address through the epistemic frames provided by bureaucrats. However, a deeper analysis of party politics reveals that the securitization of immigrations is tied to far-right narratives (Lazaridis, Wadia, 2015; McCluskey, 2019). The diffusion of nationalist refrains has then impacted left-wing parties and compelled them to normalize restrictive border policies. Despite such proximity, the Right and Left mobilize different aspects of Western cultural heritage against Muslims because of a sedimented repertoire of orientalist and anti-Islamic narratives that belong to their party families and ideologies. Hence, parties have their own historical frames to consider immigrants as an exogenous threat, through which they can potentially channel the elaboration of security responses by bureaucrats.

1.3.3 The relevance of political parties

Building on and integrating the Paris School, I aim to illustrate that right-wing and left-wing parties are not indifferently involved in securitization because they have in mind a distinct idea of why Islam is a matter of insecurity. To understand the travel of securitization tropes across parties, we need an approach that goes beyond the analytical centrality of the logic of emergency (Copenhagen) and the focus on bureaucracies (Paris). If one weaves the securitization process into ordinary political dynamics, it is possible to explore how security is framed by political ideologies (Hegemann, Schneekener, 2019; Williams, 2019), by the professional rules of politics (Neal, 2012a), by political institutions such as the Parliament (Jarvis, Legrand, 2017; Lister, 2019) and by civil society actors (Hagmann et.al., 2018). Adopting only the vantage point of state official representatives and bureaucracies leaves a vacuum regarding how competing political parties attempt to “politicize” security policies and agencies. The concept of politicization is useful to grasp how different actors “advance their potentially conflicting arguments and interact in various arenas” related to the management of security policies (Hagmann et.al., 2018, p.11). The de-politicized analysis of security affairs and counterterrorism cannot properly address the conceptual ambiguities and political conflicts behind the definition of some problems. This happens in the management of the most seemingly technical issues, like a pandemic, and even more when very contentious and value-driven notions like radicalisation (on which there is no consensual knowledge), terrorism, and religion are at stake (Hegemann, Kahl, 2018, pp. 559-560).

Political parties politicize security because they furnish clear ideological inputs in setting the priorities of bureaucracies and in giving meaning to contested concepts that cannot

be de-politicized, by which I mean detached from ordinary party debates. Despite professionals helps to interpret and tackle security issues, many politicians, especially on the Right, try to re-appropriate the discourse on security from experts and bureaucracies (Drolet, Williams, 2018, p.306). More specifically, right-wing populists have frequently lashed out at security elites by arguing that they “were not doing enough, rather than too much” (Hagmann et.al., 2018, p.4). This is particularly evident in countries where the executive has considerable leeway to appoint loyal civil servants. Hence, while serving as President, Trump instrumentalized the US system to nominate civil servants who could further his xenophobic and Islamophobic policies (Cribb, 2020). In April 2019, Trump pulled back the nominee of Ronald Vitiello for Director of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement and fired his Department of Homeland Security Secretary, Kirjsten Nielson, judged as too soft to pursue the government crackdown on illegal migration (Rockman, 2019, p.1564). Such decisions to side-line previous bureaucrats for loyal ones reflect a centralistic vision of security that aligns with authoritarian practices and populist mistrust towards the elites. However, the politicization of security bureaucracies surfaced also in countries with a different system, as shown by the former Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori, the Hungarian PM Viktor Orbán, the leader of the Swiss People’s Party Christoph Blocher, and the former French President Sarkozy (Meunier, 2012; Bauer, Becker, 2020).

Another demonstration that political parties politicize security can be elicited from the debates about radicalization and counter-radicalization, that have become a crucial section of counterterrorism policies. Since radicalization is a very contested notion, national bureaucracies are affected by partisan decisions to monitor and produce research more on some groups than others, which led to prioritize religious and racialized minorities (i.e. Muslims) than on far-right movements, as it happened in the elaboration of British counterterrorism strategy Prevent (Bentley, 2015, p.107). Similarly, environmentalist groups have been securitized by right-wing governments. The Conservative Cabinet led by Boris Johnson (2019-2022) has supported an argument firstly popularised by the right-wing think-tank Policy Exchange, which argues that the climate activists of Extinction Rebellion are an extremist organisation that pursues the “breakdown of rule of law” and thus needs to be tackled by “Ministers and politicians, the Commission for Countering Extremism, police and the general public” (Wilson, Walton, 2019, p.5). Therefore, a more comprehensive account of radicalization should integrate the works published on security bureaucracies and professionals (Bigo, Tsoukala, 2008; Bigo, 2014; Eroukhmanoff, 2015; Bonelli, Ragazzi, 2019) with research about the ideologies and electoral programs of parties. Hence, parties decide who are the radical subjects and how to fight them.

The following chapters seek to examine how the cluster of concepts related to security and Islam (radicalization, demographic threat, illiberalism, etc.) are articulated by right- and left-wing parties. The literature on which I build leaves a gap regarding how securitization is affected by partisan ideologies and not only by national identities. This gap has been partially addressed by Croft (2012), who illustrates how British Cabinets under Blair (1997-2007), Gordon Brown (2007-10) and David Cameron (2010-12) differently emboldened the nature of “Britishness” amid the national crisis that broke out after the 7/7 London bombings. In this regard, Croft pays attention to how Conservatives and Labour have politicized counterterrorism by mentioning distinct ideological understandings of Britishness. According to Croft, the

securitization of Muslims as “orientalized, radical, temporal and spatial *others*” (2012, pp.86-90) is not interpreted as a strategy to protect the survival of the state as a referent object. By suggesting a “post-Copenhagen” approach (2012, p.73), Croft argues that the referent objects of securitization are the distinct values that governing parties associate with what they consider as the British way of life. In so doing, Croft performs a genealogy of how Britishness emerged through conflictual encounters with historical enemies (Dutch, Germans, Muslims) who have relationally contributed to defining British identity. This emphasis on identity as an immaterial and fluid referent object of security resonates with Croft’s thesis that securitization is firstly concerned with the “ontological security” of the agents (the security achieved through a series of routines and practices performed in everyday life) rather than the physical survival of the state (2012, pp.17-38).

Croft lays the ground to explore the securitization of Islam beyond the Copenhagen and Paris Schools. His model shows that alternative interpretations of British ontological security are furthered by different Cabinets to motivate the securitization of Muslims. Croft brilliantly distinguishes between right-wing and left-wing competing partisan narratives about Britishness, throughout a reconstruction that tells us more about how political elites see Islam than about British Muslims’ perspectives (Amin-Khan, 2012). The bulwark of British values to defend against jihadism differs in the narratives used by the Conservatives and Labour. Norman Tebbit (Conservative MP, 1970-92) interpreted London terrorist attacks as an utter failure of multiculturalism in promoting a feeling of loyalty to Britishness in Britons of immigrant background. Conversely, former Labour PM Brown cherished a version of Britishness based on inclusiveness and openness, but his spatial and temporal narrative advocated for a rebirth of the nation after the shock of home-grown terrorism (Croft, 2012, pp.165-169). Despite this comparison, Croft does not provide a reconstruction of how different currents in the Labour party historically considered Muslim immigration, which would help to grasp even further the contemporary securitization of Islam and the emphasis on the integration of immigrants.

This thesis aims to contribute to research such as Croft’s by exploring the meaning that the securitization of Islam embodies for some British, French, and Italian parties. Such meaning emerges from the ideologies and discourses on Islam that such parties subscribe to and that change across intra-party currents and factions. Therefore, critical security studies need a stronger engagement with how the Right and Left reshape each other’s security constructs in modified but still restrictive tropes and policies. The securitization of Islam unfolds through stereotypical constructions of Muslim otherness that are crafted by political parties following their conservative or progressive vision of how minorities and majorities should coexist. For such reasons, Islamophobia is not just a common framework shared by all parties and justified in the name of protecting the state sovereignty by the threat of jihadism. This gap in the research on parties is problematic because they provide multiple and varying understandings of what insecurity is and how it should be tackled. These understandings very often sit uncomfortably alongside one another and deserve to be particularly discussed in a period marked by the crisis of mainstream parties and the rise of right- and left-wing populism (Kaltwasser et.al., 2017). Despite recent studies examining the intersection between populism and securitization (Kurylo, 2020; Wojczewski, 2020; Bonansinga, 2022) and between translation and securitization

(Villumsen, Berling et.al., 2022)¹⁸, the analyses of how security travels across political parties are still underdeveloped.

The emphasis on partisan difference matters also to debunk the narrative shared by right-wing and left-wing populists that the mainstream Right and Left converged towards undifferentiated technocratic policies. Partisan convergence can be described as the situation in which mainstream centre-left and centre-right parties converge to the point where they no longer offer voters clear alternatives on many pressing issues (Berman, Kundnani, 2021, p.23), chiefly among them economic and fiscal policies. This is a narrative that resonates with the approach that most securitization scholars endorse since they study state-led security policies without sufficient attention for the ideology of the governing parties. While a comprehensive analysis of the literature on populism falls outside the scope of this thesis¹⁹, there is a wide consensus that populist parties accuse the mainstream Right and Left of having become an undifferentiated *elite* who surrendered to neoliberal economic and fiscal recipes and who is far from the necessities of the *people* (Katz, Mair, 2009; Roberts, 2017).

Instead, what I contend is that the mainstream Right and Left have responded to the populist narrative of being a “de-politicized” elite that converges to the centre by further politicizing cultural and religious issues. Centre-right and centre-left parties are targeted by the securitization started by the far right, who calls the mainstream parties (audiences of securitization) to endorse or reject the initial move. This process has brought mainstream parties to increasing the saliency of non-economic issues (Berman, Kundnani, 2021, p.27) and raising the importance of themes like immigration, terrorism, and crime. Many centre-right parties have bought into reactionary ideas that flew from the fringes into the mainstream, as mentioned above about the discourses on cultural racism. Among them, the conservative protection of local identities, traditions and communities from globalization gained traction and scaled up politicization of non-economic issues. A forceful securitization of Muslim immigration has followed suit. This “cultural divide” (Bornschier, 2010) has gradually replaced the socio-economic class divisions and transformed the political space in several Western European countries. Social-democratic parties, who usually addressed socio-economic issues, have moved to centre and normalised the idea of inherent cultural differences between Islam and the West.

A question left unanswered by traditional securitization Schools is what happens when parties adopt the security language of their competitors. Left-wing parties have adopted right-wing narratives (e.g. more security, more restrictions on immigration), while the Right has cherished some progressive values coming from the Left (e.g. the protection of LGBTQ+ rights). Concretely, both share the same agonistic register against Muslims. However, this mutual Islamophobia is not a synonym of pure equivalence. Indeed, it is the centre-left who has gone right-ward, both for economic and fiscal policies, and particularly regarding issues like immigration and integration of ethnic minorities, while radical right parties have

¹⁸ These scholars have argued that translation matters because the interpretations of security change across “different fields, spheres, or sites of meaning” (Villumsen Berling et.al. 2022, p.12). Nevertheless, their research on translation is carried out “within and across new spaces of professions, disciplines, organisations, cultures, and scales”, which leaves again the translation by political parties out of the picture.

¹⁹ On populism, see Laclau (2005), Mudde (2007), Moffitt (2016).

maintained their traditional emphasis on nationalism and law-and-order, albeit wrapping them with liberal-progressive slogans. This thesis will show that several centre-left parties have endorsed policies that disproportionately target Muslims. The following chapters interpret the mutual appropriation of tropes as a translation across political parties and argue that translation explains how securitizing tropes travel between the Right and Left.

Conclusion

The chapter has discussed four Islamophobic tropes that Western ruling elites deploy to securitize Muslims and has linked such tropes to the specific ideological heritage of right-wing (nationalist, radical, conservative) and left-wing (liberal-progressive, social-democratic, socialist) parties. It has illustrated that the Right and Left have mutually appropriated and reshaped such tropes in a version different from the original. The categorization between tropes born on the Right and Left is not surgical. It is affected by contextual factors, such as the national political culture and the place that religion has in the country's history. The Right in a quite secularized country (e.g. Britain) is less sensitive to religious arguments than the Italian centre-left, which is historically linked to Christian democracy. Hence, many tropes can be found both on the Right and the Left. Taken together, all these tropes shape the Islamophobic discourse that constrains our possibility to think about Islam as something different from the portrait made by Western ruling elites. The socio-cultural context where current Islamophobic narratives travel across parties is marked by these discursive regularities, as well as by the critical junctures that pushed parties to securitize Islam. However, the literature lacks further reflection on how conservative and progressive parties appropriate each other's narratives, let alone specific research on left-wing Islamophobia.

The chapter then explained that it would not be possible to capture the conceptual travel of securitization by engaging only with established versions of securitization theory, whose analytical focus is on the executive branch of the state, whether they are high-ranking members of the cabinet and/or the military (Copenhagen School), or bureaucrats working for national security agencies (Paris School). The grammar of securitization is deployed by both the Right and Left to evoke conflictual dynamics and the need for coercive measures. However, the vocabulary of security changes according to how party members see the relationship with Muslim minorities. The distance between Right and Left poles remains, but it appears more as a difference in the external form, rather than in the agonistic momentum at the core of securitization (Balzacq, 2015, p.3). A deeper enquiry focused on the tropes and policies that parties carry during the securitization process helps to elicit how conservative and progressive parties have translated each other's ideas with the same purpose to securitize Islam and reiterate Muslims' subaltern condition.

Studying the travel of securitization also allows scrutinising the internal fractures in left-wing parties regarding the adoption of liberal cultural positions. This topic has raised relevant debates more in political science than in critical security studies (Bale et.al., 2010, 2013; Odman, Bale, 2015; Abou-Chadi, Wagner, 2020). Yet, both sub-fields lack further analysis of how left-wing parties have developed Islamophobic policies by drawing upon both their ideological repertoire and right-wing slogans. Hence, centre-left parties have moved right-

ward, despite historically harbouring more inclusive attitudes towards ethnic minorities than the Right. This situation deserves careful examination because it unearths an important normative conflict in centre-left parties between the solidarity towards Muslim minorities and the protection of secular and liberal-democratic norms. These referent objects are all associated with a shared understanding of “being left-wing” (Hinnfors et.al., 2012; Walzer, 2019). Yet, some of them can be used to securitize Muslims, as shown in the discussion of my case studies.

Hence, since securitization theory does not engage with political parties, I argue that the notion of translation should be seriously considered to answer my research question: *how does securitization travel across and inside parties?* Translation allows exploring how the Right and Left discursively mould the securitization of Islam in alternative tropes and policies, which cohere with their ideological understanding of the threat. The next chapter will more substantially engage with translation by exploring its conceptual roots and analytical implications. Focusing on the concept of intra-linguistic translation, the following questions will be discussed: Does translation carry an ideological significance or is it only a tactical choice? Is there the possibility to resist translation? To what extent the ideological changes occurred in centre-left parties after the cold war have affected the translation of securitization of Islam from the Right.

2. Translation: how securitization travels

The adoption of right-wing ideas and policies (e.g. the primacy of market-driven economy) by left-wing parties has been largely discussed (Moschonas, 2002; Lavelle, 2008; Buckler, Dolowitz, 2009; Evans, Tilley, 2017). There are less studies that ask whether and how this process occurred in relation to issues like the governance of religious minorities, such as Muslims, that right-wing parties have frequently securitized (Betz, Meret, 2009; Marzouki et.al., 2016). Yet, this aspect is very significant because, as chapter one made clear, there are prominent examples of left-wing parties that started to emphasize security and implement stricter policies regarding terrorism, immigration, and the integration of Muslims.

When Margaret Thatcher was asked in 2002 what her greatest achievement was, she replied “Blair and New Labour. We forced our opponents to change their minds” (Leggett, 2010, p.61). Not only did Blair move the party right-ward regarding the economy, but also in matters of law-and-order, as he pursued tougher anti-crime and anti-terrorism policies, more in line with the conservatives than with traditional socialist penology (Elcock, 1984, p.149). Earlier, in 1997, the French PM Lionel Jospin (Socialist Party) claimed that “security is the first freedom” and that “the Republican principle of equality cannot ignore the right to security” because ignoring the security of the citizens means to compromise their liberties (Cos, 2019). Yet, the slogan “security is the first freedom” was firstly vocalized by the centre-right Minister of Justice Alain Peyrefitte in 1981 when the Cabinet signed the “Law on Freedom and Security” (Tesquet, 2020). More significantly, the sentence was appropriated by Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the far-right party National Front, in several publications in the mid-Eighties (Taguieff, 1989, p.211). The same slogan “security is the first freedom” was then used by the French PM Valls to justify the extension of the “state of emergency” mandated after the terrorist attacks of November 2015 (Tesquet, 2020).

This chapter engages with the notion of translation to explain the inter-party dynamics of linguistic appropriation. It argues that translation encompasses three interrelated dimensions: it is *active*, *collective*, and *contextual*. These three dimensions surface when securitization travels inside and outside parties. In so doing, I illustrate that securitization is shaped by partisan political ideologies, whose nexus with security is under-researched (Williams, 2019).

This chapter consists of four sections. The first section scrutinizes the literature on translation to build an analytical framework for the study of securitization. It emphasizes that translation should be studied as both an *inter*- and *intra*-linguistic process, then foregrounds the latter as the key to understanding how securitization tropes travel across parties.

The second section explains that parties translate as *active* agents. I locate parties on a “chain of agents” wherein they craft securitization through the circular movement of collision, appropriation, and reformulation of words. Through this process, they interreact as both agents

and audiences of translated securitization. The purpose is to avoid passive imitation and to present the final product as better than the original. Although the appropriation of other parties' tropes is used to appeal to larger electorates, it mainly seeps into the ideological repertoire of each party to keep its traditional values, norms, and identities consistent and show coherence in front of internal and external audiences.

The third section maintains that translation is embedded in collective processes. Although it can be spearheaded by individual party leaders, translation is effectively achieved by internal factions and by a cluster of mediators that work behind the stage. Party leaders, factions, and mediators work to translate alternative ideological baggage into their vocabulary. Internal factionalism matters for translation and has been even strengthened in the context of the growing personalization of politics. If factions do not express sufficient convergence of interests, translations might fail. Accordingly, the relevance of factional disagreements can be also noticed within parties that are guided by centralistic leadership.

If the securitization of Islam as translation from the Right is rejected by left-wing audiences, a process of de-securitization might follow suit. By de-securitization, I mean the deconstruction of the security register used to construct an issue as a security threat. This process is inherently linked to party politics. The possibility to de-securitize Islam depends on political parties and their ideas about how inclusive a political community should be. Hence, I take a different approach from the Copenhagen School, which considers de-securitization as a process that brings back the debate on security from "exceptional" to "normal" politics (Peoples, Vaughan-Williams, 2010, p.84).

The fourth section spells out that partisan translations occur in the socio-cultural context where they are made and read. The translations across parties are nested in the distal context of left-wing Islamophobia and in the proximate context of interaction on the political spectrum. The distal context refers to the socio-cultural embeddedness of the securitizing discourse, retraced in the historical context in which political parties elaborated Islamophobic tropes and policies. The proximate context refers to the political dimension in which the Right and Left collide and translate each other's words into own referent objects to protect from radical Islam. The section discusses how the boundaries between Right and Left blurred after the widespread diffusion of neoliberal doctrines, which solicited centre-left parties to appropriate some notions preached by the Right. Such an ideological transition chronologically precedes the recent anti-Muslim narratives but cannot wholly explain them. In fact, the right-to-left translation of securitization of Islam is a form of hostility framed by inherited motivations that stress Islamic religious and cultural incompatibility with the secular West.

2.1 Literature review and analytical framework

This section spells out how the notion of translation can be utilised to build an analytical framework to explore how securitization travels across parties.

Firstly, I assess the constructivist theories in International Relations (IR) and critical security studies, that studied translation as a lexical transformation of concepts from one

language to another – inter-linguistic translation. Yet, little is the attention to the intra-linguistic translation of tropes by actors speaking the same language.

Secondly, I analyse how “Actor-Network Theory” (ANT) yields insights to understand translation as a relational activity, enriched by the contribution of each component of the social agent. This model is rather useful to decipher how the Right and Left translate anti-Islamic security tropes within the same national scenario, which is the most original contribution of the thesis. However, a rigorous application of ANT is not suitable for my purposes because it does not focus on the agents’ political subjectivity and ideas, which are vital to translate securitization.

2.1.1 Translation in IR and critical security studies

The concept of translation has received much attention from constructivist IR scholars, who have expressed a substantial interest in the inter-linguistic travel of knowledge across the international. Inspired by the works of cultural anthropologists and linguists, as well as postcolonial studies, this strand of constructivism unpacks the unequal hierarchies of power behind translation. The latter is by no means a neutral action and inevitably involves a clash between Western and Non-Western cultural systems (Spivak, 1993; Wolf, Fukari, 2007; Bertrand et.al., 2018). According to this perspective, foreign norms are neither diffused nor passively received but instilled into grounded knowledge and contexts by local gatekeepers. The final achievements are both linguistic and policy translations that stir transnational and indigenous norms of preexisting regional orders (Acharya, 2004). The emphasis on the transmission of linguistic and cultural codes involves countries that act as norm-makers and others who act as norm-takers (Checkel, 1999). This process is predicated on severe power asymmetries between more and less countries. It is thus problematic as it hides a Western-centric logic that imposes homogeneity as the ultimate purpose of the process, without any room for eventual contestations by local subjectivities. The Western-centred transmission of rules is a form of epistemic violence that is often predicated on the assumption of a cultural lag between who formulates and who receives the norms. This transmission might ignore local knowledge and even be forcefully imposed, as it happens when military operations against Muslim-majority countries are arbitrarily justified in the name of liberal-democratic values (Bhattacharyya, 2010). In this respect, the translation of norms is interpreted as a cross-border linguistic switching imbued with political biases, power asymmetries and cultural gaps between the translated item and the translator.

In grounding securitization in ideological and socio-cultural spaces, this thesis also shares some synergies with critical security scholars who explored the inter-linguistic translations of security across different localized contexts. Against a universalistic catch-all conception of security, many scholars have interpreted security as an empty object that is articulated distinctly by a rich variety of populations and identities (Bubandt, 2005; Ciută, 2009; Jarvis, 2019). Such literature has unpacked the translations of security in biographical narrations and everyday vernacular experiences of diverse people, through a bottom-up epistemology and a methodological preference for focus groups and ethnographies. Yet, these scholars lack an equivalent interest for the political agencies of parties, perhaps because of its

emphasis on popular perspectives rather than partisan views on security. Either way, securitization scholars wrote little about the translations of security vocabulary across domestic political actors and institutions. One notable exception is the research of Stritzel (2007, 2011, 2014), who unpacks the inter-linguistic translation of securitization across two national contexts: the US and Germany. His contributions aim to give a contextualized base to the theoretical speech act model of the Copenhagen School.

To spell out how securitization is inter-linguistically translated across national languages, Stritzel contends that the construction of security threats reaches out beyond initial discursive sources and goes through “passage and encounters” (2014, p.57) that reformulate security according to the meaning that each country gives to it. According to this argument, the concept of security is too abstract and a-historical if it is deprived of its binding ties with local discourses and national security cultures. For such reason, the translation of US “organized crime” into the German equivalent *Organisierte Kriminalität* (2014, p.104) was endorsed by the German security forces and by the public audience with more persuasion compared to the translation of the US expression “rogue States” into the German equivalent *Schurkenstaaten*, that received mild support (2014, p.145). Instead, other expressions (“problem states”, “risk states”) gathered more consensus among German security agencies. Whether it is a successful move or not, both cases present an inter-linguistic translation, which conveys an additional flavour to the original word because translators never “replicate the source (...) but also creatively produce, rewrite, rearticulate, re-represent something in new term” (2011, p.344). The relational mechanism delineated by Stritzel works out similarly to the transnational movement of norms that constructivist scholars described as translated into common knowledge by native populations. While I am sympathetic with Stritzel’s goal to localize the meaning of securitization according to political and national translations, my thesis touches upon the cross-party elaborations that he eventually downplays. Despite his contributions showing the metamorphosis of security meanings across different states, Stritzel does not analyse how parties of distinct political affiliations wrangle around the definition of “national security”. This aspect is worthy of being examined because the rationale and the targets of securitization depend on the ideologies of parties.

Translation is a mechanism of “rewording” elaborated by domestic political parties which act as agents and audiences of securitization. Many right-wing and left-wing parties employ the same idiom and agree on excluding Islam. Nevertheless, they recur to alternative images to canvass Muslims, due to referent objects that spring from their partisan legacy. The reformulation of knowledge is localized not in terms of geographical collocations, but of political and ideological moorings adjusted to the national context. This thesis aims to illustrate how parties have conceptualized the nexus between security and Islam by engaging with their political ideas and the socio-cultural *milieu* where party agents interact. The analysis of contextualized partisan securitizations of Islam shows that translation also means intra-linguistic “transfer of meaning”, by which I mean a conceptual change of the word Islam (a “signified”) in the same language, rather than a transformation of the signifier into another language. What I scrutinize are not different national security cultures, but the distinct ideas that political parties have about Muslim minorities and their impact on national security. The agonistic logic of securitization rests unaltered: only the external forms (such as the

Islamophobic tropes described earlier) are vulnerable to modifications according to the referent object that each party sees as threatened by Islam.

The translation framework also allows better scrutinizing the role of the securitizing audiences, underestimated by the Copenhagen School (McDonald, 2008; Côté, 2016) or conflated with the “general public” (Vuori, 2008). In my analytical framework, political parties are both actors and audiences of translation. This means that the transfer of meaning is not a linear flow directed from actors who “make” securitization firstly to passive audiences who “take” it. The audiences interact industriously with the source of securitization. To produce satisfactory translations, agents must elaborate on the message by using their ideological repertoire and avoid passive imitation, whereas audiences must accept it as congruent with the party legacy. To study the role of the audiences, we need an analytical framework of securitization based on a constant communication across three interconnected levels: 1) the securitizing *agents* (actors and audiences); 2) the *context* of securitization (distal, proximate and critical junctures); 3) the securitizing *act*, that I do not consider as speech act like the Copenhagen School but as a practice based on tropes and policies (Balzacq, 2011, pp.35-37).

Building on the securitization scholarship and the distinction between “formal” and “moral” audiences (Balzacq, 2005; Roe, 2008), this thesis further scrutinizes the role played by formal audiences, by which I mean actors supplying the securitizer with necessary legal support to deploy securitizing policies. Instead, the “moral audience”¹ provides moral support that can increase the chances of successful securitization, despite it being formally unnecessary (Balzacq, 2005, p.185). Aside from formal and moral, I divide the audiences into two further sub-categories. The first one is the *internal*: the political members of the party who approve resolutions, programs, and ideological guidelines about the translated issue. The second one is *external*: the competing political parties that are sources of translated messages. The electors called to the ballots audience are both external audiences because they are part of all the electoral body, and internal, as they might be at the same time party members or sympathizers. Electoral audiences have a potential crucial sway in suggesting or rejecting translation moves because party leaders must convince them of the ideological coherence of the move (Buckler, Dolowitz, 2009).²

Constructivism and critical security studies have been more inclined to analyze the inter-linguistic translation across countries rather than across parties. For such reason, further engagement is needed with another strand of literature that devoted much attention to translation, Actor-Network Theory, which provides useful instruments to interpret how Right and Left political parties translate each other’s tropes.

¹ E.g. the public opinion and religious bodies. I will come back to this point in the conclusions of the thesis.

² Nonetheless, it is complicated - and ultimately beyond the purposes of the thesis - to ascertain if translation is approved by focusing barely on electoral appointments, which are hardly ever single-issued on Islam. One notable exception are two referendums that were held in Switzerland against the construction of minarets (2009) and full-facial coverings (2021).

2.1.2 Translation in Actor Network Theory

Actor-Network-Theory (also known as “material semiotics” or “sociology of translation”) is a theoretical approach that studies the making of scientific and technological facts as a product of translations realized across networks that are both natural and social (Milton, Bandia, 2009; Best, Walters, 2013b; Salter, Mutlu, 2013, pp.8-9). Latour deconstructs the natural and the social - that he considers as two core dimensions of modernity (1993, pp.10-11; 2005, pp.106) - into a web of associations that show the relational and fragmented essence of every human product. Within this chaotic interplay between natural and human agency, translation is discussed as a conceptual device that captures the dispersed fabrication and the diffusion of knowledge. On top of that, Latour grasped the socio-political relevance of translation in writing about the notion of power, described as an artifice created during the act of exercising it, rather than the immovable and self-referential accessory of modern sovereignty.

Similarly, I interpret the translation of securitization as an energetic and fluid process shaped by political actors and audiences. The translation of tropes and policies that target Islam happens as a collective construction, whose meaning is never fixed but tirelessly constituted by plural communicating agents. Individual charisma alone would not be enough to realize a full-fledged translation, although it certainly eases its success and implantation in a party. Hence, security knowledge should be considered as assembled in the meanders of networks, where translation “defines and redefines the relationship between parties to that communication” (Freeman, 2009, p.6). In such networks, social agents cannot create ideas from scratch since they are embedded in a pre-existent structure. Despite the contextual constrain, social agents are nonetheless able to bend and manipulate some structural constraints according to their interests. The caveat to keep in mind though is that ANT theorists downsize the political capacity of human subjects, as their analytical focus privileges a fractured agency diffused amidst material and immaterial objects. “Actors” and “actants” are equivalent, both participating in the construction of horizons of meanings, traces, and associations (Callon, 1984; Law, 1999; Best, Walters, 2013a).

Actor-Network Theory yields precious insights to sustain my analytical framework. If we follow Latour (2005) in considering the “social” as something continuously assembled, this perspective sets the ground to study the translation of securitizing tropes across multiple agents nested in alternative contexts. This option delineates an innovative method to investigate political and security dynamics, for instance by zooming on the circular translation of ideas within single parties, across alternative parties, or even between parties and their electors. In this respect, I preserve the constructivist approach of ANT, that allows capturing the translation of notions by differing agents, who discursively formulate it through cross-fertilizing contributions. Yet, I wittingly propose a framework that differs from the anti-subjective one used by ANT, which leaves less room for individual agency (treated on a pair level with objects) and for how securitizing actors translate in the name of alternative referent objects.

A different approach that finds a balance between structure and agency is necessary to explain translation, which is not only constituted by contextual dimensions, but also by active

and collective actions that strongly shape the process. This means granting political agents more leeway to maneuver and imprint on structural constraints than it has been done before in securitization theories. It ultimately means also to move beyond Latour, because considering society as a web of mediators and proxies (2005, p.108), means reducing the intake of political subjects and their active entrepreneurship that produces the securitization of an issue, translates according to its vocabulary, accepts, or rejects the securitizing move. What I propose here is to give equal prominence to the agency of specific collective groups (political parties) and the constraints of the structures of power they are embedded. The political actor does not represent an autonomous figure who can erase centuries of contextual constraints through exceptional securitizing will, as portrayed by an old-fashioned conception of history driven by gestures of great personalities. Nonetheless, human agencies like party leaders and members, institutional figures, and political thinkers are all relevant in the translation of Islamophobic narratives. Subjects are not a mere product of discourses, since they pick up, assemble, and constantly reformulate linguistic and non-linguistic material depending on their viewpoints and concrete political constraints. The fact that subjects are nested in a specific historical and geopolitical context fuels this fabrication as vigorously as the political and ideological heritage of their political party.

This thesis does not follow ANT because this would bring me to consider securitizing subjects as passive “nodes” of human / non-human associations. ANT’s framework ends up erasing subjectivity and all binary distinctions (Law, 1999, p.3). It is generally more employed to analyse how technological and material things interact with humans. ANT reduces the room for individual action, as it often happens in post-structuralism³ and in the established securitization Schools. All these interpretations dispossess the agents of their capacity to imprint distinctly on translation in accordance with their unique understanding of the issue in question – namely the consideration of Islam either as incompatible with the norms cherished by the Right and the Left. The agency of political elites matters despite discursive limits, as their ideological preferences might steer security in alternative directions. Hence, to analyze the translation of securitizing tropes across parties we need an analytical framework of securitization that matches structure and agents as co-dependent levels of analysis, in line with [this thesis’ methodology](#). Indeed, securitization unfolds over three levels that are not isolated: the *agents*, the *context*, and the *acts* (Balzacq, 2005). This framework is crucial to understand how parties behave on the political spectrum where they have some room to interact as actors and audiences of securitization.

Despite lacking full autonomy from the surrounding context, this section has explained that the agency of parties is vital in understanding intra-linguistic translation of securitization. Thus, intra-linguistic translation should be incorporated into critical security studies, when most of research on translation focused on how norms travel across borders. The next section partly builds on one of Latour’s concepts (the “chain of agents”) to explain how the translation occurs as an active transfer of meaning across parties.

³ For further discussion see Laclau, Mouffe (1985) and Glynos, Howarth (2008).

2.2 Translation is active

Parties translate the semantic repertoire of their competitors in active ways, with the purpose to match their ideological heritage. This dynamic can be appreciated thanks to the insights provided by the sociology of translation and its insistence on relational networks, that illustrate how power and knowledge spread across circular avenues. After clarifying that the securitization of Islam starts from the Right, I claim that the translation implies a re-formulation of the original securitizing message that fits parties' ideological legacies so that their version does not appear as a passive imitation. As Balzacq (2015, p.3) argues, "security practices that result from securitization remain socially binding so long as they respond to commonly accepted values", that in this thesis are the values of political parties shared by their members and electors. Thus, it is possible to analyse translation as both an ideological and pragmatic choice.

To better grasp translation, I borrow the metaphor of the "chain of agents" that Latour (1986) proposed to conceptualize the diffusion of power. Latour imagined that power goes around a "chain of agents" who translate linguistic and non-linguistic artifacts in accordance with their projects (1986, p.264). This construction serves to understand the relational and subjective assemblage of power and knowledge in distinct translations, including the assemblage of securitization across a right-left ideological spectrum. On this chain, right-wing and left-wing ideologies guide the agents in ordinary political life by reducing the conceptual complexity and plurality of meanings: they help to identify security threats, define a solution to tackle them, and eventually elaborate programmatic lines to avert the resurgence of similar problems. Hence, securitization is not a trickle-down performance generated by the virtue of its strength and encountering no resistance. As argued by Vuori (2008), even authoritarian states have the need to justify security campaigns in front of the masses to gain their support. Indeed, the spread in time and space of securitizing claims is linked to the reactions of multiple agents, some of them situated along a political chain.

Right-wing and left-wing parties are simultaneously actors and audiences of securitization, often equipped with the formal power to approve or neglect the manufacture of Muslims as security threats. Not only do the Right and Left nurture their own ideological reasons to place Muslims outside the boundaries of Western civilization: also, they borrow intolerant vocabulary from the other political side and re-make it through alternative phraseologies that sound familiar with their referent objects. The relationality of the chain of agents allows to scrutinise the extent to which the Left appropriates and modifies the construction of the Right. Given the circular securitization dynamics, the move in the reverse direction is also significant. The appropriation of leftist themes by right-wing parties conceals a translation of the securitization of Islam which moves in the opposite direction and buys into the vocabulary of left-wing actors. For such reason, the conceptual infrastructure built by Latour helps to better handle the interaction between actors and audiences and their translation of alternative, though similarly discriminatory, narratives about the Muslim presence in Western Europe.

Although the chain is a circular construction, I want to retrace who are the agents that firstly injected specific ideas into the political discourse. The most heinous manifestations of Islamophobic acts begin on the Right. In particular, the constellation of far-right parties and groups embodies the quintessential agents to vocalise Muslim incompatibility with Western civilisation (Bail, 2014). Other motivations justify starting from the Right, such as the dramatic spike in hate crimes and armed attacks committed by far-right terrorists against Muslims in the 2010s. Among them, it is important to remember at least the anti-Muslim attacks committed in Finsbury Park, London (UK, 2017), Christchurch (New Zealand, 2019), Hanau (Germany, 2020) and London, Ontario (Canada, 2021)⁴. It is not by chance that such horrific crimes targeting Muslims have often involved individuals who embrace overt racist and white supremacist proclaims, that have gained even more traction in the age of social media. While this thesis does not directly touch upon far-right and white supremacist terrorism⁵, it is important to highlight that the ideological broth where anti-Islamic violence simmers sits comfortably with conservative and nationalist tropes belonging to the Right.

The radical right's securitization of Islam draws on nativist, populist and authoritarian rhetoric (Mudde, 2007, p.23) and subscribes to an idea of the "people" as ethnically, religiously and culturally homogeneous entity (Mény, Surel, 2002, p.7). Right-wing populists stoke fear about Muslim immigration framed as part of a plan spearheaded by transnational elites to throw Europe into chaos and transform its demographics. Recently, what gained momentum on the Right is the narrative of a putative Muslim invasion, that would culminate in a great replacement and in the creation of "Eurabia", meaning the Arabization of Europe (Ekman, 2015; Bangstad, 2019). Such ideas of infiltration by Islamist "Trojan horses" (Bracke, Hernández Aguilar, 2021), considered as both physical and ontological threats, have inspired violent behaviours like the terrorist attack in Christchurch, as the perpetrator (Brenton Tarrant) claimed to be the author of a manifesto called "*The Great Replacement*". These narratives are instrumentalized by far-right circles to explicitly blame liberal and left-wing parties, EU institutions and international NGOs to conspire against the "people" (Marzouki et.al., 2016). Political elites are accused by radical right parties of being incapable to patrol borders, sympathize with the demographic replacement of Europeans by Muslims, and grant immigrants with economic benefits that should have been allocated to native working-class folks, many of whom have for long voted for social-democratic parties (Bobba, McDonnell, 2016, p.292).

Not only do Islamophobic tropes widely circulate across extreme right groups. Also, they have become gradually institutionalized in mainstream discourses because many radical right parties accessed important positions in national Cabinets. Many scholars have extensively written on how radical narratives percolated into mainstream centre-right parties (Carvalho, 2014; Wodak, 2015; Akkerman et.al., 2016). After the jihadist attacks of the 2010s, politicians belonging to right-wing parties have translated this feeling of unease and insecurity into narratives about the failures of multiculturalism and the need to be more cautious in dealing with Muslims" (Modood, 2013). In 2010, the German PM Angela Merkel declared to a meeting of her party's (Christian Democratic Union) youth wing that Germany's efforts to create a

⁴ For further information on right-wing terrorism, see The Soufan Center (2019), Aasland, Ravndal et.al. (2022).

⁵ For further debate see Jarvis (2022), Martini (2023).

multicultural society had “utterly failed” (Weaver, 2010). Similarly, in 2011 the British PM David Cameron stated that he rejected far-right arguments on the “clash of civilizations”. However, he also insisted that, because of state multiculturalism, Britain had failed to provide a vision of society to which some young Muslim men felt to belong (HM Government, 2011). From these excerpts we notice that mainstream Right parties act as audiences of far-right securitization, that may be passively approved, actively translated into distinct vocabularies of intolerance, or even rejected. Centre-left parties are likewise targeted as audiences of securitization.

Active translators need ideological anchoring because the conceptual elaboration of security threats cannot be replicated as a facsimile, otherwise, translation would lose its credibility and appeal in front of partisan electors. As Latour maintains (1986, p.267), translation becomes a “betrayal” if the translator fails to adjust the appropriation of other narratives to its own ideological legacy. Such legacy pre-exists the entrance in the “chain”, since it is located in the distal context. Hence, it is not a posterior performance that emerges linguistically during the speech act, as the Copenhagen School would argue. Ideas are translated across political agents in a relational game based on co-dependency, interactions, complicities, and contributions. The subjective agency of political agents should not be hollowed out, against what post-structuralist discourse theories would argue (Keller, 2013, p.17). In fact, agency matters. Agency is mutually shared by actors and audiences, as the latter is crucial in approving securitization and its translations. Thus, far-right parties reiterate the Islamophobic trope that Muslims are misogynists in the name of the superiority of Western civilization, more than universal women’s rights. Left-wing parties are worried of Muslims’ religiosity in the name of secularism and liberal principles, rather than demographic concerns. In both cases, if parties translate, they actively elaborate the original message to align it with the referent objects of their political parties. As the next chapters will show, the referent objects are not static ideological references passively inherited from the party traditions. Instead, they represent an assemblage of concepts and positions that are conveniently chosen by the translator according to the contextual necessity. Therefore, when appropriating external tropes, an active translation is needed to claim continuity with a selected legacy of the party, to signal a rupture with past failures, and assert that the new version is better than the original. In this respect, the process is very similar to the appropriation of other ideas and concepts aside from Islamophobia.

Although the translator actively crafts the security message upon its ideological orientation, it might be accused of copying the securitizer’s firsthand product for reasons like the electoral appeal of security topics and the cross-party consensus to fight some forms of terrorism. Hence, translation is laden with risks: when parties securitize by speaking a language that jars with their ideological repertoire, translation is likely to fail due to hostility by their electors, fellow party members or the scepticism of external parties that concocted the original message. Left-wing parties would contradict much of their recent efforts in the integration of minorities if they blindly followed the intolerant agenda against immigration and Muslims set about by the far-right. Without a digestible translation of securitization into their principles, the accommodative logic of “if you can’t beat them, join them” (Downs, 1957) can splinter left-wing parties into multiple factions, diminish the credibility of their internationalist agenda,

and further the circulation of far-right leitmotifs (Bale et. al. 2010, 2013; Brustier, Escalona, 2015). Considering this intricate balance between ideological loyalty and pragmatic shifts, political translators should never take for granted the negotiations with plural audiences. Since audiences are entitled to approve or reject securitization, translators must modify the product so that it dovetails with their partisan ideologies. In doing so, they hijack the same vocabulary of security to increase the surveillance of Muslims, portrayed as threats to the distinct referent object familiar to its electors.

The translators integrate the source with new ideas because of the fear that a passive reproduction of somebody else's concepts might alienate the sympathy of electors, who might choose the original instead of the facsimile. This is what argued by Jean-Marie Le Pen (leader of the National Front until 2011) during the Presidential campaign in 2007, when he stated that the "electors will always prefer the original to the copy" (Le Monde, 2007). Although he obtained only the 10.4% of the votes, Le Pen's xenophobic narratives gained unstoppable momentum. Some scholars even talk about a sort of "lepenisation" of spirits to argue that Le Pen's emphasis on the nexus "immigration-insecurity" has gradually been incorporated firstly by the right-wing party Union for a Popular Movement and, after 2012, by the reactionary wing of the Socialist Party (Tissot, 2008; Fassin, 2013; Brustier, Escalona, 2015). The translation by mainstream Right and Left may have prevented electors to choose the most radical option (the original far-right securitization), but eventually radicalized the translators themselves. On the centre-right, President Sarkozy (2007-2012) promoted some policies (e.g. the creation of a Ministry of National Identity and Immigration, the expulsion of Roma people) that implicitly legitimized the ethno-exclusivist agenda of the National Front (Mondon, 2013, p.32; Carvalho, 2014). Moreover, during the Sarkozy years, we also notice the left-to-right translation of French secularism - which is more an electoral workhorse of left-wing parties than right-wing ones, [as chapter four explains](#) - into a discursive tool used to justify nationalist policies. This strategy served also to deprive the National Front of a topic that was becoming electorally appealing on the Right, as the Union for a Popular Movement secretary Jean-François Copé declared in 2011 (Baubérot, 2014, p.37).

Three lines of criticism can be raised against my argument that translation is an active process in need of ideological anchoring. Firstly, it might be contested that some political ideologies have entered troubled waters over the last decades, especially when it comes to social democracy (Lavelle, 2008). For instance, Cos (2017) maintains that the Socialist Party has always been a party of professionals whose actual behaviour is very different from what they pledge in their electoral programs. Secondly, against the centrality of ideologies, some scholars argue that institutional legacies and structural factors are more relevant than party agency (Hansen, 2000; Consterdine, 2020). Yet, other political scientists give more leeway to the influence of parties in policy sectors such as migration management (Hampshire, Bale, 2015) and foreign policy operations (Verbeek, Zaslove, 2015). Finally, other scholars highlight that politics went through a process of professionalization that has downsized the weight of ideologies, as I will later explain with reference to Katz and Mair's thesis of the "cartelization" of parties (1995, 2009). Accordingly, party candidates elaborate their program only to conquer electoral offices and try to attract as many electors as possible. Subscribing to this position means reducing the appropriation of external themes to the simple reproduction of ideas that

are gaining momentum amid public opinion (e.g. left-wing parties and restrictive border policies).

Against these arguments, I contend that parties do not translate merely for material interests, since they attempt to provide representations that sound ideologically more attuned to their audiences. Party competition for representative positions and public resources paves the way to trace the symbolical boundaries of the polity and to establish an official discourse about the identity of security threats against the state. The presence of resilient ideological legacies enables parties to distinguish their programs regarding much-contested issues such as Islam, terrorism, security, radicalization. Ideological elaboration is necessary when parties adopt themes that are traditionally far from their heritage, as Cos shows in a more recent study (2019) on the Socialist Party's appropriation of security, an issue traditionally owned by the Right. In this respect, each party acts as a distinct "cultural enterprise" (Sawicki, 2001) that carves out alternative conceptions of national security. These ideas are spread in the partisan milieu and contributes to form the cognitive and normative frames of the party members (Rioufreyt, 2019). Such ideological training is still very vivid inside the activities of party youth organizations. Specifically, the far-right groups and their subcultures are important ideological laboratories that should not be studied only through structural approaches (Dechezelles, 2008; Miller-Idriss, 2018).

To this extent, political ideologies fulfill the socio-political contextual conditions that facilitate parties in successfully reaching the translation of securitization. In this respect, partisan ideologies have at least three major functions: *legitimization* of party actions; *de-contestation* of plural meanings about security threats; *socialization* of young militants (Freeden, 1998, p.22). Ideologies frame translations, as parties must secure the coherence of their identity in front of electors even when adopting words usually uttered by other political sides. Hence, they carve out an issue in a language congruent with their heritage and then show that the new versions are better than the older ones. Such ideological struggles over the definition of threats have a huge social effect, as the victorious hegemonic vision is diffused across a wide range of sectors and institutions, such as schools and media.

The following chapters spell out that the translation of Islamophobic tropes respond to both an ideological reshaping and more prosaic contextual needs. From an ideological perspective, right-wing parties such as the UKIP, the National Front, and the North League claim to defend women's emancipation and working-class jobs better than left-wing parties because the latter are accused to prioritize the interests of immigrants and Muslims – in its attempt to balance immigrants' and native citizens' rights. Despite ignoring women, LGB individual and workers on other occasions, such individuals are functional to the reproduction of a putative homogeneous white West to oppose to the alleged demographic invasion from Muslim-majority countries. About left-wing parties, it is possible to say that the securitarian turn happens in a discursive framework where security is flagged as a left-wing value because the respect of authority is presented as a precondition to ensuring freedom and respecting human rights, as in the words of securitizing agents like David Blunkett (Labour, UK), Minniti (Democratic Party, Italy), and Valls (Socialist Party, France). Therefore, parties are moved by ideological viewpoints that, on one hand, pre-exist in their historical legacy and, on the other,

are enriched by the issue competition with other parties, which are external audiences of securitization.

Nevertheless, it is important to stress that ideology is not synonymous with abstract idealism. The rules of the game and the necessity to survive in elections compel the party to cope with several institutional constraints (electoral system, party system, etc.) that locate translations on a middle ground between strategic options and ideological consistency. Aside from ideological considerations, the use of liberal-progressive themes by the far-right serves also to cleanse it from its past anti-democratic legacy, while the governance of Muslims as a potentially radical community by the Left meets the increasing worries of the public opinion (especially of electors who can potentially switch to the Right) in front of jihadist terrorism and irregular migration too. These contextual elements are quite significant for the success of translation, as the chapter later explains.

This section has shown that political parties act as agents and audiences of securitization and that the ideological elaboration of the message is as important as other factors that explain translation. Translation raises different reactions among parties and leaves room for alternative conceptualization of the political community. The cleavage between plural ideological positions is one of the main sources of intra-party factionalism, a significant factor that affects translation and rebranding of partisan agendas. For example, several dissenting voices on the Left counter the use of right-leaning language and propose instead a more inclusive governance of Muslim minorities. This happens because translation is a collective process, as the next section displays.

2.3 Translation is collective

Political parties translate as collective agents. The party leader is not the unique artisan of translation, as the process is fulfilled by networks of candidates that act as “mediators” (Latour, 2005, p.39) by getting involved in the appropriation or rejection of external sources⁶. Party leaders, factions, and mediators all retain considerable strength to translate alternative ideological legacies into the vocabulary of the party. This polyphonic interaction illustrates that translation requires persistent efforts to avoid passive replication of the original and to lure the support of electoral and internal audiences. In focusing on parties as units of analysis of securitization, it is possible to notice that the adoption of alternative ideological tenets is challenged by the endorsement of multiple audiences.

While the previous section analyzed the *external* audiences (right-wing and left-wing parties on the chain of agents), I hereafter explore how *internal* audiences engage with translations. I discuss the leverage that intra-party factions and mediators have in the collective process of translation. If intra-party factions do not show sufficient convergence of interests, translation remains unaccomplished. Besides, such failure can tear the group apart and bring schismatic dynamics. Even when the party does not split, intra-party disputes on translation from the other side are very common, especially on the Left, because such parties have

⁶ On the plurality of agents involved in translations, see Milton, Bandia (2009).

frequently witnessed a high degree of fragmentation. In front of the securitization of Islam, some factions on the Left can call for the rejection of the adoption of right-leaning language and its de-securitization. Additionally, the section clarifies that factionalism is observable even in centralistic parties (e.g. National Front) and that the personalization of politics is a variable that strengthens the agency of *all* translators, independently of the position occupied in the party.

Translation is a collective move because political parties are plural structures animated by the competing voices and demands of factions. The word “faction” lacks a unitary definition. By summarizing the main findings in the literature, Giannetti and Benoit describe factions as “party sub-groups having similar preferences on relevant policy issues” (2009, p.5). This thesis analyses party sub-groups insofar as they coalesce around specific interests, independently from their effective institutionalization inside parties. Factionalism is relevant as it dynamizes the internal life of parties and impacts domestic and foreign policy outcomes (Homan, Lantis, 2020). The activism of factions depends on different causes and purposes. According to Sartori (1976, p.74), four aspects determine factionalism: *party organization*; *motivations* (by *principles* or *interests*); *ideological* consistency; *Left-Right* positioning.

By building on the last two features, I posit that the securitization of Islam and its translation create ideological rifts across intra-party factions. These factions may act in conservative or progressive ways depending on whether they include or exclude Muslims from the national community. Intra-party factions are interactive units that translate the Islam-security nexus through both pre-existing ideologies and pragmatic reasons, as mentioned in the previous section. Concerning left-wing parties, the examples of Britain, France and Italy confirm that factions supporting less restrictive policies on immigration and Islam frequently parted company with the integrationist vision preached by other candidates, as I later explain in the thesis. Such ideological differences are visible even when factional cleavages heavily tangle with personal rivalries and even when factionalism seems to be barely driven by electoral calculus (Noel, 2016).

Internal factions command a great deal of influence in translation, despite often working behind the curtains. This notwithstanding, the link between the translation of security across parties and intra-party factionalism has not been explored by established securitization Schools. Factions translate through conflictual appropriations and adaptations into their vocabulary. Hence, cross-party translations look more like a collision between opposite sides than like an “encounter” across different national vocabularies described by Stritzel (2014, p.57). “Encounter” is an expression that insufficiently conveys the weight of altercations raised by translations, let alone the drawbacks for the party survival - electoral demise, change of leadership, implosion. Centrifugal dynamics are yielded by cleavages that both pre-exist party’s formation and mirror new issues that gradually fracture partisan unity. In this respect, a first chasm emerges in the history of left-wing parties, as many among them had to overcome the internal divergence between reformists and revolutionaries, replicated today by the divisions between social-liberal and social-democratic (Childs, 2000). A second chasm instead is particularly evident in the more recent reaction that left-wing parties had to the settlement of Muslim migrants. A reaction that has frequently juggled between state-led assimilation and a

liberal commitment to multiculturalism (Kundnani, 2007, p.29). Although it is implausible that the quarrels about how the position to take on a single-issue - such as the rights of Muslim minorities - triggers “degenerative factionalism” (Boucek, 2009, pp.473-477), dissonant views can shatter the unity of the party and lay the ground for schisms, defections, and expulsions.

Translation raises criticism and dissent inside political parties if some currents fret about the dilution of partisan identity caused by the imitation of its adversaries. Regarding security affairs, factions might refuse the translation of competing narratives. However, this does not bring to the automatic de-securitization of the issue. Many radical Left and communist parties have historically securitized Muslims even without using right-wing arguments. This happened for several reasons, such as the concerns that Muslim immigrants would compete with the white working-class for lower-skilled jobs - like in the British Labour (Virdee, 2014), the Dutch Socialist Party (Lucardie, Voerman, 2016), and the Danish Social-Democrats (Nedergaard, 2018) - or for a deep-rooted hostility against religion, like on the French Left (Raymond, 2009).

When the translation of right-wing tropes and policies is rejected, the de-securitization of Muslims becomes a viable option for left-wing parties. However, de-securitization does not always result from the rejection of translation, because the Left can still securitize Islam by using own tropes. I posit that de-securitization happens in two ways: a functional one, meaning that a given issue should not be addressed as a security problem, and an emancipatory one, that not only implies the destruction of securitizing tropes but also attempts to emancipate the securitized individuals. The functional de-securitization occurs when Muslims are not described as a security threat compared to other major sources of unease and concerns (such as socio-economic issues). Yet, the political agonism at the core of securitization is not questioned but only watered down. Therefore, this version is more inspired by “instrumental” reasons than by “ethico-political” ones (Huysmans, 1998b, p.572). The left-wing factions in the French Socialist Party and Italian Democratic Party, Labour under Ed Miliband, and Jean-Luc Mélenchon (leader of the party *La France Insoumise*) before 2017 have proposed a functional de-securitization of issues related to Islam, such as citizenship. In the emancipatory modality, the de-securitizing agents try to unravel the agonistic substance of securitization and propose an emancipatory project for Muslims (Aradau, 2004). The choice to wipe out the securitizing register brings a more inclusive form of politics, based on sympathy towards Muslims’ daily travails, commitment to Muslims’ self-affirmation, and rejection of xenophobic mindset. This version resonates with Labour under the leadership of [Jeremy Corbyn](#). These instances of de-securitization will be explored in the following chapters.

As of now, it is vital to remember that factions can lead to de-securitization and that, although translations are often spearheaded by top party representatives (President, First Secretary, etc.), the possibility to translate is not a unique prerogative of the official party leader because several agents can start the move. Admittedly, central party leaderships are significant to renew partisan agendas. Party leaders sometimes mark the new course so assertively to be associated with an epochal change in the history of their party. For example, the neologism “Blairism” was coined with reference to the “new” direction that Blair gave to Labour (Ezard, 2000). Yet, translations are carried out by networks of candidates who raise the saliency of a

given issue: such networks exist as in parties led by authoritarian rule as in parties marked by democratic internal debates. The importance of sub-groups involved in translation is independent of the level of “Intra-Party Democracy”⁷ and from the party’s commitment to guarantee open participation by its ranks and file – such as through primary elections. On the Right, Marine Le Pen has translated liberal-progressive and republican themes to sever the bridges of the party with the neofascist legacy of her father and previous National Front’s leader Jean-Marie. Considering this strategy of modernization as the outcome of her individual capacity alone is an incomplete exercise. The same mistake is committed if the translation of neoliberal economic programs and law-and-order policies by social-democratic parties is reduced to the unique agency of centre-left leaders who adopted such a model into their institutional contexts (Favretto, 2003; Di Francesco-Mayot, 2018). Hence, it is necessary to engage more with the network of translators that rebrands the partisan agenda, going beyond the gravitational centrality of individual leaderships. Collective translations feature in all parties, both on the Right and the Left, and even in parties that are governed less collegially and without institutionalized factions.

Let me provide an example from the Right. In the National Front, we would expect translation to trickle down from central party leadership because the appointment of party candidates has been traditionally restricted to an elite, compared to other parties that adopt more transparent and democratic mechanisms of selection (Bachelot, Haegel, 2015, p.95). In congruence with this view, Marine Le Pen has received broad mediatic coverage (Sayare, 2017; Bolongaro, 2018) for her charismatic attempt to “un-demonize” (*dédiaboliser*) the party and wipe off anti-democratic refrains, antisemitism, and homophobia. In so doing, she has managed to conjugate the acceptance of some republican norms (e.g. respect for secularism) with the lingering ethno-nationalism of the National Front. Yet, the literature contends that this partial ideological restyling is neither innovative nor solely individual (Dézé, 2015). Marine Le Pen is not the first National Front candidate to reckon that the incorporation of some Constitutional values is a litmus test to achieve political legitimacy and overcome the high threshold (12,5%) of the French two-round electoral system. The roots of un-demonization hark back to the ideas of Bruno Mégret, a prominent cadre of the National Front from 1985 to 1998. A former member of the right-wing party Rally for the Republic, Mégret soon became the number two of Jean-Marie Le Pen and one of the most critical voices of his ultra-nationalist stances. Mégret foresaw that the party could improve its electoral performance by luring conservative electors (Crépon, 2012, p.51). Consequently, he proposed to drive the agenda of the party towards economic protectionism, inspired by the concept of “national preference” in socio-economic policies, still present in Marine Le Pen’s electoral program for the 2022 Presidential Elections (Le Pen, 2022).

The notion of “national preference” was coined by Jean-Yves Le Gallou, another former member of Rally for the Republic and of the think-tank *Club de l’Horloge*, ideologically close to the “New Right” intellectual constellation. Le Gallou aimed to inculcate the theses of the New Right leader Alain De Benoist into the National Front’s program. In particular, Le Gallou stressed anti-liberal and anti-globalist tones, the opposition to the modern right-left

⁷ A notion measuring the “internal distribution of power within political parties” (Cross, Katz, 2013, p.100).

dichotomy and the mission to establish a counter-cultural ideological battle to dismantle neoliberal hegemony. This agenda based on economic protectionism partially translated the left-wing denunciation of neoliberalism into a nativist framework that pleaded for more State intervention and welfare for French workers first. The electoral potential of such discourse resonated with Jean-Marie Le Pen's argument on the nexus between immigration and unemployment. Hence, it convinced Le Pen to embrace protectionism and abandon his previous option for economic *laissez-faire*. The National Front's 1993 program was impacted by Le Gallou and Mégret (also a member of the *Horloge*) regarding two dimensions that Marine Le Pen has frequently repeated: national priority in economic policies and anti-immigration measures justified by economic preoccupations, cultural insecurity and "ethno-differentialism" rather than by biological racism (Mondon, 2015, p.398). De Benoist developed the "differentialist" theories to insist that no culture is inherently superior to the others and that each culture has the right to be different and preserve its distinctiveness. However, while arguing for equality among cultures, this position also implied a harsh rejection of immigration and multiculturalism due to the fear of the ethnic and racial mixture (Bar-On, 2013, p.16).

The un-demonization strategy is part of the National Rally's distal context. It is not an exceptional strategy sought by Marine Le Pen but a collective translation of a more moderate ideas into a nationalist framework. The move was prompted by a cluster of top party candidates and endorsed by the youngest generations of party militants. In hindsight, Mégret (who split from the party in 1998 due to the antagonism with Jean-Marie Le Pen) and other New Right thinkers sowed the seeds for the translation of some liberal-progressive French republican norms. Therefore, the presence of factions gathered around diverse ideological agendas and age cohorts is a typical party feature that has animated centralized parties too. Admittedly, the National Front was indeed established in 1972 as a conglomerate of various groups gathered around ultra-nationalist and conservative ideologies (Stockemer, 2017). While the internal heterogeneity has not fomented many centrifugal tendencies, it has laid the ground for ideological cross-fertilization with national-conservative intellectual circles, as the mediation between the *Club de l'Horloge* and the National Front demonstrates. The activity of Le Gallou and Mégret as mediators resulted in a translation from "extreme" to a more "moderate" right-wing semantic. Mediators use their agency to transform and co-produce a token, despite structural constraints. Embedded in a network of routes and connections, mediators differ from inter-mediators: the former's "input is never a good predictor for their outputs", while the latter "transport without transformations" (Latour, 2005, p.39; Wolf, Fukari, 2007).

After illustrating that factionalism impacts translation on the Right, let me now focus on how the distinction between mediators and inter-mediators helps to understand centre-left parties' translation. This is valuable both to study inter-linguistic and intra-linguistic translations. For instance, some French Socialist Party members acted as "mediators" to translate the British "Third Way" doctrines into a version that could fit the historical and epistemic context of the French Left (Rioufreyt, 2013). One significant example is given by the prefaces written by Socialist Party's representatives Martine Aubry and Jacques Delors to the translation of Blair's and Anthony Giddens' manuscripts into French. The preface was an act of mediation because Socialist politicians needed to problematize the "Third Way", tailor it to the French context and avoid the risk of a passive imitation that would sound unintelligible

to Socialist electors. Differently from the “intermediators” (Socialist politicians who liaised between their party and Labour politicians in various meetings and conferences), the “mediators” do something more than help ideas to circulate. Instead, they deflect and translate it into a renewed contribution (Rioufreyt, 2013, p.46). This analytical difference shows that the networks of mediators have more leeway in translations than the inter-mediators.

Another good illustration of the role of mediators in centre-left parties comes from the collective translation of a conservative meaning of insecurity, visible in the adoption by the Left of anti-crime policies popularized by the Republican Mayor of New York City, Rudy Giuliani, in the Nineties. These policies were inspired by the doctrine of “zero tolerance”, which was predicated on the assumption that the urban quality of life should be preserved against petty crime and minor disorders. Wacquant (2009, pp.14-16) claims that this doctrine was developed by a conservative network of policymakers, think-tanks and intellectuals, and that its purpose was to castigate an underclass made up of racial minorities and poorer citizens. This translation set the stage for the successive construction of immigration as a security threat and is very relevant to understand the securitization of Islam in the 2000s and 2010s.

While the “zero-tolerance” measures failed to reduce crime, the model contributed to questioning the former socialist penal principle that crime is a product of socio-economic inequalities as well as of individual psychology (Taylor, 1981, pp.44-45; Elcock, 1984, p.149). This conceptual shift of the interpretation of insecurity - less centred on socio-economic factors and more on individual factors and cultural motivations⁸ - was in line with the demise of the social-democratic welfare state, on which I will come back soon. Hence, many European centre-left politicians travelled to New York to learn its principles and potentially import them back home (Wacquant 2009, p. 247). During a debate in the National Assembly in 2002, the MP Julien Dray (Socialist Party) gave heavy support to implementing such policies to earn the ironic endorsement of Sarkozy (Wacquant, 2009, p.11). In his analysis of how the “zero-tolerance” policies were received by the European Left, Wacquant maintains that the model was adapted following “national traditions, political and intellectual” (2009, p.40). In travelling from the US to France, the policies went through an inter-linguistic translation, as Socialist Party members struggled to incorporate these repressive policies with their innovation, the proximity police. As further explained by De Maillard and Le Goff (2009), the American model was not copied but translated by a network of Socialist mediators who went the extra mile to translate a foreign product into a renewed contribution resonating with the French context, instead of barely ease the circulation of ideas, as inter-mediators do (Latour 2005, p.39).

Although the mediators put much effort into translating an external product into local languages, the success of translation requires an adequate endorsement by party internal audiences, which explains why translation meets fewer obstacles when streamlined by the leadership. However, all party representatives can translate. The personality, charisma, and the significance of the translated issues are factors that balance the weight of internal audiences. If

⁸ On “cultural insecurity”, see Bouvet (2015), who argued that the French mainstream Left has failed to take into serious consideration cultural and identitarian interests of French electors, many of whom have this preferred to vote for the far-right.

the agenda defended by the translator gains electoral public support, the central leadership may decide to follow the wave, providing that the translator's language fits with the party identity. In this respect, jihadist terrorism and the Mediterranean refugee crisis have prompted some left-wing lawmakers to challenge the orthodoxy of their parties by invoking tougher measures to securitize Islam. Let me provide some examples.

The German Social-Democratic Party ousted its member Thilo Sarrazin in 2019 after he published a book that reproduced reactionary tropes about Islam, such as the alleged Muslim demographic invasion, Muslims' inherent inclination to crime and unemployment, and their drainage of welfare resources (von Schwerin, 2018; Bracke, Hernández Aguilar, 2020, p.685). In 2010 Sarrazin had already written a best-seller book whose content can be considered Islamophobic, as I said in chapter one. The expulsion came after the intra-party dissent towards the unabashed racism of Sarrazin. Some amid his arguments strike a chord with the parallel far-right program of Alternative for Germany and with the disillusionment of many Germans for the inclusive migration policies that Merkel supported in the wake of the 2015 refugee crisis (Mushaben, 2017, p.529). Nonetheless, this narrative has not gained traction in the Social-Democratic Party. Had Sarrazin washed his xenophobic proclaims with the concerns about immigration usually raised by social-democratic parties and trade-unions, he could have received a less critical appraisal, as did by Sarah Wagenknecht, former leader of the radical Left party The Left (Jacobin, 2018). Ultimately, Sarrazin's translation failed since it recalled a passive move rather than an active process.

Conversely, the leader of Danish Social Democrats Mette Frederiksen (Prime Minister from 2019) has moved her party to the Right, as shown by the translation of Danish People's Party's Islamophobic rhetoric in a liberal-progressive and social-democratic fashion (Sedgwick, 2013). Neither did the Social Democrats oppose the *burqa* and *niqāb* ban (Orange, 2018), nor the controversial reform of citizenship that prescribes compulsory handshaking to become Danish. Both policies implicitly target Muslim women as culturally incompatible with the Danish national identity and judicial system. In addition, Frederiksen has supported the controversial plan "One Denmark Without Parallel societies-No Ghettos in 2030", proposed by the liberal-conservative government in 2018 to avoid the formation of parallel enclaves and better integrate non-Western immigrants. Such policies are addressed to improve the urban "ghettoes" where the presence of immigrants is considerably high (O'Brien, 2022). Despite recalling the nationalist narratives on Muslim "Trojan horses", the plan is also ideologically coherent with the restrictive stances on immigration that the Social-Democrats defended 30-40 years ago and that nowadays are presented to social-democratic electors as necessary to save the generous Danish welfare system (Nedergaard, 2018; Piser, 2019).

These illustrations show that right-to-left translations have also happened beyond the three case studies of this thesis, making the case for a generalization of my argument to other countries in which Islamophobia is normalized across the political spectrum. Moreover, these illustrations also support my argument that translation is a collective move that needs approval of different audiences. Although single leaders symbolically embody the route followed by parties, their role is not exhaustive. The argument that translation is the effort of a single leader risks portraying the transfer of meaning as a bare self-referential performance achieved without

the intervention of factions, mediators, and even single heterodox elected officials like Sarrazin. In this respect, one might wonder if the increasing trend in the “personalization” of politics speaks against this collective agency in translating. Broadly defined as “the process by which the weight of the group declines in politics, while the centrality of individual politicians’ rise” (Rahat, Kenig, 2018, p.1), the personalization seems to validate the claim that the party leader weighs more than the collective.

Nevertheless, the personalization of politics does not erase the role of factions because it increases their visibility, bargaining power, and their odds to emerge as independent units. Personalization is a phenomenon that potentially contributes to the success of many party chiefs who compete for official leadership. These possibilities are even boosted by the leeway that mediatized politics has given to party candidates who want to advertise their positions. In this regard, the online presence of candidates is still more widespread and relevant than the presence of individual party leaders alone (Rahat, Zamir, 2018, pp.111-112). By using social media, each party candidate has a platform to co-opt alternative discursive themes and potentially propose to translate them. Therefore, personalization creates a level playing field where even minor factions can spearhead translation, with the threat of undermining party unity and upending official guidelines. Moreover, the personalization mutually fortifies the individual charisma of some candidates, who will feel more empowered to set the translated issue on the top of political debates. This trend is observable specifically during the primary elections for party leadership, where it is possible to elicit a more reactionary or progressive agenda regarding the governance of ethnic minorities, as shown in France by the contest between Valls and Benoît Hamon for the Socialist leadership in 2017 (Sokolova, Perez, 2018).

After explaining that translation is collective, let me now focus on the contextual dimension. While the radical right translates liberal-progressive discourses into a reactionary version, the bulk of translation has occurred from Right to Left. Particularly, the centre-left has translated from the Right both tropes and policies. As the next section explains, this dynamic has been partly facilitated by a proximate context in which centre-left parties had already moved right-ward after legitimizing neoliberal economic doctrines.

2.4 Translation is contextual

Translation becomes feasible if entangled to the socio-cultural, historical, and political texture under which it is fabricated and spread. A favourable context makes party agents more receptive to the opportunity of cross-party translations. Consequently, securitization can be translated only if it is “localized in the norms” (Acharya, 2004) that parties consider jeopardized by the requests put forward by Muslim minorities. Such norms are nested into the “distal” (socio-cultural) and the “proximate” (political) contexts that affect how parties translate the securitization of Islam (Wetherell, 2001, p.380; Balzacq, 2011, p.37). Distal and proximate contexts integrate the critical junctures, which are another relevant contextual element to analyse the translated securitization. The three faces of the context are intermingled, as it often happens that the proximate encounter between the Right and Left overlaps both with important critical junctures and with the historical development of Islamophobic tropes in party’s history.

Translation works relationally in both directions. This holds true for right-wing parties and their conversion to secular and liberal-progressive values. However, here I want to reflect on how distal and proximate contextual factors fuel the left-wing securitization of Islam. In doing so, I take a different perspective from the scholars who read the adoption by the Left of right-wing Islamophobia and emphasis on security as a fruit of the centre-left convergence with the Right towards neoliberal policies. There is evidence that the proximate interaction between the Right and Left compelled the latter to move right-ward and accept neoliberal economic and fiscal recipes, which blurred the lines between mainstream parties (Moffitt, 2022). Nonetheless, I suggest that there is no automatic connection between converting to neoliberalism and peddling Islamophobic tropes, that were already present in left-wing parties' distal context – namely in their attitudes to colonialism, secularism, and to the immigration waves from Muslim majority countries. In other words, the centre-left's gradual overhaul of its social-democratic agenda does not fully explain why the cultural and religious grievances demanded by Muslims are construed as a security threat.

2.4.1 The distal context

By distal context I mean the historical and socio-cultural fabric where the Islamophobic discourse is produced and in which it makes sense. This thesis discusses four Islamophobic tropes that are rooted in Western history and that I have identified as sitting comfortably with right-wing (Muslims as “violent” and as “demographic threats”) and left-wing (Islam as “not secular” and “patriarchal”) ideologies (Kumar, 2012; Meer, 2014). On top of that, it is important to stress that such tropes are uniquely translated across languages and countries. This form of inter-linguistic translation varies according to how Muslims are constructed in each distinct national context. For instance, chapter four will show that the symbolic and material conflicts raised by Islam in France are predicated upon *laïcité*, an “assertive” form of secularism (Kuru, 2009) that is not equally translatable in the British and Italian national cultures.

Aside from the national specificities, Islamophobia is also grounded in the distal context of political parties' history, which translates the securitized threat both in their local language and culture (inter-linguistically) and in the ideological legacy of the party (intra-linguistically). The trope that Muslims are vulnerable to radical religious narratives and thus incompatible with secular norms is widespread across Western countries but specifically linked to the anti-religious agendas historically proposed by both socialists and left-wing liberals, more than by parties situated on the Right, that have been traditionally more conservative and respectful of the presence of religion in public affairs. Most left-wing political ideologies (social-democracy, social-liberalism, socialism, communism) have considered religion, and specifically Islam, as antithetical to some of their referent objects such as belief in gender equality, freedom of expression, and rejection of transcendental sources of political legitimacy. In line with their unique national culture, the centre-left parties selected by the thesis have securitized Muslims in sharp continuity with decades of restrictive policies and practices. For instance, the need to protect British working-class jobs and secure their votes brought Labour to pass austere

immigration policies in the Sixties, because it saw black immigrants as a factor of increasing competition against native workers (Virdee, 2014).

The relevance of longstanding historical factors invites to contest the Copenhagen School's argument that securitization is a speech act that results from exceptional circumstances. The critical junctures alone are insufficient to understand why anti-Islamic tropes have travelled across the Right and Left. It is also important to account for the distal context in which the issue was already seen as a possible source of insecurity. For example, in France, Muslim immigrants were already considered dangerous subjects by both conservative and progressive parties at least since the 1980s, when there was a shift in the way "Muslims chose to publicly affirm their identity" (Bowen, 2007, p.66). Hence, the current calls from the French Socialist Party to monitor the radicalization of Islam cannot be apprehended without analysing how *laïcité* has become a referent object of securitization since the Presidency of Mitterrand (1981-1995) (Ferhat, 2016). Likewise, the iron-fist approach that the Italian Democratic Party adopted to govern the Mediterranean refugee crisis aligns with the securitization of immigrants from Albania (in the 1990s) and Libya (in the 2000s) that was endorsed by the former centre-left parties but framed through a humanitarian register (Albahari, 2006; Andall, 2007). Hence, securitization is not an exceptional product that follows an escalation, but the outcome of ordinary inter-party and intra-party debates rooted in a longer historical period.

2.4.2 The proximate context

The proximate context refers to the type of interaction that the participants are involved in – for instance, a spoken or written conversation. It represents the political chain of agents where parties translate across each other. Back to the example of Labour, the restrictive immigration agenda pushed forward by Harold Wilson (PM, 1966-1970) cannot be understood without a parallel focus on the racist discourse popularized by radical right-wing MPs (such as Enoch Powell) who imposed race as the privileged analytical prism to interpret the socio-economic unrest of that period (Hall et.al., 2013[1978]). The securitization of Muslims under the Hollande Presidency was partly caused by the parallel electoral rise of the National Rally, which imposed security and Islam as topical electoral themes (Alduy, 2017). Similarly, the Democratic Party has not contested many xenophobic slogans spread by the North League because of the latter's growing popularity (Bobba, McDonnell, 2016).

Let me now have a look at the contemporary proximate context, which shows that the mainstream Right and Left have agreed on a neoliberal discourse in the economy, as claimed by populist parties, and also on the identification of security threats. Before proceeding, it is crucial to define neoliberalism, that represents an amorphous set of economic and political doctrines evolving so that a universal definition is impossible to condense. This thesis interprets neoliberalism as a political and economic ideology based on: priority to global economic and financial flows over national protectionism, privatization of public goods, deregulation of trade, empowerment of individual responsibility and "marketization" of most aspects of human existence (Brown, 2019). Since the mid-Seventies, neoliberal economic ideas turned into a widely accepted paradigm and pushed social-democratic parties to question state prerogatives

in the economy, such as commitment to redistribute wealth and reduce market inequalities; support of government economic intervention; belief in welfare and in social security⁹. Instead, parties like Labour and the German Social-Democratic Party were among the first to accept the capitalist logic of subordination to free markets, as underlined by academic research and policy evidence (Moschonas, 2002; Lavelle, 2008; Bale, 2017, pp.297-299; Gerbaudo, 2021). Structural factors - the crisis of the Keynesian welfare State, the European integration process, globalization of trade - induced the centre-left to partly embrace neoliberalism and the “third way” between socialism and market economy theorized by Giddens (1998). A constellation of economists, politicians, and intellectuals adopted social-liberal positions that were thought necessary to correct the shortcomings of capitalism and harness social-democracy for the contemporary challenges of a world “where there are no alternatives to capitalism” (Giddens, 1998, p.19). The hybridization of centre-left parties with pro-market economic policies gained momentum after the fall of socialist economic systems and the widespread diffusion of the neoliberal discourse.

For such reasons, it has become common to describe centre-right and centre-left parties as converging towards consensual neoliberal policies due to the constraints imposed by globalization and Europeanization (Mair, 2009, p.215). The differences between conservative and progressive political programs lost pertinence due to bipartisan convergence in the administration of the public economy, which partly accounts for citizens’ disaffection toward traditional party politics (Roberts, 2017). Hence, voting for mainstream parties is like choosing between Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola, as argued by Pablo Iglesias, former leader of the Spanish left-wing populist party *Podemos* (EuropaPress, 2014). This argument seems to be shared by many political scientists who hold that economic and cultural resentment of traditional left-leaning occupational groups partially explains the electoral appeal of the radical right protectionist agenda (Rydgren, 2013; Berman, Snegovaya, 2019, p.15). Furthermore, the disaffection against the professionalization of politics is another leitmotiv hijacked by populists in the mobilization of apolitical citizens and disappointed electors. According to Katz and Mair (1995), parties began behaving like “cartels” of professionals that cooperate and collude to employ public resources and to shut down the gates of political competition. Katz and Mair have lately held that many ideological labels used to describe party families are less meaningful because “there is likely less difference between two British parties, one of which is social-democratic, than between two social-democratic parties, one of which is British” (2009, p.761). Accordingly, the transfer of authority to international institutions and the consensus around globalized neoliberal capitalism have homogenised mainstream parties and transformed them into “cosmopolitan elites” (Vieten, 2019).

A question worth posing is whether the ideological affinity on neoliberalism has affected how mainstream parties treat non-economic themes, such as security. The argument about a bipartisan convergence implies that security affairs are discussed and addressed in a de-politicized scenario in which parties speak the same neoliberal and technocratic language (Doyle, 2013). This position resonates with the traditional securitization Schools, who privilege

⁹ For a wider debate on “social security” and its ideological collocation on the Right and Left, see Neocleous (2008, p.76), Zedner (2009, pp.34-35), Develennes (2022, p.53).

state agencies as units of analysis without exploring the role of partisan agendas, probably deemed uninfluential. Nonetheless, more than converging towards an allegedly de-politicized centre, Western politics of the last two decades showed more polarized positions on the political chain of agents between right-wing and left-wing populism, as well as centre-right parties radicalizing on the Right and centre-left parties which also moved closer to the Right by translating nationalist slogans (Katsambekis, Kioupkiolis, 2018; Gerbaudo, 2021). In this regard, one pertinent question to ask is: has the left-wing parties' conversion to neoliberalism led them to securitize Muslims?

It is widely acknowledged that neoliberal doctrines give a significant importance to the security of the state (Harvey, 2005; Foucault, 2008; Dillon, Neal, 2008; Wacquant, 2009; Dean, 2010). Building on Foucault, Devellennes explains that “to provide security, neoliberalism has fully embraced the power of the state to create markets and economic structures that liberalism once thought to be natural. Nowhere is this shift more evident than in the rise of security as a core value of society” (2022, p.39). It is true that the sector of security has been opened to privatization and that more restrictive policies have been implemented to fight against crime. The growing privatization of security signals the erosion of traditional state monopoly in favour of private military contractors, policing agencies, and providers of security technologies. Hence, the twist towards neoliberalism has changed the social-democratic relationship with the state. There is a wide consensus that commercial security governance does not brush aside state sovereignty but articulates the public/private dichotomy in hybrid assets of power where the state is still influential in both internal and external security affairs (Abrahamsen, Williams, 2011; Alimahomed, 2014). This happens because the primacy of the market craves the complicity of muscular state apparatuses to secure private property and freedom of circulation, disperse anti-capitalist protests and repel the disenfranchised categories. Thus, neoliberalism has inspired many centre-left parties to adopt the right-wing interpretation of security as absence of threats to law-and-order. Earlier I have illustrated this argument regarding the translation of “zero-tolerance” policies from the US to Europe. Chapters [three](#) and [four](#) will shed further light on this point.

The restrictive management of immigration flows recently witnessed can also be considered as another effect of neoliberal doctrines on left-wing parties. Since the maximization of economic worth is the strongest rational governing neoliberal migration policies, the result is the choice of securitizing disenfranchised immigrants while competing at the very same time to accommodate wealthy ones. An example of this market-driven logic comes from New Labour's migration policies enacted during its second term (2001-2005). Labour followed neoliberal ideas in opening borders for high-skilled, worthy immigrants while making access to asylum harder (Somerville, 2007). The neoliberal priority to attract competitive workers, however, was balanced by tougher measures on asylum policies and on illegal economic migrants, implemented by three pieces of legislation between 2002 and 2006¹⁰. This shows that the securitization of Muslims is also predicated upon socio-economic factors like class, as confirmed by the evidence that underprivileged Muslims are mostly

¹⁰ The Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act (2002), the Asylum and Immigration Act (2004) and the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act (2006).

affected by Islamophobic violence and hate speeches (Runnymede Trust, 2017, 2021). Such form of racism is entangled with the global hierarchies created by world capitalism and imperialism. Indeed, many scholars concur that contemporary racism cannot be thought in isolation from neoliberalism (Carr, 2016; Truong, 2018; Kaya, 2019; Mavelli, 2022). Wacquant (2009, p.4) holds that the social Darwinism of neoliberal states inevitably targets some “castaway categories” such as extra-European immigrants. Similarly, Brown (2019, p.10) claims that identity politics and xenophobia cannot be reduced to neoliberalism but represents its “Frankenstein creation”: a degeneration caused by the neoliberal dismantlement of traditional socio-cultural bonds.

For such reasons, it is reasonable to think that centre-left politicians have securitized Muslims as cultural others to conceal the socio-economic precarity precipitated by the liberalization of markets supported since the late Nineties. As a reaction to the left-wing drift towards neoliberalism, radical right parties have appropriated some ideals traditionally defended by the Left and claim to better represent the interest of the working-class. However, left-wing parties have historically been more prone to promote class solidarity between natives and foreigners. This form of class solidarity is still quite important in the rhetoric of radical left parties (Katsambekis, Kioupkiolis, 2018). By contrast, right-wing parties do not aim at the socio-economic emancipation of the working-class but only of “native” workers. While it is true that some working-class folks stopped voting for left-wing parties and that mainstream Left parties have downsized the importance of blue-collar voters in its agendas, it is incorrect to claim that the working-class now votes in block for the radical right. Many working-class electors are progressive (especially ethnic minorities and women) and have often voted for the Left or abstained (Amable, Palombarini, 2021; Abou-Chadi et.al., 2021). Moreover, it is difficult to find right-wing parties that have seriously questioned neoliberal policies (Rydgren, 2013).

That said, the left-wing shift towards restrictive policies on Islam should not be ascribed only to neoliberal socio-economic recipes. Although there is an evident link between securitization of immigration and endorsement of neoliberal policies, this interpretation comes with an analytical cost, as it mostly reads securitization of *Islam* as securitization of *Muslim immigration* and entrenches it into socio-economic problems (unemployment, injustice, structural racism)¹¹. Pieces of anti-Islamic hostility can be retraced in the historical development of parties’ ideologies, that precede the recent circulation of neoliberal mantras. In this vision, securitization is justified by the hostile representation of Islam as different from the European political and historical landscape, that parties may interpret as predominantly Christianized and ethnically homogeneous (the Right) or secularized, liberal, and partially opened to the encounter with other cultures (the Left). Relying on a structural interpretation that blames capitalism for Islamophobia explains why rich Muslims do not raise feeling of unease because their wealth allows substantial financial investments, as it happens in the UK (Mavelli, 2022, p.81). However, it cannot fully account for the historical trajectories of orientalist and Islamophobic tropes (Renton, 2018). Neither is it exhaustive to grasp why the

¹¹ Nonetheless, it is true that Muslims are generally less economically well-off than the majority of Western European population (Dancygier, 2013, p.4).

emphasis on shared values and civic culture often trumps economic rationales (e.g. employability) as the main criteria to integrate and accommodate immigrants, as advocated by research on citizenship (Mouritsen et.al., 2019, p.596). To this extent, anti-Islamic racism potentially jars with neoliberalism if we consider the latter as an ideology that commodifies individuals independently from their identity.

Therefore, analyses focused on socio-economic factors should be completed by an account of political parties' misperceptions about Islam, which was seen as "other" for reasons that precede the economic doctrines spread by neoliberalism. Back to Labour's illustration, the securitization of Muslim asylum-seekers and citizens makes more sense when one recalls the distal context of the party, marked by the hostility towards non-European immigration and the support for the British Empire and the Commonwealth - support that was not immune from manifestations of civilizational superiority (Morgan, 1999, p.236; Catterall, 2018, p.826). Additionally, the securitarian turn is connected to the critical junctures of the early 2000s - 9/11 and 7/7 terrorist attacks and the Second Gulf War, that reignited orientalist tones in the party (Moosavi, 2015) - and to the governmental efforts in civic integration and counter-radicalization policies (Huysmans, Buonfino, 2008).

Bringing the "distal context" into the picture is important because it allows interpreting the securitization of Islam as something more than a mere consequence of neoliberalism. Likewise, it enables to contest the argument that the left-wing securitarian turn is a "contagion" from the far-right, whose ideas impact all the party systems and not only the centre-right positions (van Spanje, 2010). This argument, supported also by scholars who study the mainstreaming of the far-right (Brown et.al., 2021), absolves the Left by minimizing the epistemic elaboration of dangerous ideas by the audiences, which are described as hit by far-right "contagion" (Kallis, 2013, p.239). In other words, little is the attention to how left-wing parties translate right-wing racist tropes by building on its Islamophobic narratives. In one relevant study on Western European centre-left parties, Bale et.al. (2010, pp.412-414) argue that in front of mounting right-wing xenophobia, social-democratic parties might decide to hold their principles or to defuse the attention and talk about other issues, but also to adopt the position of the competitor¹². However, the adoption of right-wing tropes needs to be integrated by studies on the distinct forms of Islamophobia emerged in left-wing ideologies and parties (Raymond, 2009; Achcar, 2013; Ferhat, 2018).

To recap, the acceptance of neoliberalism has brought centre-left parties closer to the Right regarding economic, fiscal and also security policies. More than a convergence towards the centre, it is the centre-left that has moved right-ward. However, the securitization of Islam is not just a product of this right-ward shift, that occurred in what I defined as proximate context, but also of specific left-wing ideological pillars grounded in the distal context. Despite the difference remaining more formal than substantive, such difference debunks the argument that neoliberalism dilutes all the nuances between Right and Left. When it comes to the securitization of Islam, neoliberalism alone does not provide exhaustive explanations to interpret partisan translations. The translated securitization is embedded in three contexts: the

¹² See also Meguid (2008).

critical junctures, the proximate context, where parties interact with each other, and the distal context, where we find traces of orientalist and Islamophobic narratives across both the Right and the Left.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that translation is an active, collective, and contextual transfer of meaning across parties, that I located on a “chain of agents”. This chain shows that political parties interact as active agents and audiences of translated securitization and contribute to the debate on Islam by reformulating Islamophobia into hybrid versions. When parties appropriate tropes from the other side, they must reformulate securitization in the name of their own referent objects, with the purpose to be ideological coherent. Otherwise, they would be accused of passive imitation. I have explained that the securitization of Islam starts on the Right. However, left-wing parties actively contribute by translating it in its own Islamophobic language. While the transfer of meaning can be inspired by individual party leaders, the chapter has also showed that translation is achieved through a complex collective move animated by party candidates, factions, and mediating agents. The acceptance of translation by multiple audiences is vital because the lack of convergent interests might bring internecine fractures in parties. Such a pattern is reinforced by the contemporary personalization of politics.

I have also explored the contextual dimension that impinged upon translation across parties. Concerning the right-to-left translation, the cross-fertilization of social-democracy with neoliberalism prompted some centre-left parties to prioritize market economy and indulge in a partial securitization of socio-economic marginalized groups like immigrants. Nonetheless, the social-liberal turn has not prepared the ground for left-wing securitization of Islam, which spawned both from the radical right ability to capitalize upon economic and cultural insecurity of some electors and from the Islamophobic hostility sedimented in left-wing parties’ distal context.

The translation framework shows that each party constructs the same threat (Muslims) according to its understanding of security and Islam. In doing so, parties try to preserve coherence with their history and referent objects. Despite both sides translating securitization in their own language, a substantial number of social-democratic and social-liberal parties have issued restrictive policies on immigration and integration of Muslims and appropriated a conservative meaning of security, while the Right keeps loyal to its nationalist policies. Thus, there was no convergence towards undifferentiated policies, but rather a right-ward move by left-wing parties.

The following chapters further explore this argument by analysing the intra-linguistic translation of the securitization of Islam across right-wing and left-wing parties in three different countries. Political parties act in specific national contexts, where concepts like “security” and “Islam” are inter-linguistically translated into different meanings and referent objects: the idea of “balanced race relations” between the working class and immigrants in Britain; *laïcité* in France; gender equality and human security in Italy. The following chapters

also show that the current securitization theories cannot grasp how securitization tropes travel across parties. Chapter three takes issue with the Copenhagen School, as the British case has been mostly addressed by this School and some of its key critics (Croft, 2012; Neal, 2012a). Instead, chapter four tries to integrate the Paris School approach through a detailed focus on parties' ideas and policies, since most securitization scholarship on France is from the Paris School. The fifth chapter discusses the Italian Democratic Party's immigration and integration policies by using the framework of translation and reiterates that both the Copenhagen and the Paris Schools minimize the active role of parties in shaping securitization.

3. The Labour Party in the UK: translating the securitization of Muslims to balance race relations

“People want to know that the Muslim community in particular, but actually all minority communities, have got the balance right between integration and multiculturalism.”¹

Tony Blair, Labour, 2006

“I think what Prevent has often done is seen to target the Muslim community, not anybody else, looks to say there is a kind of suspicion over the whole community and it's actually often counter-productive”²

Jeremy Corbyn, Labour, 2017

The counterterrorism agenda implemented by “New” Labour³ under former PM Tony Blair (1997-2007) and Gordon Brown (2007-2010) has led to Islamophobic outcomes. Among the most controversial aspects, a report published by the Transnational Institute (Blakeley et.al., 2019) recalls that New Labour’s legislative agenda expanded the use of surveillance and propaganda, legitimised military force and extra-judicial killings as counterterrorist methods and normalised complicity with torturers. In New Labour’s discourse, security threats were not equated to individual acts of violence but framed into a clash of culture, ideology and values between Britain and Islamism (Blakeley et.al., 2019, p.3). The increasing discrimination of Muslims raises some puzzles because it contrasts with the respect of human rights that Blair flagged as guiding principle of his foreign policy approach (Dunne, Wheeler, 2000, pp.61-62). However, this puzzle cannot be explained by established securitization Schools, who are praiseworthy but come with an analytical cost: minimizing how security is interpreted across and inside political parties.

The Transnational Institute’s report instead shows that national security issues are inherently connected to party’s ideologies and leaderships, that bring a party to adopt more conservative or progressive positions on Muslims. New Labour bought into narratives and operational modes that restricted liberties and clashed with British human rights obligations. Hence, the major British centre-left party adjusted ideas that resonated with nationalist jargon and contrasted with the vision of British Muslims’ integration advanced by Labour left-wing MPs such as Jeremy Corbyn, who has proposed an alternative and inclusive narrative that debunks many stereotypes surrounding Muslims. The report advocated a more progressive security agenda upheld by the respect of human rights and racial and religious equality. This agenda aligns with Labour’s 2017 manifesto, significantly redacted under Corbyn’s leadership,

¹ In Moosavi (2015, p.656)

² In BBC (2017a).

³ Expression used to indicate the historical period of Labour between the mid-Nineties and 2010.

and shares its purpose to overhaul British counterterrorism to seek a fairer balance between civil liberties and security needs (Blakeley et.al., 2019, p.4).

This chapter argues that Labour has securitized Muslims through the translation of the right-wing meaning of security - interpreted as absence of threats to British law-and-order and the tropes that Muslims are prone to violence and are potentially demographic threats. Labour has justified translation in front of its audiences (other parties, electors, party members) by showing congruence with one important referent object of its history: the establishment of balanced race relations, that ensures protection to both the British working-class and to immigrants. The existing securitization approaches do not grasp the significance of translation because their emphasis on the executive as central agent of securitization overlooks a detailed analysis of how tropes travel across and inside political parties. The chapter specifically takes issue with the Copenhagen School, that considers securitization only as an “exceptional” move above and beyond politics. The historical trajectory indicates that New Labour’s securitization is not the mere consequence of critical junctures such as the jihadist terrorist attacks, despite their obvious emotional impact. Translation depends on Labour’s distal and proximate contexts, embedded in Labour’s ambiguity between promotion of multiculturalism and suspects towards black and brown minorities. While an important existing literature attempts to move beyond the Copenhagen School approach, it does not reflect upon Labour’s adoption of right-wing language and policies. This chapter addresses this gap by using the translation framework, which privileges political parties as artisans of securitization.

This chapter proceeds as follows. The first section critically evaluates the counterterrorism policies under New Labour’s Cabinets led by Blair and Brown. These policies instantiate a contemporary form of securitization of Islam, that should be interpreted through the analytical framework of translation.

The second section explains that such translated securitization is not exceptional as it depends on a pre-existent ideological legacy situated in the distal context. New Labour’s securitization of Islam should be read as the historical development of restrictive immigration policies already circulating in the Sixties, conditioned by the coeval rise of nationalist and populist refrains on the Right. Yet, “old” Labour also promoted inclusive anti-discrimination policies that display a substantial ambivalence in its relationship with ethnic minorities. Drawing on this legacy, I claim that the referent object flagged by Labour in the securitization of Muslims is the concept of “balanced race relations”.

The third section spells out the proximate context in which Labour translated a right-wing meaning of security. This context coincides with Margaret Thatcher’s Cabinets (1979-1990), whose agenda drew upon a neoliberal, populist, and authoritarian repertoire that percolated into New Labour’s discourse on Muslims.

The fourth section reflects on the collective nature of translation by analysing Labour’s internal reactions to the securitization of Muslims. Contextualised in the internal feuds between Labour’s Right and Left, I explain that Corbyn advanced an alternative agenda to de-securitize Muslims and to revise British counterterrorism strategy.

3.1 New Labour's counterterrorism agenda

This section aims to critically assess the counterterrorism policies elaborated by New Labour's Cabinets led by Blair and Brown. Many studies examine how British Muslims have been targeted by securitizing discourse and policies (Brown, 2008; Abbas, 2012; Hussain, Bagguley, 2012; Saeed, 2016), in which New Labour took active part. As I am going to explain soon, Labour's counterterrorism agenda did not resemble to an "exceptional security response", as the Copenhagen School argues, but a set of routinised discriminatory measures that disproportionately affect Muslims' daily lives, as several authors have contended (Croft, 2012; Ragazzi, 2016; Heath-Kelly, 2013, 2017). Yet, these works do not interrogate the origins of New Labour's Islamophobia. Neither do they ask why a centre-left party started to use a language that normalized right-wing tropes. The minimization of how parties act simultaneously as agents and audiences of securitization is an obstacle to retrace the seeds of contemporary Labour's securitization of Islam. After analysing the discourse and policies of New Labour's counterterrorism, I propose to follow a different trajectory by interpreting securitization of Islam as an active, collective and contextual translation across the Right and Left.

The development of New Labour's counterterrorism started with the introduction of the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act, issued two months after 9/11. Harshly criticized for some draconian measures (e.g. the indefinite detention of presumed international terrorists) and its incompatibility with the European Convention of Human Rights, the Act ushered in a wider counterterrorism strategy called CONTEST, firstly elaborated in 2003 and then reiterated in the 2006 strategy for *Countering International Terrorism*, adopted one year after the attacks in London on July 7, 2005. As reiterated by the 2018 reviewed version, Al Qaeda and Daesh were still persistent security threat, even more than in 2011, when the last review strategy had been published. CONTEST's risk reduction model is still based on four strands: Prevent, Prepare, Protect, Pursue (HM Government, 2006, p.1).

Among these, the Prevent strand deserves further discussion. Elaborated as a strategy to safeguard people from becoming or supporting terrorism, its implementation has prompted criticism, even within Labour, for its harmful consequences on British Muslims. Among the discriminatory outcomes, it is important to remember that Prevent imposes increased surveillance on Muslims in their public and private spaces, with the purpose to neutralize dangerous ideas (Bentley, 2015, p.107). Despite recognizing that "only a tiny minority of radicalized individuals become terrorists" (HM Government, 2006, p.10), Prevent places emphasis on the need to counter "extremist ideas" that contrast with British values and might drive to "non-violent radicalization", namely a very inchoate and muddy concept (Sedgwick, 2010; Martini et al., 2020, p.2; Taylor, 2020, p.859). In so doing, Prevent discursively links the legitimate sense of grievance and injustice perceived by many Western Muslims (expressed for instance in their anti-imperialist rhetoric, HM Government, 2006, p.10) as a vehicle to embrace fundamentalist attitudes. Thus, New Labour's counterterrorism program has securitized part of British Muslims as potential threatening others, creating what Ragazzi (2016) defines as a

“suspect category” that is artificially divided in “extremist” and “moderate” Muslims, depending on whether they conform to Britishness or not⁴.

Several scholarly contributions on the British case study disagree with the Copenhagen School, as they argue that the securitization was not a mere response to exceptional events that pushed British decision-makers to declare a security emergency through a speech act (Buzan et.al., 1998), even though 9/11 was certainly a critical juncture that escalated negative views about Islam, or a “turning point in history”, according to Blair (Lister, 2019, p.418). Amid the most valuable contributions, Croft proposes a “post-Copenhagen” framework more grounded in temporal and spatial trajectories compared to the Copenhagen School (2012, pp.86-94). Croft argues that the securitization of Islam by British political elites is just the last step of a long historical process in which the British national Self is forged against foreign enemies. The need to secure British values against potentially radical Muslims – whether “homegrown” terrorists or foreign immigrants – does not create an emergency in which the survival of the state is jeopardized. Rather than exceptional, security measures are ordinary and affect the daily lives of British Muslim and non-Muslim citizens, encouraged to cooperate in tackling radicalization and abide by British way of life. Not only the state, but also other individual and social actors perform routinary actions to maintain their “ontological” security and brush aside the anxiety raised by unexpected events (Croft, 2012, pp.25-26). However, the post-Copenhagen framework does not capture the specific partisan trajectory that brought Labour to endorse securitization of Islam.

Like Croft, other authors further de-emphasize the exceptionality of securitization but do not engage with intra- and inter-party dynamics. Heath-Kelly (2017) argues that Labour created a pre-criminal space of intervention in which the Government intervenes to tackle anticipatory signs of radicalization. The pre-emptive intervention is not meant to counter an extraordinary security threat but to pervade the everyday life of British citizens and calculate the risk of radicalization. Although Heath-Kelly correctly points at some narratives that Blair flagged to justify counter-radicalization strategy - such as “community cohesion” and the dialogue with “moderate” Islam (2017, p.300) - her contribution does not question how this semantic option was influenced by the mainstreaming of Islamophobic right-wing tropes.

A better framework to adequately capture the interplay between political factors and elaboration of security is provided by Neal (2012a, 2012c) and Lister (2019), whose contributions mark a significant advancement in the study of how ordinary politics affects the realm of security. Neal (2012c, p.261) argues that New Labour had already normalized stricter instruments to fight terrorism before those tragic terrorist attacks. Blair’s first endeavour to reform counterterrorism came from the Terrorism Act (2000), which made counterterrorism legislation less executive-centred and more dependent on parliamentary deliberations. Similarly, Lister maintains that British policymaking in counterterrorism affairs does not look so much different from other normal political subjects. The presence of multiple audiences who openly and publicly contested securitization is something that jars with the narrative that pits

⁴ Ragazzi argues that it is incorrect to define the essentialization of Muslims as a “suspect community” (Pantazis, Permberton, 2009) because they do not represent a homogeneous “community”. On this debate, see also Brighton (2007) and Archer (2009).

security as the realm of secret and exceptional decision-making. In the passage of the Terrorist Act in 2006, Lister explains (2019, p.424), one elicits that the draft of the bill prompted cross party discussions and intra-party dissent, as the Cabinet was defeated in Parliament on a key area of the bill.

My thesis builds on this argument, that invites to consider the securitization through counterterrorism measures not only as more routinised – against the Copenhagen School – but also as more sensible to the political imprinting given by parties. This aspect is downplayed by both Schools, as the Paris School seems to argue that security is a domain separated from politics (Neal, 2012a, p.113; Lister, 2019, p.421). The arguments made by Lister and Neal yield fruitful insights for the sake of this research. The robust emphasis on the politicization of security (instead of the securitization of politics) sets the analytical ground to study how political actors (both institutional and not) circumscribe what security is. Building on this interpretation, this chapter invites to read New Labour’s counterterrorism agenda as a product chiming with its political ideals, while hiding the translation of right-wing vocabulary. This is something that the existing securitization frameworks do not capture, as they both focus on the executive and its security agencies (military, police, intelligence etc.) as main actors of counterterrorism.

There are already studies that scrutinized the British military intervention in Iraq and the securitization discourse underpinning it, through an approach that shows more sensibility for the political factors that influence the agent-audience relation (Roe, 2008; Hayes, 2016). As many Labour MPs hesitated to approve the operation, Roe argues that Blair had to master the formal and moral support of “internal” party audiences by framing Saddam Hussein as a threat to norms cherished by Labour (e.g. respect for international peace and human rights). To sell this securitization move to the public, Hayes maintains (2016, p.341) that Blair clothed it into narratives stressing British moral duty to send boots on the ground in the name of its democratic identity and international role in supporting UN-based international order. Despite the further advancement in capturing the politics behind security, neither Roe nor Hayes propose to engage with partisan ideology and history, leaving one question unanswered: how did New Labour adopt a discourse on securitization of Islam that contrasted with the respect of human rights and multiculturalism, namely two significant points in its 1997 manifesto?⁵ To answer so and integrate the previous contributions, more research is needed on intra-party and inter-party dynamics that affect the securitization of Islam.

By analysing New Labour’s distinct way to translate securitization, I build on the argument proposed by Neal and Lister and take a different position compared to the few studies on party ideologies and British counterterrorism. Among these, Morgan and de Londras’ research dwells on the ideological rationale behind the Conservative’s counterterrorism policies. They claim that New Labour and David Cameron’s Cabinets (2010-2016) found a rare point of bipartisan agreement, which makes the case for the absence of a pure ideologically “conservative counterterrorism” (Morgan, de Londras, 2018, p.187). Their research unpacks the legislative continuity between the Blair and Brown administrations and the following

⁵ See Labour Party (1997).

Conservative Cabinets led by Cameron and Theresa May (2016-19). The two scholars confirm the argument about the substantial partisan convergence around national security issues (particularly counterterrorism), which becomes even more explicit in British political culture - usually characterized by continuity, moderation, and compromise, giving less room to ideological quarrels and party polarization (Leach, 2009, p.18). Regarding New Labour, Morgan and de Londras hold (2018, p.188) that CONTEST's three focal points (prevention, surveillance, little commitment to human rights protection) led to controversial policies (e.g. restricting the physical liberty of suspected terrorists, deportation, massive acquisition of data, adjustment of human rights law for national security motivations) that were less expected from an alleged progressive party. Likewise, other scholars stress that CONTEST failed to deliver appreciable results and disproportionately targeted Muslims especially after the 7/7 attacks (Gearson, Rosemont, 2015).

Despite arguing that there has been convergence between Labour and Conservatives, Morgan and de Londras also notice (2018, p.210-13) that Cameron and May's counterterrorism policies sit comfortably with some Conservative ideals: building on the status quo rather than theorizing new approaches; committing to paternalistic statehood; championing the Western civilization against its enemies. Moreover, the Conservatives replaced the "control orders" (an order to restrict an individual's liberty for reasons of national security, as stated in the Prevention of Terrorism Act, 2005) with Terrorist Prevention and Investigation Measures (TPIMs). As the TPIMs were less intrusive and restrictive than the New Labour's control orders, they also epitomize how a right-wing party reacted to the centre-left adoption of authoritarian policies by claiming that its recipe to balance between security and freedom was better than Labour's (Morgan, de Londras, 2018, p.200).

Along with the study of conservative ideology, more attention is needed to Labour's referent objects of securitization, to how Labour was impacted by right-wing narratives, and to the disruption that securitization brought inside Labour. This helps to challenge the argument of a bipartisan convergence by retracing Labour's distinct translation of securitization. Although no neo-elected political party can decide a complete U-turn in national security strategies, New Labour's approach to counterterrorism is distinct and reflects a wider trend in Western centre-left parties. It participates in the broader purpose of securitizing Islam, realized as a translation from the right into a vocabulary congruent with Labour's referent objects that must be secured to appease internal (factions) and external (electors) audiences. As explained [earlier in the thesis](#), instead of centre-right and centre-left parties converging towards an allegedly de-politicized centre, the political spectrum has seen a right-wing drift by centre-left parties like Labour regarding the governance of Muslims.

The approach based on translation better explains the rise, character, and form of left-wing securitization. In what follows, I operationalize translation into the British distal and proximate contexts. The adoption of Islamophobic tones widely diffused in the 2000s met a pre-existent partisan heritage that rendered the translated securitization more normal and institutionalized in party practices than the Copenhagen School would tell us. Translating securitization of Islam made sense because Labour had historically espoused an ambivalent attitude towards Black and Brown immigration and then towards Muslims. Little had New

Labour to translate from the Right since contemporary translation follows the historical precedents of previous Labour Cabinets, whose involvement in repressive policies of criminal justice precedes the recent exploit of far-right narratives (Gilroy, Sim, 1987, p.74). This chronological dimension received less attention from current securitization theories. More engagement is needed to uncover how the recent “turn” to a tougher security discourse grows its roots in Labour’s distal context.

3.2 Labour and the ambiguity of British multiculturalism

This section provides an overview of the distal context⁶ in which Labour issued restrictive immigration policies in the attempt to balance the commitment to create a multicultural society with the protection of the British working-class. This aim to balance race relations is the referent object that Labour flags during the securitization of Muslims. Current securitization studies do not sufficiently explore the role of parties. I do it by showing that Labour carries an ambiguous xenophobic legacy that firstly stems from its previous experiences in government. Part of Labour regarded black immigrants as a factor of increased competition in the job-market. This vision was then reinforced by the parallel rise of racist and nationalist slogans on the Right. While the commitment against racism remained stronger in the post-war decades, the laws approved in the Sixties and the Seventies revealed an ambivalent attitude towards ethnic minorities that Labour still struggles to clarify. Little was said about the religious and cultural features of Muslims, who were mostly framed as racial rather than religious others until the “Rushdie affair” (Abbas, 2012; Gilliat-Ray, 2014). However, current securitization of Islam should be understood considering the previous securitization of black and brown immigrants because the overwhelming majority of Muslims in the UK and Europe have an immigrant background. Thus, as recalled by Casanova (2006, p.76), “the immigrant, the religious, the racial, and the socio-economic deprived ‘others’ all tend to coincide”.

Labour was created in 1900 and adopted a socialist programme in 1918 (Bartle 2021, p.103). The foundation of Labour did not bring to a unified British left-wing party. The Left was divided between Labour and many trade unions, on one side, who harboured a paternalistic and concerned attitude about immigration, while smaller far-left formations (such as the British Socialist Party), on the other, committed to internationalist solidarity and racial equality. The need to protect the British working-class determined how Labour translated its discourse on Muslim immigrants, whose presence in Britain can be traced back to the mid-nineteenth century (Ansari, 2004). Labour had long opposed workers’ freedom of movement, endorsed border restrictions and accommodated working-class racism instead of challenging it (Virdee, 2014, p.84). During the short-lived Government of 1924, Home Secretary Arthur Henderson proposed budget cuts for immigration staff and envisioned a special system of Police registration for coloured seamen (Tabili, 1994, p.82). While Labour had contested the Aliens

⁶ I do not provide a comprehensive historical analysis of Labour. My aim is to flag key moments and recurring themes regarding the securitization of Islam and its translation. On Labour’s history, see Thorpe (1997). On Labour’s foreign policy and relationship with the Commonwealth, see Morgan (1999), Davis (2000), Plant et. al. (2004), Smith (2008), Catterall (2018).

Act (1919), there seemed to be less criticism against the Coloured Alien Seamen Act (1925), which the party did not repeal during its second Cabinet (1929-31). One rationale behind the hesitation was trade unions' concerns about unregulated immigration. The hostility raised by foreign competition on the labour market brought Labour to justify restrictions to secure working-class stability (Lunn, 2000; Reitan, 2003; Ansari, 2004). As Davis recalls (2000, p.390), trade unions opposed immigration even during a period of full employment, which confirms that racialized comments and discriminatory practices were more the norms than the exception.

The immigration of Arab and African workers from the former colonies posed Labour in front of a dilemma between pragmatic protectionism and idealistic internationalism, which still marks many Western left-wing parties. Eventually, the interests of native Britons trumped the commitment to emancipate foreign workers. Border controls and cuts on the arrivals of immigrants were framed into the socialist need to cocoon the British working-class from the competition of ethnic seafarers – objects of hatred by white seamen and their unions (Lunn, 2000, p.108).

This discussion on Labour's race and immigration agenda helps to understand that ambivalent policies are rooted in the party's distal context, tarnished by its compromising posture towards racism (Virdee, 2014, p.95). By drawing on this sedimented heritage, the translation of some right-wing tropes becomes intelligible to Labour's audiences because it is wrapped by familiar referent objects already used to securitize immigration. In 1948, 11 Labour MPs asked PM Clement Attlee to halt black immigration because "they were likely to impair the harmony, strength and cohesion of our public and social life, and to cause discord and unhappiness among all concerned" (Virdee, 2014, p.102). By associating black people with disorder and weakening of the social bonds, Labour implicitly conveyed the argument that immigration was a security threat. Thus, contemporary securitization of Islam is also connected to working-class racism, collateral effect of the protection of British workers. The equation "failed socio-economic integration of racialized minorities = violence" was already circulating in Labour's distal context.

In the 1960s, part of the Conservatives embraced overtly nationalist and populist slogans, which had a remarkable impact on the way the political conversation about race unfolded. This happened after that the possibilities previously offered by the British labour market (mostly in low-paid jobs) to Caribbean and South-Asian workers shrank. While an early optimism for economic growth had convinced mainstream parties to favour expansive immigration policies, the settlement of black proletariats settled in British industrial towns prompted a reaction of antagonism and "indigenous racism" (Hall, 2017[1978], p.146) by segments of white lower and middle-class. The urban riots started in Notting Hill and Nottingham in 1958 showed that fascist political groups exploited popular concerns to stoke fear about imminent racial tensions. When the material conditions to accommodate newcomers worsened, both parties opted to restrict entries and transform "people who came as citizens into immigrants through a series of Commonwealth Immigration Acts" (Bhambra, 2017, p.221) - two signed by the Conservatives (1962, 1971) and one by Labour (1968).

Already ambivalent towards immigration, Labour leaned towards more restrictive solutions, especially after the 1964 elections. This means that Labour's xenophobic discourse (embedded in its party legacy) collided with right-wing securitization. The result was a translation into an alternative version that resonated with the working-class racism Labour had previously endorsed.

Racism was a clear driver in right-wing securitization, in a historical period when the "racial" was more dominant a frame than "religion" to discuss immigrants. The securitization of ethnic minorities was inspired by the vocabulary popularized by a radical faction of the Right embodied by Enoch Powell. Conservative MP from 1950 to 1974, Powell embodies some aspects that one can easily find in contemporary right-wing populism. Powell framed immigration and racial policies as liberal elites' conspiracy that imposed racial equality upon white majorities and ended up in their "minoritization" (Shilliam, 2021, p.245). Preaching a racialized vision of English nationhood as exclusively white, Powell claimed that national heredity was constituted by intrinsic cultural traits and political values that were incompatible with immigrants. Most notably, Powell passed into history when, on April 20, 1968, gave a virulent speech (the "rivers of blood" speech) against mass immigration and multicultural integration policies to a party meeting in Birmingham. He singled out Commonwealth arrivals as an alarming threat to English nationhood and prophesised racial bloodshed ("I seem to see the river Tiber foaming in much blood") in the communities more concerned by ethnic diversity, where "in 15- or 20-years' time the black man will have the whip over the white man" (Powell, 1968). Aside from the ultra-nationalist conception of citizenship, Shilliam (2021, p.244) argues that Powell's vision of Englishness emphasized values like individualism and self-responsibility. In his vehement attacks against centre-left Cabinets and their public management of economic life, one elicits the anti-statist register that Thatcher would draw upon later. In line with this was Powell's populist resentment against British liberal elites who silenced native citizens and obliged them to accept immigration. Powell's narratives interweave liberals and foreigners in the category of "enemies within" (Hall et.al., 2013[1978], p. 271), in a move that is very common to current right-wing populist parties, especially when they accuse the Left of being accomplice with Islamist groups (Liogier, 2012; Bobba, McDonnell, 2016, p.292; Alduy, 2017, pp. 119,141,351)

Labour accepted the trope of immigrants as demographic threats but translated the securitization of ethnic minorities into a narrative chiming with its own referent object: the need to ensure balanced race relations in the name of anti-racism and multiculturalism. Racism had palpable consequences on Labour's immigration policies, which veered towards restrictive approaches after the narrow electoral victory that led to the Government of Harold Wilson (1964-1970). 1964 elections fortified the impression of a turning point in the discourse on immigration, framed as a racial, cultural and securitarian threat by reactionary voices on the Right and soon reproduced by Labour. As argued by Stuart Hall (2017[1978a], p.149), race turned into an accepted prism to read contingent socio-economic disorders and into a legitimate electoral tool symbolized by the unexpected victory of the Conservatives in Smethwick. Smethwick was the county borough with the highest rate in recent immigrant settlements to England. The conservative candidate Peter Griffiths surprisingly defeated Gordon Walker (Labour shadow Foreign Secretary) after a campaign marked by overtly racist propaganda

(Wigmore, 2014). Under the mounting pressure coming from the right edge of the chain of agents, Labour straddled ambiguous solutions that eventually put the protection of white Britons before the belief in racial equality.

On one hand, party cadres preached an emancipatory approach towards immigrants. Hence, Labour strived to ensure racial emancipation and promote multiculturalism. As declared by then Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell in 1961, “the whole future of the world will probably depend on whether people of different colours can live in harmony with each other” (Bealey, 1970, p.221). Therefore, the Race Relations Acts (1965,1968) granted immigrants equal access and equal rights and opportunities on the labour market and other key areas of British society (Meer, Modood, 2009b, p.479). The acts dovetailed with the proclaimed discursive shift from cultural assimilationism to a softer accommodation of different cultures, that many commentators deciphered from the statement of Labour Home Secretary Roy Jenkins (1965-67). Jenkins defined integration not as a “flattening process of assimilation but as equal opportunity, coupled with cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance” (1967, p.267). To effectively translate, Labour policies put racial equality into the referent objects that the party shielded and that could potentially justify a mild de-securitization of ethnic minorities – regarded by the Conservatives as sources of insecurity, as one can elicit from the electoral manifestos of 1964 and 1966 (Dale, 2000a, pp.150, 171).

On the other, despite having vehemently condemned it, Labour did not repel the 1962 Immigration Act and in 1965 even halved the quotas on which 1962 legislation was based (Hansen, 1999, p.811). Like in the inter-war years, the lack of enough working-class jobs and the shrinking of welfare resources justified further restrictions on Commonwealth immigration. The party had likely to heed trade unions’ fears that immigrants could lower local salaries and attempt to public order (Reitan, 2003). Additionally, some party cadres reckoned that exploiting native people’s resentment for pro-immigration policies paid in electoral results (Kettle, 2016). For instance, Richard Crossman (Cabinet Minister) warned that reluctance to stem the flows could result in a severe electoral backlash in the West Midlands and the Southeast (Hannah, 2018, p.133).

Labour’s commitment to secure balanced race relations and maintain working-class electoral strongholds required a certain symmetry between the integration of newcomers and socio-economic security of native Britons. Crossman’s words sounded predictive of the electoral transition from Left to Right that occurred in the Midlands and the North under Thatcher and during the 2010s when Miliband was Labour’s leader (Fielding, 2021). To stem these bad performances, it is likely that Labour actively translated the concerns about immigration into a narrative tailored to prioritize one referent object (protecting the British working-class from foreigners) upon another one (racial equality). Accordingly, the argument that numerical restrictions were the condition of possibility to improve multi-racial cohabitation soon outweighed alternative explanations. Following this argument, immigrants might have turned into a threat to public order in case of failed integration. There is evidence about it in the electoral manifesto of 1964, that tangled the purpose of stopping racial conflicts and discrimination to the quantitative limitation of immigrants settling in the UK (Dale, 2000b, p.105). The party believed that cultural obstacles could hinder immigrants’ integration while

isolating the racial question from the historical dynamic of British domestic and foreign policy. Labour MP Roy Hattersley indicated a trade-off between entry and integration policies as he claimed that “without integration, limitation is inexcusable; without limitation, integration is impossible” (Squire, 2005, p.55). As reiterated by the 1965 White Paper on Immigration from the Commonwealth, flows had to be kept under a certain tolerance threshold. A similar rationale can be found on the French and Italian centre-left ([Mitterrand](#), [Minniti](#)), so as in other parties using a liberal vocabulary to curb immigration (Blommaert, Verschueren, 1998, pp.77-80; Chabal, 2015, p.86). This delicate balance is part of a distal context that still partly explains the securitization of immigration operated by New Labour.

In front of Conservative allegations of being incapable to tackle immigration, Labour Cabinets curtailed arrivals from the Commonwealth. The electoral saliency of racial issues tabled by the Conservatives brought the Labour to balance its Race Relations Acts through the Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1968, which strengthened the dispositions of the 1962 Act that the Labour had earlier opposed. The bill prevented the large immigration of Kenyan Asians, marginalised by the newly independent Kenyan regime. Since Kenyan Asians held a British passport, the Labour Cabinet dreaded that the flows might overcome a reasonable threshold. Hence, in a discursive articulation that recalls populist tones, Labour Home Secretary James Callaghan declared that Britain would no longer accept Kenyan Asians’ passports and securitized the issue as “urgent and essential” affair because the “additional expenditure” to accommodate immigrants would put “race relations in jeopardy” (Consterdine, 2018, p.57). Callaghan suggested that similar policies might potentially concern 1 million Asians in other parts of Africa. In evoking “the prospect of an invasion” (House of Commons, 1968), he bought into tropes expected more from the Right than the Left. This securitizing policy served to protect the British welfare system and harmonic racial co-existence.

Some lawmakers on the Labour’s Left were idealistically sympathetic to racial minorities and pragmatically interested in their votes. Yet, what eventually triumphed in the intra-party battle of ideas were Callaghan’s nationalist and anti-intellectual tones, indifferent to international obligations and aligned with the social conservatism of middle- and working-class England (Hansen, 1999, p.810). As part of left-wing electors (securitization audiences) endorsed further restrictions (basically sympathizing with Powell’s stances), Labour eventually limited non-white Commonwealth immigration in what was justified as a “geographical rather than racialist distinction” (Lattimer, 1999), as it applied to those who did not have UK ancestors independently from their ethnic background. Yet, the bill ended up discriminating on racial grounds (Thorpe, 1997, p.174). In so doing, Labour endorsed a securitizing request made earlier by the anti-immigrant lobby of the Conservative Party and moved against the social-liberal and multicultural turn theorized by Jenkins but contested by Callaghan (Hansen, 1999, p.813; Hall et al., 2013[1978], p.241). The securitization was actively translated as necessary to safeguard working-class jobs: a reference that made it intelligible to party electors because aligned with Labour’s roots.

It is important to stress that racial tensions were still immune from the instrumentalization by groups inspired to political Islam, as it happened lately after the Rushdie affair. Little has been written about Labour’s ambiguous attitude towards the religion carried

by minority groups. One potential explanation is that Labour is not as attached to secularism as other centre-left European parties, as the comparison with France shows. Another reason points to the British elites' framing of Muslim immigrants more in racial than in religious terms. Indeed, the label Muslims was used with a racialized rather than a religious connotation, as race represented a successful frame to sense the socio-economic crisis of the 1960s. Thus, concerns about the presence of Islam in the public space (such as mosques, headscarves, and *halal* food) did not bear a mark on the decision to curtail immigration, more justified by economic (pressure on the job market) and demographic reasons (racial riots). The lukewarm consideration of religion aligns with the fact that many Muslim immigrants settled in Britain got accustomed to a secularized way of life (Ansari, 2004). A considerable effect of such indifference was to exclude religion from Labour's Race Relations Act (1965), that prohibited discrimination based on "colour, race, ethnic or national origins" in jobs, housing, and commercial services, without dwelling on the possibility of discrimination for religious practices (Hepple, 1966).

In conclusion, a more comprehensive understanding of Labour's securitization of Muslims requires to engage with temporalities, issues and actors that one might not meet by using current securitization approaches. Contemporary Islamophobia should be read in light of Labour's distal context, that makes current translations familiar to Labour's audiences. The Right (point of departure on the chain of agents) racialized public disorders and insisted on the re-establishment of state authority. These tropes impacted Labour's securitization in the 1960s. So would do Thatcher's emphasis on law-and-order after 1979, which brought Labour to adopt harsher policies on crime, immigration, and citizenship. The next section shows that Thatcherism strongly influenced Blair's securitarian turn.

3.3 Translation as a reaction to Thatcherism

This section firstly discusses the Right, point of departure on the chain of agents. It explains what Thatcherism is, how it influenced the domain of security in direction of neoliberal privatization, and how it scaled up the criminalization of deviant minorities by mobilizing conservative ideas (security as law-and-order, ethno-national populism, focus on individual responsibility and community mobilization). Secondly, since the chain of agents is relational, I dissect how Labour translated the securitizing tropes coming from its competitors. It is well documented that Blair's revitalization of Labour echoed right-wing motives circulating during Thatcher's period, especially regarding public intervention in economic affairs (Heffernan, 2000; Bevir, 2005; Lavelle, 2008; Griffiths, Hickson, 2010). So did the Conservative jargon impact New Labour's elaboration of security since Blair's counterterrorism policies indiscriminately targeted Muslims as threatening subjects vulnerable to radical anti-British narratives.

The distal context, represented by Labour's history and ideology, is entangled with the proximate context, represented by Labour's interaction with right-wing parties. Both elements impact translation. By looking at the interaction between parties on the political spectrum, one can see that New Labour reacted to Thatcher's authoritarianism by implementing tougher anti-

crime measures and framing the 2001 riots in cultural rather than socio-economic terms. Yet, New Labour appropriated this neoliberal and populist discourse on “security” (based on individual responsibility and repressive approach to crime) and translated it into another form congruent with the party identity. The referent object to secure against the threat of Islamism was the concept of “balanced race relations” between British people and ethnic minorities. The party warned about the possibility that some radical Muslims could threaten the public order and community safety, the purpose being to show proximity with lower-class electors and try to strike a balance between the protection of British workers and the commitment to multiculturalism. The section also interprets this move as a reaction to the right-wing discourse centred on the protection of British ordinary people and white working-class. The protection of the working-class has been traditionally a referent object of Labour’s policies until Blair changed the perception of Labour from a working-class to a “third way” party (Evans, Tilley, 2017, p.10). Meanwhile, the Right (from Thatcher to the British National Party, UKIP and Brexit Party) has gradually translated the image of British working-class into a racialized and marginalized community to protect from immigration and Islamism. This continuity confirms that the securitization of Muslims in the 2000s was not an exceptional move, but a normalized political practice aligned with Blair’s previous right-ward shift on crime and security.

The Labour Cabinets guided by Wilson (1974-76) and Callaghan (1976-79) stayed loyal to the party’s traditional anti-racist commitments, since the third Race Relations Act (1976) prohibited discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic and national origin in jobs, provision of goods and services, education, and public functions. Nonetheless, firm controls on immigration were still deemed imperative to prevent a spike in racism and maintain balanced race relations. As Jenkins (Home Secretary, 1974-76) argued during the second reading of the third Race Relations Act in the Commons, racial discrimination is morally repugnant to a civilised and democratic society, as well as a form of economic and social waste (House of Commons, 1976). His words are quite relevant considering that in the Seventies new forms of routinised discrimination against black people became widespread, as the raids on social centres and the search on suspicion on the streets confirmed (Hall et.al., 2013[1978], p.283). Yet, there was a clear threshold to the number of people which Britain could absorb, and it was “in the interest of the racial minorities themselves to maintain a strict control over immigration” (House of Commons, 1976). This might be one reason for Labour to not repeal the Immigration Act of 1971, issued by the Cabinet of Edward Heath. The Act represented the ideological advancement of Powellite agenda into the Conservatives and the fulfilment of their promise to fortify the rule of law and curtail immigration (Taylor, 1981, pp.1-35)⁷.

3.3.1 Thatcherism as authoritarian populism

This attitude was visible under Thatcher, who became leader of the Conservatives in February 1975. Her impact upon the party and across the political spectrum was so pervasive to restructure the whole British politics and shift it to the right (Heffernan, 2000, pp.114,170). Hall and Jacques (1983, pp.10,15) have considered Thatcherism as a turning point and an

⁷ Although Powell was sacked after the Rivers of Blood speech (Gamble, 1974, pp.115-116).

effective “authoritarian populist” force that aimed to hegemonize British politics. Hence, I use the expression “Thatcherism” to mean a right-wing populist political agenda underpinned by a distinct security recipe: law-and-order, authoritarian populism, emphasis on the free market and on situational prevention based on community policing. The impact of Thatcherism brought Labour closer to the Right regarding economic, fiscal and security policies and eased the translation from right to left. Still, this proximate context needs to be integrated with the previous section on the distal context to understand New Labour’s concerns about immigration and specific instances of Islamophobia.

In dissonance with other Conservative factions, Thatcher veered the party towards the neoliberal advocacy of a minimal state in the economy and social conservatism in moral and sexual affairs (Heppell, Hill, 2005; Leach, 2009, p.75). Securing private property and safety and the respect of state authority became referent objects to secure against the threats of “welfare scavengers”, hooligans, and immigrants. Concerning ethnic minorities, a certain inclination to frame their marginality firstly as a problem for public order and only secondly as a socio-economic issue gained momentum. The Home Secretary William Whitelaw (1979-1983) tackled BAME grievances through a law-and-order approach based on massive policing. This occurred especially after the riots broke out in 1981 in Brixton, in a predominantly African-Caribbean area with high unemployment and crime. As the disorders sparked in other British cities in 1985, the government had enough leeway and support to enact the Criminal Justice Act and the Public Order Act (1986), which granted the police substantial power to quell riots, which were also condemned by Labour. Moreover, Thatcher had further shrunk entry policies through the 1981 Nationality Act, firstly endorsed and then contested by Labour. The bill “closed loopholes for certain types of New Commonwealth family reunification” and “ended the thousand-year-old practice of automatic *ius soli* for children born on British soil from non-British parents” (Favell, 1998, p.108). Such a move points to the gradual mainstreaming of Powell’s nativist discourse into Conservative vocabulary and of the xenophobic ideas peddled by far-right groups like the National Front.

The populist resentment against Labour’s former Cabinets, accused of state corporatism, coupled with a criticism inspired to neoliberal ideas. Right-wing neoliberal populists usually reproach the Left of imposing fiscal burdens upon the “silent majority” of honest hard-working people to waste public money in expansive policies for undeserving ethnic minorities and “welfare scavengers” (da Cruz Queiroz, 2021). Foregrounding the move made by other leaders who stir neoliberal positions on the economy with social conservatism (Trump, Berlusconi, Jean-Marie Le Pen), Thatcher championed both free-market economy and right-wing patriotism. This assemblage was based on the cult of traditional values, firm leadership, and on the appeal to the “common sense” of ordinary people. Thatcherism transformed a right-leaning populist electorate - small businessmen, shopkeepers, accountants, solicitors and low-level industrial functionaries (Lane, 1983, p.171) - into a moral-political force to rally against the state apparatus, as this was allegedly occupied by neo-Keynesians and socialists. The aim was to lure many working-class and lower-middle-class voters disappointed by Labour, voted by fewer than half of the trade union members in the 1983 elections (Reitan, 2003; Edgerton, 2021). Hence the Right began appropriating the protection of the working-class, an issue usually owned by Labour, to translate it into a white homogeneous community

threatened by “welfare scavengers” and foreigners. Hence, Thatcherism was predicated upon an exclusive vision of citizenship that mostly considered immigrants as a disturbance or a threat, despite attempting to include wealthy voters from ethnic minorities (Francis, 2017, p.288).

Connected to this image of the nation was the emphasis on “individual responsibility” and “community mobilization” against crime, namely two pillars of Thatcher’s plan to reduce insecurity by boosting law-and-order. These concepts were translated from rhetoric to policies such as the local partnerships between the public and police and programs such as “Neighbourhood Watch”, which Gordon (1984, p.54) described as a scheme “involving volunteer civilian patrols of particular areas, under police supervision”. As they were supposed to encourage virtues such as individual self-help, community cohesion and loyal cooperation with law-enforcement agencies, Neighbourhood Watch merged traditional Conservative standpoints with the enthusiasm for the new neoliberal thinking widespread under Thatcher (Hope, 2009, p.48; Moores, 2017, p.232). Eventually, what the new system of policing arranged was a system of capillary surveillance that disproportionately targeted racial and socio-economic subaltern subjects by drawing racialized boundaries between in-group and out-groups. Hence, the literature has underlined the fictional and elastic meaning of “community policing”. The signifier “community” mirrors an imagined homogeneous body whose private security must be kept safe from undesirable elements (O’Malley, 2010). Vitale (2017, p.29) argues that community policing “expands police powers but does nothing to reduce the burden of over-policing on people of colour and the poor”. Likewise, Moores recalls that the form of citizenship created by Neighbourhood Watch was overwhelmingly associated with property ownership and wealth (2017, p.231). Additionally, critics of the scheme underlined the absence of discussion on domestic abuse and racist attacks (Moores, 2017, p.238).

3.3.2 The impact on New Labour’s interpretation of security

Thatcher’s conservative and populist vision of Britain, centred on law-and-order, individual responsibility, and community mobilization, set a significant contextual background in which New Labour’s policies were later developed. It also resulted in discriminatory attitudes against British ethnic minorities, considered as a factor of destabilization for community cohesion and balanced race relations. Moved partly by this contextual development, and partly by his personal experience matured as Shadow Home Secretary in 1992-1994 (Wenzelburger, Staff, 2017, p.567), Blair placed the need to quell public disorder and crime high in his political agenda. He pledged to be “tough on crime and on the causes of crime” (Blair, 1995). In so doing, he juggled between an approach that electors would expect from a progressive party and some solutions that echoed Thatcherite motives. New Labour mixed structural interventions to tackle socio-economic marginalization with “quasi-criminal instruments and early and remote criminalization” to address problems from anti-social behaviour to terrorism-related activities (Morgan, de Londras, 2018, p.212).

This option disclosed an inclination towards authoritarian and populist slogans. The anti-social behaviour legislation contained in the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) rang some populist refrains already heard under the Conservatives since Straw defined it as the “triumph

of community politics over detached metropolitan elites” (Pratt, Miao, 2019, p.54). The emphasis on ordinary people was a leitmotiv of Thatcher’s policies like Neighbourhood Watch. Additionally, the opposition between “common British people” and “cosmopolitan urban” elites is a reactionary rhetorical construction that percolated in the narratives of pro-Brexit supporters (Vieten, 2019, p.107). If New Labour articulated community safety as a middle way between crime control and socio-economic interventions, a vast body of literature underlined how the former aspect eventually trumped the latter (Edwards, Hughes, 2009, pp.70-72). The party translated pieces of Thatcher’s discourse on security into a new version that justified harsh anti-crime and counterterrorism policies in the name of ensuring community safety and, thus, balanced race relations.

Although New Labour strived to distinguish itself from the Conservatives, some affinities with Thatcherism emerged in the normalization of stricter policies to cope with high crime rates and infringement of public order (Lilly et.al., 2015, p.218). Right-to-left translation was partly dictated by the sympathy that Thatcher’s agenda on moral and racial issues had gained among segments of the British working class (Hall, 2017[1981], p.193). Additionally, it can be interpreted as a reaction to Conservative insinuations like that Labour was not credible enough to reduce crime and insecurity (Thorpe, 1997, p.148; Shaw, 2015, p.6). This perception is still resilient: a 2010 survey revealed that large majorities of the interviewees were sceptical about New Labour Cabinets’ ability to control immigration and asylum (Goodwin, 2011, p.62).

Labour had for long interpreted insecurity as a condition provoked by the “ongoing inequalities endemic in unreformed capitalist societies” (Taylor, 1981, p.45). Yet, this interpretation slowly morphed into another version based on right-leaning values: respect of authority, conformism to white British communitarian norms, protection of private property. The discursive translation into a liberal-progressive language counterpoised the strictest measures with emancipatory provisions such as the criminalization of racial and religious offences – in line with the establishment of balanced racial relations, referent object to secure. However, the emphasis on community safety imports from Thatcherism the purpose to identify and neutralize potential incompatible subjects. Although Blair, who acted as a translator, actively modeled the security language upon Labour’s ideological referent objects, he indeed emulated the securitizer’s firsthand discourse, which instead was not regarded as aligned with the party’s legacy according to the Labour Left. The policies of crime containment set the ground for the surveillance of Muslims because of the alleged threat that violent and radical Islamism posed to community safety. The latter is a necessary instrument to balance race relations. This was particularly visible after the urban unrest that broke out in 2001 in several Northern English towns (Oldham, Burnley, Bradford).

The 2001 riots raised questions about the coexistence between ethnic minorities and white neighbourhoods. More specifically, the riots were read through a culturalist perspective that shifted on Muslims the burden of being “self-segregating” from the rest of Britain. A similar fear for the proliferation of Muslim “parallel societies” and “no-go areas” (Rimi, 2022) is widely spread in other Northern and Western European countries, [as the chapter on France illustrates](#). This interpretation voluntarily omitted the socio-economic and demographic context

surrounding the protests, which was also underlined by a report that accused the Oldham council to fail to address poverty and exclusion (Carter, 2002; Ratcliffe, 2012, p.264). Additionally, less attention received the fact that the British National Party moved a racist offence against British South Asian Muslims, who got involved in the Bradford riots as a response to the threat of neo-fascist mobilization (Bagguley, Hussein, 2008, p.173). In parallel with these actions, we can also notice that some tropes circulating in far-right discourse gained momentum in the way New Labour framed the riots of 2001. This right-ward discursive shift appeared in stark contrast with Labour's interpretation of the 1995 urban riots, more sympathetically cast as an outcome of social deprivation (Bagguley, Hussein, 2008, p.61)⁸. This was more aligned with what would be expected from a left-leaning party, whereas parliamentary debates after 2001 disclose that both Blunkett and John Denham (Minister of State for Policing, 2001-2003) endorsed reactionary preoccupations about the retreat of multiculturalism and the need to cement ethnic communities around British values (Bagguley, Hussain, 2008, pp.160-161). In so doing, the New Labour legitimized a narrative popularized by New Right intellectuals: that multiculturalism had thrown the UK into a "national moral crisis" (Kundnani, 2007, p.36). Impressions of multicultural fatigue were confirmed by the Denham and Cantle reports: commissioned by the Government, both reports praised cultural integration as the remedy to avert future disturbances (Abbas, 2012, p.352). Although the commitment to fight racial harassment and discrimination remained sound - as the Race Relations (Amendments) Acts 2000 had confirmed⁹ - what gained traction was an orientalist reading of South Asian Muslims as troublesome and patriarchal communities, that aligns with left-wing ideological tropes.

Due to the diffusion and translation of right-wing tropes, the riots fortified the impression that cultural rather than socio-economic motivations were central to interpret the grievances of Britons of Muslim background. The riots also indicate that the securitization of Islam preceded 9/11 and 7/7 because it stemmed also from New Labour's translation of an identitarian discourse to address ethnic minorities' protests. This divisive narrative paved the way for the successive emphasis on white working-class' disadvantages, emerged especially during Brexit.

The riots' legacy weighed in the elaboration of counterterrorism and its emphasis on community safety, necessary to balance race relations. According to Archer, "community has become an important notion in the British political discourse, but it has no firm definition, and the term is thus used to serve many different interests" (2009, p.334). The idea of community flagged by New Labour was far-away from the traditional socialist connotation and more aligned with Blair's purpose to overcome intermediaries in the relationship between state and individuals (Freedman, 1999, p.161). Although claiming a difference with Thatcher, New Labour stressed values like individual responsibility, moral regulation of communities, and reciprocal duties to fight crime, already present in 1992 conservative manifesto (Dale, 2000a, p.339; Buckler, 2007, p.40) and partially resonating with communitarian political philosophy (Turner, 2016). Blair followed Thatcher's idea that communities are central sites for and solution to

⁸ See Labour MP Max Madden in House of Commons (1995).

⁹ See Labour MP John Denham, who was Minister for Police, Courts and Drugs, in House of Commons (2001).

many contemporary crime problems (Reiner, Cross, 1991). In doing so, Blair translated a meaning of community that was more congruent with his agenda, but different from the idea - promoted by Labour local administration in the Eighties (Squires, 1999) - that communities firstly needed reforms to address socio-economic inequalities.

Since translation is an active process, Blair arbitrarily cherry-picked from Labour's past the references he needed to justify its securitarian turn. The reference to the partisan ideological heritage served to persuade internal party audiences that New Labour's vision was a coherent reformulation of "Old" Labour's ideals (Coxall et.al., 2003, pp.65-66). They also served to avoid the accuse of passive imitation. Buckler and Dolowitz (2009, pp.17-18) argue that the ideological renewal of Labour in the Nineties was possible because the rhetoric of a "New" Labour, substantially more liberal and open to free-market than the "Old" one, matched with some key ideological references of the party, such as ethical socialism and new liberalism. By selecting these ideas and neglecting the ideological positions espoused by other party factions like the socialist-leaning current of Tony Benn (Hannah, 2018), New Labour could justify its right-ward movement in economic and fiscal policies. This example shows that translation is an active and collective move since securitizing agents need to negotiate with intra-party audiences and electoral audiences to gather enough support for the move.

Instead of arranging fair cooperation with Muslim minorities, Prevent created a hostile climate based on disproportionate surveillance and attempts to co-opt the "moderate" Muslims into providers of useful intelligence to law-enforcement agencies (Institute of Race Relations, 2010, p.77; Spalek, 2012, p.37). In this respect, Labour's counterterrorism agenda instantiates an active translation of a conservative idea of community into a model theoretically based on balanced race relations but practically discriminating Muslims. The idea that Islamism could disrupt community cohesion, as I said before regarding the riots, should be connected to the right-wing trope that Muslims are prone to violently impose their cultural and religious demands. In this respect, David Goodhart, a left-wing pundit close to New Labour, warned that the xenophobic sentiments against asylum-seekers was not a new form of racism, but a normal reaction raised by their cultural differences (Kundnani, 2007, p.28). These concerns signalled a trade-off between the recognition of cultural diversity and admission of too many immigrants, on one side, and preserving community solidarity and safety.

The discourse on counterterrorism was also marked by New Labour's normalization of Islamophobic tropes, both belonging to left-wing vocabulary and to right-wing one (Goodwin, 2011, p.57). In 2006 Straw suggested Muslim women who cover their faces with veils were hurting community relations. In so doing, he reproduced the trope of Islam being a patriarchal and misogynist religion. The next year, Labour MP Margaret Hodge was criticized for "using the language of the British National Party" after suggesting British families have a sense of entitlement over immigrants. Afterward, PM Brown sparked furore after pledging to create "British jobs for British workers", namely a slogan previously used by both the National Front and British National Party. Although all three episodes matter, the translation from the far-right was more visible in Hodge's words. The latter was directly challenged by the British National Party leader Nick Griffin in her constituency (Barking). Yet, she eventually kept her seat with 24,628 votes, while Griffin arrived third with 6,620 votes, after the Conservative candidate. By

contrast, Straw and Brown's declarations can be read both as a reaction to contextual factors (jihadist terrorism, heavy competition on the job market after the financial crisis of 2007-8) and as a discursive influence from the far-right.

Another effect of New Labour's focus on community safety was the artificial division between moderate and extremist Muslims, that holds a central place in the party's counterterrorism agenda and that reiterates the trope that some Muslims are prone to violence and radicalization. In this respect, integration and citizenship policies responded to the need to halt the circulation of radical views across Muslims. Evidence of this purpose can be found in the electoral manifestos (e.g. 2005) and in the speeches of prominent members of the Cabinet. Among these, the Home Office Secretary Blunkett (2001-2004) was a crucial securitizing actor whose behaviours seemed to be in line with some right-wing positions – so much to be endorsed by the Conservative MP Norman Tebbit as a person “more in touch with the feelings of the average person in this country than his colleagues in the Labour Party” (Croft, 2012, p.179). Blunkett defined himself as conservative on social matters (Beckett, 2001). On another occasion, he argued that security and social order were pillars of “a truly civil society” (Atkins, 2010, p.49) and that Labour could better address the breakdown of community cohesion compared to the Right. His prioritization of national security reasons to condone illiberal social and foreign policies - as shown by his vigorous defence of the ATCSA (Cowley, 2005, p.88; Kettell, 2011, p.39; Wenzelburger, Staff, 2017, p.566) - raised much controversy within the Labour Left. Like Blunkett, Ruth Kelly (Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government) pushed further the focus on community cohesion by stating that “making (British values) resonate with some people, including a small group of younger Muslims, is a genuine challenge” and that Muslim children need to be taught “about how to live out the values of justice, peace and respect both as a person of faith and as a citizen” (Moosavi, 2015, p.660). These words seem to recall the right-wing trope that Islam is prone to radicalism and violence and reluctant to accept non-negotiable British liberal-democratic values.

With the broader purpose of balancing race relations, New Labour also adopted a less inclusive vision of citizenship. The party actively translated from Thatcher the centrality of “individual responsibility” in the integration process. Conversely to the social-democratic vision of citizenship that Labour had sponsored for long, citizenship was now based priorly on duties than on rights (Bevir, 2005, p.67). Accordingly, the 2003 report published by the “Life in the UK” advisory committee advanced symbolical reforms in granting British citizenship, which required foreigners to validate their allegiance to the civic and social pact (Somerville, 2007, p.56). The stronger focus on cultural affinity signals a rightward move beyond the initial New Labour's enthusiasm for the Third Way, whose version of citizenship was predicated upon a more cosmopolitan and multicultural dimension (Giddens, 1998, p.65).

Citizenship became harder to gain and object of possible revocation, since the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 created a new single standard for the removal (Choudhury, 2017, p.234). Another controversial effect of the securitization of citizenship was the use of deportation as an acceptable counterterrorist instrument to remove from the territory foreign nationals deemed to undermine national security (Joppke, 2016, p.733), similarly to what French and Italian centre-left parties would have done ten years later. Deportation was a

key element of the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Law of 2006, which established a “lower threshold for deprivation of British citizenship” and “limited any appeal before removal to human rights ground” (HM Government, 2006, p.19). However, the choice of deportation reveals the weak commitment to defending human rights law during the war on terror (Morgan, de Londras, 2018, p.197). Despite the rhetorical claim that Islamism defies human rights and the rule of law, as implied by Labour’s Cabinet member Hazel Blears (Moosavi, 2015, p.660), New Labour ignored the very same commitments as it brought pre-detention for suspected terrorists up to 90 days. 63 Labour backbenchers voted against the plan, showing that translation encountered opposition within the party left-wing (Wintour, 2005).

Instead of ensuring balanced race relations, these policies led to severe restrictions upon ethnic minorities and shifted the party closer to right-wing positions. New Labour imposed stricter control on asylum-seekers as a precondition to cement community safety and national security. The perceived insecurity raised by ethnic minorities - emphasized by both the Tories and the far-right - impacted Blair’s “balanced” immigration strategy, where tolerance towards high-skilled immigrants was levelled up by tough measures against poor asylum-seekers. Since asylum applications from Muslim-majority countries skyrocketed¹⁰, the governance of immigration was entangled with the concomitant war against jihadist terrorism. For such reasons, parliamentary debates on entry policies regularly featured the possibility that potential terrorists could abuse of British asylum system and the trade-off between national security and human rights law (Huysmans, Buonfino, 2008, p.773).

Beyond the mutual agreement on restrictive border controls, some Labour MPs translated the xenophobic vocabulary popularized by the Conservatives, such as the slur “bogus asylum-seekers”, that reiterated the trope of a demographic threat to British security. This expression was already condemned in 1991 by some Labour MPs like Alistair Darling (House of Commons, 1991b). Likewise, it will be repelled by the Labour Left under Corbyn. The Conservatives had stoked fear about fraudulent asylum-seekers who took advantage of welfare entitlements¹¹ and who could recur to terrorism, as Michael Howard (Conservative leader from 2003 to 2005) argued (Croft, 2012, p.186). Blunkett legitimised both tropes. Not only did he bash individuals attempting to abuse British welfare – a discourse historically circulating across Labour (Squire, 2005, pp.59-61). Additionally, he indulged in the discursive nexus between asylum-seekers and terrorist threats, dwelling on the obstacles that international laws on refugees could pose in the application of counterterrorism measures (Huysmans, Buonfino, 2008, p.774).

This form of translation was intelligible because it resonated with Labour’s distal context and previous immigration policies. Already in 1991, Roy Hattersley argued that “our objection to the (Asylum) Bill stems not from its effect on the bogus asylum seeker, but from its consequences for the genuine refugee” (House of Commons, 1991a). In 1996, the then

¹⁰ Labour’s first term was “overshadowed” by the “eightfold increase of asylum application between 1988 and 1998” (Consterdine, 2018, p.67). A substantial spike in applications came from Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Bosnia (Walsh, 2022).

¹¹ On the use of “bogus asylum seekers” in Conservative rhetoric, see the debate on the Immigration Carriers’ Liability Bill (House of Commons, 1987) and the debate about the Asylum Bill in 1991 (House of Commons, 1991a, 1991b).

shadow Home Secretary Straw stated the “need to tackle bogus asylum seekers” (House of Lords, 1996) because the abuses would jeopardize domestic race relations (Bloch, 2000, p.37). Lately, Fiona MacTaggart advocated an improvement of the asylum application system, whose lack of accountability eased “bogus” claims and hindered the accommodation of “genuine” ones (House of Commons, 2002). However, Mactaggart also warned that Labour language tended to ambiguously flirt with a label that furthered the racist narration of the British National Party, as her party colleague Shona McIsaac had stated two hours before in the very same debate. The promise to accommodate acceptable refugees and eradicate racial discrimination was a cornerstone of Blair’s agenda, as promised by the 1997 electoral manifesto, that proposed a new offence of racial harassment and a new crime of racially motivated violence to protect ethnic minorities (Dale, 2000b, p.365)¹². Anti-racism was played as a legitimate card to keep immigration within an arbitrary tolerance threshold and prevent tensions between British people and ethnic minorities. It is very significant that Blunkett warned about the possibility to being “swamped” by immigrants, using the same controversial expression adopted by Thatcher some years earlier (Favell, 1998, p.112; Goodwin, 2011, p.57) and peddling again the idea that Muslims are a demographic threat.

Translation brought New Labour to adopt right-wing tropes and policies that were harshly contested by some backbenchers and party members. After analysing the active and contextual dimensions of translation, the next section explores the collective aspect and shows that intra-party frictions might lead to the rejection of translation and, possibly, to de-securitization.

3.4 Rejection of translation and emancipatory de-securitization: Labour under Corbyn

Translation is a collective process. Either the translation of external words is endorsed by major intra-party factions, or it grinds to a halt in case of internal contestation. This tension frequently features in left-wing parties, historically fractured into various currents. Labour is not an exception, founded in 1900 by a merge between groups subscribing to different ideologies – social-democracy, ethical socialism, Fabianism. Many scholars retraced the longstanding internecine disputes between right-wing and left-wing currents, who provided differing answers to economic, social, and foreign policy questions (Plant et.al., 2004; Callaghan, 2007; Phythian, 2007). While the securitization of Islam has not provoked schisms, it has nonetheless torn Labour’s unity on some occasions like the Rushdie affair, the Iraq war, and the reaction to jihadist terrorism, that this section addresses. Divergences about security, immigration, and Muslim minorities intensified after the 2015 leadership election, which ended up with the unexpected triumph of Corbyn (59.5%), a historical voice of Labour’s Left (Hannah, 2018, p.222).

¹² See the MacPherson enquiry (1999), the Commission for Multi-Ethnic Britain (2000) and the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 (Uberoi, Modood, 2013).

This section holds that Corbyn de-securitized Muslims by opposing translation and articulating an emancipatory conception of the British community. His agenda parted company with other Labour MPs who securitized Muslim immigration either as a cultural threat (translating right-wing tropes, like Blair and Brown) or as a socio-economic risk (rejecting translation but securitizing according to traditional Labour values, like Ed Miliband).

Before focusing on Corbyn, it is important to contextualize its ideological stances within the tradition of the Labour Left. Elected as MP in 1983, Corbyn's parliamentary career started in a period of sour intra-party tensions, as showed by the schism that brought four Labour MPs to establish the Social Democratic Party in 1981 (Hall, 2017[1981], pp.187-199). Right- and left-wing factions mostly disagreed around the responses to the economic crisis of the late Eighties and the attitude towards Thatcherism. Labour polarized between a revisionist wing (who wanted to sever the bridges with social-democratic attitudes) and the "New Left", gathered around Tony Benn and the Socialist Campaign Group, soon joined by Corbyn. The New Left emerged in the early Seventies by insisting that Labour should "take a more radical, focused and socialist approach to policy issues", with demands that "marked a break with the Party's Revisionist trajectory" (Wickham-Jones, 2004, p.24). This faction harboured an unwavering commitment to disarmament, anti-imperialism, and emancipation of minorities, whose quintessential example was the Greater London Council led by Labour politician Ken Livingstone (1981-1986). Labour Left's ideas widely marked the 1983 electoral manifesto, one of the most radical in Labour's history. A strong progressive leaning emerged about security issues, conceived priorly as economic safety and social inclusivity (Dale, 2000a, p.275). However, the 1983 electoral defeat enabled Neil Kinnock to seize the lead and move the party closer to centrist positions.

To address the first important critical juncture that fractured Labour regarding the governance of Islam, we must consider again the Rushdie affair, discussed in [chapter one](#). The Rushdie affair belongs to the distal context in which the contemporary translated securitization makes sense. It posed Labour in front of a dilemma, as it had been earlier for racial and immigration policies. This reflects the ambivalence between liberal tenets and solidarity with ethnic minorities, namely a common feature of centre-left parties. The affair provoked intra-party fractures. Some Labour representatives flagged liberal beliefs (freedom of speech) as referent objects to secure against religious fundamentalism. As reported by Carle (2008, p.187), a liberal wing outspokenly defended Rushdie's autonomy. Labour leader Neil Kinnock opposed demands for censorship and MP Clare Short maintained that "if we didn't publish books that offend, we would have no books in Britain". Other Labour MPs harboured empathy with Muslims and so underlined that the volume might be offensive and intentional blasphemous, as Roy Hattersley argued. However, aside genuine empathy, the words of MPs like Keith Vaz and Max Madden also conceal the pragmatic motivations of defending Muslims because their votes could tip the electoral balance in Labour's favour¹³.

Looking at the consequences of the Rushdie affair, one can see that securitization of Muslims eventually trumped Labour's multicultural pledges. Labour securitized Muslims not

¹³ On British Muslims' vote, see also Dancygier (2013).

only on ethnic but also on cultural and religious ground, as if Muslims were outsiders that might undermine balanced race relations. The Manichean opposition between freedom and Islam reinforced the construction of Muslims as irrational and passionate subjects that must learn liberal and secular norms (including blasphemy), even if it means being ashamed and mocked for their religious beliefs (Mavelli, 2012, p.75). The shift from framing Muslims' issues as socio-economic to argue that Muslims were reluctant to adopt British culture indicates a drift towards discursive categories that traditionally belonged to the Right and that New Labour absorbed under the sway of nationalist ideas. The Rushdie affair also showed that securitization is not a trickle-down performance generated by the virtue of its strength. Hence, it usually encounters opposition inside left-wing parties. In what follows I discuss important debates that have triggered intra-party fractures because the translation of right-wing narratives about immigration and Muslims was rejected by the Labour Left, as it was considered at odds with the commitment to anti-imperialism and anti-racism advanced by Corbyn.

Corbyn inherited a party whose immigration policies had been restrictive towards asylum-seekers and low-skilled immigrants (Somerville, 2007) and generally more integrationist than multicultural (Kundnani, 2007,2012). When Ed Miliband lead Labour from 2010 to 2015, the party reiterated its preoccupation with immigrants' flows, despite couching it in a way that would sound convincing for Labour's electoral "audiences". As chapter one [anticipated](#), Miliband singled out a trade-off between Labour's commitment towards anti-racism and the concerns of white British working-class electors (Shaw, 2015, p.6). In so doing, Miliband displayed a sharp continuity with "Old" Labour's historical rationale of governing immigration within an arbitrary threshold. This distal context coupled with a proximate context dominated by the debate on Brexit, a critical juncture that revealed significant divisions in British society (Hobolt et.al., 2021). As many supporters of the "Leave" campaign securitized immigrants from an economic and security perspective, many Britons of Muslim background faced higher levels of bigotry, hate and intolerance (Abbas, 2019, p.128). Labour formally supported the Remain side but was affected by internal splits, as many ethnocentric white working-class electors supported the Leave side to stop freedom of movement (Soboloewska, 2021).

When translation and securitization are simultaneously rejected, the Left can follow two avenues for de-securitization: functional and emancipatory. The functional way means that Muslims are not listed as a security threat compared to other major sources of insecurity (such as socio-economic issues). This might happen because "a security approach is considered to be an ineffective way" to deal with the phenomenon (Huysmans, 1998b, p.572). Yet, the friend/enemy logic - inspired by the work of Carl Schmitt (2007) - is not overtly challenged but temporarily downplayed and moved to other issues. Miliband's Labour was ambivalent. On one side, it pandered into nationalist slogans on immigration, arguing that, after Trump and Brexit, "progressive cannot take white working-class voters for granted", as declared by Labour MP Emma Reynolds (Mondon, Winter, 2019, p.513). This agenda met bitter reactions on the Labour Left. Indeed, after Labour sold branded mugs that printed the slogan "Controls on Immigration", MP Diane Abbott (close to Corbyn) defined them "shameful" on Twitter and

added that “the real problem is that immigration is one of our 5 pledges at all” (Perraudin, 2015).

On the other, it seemed to functionally de-securitize some issues related to Islam because the party explicitly avoided fuelling escalating tones between Muslims and “native” Britons. Hence, there is no translation of right-wing cultural preoccupation about Muslim identity and self-segregation, differently from what some of Blair’s Ministers had claimed earlier. In this respect, when Miliband claimed again in 2014 that consistent migration flows had huge effects on British lives, he seemed to allude to economic rather than cultural effects (Miliband, 2013). Other evidence of Miliband’s functional de-securitization was the promise to criminalize hate crime legislation surrounding religion, which prompted criticism by right-wing translators of “freedom of speech” such as Douglas Murray (2015).

Instead, Corbyn ushered in a U-turn compared to the security-centred approach advanced New Labour and never wholly repealed by Miliband. New Labour’s translation of reactionary narratives prompted disagreement inside the party, as the left-wing faction denounced a passive imitation of the Tories and a betrayal of Labour solidaristic and internationalist traditions (namely the referent object of the Labour Left). Labour’s activists’ dissatisfaction with the party’s neoliberal convergence partially explains Corbyn’s victory, on the heels of the public outcry against austerity. Corbyn tried to thwart the translation from the Right through more inclusive language and policies towards British Muslims and Muslim-majority countries. By looking at Corbyn’s speeches about Muslims, there seems to be the intention to unravel the friend/enemy distinction and propose an emancipatory de-securitization for Muslims. This brings to a more inclusive form of politics, based on sympathy for Muslims’ experiences, commitment to their self-affirmation, and rejection of epistemic and institutional violence: something that can be made possible only by rejecting the binary logic of security (Aradau, 2004). Corbyn’s understanding of ethnic minorities’ grievances make his de-securitization looks like an “ethico-political judgement of a particular form of organizing the political community” (Huysmans, 1998b, p.574). More specifically, a negative judgment of previous Labour’s Islamophobic discourse.

In the most relevant texts about immigration, counterterrorism, and citizenship of the Corbyn’s period, three main arguments invite to an emancipatory de-securitization of Muslims by challenging some of the Islamophobic tropes previously endorsed by Labour.

Firstly, we notice a strong will to fight racism and Islamophobia (Labour Party 2017, 2019a, 2019b). Labour’s 2017 manifesto took a more progressive stance compared to when Miliband served as leader. Not only did it state Labour’s traditional commitment to racial equality. Also, it pledged not to “scapegoat immigrants nor blame them for economic failures” (2017, p.28), a U-turn compared to the earlier use of xenophobic language. Symptomatic of a fresh start is the decision to treat immigration in a specific section tailored for Brexit, while erstwhile the Labour used to address the issue in connection with “crime” and “safer communities”. Another relevant sign of change was the endeavour to review the Conservative arrangements to housing and accommodating refugees, judged as not fit for purpose. Labour’s “Race and Faith manifesto” (2019b, pp. 16-17) promised to ensure universal healthcare for migrants and refugees and increase support for BAME LGBT asylum-seekers. The document

resonates with grassroots left-wing movements theorizing intersectional alliances between racial and economic subaltern subjects. The intersectional perspective debunks the myth of a homogeneous white working-class, predicated on the false assumption that Western blue-collar workers have massively started to vote for right-wing and far-right parties (Mondon, Winter, 2019; Runnymede Trust, 2021). The party also committed to work with social media platforms to combat the rise of racism, including antisemitism and Islamophobia, and extremism (p.13). Regarding education policies, Labour pledged to “support religious education about all faiths in all schools” - a policy that was already inaugurated by New Labour - and “review the curriculum to ensure that it enriches students and covers subjects such as racism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, xenophobia and black history and continues to teach issues like the Holocaust” (p.15).

Secondly, connected to the fight against Islamophobia is the argument that not all Muslims are terrorists, which implies the rejection of the first and second tropes identified by the thesis. Thus, Corbyn has stressed the need to review Prevent and consistently voted against the counterterrorism laws approved by Labour (BBC, 2017b). This aspect further emerged after his election, when more Labour MPs advocated to reform it and start a reflexive debate on the mistakes committed during the previous decade. For instance, the Counterterrorism and Security Act (CTSA, 2015) was rejected by a vast majority of Labour’s MPs as it imposed the Temporary Exclusion Orders¹⁴ and the statutory duty on Prevent¹⁵. If both provisions appeared congruent with New Labour’s previous legislation, it was clearly out of tune with Corbyn’s plea to review the toolbox used during the war on terror. Among the critical voices, Corbyn underlined that the bill undermined civil liberties for two main aspects: “the effective banning of people from either travelling from or returning to this country” and “freedom of speech”, jeopardized by the Prevent strategy being imposed on universities¹⁶. In this respect, Corbyn and other Labour Left politicians like Livingstone and George Galloway share the aim to debunk a discursive campaign that harms Muslims because it pitches them as undifferentiated supporters of religious fundamentalism (Peace, 2016, pp.97-98).

Thirdly, the position taken on Prevent aligns with Corbyn’s longstanding aversion to imperialism and specifically the war on terror. A first important instance of this argument comes from Corbyn’s involvement in the campaign against the war in Iraq. Much has been written about the internal rebellions that Blair faced when Parliament was called to vote on the Iraqi war (Roe, 2008; Kettell, 2011; Hayes, 2016). Labour Left’s protests (e.g. the creation of the coalition *Stop the War*) are the background of the critical attitude that Corbyn and his supporters showed later towards British foreign policy in Muslim-majority countries. Blair’s decision to join the “war on terror” was considered at odds with the Labour Left’s commitment to anti-imperialism. Corbyn’s radical vision drove his voting behaviour in Parliament, that

¹⁴ The Temporary Exclusion Orders “enable the Home Secretary to prevent someone who has the right of abode but is currently outside the UK from returning to the UK without a permit” (Morgan, de Londras, 2018, p.201).

¹⁵ Mandated by the CTSA 2015, the Prevent statutory duty has imposed a legal requirement to various public sectors (such as secondary education and universities) to report people suspected of being drawn into terrorism.

¹⁶ See also the speeches by Yasmin Qureshi and John McDonnell, in House of Commons (2015).

makes him the most rebellious Labour backbencher between 2001 and 2005, when he consistently voted against Blair's counterterrorism agenda (Cowley, 2005, p.49).

The anti-war mobilization discloses a de-securitizing vision of the alleged threat posed by Iraq and Islamist terrorism. Inspired by the antipathy to the use of force and by anti-imperialist beliefs, Labour's Left contested a securitizing move that echoed US neoconservative belligerent tones. Corbyn forcefully affirmed that another war (after Afghanistan) would not bring security but only "conflict, hate, misery, desperation" (Snowdon, 2016). Corbyn's opposition to military operations in the Middle East chimes with his longstanding blocking to every piece of anti-terror legislation drafted during his role as MP (BBC, 2017b; Corbyn, 2023). Furthermore, it strikes a chord with his sympathy for the Palestinian cause and for a dialogue with Hamas and Hezbollah to ease the peace process with Israel. These were some of the reasons for which Corbyn has been accused of supporting some political groups sharing Islamist views and of nurturing antisemitic ideas (Hearst, 2020). Aside from link between Corbyn's vision of the Israel-Palestine conflicts, Corbyn has been also accused of antisemitism because he mishandled several cases of antisemitism in the Labour Party when he was party leader. These allegations led the Labour Party leadership to exclude Corbyn from the Parliamentary Party under Keir Starmer, who won Labour's leadership elections in 2020¹⁷.

More than active support for Islamist groups, what Corbyn seems to suggest is that Islamism is a socio-political phenomenon influenced by geopolitical dynamics rather than reading it through orientalist lens, as New Labour has instead done (Moosavi, 2015). Corbyn has frequently stressed Western complicity in supporting authoritarian regimes, such as Blair's support of Ghaddafi (Corbyn, 2011), which contributed to wreak havoc in the region and to fuel protests often exploited by jihadist groups. In this respect, the Labour leader insisted that there were a lot of contradictions "surrounding how we decide who is a good fighter and who is a terrorist" (House of Commons, 2014). In a famous speech delivered at Chatham House (2017), he vocally stated that the British approach to international security since the 1990s had failed, bringing about more insecurity at home and devastation abroad. Corbyn frequently provided a disenchanted geopolitical analysis of British foreign policy in North Africa and Middle East. During the parliamentary debates on the CTSA, he argued that many young people were lured by ISIL because of Western interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan (House of Commons, 2014). A similar point was repeated in the aftermath of the dramatic jihadist attack at the Manchester Arena (May 22, 2017), when Corbyn warned about the dangerous links between muscular foreign policy and resentment of homegrown Muslims (Merrick, 2017). The contrariety to military operations against Muslim-majority countries couples with Corbyn's genuine commitment to emancipate British Muslims. Such foreign policies might appear Islamophobic in the eyes of British Muslims, as confirmed by their resentment towards the war on terror (Hill, 2013, p.57) and by their declining trust in Labour's capacity to represent them (Labour Muslim Network, 2020).

¹⁷ However, a comprehensive analysis of Starmer's leadership falls outside the scopes of this thesis.

In conclusion, Corbyn and the Labour Left demonstrate that security issues are not immune from political factors such as the activity associated with decision-making in a group (Labour) and the power relations between British political elites and ethno-religious minorities (relations that might become asymmetrical depending on how the governing party considers Muslims). The rejection of a right-ward translation was justified in the name of genuine left-wing values, such as social justice, internationalism, and human rights, as stated in the Race and Faith Manifesto (2019b, p.4). Muslims are not pitted as cultural enemies of an ethno-religious homogeneous “people”, as the far-right does. Rejection of right-leaning translation means prioritizing multilateralism, prevention, and conflict resolution upon unilateralism. The focus on human rights does not imply the hypocrite paternalism that compelled New Labour to flag humanitarian intervention, as “regime change” operations have made the world more dangerous and violate national sovereignty. In Corbyn’s vocabulary, the fight against Islamophobia contributes to de-securitize and emancipate Muslims. Thus, Corbyn’s counterterrorism strategy looks different compared to Blair’s, showing that security affairs should never be read independently from inter- and intra-party dynamics.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that Labour borrowed a right-wing meaning of security and two right-wing tropes about Muslims and translated them into a version congruent with one of its referent objects, the creation of balanced race relations, that was long cherished during the party history. It has interpreted New Labour’s counterterrorism strategy as a translation from the Right, grounded in both distal and proximate contexts. In so doing, it has highlighted the limits of the Copenhagen School, whose interpretation of security as exceptional misses the rich contextual dynamics behind securitization. The historical trajectory illustrates that New Labour’s securitization was not just a product of critical junctures such as the London bombings. Translation is attached to “Old” Labour’s past, which disclose an ambiguity between commitment to internationalist solidarity and racial equality, on one side, and concerns about immigration, on the other. The use of race as the prevalent prism to explain the socio-economic crisis of the 1960s began on the Right and then gained traction across all the political spectrum, challenging the bipartisan consensus upon inclusive immigration and race policies (Leach, 2009, p.174; Virdee, 2014, p.113). The spread in time and space of securitizing claims prompts the political agents situated on the chain to react, for instance by translating a securitized threat in the name of own referent objects. For Labour, curbing immigration flows was justified to prioritize British workers. Specific worries about Muslim minorities as a cultural source of insecurity did not materialize until the Rushdie affair.

Although contemporary left-wing Islamophobia is not a mere result of right-wing “contagion”, New Labour built on the previous law-and-order mindset popularized under Conservative Cabinets – especially when Thatcher served as PM. In this respect, Labour shifted its understanding of security from socio-economic safety to protection from crime and defence of the British way of life. It translated reactionary discourses that described ethnic minorities as security threats from a cultural perspective, and policies based on surveillance and restrictions of liberties that jar with progressive principles. To figure out this incongruence,

translation occurred actively through ideological adjustment into core Labour traditions and through collective negotiations with internal audiences, who often rejected right-leaning language.

Finally, the chapter has recalled that securitization of Islam has caused intra-party divisions. Corbyn de-securitized Islam in an emancipatory way. Particularly, he opposed foreign interventions against Muslim-majority countries; he raised awareness about the Islamophobic practices against British Muslims; and he criticized Prevent. Thus, translation is a collective move because it is tied to the contingent acceptance or rejection by intra-party audiences. Perhaps, had left-wing factions gained influence earlier, Labour would have rejected the translation of Thatcherism. Besides, had a more progressive agenda gained momentum, more Muslims would feel a deeper connection with Labour. According to the Labour Muslim Network (2020, p.15), “the adoption of particular policy positions affecting Muslims, decisions on foreign policy stances and a history going back to the ‘war on terror’” were all trends that may help interpret why 47% of Labour Muslim electors thought the Labour did not represent the Muslim community effectively and 59% disagreed with the statement “I feel well represented by the leadership of Labour”.

This chapter has showed that the securitization of Muslims by Labour is justified by one referent object of security: the idea of “balanced race relations” between protecting the British working class and promoting a formal anti-racist discourse towards ethnic and religious minorities. Differently, the next chapter illustrates that the French Socialist Party securitized Islam in the name of an assertive interpretation of secularism that is not visible neither in Britain nor in Italy. The example of Labour unearths the limits of the Copenhagen School. The next one, about France, aims to supplement the Paris School approach through a detailed focus on how the Right and Left impact on the elaboration of counterterrorism policies in the name of divergent meanings of secularism.

4. The Socialist Party in France: translating the securitization of Muslims in the name of *laïcité*

“To establish laïcité, we had to fight against the Church. To preserve it, should we not fight against Islam?”¹

Élisabeth Schemla, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 26 October 1989

“The migrant crisis signals the beginning of the end of women’s rights”²

Marine Le Pen, National Rally, 2016

France was the main target of ISIL-related terrorist attacks during the 2010s. According to the Global Terrorism Index (Institute for Economic and Peace, 2020, p.57), 255 fatalities were registered from 2014 to 2019. Then a total of seven incidents occurred in 2019-2020, which killed nine people and wounded another 23 (Gatehouse, 2018). Before 2015, the mass shooting by Mohammad Merah in Toulouse and Montauban killed eight people (including Merah) and wounded five. These massacres represent a crucial step in how France reacted to jihadist terrorism. France was targeted after 16 years of relative calm, as the country was spared by the Al-Qaeda-led terrorist attacks in Europe and the US. Additionally, Merah is the symbol of a new wave of political violence committed mostly by homegrown French citizens, in a context marked by “social dereliction, post-colonial resentment, political disenchantment, and circulation of radical interpretations of Islamism” (Kepel, 2015, p.88). Four months after the Merah affair, François Hollande (Socialist Party³) took office as President. The chapter is mostly concerned with the securitization of Muslims under Hollande’s Presidency, which is crucial to understand the Islamophobic policies implemented later by President Macron (Amable, Palombarini, 2021; Devellennes, 2022)⁴.

This chapter argues that the Socialist Party has securitized Islam by actively translating right-wing tropes into a vocabulary more congruent with its partisan history and identity. More specifically, the securitization occurred in the name of *laïcité* (the French version of secularism) as a referent object. Thus, this securitization results from specific distal and proximate contexts and not only from the reaction to critical junctures like the jihadist attacks of 2015. Although *laïcité* represents a Republican value cherished nowadays by all French parties, the chapter stresses that French left-wing parties have been historically more consistent and proactive in promoting secular policies, as showed by their support for the first laws on the

¹ In Deltombe (2007, p.115).

² In McAuley (2017).

³ *Parti Socialiste*

⁴ Macron won the 2017 and 2022 Presidential elections with a significant margin over Marine Le Pen (66.1% vs 33.9% in 2017 and 58.55% vs 41.45% in 2022). However, Marine Le Pen’s qualification to the second-round signals a right-ward gravitational shift in the French public debate and the success of her un-demonization and normalization strategies. Many studies show that her electorate is still ideologically right-wing (Mayer 2013; Surel 2019; Amable, Palombarini 2021).

separation between church and state, whereas the Right began to appropriate secularism more recently. Such translation of secularism by right-wing parties has compelled the Socialist Party to react by re-appropriating *laïcité* as a central argument to fight what they consider Islamic radicalization.

Differently from the chapter on Labour, this one explicitly engages with the Paris School, whose subscribers have written extensively about France. The Paris School interpretation rightly claims that securitization is normal rather than exceptional. However, it marginalizes a comprehensive analysis of the partisan logic behind translation, which this chapter instead put forward, showing that the securitization started before the recent jihadist attacks and that it has been normalized and translated into a version that sounds intelligible to the Socialist Party's audiences.

This chapter is organized into four parts. The first section explores the tropes and policies on Muslims promoted by the Socialist Party under Hollande's Presidency (2012-17). It illustrates the translation of right-wing Islamophobic tropes and clarifies that the available literature cannot grasp the trajectories and dynamics of left-wing securitization because it would consider it either an exceptional move (Copenhagen School) or a prerogative of bureaucratic actors (Paris School).

The second section explains that translation was not an exceptional move because left-wing fear of Islamic fundamentalism is rooted in a "distal context" that brought part of the Socialist Party to see Islam as a culturally incompatible element. The distal context, marked by growing Islamophobia and attachment to *laïcité* as a referent object to secure, partly explains the contemporary securitization in the name of *laïcité*. Finally, I discuss the "Creil affair" of 1989, which raised much discussion in the Socialist Party after three Muslim students were excluded from their high school because of wearing the veil.

The third section zooms in on this proximate context that sees the Right and Left colliding on the chain of agents. Since translation is an iterative process, the Socialists further securitized Muslims in the name of secularism after two conjunctures. First, the growing emphasis on security by important cadres of the party. Second, the translation of *laïcité* by right-wing parties, which have appropriated it as an instrument to discriminate Muslims. The section explores the rise of the National Front⁵ and the reactions it generated on the Left. Then, it analyses the Socialist responses to the "Law on secularity and religious symbols in public schools" (2004) and the "Law banning face coverings" (2010), promoted by centre-right Cabinets.

The fourth section shows the disagreements that the translated securitization of Islam raised among the Socialists. During the Hollande Presidency, right-leaning narratives on security and identity issues gained momentum among the right wing of the Socialist Party but raised much furore among the internal left wing. Translation was contested by internal audiences, who proposed a functional version of de-securitization. This dynamic of mutual

⁵ *Front National*

contestation is not captured by traditional securitization because it misses a deep engagement with intra-party debates. However, the French Left has fallen short of proposing an emancipatory de-securitization, differently from Corbyn, which is a sign of the lingering attachment to French *laïcité*.

4.1 The Socialist Party in the Executive (2012-2017)

This section first assesses existing securitization literature and its limited engagement with political parties. Then, it discusses how the Socialist Party translated the securitization of Muslims in the name of French Republican values - chief among them *laïcité* - coherent with the party's political ideology and history. This transfer of meaning can be captured by the framework of translation. To support this argument, I provide empirical evidence from relevant speeches released by President Hollande and Manuel Valls, Prime Minister from 2014 to 2016. As explained earlier in the thesis, the terrorist incidents of the 2010s represent a critical juncture that posed the Socialists in front of a dilemma: the defence of French national security versus the need to be inclusive towards Muslim minorities, who massively voted for Hollande in the 2012 elections (IFOP, 2013). What followed the most dramatic series of attacks (November 13, 2015) was a knee-jerk reform of counterterrorism included, among others: the declaration of the state of emergency (*état d'urgence*); the declaration of war against ISIL, a more assertive foreign counterterrorism agenda, the deployment of the army to protect "sensitive points" of French territory (*Operation Sentinelle*), the deportation of foreign nationals suspected of terrorism, the reform of intelligence (2015), and increased prison sentences for terrorist acts. Two policies deserve attention to capture the movement of tropes from Right to Left: the project of law to deprive terrorists of citizenship, which eventually did not pan out due to the absence of a solid majority in both Parliament Houses; and the state of emergency established in November 2015 and extended five times until November 2017.

France has yet to receive the attention it deserves from academics working on critical security and terrorism studies. Yet, it is a rather important case to understand why Muslims are a bipartisan security threat that is differently translated by right-wing and left-wing parties. Among the most innovative interventions, Bourbeau (2011) argued that French political elites have massively participated in the securitization of immigration, whether they came from the Right or the Left. His solid research shows that the process was mostly fueled by right-wing parties like the National Front and the Rally for the Republic⁶ and endorsed by the Socialist Cabinets⁷. However, his enquiry does not interrogate the discourse of the Left about Muslim minorities. Although Bourbeau provides a useful analysis of the restrictive turn on immigration launched by Michel Rocard's Cabinets (1988-1991) (2011, p.65), he does not engage with how Islam increased the saliency of the link between immigration and insecurity – let alone mention crucial events like the Creil affair. Another important contribution comes from Beauchamps (2017), who addressed the link between citizenship and security in her historical reconstruction of de-naturalization. Beauchamps rightly argues that denaturalisation law in France is problematic because "it solely applies to nationals by acquisition, that is, to French citizens

⁶ *Rassemblement pour la République*

⁷ Under the Presidency of Mitterrand in 1981-1995 and by the PM Jospin during the "cohabitation" in 1997-2002.

who were born in a foreign country and disposed of another nationality before acquiring the French one” (2017, p.49). Yet, her analysis is more focused on the juridical evolution of de-naturalization than on the securitarian dimension of de-naturalization and its meaning for the Socialist Cabinets.

Other securitization scholars working on French security policies concur that security is not an exceptional domain above and beyond politics. Indeed, it is not a coincidence that many of them share the epistemological and normative commitments of Bigo and the Paris school. According to Bigo and Tsoukala (2008, p.5), insecurity pertains more to mundane administrative decisions, the use of technologies, and the management of numbers instead of persons. This argument states that insecurity is more normal than exceptional, conversely to the Copenhagen School and despite the proliferation of urgent measures across Western Europe (such as the state of emergency in France) seems to confirm that the war on terror has led to an exceptional authoritarian drift.

Yet, the Paris School’s approach suggests reading the authoritarian turn of French Cabinets as a practice embedded in ordinary laws and institutionalized activities. Bigo and Bonelli (2018, p.10) make the case to distinguish between “state of exception”⁸ and the French state of emergency, which is called *état d’urgence* (literally “state of urgency”) . The latter, established by the Law of April 3, 1955, in the context of the Algerian war of independence, is closer to an administrative instrument to govern citizens’ daily lives, grounded in norms and procedures more than in the juridical void evoked by the state of exception. This argument is shared by Guittet, who maintains that there has been a recent shift from penal to administrative authorities to implement counterterrorist dispositions (2018, pp.123-125).

This interpretation serves to understand that French recent counterterrorism policies were not exceptional but meticulously constructed by a network of security professionals who can define who threatens national security. In explaining how insecurity is managed by networks of professionals, Bigo and Tsoukala (2008, p.5) argue that the securitization actors:

“never know the final results of the move they are doing, as the result depends on the field effect of many actors engaged in competitions for defining whose security is important, and of different audiences liable to accept or not that definition”.

Despite mentioning “many actors”, Bigo and Tsoukala’s research interest points to bureaucratic agencies closely linked to national executives (such as the military and the intelligence), who commands an increasing influence as decision-makers both in front of imminent threats and in preventing future risks (Bigo, Bonelli, 2018, p.10).

This emphasis on national security bureaucracies and executives comes at the analytical cost of excluding professional politicians and other political institutions, reduced to backstage figures, while indeed they retain some power to shape securitization (Neal, 2019, p.26). Neither does the Paris School engage enough with the metamorphosis of security discourses across parties. For instance, one disadvantage of using the Paris School to research France lies in

⁸ On the concept of state of exception, see the works of Carl Schmitt (1985) and Giorgio Agamben (2003, 2005).

minimizing the fact that the state of emergency was discussed and endorsed by the French National Assembly. Using the securitization vocabulary, it is possible to say that the Parliament acted as a “formal audience” superseding the prorogation and the concession of discretionary powers several times (Hennette-Vauchez, 2019). The legislative production of the state of emergency is a strong sign that securitization belongs to the “normal” political process. Evidence of this trend is provided by the frequent use of the state of emergency by French Cabinets, who have declared it to fight against terrorism and then to impose restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemics (Hennette-Vauchez, 2022). My analytical framework based on translation supplements the Paris School by arguing that security affairs are discussed in a scenario that allows for ideological elaboration and discussion inside and across parties⁹.

The production of security policies should be studied in combination with party politics and ideologies. The Socialist Party’s discourse on Islam is a product of partisan legacies and intra-party contestation. Parties do not accept securitization passively in the name of exceptional circumstances. Instead, they translate tropes and policies to marry securitization with their ideological heritage, as the centre-left did to confront the jihadist threat.

Hollande and his Cabinet clothed the securitization into a rhetorical shape that his party colleagues (internal audiences) and left-wing electors (external audiences) consider more in line with partisan identity and values cherished by the Socialist Party, such as *laïcité*. While this dynamic is not underlined by the bureaucratic-centred approach of the Paris School, the analytical framework of translation allows reading how securitization tropes travelled across and inside parties, as illustrated by the analysis of Hollande’s project of law on citizenship removal and by the state of emergency.

4.1.1 Hollande and Valls: translators of securitization

Hollande declared a state of emergency on November 13, 2015, after the attacks in Paris and Saint-Denis. Created in 1955 to face specific exceptional circumstances (the Algerian war of independence), the state of emergency is entrenched in the colonial history of France (Hennette-Vauchez, 2022, p.135). It grants exceptional powers to the Ministry of Interior and the police in anomalous circumstances. As an example of exceptional powers, in February 2016 Human Rights Watch reported that between 350 and 400 people had been placed under house arrest. Emergency powers have created economic hardships, traumatized children, and contributed to further stigmatizing the whole Muslim minority (Human Rights Watch, 2016). French Muslim communities have been disproportionately targeted by this counter-radicalization strategy, as witnessed in the UK under the Prevent strategy (France24, 2015). Moreover, after being formally removed in November 2017, the state of emergency has been normalized and transposed into the Law on Interior Security and Fight against Terrorism (known as “Law SILT”). Although both Hollande and Bernard Cazeneuve (Minister of Interior in 2014-16 and then Prime Minister in 2016-17) promised that “the exception would not become the rule” (Hollande, 2016a), Cazeneuve also subtly argued that the *état d’urgence* is not an exceptional regime because it is “constitutive of the rule of law” (Seelow et.al., 2016).

⁹ On this point, see also Neal (2019, p.33).

The inscription of the derogatory logic into ordinary law raised criticism amongst several human rights associations and in the National Consultative Commission for Human Rights (Bigo, Bonelli, 2018; Guittet, 2018, p.122).

To convince the Socialists' internal and external audiences, Hollande justified the state of emergency as a necessary tool to preserve security and as compatible with French democratic rules. This emerged in several speeches released after significant terrorist incidents, such as the attack in Nice on July 14, 2016 (Hollande, 2016b) and the murder of the Catholic priest Jacques Hamel in Saint-Étienne-du-Rouvray on July 26, 2016 (Hollande, 2016c). In another significant meeting held by the social-liberal think tank *Terra Nova*¹⁰, Hollande highlighted that the responses to jihadism would not be in contrast with the rule of law (Hollande, 2016d), in trying to persuade that his Cabinet would better balance between security and freedom compared to other parties. The same tactic can be found in other centre-left parties such as Labour and the Democratic Party. Hollande actively translated a right-wing meaning of security (absence of threats to French law-and-order) into the necessary condition to ensure freedom and respect for human rights. This represented a viable justification of securitization in front of progressive audiences, not only because France was described by Hollande as the birthplace of human rights, but also because the protection of human rights is a value that holds significant sway in the Socialist Party's social-liberal agenda (Bogain, 2017, pp.478,481). Nonetheless, the state of emergency eventually came under a barrage of criticism from Socialist left-wing factions and NGOs (Human Rights Watch, 2016; Amnesty International, 2017; Hamon, 2017).

In most of his speeches, Hollande's vocabulary was not based on the argument of a cultural clash between the West and Islam, frequently chosen by right-wing parties. In one homage ceremony for victims of terrorism held in Paris (September 19, 2012) Hollande declared that the war against terrorism was not a clash of *civilizations*, but a response to the war *against all civilizations* triggered by the terrorists (Hollande, 2012b). This argument was also repeated some days after the November 2015 attacks (Hollande, 2015b). The construction of the terrorist's "otherhood" is not predicated on cultural and religious features, that left-wing electors would find difficult to accept as referent objects of securitization because it aims to convince progressive audiences of the necessity to securitize Muslims. Alduy (2017, p. 244) shows that Hollande carefully avoided mentioning "Islamism", let alone Islam, in most of his speeches about terrorism. In so doing, he chose not to translate the first Islamophobic trope identified by this thesis, namely that violence is inherent to Islam. The description of the terrorist evil recurred to general negative labels ("*murderers*", "*cowards*", etc.) or adjectives that sneakily evoke the orientalist slurs thrown at Muslims ("*fanatics*", "*barbarians*"). Likewise, Bogain finds that Hollande's speeches after the Charlie Hebdo shooting and the November 2015 attacks showed a hyperbolic construction of French national identity as cemented upon Republican values such as freedom, education, solidarity and secularism (Bogain, 2019, p.250). The French version of secularism, *laïcité*, deserves further discussion

¹⁰ On *Terra Nova*, see Amable, Palombarini (2021).

because it has been a significant referent object in the Socialist Party's securitization of Muslims.

Laïcité informs the French republican model of citizenship, that is in principle universal and non-discriminatory towards minorities. It is important to clarify that *laïcité* is not a mere synonym of secularization, that in turn is a quite contested notion (Asad, 2003). As Roy explains:

"Secularization is not antireligious or anticlerical: people merely stop worshiping and stop talking about religion; it is a process. *Laïcité*, on the contrary, is explicit: it is a political choice that defines the place of religion in an authoritarian, legal manner" (2007, pp.7-8).

Several scholars agree that French-style secularism misrepresents national French values as if they were universal principles (Scott, 2007; Fredette, 2012; Bancel et.al., 2017; Balibar, 2018). Alouane (2015, pp.31-32) argues that the debate on *laïcité* is tightly entrenched with the protection of French identity and majority nationalism against minority groups, whose religious freedom and clothing choices are limited in the name of a secular public order. Hence, I agree with the argument that French *laïcité* has become a political regime of exclusion and construction of secular modes of subjectivity, more than a regime of separation between the state and the church (Mavelli, 2012, 2013).

Laïcité was a pillar of Hollande's 2012 electoral program. The Socialist President even proposed to inscribe the principles of the Law on the separation between state and church (1905), that I will discuss soon, into the French Constitution (Hollande, 2012a). In 2013, one year after the attacks committed by Merah, Hollande pledged that the daily battle against terrorism should be fought in the name French Republican values, chiefly *laïcité*, which ensured the freedom of conscience to all confessions (Hollande, 2013). In the speech released some weeks after the Charlie Hebdo shootings, Hollande (2015a) reiterated that the terrorists had targeted two fundamental principles of the French nation: freedom of expression and freedom of conscience, both made possible by the religious tolerance ensured by *laïcité*. On November 18, 2015, Hollande declared that "*laïcité* is a Republic that makes room for everyone but does not allow anything that might threaten it" (Hollande, 2015c). While there is no mention of Islamism, the implicit assumption governing these speeches is that a minority of Muslims abhors French religious freedom and tolerance, which should be secured also to protect the "good" integrated Muslims. However, the counterterrorism response has restricted the very same freedom originally contained by *laïcité* (Human Rights Watch, 2016; Amnesty International, 2017) and assumed that Muslim religious practices might be a vehicle to radicalization.

Other declarations of Hollande explicitly translated right-wing tropes. In one interview released to *Les Echos* (a liberal newspaper), Hollande warned that topics related to "identity" represented a debate that could not unify the Left. However, he also declared that France received too many immigrants. This argument, that recalls the second trope of this thesis – Muslims as demographic threats – has been deconstructed by critics of the "great replacement" conspiracy theory (Taguieff, 2022), as well as by studies showing that immigrants are not a burden for the French economy (de Blic, 2013). Hollande added that Islam was a problem not

because ontologically dangerous but “because it wanted to establish itself as a religion of the Republic”, which would be an attack to French secular principles. The argument that Islam is trying to impose its principles speaks to the first Islamophobic trope about Muslims’ radicalization and incompatibility with the West. In the same interview, Hollande pledged again to the republican secular model of universal emancipation that will persuade veiled Muslim girls to accept French mores (Les Echos, 2016). This focus on universalism has been object of discussion by Bogain (2019, p.250), who argues that Hollande arbitrarily chose the referent objects and historical legacies to secure against Islamism. Its construction of republicanism omitted the “dark side” of French universalism, such as the colonial past (Bancel et.al., 2017), the contemporary muscular foreign policy (e.g. the war on jihadism in Mali¹¹) as well as the instrumental emphasis on “colour-blind” universal republican values to hide concrete socio-economic inequalities, structural racism, and post-colonial stigma against Muslims (Dawes, 2021).

The speeches of Valls, Minister of Interior (2012-14) and then Prime Minister (2014-16) yield other insights to understand how *laïcité* was put forward to securitize Muslims. In January 2015, after the Charlie Hebdo shootings, Valls declared that France was at war against terrorism, jihadism and radical Islam (Fragon, 2019, p.131), which reveals a more confrontational posture compared to the cautious language used by Hollande. Valls exhorted to establish the republican norms against who “in the name of Islam, impose a lead blanket upon some districts and enforce their order based on trafficking and religious radicalism” (Valls, 2015a). This narrative prescribes that Muslims must conform to national values and routinely validate their loyalty to French values. Moreover, it shifts the onus of integration more on Muslims’ shoulders rather than on state-led programs without accounting for structural Islamophobia in French society. Since 2012, Valls has stated that “it was time for Islam to take its responsibilities and cooperate with the state about funding to mosques and formation of imams” (Valls, 2012). The nub of his argument points to the empowerment of French imams in the transmitting republican values, condemning extremist subjects, and containing Salafist ideas, that Valls deems necessary to “winning the battle of French Islam” in the war against extremist ideologies (Berdah, 2016). According to some scholars (Smail et.al., 2017, pp.18-19; Sèze 2019, p.153), the expectation that Muslim leaders should speak up to overtly disassociate themselves from jihadism presupposes that they share a feeling of hidden guilt and lack of loyalty to French secular values. These suspicions are fed by the persuasion that Islam is threatened by “the tentation to withdraw” from French society, exploited by preachers of obscurantism and communitarian ideas (Valls, 2015b).

An explicit translation of right-wing policies was also the Project of Constitutional Law on de-naturalization. Even though the French Senate approved an amended version of the initial text, the Project created a political stalemate that eventually pushed Hollande to abandon it. This heightened controversy depends on the fact that denaturalization (inscribed in French legislation since the First World War) produces “a principle of unequal citizenship, according to which born nationals enjoy an irrevocable right to nationality, whereas new nationals only have access to a conditional form of national identity” (Beauchamps, 2017, p.49). As

¹¹ See D’Amato (2019, p.82).

Beauchamps explains, in 1996 French legislators amended the art.25 of the Civil Code to insert “acts of terrorism” as a possible cause of de-naturalization. In that period, France was targeted by several jihadist attacks like the bombings in Paris and Lyon in 1995, carried out by the Algerian Armed Islamic Group¹². This wave of attacks pushed the French Government to react firmly. Similarly, Hollande advanced the Project after the terrorist attacks against Charlie Hebdo in January 2015 and against multiple targets in Paris and Saint-Denis in November 2015. It proposed to modify art.34 of the Constitution by inserting the possibility to remove the citizenship from binationals convicted for “serious attempts against the life of the Nation” (Assemblée Nationale, 2015). The Project on de-naturalization disproportionately targeted French binationals, who mostly share a North African background. Hence, it is reasonable to think that the Socialist Party nurtured vivid concerns about their radicalization and disavowal of the French republican pact and secular values (Joppke, 2018, p.745), therefore buying into the first Islamophobic trope.

While scholars have addressed how the access to citizenship is tied to national security considerations (Guillaume, Huysmans, 2013; Mavelli, 2022), what is less discussed is that restrictions to citizenship and deprivation have been an electoral workhorse of the Right. In France, Sarkozy (twice Minister of Interior¹³ and then President in 2007-2012) speculated on the possibility of citizenship deprivation after the urban riots in 2005 (Le Monde, 2010). Considering that the riots were animated by many second-generation French of Muslim background, Sarkozy proposed to strip French citizenship to certain categories of naturalized citizens who had been incriminated. In so doing, Sarkozy ignited again a feeling of stigmatization among French Muslims, whose loyalty to the Republic was again called into question (Kepel, 2012, p.23). More radically, in 2012 Marine Le Pen theorized the possibility of stripping citizenship from dual nationals condemned for criminal offenses (Thierry, 2015). Assessing how the centre-left chased right-wing slogans, Le Pen traced a causal link between Hollande’s constitutional project and the tremendous electoral rise of the National Rally¹⁴, which had just garnered more than 28% in 2015 regional elections. Similarly, Florian Philippot (National Front) underlined that Hollande’s project on de-naturalization symbolized a clear ideological victory of the Right (BFMTV, 2015).

Eventually, the political violence inspired in the name of jihadism pushed Hollande towards the translation of right-wing tropes into Socialist language. Yet, the Socialist Party legitimized restrictive solutions that in the long term seemed to be out of tune with the major preoccupations of left-wing electors. Despite research showing a widespread approval of the securitarian policies (Bogain, 2020), Hollande alienated part of left-wing electors more concerned with socio-economic stability than with law-and order (Alduy, 2017, p.311) and traditionally having open attitudes on immigration and cultural issues (Stimson et.al., 2012).

¹² Although they contributed to beef up the martial tones against terrorism, these attacks were not critical junctures as they did not impact the relationship between the Socialist Party and French Muslims as other events - e.g. the Creil affair - did. For further discussion, see Deltombe (2005) and D’Amato (2019, p.63).

¹³ In 2002-2004 and 2005-2007.

¹⁴ *Rassemblement National*

Despite its merits in analysing securitization, the Paris School has not considered how securitization is translated by political parties. Methodologically centred on state actors and security bureaucracies, current securitization theories cannot appreciate how political parties affect securitization. Parties are not undifferentiated entities that converge to the centre and agree on a common discourse on insecurity. Instead, it is the Socialist Party that has got closer to the Right. Hollande translated a right-wing meaning of insecurity and right-wing policies (such as the project on forfeiture of nationality) through a referent object, *laïcité*, that marks the history of the Socialist Party. The translation of right-wing tropes was wedded to a specific referent object, *laïcité*, that, as the next section shows, has been historically cherished by many French parties on the Left.

4.2 Securing *laïcité* against Islam

Hollande and the Socialist Cabinets have flagged Republican values such as *laïcité* as referent object to construct Islam as a source of insecurity and translate from the Right the tropes about Muslims as radical individuals and demographic threats. Yet, this move was intelligible to left-wing audiences because a substantial number of Socialist Party officials had called to securitize Muslims earlier under the Presidency of Mitterrand (1981-1995) in the name of *laïcité*. This dimension of securitization is grounded in the Socialist Party's distal context and chronologically precedes the translated securitization inspired by the reaction to the Right.

This section interprets the Creil affair - introduced in [chapter one](#) - as the first critical juncture that posed the Socialist Party in front of a predicament between respect of *laïcité* and solidarity with Muslim students. Many party members, liberal and feminist intellectuals called to securitize the veil, albeit Jospin (Minister of Education in 1988-1992) pursued a solution of compromise rather than coercive means. The Creil affair is the first step towards successive securitization moves. It is a remarkable component of the socio-cultural background in which the successive Socialist's translated securitization was intelligible.

The development of *laïcité* was marked by a series of milestones between the 19th and 20th century. Most notably, the "Law Ferry" (from the name of the Minister Jules Ferry, member of the Republican Left party) of 1882 made primary education free and secular to all French pupils. In 1905, a new law on the separation between the state and church passed amid the support of important political figures like Aristide Briand and Jean Jaurès, both belonging to the then French Socialist Party¹⁵. Although the Law watered down the most vocal anticlerical requests, Kuru argues that it is an exaggeration to define it as liberal and tolerant, as done for instance by Jean Baubérot (2014) - one of the most notorious experts of French secularism who was the sole member of the Stasi Commission to have abstained on the vote of the report that brought to the Law banning religious symbols in school in 2004. In fact, according to Kuru (2009, p.150), the Law of 1905 required all religious groups to be nationally registered as "religious associations", it banned the state funding of religion, and it stoked a general intolerance towards religion's public roles. While acknowledging the importance of these

¹⁵ For deeper analyses, see Kuru (2009, pp.142-153), Baubérot (2014).

different viewpoints, what matters most for the purposes of this thesis is to recognize that, independently from its original spirit, *laïcité* has been applied as a regime of exclusion of certain religious subjectivities, by both right-wing and centre-left parties.

However, the Laws of 1882 and 1905 were strongly advocated by politicians close to republican and socialist ideals, located on the left-to-centre side of the chain of agents, and opposed by the Catholics and by monarchist right-wing parties. Therefore, the Socialist Party and other contemporary parties on the French Left consider themselves as a beacon of secularism and heirs of the past struggles against religious authorities. The argument that Islam poses obstacles to individual emancipation is part of the French Left's historical critique of religion and racial biases against Muslims (Slavin, 1991; Scott, 2007). The persuasion that religion was incompatible with modernity and thus to confine to the private sphere was widely spread across French progressive elites since the post-revolutionary period. The ideological battle between republicans and conservative Catholics brought to the victory of the first faction and the rise of an "assertive" form of secularism (Kuru, 2009, pp.138-139). *Laïcité* slowly turned into a historical pillar of French socialism and its political culture, evident in the creation of a relevant network of associations (the Human Rights League, the masonry, teachers' unions) traditionally positioned on the Left (Cahon, 2019, p.39). This heritage is vital to understanding the discourse formulated by the Socialist Party in 2012-17.

Even though mainstream French parties share the persuasion that the place of Islam into the public sphere should be limited and regulated, each party translates its Islamophobic tropes differently, the purpose being to claim to better secure *laïcité*. This dynamic was already present in the Mitterrand years, when the Socialist Party began worrying about second-generation French Muslims and their strong attachment to religious practices and identity. This preoccupation was expressed through words that left-wing audiences could understand in virtue of their familiarity with progressive vocabulary. The assertive version of secularism that gained traction was negatively biased against Islam. Conversely, the concerns about *laïcité* disappeared when the Cabinet pursued a rapprochement with private schools after the loud protests by Catholic organizations in 1984, which brought the Socialist Party to delete any reference to *laïcité* in the policy declarations submitted at the 1985 Party Congress in Toulouse (Ferhat, 2016; Almeida, 2017, p. 221).

The first examples of how the Left securitized Islam in the name of *laïcité* occurred during the labour strikes that shattered the national automobile industry in the Eighties. Several Socialist lawmakers warned that Muslims' cultural differences were an obstacle to assimilation. Mauroy (PM, 1981-1984) denounced the presence of immigrated workers "who are inspired by religious and political groups organized by criteria that have little to do with French social reality". The Minister of Labour, Jean Auroux (1981-1982), claimed that "there is evidence of a religious and fundamentalist factor in the clashes we have experienced, which gives them a dimension that is not exclusively related to trade-unions" (Hajjat, Muhammad, 2013, p.107). Likewise, the Minister of Interior Gaston Defferre (1981-1984) reiterated that parts of the Islamic civil law were contrary to French ones (Brubaker, 1992, p.149), in another attempt to ask Muslims to validate their loyalty to republican principles. According to the framework of *laïcité*, ethnic and religious bonds shall not prevail upon the "forging of one

national identity based on the democratic principles of the French Revolution” (Vichniac, 1991, p.41). Since *laïcité* is predicated on the assumption that the sacred and secular lives can be divided (Scott, 2007, p.98), Islam’s alleged reluctance to respect such boundaries represented a source of insecurity for the stability of the French secular way of life.

Such statements from the Socialists members of the government implied that Muslims’ religious visibility clashed with the secular fabric of French society. They revealed the tension between the universal and colour-blind recognition of equal rights ensured by French Republicanism (Chabal, 2015) and the requirement to abide by French secular norms, that constrain or prohibit the expression of Muslim religious practices. The Socialist Party remained formally committed to an abstract and colour-blind anti-racism, that marked an evident difference with the more nationalist rhetoric of the Right (Brubaker, 1992, p.142). During the first years of socialist administrations, the idea of an inclusive “right to difference” gained prominence across some anti-racist movements on the Left, setting a boundary with the former republican reluctance to accept diversity (Chabal 2015, p.188). In this respect, the Socialist Party showed a mild sympathy for the March for Equality and against Racism of 1983, when men and women of Arabic background (“*Beurs*”) marched across France to raise awareness about discrimination and racism (Bowen, 2007, p.67). However, many left-wing intellectuals who staunchly supported universal republican values (such as Alain Finkielkraut, Régis Debray and Pierre-André Taguieff) have disqualified this argument as belonging to the “ethno-differential” propaganda of the New Right and its overwhelming focus on cultural differences. Instead, much of the discourse on the “right to difference” aimed to problematize the assimilationist civic integration at the core of the French universal model and to promote tolerance towards ethnic and regional minorities.

Nevertheless, the new discourse on the “right to difference” did not gain momentum across the party, as many politicians considered it too risky (Vichniac, 1991, p.40) and as it jarred with the revitalization of Republican ideals promoted by Mitterrand (Chabal, 2015, p.57). The Socialist Party could not disavow the republican integration model, that imposed cultural constraints on ethnic and religious minorities. One example of this attitude comes from the posture taken towards the anti-racist organization SOS-Racisme, founded in 1985. SOS-Racisme predicated an embryonal form of identity politics, despite the limited room that this concept had in the centralistic French republican model. Many scholars (Kepel, 2013, p.190; Vergnon, 2016, p.126; Mattei, Aguilar, 2016, p.75) argue that the support given by the Socialists came only from the margins and was indeed tactical, as it increased the popularity of the party among the homegrown French Muslim electors.

Another sign of this ambivalence is displayed by the securitization of immigration, which on many occasions was endorsed by centre- and far-left parties (Vichniac, 1991, p.43; Raymond, 2009; Bourbeau, 2011). The argument advanced to justify restrictions was predicated on the assumption that immigrants can be integrated only by limiting further entries and providing that they want to “de-islamize” themselves (Roy, 2007, pp.30-31). This preoccupation drove the Socialist Party to gradually institutionalize the presence of French Muslims through the creation of the Council for Reflection on French Islam by the Minister of Interior Pierre Joxe (Raymond, 2009, p.487). This institutionalization responds to logic of

securitization because it proactively co-opts Islam in a “corporatist way” by creating Muslim representative bodies trusted by the state (Silvestri, 2010, p.48).

Hence, the Socialist Party neither challenged the arbitrary distinction between good and bad Muslims nor fought to stop the normalization of Islamophobic tropes. The colour-blindness principle indeed has contributed to ignoring the structural racism and the recent increase of Islamophobic acts (Bayrakli, Hafez, 2020, pp.302-305). Therefore, the roots of the Socialist Party's Islamophobia should be retraced in left-wing anti-clericalism and attachment to *laïcité*, and not exclusively in the discursive contagion of the Right.

Laïcité was flagged as a referent object during the Creil affair in 1989, when three female students of Muslim background were not admitted to school because of their veil. This episode kickstarted a national debate about the public visibility of Islam in French schools, albeit fewer than 1500 Muslim students wore a headscarf (Kuru, 2009, p.104). What happened in Creil confirmed that Islam ceased to be discussed only in relation to immigration controls, as the three students embodied the second generation of French Muslims who appeared in the public debate after the anti-racist march of 1983 (Liogier, 2012).

The Creil affair was a critical juncture that posed the Socialist Party in front of a dilemma about Muslim minorities. It prompted plural reactions inside the party, which still struggles to speak with one voice when it comes to Islam. Although many Socialist politicians concurred that the students should not be admitted (and thus securitized the veil), no coercive policies followed. Jospin sought a compromise by giving educators the responsibility to decide on a case-by-case basis whether girls wearing the *hijab* should be admitted to classes. Many Socialists bashed Jospin's policy as a weak compromise while proposing more assertive measures against what they considered as an attack against *laïcité*. Further, the Socialist Party Executive Bureau recommended the ban of visible religious signs in public schools. Against Jospin, the central office claimed that the compromise did not lift young Muslim girls “of an obligation – the *hijab* – that they hoped to be freed from in France” (Cahon, 2019, p.44). On the other end, the faction *Nouvelle École Socialiste* did not adopt a prohibitionist attitude. Among the supporters of a milder line, Mélenchon (Socialist Party member from 1976 to 2008) took issue with the exclusion of Muslim students in the name of anti-racism, as did the leader of SOS-Racisme Harlem Désir (Juhem, 2001).

The Creil affair is significant to understanding contemporary forms of translation. It is indeed part of the distal context in which the last Socialist Cabinet grounded its Islamophobic discourse and translated right-wing emphasis on security. The national controversy marked how French political elites felt that their secularised public space was threatened by Islamic practices. For such reason Jospin's compromise was considered as a sign of laxity by many on the Left. A group of liberal and feminist intellectuals defined Jospin's compromise as “the Munich of republican school”, matching immigrants from Muslim majority countries to the gloomy memory of Nazi occupation (Bowen, 2007, p.85). In this narrative, Creil represents the beginning of a slippery slope towards multicultural policies that are described as alien to the French context.

Discussing the Creil affair serves to grasp how the Right instrumentalized the Republican model of education only with the purpose of attacking the veil, as I said earlier in chapter one (Peker, 2021, p.330). For example, the right-wing newspaper *Le Figaro* converted to the defence of secularism when the latter seemed to be threatened by Muslims. While in 1984 *Le Figaro* advocated the rights of private catholic schools, in 1989 it praised the merits of French secular and republican school, instrument of assimilation of “black and Arab people” who became “perfect French” (Deltombe, 2007, p.115). This was the first step of the right-wing translation of *laïcité* into a benchmark of French way of life. A great number of right-wing politicians (especially in the mainstream Right) would affirm thereafter their commitment to defend secularism and Marine Le Pen too started to champion the concept from 2011. For such reasons, Jospin’s decision to find a compromise on the headscarf has been interpreted as a reaction to the increased politicization of the affair by the Right, who reaped more electoral benefits from identity issues compared to the Socialist Party (Beaugé, Hajjat, 2014). This means that the Socialist government acted as an audience rather than an agent of securitization tropes coming from the Right but not yet translated into concrete policy measures.

However, the Creil affair showed that part of the French Left warned about the incompatibility between Islam and *laïcité*, referent object that aligns with the French Republican model based on abstract and colour-blind solidarity within a single national, linguistic and secularized community. It also showed that the Socialist Party hesitated to recognize cultural pluralism, which still sounds like a foreign product not resonating with the French assimilationism. This attachment to *laïcité* is not a translation from the Right, because it is wedded to some principles traditionally guiding the French Left, such as state centralism, monoculturalism and the importance of the republican school (Hazareensingh, 2006; Lazar, 2010). To be translated has been the discursive emphasis on Muslims’ reluctance to accept French majoritarian cultural norms, that reinforces the trope of an inevitable conflict between France and Islam. The centrality of identity factors in political debate is traditionally more congruent with the nationalist semantics popularized meanwhile by the National Front, whose ideals sit uncomfortably with the equal and universal values of *laïcité* (Crépon, 2012, p.239).

The focus on culture obscured possible reflections that would be more expected from a centre-left party, such as how schools could better promote minority emancipation and tackle education inequalities (Fredette, 2012, p.81; Mattei, Aguilar, 2016, p.115). Instead, schools have become a privileged site for the transmission of French national and secular values (Bowen, 2007, p.65) and to detect early signs of radicalization (Sèze, 2019). The effects of this discursive translation are still visible in the CVE strategy promoted by the Socialist government, aimed to strengthen the role of schools as a vehicle of republican integration. The strategy was elaborated as a response to the increasing exodus of foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq and the internal threat of people signalled for violent radicalization¹⁶.

In crafting appropriate counter-narratives to the Islamist radicalization, the Socialists chose a language tailored to protect one of its referent objects (*laïcité*) and render securitization intelligible to internal and external audiences, less accustomed to debates on security, culture,

¹⁶By the end of 2016, 2073 French citizens had joined the IS, while 9300 others were reported to the authority for violent radicalization (Premier Ministre, 2016)

and identity. After the Charlie Hebdo attacks, the Cabinet prioritized schools among the sites where radicalization could be detected and prevented, which marks another affinity with the British strategy Prevent. In this respect, the Socialists published a “Charter of *laïcité* in schools”, based on the argument that secular values could prevent physical and moral violence in schools (Peker, 2021, p.334). The Minister for Education Vincent Peillon (2012-14) launched a course on “secular morality” from 2015, while in the same year the Cabinet launched the “*Committee on Equality and Citizenship*” (Assemblée Nationale, 2016). Among its purposes, Sèze (2019, p.131) mentions the transmission of a republican ethos across schools, the involvement of young people in activities that increase civic cohesion, the constitution of voluntary citizenship reserves, and the commitment to fight against all forms of discrimination (especially anti-Semitism and anti-LGBTQ hate). The Socialists’ interpretation of secularism differs from the Christianized secularism of the Right (Bernard, 2016). As I will soon explain, the CVE is a distinct product that echoes the Socialists’ social-liberal and republican identity. Such an identity is tightly connected to an assertive vision of *laïcité* as basic principle for civic coexistence, that has brought to severe restrictions upon certain religious practices. This occurs despite the widespread republican consensus in French political elites.

Although the Socialist Party avoided securitization policies in Creil, it turned to interpret Islam as a culturally destabilizing element, that witnesses how right-wing frames (interpreting cultural differences as a source of insecurity) circulated on the Left. It is because of this distal context of Islamophobia that the translation of the right-wing meaning of security became a viable option. Such translation resonated with an ideological opposition between friends (the defenders of French republican principles) and enemies (the religious fundamentalists) of *laïcité* that the Socialist Party has not problematized but reinforced.

4.3 Translating security from Right to Left and *laïcité* from Left to Right

Aside from the distal context, the Socialist Party translated in the proximate context of interaction between right-wing and left-wing parties, as this section explains. Right-wing tropes have influenced the active translation of securitization by the Socialists in the name of *laïcité*. To understand this process, this section engages with two iterative dynamics. First, the Socialist Party absorbed a right-wing interpretation of security (absence of threats to law-and-order) after being accused by the Right of ignoring French people’s concerns. This speaks against the argument of a convergence between Right and Left, since it is the centre-left party who drifted towards a conservative meaning of insecurity - more cultural than socio-economic. Second, the Socialists reacted to the right-wing translation of *laïcité* (a left-wing referent object) into an identitarian construct, while accusing the Left of sacrificing French secularism to accommodate Muslims’ grievances.

4.3.1 Security from Right to Left

The securitization of French Muslims began on the right side of the chain of agents. Since the electoral breakthrough of the National Front, France has witnessed the shift of public

discourse towards frames associated with the Right (Fassin, 2013). This discursive metamorphosis needs to be addressed because it helps to interpret how the Socialists translated a conservative meaning of security.

The French far-right has traditionally framed ethnic minorities as culturally incompatible with its ethno-religious homogeneous idea of French “people” (Sirinelli, 2014; Surel, 2019). In the Eighties, Le Pen fearmongered about the arrival of immigrants on French soil and portrayed them as a security issue. When the Socialist Cabinet led by Pierre Mauroy extended an amnesty to those who entered France before January 1981 and had a stable job, the National Front underlined the insanity of such a proposal that might have driven France to lose its Frenchness (Shields, 2007, p.203). By insisting on the escalation of crime and the economic and demographic threat posed by immigrants, the far-right party set a specific political agenda that mainstream parties had to confront (Mayer, 2013; Dézé, 2015; Stockemer, 2017). The security of French people morphed into a salient electoral issue on which right and left-wing mayors competed to earn credit and show that their governance of crime and public order was better than Le Pen’s.

Jean-Marie Le Pen promoted the circulation of xenophobic rhetoric and obliged competing parties to take a stance on issues like French identity, immigration and citizenship, that the National Front tried to electorally own (Vichniac, 1991, p.44). The main centre-right party (Rally for the Republic) espoused a pronounced securitarian discourse since the first period of “cohabitation” under the Presidency of Mitterrand. The Cabinet led by Jacques Chirac (1986-88) enshrined more restrictive policies on citizenship and immigration (Bourbeau, 2011, p.72). Not only did right-wing parties construct immigrants as vectors of insecurity, crime, and drug trafficking; also, they accused the Left of laxity, as it occurred after Mauroy’s amnesty to illegal immigrants. These allegations hark back to Paris’ municipal electoral campaign in 1983 and gained popularity across the candidates of Rally for the Republic in the Nineties (Bonelli, 2010, pp.182-183).

Both the National Front and Rally for the Republic blamed the Left to fail to tackle crime and immigration: two themes that the Right considered reasons of insecurity and that were interwoven to stress that many criminals had a foreign background (Davies, 2002, p.139). These narratives impacted the Socialist Party. Indeed, in 1984 French PM Laurent Fabius (Socialist Party) had already stated that “Jean-Marie Le Pen poses good questions, without giving good answers” (Atlantico, 2011). This statement sounds surprising for a party that claimed to adhere to anti-racism, described by Fabius as the “soul of France” (1985, p.108), but at the same time shows that the Socialist could not avoid engaging with the National Front’s electoral growth - 10.45% in 1984 European elections, 9.7% in 1986 legislative elections, 14.38% in 1988 Presidential elections. Nonetheless, the Cabinet had promoted an ambivalent immigration policy under Mauroy, based on tougher restrictions on new entries and inclusive measures towards already settled immigrants (Shields, 2007, p.201).

The xenophobic vocabulary coming from the Right gained traction in the Nineties¹⁷. After the defeat to Chirac in the Presidential Elections of 1995, the Socialist Party more assertively translated right-wing tropes in the name of left-wing referent objects. By elaborating this ideological bricolage, the party aimed to weaken political competitors and legitimize security as an important issue for the party (Cos, 2019, p.143). The Socialist Party needed to show more closeness to the “people” as a reaction to right-wing populist accusations of being a “detached elite”. This narrative was gaining momentum in other Western centre-left parties too: in the same years, Labour aimed to show that its anti-crime policies was the “triumph of community politics over detached metropolitan elites” (Pratt, Miao, 2019, p.54), as mentioned in chapter three. Accordingly, the Jospin Cabinet praised the increase in the number of local policemen (the “proximity police”) as a cutting-edge solution to crime and insecurity that chimed with left-wing values like humanism and solidarity. This notwithstanding, the direction followed by Jospin and his Minister of Interior Jean-Pierre Chevènement changed the balance of power inside the party, with the marginalization of left-wing currents closer to the Magistrate’s Union (Bourgoin, 2013, p.46). This dynamic brought the Socialist Party to launch its electoral bid on security during the Villepinte meeting (1997) when the party leadership took a more conservative stance compared to its former agenda on security published in the Bonnemaïson Report (1982). While the Bonnemaïson Report interpreted security as individual emancipation from socio-economic constraints and state coercive measures, the Socialists seemed now to downplay the social explications of crime. Hence, the concept of security changes meaning inside the same political party: something that the methodological state-centrism of established securitization theories does not fully capture.

An evident signal of right-wing contagion was the Socialist translation of the slogan “security is the first freedom”, that firstly appeared in the “Law on Freedom and Security” - issued in 1981 by a right-wing Cabinet - and then was used several times by Le Pen (Taguieff, 1989, p.211). As chapter two [anticipated](#), this slogan was appropriated by Jospin in the Villepinte meeting (Cos, 2019), marking an evident difference with what PM Mauroy had argued earlier: “freedom is the first security” (Tesquet, 2020). Such a historical enquiry of intra-party and inter-party interactions is significant for the study of contemporary securitization because it shows that Hollande was not the first Socialist politician to give prominence to security.

When political parties appropriate the themes flagged by their competitors, they try to ensure that their electors and fellow party members understand the translation. Therefore, Jospin translated security into the condition of possibility to fight against social inequalities and injustice, with the purpose to cocoon industrial and clerical workers - constituencies that the Socialists had progressively lost and who partly shifted to the National Front (Sawicki, 2013, p.106) - against robberies, aggressions, and sexual abuses (Cos, 2019, p.144). Likewise, years later Hollande and Valls would translate security to praise left-wing referent objects such as the respect of *laïcité*. Jospin’s translation of security as a “fundamental right” marked its

¹⁷ The international rise of Islamist parties (e.g. in Algeria) was another factor contributing to raise the alert about the transnational links between French Muslims and foreign terrorist groups (e.g. the Armed Islamic Group) and the possibility of terrorist attacks.

campaign for the 2002 Presidential Elections (Jospin, 2002). Yet, this move eventually ended up in failure. It favoured the National Front, who most benefited from the mainstreaming of nationalist refrains (Davies 1999, p.141). Jospin did not manage to pass the first round of French Presidential Elections, beaten by Chirac and by the surprising score of Le Pen (16.86%), whose program aimed to establish a “national and European preference” in housing, employment and social assistance, deport illegal immigrants and suppress automatic acquisition of French citizenship (Le Pen, 2002).

The extent to which political parties return to securitization for both electoral and ideological purposes is still an uncharted theme in current securitization debates. Neither the Copenhagen nor the Paris Schools’ frameworks lend themselves to exploring how the success of securitization depends on partisan dynamics. The resonance of Le Pen’s slogans across the political spectrum signals that the securitization of ethnic minorities was not a mere product of security bureaucracies. [Chapter one explained](#) that Paris School authors like Bigo (2002) minimize Le Pen’s emphasis on insecurity to argue instead that immigrants are constructed as a threat by the government ministries and security agencies in charge of immigration independently from partisan affiliation. This approach is built on the evidence that French political parties all agree in patrolling national borders. Yet, it provides a limited understanding of why the Left bought into right-wing semantics without proposing alternative visions that one could expect from progressive parties. The semantic shift to emphasize security as law-and-order signals that the Socialist Party acted as an audience of securitizing tones coming from the Right. This is a proximate contextual element that prepared the Socialists to turn lately into an agent of securitization after winning the elections in 2012.

4.3.2 Laïcité from Left to Right

The right-wing translation of *laïcité*, that already started in 1989 after the Creil affair, had a considerable impact upon the Socialist Party’s successive securitization of Islam. To assess this translation, let me scrutinize how the centre-right party Union for a Popular Movement¹⁸ revamped and nationalized the debate on *laïcité* under the Presidency of Chirac (2002-2007) and Sarkozy (2007-2012). The emphasis on the respect of French secular norms should be read as a reaction to the public uproar raised by a series of sexual assaults committed across French urban peripheries (*banlieues*) by young men mostly from a Muslim background. Following the murder of Sohane Benziane (a young French woman of Algerian origins who was burnt alive by her ex-boyfriend), the feminist collective *Ni Putes Ni Soumises* organized a nationwide march to condemn violence against women living in the *banlieues* and to call for gender equality (Amara, 2003). The mass mobilization catalyzed the attention of the Cabinet, who promised the marchers that their fight would be prioritized in the integration policies (Morgan, 2017, p.896). The Union for a Popular Movement instrumentalized the protests to construct the *banlieue* as the emblematic site of insecurity for women, who should be rescued from Muslim men’s violence. Like other centre-right parties (e.g. in Austria, Italy, Switzerland, the UK), the Union for a Popular Movement translated the third and fourth tropes identified by this thesis. It peddled the narrative that radical Islam hindered women’s security and

¹⁸ *Union pour un Mouvement Populaire*

emancipation, that in the French optic are a consequence of *laïcité* (Selby, 2011). This aligns with the attempts to translate secularism from the Left, in a process that Almeida (2017, p.256) retraces in 1991 when the word *laïcité* appeared for the first time in one Rally for the Republic's programmatic document.

Nonetheless, the Union for a Popular Movement translated *laïcité* into a different shape compared to the more liberal framework of the 1905 Law. This interpretation brought to shrink the religious freedom of Muslim minorities. Since it was very different from the original version supported by the Left, Baubérot has argued that the Right has falsified *laïcité* (2014, p.54). Amid the Union for a Popular Movement's most notable politicians, the President of the National Assembly François Baroin acted as the main agent of this *nouvelle laïcité*, by arguing that the policies about secularism invested the cultural and identitarian sphere rather than the strict religious one (Baubérot, 2014, p.63). Despite the alleged state neutrality, the conservative interpretation of *laïcité* tends to increase the visibility of Catholic norms, that are considered as inherent in the definition of French national identity (Baubérot, 2014, p.66). In this respect, the philosopher Étienne Balibar has used the expression "*catho-laïcité*" to denounce the "degree of complicity in managing the religious field" reached by the state and the Catholic Church (Salvatore, 2007, p.150). The *catho-laïcité* condenses the asymmetric view of the separation between church and state where Catholicism is seen as a cultural heritage to protect against Islam. Christianity is presented as the condition of possibility for the historical development of *laïcité*, as maintained by Marion Maréchal-Le Pen, former member of the National Rally and now Deputy President of the far-right party *Reconquête*, led by Zemmour (Cremer, 2021, p.7). Hence, both Christian and secular references are mobilized with the main purpose of attacking Muslims, in a new civilizational clash that gained traction across Western radical right parties.

The conflicts of meaning around *laïcité* drove Chirac to appoint a commission of intellectuals, politicians and members of civil society named after its president, Bernard Stasi. Although the final report of the Stasi Commission made many recommendations to promote an equal and non-discriminatory version of *laïcité*, the Union for a Popular Movement eventually took only the one that had to do with the headscarf (Bowen, 2007, p.113). The following step was the drafting of the "Law on secularity and religious symbols in public schools" (2004), which among other things banned the headscarf in primary and secondary schools, and the "Law banning face coverings" (2010). The latter directly targeted the *burqa*, which Sarkozy defined as "not welcomed in France" in 2009 (Mavelli, 2013, p.172). This aligns with the gradual authoritarian shift in Sarkozy's conception of *laïcité*, that matches with the ideological radicalization of his party further on the Right (Haegel, 2012). Sarkozy was not an assertive supporter of secularism, as showed by his attempts to institutionalize Islam and to give more public visibility to religion (Raymond, 2009, p.493). Yet, the concerns about Islamist radicalization (escalated after the 2005 riots and the jihadist attacks against London and Madrid) and the electoral growth of Marine Le Pen inspired two Laws driven by an exclusionary logic that restricted Muslim liberties in the name of secularism, as if the veil represented an existential challenge to French core values.

The two Laws are not the exceptional product of a securitizing speech act, as argued by the Copenhagen School. Indeed, the headscarf bans stemmed from a sedimented discursive context in which French political elites had for long heavily politicized the issue of the headscarf. It would be more correct to read the Islamophobic measures as a product of a network of “security professionals of secularism”, in line with arguments advanced by the Paris School (Mavelli, 2013, pp.173-175).

While the existing approaches to French securitization of Islam yield useful insights, they do not capture how French parties translate *laïcité* in different vocabularies and forms, each of them claiming to be the most functional actor to secure French secular norms. The framework of translation illustrates the proximate context wherein the Socialist Party reinforced its attachment to *laïcité* (traditional left-wing referent object) as a reaction to right-wing *catho-laïcité*. This means that political parties wield a significant influence in the definition and contestation of the referent objects challenged by Islamism, despite both Right and Left consider it a national security threat. The construction of insecurity sits in the realm of party politics: the Union for a Popular Movement securitized the veil without encountering strong resistance by intra- and inter-party audiences. Securitizing tropes against Islam turned into mainstream discourse, showing again that security is not an extraordinary sphere materialized after a speech act.

Despite its virtues, relying only on a Paris School’s framework comes at the analytical cost of marginalizing the role of parties. Differently from the Paris School and Mavelli, I suggest that the abovementioned “professionals of secularism” could not implement any policy without the political filter imposed by parties. Despite the Stasi Commission’s inclusive recommendations (among which the recognition of a Jewish and a Muslim holiday in school calendars, where religious holidays are only Catholic), the Cabinet bent towards the exclusive protection of French Christian heritage. Thus, bureaucratic expertise was not the only source of security discourses. Additionally, the Paris School does not examine how ideas spread across the chain of political agents and impact upon the production of security - e.g. how the identitarian meaning of *laïcité* was received by other parties on the chain of agents.

On the right edge, Marine Le Pen and the younger National Front militants were central agents in translating *laïcité* into an instrument to praise French national identity and history. This appropriation of secularism by Le Pen and by the Union for a Popular Movement into a nationalist shape buys into the third and fourth tropes identified by this thesis: Islam as “not secular” and as “patriarchal”. It betrays the religious freedoms established by the Law of 1905 and shows a repressive face against one religion, Islam (Baubérot, 2014, pp.29-37). Within the National Front/Rally, that still has ties with ultra-catholic movements (Almeida 2017, p.251; Froio, 2018), this translation appears torn by several contradictions. Marine Le Pen appropriated republican and liberal values such as “freedom of speech”, after the critical juncture of the Charlie Hebdo mass shooting, and “women’s emancipation”, after the debate about the burkini, despite her political project showing little concern for gender equality (Morgan, 2017). In both cases, *laïcité* served as a functional framework to blame Muslims for their supposed incongruence with the Western Judeo-Christian and secular norms (Hurd 2008, pp. 37-38). Even before 2015, Le Pen had bashed the Socialists’ initiatives on *laïcité*, accusing

the Left of laxity and calling for a ban of veil in universities and of *halal* food in school cafeterias (Peker 2021, p.334).

The identitarian interpretation of *laïcité* is a translation from Left to Right firstly activated by the Union for a Popular Movement, in line with the emphasis on national identity, security and citizenship promoted by Sarkozy¹⁹, and then reiterated by Marine Le Pen in the wake of jihadist terrorist attacks. As anticipated in [chapter two](#), the National Front's "undemonization strategy" (Surel, 2019) was less as an individual endeavour of Marine Le Pen and more a collective move started beforehand. This move should be located into a pre-existent distal context that saw many right-wing intellectuals and politicians to instrumentally accept French republican values (such as *laïcité*) to gain respectability and improve their electoral scores.

The next section examines two dynamics connected to translation. First, how the Socialist Party responded to the right-wing translation of *laïcité*. Second, how the translation of policies from Right to Left fractured the Socialist Party.

4.4 Functional de-securitization in the Socialist Party

Securitizing actors act both as agents and as audiences of securitization. Agents vocalize securitizing tropes and implement concrete policies, that audiences might accept "formally" (e.g. voting for a law) and/or "morally" (e.g. giving a symbolic support when they are deprived of formal powers) (Balzacq, 2005, p.185). The Socialist Party endorsed the securitization of Islam as a formal audience before becoming an agent of translated securitization under Hollande. However, the securitization brought several pushbacks across the French Left and specifically in the Socialists, historically divided between "hard" and "soft" supporters of *laïcité* (Ferhat, 2016). The formers, heirs of the Jacobin tradition, advocate rigid confinement of religion to the private sphere, while the latter call for state neutrality and freedom of consciousness (Le Nouvel Observateur, 2010).

This section explains that the instability of translated securitization is linked to the reactions generated inside and outside the party. Translation is often spearheaded by politicians who decide to incorporate in their agenda an issue that usually belongs to the other side. Valls instantiates a centre-left politician translating narratives from the Right, like the emphasis on security and the identitarian version of *laïcité*. In so doing, such translators might encounter opposition inside their party, who does not recognize the issue as ideologically congruent with the partisan identity. Since translation is a collective move, its achievement depends on winning enough support among party factions, that have always been quite strong in the history of the Socialist Party (Sawicki, 2013, p.105). The necessity to counter the Islamist security threat did not officially split the Socialists but created some fissures that put partisan cohesion under strain.

¹⁹ The importance of these issues emerges also in the rhetoric of the Socialist candidate to 2007 Presidential Elections, Ségolène Royal, as explained by Sawicki (2013, p.108).

The rejection of translation opens opportunities for de-securitization. Parties can follow two modalities of de-securitization: functional and emancipatory. This section shows that the dissident voices on the Left opposed right-wing language but failed to propose an emancipatory de-securitization because they did not contest the abstract universalism of French *laïcité*. Neither did they challenge the binary distinction between good and bad Islam. The de-securitization was instead functional: securitization was not tabled because Muslims were not deemed a “security issue”.

4.4.1 From audience to agent of securitization

The traditional securitization literature does not engage with the distinct rhetoric that parties use to justify their Islamophobic posture and present their narratives as better than their competitors. The Socialist Party supported the two Laws on the headscarf in 2004 and 2010. Yet, to avoid accusations of chasing the Right, it tried to justify them in a way that could resonate with their electoral audiences and referent objects. Hence, despite timid internal dissent, the Socialist Party acted as a formal audience of securitization, incapable of contrasting the active translation that the Right made of *laïcité*.

The 2004 Law gathered almost bipartisan support: 494 MPs voted in favour, 36 against and 31 abstained. It was quite unanimously endorsed by the Socialists. As declared by Hollande (who was then party secretary), the Socialist Party would make the choice of “the Republic and of *laïcité*” (Le Monde, 2004). This vocabulary reiterates again how *laïcité* was weaponized as a referent object to justify restrictions on Muslims. This choice was partly propelled by the increasing worries about Islamist communitarianism that brought many Socialists to advocate the prohibition of the headscarf in public schools already after the Creil affair. Only two Socialist members rejected the ban: Christophe Payet and Christiane Taubira, a left-leaning politician who would later turn into a staunch opponent of Hollande’s Project of law on denaturalization.

The debate on the 2010 Law initially raised some criticism within the Socialists, but eventually, the party cohesively voted to approve it. In January 2010, the Socialist Party spokesman Benoît Hamon maintained that the party “was against the burqa, a prison for women that has no place in the Republic”, since it is imposed by radical interpretations of Islam. Nonetheless, he admonished the centre-right that the government could not decide which interpretation of Islam was legitimate or not in the name of *laïcité*. The best thing to do, according to Hamon, would be to condemn such practices without banning them as illegal (Le Figaro, 2010). Yet, against Hamon’s agenda, the Socialist Party approved the law, contributing to normalize securitarian alarms coming from the Right (Le Nouvel Observateur, 2010).

Neither the Copenhagen nor the Paris School emphasizes the referent objects that left-wing politicians imagine when translating the securitization of Islam. Chief among the referent objects, *laïcité* acquired meanings that differed from the Right and changed across party factions. More than an emancipatory discourse, Hamon tried to functionally de-securitize the *burqa* since it was not strictly speaking a security threat for the Republic. Still, he did not contest the argument that the headscarf is a source of cultural unease and women’s submission,

that other left-wing politicians and parties have made (Gaudino, 2022). Eventually, all the French Left (from the Socialist Party to radical and communist groups) remained loyal to its traditional ideological references: it advanced liberal and feminist arguments (Lévy, 2010) and refused to actively translate right-wing nationalist and identitarian tones to make securitization intelligible to its audiences. This point is crucial to understand that rejecting translation does not mean to automatically de-securitize Islam.

The posture of the Socialists left-wing members like Mélenchon is indicative of the French Left's reluctance to de-securitize Islam in an emancipatory way. Despite not calling for the headscarf ban in schools during the Creil affair (thus espousing a more inclusive and progressive position), Mélenchon approved the bans both in 2004, when he was still in the Socialist Party, and 2010, after creating the Left Party²⁰. Mélenchon has for long argued that headscarves are an unbearable symbol of submission that "should be fought ideologically" (Assemblée Nationale, 2021). In 2010, he criticized a veiled woman candidate for the New Anticapitalist Party²¹ as her choice would "divide" rather than "coalesce" electoral support, considering the plural opinions about religion on the Left (Andrieu, 2010). In the same year, he expressed scepticism about Muslim women who wear the *niqab*, despite studies confirming that many women choose it without constraints (Gaspard, Khosrokhavar, 1995; De Féo, 2020). Even so, Mélenchon followed his party in endorsing the ban on full-face veil and claimed that "servitude, even if voluntary, is neither more acceptable nor more legitimate" (Mélenchon, 2010). Therefore, he partly securitized Islam by using the third and the fourth tropes identified by this thesis.

More convincingly than Hamon, Mélenchon agreed with the feminist argument that the headscarf constrains women's emancipation and thus needs to be securitized. His attachment to *laïcité* can be an obstacle to the recognition of what Muslims perceive instead as a form of individual and religious freedoms. Mélenchon seemed to follow the interpretation of *laïcité* elaborated by the philosopher Henri Peña Ruiz, close to the Left Party. On more than one occasion, Peña Ruiz has argued that it is fair to be Islamophobic because a critical attitude towards religion is a cornerstone of *laïcité* (Pezet, 2019). Freedom of speech and belief in secular emancipation should not slip into racism against the Muslim worshipper, as any form of discrimination is condemned. In other words, religion can be a legitimate target because it derives from an individual choice, while ethnic origins are part of a natural heritage that cannot be changed. Mélenchon has shared this theoretical posture and a reluctance to use the word Islamophobia - at least until 2017, as I will soon explain.

As of now, it is important to underline that this position shared by Mélenchon and Peña Ruiz is problematic for at least two reasons. First, it downplays the fact that Islamophobia has become an inherently racialized phenomenon and that the abstract arguments against the veil end up in concrete discrimination and violence against Muslim women (Perry, 2014). The analytical distinctions between Islam as *fundamentalist religion* and Muslims as *subjects* are troublesome, as they are entangled in overlapping dimensions of "otherness", as confirmed by the Runnymede Trust that shortly synthesizes Islamophobia as "anti-Muslim racism" (2017,

²⁰ *Parti de Gauche*

²¹ *Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste*

p.1). Second, the argument that the full-face veil should be banned in the name of human dignity raises severe doubts because it is predicated on the assumption that there is an “objectively defined conception of dignity” that “would push the state toward the questionable pursuit of an ethical project” (Joppke, Torpey, 2013, p.34).

During the debates about the two Laws of 2004 and 2010, the Socialist Party raised much criticism against the Union for a Popular Movement’s vision of *laïcité*, judged as compromised by the focus on national identity, aimed to lure far-right electors. Conversely, despite not calling for de-securitization, the Socialist Party barely recurred to the right-wing language that evoked the headscarf as a threat to the public order and national identity (Alouane, 2015). The Right articulated a discourse where *laïcité* was interwoven with the emphasis on French national identity. This form of identitarian *laïcité* was not shared by Martine Aubry (Socialist Secretary, 2008-2012), who refused to participate in some meetings of the parliamentary commission on the burqa led by the Communist MP André Gerin. This brought to the Socialists abstaining from the vote on the final report that preceded the 2010 Law (Assemblée Nationale 2010, pp.235-236; Joppke, Torpey, 2013, p.38).

The Socialist Party also contested the falsified version of *laïcité* translated by the National Rally. Regarding freedom of consciousness and speech, in 2012 Hollande stressed that Marine Le Pen’s call to ban all religious symbols in the public space was not aligned with *laïcité*, based instead on mutual respect and coexistence in one national community (Le Journal Du Dimanche, 2012). This highlights how the Socialist Party still considers its version as more congruent with the principles of 1905 and with French republicanism. This notwithstanding, in voting the laws designed by the Right, the Socialist Party trained for future securitization moves, which became possible as soon as it obtained a parliamentary majority in 2012. This legacy contributed to shaping the securitarian agenda translated by Hollande and Valls, which was not only dictated by critical junctures such as the jihadist attacks.

4.4.2 Internal factions and collective translation under Hollande’s Presidency

From 2012 to 2017, the translated securitization spilled over into internecine clashes that fractured the Socialists in two broad factions, which again confirms that translation is a collective phenomenon realized by networks of agents instead of single individuals. One faction translated authoritarian and Islamophobic tropes in the name of *laïcité*, while another rejected translation worrying that it would clash with left-wing history and values.

Valls, who represented the first faction, was a relevant agent of translation, as the chapter showed earlier. In this respect, Valls often lamented that the Left was quite laxist in responding to popular concerns about mounting insecurity and criminality. To stimulate the development of a left-wing doctrine on security, Valls wrote a book called *Power*. One of his main arguments was that respecting authority - usually a radical right ideological principle (Mudde, 2007, p.23) - is the condition of possibility to guarantee emancipation (Valls, 2010, p.216). Yet, Valls translated this argument into a version that grounds its legitimacy “in its capacity to project herself in the future and ensure social progress” (2010, p.219). The link between security and emancipation is mentioned to make the message more appealing for left-leaning electors, less used to hear fellow politicians using this vocabulary.

The arguments advanced by Valls conceal a translation of a right-wing meaning of security (as absence of threats to law-and-order), which had already gained traction in the Socialist Party under Jospin. In Valls' rhetoric, more security is needed against an ideological enemy - Islamism - that jeopardizes *laïcité* and the republican universal values that the Socialist Party considers more in line with the Left than the Right. Accordingly, one month after the November 2015 terrorist attacks, Valls (2015c) cautioned against the translation of *laïcité* by the far-right, whose weaponization of secularism could bring France back to "religious wars". However, the securitization policies approved under Hollande show that the discursive use of *laïcité* concealed discriminatory outcomes on Muslims' religious freedoms. Another example comes from Valls' political ally Malek Boutih who signed a controversial Parliamentary Report entitled "Radical Generation". The Report sowed divisions among the Socialists for its alarmistic portrait of French young people, as though they were mostly on the verge of radical extremism. Tellingly, it was praised by the Right and defined by a member of the Socialist central office as "flirting with hard right-wing thinking" (Le Nouvel Observateur, 2015), considering that Boutih advanced arguments like that "wearing the veil is always the first campaign of radicalism" (Boutih, 2015). His words resonate with the arguments that Valls made about the veil and *halal* food, both described as emblems of creeping Salafist agenda and communitarian posture against *laïcité* (Coignard, 2002; Le Point, 2013; France-Soir, 2016).

This emphasis on the protection of *laïcité* - a left-wing electoral turf - from right-wing translations is underestimated by Paris School scholars, analytically more attracted by the bureaucratic elaboration of counterterrorism policies than on the rhetoric used to present them to the public. Recent research in line with the Paris School's securitization holds that national security bureaucracies fabricated "Islamist radicalization" as a public problem before political elites did (Sèze, 2019, p.38). However, this comes at the cost of downplaying the inter-party and intra-party issue competition on secularism. The elaboration of a counter-radicalization strategy was influenced by the Socialist Party's security conversion and attempt to fetch back electors lured by the Right.

The influence of right-wing Islamophobic tropes emerges also in the interpretation of insecurity as consequence of cultural and religious differences rather than socio-economic marginalization. Although Valls often repeated the need to eradicate discrimination and ghettoization (Le Monde, 2015), the strategy to prevent extremism was pivoted more on cultural and secular counter-narratives than on socio-economic measures and anti-discrimination action, which would address some root causes of French minorities' alienation. Valls tried to dodge the stigmatization of the banlieues by claiming that Islamist radicalization is geographically widespread as it plugs into individual frustration and lack of social integration (Valls, 2016). This is a pragmatic way to halt further debate on the socio-economic marginalization suffered by these territories (Truong 2018). Yet, the Socialist Cabinet eventually clarified that some urban areas (e.g. the *banlieues* around French largest cities) were more threatened than others as predominantly marked by signs of religious communitarianism. Significantly, after the jihadist attacks in Bruxelles (22 March 2016), the Minister of the City Patrick Kanner warned to monitor the "hundreds of French Molenbeek" (Le Point, 2016a). Molenbeek, namely the Brussels' district where the authors of the attack came from, is mentioned as a symbol of "territory lost to Islamism" (Rougier, 2020).

This narrative portrays portions of national territory as “preyed” by mounting ideological campaigns against French “way of life”, allegedly threatened by religious radicalization and communitarianism. Accordingly, stronger presence of religion in the everyday life of French Muslims turns into a symbolic declaration of cultural war (El Karoui, 2016). Despite both the French Right and Left fuelled the discourse against multiculturalism, warning about “inner enemies” and “fifth columns” is an old conservative and anti-communist refrain that in France recalls the antisemitism circulating during the affair Dreyfus and the Vichy period (Dély, 2017, p.285). The saliency gained by the discourse on French identity, fueled before by Sarkozy and translated by the Socialist’s right-wing, is another aspect underestimated by traditional securitization Schools, that do not address how a centre-left party securitized Islam by using nationalist and authoritarian rhetoric.

Concretely, Valls’ engagement to render the Socialist Party a credible securitizing actor eventually collided with internal party audiences and betrayed an excessive rapprochement to conservative rhetorical options, running the risk of transforming translation into a passive imitation. Many key figures of the Socialist Party and the Cabinet took issue with the translated securitization spearheaded by Valls. Yet, nobody advanced a deep emancipatory strategy for French Muslims. Neither did they try to highlight the drawbacks of French republican universalism. The project on the forfeiture of nationality proposed by Hollande in 2016 is a key example of internal party dissent. Although eventually it was not voted, the project raised concerns in several Socialist politicians. As recalled in the introduction, the Socialist secretary Cambadélis, warned that the “idea was not born on the Left, but on the Right, and then appropriated by the National Front” (Quinault-Maupoil, 2015). Therefore, this project contrasted with Hollande’s attempts to evoke different referent objects than the ethnic, civilizational, and populist ones cherished by the Right.

A collateral effect of de-naturalization was the resignation of Taubira as Minister of Justice in January 2016. Taubira, a figure much appreciated within the Socialist left-wing, parted company with the securitarian turn triggered by the government. She defined it as ineffective and lamented its discriminatory outcomes on bi-national French (Wieder, 2016). Compared to the discourse promoted by the Cabinet, Taubira has tried to give a more comprehensive analysis of terrorism. Despite the condemn of radical interpretations of Islam, she has invited not to underestimate the Western complicity in exporting chaos across the Middle East, as well as the different attitudes that the West has in front of white supremacist terrorism (Taubira, 2016). Against Valls’ emphasis on authoritarianism, Taubira signed a more liberal reform of penal justice in 2014 with the purpose to stem the massive recourse to imprisonment. Not surprisingly, her resignation was welcomed by the Right and by some police unions, who accused her of a laxist attitude regarding criminal justice (Cornevin, 2016). Ironically, Philippot claimed that the Cabinet “preferred Marine (Le Pen) to Christiane (Taubira)”, so much was Le Pen’s ideological influence visible (BFMTV, 2015). This notwithstanding, Taubira’s gesture did not convince the Socialist Party to contest the securitarian rhetoric of the Cabinet.

Like Taubira, Hamon (on the Socialist left-wing) raised many concerns against Hollande and Valls, inasmuch to step down as Minister of Education in August 2014.

Afterwards, he defined the proposal to constitutionalize the removal of citizenship as a factor that produced disagreement in the party. When the parliamentary group *Socialists, Republicans and Citizens* was called to approve or reject the Law in February 2016, Hamon voted against it, together with other 83 MPs, while 36 abstained and 165 endorsed it (Sénecat, 2017). Hamon tried to stake out his distinct position by saying that the defense of secularism should not be used as a vehicle for stigmatization (France24, 2017). This stance reinforced his candidature at the primary elections as a representative of the party's left wing (Apetogbor, 2016). Consequently, when Valls faced Hamon in the Socialist primary elections (2017), the former PM accused the challenger of being ambiguous about *laïcité* and in cahoots with Islamic communitarianism (FranceInfo, 2017). In positioning himself among the right-leaning voices in the party, Valls claimed that identity and cultural issues would be the game-changer for the 2017 Presidential elections (Le Journal Du Dimanche, 2016). This impacted upon his assertive vision of *laïcité*, weaponized as a tool to rescue from right-wing parties. Valls had already shown its inclination to envision tougher measures compared to what he described as a Socialist soft approach on security issues, which earned him the criticism of party cadres. As Valls actively clothed Islam into a cultural threat to secularism, progressive factions of the party blamed the Cabinet for passive imitation of right-wing policies (Durovic, 2019). However, Valls' defeat to Hamon in the primary elections can be interpreted as a sign that the translation from the Right did not gather enough support by party internal audiences, necessary to endorse the move.

The French Left is still fractured regarding religious minorities. In the period scrutinized so far, the balance between inclusionary and assertive secularism shifted towards the second because of the critical junctures and the proximate context. Despite Hamon rejecting translation, he has not made significant efforts to promote a genuine de-securitization of Muslims by limiting his critique to the functional claim that Islam is not a security threat. This is not in line with the emancipatory model of de-securitization proposed by Aradau, who argues that emancipation is linked to democratic forms of participation and contestation. Therefore, it “activates a logic based on universal address and recognition, that disrupts the exclusionary logic of security” (Aradau 2004, p.401).

Moving further on the left side of the chain of agents, the position of Mélenchon towards Islam has been quite ambivalent. In the 2000s, Mélenchon called to securitize the veil as it showed the patriarchal and anti-secular nature of Islam. During the Hollande's Presidency, Mélenchon softened his posture but still did not advocate for an inclusive political community, more committed in fighting structural racism and Islamophobia. Like in the Socialist Left, the final product has been a functional rather than an emancipatory type of de-securitization because Mélenchon has still subscribed for long to a strict version of *laïcité* (that eventually hurdles the respect of cultural and religious pluralism) and fails to condemn French universalism. This ambiguous attitude aligns with the positions espoused by many on the French radical and communist Left, who have feared the political implications of the veil and endorsed more restrictions in the public space (Scott 2007, p.33; Raymond, 2009; Ferhat, 2018).

However, after 2017, Mélenchon and *La France Insoumise* have recently expressed a deeper concern for Islamophobia compared to the previous decade (Gaudino, 2022). In line with radical left populist ideals (Marlière, 2018), what has emerged is a more inclusive narrative that de-securitizes Muslims by replacing them with other major sources of socio-economic insecurity - such as transnational capitalism, climate change, the far-right (Alduy, 2017). Moreover, Mélenchon has more recently endorsed a less muscular version of *laïcité* (Mélenchon, 2021a). In so doing, he has managed to attract substantial support by Muslim electors (37% of Muslim votes in 2017 and 69% in 2022)²², by showing to privilege some radical left referent objects (e.g. socio-economic justice) that differ from the social-liberalism and the assertive secularism of the Socialist Party (Kuru, 2009; Rioufreyt, 2016).

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the Socialist Party has translated the securitization of Islam through *laïcité*, a referent object that has been quite relevant in the history of the party and of the French Left. Hence, the securitization under Hollande's Presidency is not an exceptional measure caused by a critical juncture – the jihadist attacks. Instead, it was a normal outcome of the attachment to left-wing preoccupation about religious presence in the public sphere coupled with the right-wing emphasis on security.

Throughout a reconstruction of Islamophobia in the French Socialist Party, this chapter has reiterated that traditional securitization Schools do not provide the appropriate instruments to understand how securitization travels across and inside political parties. Ignoring the role of political parties creates analytical blind spots to study securitization because the national executives who impose and reproduce some discursive frameworks to discuss Islam are made of politicians with distinct political ideologies. The securitization of Islam in France would not be possible without the substantial consensus of the main political parties and the absence of a vocal opposition to security measures. While the parties on the Left have for long been more inclusive towards ethnic minorities, their attitude towards Islam is not prone to accommodate the requests for more cultural pluralism. It has recently grown into more hostile rhetoric and policies by the centre-left. This situation should be read as a sign that mainstream parties have not converged towards undifferentiated policies to govern Muslims. It is the Socialist Party that has moved so far to the Right to “lose its political appeal to left-leaning electorate” (Devellennes, 2022, p.3), that now votes largely for Mélenchon, most voted by electors who self-position themselves on the Left (ENS Lyon, 2017) and by Muslims, as I said earlier.

In the analysis of the Socialist Party under Hollande's Presidency, I have highlighted the limitations of the traditional literature in understanding how securitizing tropes travel across and inside parties. The Cabinets' policies were guided by a meaning of security as absence of threats to French law-and-order that was elaborated by the Right and then translated by most of the Socialists in the name of referent objects coherent with the party's history and political ideology, such as *laïcité*.

²² See Sauvaget (2017) and Le Normand (2022).

In retracing the trajectory of centre-left's securitization in the distal context, the second section has claimed that *laïcité* is a crucial referent object secured by the Socialist Party. The secular norms are not translated from the Right because they represent referent objects that the Socialist Party deems as its heritage. This was shown by the analysis of the Mitterrand years and the Creil affair, the first critical juncture that conditioned the relationship between French Muslims and the Left. An analogous emphasis on secularism is absent in the British Labour, where the securitization of Muslims is more predicated on race than on religious and cultural grounds. Likewise, antireligious attitudes do not play a strong role in modulating the securitization of Muslims in the Italian centre-left, more concerned about immigration in general than Islam in particular.

The third section has integrated the analysis of the distal context with the proximate context wherein the translation of securitization from the Right occurs. I have showed that the Union for a Popular Movement and the National Front/Rally accused the Socialist party of being laxist on security. Moreover, they translated *laïcité* into an identitarian version. These dynamics impacted the Socialist Party, which grew from a securitization audience (by approving the headscarf laws in 2004 and 2010) to an agent during the Hollande years. Hence, tropes and policies that securitize Islam result from the translation of a right-wing tropes, based on the idea that Islam is a radical religion and a source of "cultural insecurity" (Bouvet, 2015). The final product is an active translation that retains the original friend/enemy logic wrapped into a different version that is congruent with the left-wing identity of Socialist audiences.

This notwithstanding, translation can come under a barrage of criticism from within the party. The fourth section has explained that de-securitization is not a straightforward path because the French Left is torn by a predicament between the defence of minorities (often part of the socio-economic disenfranchised groups allegedly represented by the Left) and the protection of *laïcité*, that explains the reluctance of accepting religious and cultural pluralism. The assertive form of secularism has gained so much momentum to appear as the dominant position of the Left, while a far-left minority denounces French structural racism and Islamophobia.

This chapter has integrated the Paris School by focusing on how *laïcité* is differently translated by the Right and Left to securitize Muslims and justify harsh counterterrorism policies. The next chapter examines how the Italian centre-left securitized Muslims. The case study matters because Italian Muslim second generations are less numerous compared to the British and French ones. Thus, the debate on the securitization of Islam is frequently tied to how immigration should be governed. Considering that Italy is scantily mentioned in securitization studies, the chapter fills this gap by discussing some Italian policies as an example of translated securitization.

5. The Democratic Party in Italy: translating the securitization of Muslims through human security and gender equality

“Security is a problem that affects the weak. Because the rich purchase their security. Is it right-wing to stand with the weakest? (...) As a man of the left, I have the problem of inclusion. Even if it is just one citizen. I have an obligation not to abandon him to fear, which is the feeling that first destroys a democracy and then the reasons for being together”

Marco Minniti, Democratic Party (2017a)

“Feminists who talk about women rights pretend to ignore what is the first, unique, big, real danger, in 2019, to the rights, the social conquests... to the freedom of working, of speaking, of studying and of wearing whatever you want... (the danger) that is not the World Congress of Family, but Islamic extremism and the Islamic sub-culture which considers women's value as less than zero. (...) If she wears Western clothes, thinks like a Western, and has fun like a Western ... she will be beaten up. At my home, there is no room for a sub-culture in the name of which your God tells you that women are worth less than men, because, at my home, women and men have equal rights, and equal duties”¹

Matteo Salvini, North League, 2019

The scholarship about Islamophobia in Italy is rich, but predominantly focused on right-wing parties (Betz, Johnson, 2004; Zaslove, 2004; Woods, 2010; Ozzano, 2019). Less attention has been dedicated to the normalization of Islamophobia by left-wing parties. Further, the topic is currently unexplored by securitization theorists, despite the fertile empirical potential of the Italian case study. This absence in the literature is surprising, considering that the Democratic Party² validated the perception that immigration and Islamist radicalization were issues to tackle through a firm approach. During the coalition government lasted from 2013 to 2018, the Democratic Party reproduced arguments peddled by the radical right parties North League³ and Brothers of Italy⁴. The right-wing securitization of immigration and Muslims solicited the Democratic Party to adopt a tougher approach, in a context of unfavourable attitudes of Italians towards increasing arrivals by sea (Strati, 2016). Few studies started to investigate the securitization of immigration in Italy (Campesi 2014, 2018, 2020). Yet, these studies do not account for how the Democratic Cabinet translated right-wing refrains into a version more attuned with its ideological pillars and familiar to party members and to its electors, “firmly rooted in the left-wing ideological camp” (Angelucci et.al. 2019). As explained earlier in the

¹ See AP (2019).

² *Partito Democratico*. The party was created in 2007 by merging the social-democratic party Left Democrats and the Christian-democratic but left-leaning party Daisy (*La Margherita*)

³ *Lega Nord*

⁴ *Fratelli d'Italia*, heir of the party National Alliance (*Alleanza Nazionale*), which in turn was heir of the post-fascist party Social Italian Movement (*Movimento Sociale Italiano*).

thesis, party members and electors are internal audiences called to approve or reject the translated securitization.

This chapter argues that the Democratic Party translated the securitization of Muslims by restricting immigration and buying into the trope that Muslims are vulnerable to religious radicalization. The major Italian centre-left party achieved so by using liberal-progressive and left-wing referent objects, specifically, the respect of human security in the securitization of immigration and the respect of gender equality. As argued throughout the thesis, translation allows understanding how securitization tropes travel across parties through a process that is active, collective, and contextual. This dynamic of mutual appropriation and contestation would not be understood by traditional securitization Schools because they miss a deep engagement with how parties (and intra-party currents) act at the same time as agents and audiences of securitization. The chapter shows that Italian centre-left parties acted as formal external audiences of right-wing securitization of Islam during centre-right Cabinets (2001-2006, 2008-2011). Then, it became an agent of securitization from 2013-18, while the right-wing coalition turned into an external audience.

This chapter is structured as follows. The first section interprets the management of the Mediterranean refugee crisis as a significant example of active translation of securitization from the Italian Right to the Democratic Party. In the Italian context, talking about Islam means talking about immigration, as recent flows came mostly from Muslim majority countries (e.g. Nigeria, Mali, and Bangladesh⁵) and since 1,5 out of 2,7 million Muslims are foreign citizens (Ciocca, 2023). The Democratic Party has translated by balancing between border policing and human security. The latter refers to an interpretation of security that is people-centred and universal, as mentioned in chapter one. Since it “exhibits a distinct liberal character” (Peterson, 2013, p.318), I consider it as more aligned with social-liberal parties like the Democratic Party.

The second section operationalizes the active translation into the distal and proximate contexts by looking at how Italian centre-left parties securitized immigration before the Democratic Party was founded. Thus, its policies were not an exceptional move. Translation is intelligible to party audiences because of a pre-existent ideological legacy preceding the formation of the Democratic Party. Building on this distal context, I map how centre-left parties governed immigration flows by translating securitization into a rhetoric centred on humanitarian concerns.

The third section explores the collision between Right and Left on the chain of agents. The collision revolved around the translation of gender equality. While the Right began translating gender equality to claim that Islam is incapable of negotiating with Italian norms, the centre-left securitized Islam by re-appropriating gender equality in the National Pact for an Italian Islam.

Finally, the fourth section claims that the instability of translated securitization is linked to the contentious reactions generated inside the party. Translation is a collective process

⁵ The numbers of arrivals on the Italian coasts are the following ones: 170,100 in 2014, 153,842 in 2015, 181,436 in 2016, 119,369 in 2017, before plummeting in 2018 (23,370) due to the policies promoted by Minniti and in 2019 (11,471) due to the even harder policies by Salvini (UNHCR, 2023).

doomed to fail if there is no substantial partisan agreement. Disagreements in the Democratic Party brought intra-party audiences to contest securitization, especially regarding the governance of Mediterranean immigration. Likewise, the debate on citizenship was entrenched with the preoccupation for jihadist attacks, that diminished the political will of the centre-left to reform the Italian restrictive citizenship regime.

5.1 Securitization of the Mediterranean refugee crisis

This section assesses two important security policies promoted by the Democratic Cabinets: the military operation *Mare Nostrum*, aimed to identify and rescue immigrants in the Central Mediterranean, and the *Memorandum of Understanding* (2017) signed with the Tripoli Government of Fayed Al-Sarraj and several Libyan tribal chiefs, aimed to jointly patrol Libyan coasts and fight human trafficking and irregular migration. Both signal the “harsh stance increasingly taken by the Democratic Party on immigration” (Castelli Gattinara, 2017a, p.326), but also the party’s twofold purpose: governing the flows by saving the lives of immigrants.

Yet, the Democratic Party actively translated from the Right the idea that immigrants are security threats, and that Muslims are prone to radicalize in case of failed integration. Current securitization theories would not focus on this aspect, because they do not appreciate how securitizing tropes follow alternative historical and ideological trajectories inside and outside parties, that affect how security agents behave. The resolute management of immigration by the Italian centre-left is neither exceptional (Copenhagen School), nor the mere product of security bureaucracies (Paris School), because it is the result of a normal process of partisan elaboration that pre-exists the critical junctures witnessed over the last decade.

Topics like securitization of immigration and counterterrorism in Italy sparked vivid interest among academics. Several studies have discussed the Italian governance of Mediterranean immigration flows (Cuttitta, 2014, 2018; Vaughan-Williams, 2015; Tazzioli, 2016; Mavelli, 2017; Ceccorulli, Cotichia, 2017) and the distinct reactions that immigration raised within right-wing and left-wing parties (Massetti, 2014; Castelli Gattinara, 2017a, 2017b; Gianfreda, 2018). Moreover, recent publications questioned whether Italy has experienced a radicalization of its Muslim minorities and how it has faced the jihadist threat (Marone, Vidino, 2018; Vidino, 2018; Beccaro, Bonino 2019; D’Amato, 2019). Although all these works are remarkable, none of them evaluate how securitizing tropes move across the political spectrum, let alone explicitly engaging with securitization theories and Islam in Italy.

Let me start by describing what *Mare Nostrum* was and why it matters to appreciate the left-wing securitization of immigration. On October 18, 2013, the Italian Government led by Enrico Letta launched the military operation *Mare Nostrum* shortly after two dramatic shipwrecks (3 and 11 October 2013) caused the death of 636 people near the island of Lampedusa (Sicily). The operation (which lasted until October 31, 2014) spanned over a large area (almost 70,000 squared kilometres) across the Central Mediterranean, where migration flows from Africa to Southern Europe had drastically increased after the Arab Spring, the civil wars in Libya and the collapse of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

From the beginning, the Italian government clarified that *Mare Nostrum* responded to both military and humanitarian purposes (La Repubblica, 2013). In one year, 101,000 people were intercepted and 728 smugglers reported by Italian security forces (Servizio Studi Senato, 2015, p.15). Despite a decades-long militarization of Central Mediterranean border controls by centre-right and centre-left Italian Cabinets (Campesi, 2018), the Democratic Party praised the mission as it rescued migrants in distress in a sea zone comprised between Italian and Libyan waters⁶. However, the Italian navy was moved by both humanitarian and security concerns: according to Cuttitta (2018), the ships were used to identify people, detect smugglers, and as “floating” detention centres. Tazzioli argues that the EU agencies (e.g. Frontex), the Member States and other non-governmental actors transformed the Mediterranean into a space of governmentality, where humanitarian purposes are strategically evoked to channel human mobility and “exercising a hold over migrants’ lives” (2016, p.7). Aside from Italy, the whole EU governance of immigration in the Mediterranean was described as a regime of capture and dispossession of human lives that aims to ensure internal security through rigid border controls (Jeandesboz, 2016).

While I am sympathetic with such criticism, it gives the misleading impression of a convergence between centre-right and centre-left parties in governing immigration as a security threat. Despite the shared preoccupation for border security, securitization was translated into alternative tropes and policies across the Right and Left.

In trying to strike a fragile balance between human security and border policing, the Democratic Party translated the need to control immigration stressed by the Right into restrictive policies presented as humanitarian, and thus more congruent its values. As shown by the content analysis of parliamentary debates made by Gianfreda (2018, pp.96-98), the Democratic Party framed the refugee crisis mostly as a humanitarian and structural problem, without buying into right-wing nationalist tones. This might appear as a mere rhetorical device to strengthen the humanitarian goal of *Mare Nostrum*, as showcased by photographs and videos officially published by the Italian army (Musrò, 2017). The underlying logic – controlling the flows – apparently converges with the right-wing agenda. Nonetheless, the translation into humanitarian vocabulary matched with the concrete results of *Mare Nostrum*. Compared to the previous military mission (*Constant Vigilance*) that patrolled the Strait of Sicily and performed search and rescue operations since 2004, *Mare Nostrum* scaled up its rescue capacities by increasing vehicles and troops (Cuttitta, 2018, pp. 789-790). Such efforts earned the mission the homage of the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the UNHCR, Amnesty International and *Médecins sans Frontières*. *Mare Nostrum* shut down in 2014 after that the Italian Government for long demanded the EU to share the burden of “sea rescues of migrants”, as declared by the Minister of Interior Angelino Alfano, member of the party New Centre Right (Ansa, 2014). Hence, *Mare Nostrum* was substituted by the EU mission *Triton* (conducted by Frontex and under Italian control), that was criticised by human rights activists because it minimised the humanitarian dimension compared to the securitarian one (Tazzioli, 2016, p.13).

⁶ Indeed, the Italian vessels often intervened outside their Search and Rescue Region (SRR) to save lives, bring shipwrecked immigrants to Italian shores, and insert them into the national centres of reception.

Despite its ambivalence, translation clothed securitization into ideological forms and actions intelligible by centre-left electors and party members, audiences of securitization. The liberal-progressive semantic of this securitization move cannot be appreciated if one recurs to traditional Copenhagen and Paris Schools. Both would focus on the Italian Government as a “de-politicized” actor, without questioning party ideologies and asking, for instance, whether the meaning of security espoused by the Democratic Party has changed. There is no explicit scholarly engagement with the Italian case and the established securitization Schools. However, one can hypothesize that Copenhagen scholars would consider the securitization of Mediterranean immigration as something “exceptional” and “above politics” (Buzan et.al., 1998, p.23), since the number of arrivals on the Italian shores was unprecedented. In this respect, Castelli Gattinara (2017a, p.326) explains that while the Law 46/2017 on “international protection and contrast to irregular immigration”:

“aimed to simplify asylum procedures and curtail illegal immigration by signing bilateral agreements and by expanding the network of administrative detention, its logic remains one in which migration is treated as an emergency phenomenon that must be repressed”.

Likewise, Selmini (2020, p.98) suggests that Marco Minniti - Minister of Interior in the Governments led by Matteo Renzi (2014-16) and Paolo Gentiloni (2016-2018) - presented the circumstances as an “emergency” but that he did not support his claims with objective evidence. These arguments echo the Copenhagen School, that, as Neal explains (2010, p.4), “problematizes the object of exceptionalism by theorizing the ways in which events and situations are *named* and *declared* as exceptional”.

This interpretation neglects two important points. Firstly, the Democratic Party managed immigration through agreements, administrative procedures and military missions that had their roots in the past centre-left governments, as the next section explains. Secondly, the solutions adopted by Minniti (like the Law 46/2017) led to normalise an administrative routine based on border control rather than creating an exceptional regime. In doing so, Minniti advocated a “left-wing” approach to security. He described immigration as a long-term structural phenomenon rather than an exceptional one. Like Renzi⁷, Minniti also drew a line with the rhetoric of urgency that he instead associated to the populist Right, as stated during the 2017 social-democratic festival “*de l’Unità*” in Rome (Gargiulo, 2018, p.161; Reynolds, 2018). According to Minniti, migration needs to be governed multilaterally, through foreign aid and cooperation with the country of departures. However, the bilateral agreements with African countries like Libya and Niger aimed at patrolling borders more than economic development. The need to reduce immigration flows also pushed Minniti to use emergency decrees, that one could expect more from conservative parties (Gargiulo, 2018, p.152). The method of emergency legislation does not necessarily validate the argument that securitization is exceptional as though it occurs only as a unique episode of suspension of normal laws. Admittedly, emergency decrees became so frequent to lose their “exceptional” character and become part of a routinised way of managing immigration. The Minister justified this priority by arguing that security and immigration were so crucial an issue that their mismanagement could make democracy collapse. Thus, he translated securitization into a familiar language

⁷ See for instance Dire (2015) and Zapperi (2016).

(security in the name of democracy) that centre-left partisan and electoral audiences find intelligible.

By contrast, the Paris School would maintain that the management of immigration flows is a practice that the Italian and EU troops performed independently from political factors. Building on scholars like Bigo (2008), in many of his works Campesi (2014, 2018) holds that the European governance of Mediterranean migration is part of a routinised process of selective inclusion and exclusion, performed by EU security agencies such as Frontex and by national security agencies alike. Yet, what is missed by Paris School perspectives is a further reflection on the justification through translation that parties make of security and military operations. Likewise, in the Italian case, it would be beneficial to assess how a right-wing cabinet might promote a different use of the national law-enforcement and military corps. The North League and Brothers of Italy vocally criticized *Mare Nostrum* for its financial burden and since it was considered as a potential pull factor for irregular immigration (Diamond, Guidi, 2019).

The fact that the radical right proposed an alternative vision of *Mare Nostrum* implies that national security bureaucracies are conditioned by the resources centrally allocated, by normative and political guidelines coming from governing parties, and by the parliamentary procedures and debates each draft law goes through. This sensibility for the political “life” of security should integrate the Paris School framework, as argued by several scholars working on the intersection between politics and security (Hagmann et.al., 2018) and as displayed in the Memorandum with Tripoli, politicized by Minniti. After becoming Interior Minister, Minniti translated a right-wing meaning of security into a left-wing narrative. Minniti governed Mediterranean immigration flows by combining a firm-hand approach with the promise to uphold individual freedom. In his words, “security” is a condition of possibility to guarantee “freedom” (Gargiulo, 2018, p.151). Hence, it represents “a left-wing prerogative” because security is a problem that affects the “weak”, who cannot buy their protection and should rely on the state to intervene in their defence (Minniti, 2017a). These arguments resonate with the concerns about insecurity expressed by the Socialist Party in France and Labour in the UK, as the previous chapters illustrated.

The Memorandum with Tripoli, which translated the right-wing trope on Muslim immigrants as a security threat, illustrates that party politics and ideologies are intertwined with securitization. Not only does this emerge in the rationale of the deal, as it provides for Rome to finance infrastructure to combat irregular migration, train personnel and provide technical assistance to the Libyan coastguard and border guard. Moreover, the Memorandum explicitly extends the validity of the “Treaty of Friendship” signed between the PM Silvio Berlusconi⁸ and Gaddafi in 2008 to establish a more resolute control on clandestine immigration, which was criminalised by the controversial Law 94/2009. Although this continuity might be read as a convergence in the name of national security, Minniti has outlined several reasons to consider the deal as part and parcel of a left-wing conception of security. Compared to the nativist and

⁸ Whose party was now named *Popolo della Libertà* (People of Freedom), created in 2008 by merging *Forza Italia* with the national-conservative party National Alliance, that polished its image of post-fascist party under the leadership of Gianfranco Fini.

populist refrains uttered by the Right, the Democratic Party gave the impression of caring about humanitarian purposes and inclined to long-term solutions instead of emergency slogans.

The use of a humanitarian register chimes with the centre-left's legacy and electoral promises but is highly instrumental too. When a journalist enquired about the detention facilities arranged in Libya, Minniti (2017d) vindicated this policy as necessary to eradicate human traffic and to prevent dangerous journeys that could kill migrants or end up crashing their hopes:

“Accommodation has its limits in its capacity of integration. A young guy from the Sahara who travels to the North is motivated by the radical hope of a better life. If this hope is upended by radical disillusion, his constructive force becomes a destructive force against the society that disappointed him. He must arrive in Italy legally (...) This will be possible if we defeat irregular immigration”.

These words recall the first trope of Muslims as potentially radical subjects, whose life must be “protected” to prevent their radicalization (inspired to Islam) against Italian society. The presentation of immigrants as potential fanatics reproduces the picture of the wild and savage non-white world that generates exploitation and violations of human rights, committed for instance by the smugglers (Cuttitta 2018).

Such emphasis on migrant's life can be read as an attempt to instrumentalize human security, exploited to condemn smugglers but forgotten when it comes to regulate the activities of NGOs, with the aim to fight illegal immigration (Minniti, 2017d). NGOs loudly protested since Minniti decided to adopt a “code of conduct” that they had to sign to keep on operating in the Mediterranean and docking in Italian harbours (Cusumano, Gombeer, 2020, p.246). The code provided for some measures that not all the NGOs accepted: for instance, most of them refused to subscribe to receive officials of the Italian judicial police on board (charged to investigate on the eventual collusion between NGOs and human smugglers), as this would infringe the “no-weapon” policy implemented on the boats (Bechis, 2017). The refusal to sign the document produced tangible effects when *Médecins sans Frontières* was denied access to Lampedusa on August 5, 2017. The less tolerant attitude towards NGOs shows the partial hypocrisy of Minniti's translation into humanitarian vocabulary and the weight of right-wing refrains against search and rescue missions in the Mediterranean.

Although the Democratic Party translated right-wing policies without buying into theories like the “great replacement”, the ambiguous use of orientalist tropes and the reference to the “limits of accommodation” reveal an instating preoccupation with national cohesion and security. Eventually, this brought the Minister to distinguish between “genuine” asylum-seekers to welcome and “criminal” immigrants to expel. What is lacking is also a detailed problematization of the several reasons that force economic immigrants to leave (poverty, capitalist exploitation, climate change) and of Western partial faults, which would be attuned to a former communist left-wing lawmaker like Minniti. Moreover, by mentioning a supposed tolerance threshold in the Italian capacity to accommodate foreign bodies, the Democratic Party wraps its translation with a sort of scientific and technical jargon that again is different from simplistic populist slogans. As showed earlier, the idea of a tolerance threshold is common also to the British and French centre-left. In this regard, overcoming the threshold would mean making the process of integration less smooth. Since a failure of immigrants' integration entails

more possibility of radicalization, immigration flows need to be harnessed and immigrant detention centres should work to ease deportation policies, according to Minniti (2017b). As Campesi underlines (2020, p.21), Minniti justified the rearrangement of detention policy to control “those who are of an irregular status and may be considered a danger”, even if they have not formally committed a crime.

Minniti’s securitizing moves resented from a proximate context in which the Right and the populist Five Star Movement⁹ blamed the NGOs of complicity with smugglers (Pantaleone, 2017; Cusumano, Gyomber, 2020). Nonetheless, his arguments are softer than his adversaries’ and at odds with the nativist alarms that the far-right raises about the putative ethnical substitution of white Europeans with immigrants from the Global South. Immigrants and asylum-seekers are not described as a security threat for Italian ethno-national identity, as right-wing parties do, but they are believed to possibly jeopardize social cohesion and compete with Italian workforce. By looking at the right edge of the chain of agents, one finds that both the North League and Brothers of Italy have consistently attacked the Government for its inability to stop the “invasion” and “Islamization” of Europe (Bobba, McDonnell, 2016; Gianfreda, 2018; Bulli, 2019). In this respect, on October 17, 2014, the League organized a protest in Milan, when Salvini rallied about 100,000 people to call for the end of *Mare Nostrum* and to stop the invasion of clandestine immigrants (MilanoToday, 2014). The press and parties on the Right often accused NGOs of being in cahoots with human smugglers; while warning about the nexus between migration and possible infiltration of jihadist terrorists, above all after the jihadist attacks against Western Europe in 2015-17 (Ulrich, 2016; Micalessin, 2017). Conversely, Minniti avoided reactionary references to the white European civilization jeopardized by Islam. Likewise, as there are few traces of the controversial discursive nexus between immigration and jihadist terrorism (Wintour, 2017), while parties on the Right predominantly tied jihadist terrorism to the arrival of asylum-seekers and economic immigrants.

What can we learn from these instances of translation? A difference still exists in how the Right and Left parties translate rhetorical devices to securitize Muslims in the name of multiple referent objects. Overall, the Democratic Party’s referent objects map onto a distinct political-ideological heritage that stirs elements more attuned with liberal/left-wing ideas rather than a right-wing one. One referent object, human security, drove the party towards concrete humanitarian policies. For instance, in December 2015 several religious actors (the Sant’Egidio Community, the Italian *Caritas*, the Union for Waldensian Churches, the Federation of Evangelic Churches in Italy) signed a protocol with the Renzi Cabinet to arrange “humanitarian corridors” from Libya to Italy so that the weakest refugees could travel safely to Europe. However, as Squire argues, the corridors are still bound to the securitarian logic promoted by the Italian Government, and to the “divisive politics of fear that its activities on the ground seek to contest” (2020, pp.106, 126). Another difference with right-wing parties is the rejection of an ethnic form of nationalism to choose instead a civic nationalism based on liberal values such as gender equality and secularism, portrayed as pillars of Italian national identity, as I will later discuss.

⁹ *Movimento Cinque Stelle*

Yet, the policies advanced by the Democratic Party betrayed the principles of solidarity, anti-authoritarianism, and social integration vindicated during the opposition years against Berlusconi's Cabinets and established in the Charter of Values of 2007 (Masseti, 2014, pp.11-16). Regarding the governance of Mediterranean immigration, the centre-left moved closer to the right-wing belief that immigrants are security threats rather than possible assets. The examples of translated securitization show that the process is rooted in the normal political competition between right-wing and left-wing parties and that neither the Copenhagen nor the Paris Schools could grasp all its nuances.

The next section reflects on the historical trajectory that set the ground for the contemporary translation in both domestic and external securitization of immigration.

5.2 How the Democratic Party learnt to translate securitization

This section operationalizes the active translation into the distal and proximate contexts by looking at how the Democratic Party of the Left¹⁰ (created in 1991 as the evolution of the Italian Communist Party¹¹ after the collapse of the Soviet Union) and the Left Democrats¹² (leading the Executive from 1996 to 2001) translated the right-wing call for more security into a blended discourse that was intelligible by their audiences. The balance between military and humanitarian concerns already marked the governance of precedent immigration waves from Albania and Libya, that arranged the distal context in which the Democratic Party's successive translation made sense. Although the Democratic Party of the Left avoided references to the immigrants as ethno-demographic threats, it embraced a tough approach that was certainly influenced by the parallel electoral rise of the North League, who called to stop the admission of immigrants. The section clarifies that the security doctrine fleshed out by Minniti cannot be apprehended as a unique exceptional consequence of the Mediterranean refugee crisis and jihadism, despite the considerable number of arrivals in the 2010s. Instead, it is influenced by the distal context, that drives the translations. Such textual repertoire feeds the misrepresentations of Islam that Western elites have for long used to frame Muslims as inherently different and inferior subjects (Said, 1978; Kumar, 2012; Meer, 2014). While the other chapters partially retraced the Islamophobia of Labour and the Socialist Party in their colonial past, Italian centre-left parties are a younger case that have not directly witnessed the colonial occupation of Muslim majority countries like Libya and Somalia (Del Boca, 2005; Griffini, 2022).

5.2.1 Albania

Since Italy was for long spared by immigration flows, little was the engagement by Italian left-wing parties with the question of Islam. Some first debates emerged in the Eighties after the Rushdie affair and the controversies around the headscarf, examined earlier in the

¹⁰ *Partito Democratico della Sinistra*

¹¹ *Partito Comunista Italiano*

¹² *Democratici di Sinistra*

dissertation. The Communist Party's secretary Achille Occhetto asked for a UN intervention to safeguard Rushdie's rights by accusing Khomeini of fanaticism. The Communist Parliamentary Group asked the Italian Government to coordinate an international initiative to protest the repression of freedom of speech (Fabiani, 1989). Yet, although there was no translation from Right to Left, the Communist Party did not de-securitize Islam because it resorted to ideologically more congruent tropes to worry about Islamic practices. Communist feminist journalists (e.g. Rossana Rossanda, Miriam Mafai) argued on more than one occasion that tolerating the *chador* clashed with being feminist and with left-wing principles, similarly to what French feminist intellectuals maintained in the same period (Badinter et.al., 1989; Mafai, 1989; Garbesi, 1999). This antireligious attitude did not tarnish the clear pro-immigrant position that the Communists articulated towards growing numbers of immigrants, as underlined by the project to give foreigners voting rights at local elections after three years of residence in Italy (L'Unità, 1989; Andall, 2007, p.138). Independently from religious practices, neither did the Communists criminalize nor securitize ethnic minorities, compared to the virulent anti-immigration campaigns that the Right fuelled. The North League's articulation between crime, insecurity and the presence of foreigners took a foothold at least since the national elections of 1992 (Zaslave, 2004) and rekindled after the second wave of immigration from Albania to Italy, that started in 1997 and posed serious challenges to the centre-left coalition government.

Torn between the growing impact of the North League (proximate context) and the ideological mistrust against religion (distal context), the Democratic Party of the Left securitized irregular immigration by translating tough policies in the name of human security, necessary to persuade internal (party members against securitization) and external audiences (Radical Left junior partners and right-wing opposition). This historical precedent matters to understand what would happen lately with Libya. Meanwhile, the North League spearheaded virulent anti-Islamic campaigns, that worsened the perception of Muslims in the public opinion especially after 9/11 (Ruzza, Fella, 2009, pp.90-95; Allievi, 2014, p.730). This contributed to the centre-left translating the securitization of immigration by deploying the military to patrol national borders. Already in 1995, the Cabinet led by Lamberto Dini¹³ had decided to send troops in Apulia (Decree-Law 365/95) to contrast the arrivals of Albanian irregular immigrants. The centre-left's endorsement of such measure was defined as "appalling" by the Communist Refoundation Party¹⁴, that raised severe doubts on the "quality of the values on which D'Alema¹⁵ wants to build a genuine, modern European left-wing party" (La Repubblica, 1995).

This rift between centre- and radical Left on security policies widened when the Democratic Party of the Left Cabinet decided to launch Operation Alba (April 15, 1997), a peacekeeping operation in Albania promoted by Italy and started under the multilateral framework of the UN and the OSCE. Analyses of the Italian parliamentary debates disclose that the Cabinet stressed the humanitarian importance of the security mission. Although the mission was never justified as an urgent response to an exceptional situation (Ignazi et.al.,

¹³ A "technical" government, supported mostly by the Democratic Party of the Left.

¹⁴ Partito della Rifondazione Comunista

¹⁵ Massimo D'Alema, former Prime Minister (1998-2000) and leader of the Democratic Party of the Left.

2012, p.110), it still represented a form of securitization, contrary to what the Copenhagen School would argue. The military intervention aimed to prevent large waves of refugees, since Greece and Italy were the two first contributors in terms of troops (Kostakos, Bourantonis, 1998). On March 20, the Democratic Party of the Left issued the Decree-Law 60/1997 that enabled the prefects to expel any foreigners for reasons of national security. Eight days later, the Albanian ship *Kateri i Radës* sank after being rammed by the Italian naval vessel *Sibilla*. The tragedy happened near the street of Otranto, where at least 84 Albanians died. The major Italian newspaper on the liberal left, *La Repubblica*, had already warned about the exodus from Albania through tones that resonate more with right-wing nationalism “invasion” of “clandestine immigrants” (Albahari, 2006, p.8), showing that immigration was a concerning topic for progressive public opinion too.

Before Operation Alba started, PM Romano Prodi underlined the double referent objects of the Italian mission in the Adriatic Sea: the human security of refugees and Italian border security. This ambiguity prepared the distal context in which Minniti implanted the successive translation of securitization, where the threat immigrants pose to national security is counterbalanced by some humanitarian rhetoric and aims. By seeking a balance between the “respect of solidarity and humanity”, the “defence of rule-of-law and public order”, and “the civic coexistence between people and individuals” (Camera dei Deputati, 1997a, pp.14227-14228), Prodi translated the need to expel irregular immigrants using referent objects cherished by the centre-left coalition. The PM ensured that those who needed help and assistance deserved to receive it, but those who belonged to organized crime had to be “timely and duly expelled or pushed back” (Camera dei Deputati, 1997a, pp.14227-14228). Another important point – also raised twenty years later by Minniti - is the description of patrolling activities as a duty to protect the security, legality, and justice of both Italian and Albanian citizens, as Albanians were preyed on by smugglers and criminals. For such reasons, the Italian government offered Tirana to jointly control and contain clandestine emigration through the Adriatic. According to Prodi, this was a legitimate action to choke the criminal management of immigration, rather than a naval blockade. Eventually, Prodi explained that the peacekeeping mission under preparation was needed to build stability in Albania, since Italy “neither wanted to push back refugees nor to put obstacles to their hopes, but its firstly Albanians’ duty not to give up to desperation” (Camera dei Deputati, 1997a, pp. 14227-14228). This assertion recalls the orientalist figure of the disillusioned and hopeless Saharian migrant evoked by Minniti.

Although the governing coalition did not translate the right-wing trope on the clash with Albanian Muslim immigrants, the securitarian rationale of the mission gained Prodi the endorsement of most right-to-centre parties. Yet, the policies were rebutted by two parties on the extreme edges of the chain of agents: Communist Refoundation and North League, both voting against Operation Alba for alternative reasons. The Communist leader Fausto Bertinotti argued that the visceral xenophobic campaigns by the Right had impacted the restrictive attitude of the Cabinet. Consequently, the policies implemented on the Adriatic border - maritime patrolling and naval blockade - sparked a “hostile political climate” that eventually concurred to the tragedy of Otranto (Camera dei Deputati, 1997a, p.14241). Communist Refoundation refused the translated securitization as it betrayed the spirit of the Left and asked instead for a UN mission, while calling the Cabinet to immediately remove the maritime

patrolling and to order the Italian Navy to carry out intensive surveillance with the sole aim of rescuing any vessels in difficulty (Camera dei Deputati, 1997b).

Conversely, the North League judged Prodi's decision as insufficient and further opposed the mission through a racialized securitization of Albanians, who were part of an ethnic minority incompatible with North Italians ("Padanian"¹⁶) people. Although the North League endorsed a multilateral operation in 1995 when the democratic transition in Albania was considered as a push factor for possible immigration to Italy, it decided not to intervene for the intrinsic security threats of Albanian political context (Ignazi et.al., 2012, p.65; Verbeek, Zaslove 2015, p.533). This option aligns with its foreign policy attitude, which was recalcitrant to send boots on the ground, despite supporting a worldview based on the "clash" between Western and Islamic civilization, especially after 9/11. Using a typical right-wing refrain, the League blamed the Left of being too soft in admitting clandestine immigrants (as it happened when 835 Kurdish refugees arrived in Italy in December 1998)¹⁷ and their repatriation, like in the case of Albanians¹⁸. Its securitizing practices - e.g. organizing armed militias and vigilantes against immigrants (L'Unità, 1997d) - escalated the tension with the Cabinet. When in August 1997 Prodi approved the request from Tirana to slow down the repatriation of irregular immigrants, the North League, and National Alliance accused the Interior Minister Giorgio Napolitano of lying about the effective number of expulsions made by the Cabinet (L'Unità, 1997b).

In front of the instrumentalization of crime by the far-right, who connected it to immigration, the Left Democrats integrated the military operation with a reform of the Italian immigration system to control irregular immigrants and admit regular ones. This step was needed considering Italy's entry into the Schengen agreement and its ratification of the Treaty of Amsterdam, which coordinated the securitization of European external borders (Huysmans, 2006, pp. 67-69). The Law 40/1998, signed by Livia Turco and Napolitano, crystallized the ambiguities of the party, as it institutionalized the establishment of "temporary detention centres" (firstly settled by the Dini Cabinet through the Decree-Law 489/1995), introduced more stringent checks at the borders, and ratcheted up pushbacks and deportations (Abbondanza, 2017, p.80). As Napolitano argued during the debate on the repatriations of Albanians, the Law allowed quicker expulsions of clandestine immigrants (L'Unità, 1997b). Yet, it aimed at promoting the gradual integration of new immigrants too, symbolized by the new residence card available to immigrants residing in Italy for at least five years. Both the lawmakers stressed that immigration should be framed "outside the logic of emergency" (drawn upon by the far-right¹⁹) and that Italy needed a cultural and legal frame to govern immigration, defined as "a long-term, stable and positive phenomenon" (L'Unità, 1997c). The arbitrary distinction between "good" and "bad" immigrants, depending on their rights/claims

¹⁶ See (Albertazzi, 2006).

¹⁷ See Maroni (North League) and Maurizio Gasparri (National Alliance) against Napolitano (L'Unità 1997e).

¹⁸ See Alberto Lembo (North League) in Camera dei Deputati (1997a).

¹⁹ See Turco's comments against Gasparri (National Alliance) in L'Unità (1997a). According to Turco, although immigration is not an emergency, the approval of the Law 40/1998 was needed as soon as possible because of the Italian normative gap regarding immigration.

to asylum and entry quotas linked to the job market, also participates in the distal context upon which Minniti built his translation twenty years later.

About the Turco-Napolitano Law, Andall (2007, p.152) affirms that a bipartisan convergence existed between mainstream Right and Left regarding immigration policies. If some differences about integration were at stake, Andall argues, they related more to the rhetoric than to effective actions. This argument chimes in with Turco's declarations that "immigration should not be the vehicle for ideological contraposition" (L'Unità, 1997a), released to seek the approval of the Right – that yet eventually voted against the Law.

Nevertheless, the convergence hypothesis is not wholly convincing. Firstly, the differences were not only rhetorical because they were translated in concrete policies, as immigrants were given access to a series of tangible rights – e.g. education, healthcare, family reunion (Andall, 2007, pp.141-144). Despite the successive impasse, the Left Democrats signalled a partial will to reform and de-securitize citizenship rights, in line with the progressive values they allegedly defended. Secondly, rhetorical nuances are never uninfluential because they transmit how securitization is translated to entice its multiple audiences. Through translation, left-wing electors and radical left allies were convinced that closing borders for irregular immigrants resonated with left-wing identity because it saved lives, did not put labour force under unsustainable pressure, and was not as restraining as a right-wing policy. Additionally, the Right was persuaded that the Law met the purposes of reinforcing national borders and speeding up expulsions, as the EU asked to admit Rome into the Schengen area (Paoli, 2018). These rhetorical gimmicks are translations that the Left Democrats performed according to the type of audience to win over, as recognized by one spokesperson of the Immigration Office (Andall, 2007, p.139). However, they were not a convergence because the centre-left espoused a right-wing meaning of security as border control, rather than the two parties converging towards a de-politicized centre. As the securitization of immigration from Albania and the Law Turco-Napolitano illustrated, the translation performed in the mid-2010s plugged into the pre-existent heritage carried by the centre-left. This experience is significant to understand the trajectory of current securitization of immigration.

5.2.2 Libya

Another example of securitarian governance of immigration came from the treaty on immigration with Libya, that entered into force under the centre-right government of Berlusconi (2008-2011) but was initially prepared by previous centre-left governments (2006-2011). I explained earlier that the Memorandum of Understanding of 2017 was built on the "Treaty of Friendship" between Berlusconi and Gaddafi. The treaty dovetails with the nationalist agenda envisioned by the Right and with the contemporary EU efforts to intensify the border controls in the Mediterranean. Although many studies discussed the treaty (Hamood, 2008; Paoletti, 2010, p.135; Abbondanza, 2017, p.83), little do they say on the centre-left contribution to prepare it. Writing about the outsourcing of migration controls outside Europe, Bialasiewicz (2012, p.853) connects the treaty to the broader "anti-immigration crusade" launched by the centre-right coalition – represented by the abovementioned Law 94/2009. While she mentions that the joint sea patrols started in December 2007, she neglects that it was

the first Prodi Cabinet (1996-1998) to usher in the bilateral rapprochement between Rome and Tripoli, symbolized by the Memorandum of Intent signed in December 2000 under the centre-left Cabinet led by Giuliano Amato (Paoletti, 2010, pp.116-121). The agreement boosted the cooperation on vital issues such as drug trafficking, terrorism, organized crime, and the fight against illegal immigration (Hamood, 2008, p.32). The successive Berlusconi Cabinet (2001-05) approved the previous securitization move through another Memorandum of Understanding (2006) to tackle international terrorism and undocumented migration, along with the readmission agreements of 2003, 2004 and 2005 (Colombo, 2012, p.93)

Afterward, the second Prodi Cabinet (2006-2008) arranged a comprehensive treaty of friendship and cooperation that could settle the colonial disputes and furthered the security cooperation, through readmission agreements and a new Italian-funded “reception centre” in Libya. If the Berlusconi centre-right Cabinet (2008-2011) took the credit for the August 2008 treaty, this would not have been possible without the preparatory works by D’Alema (Foreign Affairs Minister) and Marcella Lucidi (Interior Undersecretary). As D’Alema lamented, Berlusconi succeeded in quickly signing the treaty because he copied the one negotiated by the Left Democrats “without the necessary guarantees of respect for the human rights of migrant populations in Libya” (Diodato, Niglia, 2019, p.124). This is a relevant aspect for the distal context of translation because, before Minniti, D’Alema tried to cover its securitarian agenda beneath a veneer of humanitarian rhetoric and balance between protection of national sovereignty and international solidarity.

In front of mass deportations to Libya – which were carried out since 2004 and infringed “Italy’s national and international obligations, particularly the right to seek asylum and the principle of non-refoulement” (Hamood, 2008, p.33) -, the Left Democrats promised to stop expulsions towards a country that rejected the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees. This promise turned out to be a lot of hot air, attacked by the Right as Italy would risk “living the same urban riots experienced in French banlieues” (Il Giornale, 2006). Followingly, the Berlusconi Cabinet and his Interior Minister Roberto Maroni (North League, 2008-11) pursued an aggressive policy of expulsion and “pushback”. Since migrants intercepted in international waters by Italian coast guard vessels were directly repatriated to Libya before checking their rights/claims to asylum (Bialasiewicz, 2012, p.853), the pushbacks arouse condemnation by scholars, NGOs and by the European Court of Human Rights, that established the obligation for the EU Member States to examine the individual circumstances of “irregular migrants” arriving at their borders before deciding on their admission/expulsion (Hirsi Jamaa and Others v Italy 2012). Amid such international disapproval, Lucidi clarified that her party’s negotiations with Libya never envisioned the pushbacks but rather a package of measures (e.g. joint patrolling and SAR missions in Libyan and international waters, distinction between asylum-seekers and economic immigrants) compliant with human rights and with the EU and international laws, attempting to mark a distance between the Democratic Party’s policies and the centre-right’s ones.

Had the centre-left Government won the 2008 elections, one can wonder whether entry policies might have been less restrictive. Without speculating further, some controversial decisions show that the Democratic Party’s attitude juggled between respecting human security

and securitization, starting from the fact that the deportations from Italy to Libya never stopped despite the ambitious proclaims of Lucidi. At the end of 2007, the NGO Melting Pot recalled that the centre-left Government and the EU ignored the reports about human right abuses committed by the Libyan authorities against refugees and immigrants. Meanwhile, the government decided to welcome 40 Eritrean refugees as a gesture of tactical compassion to avoid their repatriation to Eritrea, where they would have risked the death penalty (Melting Pot Europa, 2007). As Mavelli argues, limiting accommodation only to the “sickest” refugees (as among them there were 35 women and 1 child) under the veneer of humanitarianism is a dispositive that privileges vulnerable individuals as the most valuable from an affective rather than a purely biological or economic perspective (Mavelli, 2017, p.821). Regarding the Democratic Party, this tactic serves to translate in the name of humanitarian imperatives by merging selective generosity with security necessities.

To conclude, centre-left parties have actively translated the securitization of immigration to persuade electors, fellow party members, and other parties on the chain of agents that the move aligned with their legacy and identity. Otherwise, they would have been accused of passive imitation and betrayal of their values. As this section has showed, left-wing securitization of immigration is sedimented into the distal context, that reduced the efforts made by Minniti to adjust the message. This did not prevent party internal audiences to contest translation, especially when the adoption of right-wing refrains became overwhelming in both entry and integration policies. The next section shows that left-wing translation occurs also as a reaction to the specular right-wing translation of liberal tropes, that pushed the Democratic Party to reappropriate them and show that its original versions are better than the modified ones. I illustrate this argument through the case study of right-wing parties translating references to gender equality with the aim to securitize Islam.

5.3 How the Democratic Party reacted to the right-wing translation of gender equality

The Democratic Party has securitized Islam also as a reaction to the right-wing translation of the third and fourth Islamophobic tropes identified by this thesis: Islam as “not secular” and as “patriarchal”. As the analytical framework illustrated, the relationality of the chain of agents allows to map out how centre-left parties appropriate and translate the securitarian vocabulary coming from the Right. Now it is crucial to focus on the right-wing mobilization and the responses it raised by the Democratic Party in the proximate context where party interaction takes place. Right-wing parties have securitized Islam both by mobilizing their ideological pillars (ethno-national populism, racism, inclination to consider social marginality as a problem for the public order) and by translating liberal-progressive and left-wing tropes. Translation is nested in a specific inter-linguistic context. Hence, I focus on the translation of gender equality (a centre-left’s referent object) instead of other concepts that the Right translates elsewhere (e.g. *laïcité* in France). The meanings of “gender equality” and “Islam” depend on the historical interpretations given by Italian political elites. The right-wing translation of gender equality compelled the Democratic Party to re-appropriate its referent

object in a securitarian shape. The National Pact for an Italian Islam proposed by Minniti in 2017 secures gender equality from the threat of Islamist radicalization, buying into the two tropes translated by the Right. To understand this dynamic of mutual appropriation and contestation, we need to engage with translation and integrate the Copenhagen and Paris Schools.

5.3.1 The Right: between own referent objects and translation of gender equality

Islamophobia and anti-immigration slogans from the Right differ from the centre-left due to the presence of nativist, populist and authoritarian tropes (Mudde, 2007), that are used to stress that Muslims are a threat to the preservation of an ethnic, cultural and homogeneous Europe. Linked to nativism is the defence of Christianity, a typical right-wing referent object that is rarely found on the Left. This referent object serves to boost a symbolic civilizational crusade against Islam. The North League weaponizes the European Judeo-Christian roots against the threat of religious “others”, in line with the Judeo-Christian interpretation of secularism discussed by Hurd (2008, pp. 37-38). The party’s Islamophobic claims grew stronger after 9/11, but were already circulating earlier, as showed by the protests to boycott the edification of mosques (Triandafyllidou, 2006) and the campaigns in defence of Crucifixes in Italian public spaces (Ozzano, 2019). Yet, this translation of religion as a cultural marker sounds hypocritical. The party electors have lower religious attendance than the Italian population overall (Passarelli, Tuorto, 2018). Moreover, Pope Francis has strongly criticized the racist agenda proposed by Bossi and Salvini, as I will further explore in the thesis’ conclusions. Indeed, many early North League members sympathized for anti-clerical and even neo-pagan ideals (Guolo, 2011).

Under the leadership of Matteo Salvini, the party has given more centrality to the defence of Christianity. Salvini has frequently showcased Christian symbols during electoral rallies (McDonnell, 2016). The apparent contradiction with Bossi’s leadership wanes if we read the religious dimension hijacked by the North League as a form of “belonging” to mutual cultural, normative, and aesthetical heritage rather than “believing” in the message of solidarity of Christ. Both religions are culturalized, as we understand from Salvini’s definition of Islam as “a different system of law, not a religion, incompatible with Italian constitutional norms” (SkyTg24, 2018). Some projects of law further illustrate this point. North League Senator Massimo Bitonci proposed a Draft Law to establish the commemoration day of the Lepanto Battle of 1571 (Senato della Repubblica, 2013), showing a sense of loss for European Christian roots against the twofold threats of secularization and Islamic invasion.

Another important example comes from the Draft Bill 2533/2016 presented by Senator Roberto Calderoli (that we already met in [chapter one](#)) merges the defence of Christianity with a translated version of gender equality, both considered as cultural markers of the West (Senato della Repubblica, 2016). The Bill was thought to counter the “religious and ideological doctrines incompatible with our Constitutional principles, juridical order, public security and social welfare of the national collective”. More specifically, it hampered the construction of mosques, criminalised the apology of *shari’a* and justified the ban of Muslim *burqa* and *niqab* as a threat to public security and gender equality. Calderoli deliberately established a causal

link between the heritage of Christian Europe and progressive normative achievements such as the privatization of religion and the recognition of women's rights. The description of Islam as a "global project" inclined to "interfere with all aspects of life" seems to naturalize the differences as ontologically given and impossible to overcome, in line with the first trope of Muslims as a different violent civilization. The alleged lag between Muslim immigrants and Western Europeans regarding gender emancipation and sexual freedom is often considered by the radical Right as a cultural stigma that excludes the possibility of changes. However, little was done by right-wing parties to tackle gender inequalities and misogynist violence, that are still very concerning issues in Italy (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2020).

This shade of Islamophobia, imbued with Christian symbolic references, is a feature of the Italian Right that is not translated by the Left. Such vision is often expressed through populist tones and ethno-demographic concerns that are barely found in left-wing rhetoric. Regarding populism, North League candidates frequently suggested organizing local referendums to approve or reject the construction of mosques, as though the Italian "people" could contest the legitimacy of Muslims' rights to worship because of public security concerns. When in 2009 in Genoa the centre-left administration granted land to local Muslim communities for the construction of a mosque, Maroni declared that such a delicate decision could not be approved without a popular referendum (La Padania, 2009). This should be modelled on the one against the construction of minarets that the Swiss People's Party promoted and that was largely praised by cognate right-wing populist leaders²⁰.

According to right-wing narratives, the ethnic and cultural homogeneity of European people is threatened by the growing Muslim demographic presence, in line with the second trope identified by the thesis. The emphasis on demography led to the institutionalisation of the Ministry of Families during the short-lived coalition Cabinet between the North League and the Five Star Movement in 2018-19. Appointed as Ministry was the ultra-conservative deputy-leader Lorenzo Fontana, whose political positions are imbued with far-right and traditionalist Catholic ideas. Fontana pledged to counter the circulation of "gender theory" and to thwart the recourse to abortion. In this ideological vision, extending women and LGBTQ+ rights are considered part of a larger conspiracy to stifle white natality and arrange its ethnic substitution with Muslims, against which Fontana elaborated a national demographic plan (Renzi, 2018). Likewise, the program of Brothers of Italy for the European elections of 2019 draws upon the same racist repertoire and calls to stop the "Islamization of Europe" (Coluzzi, 2019). The discursive nexus between Muslim invasion, plummeting white natality and ethnic substitution is a leitmotiv historically supported by the far-right. The worries that yellow and black races would destroy white men's civilization hark back at least to Benito Mussolini's discourses during the colonial operations in Africa (Del Boca, 2005). Therefore, these tropes belong to the ideological repertoire that the Right uses to securitize Islam.

However, this thesis has explained that the securitization of Islam has been translated also from Left to Right. Hence, the emancipation of women and LGB minorities - themes more aligned with left-wing voters (Pew Research Center, 2020, p.12) - are supported by right-wing

²⁰ See Maroni (La Repubblica, 2009) and Marine Le Pen (Reuters, 2009).

parties but only when they can be instrumentalised to argue that the European civilization is superior to Islam (Foster, Kirke, 2023). The North League and Brothers of Italy are not an exception to this process. The North League targeted Islam by translating gender equality since Bossi was party secretary. Amid the most controversial electoral posters, one displayed a family of veiled women and children under the slogan “*Would you like a government like this? Wake up!*” (Woods, 2010, p.213). Another billboard used in Lombardia regional elections in 2010 put two white, blond women aside two women in a burqa and reported the message “*We love women without veil!*” (Testa, Armstrong, 2012, p.9). However, the translation of gender equality became prominent the 2010s, due to some [critical junctures](#) that the Right exploited to defend women from the threat of Muslims. Both Salvini and Giorgia Meloni (current Prime Minister and leader of a right-wing coalition elected in September 2022) have claimed to better defend women’s rights compared to the Left. They do it by reproaching feminists and leftists to turn a blind eye when Muslims discriminate women, for instance in cases of forced marriages (Balsamo, 2021). Hence, in the 2019 World Congress of Family organized by Christian and far-right associations in Verona, Salvini declared that the real threat to women equality did not come from conservative ideologies but from Islamic extremism (AP, 2019). Translation is actively carried out because liberal arguments are selected barely to draw the borders of the West. Rather than a dissonance, it is indeed a coherent form of translation. Farris (2017, p.37) describes this conceptual creation as “femo-nationalism” by exploring how women - native and non-native alike - are constructed as a category that needs to be rescued from hyper-sexualised and patriarchal brown men.

Translation can meet some ideological obstacles. The translation of the trope “Islam as patriarchal” jars with how the Italian radical right turns a blind eye in front of violence committed by white Western men, let alone condemning homophobia. Gender equality and feminism are cherished as prerogatives of the West against Islam, but at the same time are polemically attacked by the radical right (e.g. Fontana) since they have destroyed the traditional vision of women as “mothers of the nations” and dropped the demographic curve. These arguments mark the 2018 electoral program of the centre-right coalition, which clarifies that the traditional family is the “first and fundamental nucleus of society” and sets up an extraordinary natality plan “through financial aids more than proportional to the number of children” (AGI, 2018). The North League wants to “save” Italian and Muslim women from the threat that “brown men” pose to equality and safety (Bhattacharyya, 2010). This engagement was reiterated in the Draft Bill 265/2018, which again tried to explicitly ban the Muslim *burqa* and the *niqab* not only for reasons of public order, but also “because they contrast with Italian fundamental Constitutional principles, firstly the respect of women’s dignity” (Camera dei Deputati, 2018a). Admittedly, party members are oblivious of women’s dignity when it comes to condemning gender violence committed by Italians: a problem that has been watered down by many local elected members of the party. There are several examples of misogynist comments uttered by local North League elected officers. A representative in the District of Livorno argued that “abortions are the first global cause of femicides” (Il Tirreno, 2020) while another one in the Trieste City Council affirmed that “femicides are an invention of the Left” (La Repubblica, 2017b). This occurs because the purpose of translation is to co-opt native women into the ethnic version of the “people”, mobilized against the common Muslim foe.

Translation is a contextual and collective practice. Women emancipation figures in the agenda of radical right parties because it is contextually accepted by right-wing voters as a crucial constitutional principle. Although conservative beliefs are stronger in Italian, Spanish and Eastern European right-wing parties compared to their Northern European equivalents (Akkerman, 2015), all of them are wary that overtly rejecting women's emancipation would undermine their image of respectable parties aiming to govern the country. Hence, translating women's rights to feed arguments against Islam is an advantageous strategy. By contrast, the incorporation of LGBTQ+ rights in the securitization of Islam would be controversial and likely counterproductive in parties like the North League and Brothers of Italy. Not only due to their homophobic and transphobic positions that treat LGBTQ+ legitimate requests as part of a hidden conspiracy against core Catholic values (Ozzano, 2019). Many members of such parties and their conservative constituencies would reckon such stances as an ideological short-circuit. Admittedly, Salvini has grasped the strategic importance of gay rights. After the jihadist shooting at Orlando gay nightclub *Pulse* in 2016, he claimed that gay rights cannot coexist with the Islamic incursion and ironically asked why the Left could justify "the protection of gay rights and the construction of mosques" at the same time (Il Secolo XIX, 2020). Nevertheless, a strong commitment to this agenda is out of reach for the Italian radical right due to the importance that cis-hetero-normative family values have for a considerable number of Italian right-wing electors. Choosing women while forgetting LGBTQ+ communities show that translation is a selective and contextual process. Parties cannot copy what their competitors say, but gradually accommodate the translated concepts into an ideologically congruent version.

5.3.2 The National Pact for an Italian Islam: reappropriating gender equality

Since translation is an iterative process happening on a chain, it is crucial to understand how the Democratic Party reacted to the right-wing translation of gender equality. The National Pact for an Italian Islam, established in 2017 by Minniti and subscribed by 70% of Italian Muslim associations, signals the reappropriation of gender by the Democratic Party to justify a securitarian view of Islam. The Pact was meant to facilitate the signing of an agreement between the government and the Muslim associations and to regulate church-state relations according to the Italian system of concordat called *Intesa* (Mezran, 2013; Alicino, 2022). It is part of a long series of initiatives launched to foster the dialogue with Islam and proceed to its formal recognition through the *Intesa*. Each of these agreements, however, has showed the power of parties in deciding the boundaries between "good and bad" Muslims.

The analysis of the previous agreements discloses a difference between the more inclusive program shared by centre-right and centre-left parties, on one side, and the North League, on the other, which was reluctant to encourage the *Intesa* with Islam (Allievi, 2014, p.731). The first consultative body was arranged by the Minister of Interior Giuseppe Pisanu (*Forza Italia*) in October 2005. Despite its role as junior partner in the coalition government led by Silvio Berlusconi, the North League raised strong opposition against the *Intesa*. The Minister for Reforms Calderoli defined it as a "huge mistake" because "there is no Italian Islam" and "there will never be integration" since Muslims' logic aims at oppression and

cancellation of others' identity" (La Repubblica, 2005). By saying that the West was a superior civilization compared to Islam, Calderoli reiterated the arguments popularised by the conservative journalist Oriana Fallaci, in line with the first trope of this thesis. These narratives widely circulated and reduced the political opportunities to encourage dialogue with Muslims. Although the centre-left government (2006-08) confirmed the Consulta of Pisanu, the new centre-right coalition government led by Berlusconi (2008-11) downplayed the already "vague representativeness" of the Consulta when the Minister of Interior Roberto Maroni approved the creation of the Committee for Italian Islam in 2010 (Allievi, 2014, p.731). The Committee, which was largely animated by conservative intellectuals (El Ayoubi, 2010), excluded the Union of Islamic Communities and Organizations in Italy (UCOII) because of its alleged ties with the Muslim Brotherhood.

Despite the Pact is more inclusive than the consultative body previously arranged by Maroni, it can be considered as a soft tool of securitization that the Democratic Party framed through its peculiar referent objects: gender equality, but also secularism and respect of human rights. Regarding gender equality, the Democratic Party tried to reappropriate a theme that was slipping away from under its feet, as the Right translated it to further its Islamophobic claims and accuse the Left of being closer to Muslims' needs than to Italian women's ones. As a precondition to be granted constitutional rights, Muslims were admonished to "accept without compromises that Italy is a secular state that does not impose religious laws and that cannot accept the submission of women to me". Aside from the slogans on "the mutual recognition of each other", the Pact aimed to facilitate "integration and security" (Minniti, 2017e). The commitment to reach a form of concordat (item n.6) was bounded to two contentious points: the invitation to "foster the dialogue between Muslim communities and the Interior Minister" (item n.1) and to lay the ground to forms of cooperation with the purpose to "contrast phenomena of religious radicalization" and offer interpretive keys to understand the reasons behind it (Ministero dell'Interno, 2017).

The Pact translated a securitarian logic in narratives that match the Democratic Party's principles. Interestingly, the Cabinet signed the Pact shortly after Brothers of Italy proposed a similar draft bill to institutionalize Islam (Camera dei Deputati, 2015). This draft bill was declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Affairs Commission of the Italian lower house. According to the right-leaning newspaper *Il Giornale*, Minniti copied Brothers of Italy in the elaboration of the Pact, that was defined as "hypocritical" (Ferrara, 2018). More than a copy, it represented a translation, as we can ascertain by comparing similarities and differences between the two texts. Neither does the Pact buy into right-wing authoritarian purposes, nor does it co-opt Muslims through disproportionate interferences, as Brothers of Italy suggested through setting up a national register for Imam and the releasement of a formal license to lead the prayer. Instead, the Pact encourages the formation of Imams to make them mediators of "civic principles of coexistence" based on the respect of Italian constitutional principles (e.g. gender equality) and national institutions.

Nonetheless, there are some similarities between the two agreements proposed by the centre-left party and the radical right party. The Pact translates the securitarian rationale behind the right-wing project as it interweaves the integration of Muslims with Italian national security

worries. Further, the division between a “good” and moderate Islam versus a “bad” and fanatical one instils a praxis of “suspect” that partly coheres with the paranoid assumptions peddled by the Right (Ragazzi, 2016). The concession of rights to Muslims depends on their dissociation from extremist groups, implicitly assuming their complicity in radical ideologies and behaviours. Renzi invited “moderate Islam to raise its voice” (Dire, 2016) after jihadist terrorist attacks, stating a symbolical requirement that Muslims should routinely validate their allegiance to the hosting nation after such episodes of murdering. As discussed earlier, this artificial distinction is also part of the French and British left-wing party’s discourse on Muslims.

The idea that Muslims are potentially dangerous subjects is at the core of the first right-wing trope identified by this thesis. It intertwines with the discourse about the ongoing “radicalization of Islam”, that the Democratic Party used as a theoretical lens to securitize immigration, to launch the first Italian CVE strategy and the reform of counterterrorism (DL 7/2015) - that in turn drew criticism as potentially authoritarian and disproportionate (Cavaliere, 2015). The Draft Bill 2883/2017 (approved by the Chamber of Deputies, then stalled in the Senate)²¹ proposed to create a Parliamentary Committee to monitor the “radicalization and violent extremism inspired to jihadism” and to oversee the respect of secularism and equality in matters of gender, race, ethnicity, and religion. Differently from the Right, the Bill neglected any reference to the criminalization of Islamic fundamentalism, the ban of mosques, and the necessity for harder entry policies, that Brothers of Italy asked to insert (Camera dei Deputati, 2016). Yet, the Democratic Party accepted and translated the trope about Islam as a radical religion clashing with the West, in line with the argument that Islam is preyed on by radical sects who are dwarfing the moderate factions and transform Western cities into hotspots for civic unrest and terrorist actions (Kepel, 2015).

This argument can be countered by alternative explanations of jihadism, but it ended up shaping the elaboration of the Italian CVE strategy - which eventually has never been approved. Yet, as it did not contain any article on far-right terrorism, this strategy signals that the centre-left absorbed the overwhelming concern raised by Islamism compared to racially motivated attacks. While Italy has been spared by jihadist attacks, it was targeted by far-right terrorism. In 2011 Gianluca Casseri (close to the extreme right group CasaPound Italy) shot dead two Senegalese market traders in Florence and wounded three others before committing suicide. Seven years later, Luca Traini (former North League local candidate) severely wounded six African immigrants in Macerata in a mass shooting in Macerata, that only some left-wing intellectuals and newspapers characterized as “terrorism” (Colombo, Quassoli, 2022). Additionally, almost unacknowledged is the fact that there were more Italian far-right foreign fighters in the Ukrainian civil war than Italian Muslims joining ISIL’ ranks and file - only 24 (Marone, Vidino, 2018; The Soufan Center, 2019). Hence, we can appreciate again how nationalist rhetoric impacted the Democratic Party’s definition of security threats.

²¹ Senato della Repubblica (2017)

After exploring how the collision with the Right brought the centre-left to reappropriate gender equality against Islam, it is time to examine whether intra-party factions tried to halt the translation to de-securitize Muslims.

5.4 Citizenship and immigration policies: missed opportunities for de-securitization

The debates on citizenship and immigration policies yield important insights about the de-securitization of Islam. Although many factions in the Democratic Party rejected the translation from the Right, both policy fields provided opportunities to support a genuine emancipatory agenda. This section starts by analysing the tropes and policies that the Italian centre-left proposed on citizenship. From the beginning, the Democratic Party supported a functional de-securitization of immigration and Islam through easing the concession of citizenship, while the radical right contested the reform of the Italian traditional system based on the *ius sanguinis*. In so doing, the left-wing factions of the Democratic Party have followed a functional way to de-securitize citizenship, as they avoid talking about it as a security issue without rearticulating the question of Islam and showing radical forms of political engagement for Muslims' emancipation (Hansen, 2012, p.542). However, the reformist impetus contrasted with the translation of securitization analysed earlier, symbolized also by the authoritarian counterterrorism policies that implicitly operated against an easier access to citizenship by stressing the centrality of deportation as counterterrorist tool. This is the first missed opportunity for de-securitization addressed by the section.

The literature left uncharted the possibility that securitization encounters opposition because party members (internal audiences) deem the move as a betrayal of core party values. As [chapter two](#) posited, there is a delicate balance between translation, securitization, and de-securitization. The latter is a possible outcome of a failed translation that is rejected by factions worried about the dilution of partisan identities. Finally, the section discusses how the immigration agreements with Libya prompted contrasting reactions within progressive factions, that discursively de-securitized the issue. However, little was done to change the governance of Mediterranean immigration, which I consider as the second missed opportunity for de-securitization.

Differently from the ethno-nationalist ideologies of the North League and Brothers of Italy (AGI, 2018; Coluzzi, 2019), the Democratic Party has endeavoured to reform the Italian citizenship regime, regulated by the Law 91/1992. This can be considered as a mild attempt to de-securitize the access of immigrants to citizenship. The Law 91/1992 met much criticism as it established that foreigners could become Italian citizens either through the principle of *ius sanguinis* (acquisition through bloodlines), or through marriage with an Italian national, or after 10 years of uninterrupted residency in Italy. Both in 1996-2001 and 2006-08, the centre-left Cabinets tried to cut to 5 years the period of residency and to introduce a “temperate” version

of the *ius soli* (Allievi, 2014, p.729)²². Although the Democratic Party pursued the reform without sufficient political will, it gathered support from liberal centre-right MPs who were reluctant to frame citizenship through a securitarian lens. In 2009, a group of 50 MPs from all political groups (except the North League) advanced a draft bill signed by MPs Andrea Sarubbi and Fabio Granata (Camera dei Deputati, 2009) to propose the adoption of temperate *ius soli*. If approved, foreigners would be granted citizenship by showing the stability of residency in Italy or through the participation of minors in one education cycle. The new policy met harsh opposition within the right-wing coalition. Against the reform, some North League lawmakers insisted that the reform would trigger an invasion of immigrants, while the most right-wing faction of the People of Freedom fractured between the doves, who supported the reform, and the hawks, who substantially agreed with the North League. As the Sarubbi-Granata draft flopped, it is reasonable to think that the Democratic Party was identified as an audience of securitization by the Right and dragged into cultural and identity conflicts that partly worried its electors (Masseti, 2014, p.16).

Despite this pressure from right-wing parties, the Democratic Party did not turn into an agent of translated securitization around the topic of citizenship, which was meant to be facilitated according to the ambitious reforms prepared by some Cabinet members. Under the premiership of Letta (2013-14), the new Minister of Integration, Cécile Kyenge, was the first black Minister appointed to a Cabinet position in Italy. As Kyenge argued that the introduction of the *ius soli* for foreign children born in Italy was a priority of the party, she underwent harsh criticism and racist slurs by prominent figures of the North League. While the reformist thrust came to a halt with the formation of the Renzi Cabinet in 2014 (and the dismissal of Kyenge as a Minister), several centre-left MPs reiterated that a system based on the *ius sanguinis* was not appropriate for a country that had received consistent immigration flows over the last decade. On October 13, 2015, the Chamber of Deputies approved the Bill 2092, which amended Law 91/1992 with two provisions (Senato della Repubblica, 2015). Firstly, a moderate version of the *ius soli* that gives Italian citizenship to individuals born in Italy from foreign parents (at least one of them) holding a permanent residence permit or possessing the EU long-term residence permit (5 years of residence without interruption needed in both cases). Secondly, the *ius culturae*, that allows foreign minors who were born in Italy (or have entered Italy within the 12th year of life) and who have regularly attended one or more education cycles delivered by the Italian National Education System for at least 5 years to acquire Italian citizenship (Bulli, 2019, p.15).

Most Democratic Party factions agreed on approving a more inclusive reform of citizenship, vindicated by the same Minniti as a matter of crucial importance for the future of Italy (La Repubblica, 2017a). This might be surprising, considering his role as securitizing actor. This apparent ambivalence fits with the ideological position of the Democratic Party regarding the governance of ethnic minorities. Like other social-liberal and social-democratic parties, the Democratic Party does not propose an ethno-nationalist image of the Italian people, which is instead the main referent object of the radical right. For instance, after the Chamber of Deputies approved the text AS2670, the North League MP Cristian Invernizzi described the

²² E.g. the Draft Bill 1607 proposed by the Minister of Interior Amato in 2006 (La Repubblica, 2006).

reform of citizenship as a trojan horse prepared by the Left for the “Africanization of Italy”, using the Islamophobic trope of Muslims as demographic threats (Giambartolomei, 2023). Instead, the Democratic Party seemed to cherish the idea of a community of citizens open to integrate ethnic minorities and second generations into Italian constitutional fabric (Partito Democratico, 2013, 2018). This version of the citizenry aligns with a pluralist, universalist, and liberal version of nationalism, that neither resonates with the popular homogeneity theorized by populism, nor with the ethno-cultural nation secured by the radical right. As pledged by Democratic MP Sandro Gozi, global migrations demand to modernize citizenship regimes and substitute the ethno-territorial conception with a pragmatic one based on the effective economic, social and political integration of foreigners (Camera dei Deputati, 2013). Accordingly, the temperate *ius soli* and the *ius culturae* match the need to accept immigrants if they are integrated in the national fabric.

Although civic integration policies lack resemblance with ethnic populism, they also lead to exclusion and securitization as they translate from the Right some arguments that naturalize Muslim immigrants as culturally more reluctant to integrate. Indeed, the distinction between ethnic and civic nationalism is rather porous, as the civic values sold as a benchmark for a positive integration are often the ones shared by ethnic majorities (Mouritsen et.al., 2019, pp. 600-604). The Democratic Party’s policies on civic integration hide three problematic flaws.

First, the logic of cultural adherence that compels Muslims to adopt Italian majoritarian standards and consistently validate their loyalty to the Republic. This logic precedes the Pact, as it already marked the Charter of values for citizenship and integration (realized under Amato in 2007) whose subscription seemed to be particularly reserved to Muslim minorities. Secondly, the possibility to remove citizenship in case of severe threats to national security, as powerfully argued by the North League and reiterated by several centre-left lawmakers²³. Thirdly, the link between successful integration of “good Muslims” and restrictive immigration and deportation policies to keep arrivals under a tolerance threshold, beyond which the possibilities of radicalization and xenophobia would scale up. The tension between generous citizenship and integration policies and security imperatives was already evident at the beginning of the legislature. It turned into an unbearable cost as soon as the Right vocalized its hostility to the reform, pushing the Democratic Party to back down.

During the legislature, the pressure exerted by the Right in the proximate context urged the Democratic Party to gradually translate the meaning of security as absence of threats to Italian law-and-order, and more specifically to Italian borders. This translation served to securitize citizenship policies. The North League, Brothers of Italy, and extreme right groups (CasaPound Italia, Forza Nuova) reacted vehemently against the temperate *ius soli* and *ius culturae*. The protests were also caused by the increasing perception of insecurity raised by Mediterranean immigration and jihadist terrorism. Such critical junctures entangled the reform of citizenship with the need to protect the country from security threats, such as immigrants

²³ See the Draft Bills Bressa (PD), 273/2013, (Chamber of Deputies); Di Lello (PD), 200/2013 (Chamber of Deputies); Caparini (LN), 404/2013 (Chamber of Deputies); Stucchi (LN), 738/2013 (Senate). All the Draft Bills were unified in the bill 2092 (Senato della Repubblica, 2015).

and second-generation Muslims who might potentially radicalize. The North League normalized the discursive link between terrorism and *ius soli*. The MP Massimiliano Fedriga warned that the model of integration based on *ius soli* and “easy citizenship” miserably failed in Parisian banlieues and Molenbeek (Giambartolomei, 2023). These urban areas represented the emblem of Islamist radicalization, as explained in the previous chapter. The possibility that undeserving immigrants would become citizens to then turn against native people haunted the debate on citizenship. Hence, easing access to citizenship would put severe obstacles to repatriations for security reasons. The risk of a failed integration loomed even within apparently success stories. As Calderoli recalled, the Pakistani cricket player Aftab Farook, who won the European tournament with the Italian under-19 National team in 2009, was then deported in July 2016 for alleged terrorist activities (La Repubblica, 2016a). In this collision with the Right, the debate on citizenship reform was tainted by the unjustified worries that in the future Italy would deal with radicalized second-generation Muslims.

The reform bill stalled in the Senate until the legislature ended. Why has the Democratic Party missed this first opportunity to de-securitize Islam? The impact of right-wing Islamophobia has potentially induced the Democratic Party to step back, albeit it avoided to explicitly securitize citizenship as other parties did. The mild attitude of the Gentiloni Cabinet in pushing the Law forward was conditioned also by the intra-coalitional rifts between the progressive wing of the Democratic Party and the centrist party Popular Alternative, which opposed the law. The governmental paralysis sowed the seeds of internal protests. Amid these, in December 2017 the Senator Luigi Manconi (Democratic) scolded the 29 Democratic Senators absent during the last constitutional assessment of the draft bill, who was eventually not approved for lack of quorum (The Local Italy, 2017).

The Democratic Party surrendered to right-wing slogans and failed to problematize the fallacious argument that reforming the citizenship regime based on *ius sanguinis* would reduce the possibility to deport foreigners suspected of terrorism. As recalled by Vidino (2018, p.15), “deportation of foreign suspects has been the cornerstone of Italy’s counterterrorism strategy”, and the hypotheses for administrative deportation have been “expanded” in the Laws of 2005 and 2015. Administrative deportation of non-EU citizens “represents a discretionary act of the executive” and is “immediately enforceable”: therefore, compared to “judicial deportation”, it is not subject to prior judicial validation. For instance, Italian Prefects can order the administrative deportations for reasons of “social dangerousness” (Marone, 2017). 566 individuals have been deported from 2015 to October 2021 (Ministero dell’Interno, 2021), while other 79 have been deported in 2022 (Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, 2022). One reason for these relatively high numbers is that most of the individuals deported for reasons of national security do not have an Italian citizenship. Although Minniti praised the introduction of temperate *ius soli*, he seemed to believe that administrative deportation were necessary to prevent jihadist attacks on Italian soil (Minniti, 2017f). The discursive entanglement between counterterrorism and the introduction of *ius soli* implicitly suggests that maintaining the *ius sanguinis* would prevent inauspicious outcomes, such as the formation of an Islamic political party, as declared by the newspaper *Il Secolo d’Italia* - close to Brothers of Italy – (Musacchio, 2019), and the establishment of communities segregated by the rest of the nation, as declared

by MP Emanuele Fiano (Democratic Party) in the debate on CVE policies (Servizio Studi Camera dei Deputati, 2020).

The most recent Democratic Party's draft bill to introduce a temperate *ius soli* / *ius culturae* is under examination in the Italian lower house (Camera dei Deputati, 2018b). This unsuccessful path is an effect of the translation of right-wing Islamophobic and securitarian tropes, merged with the pre-existent ambivalence of the Democratic Party towards immigration and Islam. The Right hijacked the discussion on such themes, as shown by the fact that Salvini celebrated Gentiloni's decision to postpone the debate on citizenship as a victory of the North League (Bulli, 2019, p.21). As for the distal context in which the securitizing move appeared digestible for the Democratic Party, one must recall again that Minniti strived to translate security as a left-wing value, as the Left is "more capable than the Right to juggle between respect of civil liberties and rights and protection from threats" (Minniti, 2016). This ambiguity partakes the general strategy of the party to promote a left-wing doctrine of security based on occasionally generous integration policies, restrictive immigration regime and tough counterterrorism agenda covered under a thin veil of humanitarian rhetoric.

A second missed opportunity for de-securitization comes from the debate on Mediterranean immigration, as left-wing party factions contested Minniti's translation but failed to impose a more progressive line while the party was governing. The legislature 2013-18 witnessed the Democratic Party's securitarian agenda on immigration and its failed attempt to de-securitize immigration. However, after the electoral defeat in 2018, a more progressive party leadership seemed to sever the bridges with the Minniti doctrine and reject translation from the Right. Although the debate on the temperate *ius soli* did not yield any appreciable result, the Memorandum of Understanding signed with Libya went through a functional de-securitization by intra-party audiences. The first section explained that Minniti translated the Memorandum into an instrument necessary to protect human security. This could eventually justify to the Democratic Party what appeared as a restrictive policy to stem cross-border movement. However, the translation of securitization proceeded collectively. This means that it triggered dissent inside the party when some currents worried about the dilution of partisan identity caused by the massive imitation of its adversaries. This is what happened when the Memorandum attracted severe criticism within the Democratic Party and earned instead the praise of Salvini. When the latter succeeded Minniti as Interior Minister in 2018, he claimed that Minniti did "a good job" and that the new North League/Five Star Movement coalition government would "further the policies of control, pushback and deportation" launched by the former Minister (Decrestina, 2018).

Progressive Democratic Party factions contested the right-ward securitarian shift in immigration policies and advocated to reject the Memorandum for several reasons. The deal seemed to validate the xenophobic narratives and policies that the Right had erstwhile promoted. The Governor of Tuscany Enrico Rossi claimed that Minniti turned into the copy of Salvini: a strategy that wouldn't pay out since "people always prefer the original to the copy" (Calabrò, 2018). Matteo Orfini (Democratic Party President 2014-2019) advocated rejecting the Memorandum as it contrasted with human rights, because of the inhumane living conditions that migrants suffered in Libyan detention camps (Wintour, 2017; AGI, 2019). Democratic

Party Senator Francesco Verducci admonished that this debate was crucial because at stake there was the identity of the party, which should not have turned a blind eye to the violations of human rights committed in Libya (Allegranti, 2019). Additionally, translation was contested by the former Minister of Infrastructure Graziano Delrio, who stated that all Italian docks should have been opened to NGOs vessels (Vespa, 2017). Internal dissent shows that translation is a polyphonic process that must satisfy a plurality of external (electors) and internal (factions) audiences.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the Democratic Party translated the securitization of Muslims by restricting immigration and buying into the trope that Muslims are vulnerable to religious radicalization. Along with the two previous chapters, this one has showed that existing securitization theories do not explain how securitization changes according to political parties and how security tropes travel across the Right-Left spectrum. Translation helps to grasp this process. Political factors are less visible by adopting established securitization frameworks, focused as they are on executive powers acting in emergencies (Copenhagen School) or on centralized national security bureaucracies (Paris School). These approaches give the impression of a uniform and convergent securitization discourse across parties, whereas this thesis has showed that centre-left parties have moved closer to the Right, as it happened to the Democratic Party regarding immigration and Islam.

The first section has claimed that *Mare Nostrum* and the Memorandum of Understanding between Italy and Libya represent instances of translation from Right to Left, justified in the name of human security.

Then, the second section has maintained that the securitization of immigration was not an exceptional suspension of laws because, it echoed the precedent policies started by the centre-left Cabinets in the Nineties, when immigration flows from Albania were put under tight control and when the first frameworks of agreement with Libya were established. For such reasons, the subsequent translation of right-wing anti-immigration policies is entrenched into a distal context that facilitates the transfer of meaning.

The third section has explored how the Right influenced the centre-left in the proximate context. By focusing on gender equality, I showed that the Democratic Party had to react to two securitizing moves by the Right. Firstly, to the conservative ideological refrains used to securitize ethnic minorities. Some of these slogans have not been translated by the centre-left (e.g. praising Christianity), while others have influenced its rhetoric (e.g. boosting security to getting closer to the “people”). Secondly, I analysed another aspect that has paved the way to contemporary translation of securitization, this time performed by the Right: translating gender equality as a shibboleth to securitize Islam. In relation and as a reaction to it, the Democratic Party has amplified its references to gender equality in his recent integration policies (e.g. National Pact for Italian Islam) and CVE strategy.

The fourth section has examined two opportunities of missed de-securitization, namely the discussion on reforming citizenship and the renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding

with Tripoli. While in the second case there were timid signals of dissatisfaction towards the agenda decided by Minniti, the debate on citizenship went the other way around because the Democratic Party - so far reluctant to translate nationalist slogans regarding citizenship - adopted the securitarian lens of the Right and failed to introduce the moderate *ius soli* and the *ius culturae*. While the translation of anti-immigration measures has been weak (because already nested in the distal context), the reluctance to reform citizenship has concealed a stronger translation of right-wing tropes and policies.

Overall, the centre-left translated from the Right the tropes that Muslims are vulnerable to radicalization and that Muslim immigrants might be a security concern. Hence, the Democratic Party has approved restrictive immigration and counterterrorism policies. This also signals a generic shift in the interpretation of security given by the party, which has revolved more around the meaning of security as border control and as control of ethnic minorities rather than as socio-economic. Through translation, the party has adjusted right-wing tropes and policies into its own rhetorical flavour for liberal-progressive values such as gender equality and human security. Translation has occurred collectively since some intra-party factions contested the appropriation of right-wing language. Further, it has been nested in the context of unprecedented immigration flows and the growing insecurity of Italian electors.

6. Conclusion: securitization in translation

This thesis has asked: *How does securitization travel across and inside parties?* In answering to this research question, I have argued that translation explains this dynamic. The translation of security in different tropes, referent objects and policies show that there is not a uniform discourse on security issues, especially regarding the securitization of Islam. Translation fills an important gap in securitization theories by showing that political parties matter in the debates about the meaning of security. Indeed, the construction of Muslims as security threats changes according to countries, as the comparison of the British, French, and Italian case studies show, and to political parties, as discussed with respect to Labour, the Socialist Party, and the Democratic Party. I have argued that political parties translate the securitization of Muslims in three ways. *Actively*, because parties securitize in the name of referent objects aligned with their own history and ideology, to avoid accusations of passive imitation. *Collectively*, because translation is never spearheaded by a single party leader, and because translation creates internecine disputes among party members. *Contextually*, because translation is not only the fruit of critical junctures, but also of specific distal and proximate contexts.

The remainder of this conclusion proceeds as follows. The first section underlines my key contribution to securitization theories, which is the emphasis on the intra-linguistic meaning of translation and its three dimensions. In challenging the methodological state-centrism of Copenhagen and Paris securitization Schools, translation discloses a right-ward movement of centre-left parties regarding Muslims. The section also highlights how translation enriches existing research on securitization of Islam and reflects on the possibility to generalize my analytical framework to other issues that are securitized.

The second section addresses the concept of de-securitization, that I have touched upon in the last sections of each empirical chapter. It makes the case that de-securitization is a better normative option than securitization and reflects on the normative implications of translation. On the one hand, the rejection of translation opens the possibility for the de-securitization of Muslims, which can be either functional or emancipatory. On the other hand, translation can be used to de-securitize. This occurred, for instance, when the Vatican tried to de-securitize Islam. Finally, the thesis reiterates the novelty of translation and its analytical and normative implications.

6.1 How does translation contribute to securitization theories?

6.1.1 Going beyond securitization's methodological state-centrism

I have enriched the debate in critical security studies by illustrating that securitization travels not only across countries and languages, through inter-linguistic translations, but also in the same country, through intra-linguistic translations. My focus on the intra-linguistic

meaning of translation represents an important contribution because it shows that securitization is not unanimously agreed upon by all parties represented in legislative and executive institutions. This aspect has been not touched upon by the literature, which is mostly interested in how security is inter-linguistically translated (Stritzel, 2014). In dealing with the securitization of Islam, I have explained that governments are influenced by party ideologies and dynamics of party competition that strongly impact the construction of security threats. By contrast, security appears de-politicized in the traditional securitization Schools, meaning that there is little attention to the political debates about what security means. Whereas both the Copenhagen and Paris Schools are methodologically state-centric (Neal, 2012a), I have aimed to “deepen” the debate on securitization by showing that political parties put forward referent objects that do not correspond simply to state survival (Wyn Jones, 1999, p.166), but to ideas ingrained in the history and ideology of their party.

In challenging such methodological state-centrism, this dissertation has showed that specific political dynamics shape and impact the character of securitization. While securitization studies have clearly recognized that security has political dimensions (Pram Gad, Lund Petersen, 2011), the Copenhagen School’s vision of security as a process above politics, that suspends the normal law and creates a state of exception has led it to neglect the role of professional politicians and parties¹. These agents of securitization do not feature in the Paris School’s approach either, although Paris School scholars rightly argue that the Copenhagen School misses the ordinary practices of bureaucrats (military, police, intelligence) and experts (intellectuals). This network of professionals creates a securitarian discourse that is translated into administrative procedures, routinised controls and “normal” activities that do not resemble a state of exception. Hence, the Copenhagen School aims to locate the beginning of security into a speech act, whereas the Paris School analyses the normal unfolding of security practices and situates the origins of securitization into institutionalized procedures. The starting point is not the utterance (too abstract and detached from context and audiences) but the continuous bureaucratic creation and enforcement of security measures. I agree with the Paris School and with other authors arguing that security is not exceptional (Huysmans, 2006; Croft, 2012) and that “security is politics” (Neal, 2019). Nonetheless, I have integrated these approaches through a framework that gives analytical purchase to political parties and their intra-linguistic translation of securitization.

The meaning of security is inherently tied to political parties since it is translated by the Right and Left. All the chapters argued that interpreting securitization in terms of translation across parties situates the beginning of security in ideologies shared by like-minded people (party leaders, members and supporters) about what security and insecurity mean. It is true that Western political parties are facing an enduring crisis,. However, political parties are still necessary to translate electors’ preferences into concrete policies, including security affairs. Through an analytical framework that strikes a balance between party agency and structural constraints, I explored how parties propose their own image of securitization depending on

¹ The Copenhagen School’s argument has been quite influential in the post-9/11 international politics, influenced by a revival of Carl Schmitt’s thought (Odysseos, Petito, 2007) and by the works of Giorgio Agamben (2003, 2005; see also Neal, 2010).

their ideological legacy and intra-party contestation. These factors are underestimated by established securitization Schools, but they should be at the forefront. Their impact on counterterrorism, immigration and citizenship policies is profound, since more progressive and tolerant elected officials might influence governmental agencies in a different way compared to conservative ones. As Booth recalls (2007, p.101), security is a contingent concept, whose problem is “not in the meaning of the concept, but in the politics of the meaning”. Therefore, the study of securitization should be re-politicized, meaning that we should take political contestation around security more seriously.

Translation allows us to challenge the methodological state-centrism of the Copenhagen and Paris Schools and disclose a right-ward movement of centre-left parties when it comes to Islam, by contrast with a widespread perception that parties are converging towards undifferentiated centrist positions. This is another important contribution to securitization studies, where left-wing parties have received less attention than far-right parties (McCluskey, 2019; Wojczewski, 2020; Bonansinga, 2022). While chapter two explained that convergence between the right-wing and left-wing parties has happened after they both adopted neoliberal economic policies (Katz, Mair, 2009; Evans, Tilley, 2017), this did not happen with the governance of Muslims, where parties have further politicized religious and cultural issues by arguing that some of them should be treated as security problems². The association between the concept of security and cultural/religious issues sits more comfortably with a conservative vision of politics than with a progressive one. Both the Right and centre-left have securitized Islam, but this pattern resulted from a right-ward movement of centre-left parties. The latter have endorsed Islamophobic tropes and policies, while the Right only adjusted left-wing tropes about Islam as anti-secular and patriarchal, but it maintained the same restrictive agenda. The centre-left drifted towards the Right pole of the chain of agents. This is unexpected from progressive parties who are often thought to be supportive of ethnic minorities. Likewise, centre-right parties have been overshadowed by the electoral success of radical Right parties (e.g. in the Italian and Swedish 2022 parliamentary elections), pushing the former to harshen their agenda on immigration and Islam. If one agrees that “converging” means to come from different directions to meet at the same point, there is no convergence between parties in the securitization of Islam because mainstream Right and Left have moved further right-ward, while the radical Right has not moved left-ward at all.

Translation is an active and contextual process that helps political parties to justify securitization in the name of their own historical and ideological trajectories. These aspects are missed by the state-centric approach of securitization Schools, whereas political scientists have written extensively about the mainstreaming of xenophobic ideas from the far-right to conservative and liberal parties (Kallis, 2013; Akkerman et.al., 2016; Mondon, Winter, 2017). Yet, like securitization scholars, political scientists do not engage enough with the relation between left-wing parties and Islam. Moreover, the concept of mainstreaming seems to follow a model centred on the diffusion of ideas, which does not thoroughly factor in how the Left elaborates upon the concepts produced by the Right. Diffusion and translation are not

² As argued by Berman and Kundnani (2021, p. 27), “convergence on economic issues helped to push non-economic ones to the fore”.

synonyms. The model of mainstreaming is predicated on the assumption that power travels through simple diffusion that requires no active intervention from the participants. Instead, the model of translation presupposes that “the spread in time and space of anything - claims, orders, artefacts, goods - is in the hands of people; each of these people may act in many different ways, letting the token drop, or modifying it, or deflecting it, or betraying it, or adding to it, or appropriating it” (Latour, 1986, p.267). The model of mainstreaming downsizes the active translation through which the Left attempts to show that speaking of security, border controls and reduction of religious freedom is in line with left-wing ideologies and historical legacies. Despite being useful to interpret how ideas are spread, the concept of mainstreaming does not shed light on the reverse process from Left to Right either, which I will come back to shortly.

6.1.2 Case findings and possible generalizations of translation

The three case studies’ chapters have displayed affinities and differences across the UK, France and Italy. I have found that the translated securitization happens as an active process in the three cases, but it is justified in the name of distinct referent objects that change across countries and parties. This results from the fact that Islam is translated inter-linguistically and intra-linguistically. Contrary to the Copenhagen School, the referent objects do not correspond to mere “state survival”, since there are other reasons to securitize Muslims even when they do not represent an urgent matter of national security. Chapter three has found that the translation of securitization in the UK had already started in the Sixties when Labour adopted restrictive policies on immigration. The referent object secured by Labour is the idea of “balanced race relations”, predicated on a trade-off between granting rights to the ethnic minorities already settled in Britain (which explains the Race Relations Acts and the Equality Act of 2010) and limiting access to the British labour market to new immigrants. While Labour’s securitization is predicated on race, chapter four has showed that the Socialist Party has condoned the translation of right-wing tropes in the name of *laïcité*, which the party considered already jeopardised by Islam in the Eighties. Chapter five has examined how the translated securitization of immigration by the Democratic Party is not recent because it aligns with structural racism and with the past handling of Albanian flows by centre-left parties who already selected a humanitarian discourse to justify border controls.

The referent objects show that the Right and Left are still differentiated entities. Additionally, referent objects matter because they serve to justify policies to internal and external audiences. Despite shifting right-ward, centre-left parties need to show loyalty to their core party identity, otherwise the translation of external tropes and policies would sound like a betrayal. In each country, translation has raised significant criticism by some intra-party factions. However, the internal dissent followed different trajectories in each centre-left party, as I will soon recall in the section on de-securitization.

In all my case studies, translation has happened as a contextual move. The referent objects are historically situated in a distal context in which contemporary forms of translation make sense. Despite the similar dynamic, however, countries and parties are embedded to different distal contexts. For instance, the socio-cultural fabric in which Islam has been constructed as a threat to *laïcité* in France is absent in the tradition of British and Italian left-

wing parties. Likewise, the proximate context shows conflicts between Right and Left in each case, but also specific national manifestations of right-wing and left-wing ideologies, electoral systems, and party systems, which influence the translation securitization. For instance, the UK lacks well-established radical right parties able to reach a stable representation in the legislature (as done by the French National Rally and the Italian North League and Brothers of Italy) and positions of power in the executive (as achieved by the North League and Brothers of Italy). Nonetheless, elements of the same radical right ideology can be found in political parties that reached some visibility in the last twenty years, such as the UKIP and the British National Party, and in the Conservatives, especially under the leadership of Thatcher.

This dissertation has also contributed to current debates on securitization of Islam and engaged with scholarship on Islamophobia in the West. Since security is a contingent concept, I have applied the analytical framework of translated securitization to an issue, Islam, that is securitized by right-wing and left-wing parties alike. Translation can happen if political agents belonging to different parties securitize the same threat. Otherwise, it would fall on deaf ears. This dimension strengthens again the importance of the context on which securitization thrives (Ciută, 2009). Agents interact across distal and proximate contextual dimensions that help to establish the meaning of security and guide the translation of securitization. Thus, securitization is not only the product of critical junctures that call for urgent responses to a given threat. Political ideologies and partisan histories set the interpretative framework in which the translated securitization makes sense. Aside from this distal context, translation is also inspired by the proximate context in which parties fight. Translation can occur because the Right and Left both consider Muslims as potentially dangerous, although they use different tropes to vocalize their concerns.

I have identified four Islamophobic tropes. Two of them sit comfortably with right-wing ideologies: 1) Islam is a violent religion that contrasts with the West; 2) Muslim immigrants are a demographic threat who are replacing white Europeans. Two other tropes are traditionally associated with liberal and left-wing ideologies: 3) Islam is unable to separate the political sphere from the religious sphere; 4) Islam is a patriarchal religion that poses obstacles to gender equality. In analysing how tropes and policies travel, I have showed that Muslims are also discriminated by left-wing parties that have traditionally been more inclusive. I have also examined different counterterrorism and anti-immigration policies that disproportionately target Muslims. Although my research is limited to the UK, France and Italy, the translation can be investigated also in other countries in which both right- and left-wing parties have securitized Muslims.

The translation framework can be applied to other issues that are securitized by both right-wing and left-wing parties. One contemporary example that deserves investigation is environmentalism. I have explained that, although the bulk of translation is on the Left, the Right also translates and compels the Left to translate. Right-wing parties hijack battles usually mobilized by the Left (e.g. secularism and gender equality) to lash out against immigrants and Muslims (Akkerman, 2015; Brubaker, 2017; Foster, Kirke, 2023). Regarding environmentalism, climate justice and environmental protection have been more frequently

flagged by left-wing parties and groups as referent object that require urgent measures and radical transformation of our way of life. However, the Right has also tried to appropriate environmentalism. Although some radical right politicians have expressed scepticism or even denial towards climate change, overall right-wing parties tend to adapt their arguments according to countries and circumstances, as recently illustrated by Malm and the Zetkin Collective (2021). Hence, Meloni has argued that “ecology has been militarily occupied from the left” and that “there is nothing more right-wing than ecology” (Di Sario, 2022). Boris Johnson³ and parties like Alternative for Germany have translated the fight against climate change as a necessary instrument to avoid that environmental harsher conditions drive mass immigration towards Europe (Milman, 2021). Such translation might seem surprising and ideologically inconsistent with some right-wing climate denials: for instance; the very same Alternative for Germany denies human-induced climate change (Spiegel, 2019). Nonetheless, there is a facilitating distal context in which such translation becomes intelligible to right-wing audiences. As Moore and Roberts (2022, p.39) show, right-wing groups supporting ecologism had already called for restrictions on immigration in the Seventies, like in the case of the Federation for American Immigration Reform. The right-wing translation of climate change opens important avenues to generalize my analytical framework to other issues that are securitized across different parties but translated in multiple shapes.

To recap, I have argued that my key contribution to securitization theories is the emphasis on the intra-linguistic meaning of translation. By focusing on political parties, my analytical framework challenges the methodological state-centrism of traditional securitization Schools. In so doing, translation helps identifying a right-ward movement of centre-left parties regarding the securitization of Islam, that is not based on an amorphous discourse but on specific tropes and policies adjusted by right-wing and left-wing parties. The section has also reiterated the importance of the active and contextual dimensions of translation.

The next section starts with a reflection on the third dimension of translation, the collective, and then focuses on the concept of de-securitization. The section opens up new directions for research and maintains that there are significant links between de-securitization and translation.

6.2 How can translation open opportunities for de-securitization?

The most promising area for further investigation is de-securitization, a concept that can be enriched by engaging with the translation framework. I have contributed to the literature on de-securitization by arguing that the rejection of translation by political parties can lead to de-securitization. Since translation is a collective process, de-securitization can be triggered by intra-party reactions to the adoption of a language that is at odds with partisan legacy. Political parties act as both actors and audiences of translation by interacting industriously with the source of securitization. Agents draw upon partisan ideological repertoire to avoid passive imitation so that audiences can accept translation as congruent with the party legacy. Translation is a selective process, as party leaders and mediators choose the referent objects

³ British Conservative Prime Minister from 2019 to 2022.

that are more functional to their agenda. The translators must persuade multiple audiences, who are: 1) *external*, such as the parties on the chain of agents, who might accuse the translator of copying the original message; 2) *internal*, such as party factions, who might disagree with the incorporation of external narratives; 3) *external* and *internal*, such as the electors, who might punish the translator for betraying the party identity. Each of these audiences can reject the translation and promote de-securitization, although the latter is not an automatic consequence of the former, as chapter two clarified.

This thesis has interpreted de-securitization as functional and emancipatory. These meanings are built on existing categories elaborated by securitization scholars (Huysmans, 1998b; Hansen, 2012). While these scholars seem to agree that de-securitization involves moving an issue back to the realm of political debates, I consider both functional and emancipatory de-securitization as inherently tied to party politics. In so doing, I have tried to integrate Huysmans' research (1998b, pp. 572-574), which delineates two ways to de-securitize. The first one is "instrumental", which means to shift an issue from the realm of security to the political one because the securitarian approach is deemed ineffective. The instrumental version is inspired by the Copenhagen School and its strict division between a political and a security sphere (Waever, 1995). The second one is "ethico-political", which means that de-securitization is chosen to unravel the construction of a political community based on the oppression of the securitized subjects (immigrants in Huysmans's paper, Muslims in this thesis). This division between instrumental and ethico-political modalities has also inspired the work of Hansen (2012), who identifies four varieties of de-securitization. One of them is truly original ("silencing"), whereas the others are modelled on the previous categories discussed by the literature. Accordingly, the concepts of "change through stabilization" and "replacement" involve moving an issue into the sphere of politics (as the Copenhagen School suggests), whereas the concept of "re-articulation" entails disrupting the "friend-enemy distinction" (2012, p. 543), recalling the argument of Huysmans. The distinction between realm of politics and security also appears in the conceptualization of "managerial" and "transformative" de-securitization (Balzacq et. al., 2015b), which "links de-securitization directly to the theme of contestation: it differentiates between depoliticization- managerialism on the one hand and politicization-contestation on the other" (Hansen, 2015, p.222). I have contested such division by arguing that processes of construction and deconstruction of security are influenced by inter-party and intra-party dynamics.

The translation from right-wing to left-wing parties has prompted much discomfort amid left-wing factions in the Labour party, the Socialist Party and the Democratic Party, who acted as powerful internal audiences. The use of right-wing tropes and policies, as well as the justification in the name of some referent objects over others, were contested as they risked betraying the parties' original principles. Chapter three has showed that Corbyn's Labour de-securitized Muslims in an emancipatory way. Against the first and second tropes, Corbyn has highlighted that the discursive association between Islam and terrorism leads to discriminatory outcomes for British Muslims, as seen in the "war on terror" and in the British counterterrorism strategy, that Corbyn has called to substantially reform. Left-wing factions in the Socialist Party, as illustrated in chapter four, have not fostered a true emancipatory agenda for French Muslims, which would be possible only by substantially revising the current discourse and

policies on French *laïcité*. Despite calling not to utter right-wing slogans and to functionally de-securitize some issues (i.e. citizenship), Socialist Party left-wing factions have not made other strides to fight Islamophobia during Hollande's Presidency. Likewise, as chapter five has discussed, the attempts to de-securitize Islam by the Italian Democratic Party's left wing have been more functional than emancipatory, having failed to push the citizenship reform forward and to stop the migration deals with Libya.

6.2.1 De-securitization as a normative goal

After assessing the case findings on de-securitization, it is worth asking what the normative implications of de-securitization are. This thesis ultimately suggests that using a security vocabulary is dangerous and that de-securitization is a better normative goal than securitization, especially - but not only - regarding Muslims. Although I have not fully engaged with debates on whether de-securitization should be preferred to securitization (a preference already expressed by the Copenhagen School)⁴, this question matters because of the ethical concerns haunting critical scholars of security (Huysmans, 1998a; Roe, 2004). Securitization radicalizes the discourse about a certain topic and ends up prescribing authoritarian methods, a division of society between friends and enemies, and a sense of urgency. Security practices, according to Balzacq (2015, p.2), are based on certain "rules" that are not reducible to the features of specific contexts. This does not mean that securitization creates an exceptional suspension of law, as the policies are usually normalised and implemented routinely by a network of law-enforcing agencies (Huysmans, 2006). Yet, this "normality" is based on coercive measures and hostility towards the securitized threats, which makes securitization a palatable option for authoritarian leaders across all the political spectrum, in Western and non-Western countries alike, especially when such leaders mobilise populist rhetoric (Kurylo, 2020; Destradi et.al., 2022).

Choosing "security" is an ambiguous and ultimately risky choice, even when the problem we have in mind is relevant and in need of special attention. The meaning of the signifier "security" varies over time, but it is still entrenched with the aims and instruments decided by central states and the parties sitting in national governments. States do not have a monopoly on securitization, as other actors can equally start the process (Croft, 2012). However, when an issue is presented as a security threat, there is the risk that states will monopolize the unfolding of the process by imposing their agenda to eradicate the threat, increasing punishment and policing, and mobilizing military tools. State representatives might appropriate the issue to protect by perpetuating oppressive policies towards categories that are seen as threatening. In so doing, governing parties might translate important battles to justify authoritarian practices against subjects who allegedly fuel the threat in question. As explained earlier, this is what was done by right-wing parties flagging women and gay rights to securitize Muslims, or by centre-left parties using secularism to "emancipate" Muslim women from submissive religious practices like wearing the *hijab*.

⁴ For further debate on this point, see Waever (1995), Roe (2004), Floyd (2011).

Therefore, this thesis suggests avoiding the language of security due to the radical discourse implied by its dichotomous logic and to the hegemonic position that governing parties and security agencies occupy in deciding how to deal with threats. Overall, I agree with Aradau, who rejects the logic of security since it is predicated on the assumption of precise hierarchies between “who is to be made insecure so that certain subjects can be made secure” (Aradau, 2004, p.402)⁵. This argument challenges Booth (1991, p.319) who instead posits that “security and emancipation are two sides of the same coin. Emancipation, not power or order, produces true security. Emancipation, theoretically, is security”. A similar posture is shared by Nunes (2012) and McDonald (2015). The latter claims (2015, p.157) that the logic of security as “dangerous, exclusionary and exceptionalist” is not frozen across time and space but is the fruit of a state-centric interpretation. If security is contextualized in multiple spatial and temporal dimensions, it becomes a fluid concept that can be potentially translated into emancipatory projects and benign consequences, such as for the environment (2015, p.159). Following Ashley’s definition, McDonald defines emancipation as “freedom from unacknowledged constraints, relations of domination, conditions of distorted communication and understanding that deny humans the capacity to make their future through full will and consciousness” (Ashley, 1981, p.227 in McDonald 2015, p.160). In this respect, the first step is to abolish the constraints faced by certain securitized groups or individuals and only then build an alternative agenda based on mutual recognition and solidarity. However, speaking security risks creating a zero-sum game between secure and insecure subjects, undermining the possibilities of achieving emancipation. Hence, the concept of emancipation should be detached from security and understood as a variety of de-securitization.

6.2.2 Can translation be used to de-securitize?

I have argued throughout the thesis that the rejection of translation by left-wing political parties can disclose possibilities to de-securitize Muslims. Another intriguing question is whether translation can be used to de-securitize. This question is worth raising because it invites us to reflect on the normative implications of translation. According to the analytical framework designed in this thesis, there are no obstacles to achieving de-securitization through translation. Since translation means “changing a set of words or a speech from one language into another language, or, within the same language, from one register into another one”, parties can appropriate each other’s concepts to de-construct a security issue. Left-wing politicians might translate a right-wing language to de-securitize Islam: for instance, by selecting rhetoric based on religion (historically an issue owned by right-wing parties) to accuse the Right of being xenophobic and, thus, not aligned with the universal message of solidarity and love preached by Christ. Despite this being possible in theory, so far there is little evidence of this. Radical Left parties contesting the translated securitization of Islam have de-securitized by sticking to socialist and social-democratic principles, such as the idea that the first cause of insecurity is socioeconomic, rather than cultural or religious. In the 2021 summer convention of *La France Insoumise*, Mélenchon (2021b) argued that “the enemy is not the Muslim, but the financial capital”. However, radical Left parties can still translate to de-securitize if they

⁵ She builds on Balibar (2018), who expresses strong criticism of French *laïcité*.

translate the meaning of “Muslims” from “threats” to “allies” and create alternative narratives based on tolerance, dialogue and peace, rather than conflict.

Another possibility to de-securitize through translation can be found if we take seriously the role played by religious actors. Political parties are not unique agents involved in the translation of security. Since they interact with the society they are nested in, further research is needed on religious bodies that have promoted inter-faith dialogue and tolerance towards Muslims. This line of investigation would also contribute to enriching the debate on religion and securitization. While the research produced so far has yielded relevant theoretical (Bagge Lautsen, Waever, 2000; Kanwal Sheikh, 2014) and empirical insights on some countries (Karyotis, Stratos, 2010; Vuori, 2011), the role of religious actors as “moral audiences” of securitization is yet to be thoroughly examined. Moral audiences can provide or deny some symbolic support that might increase or decrease the chances of successful securitization, despite such symbolic endorsement being formally unnecessary (Balzacq, 2005, p.185). While there is research on how the public opinion acts as moral audience (Roe, 2008), it is also important to study the role of religious bodies who have leverage in influencing electors. The posture of Christian Churches on the securitization of Islam is a topic that deserves attention because of the role played by important Christian personalities in acting as moral audiences that might endorse or refuse the xenophobic language adopted by political parties.

In this respect, it is important to explore what the Vatican says about the immigration agenda supported by the Italian Right. The Vatican is not a monolithic entity. A religious community, like a political community, contains parties and factions that can be positioned on a spectrum of beliefs and thus on a chain of agents like the one that I built for right-wing and left-wing parties in chapter two. When it comes to Islam, the Vatican is animated by both “progressive” personalities who support inter-religious dialogue and the doctrine established by the Second Vatican Council, and by “conservative” ones who still position Islam as a competing religion and a hostile other (Pratt, 2010; Siddiqui, 2018). If we look at Italian politics in the last three decades, it is possible to find examples of both factions. Some Catholic priests and bishops (like the ones in the group Communion and Liberation) have advanced arguments ideologically close to the radical Right regarding the demographic and religious threats posed by Muslims (Guolo, 2011, pp.42-64). Likewise, the North League has provided a political platform to positions that are very critical of the inter-religious dialogue with Islam, such as the ones espoused by traditionalist Catholic movements. This fracture has spilled over in the Catholic electorate, as some scholars find that Catholic voters have not usually opted for radical Right parties (Mayer, 2013; Minkenberg, 2018; Passarelli, Tuorto, 2018), while others have found that the support for the radical Right has increased over the last years (Raison du Cleuziou, 2019).

These attitudes mirror a rift between two translations of Christianity that have acquired visibility in the public debate after José Mario Bergoglio was elected as Pope Francis on March 13, 2013. The previous chapters fleshed out how radical Right parties securitize Islam also in the name of an interpretation of Christianity that stresses more the dimension of cultural belonging to common white, European roots than the dimension of believing (Davie, 2006;

Hurd, 2008; Roy 2016b). According to Italian sociologist Guolo, the North League manipulates religious narratives to justify a Christian worldview based on identitarian ideas. In so doing, they translate Christianity into a “religion without Church” (Guolo, 2011, p.149). This xenophobic interpretation has long been condemned by part of the Christian Churches as “incompatible with the message of the Evangelists” (Mayer, 2013, p.163). Specifically, Pope Francis has rejected this translation of Christianity and advanced an alternative worldview based on inter-religious engagement with Islam and compassion towards refugees (Petito, Thomas, 2015; Carter, 2018; Carr-Lemke, Glatzer, 2018). In the securitization framework, the Pope has acted as a “moral audience” who condemns the rhetoric of the clash of civilizations put forward by the North League

Several speeches and gestures show Pope Francis’ will to de-securitize Muslims in an emancipatory way, by proposing a more inclusive image of the political community. At his inauguration, the Pope “decided to go to a youth prison where he washed the feet of some inmates, including, for the first time, those of a woman and a Muslim” (Siddiqui, 2018, p.170), contrary to the usual practices of the Vatican, such as the celebration of the Last Supper at St. Peter’s Basilica and washing the feet of priests. In July 2013, for his first trip outside of Rome, he travelled to Lampedusa, an Italian island that has become a central transit point for immigrants from Africa. During a lunch for the poor organized in Rome in November 2019, Pope Francis arranged a pork-free menu to accommodate the requests made by potential Muslim guests⁶. According to Carr-Lemke and Glatzer (2018, p.269), Pope Francis has reframed the issue of refugees, characterized as a “global solidarity opportunity” and as a “gift” to receiving European states. In a speech released in front of EU leaders in 2017, Pope Francis argued that “Europe regains hope when it does not close itself off in fear of false security”, in a vehement criticism of European states’ border policies. Not only had Pope Francis contested the trope about Muslims as demographic invaders, he urged Christians, in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, “not equate abhorrence of today’s ‘violent fundamentalism’ pursued by some Muslims with ‘hateful generalizations’ of Islam”, which raised criticism among conservative Christians (Siddiqui, 2018, p.174)⁷.

Therefore, Pope Francis has translated the meaning of Christianity from a religion threatened by Muslims into a religion that pledges to open dialogues and de-securitize Muslims. His language regarding migration puts at the forefront the human dignity of immigrants and the challenges they face, which speaks to the concept of “ethico-political” de-securitization elaborated by Huysmans (1998b). This translation is rooted in a specific Christian distal context, as it “echoes a lesson embedded in *Matthew 25* to welcome the stranger” (Carr-Lemke, Glatzer, 2018, p.269), as well as Catholic Social teachings (best expressed in the encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, 1891) and, partly, the emphasis on the poor placed by Latin American liberation theologians (Carter, 2018, p.173). In this discourse, insecurity is not triggered by a clash between Islam and the West but is connected to a global economic

⁶ A similar gesture was made one month earlier by the Archbishop of Bologna, Matteo Zuppi, who attracted much criticism by Salvini.

⁷ However, Pope Francis also raised an important issue with Muslims, asking Muslim-majority countries to “grant Christians freedom to worship and to participate in their faith, in light of the freedom which followers of Islam enjoy in Western countries!” (Siddiqui, 2018, p.174).

order based on the unequal distribution of wealth and power (Carter, 2018, p.181). This posture has gained Bergoglio the reputation of a left-wing pontiff, who translates Marxist theories on international relations (“world-system” and “dependency” theories)⁸ into a language more intelligible to Catholic audiences, inspired by the ideological tenets mentioned above (Carter, 2018, p.180). Despite this translation of a left-wing language, Pope Francis has been described as “neither Left nor Right” and against “the individualism of liberals and the economic analysis of Marxism” (Mott, 2018, p.92). However, his rhetoric and gestures have qualified him as a more sympathetic de-securitizing actor than many centre-left parties who engaged in securitization practices.

To recap, this section has engaged with the concept of de-securitization, which represents one of the most promising areas for future research. It has reiterated the main findings of the thesis regarding de-securitization in left-wing parties and it has advocated that agents avoid the language of security due to its harsh distinction between friends and enemies, and to the hegemonic role of governing parties and security agencies in deciding who raises insecurity. The section has also advanced the possibility that translation can be used de-securitize, to which I will come back in the last part of this conclusion.

6.2.3 Analytical and normative implications of translation

To conclude, this thesis has aimed to develop an alternative framework for studying securitization that addresses a clear gap in the existing literature, namely the absence of a solid engagement with political parties and their multiple understandings of security. I have argued that securitization travels across and inside parties through translation. I have done so by drawing together cross disciplinary resources and integrating them in a framework that speaks to critical security studies, research on political parties and research on Islamophobia in Europe. This research is significant from both analytical and normative standpoints. Analytically, translation shows how right-wing and left-wing political parties interpret the meaning of security and the question about the links between Islam and insecurity. Such a framework allows disclosing of significant differences among political and civil society actors. Some of them, namely centre-left parties, have betrayed values of solidarity to embrace more nationalist approaches, by using translation to securitize Muslims. Other agents, like radical Left parties and some religious actors, raised serious concerns about the securitization of Islam, contesting the translation of reactionary tropes while fostering a more inclusive translation of what insecurity means and why Islam has nothing to do with it.

Normatively, the effects of translation are highly contingent. Accordingly, translation can be mobilized both to securitize and to de-securitize specific issues. Hence, the questions about the desirability of translation cannot be thought of in isolation from the kind of tropes and policies translated by political elites. This marks a difference with the debate on the desirability of securitization, that as mentioned earlier relates to discursive links with state sovereignty, violence and construction of friends and enemies. Regarding Islam, the rejection of the translated securitization of Muslims by some formal and moral audiences and the

⁸ For a wider debate, see Linklater (2013)

following trajectories of de-securitization show the existence of dissenting voices who have parted company with the Islamophobic tropes circulating in the last decades among mainstream parties. De-securitization, according to Jutila (2006), is a matter of degrees and not an endpoint. This is a valid point since de-securitization can proceed from a functional to an emancipatory modality. However, I claim that the emancipatory de-securitization of Muslims should also be a normative endpoint shared by academics and policymakers alike.

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