

**THE FRENCH COUNCIL for the MUSLIM FAITH:
ITS IMPLICATIONS for REPRESENTING MUSLIMS in FRANCE**

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ABSTRACT

The French Council for the Muslim Faith (CFCM) was formed in 2002 to act as an authoritative body for Muslims in France that it might regulate issues such as halal meat, holidays, and mosque construction, among others. A second intended role of the Council was to represent the interests of all Muslims in France that their interests might be communicated more effectively to the French government, that their growing place within French society and state might be legitimized, rather than pushed aside. Thus in this thesis, I pose this question: “Is the CFCM an effective representative of Muslims in France?”

This thesis seeks to answer this question in three parts. First, I look at the political and electoral structure of the CFCM and assess representation as a result of this structure. Then, I examine the constituent groups of the CFCM and their internal controversies to consider the representation of Muslims in France by the greater CFCM. Finally, I consider instances where the CFCM has ruled or spoken in an official capacity on both religious and social issues to demonstrate that the Council is effective at representation in some areas but not others. I ultimately conclude that by and large, the Council is not an effective representative for all Muslims in France, except in very limited circumstances. I further conclude that the Council is more effective at representing a large portion of faithful Muslims in France, but still not all.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The French Council for the Muslim Faith (CFCM) was established in 2003 by then France's Minister of the Interior, Nicolas Sarkozy, "*Pour lutter contre le danger d'un Islam des caves et garages,*" or, "To fight against the danger of an Islam of basements and garages."¹ In Sarkozy's mind, if he did not establish a commission to be the official representative of Muslims in France, their religion would be driven further underground and would ultimately result in extremism and further discontent. Officially, the purpose of the commission is to rule on the construction of mosques, the organization of Muslim holidays, the butchering and preparation of halal meat, the education of imams, the management of cemeteries and burial practices, and the nomination of prison chaplains.² Unofficially, but equally as important, the Council seeks to act as a single voice among the multi-vocal entity of all Muslim factions within France, with the ultimate goal of diffusing inter-Islamic dissent, and greater dissent among Muslim voices in France and the French government and society. An Associated Press article from 2005 describes it as "An umbrella organization for France's Muslim community, the government's chosen point of contact with Islamic leaders."³ In the *Time International Atlantic Edition*, Bruce Crumley writes, "In an attempt to turn back the tide of fundamentalism among France's 5 million Muslims, the government set up the CFCM in late 2002. The organization was supposed to encourage a homegrown, more liberal

¹ Karine G. Barzegar, "Un CFCM Pour Lutter Contre "Un Islam des Caves et des Garages"," *AP French Worldstream*, 19 June 2005.

² Ibid.

³ Jamey Keaten, "New Muslim Chaplain for Prisons Part of French Effort to Curb Extremism Behind Bars," *Associated Press Newswires*, 16 September 2005.

strand of Islam and improve communication between the government and the Muslim community.”⁴

The overarching question that this thesis aims to address is one of representation: “To what extent and to what effects does the CFCM represent the interests of Muslims in France?” In this thesis, I am purposefully examining the CFCM’s electoral system, constituent groups, and official actions to draw inferences about representation for Muslims in France. Stemming from this very basic question of representation is also the issue of secularism: Muslims in France vary in the ways they approach their faith. Can one body encompass the representational needs of Muslims with differing degrees of secularism? Finally, from this question, a third question proceeds. What role does a religious Council play in the representation of the millions of Muslims in France who are Muslim-by-association only?

The combined issues of secularism and religious devotion bring with them tensions in France. Concerning secularism, tension exists among Muslim groups that accept or reject secularism to different degrees. In terms of religiousness, the tension lies between cultural Muslims and faithful Muslims. As this thesis proceeds, I will use three aspects of the CFCM—elections, constituent groups, and official actions—to highlight these tensions and ultimately address my initial question of representation.

By the end of this thesis, I will draw several conclusions. Chief among these is that the CFCM is not an effective body at representing all Muslims in France, cultural only or faithful, except for a few instances. These few instances of effective representation for all Muslims in France have occurred through the making of public

⁴ Bruce Crumley, "A Good Idea That's Off to a Bad Start," *Time International Atlantic*, Ed. , 28 February 2005.

statements when the CFCM is, at a minimum, projecting a collective call for understanding and tolerance of Muslims on the part of a greater French public. The CFCM's representational capacity for faithful Muslims only is effective on some issues that are universal to Islam, and rendered ineffective on other issues that are specific to different interpretations of Islam. Finally, I conclude that the tension between the dual roles of the Council as an arbiter of faith issues and as representative of a greater Muslim body in France defines the identity of the Council by reflecting the tension between faithful and secular Muslims whom the Council's authority is intended to encompass.

Literature Review

Representation and Muslim Identity

My thesis understands *a priori* that the identity of a Muslim in France is distinct from that of one who is traditionally French. As such, I am situating my assessment of the representative capacity of the CFCM within the following literatures that evidence a history of Muslim identity as being distinct in France. The following literatures concerning representation and identity also suggest that there has been a history of attempted representation for Muslims in France, and often with poor results. The CFCM is one of the most recent—and most overarching—organizations to attempt to represent a greater Muslim interest in France.

Concerning a general history in France to represent those persons of Muslim affiliation within its borders, I turn to *Remaking Muslim Politics* as edited by Robert W. Hefner. According to Hefner, there has always been a question about who can serve as

an authority to Muslims. In Chapter 13 of this work, “Pluralism and Normativity in French Islamic Reasoning,” John R. Bowen asks, “Who are the authorities among these Muslims? Because traditional Islamic institutions that defined the roles of specific authorities are virtually absent from Europe, it is difficult to use the Islamic vocabulary of *muftis*, *ulama*, or *faqih*s.”⁵ Instead, Bowen claims “Teachers at religious schools, mosque officials, and leaders of Islamic associations all can claim some degree of legitimacy as Muslim public intellectuals because of their institutional roles.”⁶ In this sense, these institutional leaders have long been the ones viewed by the French as the representatives of the Muslim faith in France by virtue of their places in the community. Within this context, my study seeks to evaluate the role of the CFCM as an authoritative body within the history of—or lack of—definitive Muslim leadership in France.

Graham Fuller writes in *The Future of Political Islam* that the problem of representing the interests of Muslims in democracies is not necessarily a question that concerns the faith, but rather the persons who comprise the faith. He writes, “Indeed, the real question is not whether “Islam is compatible with democracy” but rather what is the relationship between *Muslims* [sic] and democracy.”⁷ In terms of providing a representation for Muslims in host societies where they are not the traditional majority, he puts it in these terms: “We are discussing not what Islam is, but what Muslims want. Virtually all Muslims seek a voice in the determination of government policies that affect their own lives and welfare. And most Muslims proceed with confidence that their faith

⁵ Robert W. Hefner, ed., *Remaking Muslim Politics; Pluralism, Contestation, Democratization*, Princeton Studies in Muslim Politics (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 331.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁷ Graham E. Fuller, *The Politics of Political Islam* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 122.

is indeed compatible with the benefits of modern governance and society.”⁸ Taking Fuller’s argument into consideration, the CFCM has the potential to represent Muslims in this France in this capacity. My study of the CFCM continues along this same line of reasoning: is the CFCM effective at representing Muslims in France as individuals, rather than an abstract notion of the greater Faith and its needs?

Furthermore, there is a history of objectifying Muslims in Europe and France. In “The Islamic and Western Worlds: “End of History” or the “Clash of Civilizations”?,” an essay from *The New Crusades, Constructing the Muslim Identity*, Mujeeb R. Khan writes about the historical process in Western Europe, including France, that contributed to a creation of the Muslim as an ‘other.’ “...The southern and eastern Mediterranean has long served as Europe’s consummate ‘Other.’ From the early medieval period to today, this ‘Other’ has yet to be genuinely incorporated into Europe because it has been an essential antinomy in the European construction of ‘Self.’”⁹ Khan argues that no matter what degree of integration or assimilation occurs, the historical legacy is so strong that the Muslim identity will always be defined as one separate from the European one. While this may be a bleak outlook for the future of peaceful habitation of Europe by persons ascribing to differing cultures, Khans work sheds light on why, even in our contemporary age of ‘multiculturalism,’ there continues to be a grouping of Muslims, regardless of background or culture, into one category that is viewed as separate from the traditional host-countries of Europe, including France. While my study of the CFCM does not theorize the objectifying or ‘othering’ of Muslims, the idea of Muslims within France as being separate from an established French society overshadows the entire

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Emran and Michael A. Sells Qureshi, ed., *The New Crusades; Constructing the Muslim Enemy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 177.

thesis. My study deals with the CFCM as an attempt to reconcile differences between Muslims and the French host-culture, and ultimately asks, is it effective for representing the needs of Muslims in France to participate in French culture and society?

Michele Tribalat, in her essay “The French ‘Melting Pot’: Outdated or in Need of Reinvention?” in *Reinventing France*, as edited by Susan Milner and Nick Parsons, has insight to offer in terms of discrimination against persons of Maghrebi descent, particularly Algerians, the largest group. “Young people of Algerian extraction experience the greatest job insecurity and a high rate of unemployment (40 per cent for both sexes, against 11 per cent for men and 20 per cent for women of French origin).”¹⁰ She continues, “Young men of Algerian Extraction encounter the greatest difficulties in finding and keeping employment. ...With a similar level of education, those of Portuguese extraction seem relatively protected.”¹¹ While the issue of employment for second and third generation Algerians and other Maghrebi immigrants is a different one than concerns the CFCM directly, it does serve to highlight the chronic problems that persons of Muslim affiliation face in France. There is abundant evidence of discrimination against Muslims living in France. In this sense, the CFCM has the potential to represent the interests of this people whom are facing chronic discrimination. Because the initial purpose of the CFCM is to help Muslims in France with the difficulties they face in practicing their religion, I weigh the effectiveness of the Council in speaking to a greater problem of discrimination that Muslims face with respect to their religious practices.

¹⁰ Susan Milner, and Nick Parsons, ed., *Reinventing France, State and Society in the Twenty-First Century* (Palgrave Macmillian, 2003), 134.

¹¹ Ibid.

Although faced with discrimination and difficulties, there has been a history of persons of Muslim affiliation trying to organize to represent themselves and their interests, as Miriam Feldblum details in *Reconstructing Citizenship, the Politics of Nationality Reform and Immigration in Contemporary France*. She writes, “Identity politics operated as a component of immigrant activism. ...In a highly publicized 1983 “March for Equality and Against Racism,” immigrant youth and especially *Beurs* [second-generation North-Africans) traversed across France. A major aim of the march was to bring together the different communities living in France....”¹² She goes on to detail their demands for “the right to difference” and “equality of their differences.”¹³ So while the idea of people of Muslim affiliation vying for representation is not new to France, the idea of a single authority as exemplified in the CFCM’s role is.

Bassam Tibi, in *The Crisis of Modern Islam; A Preindustrial Culture in the Scientific-Technological Age* argues that Islam is having an identity crisis in the modern world, particularly in the global era where geographic distance does not guarantee cultural isolation. As Muslim cultures’ economic proximity to other cultures decreases, their social values and traditions are often called into question. In Chapter Three, Tibi speaks of this scenario with Muslim emigrants and their subsequent generations living in non-Muslim host cultures, like in France. He argues that these people actually turn inward to religion as a means of identity, particularly when they are in a transition from home-culture to host-culture. Borrowing from the work of Niklas Luhmann, Tibi quotes, “Religion “function[s] within the social system to transform the indeterminable world into a determinable world.” This function of religion is particularly strong in those

¹² Miriam Feldblum, *Reconstructing Citizenship, the Politics of Nationality Reform in Contemporary France* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 35.

¹³ Ibid.

societies experiencing a transition period. ...Reflection on the religion of the past is a form of seeking and finding identity.”¹⁴ From this perspective, while Muslims living in non-Muslim countries may outwardly embrace some of the host country’s values, such as secularism, as Schnapper argues in *The Jacobin Legacy of Modern France*, those Muslims do cultivate a distinct identity, and often turn to their religion for that purpose.¹⁵ This trend that Schnapper highlights is reflective of the tension between the dual roles of the Council as arbiter of Muslim faith issues and representative to a greater Muslim body within a secular France.

Secularism

France is a society that has traditionally embraced Secularism. Although the largest religion in France has been and continues to be Roman Catholicism, this religion plays no role in the affairs of the state, and the state does not endorse or embrace this religion or any other. With the growth of Islam as the second largest religion in France, the tradition of secularity and republicanism in France has avoided recognition of this religion as well. As a result, efforts in France have focused on assimilating Muslims to French values of secularism, without giving their religion an official or recognized status. The following literatures suggest a difficulty with the established tradition of secularism in France accommodating the religious needs of Muslims. While this literature indicates that there is a great degree of secularism among persons in France of Muslim affiliation, the tension between religion and state-mandated secularity is one that overshadows the CFCM and my study of it.

¹⁴ Bassam Tibi, *The Crisis of Modern Islam; a Preindustrial Culture in the Scientific-Technological Age* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1988), 53.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Graham Fuller writes in *The Future of Political Islam*, “It will be Muslims in the diaspora who have the occasion, the freedom, the impulse, the ability, indeed the necessity to rethink the meaning of Islam in a contemporary secular world.... ...To be secular in no way implies non-religious; on the contrary, the secular environment provides the space and the protection for all faiths to practice....”¹⁶ This is a view that parallels Sarkozy’s reasoning behind creating the CFCM: if France is a secular society, it should not exclude Muslims to the extent that they are marginalized and under-represented. Rather, a secular French society should be one that encompasses Islam; this is exactly the position the CFCM has embraced. This thesis suggests that the task the CFCM has assumed of reconciling Islam in France with French secularity is a task that is not accomplished without great difficulty.

Michele Tribalat, in her essay “The French ‘Melting Pot’” from *Reinventing France*, argues there is an overall trend toward secularization of Muslims in France. “As regards Islam, much is said today of the Islamization of young people although we do not know how to measure the scale of the phenomenon... The tendency is, however, toward a secularization of practices. Firstly, Algerian immigrants are the least practising Muslims in France. Their children, born in France and now at an adult age, are even less practising and are just as likely to demonstrate a certain religious indifference.”¹⁷ Tribalat is showing that the Muslims in France are getting acculturated in at least one aspect to their host country: a secular lifestyle that does not place large importance on religion and religious practices. This literature highlights the difficulty of having a faith-

¹⁶ Fuller, *The Politics of Political Islam*, 186.

¹⁷ Milner, ed., *Reinventing France, State and Society in the Twenty-First Century*, 132.

oriented Council presume to represent all Muslims in France, because many of the Muslims in France are secular.

The Jacobin Legacy of Modern France speaks to the Jacobin legacy of secularism with which Muslims living within France are obligated to contend by speaking to the question of how a faith-oriented Council can operate within the secular governance of France. In Chapter 10, Dominique Schnapper writes about the meaning of modern Jacobinism for outsiders that come to France. Jacobinism asserts "...that every person, regardless of origin or beliefs, could be integrated into political society as a citizen, provided they received a *national* [sic] education."¹⁸ With respect to Muslims living in France, "They are expected to renounce those aspects of personal law which are founded upon inequality of status between men and women and to accept the rules which ensure the separation of the political from the religious, that is to say, in French parlance, 'secularism'."¹⁹ The author goes on to write that there is indication that Muslims in France are moving toward a secular culture where religion is privatized internally among Muslim groups, and is not asserted on a public level. In this sense, secularism still reigns in France, and while many Muslims are practicing, the Jacobin legacy of state supremacy and strict separation of religion and state has not been altered by the growing Muslim population.

On 28 September 2001, *L'Institut Français de l'Opinion Publique* conducted a poll of Muslims in France and their opinions on certain issues immediately after the September 11th attacks. In Table I, these data show a secular tendency of Muslims in France.

¹⁸ Sudhir Hazareesingh, ed., *The Jacobin Legacy in Modern France, Essays in Honour of Vincent Wright* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 206.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 208.

Table I. Muslim Piety in France*

Would you say that you are yourself...	%
a faithful and practicing muslim?	36
a faithful muslim?	42
of Muslim background?	16
Another religion/ without religion?	6
	<hr/> 100
This year, did you fast...	%
during all of Ramadan?	70
some days during Ramadan?	7
not at all?	22
(No Response)	1
	<hr/> 100
Do you pray every day?	%
Yes.	33
No.	66
(No Response)	1
	<hr/> 100
Generally, do you go to Mosque on Friday?	%
Yes.	20
No.	79
(No Response)	1
	<hr/> 100

*These survey items are from a poll taken by the French Institute of Public Opinion on 5 October 2001, entitled "L'Islam en France et les reactions aux attentats du 11 septembre 2001," as translated by Demas Boudreaux. Source: Institute Francaise de l'Opinion Publique, <http://www.ifop.com/europe/sondages/OPINIONF/islam.asp>

While these data are vague and perhaps colored by the events of the September 11th Attacks on the US, I interpret the responses to indicate a large degree of secularity. What is important to keep in mind is that France itself maintains no census or other official data on minorities. Polls and other data of this variety are typically only estimated at best, making this particular poll invaluable to researchers, even if the responses might be skewed as a result of emotions after the attacks. If they are skewed,

then the professed faithfulness of the respondents might actually be lower than if the poll were conducted today. In this sense, it is safe to say that while many Muslims in France recognize a collective Muslim descendancy and thus identity, they do reflect a large secularity on the part of many Muslims in France, with about one third of respondents denying religious faithfulness to Islam and the practice of Ramadan, respectively. An even greater indication of Muslim secularity in France is the denial by two thirds of the respondents that they pray daily, and nearly four fifths that they are regular attendees of Friday services.

While the contention can be made that faithfulness to a religion is not defined by service attendance or holiday observation, I contend that it is. If the established practices of a religion are holiday observation and service attendance, then a person with cultural affiliation to the religion would be considered secular if he or she does not abide by these established practices. Conversely, someone who adheres to the principles of a faith but not the practices might rather be considered *spiritual*. The data in Table I show a mix of spirituality and secularism: there is a high portion who consider themselves at least “faithful” if not “practicing,” yet a low portion who regularly go to Mosque on Friday. Conversely, there is a high portion who observe Ramadan by fasting, yet a low portion who pray daily. These data send mixed messages about secularity and spirituality to the extent that I cannot make a claim that most Muslims in France are secular in their practice of the faith. However, I can claim from these data that there is a significant portion who are secular and whom the CFCM could not effectively represent. Furthermore, in Chapter Two of this thesis I explain that the electoral system of the CFCM utilizes delegates only from mosques and places of prayer. If four fifths of

Muslims in France do not go to mosque regularly, as these data suggest, then the CFCM is definitely not an effective representative of all Muslims in France simply because only a small portion of all Muslims in France go to mosque regularly. Ultimately, these data underscore my initial contention that a faith-oriented Council is not an effective body to represent all Muslims in France because many Muslims in France are secularly-oriented themselves.

Political Ideology in France Concerning Membership

In this section, I will draw from literature to show what I mean by French political ideology and specifically this ideology's implications for Muslims living within it, within the historical context of French immigration. First, one cannot effectively speak of French democracy without acknowledging France's revolutionary roots and values which still shape it today. Dominique Schnapper argues in *The Jacobin Legacy of Modern France*, that Jacobinism still plays a prominent role in contemporary France. She writes, "Those sectors of the economy which are exposed to the global market are gradually...falling into line with capitalist logic.... On the other hand, the political and social weight of a protected sector which is the inheritance of Jacobinism, reinforced by the politics of social democracy, will doubtless resist any plans for reform for some time to come."²⁰ Jacobinism, which fiercely argues for secularism, centralism, and primacy of the state, is still how the French state functions today, if at least internally. The lasting effects of Jacobinism still disregard "...the idea that 'communities' or particular 'ethnic groups' could be recognized *as such* [sic] within the public domain." This is the type of climate that made it difficult to establish the CFCM in the first place, particularly since

²⁰ Ibid., 205.

giving Muslims in France an authoritative body is essentially officially giving them community status, as separate from a greater French citizenry.

Another point that defines French political ideology, particularly in relation to immigrants, Muslim and otherwise, is a Republican legacy stressing “popular sovereignty, citizenship, and the rights of man.”²¹ Schnapper expresses this point in *The Jacobin Legacy in Modern France*, but it is better elaborated by James F. Hollifield in “France: Republicanism and the Limits of Immigration Control,” which is Chapter Five of *Controlling Immigration, A Global Perspective*. Throughout its history, Hollifield writes, “France was not the only European state compelled to import labor to feed the fires of industrialization. What distinguishes France was its early willingness to accept foreigners as settlers and even as citizens. This acceptance is part and parcel of a republican tradition...stemming from the French Revolution.”²² In keeping with Jacobin educational traditions, acculturation and assimilation of all immigrants was attained by “The ‘republican school’ [which] was the prime instrument of the ‘republican model,’ that is to say, the model of national integration.”²³ This was effective more or less until the presidency of Valerie Giscard d’Estaing, when “the closure of the French borders in 1974 marked an important turning point in the demographics and economy of French immigration.”²⁴ This republican model was also effective because most of the immigrants until the 1960s were Europeans, who were culturally similar to the French.

²¹ Wayne A. Cornelius, Takeyuki Tsuda, Philipp L. Martin, and James F. Hollifield, ed., *Controlling Immigration, a Global Perspective*, Second Edition ed. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2004), 184.

²² Ibid.

²³ Hazareesingh, ed., *The Jacobin Legacy in Modern France, Essays in Honour of Vincent Wright*, 199.

²⁴ Feldblum, *Reconstructing Citizenship, the Politics of Nationality Reform in Contemporary France*, 21.

The relationship between France and its former colonies created a cultural environment in which, although differing culturally from the French, immigrants from the Maghreb held a special status. Prior to 1962, through colonialism, Algeria was actually considered a department of France. Additionally, Tunisia and Morocco were French protectorates until 1956. Though emigration to France from all three countries until the late 1960s was less than that from European countries, because of their former-colonial status, immigration from these countries was unhindered, particularly after the Algerian War from 1954-1962. Even during the Algerian War, when Algerian nationalists resisted French colonial control and fought for its separation from France, immigration from the Maghreb was unhindered. Hollifield explains, “Following Algeria’s independence in 1963, the status of these [Algerian] former “citizens” was unchanged. They had the right to move freely between France and their home countries. ...Morocco and Tunisia, which held privileged status as former colonies, became major sending countries in 1968-1973.”²⁵ This relationship between France and its former colonies resulted in an expanded Muslim population in France.

However, unhindered Maghreb immigration would ultimately prove to be a source of internal French conflict. Hollifield writes, “The arrival in France of hundreds of thousands of Algerians in the late 1960s led the French government to renegotiate this freedom of movement.”²⁶ These ‘renegotiations’ are what led to the border closings in 1974 during Estaing’s presidency. Demographically, after the 1974 border closings, “...the foreign population evolved into the settled, feminized, young, and increasingly non-European population of the late seventies and eighties,” as Feldblum writes in

²⁵ Cornelius, ed., *Controlling Immigration, a Global Perspective*, 183.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 189.

Reconstructing Citizenship. Until the 1960s, most of the immigration to France was from neighboring European countries; these immigrants were culturally similar to the French. Algerian and other Maghrebi guestworkers had come to France for decades, but these were mainly male laborers; only 28% of the foreign population was non-European in 1968.²⁷ Feldblum continues, “Family reunifications increased after 1974, especially among the North Africans.... Of those foreigners present in France in 1985, ...over 43% were women.... Because of these changes, the realization that the immigrants came to stay gradually grew....”²⁸ So while overall immigration might have been reduced by the 1974 ban, the immigration that continued was from North African, former colonial populations—Muslims, and this population increased in France.

When the non-European population grew, the cultural and institutional legacy of Jacobinism became strained. Schnapper states it best, “Today, we readily make the comparison between a France of the past, seen to have been united by the institutions of Jacobinism, and a new society viewed as multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-faith. ...But the national institutions and the project of the Jacobin State, which strove to increase the homogeneity of populations in the name of a particular concept of the nation..., are now increasingly contested.”²⁹ Although the Jacobin and republican legacy is still institutionally present in France, the cultural environment produced as a result of France’s immigration history has produced demands that Muslims within France have access to the simple freedom to practice their religion as they wish. Thus, the CFCM has a place in contemporary France to represent the needs of a faithful Muslim

²⁷ Feldblum, *Reconstructing Citizenship, the Politics of Nationality Reform in Contemporary France*, 21.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Hazareesingh, ed., *The Jacobin Legacy in Modern France, Essays in Honour of Vincent Wright*, 206.

body, as well as the opportunity to speak for and represent all persons in France that have Muslim affiliation, even if only cultural.

The CFCM's Formation and Ambiguity

The CFCM, or *Conseil Français du Culte Musulman*, or French Council for the Muslim Faith, was founded in 2003 to consolidate Muslim leadership in France for the purpose of unifying and facilitating a greater French Islam. For about twenty years, there had been a desire to unify these groups, both from within the varying Muslim groups in order to have more political voice, and from within the French government in order to have only a single organization with which to communicate, rather than the myriad of Muslim voices it was accustomed to. Interior Minister Sarkozy finalized the process of developing this commission by organizing COMOR, the Commission on the Organization of French Muslims, which met in October 1999. Forty-two meetings later, they ultimately agreed upon and signed the “Protocol of Accord” on Monday, 9 December 2002, and thus the CFCM was born. Dalil Boubakeur was appointed the first and interim president by Nicolas Sarkozy, while COMOR oversaw the first elections to the CFCM, in 2003. On 3 May 2003, the General Assembly, and the CFCM, met for the first time as an official body, and reelected Boubakeur as President.³⁰

One of the best descriptions of the original intent of the CFCM is by John R. Bowen, an anthropologist at Washington University in Saint Louis. Bowen has done research on the foulard affaire in France, which was the decision in 2002 to restrict any sign of religion in public schools, including the wearing of the Islamic head scarf, or

³⁰ While a study of the formation of the CFCM would be a worthy project, this study looks at the CFCM from its first 2003 elections onward. For more general information on the formation of the CFCM, see <http://www.portail-religion.com/FR/dossier/islam/pratique/institutions/CFCM/index.php>

foulard, by Muslim girls. He commented to *Liberation* in a June 2005 interview entitled

“The Large Ambiguities of the Role of the CFCM” that:

“It seems important to insist on the ambiguity of the role of the CFCM. They [the Council] are charged with resolving questions about the Faith: organization of the pilgrimage to Mecca, halal meat, [etc].They are also charged with questions pertaining to worship: imams, chaplains.... If the CFCM is given authority to answer questions of this nature, it would be illogical for them all to be theologians or specialists of the law. Another ambiguity: Is the CFCM an independent body that does not need to answer to the interior minister [to regulate faith issues in France]? Or, is the CFCM to be a counselor on Muslim affairs to the state?³¹

Ambiguity, in the sense that Bowen implies with respect to the CFCM, is intentional. Bowen argues that there is a general ‘undecidedness’ about its role and purpose. In this sense, ambiguity is good because it does not limit the CFCM in its ability to provide voice for Muslims, or in serving as authority on religious affairs of Muslims. Intentional ambiguity in the role of the CFCM is good because of the Council’s short lifespan: it might have some flexibility as issues arise. If the Council’s role and power limits were truly set in stone and its power strictly limited, the Council might have its hands tied when it really needed to act. Giving the Council a degree of undefined power is, in a sense, granting it a potentially equal degree of autonomy. This unofficial elasticity is what may likely ensure that the Council continues into perpetuity.

Two key leaders were instrumental to the founding of the CFCM, and they are two persons to whom I constantly refer throughout this project: Nicholas Sarkozy, Minister of the Interior, and Dalil Boubakeur, past and present President of the CFCM. Nicholas Sarkozy is one of the most colorful of French politicians. Born in Paris in 1955 to a Hungarian father and French mother, and trained as a lawyer (not educated at the

³¹ Catherine Coroller, "CFCM : Les Organisations en Guerre Avant La Réélection," *Libération*, 11 June 2005.

Ecole National d'Administration like most prominent French public servants), he is viewed as an outsider, and thus, as having a closer relationship to the people. He is president of the center-Right UMP (Union for a Popular Movement), also Chirac's party. During the time of the formation and the meeting of COMOR, he was Minister of the Interior to Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin. He was lowered to Minister of the Economy, Finance, and Industry, also in Raffarin's cabinet in March 2004, but was reappointed Minister of the Interior and appointed Minister of State in the cabinet of the new Prime Minister, Dominique de Villepin.³²

What characterizes Sarkozy's relationship to the CFCM is his unabashed promotion of the CFCM as necessary to establish a French brand of Islam, and to facilitate the desire of faithful Muslims to practice their faith. Sarkozy has expressed again and again in speeches his desire to uphold the French tradition of Secularism, particularly as codified in the 1905 Secularity Law which states that the French state shall not subsidize any religion. However, Sarkozy believes that the existence of the CFCM is consistent with French secularism. Sarkozy also has publicly expressed his desire for French society to be inclusive of Muslims in France, rather than exclusive, to the extent that extremism is thwarted.³³

Dalil Boubakeur has been president of the CFCM since his appointment by Sarkozy as interim President in 2002; since then he has been elected and reelected president in both the 2003 and 2005 elections of the CFCM. In his personal career, he is a doctor practicing in Paris, as well as rector of the Grande Mosque of Paris. His father

³² For this and more biographical information on Minister Sarkozy, turn to: "L'UMP Se Félicite du Taux de Participation Aux Elections du CFCM," *Agence France Presse*, 20 June 2005.

³³ "Boubakeur Attache a La Loi de 1905, Kabtane Applaudit Sarkozy," *Agence France Presse*, 24 October 2005.

was rector of the mosque before him, serving from 1958-1968, during the Algerian War. It is important to note that Boubakeur himself is of Algerian descent, and the Grande Mosque of Paris is Algerian in affiliation. Boubakeur has held several posts at the Mosque, including “Director of Cultural Activities.” During this period, Boubakeur writes that his objective was “To weave bonds of the entire Muslim community [in France].”³⁴ Throughout the 1970s, Boubakeur continued to work to help Muslims with their needs in France, and claims he made headway in organizing Muslim burials, establishing halal butchers, and other issues. When Mitterrand was campaigning for presidency in 1981, he said “We want to give Muslims all the means to affirm their rights to cultural and religious difference.”³⁵ Thus, after Mitterrand’s election, Boubakeur organized the first “General Congress of Islam in France,” which attempted to ease many problems such as racism, immigration, and repatriation of Muslims in France, but had limited success. Later, Boubakeur organized the Council of Reflection on Islam in France (CORIF), but stated that it lacked structure, authority and legitimacy.³⁶

Boubakeur was elected Rector of the Grande Mosque of Paris in 1992, with the goals of establishing “A moderate Islam that is open to dialogue,” with other goals to establish accord with the French government and establish an organization of all Muslims in France.³⁷ In 1993, he organized representatives of the Muslim community to meet and draft a charter that would “...be true to the spirit of the Muslim religion and the letter of French law.”³⁸ Boubakeur himself drafted the charter, and it was ultimately approved in

³⁴ Dalil Boubakeur, *Charte du Culte Musulman en France*, ed. Jean-Paul Bertrand (Paris: Editions du Rocher, 1995), 19.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 28.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 29.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 32.

1994. This history that Boubakeur has exhibited of allying Muslims in France is precisely why Sarkozy appointed him interim and first president of the CFCM, and is likely why he has been re-elected to the head of the CFCM, despite his group—the Grande Mosque of Paris—holding minority status in the CFCM.

In other words, Sarkozy is not calling for a dissolution of Muslim identity in the name of French republicanism. Rather, Sarkozy is recognizing their right to difference; he sees the CFCM as an effective way to do this in order to curb extremism. Boubakeur contends that Islam is compatible with French culture and traditions of governance (such as secularity), and wants to see an acceptance of Islam within France. Both leaders contend that, if Islam itself becomes part of a greater French mainstream, then extremism will be pushed out. Conversely, if Islam remains outside of a greater French mainstream, then extremism could remain an acceptable part of Islam. In this sense both leaders see the CFCM as representative of a greater Islam within France, and as a vehicle to ‘normalize’ Islam within French society.

Plan of Thesis

This thesis uses the CFCM as a case study to evaluate representation for Muslims in France. In *Designing Qualitative Research* (1999), Catherine Marshall and Gretchen Rossman state, “Case studies rely on historical and document analysis, interviewing, and typically, some forms of observation as data collection”(159). All of these modes of data collection, in some form, will be used in understanding the role of the CFCM in France and its implications for the representation of Muslims. I will certainly be doing historical

analysis as I trace the actions of the CFCM from its 2002 inception, relying mainly on document analysis. The data that I use include media reports, official web pages of Muslim organizations, French government documents, and speeches, and other documents. While the impossibility of interviewing those involved with the CFCM is a limitation, I do have access to some speeches and statements as published in French media. Finally, this case study will look at the CFCM from its December 2002 inception to the present.

Synopsis of Chapters

Following this initial introductory chapter, Chapter Two looks at the political structure of the CFCM, particularly its electoral system. I show that the structure of the CFCM is predisposed to the exclusion of many Muslims in France, particularly Muslims-by-association only. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of controversies and problems that have wracked the CFCM as a direct result of its electoral structure, and ultimately conclude that the CFCM is not effective at representing all Muslims in France.

In Chapter Three, I introduce the main constituent groups of the CFCM and discuss their rivalries and conflicts. The tension among the groups is a direct result of their extra-French loyalties and is ultimately related to the tensions of French versus non-French culture, including the tension between secularism and religion. In this chapter, I conclude that the representative capacity of the CFCM is impeded as a result of the controversies among the constituent groups.

In Chapter Four, I weigh instances where the Council has acted in an official capacity, including its rulings on matters of faith and instances where it has spoken

publicly on issues it believes either have pertinence to the interest of a greater Muslim community in France, or where it seeks to promote cultural understanding on the part of the French for a Muslim population within France. I conclude that the CFCM is an effective representative body for at least faithful Muslims on France in some areas, but not others.

Finally, I conclude the thesis in Chapter Five by summarizing my overall conclusions, as well as project what a better political and electoral structure the CFCM might embody. I also suggest ways that the CFCM might better represent all Muslims in France.

CHAPTER II

CFCM STRUCTURE and ELECTIONS

Introduction

The CFCM as established in December of 2002 is a relatively new organization. This establishment was the culmination of many meetings by several Muslim associations in France, and was produced out of a desire to include the interests of all Muslim constituencies in France. At the final meeting on 12 December 2002, the groups collectively agreed to a Protocol of Accord that defined and established the political and electoral structure of the CFCM. This chapter asks the following questions with respect to the political structure of the CFCM: Are the CFCM's political and electoral structures capable of representing all Muslims in France, or at least a portion of them? Does the CFCM reflect the collective interests of Muslims in France? I consider these questions through an analysis of both the CFCM's organizational structure and electoral system, and their implications for representation.

This chapter will be divided into three sections on the CFCM's political structure, its electoral system in practice, and an assessment of the electoral system. In the first section, I outline the political structure as established in the Protocol of Accord that the constituent organizations signed at the end of 2002 to bring the CFCM into existence. In the second section, I look at the CFCM's electoral structure and the results of the 2003 and 2005 CFCM elections. These sections combined allow me to assess the representation that the CFCM accords to Muslims in France in the third section. I argue that, using evidence found in French media and other documents about the CFCM and its

electoral system, collectively, Muslims in France are not well represented by the Council as a result of its political and electoral structure.

Political Structure of the CFCM

The structure of the CFCM is hierarchically ordered in a centralized fashion like that of French governance. First, there is the ultimate central authority of the CFCM at the pinnacle, with subordinate Regional Councils of the Muslim Faith (CRCM) geographically dispersed throughout France. Beneath these are the individual mosques and places of prayer. In this section, I am simply outlining the structure of the CFCM as defined in the Protocol of Accord that was agreed to by the current constituent organizations of the CFCM. In the next section, I will cite evidence to argue that the CFCM is structurally prone to the exclusion of many Muslims in France, thus rendering it incapable of universal representation for all Muslims in France.

Officially, a Protocol of Accord was signed on 12 December 2002 among all of the major organizations that represent Muslims in France.³⁹ These organizations include The National Federation of French Muslims (FNMF), The Muslim Institute of the Grand Mosque of Paris (GMP), The Union of French Islamic Organizations (UOIF), and the Coordinated Committee of Turkish Muslims in France (CCMTF). The CFCM will be headed by a leadership, or bureau that will have a president and two vice presidents. The vice presidents will fill the roles of administering relations with the CRCMs (*Conseils Regionals du Culte Musulman*), and coordination of commissions, respectively. There will also be a secretary general, and an assistant secretary general. There will be a treasurer and assistant treasurer, and an official who is in charge of mission, which is

³⁹ "Protocol D'Accord," (2002).

outreach. The final members will be at-large representatives from each of the three parties mentioned above.

Additionally, the political structure of the CFCM includes a general assembly. Although initially established as a small number, the general assembly must have at least ten qualified members, including five women. The protocol then states that if a person resigns or must be removed from the assembly, steps must be taken to find a replacement, maintaining gender equality, five women and five men.⁴⁰ The Protocol of Accord is not clear on how many above the initial 10 may be in the total Assembly; my assumption is that in anticipation of initial low participation, the minimum was set at 10.

Finally, there will be an Administrative Council (CA) (namely, a Board of Directors) that will be composed of representatives from the regions, representatives from the parties, representatives from each large mosque, and other qualified persons. A qualified person is someone who is not an imam or other spiritual leader, but might be someone who fills a leadership or administrative role in a particular mosque or Muslim association.⁴¹ Each person on the Council gets one vote, whether he or she represents a party, mosque, or is simply a qualified person. Also, representatives may not overlap; i.e., they may not represent a mosque and be a representative of a party. Finally, the number of qualified persons may not exceed five.⁴²

The system for electing representatives to the general assembly of the CFCM is a multimember district system; each electoral district will have one, two, or three elected officials that are selected in the following manner: Each district that has at least six seats in the general assembly (AG) will have one seat in the CA. A district with six to nine

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² "Protocol D'Accord."

seats in the AG will have two seats in the CA. Finally, a district that accounts for ten seats or more will have three seats in the CA. The representatives to the CA will be chosen in order from certified party lists, based on the number of seats each district has in the AG. Based on the number of votes, seats are awarded to representatives from the party lists. Typically, because Muslim groups tend to be ideologically similar geographically, only one party is represented per mosque or other place of prayer, to either the Regional Council of the Muslim Faith (CRCM) or the CFCM.

The protocol also specifies that the representative to the CA can designate a proxy to take his or her place if he or she is from an outlying region. Rather than having to come to Paris to meet with the CA, a representative could select anyone who is qualified, or someone who is in the AG to take his place by proxy. In that case, there are strict requirements given as to who can serve as proxy (for example, a person cannot represent a party in the AG, and then a mosque in the CA). Additionally, the titular head of each federation, or party, cannot be a candidate from a region, represent a mosque, or serve as a qualified person. The protocol then briefly mentions that candidates and representatives must be channeled through their respective CRCMs. The protocol concludes by outlining the electoral system of the CFCM.⁴³

Electoral System in Practice

In this section, I will outline the structure of the CFCM's electoral system, and show results of the 2003 and 2005 CFCM elections. Each election reflected slight changes in participation and results. In 2005, more mosques participated than in 2003, and the FNMF gained seats on the Council. Each of these instances was reported as

⁴³ Ibid.

beneficial to the CFCM, as I will explain below, in that a higher participation is interpreted as expanded legitimacy of the Council among Muslims in France, and a larger FNMF gain is reported as a move toward moderation. What this outline and results of the CFCM's electoral system allow me to do is evaluate the representative capacity of the CFCM for all Muslims in France.

The electoral system for the CFCM is modeled on the French parliamentary system. Each mosque or place of prayer is given a set number of voters, based on the size of the mosque, to elect delegates to both the CFCM and the respective 25 Regional Councils of the Muslim Faith (CRCM). These voters are comprised of imams, clerics, and other leaders from the mosques. The number of voter-delegates is between one and 15, based on the number of worshippers at the mosque.⁴⁴ The mosques or prayer rooms (as some are known) must have pre-registered to participate in the election. For the 19 June 2005 election, 1,163 places of worship were registered,⁴⁵ for a total of 5,276 imams, clerics, and other Muslim officials at each place that could vote.⁴⁶ This stands in contrast to the initial 2003 election, where there were only 995 places of worship registered with 4,042 delegates permitted to vote.⁴⁷ By 8 June for this election, the candidate lists had to be posted and approved by *Comites Regionaux Electoraux* (CORELEC) and by the *Comite National Electoral* (COMELN).⁴⁸ This date was moved to the following Wednesday because Provence-Alps-Cote d'Azur had not yet finalized its lists.⁴⁹ In the 2005 election, delegates elected councils of administration and bureaus of each Regional

⁴⁴Tom Heneghan, "Competition Lively as French Muslims Elect Leaders," *Reuters News*, 17 June 2005 2005.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ "L'UMP Se Félicite du Taux de Participation Aux Elections du CFCM."

⁴⁷ Tom Heneghan, "New Foundation to Manage French Muslim's Money," *Reuters News*, 21 March 2005.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Council, followed by 152 members of the general assembly of the CFCM and 41 members of the council of administration of the CFCM. On 26 June 2005, the council of administration met to elect the executive bureau of the CFCM. One week following the 19 June election, the CRCM and CFCM presidents would be elected by the voters in a separate election.⁵⁰

As presented in Table II below, in 2003 the results of the election were as follows: *la Federation Nationale des Musulmans de France* (FNMF), which represents Moroccan interests, obtained 40%; *l'Union des Organisations Islamiques de France* (UOIF), representing a group called the *Freres Musulmans* (regarded as militant and referred to in English as the Muslim Brotherhood), won 32%; *la Grande Mosque de Paris* (GMP), representing Algerian interests, won 15%; and the *Comite de Coordination des Musulmans Turcs de France* (CCMTF) won 5%.⁵¹ At that time, Dalil Boubakeur, rector of the Grande Mosque de Paris, was elected president of the CFCM. He was reelected in the June 2005 election as well.

Turnout for the 2005 election was estimated by Dominique de Villepin to be 85% of eligible voter-representatives from each mosque,⁵² up from 75% in the 2003 election.⁵³ The 2005 elections were heralded by Nicolas Sarkozy and others to be a move toward moderation, as the UOIF, the more radical, right-wing group lost three seats, and Boubakeur's own GMP gained three.⁵⁴ In the 2005 elections, FNMF garnered 44%,

⁵⁰ "L'UMP Se Félicite du Taux de Participation Aux Elections du CFCM."

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Xavier Ternisien, "L'UOIF Sort Affaiblie des Elections au Conseil Musulman," *Le Monde*, 21 June 2005.

⁵⁴ Heneghan, "Competition Lively as French Muslims Elect Leaders."

GMP obtained 23%, UOIF also 23%, and CCMTF fell to only 2.3%.⁵⁵ Remaining seats were filled by various smaller, local lists.

Table II. CFCM Election Results in 2003 and 2005

	2003	2005
	% of Vote	% of Vote
National Federation of French Muslims (FNMF) (close to Morocco)	40	44
Union of French Islamic Organizations (UOIF) (close to the Muslim Brotherhood)	32	23
Grande Mosque of Paris (GMP) (close to Algeria)	15	23
Committee of Turkish Muslims in France (CCMTF) (close to Turkey)	5	2.3
Other	8	7.7
Total	100	100

Sources: "Les "Marocains" en Tete," *Libération*, 21 June 2005.

"L'UOIF Sort Affaiblie des Elections au Conseil Musulman," *Le Monde*, 21 June 2005.

"French Muslim Groups Vie to Dominate State-Sponsored Council,"
Agence France Presse, 20 June 2005

Although the UOIF maintained its majority over the geographic quarter of France where it has historically been prominent, election results show a slipping of UOIF support overall. These places include the South-West quadrant of France, including the cities of Nantes, Bordeaux, and Poitiers.⁵⁶ *Sud Ouest*, a regional French paper covering the region where the UOIF has been historically prominent, said that the local *L'Union des Musulman's d'Aquitaine*, allied with the UOIF, lost seats in the CRCM to the FNMF; signaling a slight decrease in UOIF support.⁵⁷ FNMF, the party most closely allied with Morocco, has shown more success in CFCM elections. It is seen as being able to

⁵⁵ "L'UMP Se Félicite du Taux de Participation Aux Elections du CFCM."

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Nicolas Le Lièvre, "Conseil Régional Du Culte Musulman. Malgré La Progression de Nouvelles Listes..." *Sud Ouest*, 20 June 2005.

arbitrate national and local Muslim interests, although many local Muslims themselves might not feel an alliance toward the Moroccan-allied group.⁵⁸ In general, because of the UOIF's decrease in support, the 2005 election can be classified as a shift toward moderation among practicing French Muslims. In this sense, the hope generated by the CFCM's creation that Muslims in France would move toward moderation is slightly fulfilled: the more moderate FNMF gained more support while the more fundamentalist UOIF lost support.

As FNMF spokesman Abderrahim Berkaoui stated, "These elections have given more legitimacy to the CFCM. ...Our [the CFCM's] apprenticeship is over. We have three years to show what we can do."⁵⁹ Berkaoui is implying that the initial two-year period was more or less a 'trial stage' of the CFCM. The latest elections, and their apparent move toward moderation by decreased UOIF support and increased FNMF support, have been interpreted as a move toward moderation by Muslims in France.

Assessment of the Electoral System

Based on media reports of the CFCM elections, and issues incident to the CFCM elections, my assessment of the electoral system is that generally, a greater Muslim community in France is not adequately represented by the CFCM. This is so for two main reasons: First, the political structure of the CFCM is such that it excludes many Muslims in France. Second, the CFCM is perceived as being controlled by outsiders that are not sympathetic to the creation of a 'French Islam' that includes French values, such as secularism.

⁵⁸ Ternisien, "L'UOIF Sort Affaiblie des Elections au Conseil Musulman."

⁵⁹ Heneghan, "Competition Lively as French Muslims Elect Leaders."

Fundamentally, the electoral process itself is undemocratic. In an editorial in *Le Monde* from 23 June 2005, Christine Guimonnet writes, “You can speak all you want about 85% participation, the CFCM is not elected by all Muslims. The delegates elect the delegates!”⁶⁰ This statement references the electoral system outlined above in the Protocol of Accord in which representatives or delegates from each mosque or place of prayer elect representatives to the CFCM. In other words, the electoral system is structured in such a way that representative-voters from mosques elect representatives to the Regional Councils and the CFCM; the election of delegates is done by a few leaders from the mosques, not the entire congregation at each mosque, and certainly not by those Muslims who do not even attend mosque. It is a fair criticism to say that this is unrepresentative of all Muslims in France. An easier alternative would be to simply select the representatives from an election of all members of a particular mosque or place of prayer. A more democratic system, although probably more difficult to implement, might be one where *all* Muslims in France vote for a particular party list, and the delegates are selected proportionally according to the total number of votes received, much like members of the French National Assembly are selected. By limiting voting to elite leaders, there is exclusion of a huge part of Muslims in France as a result of the electoral system’s structure.

Another way the Council falls far short of representation of Muslims in France is its failure to adequately incorporate women into the electoral process, and ultimately the Council. An *Agence France Presse* article issued on the day of the 19 June Elections of 2005 is entitled “CFCM: a tranquil vote in the hall of a gymnasium in the center of Paris.” The title suggests that the elections were conducted without any significant

⁶⁰ "L'UMP Se Félicite du Taux de Participation Aux Elections du CFCM."

problems and without any violent acts. However, the author observes, “The line is composed of men, some of their heads covered with that which marks a pious Muslim.”⁶¹ Of course, if those that represent a mosque or prayer room are comprised of clerics or imams, as the Protocol of Accord stipulates, the voters will be primarily men. This is certainly to the exclusion of female Muslims and is another example of how *structurally* the Council is rendered unable to represent the entire Muslim body of France.

An article in *le Figaro* from 20 June 2005 contests that women *are* being represented, as a female voter from a mosque in Paris attested: “The emergence of women in Islam in France will influence the next CFCM.”⁶² What is significant here is that the only reason she was there was because she was an alternate delegate to vote; the actual delegate was sick that day. While it can at least be said that the CFCM is *trying* to incorporate gender equality to a greater extent than other Muslim bodies in the world, there are still great strides to be made with respect to the inclusion of women in the CFCM. As the article goes on to state, “The equality between men and women is far from respectable.”⁶³ What this article highlights is that the electoral rules intrinsically establish a gender imbalance among the representatives. Because the delegates are spiritual leaders from their respective mosques or places of prayer, they are more likely to be men, even if the nature of a particular mosque itself is one that is considered more inclusive of women.

Gender imbalance alone is not the only fault in the electoral system. Publicly, the 2005 elections were hailed as a trend toward moderation, because of the UOIF’s loss of seats and the FNMF’s gain of seats. In reality, rather than reflect an overall shift toward

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Said Mahrane, "A Paris, Fondamentalistes et Modérés Ont Voté Cote a Cote," *Le Figaro*, 20 June 2005.

⁶³ Ibid.

moderation, the slight change only reflected internal jockeying for power among the few groups that control the Council. The increase in FNMF support actually ceded no more representation to those Muslims that are not represented in the Council: everyday Muslims who are Muslim by heritage only, who may not even attend services at a mosque. The data that I referenced in Chapter One from the French Institute of Public Opinion showed that only about two thirds of all Muslims in France profess faithfulness to the Muslim Faith and fasting during Ramadan, respectively.⁶⁴ An even greater indication of secularism among French Muslims is that only about one third indicated that they prayed daily or attended Friday prayer services regularly.⁶⁵

These data reinforce my contention that if only imams, clerical and other spiritual leaders are allowed to vote on representatives to the CFCM, then the Council is not a fair representative of Muslims as a whole in France. In a bulletin sent out by *Agence France Presse*, Valerie Pecresse, spokesperson for *l'Union des Musulmans de Paris*, claims the CFCM is "Today a true source of dialogue and problem resolution that can aid everyday Muslims with questions that concern religious holidays, chaplains, and imams."⁶⁶ I contend that Pecresse's assertion is far from the truth: the everyday Muslim is one that needs not a religious Council to represent his or her faith concerns, but rather a cultural Council to ensure fair treatment of persons in France that just happen to come from Muslim backgrounds. Florence Deguen articulates my point in an article she wrote for *le Parisien* published on the day of the 2005 elections in *le Parisien*. One Muslim woman she interviewed from Saint-Denis for the article commented "These elections, they are a

⁶⁴ "L'islam en France et Les Réactions Aux Attentats du 11 Septembre 2001, Résultats Détaillés," (Institut Français de l'Opinion Public, 2001).

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ "L'UMP Se Félicite du Taux de Participation Aux Elections du CFCM."

war of influence between men who want to secure their place under the sun. The Muslim in the street doesn't have much to do with it. What has the CFCM done for him? Nothing."⁶⁷ While this is one person's opinion of the Council, her point reflects my overall criticism of the Council itself.

My second critique of the CFCM is that it is controlled not only by overtly religious groups who might be less inclined to represent the interests of secular Muslims, the groups that comprise the CFCM actually represent interests that lie outside France. (Recall the Union of French Islamic Organizations (UOIF) is associated with the Muslim Brotherhood; the National Federation of French Muslims (FNMF) with Morocco; and the Grande Mosque of Paris (GMP) with Algeria.) This scenario is well exemplified in an article by Catherine Coroller as it appeared in *Liberation*, a left-leaning French publication. She asks, "Is the UOIF really threatened? In 2003 it arrived at second place behind the FNMF by...passing a series of alliances with other federations, Turkish or African."⁶⁸ She contends that the UOIF's losing seats was the result of its lost of influence-peddling, and that the UOIF never really had that much support to begin with. The UOIF's larger margin in the 2003 election was the luck of certain circumstances involving the ambassador of Morocco at the time of the 2003 election who was unpopular among French Muslims. The unpopularity of the Moroccan ambassador led to weakened support for the FNMF—whose alliances are with Morocco—and a corresponding increase in UOIF support. By the 2005 election, the disdain for the Moroccan ambassador had passed, and the FNMF regained support. According to Coroller, the UOIF actually retained the same amount of influence and support in both the 2003 and

⁶⁷ Florence Deguen, "A Saint Denis, Beaucoup D'Indifférence," *Le Parisien*, 19 June 2005.

⁶⁸ Coroller, "CFCM : Les Organisations en Guerre Avant La Réélection."

2005 elections, rather than mark a shift toward moderation as Sarkozy, Villepin, and others in the French government would like.⁶⁹ In the end, whether the UOIF or FNMF is in the majority is less important than that the power in the CFCM is still held by a small group of leaders that are representing very specific national interests from outside of France.

My criticism that the CFCM is influenced by outsiders to France is reinforced by an article from *le Figaro* on 21 June 2005. This article contends that the FNMF gain in 2003 election compared to the 2005 election reflects an increased Moroccan control of the Council. The article states, "The Moroccans have thus, as announced, garnered their influence on Islam in France."⁷⁰ While this contention is potentially countered by acknowledging that Boubakeur, the CFCM president, is himself a representative of the Algerian faction, the GMP, the underlying reality remains that a small number of groups with extra-French ties controls the CFCM. This inherent structural problem of the CFCM is an impediment to representation for all Muslims who reside in and are culturally aligned with France.

Conclusion

Despite the glaring inadequacies outlined above, the elections to the CFCM can still be viewed as positive because they have encouraged dialogue among all factions of Islam in France, and at a minimum have served to increase awareness among the French of this large minority in their midst. It is best summarized in an article by Tom Heneghan of Reuters on 17 June 2005: "The election campaign has been surprising, however,

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Thierry Portes, "Le Maroc Accroît Son Influence Su L'islam de France," *Le Figaro*, 10 June 2003.

because of a boom in the number of mosques joining in the vote and hectic politicking within and among Muslim interest groups hoping to win influence in the national Council.”⁷¹ This is to say, any Muslim representation in France is better than none.

In conclusion, while it can be said that the CFCM is better than no group at representing Muslim interests within France, there are valid problems with the manner in which it represents those Muslims. These problems include a pronounced gender bias, self-election of delegates, foreign interests and factions dominating the Council, and the fact that the Council by its political structure represents the few *faithful* Muslims in France, not the average person who is only Muslim-by-association.

⁷¹ Heneghan, "Competition Lively as French Muslims Elect Leaders."

CHAPTER III

CFCM CONSTITUENT GROUPS

Introduction

In this Chapter, I will discuss the key groups that comprise the CFCM: their origins, backgrounds, and histories. Each constituent group has been mired in controversies that have affected the stability and authority of the CFCM. I will examine these controversies from the standpoint of the following questions. In what ways do these groups represent the Muslims in France? What implications do their conflicts have for Muslims in France? Finally, I will conclude the discussion on constituent groups by looking at the resignation of a prominent and visible member of the Council, Dounia Bouzar; Bouzar is a secular-oriented Muslim who was raised in France. She has no “group” affiliation. Does her resignation symbolize a move toward fundamentalism by the CFCM and a further widening between those who are Muslim-by-association in France and those who are faithful practitioners?

Using the disagreements and controversies among the constituent groups as cases, I will argue that the CFCM is ineffective at representing Muslims in France for several reasons. First, because the groups that comprise the CFCM have loyalties that lie outside of France to other countries and organizations, the groups have agendas that are inconsistent with many needs and interests of Muslims *within* France. Secondly, each group is largely concerned with promoting its own version of Islam, and to this extent a greater cultural Islam within France is ignored. A third issue that hinders CFCM representation is a result of the relationship between religion and secularism. While the

CFCM's purpose is a religious one (hence the name, French Council for the Muslim *Faith*), the tensions among the groups reflect the greater tension between the Council's dual roles of Faith leader and greater-Muslim leader.

Finally, and as again is pointed out by the name of the Council, if the representatives of the various constituent groups are indeed charged with representing a *French* interpretation or cultural alignment of Muslims in France, an issue that comes to the fore is tension between French and non-French culture. As with secularism, an underlying cause of the tension between the various constituents of the CFCM is the degree to which each group sees itself as being participatory in French society. The various groups, because of their extra-French ties, ultimately bring to the table of the CFCM a non-French cultural slant. In short, the competing national ties are an underlying source of tension among the groups, which ultimately decreases the efficacy, legitimacy, and validity of the CFCM as a representative body for Muslims in France.

Background on the Constituent Groups

Three main constituent groups, the Union of French Islamic Organizations (UOIF), the Grand Mosque of Paris (GMP), and the National Federation of French Muslims (FNMF), are the key players in the CFCM, according to the Protocol of Accord that was signed on 12 December 2002. Each of these organizations represents different national and political backgrounds: Moroccan, Algerian, and the Muslim Brotherhood, respectively. Other smaller organizations were included, such as one that represents Turkish Muslims. As Sarkozy explained in a speech he made to the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences in September of 2005, including the three main organizations that

independently represent Muslims and their interests in France into a single, umbrella-type organization theoretically ensures representation for all Muslims in France.⁷² However, their rivalries and homeland loyalties have defined the CFCM since its late 2002 inception. If anything will prevent the CFCM from growing in power and influence, it will be these rivalries. Dounia Bouzar, one of only a few women originally on the Council, made this point with her resignation from the Council: if the Council is supposed to be the French Council for the Muslim Faith, how can it claim to represent French Muslims when its members do not necessarily claim to be French? This is consistent with my argument that the Council, while officially intended to speak and represent French Muslims as specified in the protocol of accord, falls short of representing the diverse peoples that comprise the French Muslims.

The head of the CFCM is Dalil Boubakeur, who was favored by Sarkozy and Villepin to win the chair of the Council; one explanation for this choice is Boubakeur's geographic proximity to the government in Paris. A better explanation is simply that Boubakeur, while a professed and practicing Muslim, has a record of trying to collectively organize Muslim leadership in France, cooperation with government officials, and a professed desire to embrace French culture. This makes him favorable to Villepin and Sarkozy. Boubakeur has been quoted as saying, "I am not in favor of multiculturalism, [in a secular country like France,] there is only one culture: French culture."⁷³ This open embrace of secular ideals, and his personal friendship with Chirac and Sarkozy made him the ideal head of the CFCM when it was formed.

⁷² "Boubakeur Attache a La Loi de 1905, Kabtane Applaudit Sarkozy."

⁷³ "Politisation," *Le Monde*, 7 February 2006.

Boubakeur's party, which is from the Grand Mosque of Paris (where Boubakeur is also rector), has not had great power. Boubakeur himself yields considerable influence, as evidenced by his ability to maintain his position in the CFCM through two terms. At first, French press claimed that Boubakeur's election in 2005 was not guaranteed, but ultimately he regained his position as head of the CFCM.⁷⁴ If there has been any overt controversy as a result of Boubakeur's leadership, it has been a result of differences in views over secularism between him and member groups. For example, in the Headscarf Affair of 2004, Boubakeur successfully convinced his colleagues on the CFCM to uphold the government's ruling that no sign of religious display would be accepted in public schools or government offices. This law was mainly targeted at the head coverings that some Muslim women wear.⁷⁵ Taken at face value, this certainly impedes representation for many female Muslims in France in that those female Muslims who desire to cover their heads in accordance with their faith may not. As evidenced by Boubakeur's support of the ban and through Boubakeur's leadership, the CFCM is actually serving as an accessory to the state, rather than as a representative body for the Muslims of France.

Generally, most of the controversy that has wracked the CFCM has centered on The Union of French Islamic Organizations (UOIF), particularly during the past election turmoil, and on its threatened separation and withdrawal from the Council. As mentioned above, one of the causes of the CFCM's limited capacity for representation is the national and sectarian allegiances held by CFCM member groups. In the case of the UOIF, I will

⁷⁴ Catherine Coroller, "Les Grandes Ambiguïtés du Rôle du CFCM," *Libération*, 18 June 2005.

⁷⁵ *Le Vrai Visage de l'UOIF : Antisémitisme, Apologie et Financement du Terrorisme, et Appel au Djihad* (2004 [cited]); available from http://www.wiesenthal-europe.com/csw/CSWPages/csweurope_rapportuoif.htm.

identify several reasons cited why the UOIF has been the most problematic member group in the CFCM. The UOIF's loyalties and affiliations provide context for understanding why it has been problematic. Of the other constituent organizations in the CFCM, the UOIF is the organization that has loyalties other than national ones. The UOIF is most closely associated with the Muslim Brotherhood, which makes the UOIF one of the most right-wing nationally-recognized Muslim organizations in France, and one of the ones most credited with advocating violence and non-peaceful dissension tactics.⁷⁶ The Muslim Brotherhood is a fundamentalist group with Egyptian ties, and it has also advocated violent dissension tactics, particularly by the Palestinians against Israel.⁷⁷ In their official literature, the Muslim Brotherhood organization openly acknowledges that they use violence to achieve their goals.⁷⁸ The UOIF also maintains close ties to Sheikh Qaradawi, a fundamentalist cleric who is politically aligned with Al-Qaeda. Qaradawi resides in Qatar where he is a well known (and well respected) cleric and scholar. In Qatar, he is the leader of an Islamic research center.⁷⁹ Qaradawi's religious fundamentalism is not what has brought him the most criticism from the West; it is his strong ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, and his advocacy of violence as a means of achieving his version of an Islamic agenda, particularly in Palestine. In an interview by the BBC program "Newsnight," Qaradawi had this to say in defense of frequent

⁷⁶ <http://www.wiesenthal.com>, "True UOIF.pdf"

⁷⁷ For more information on the Muslim Brotherhood, see <<http://www.ummah.net/ikhwan/>> From Ummah.com: "Ummah.com is a humble effort to provide services for the Muslim community world wide. As well as anyone looking for information on Islam."

⁷⁸ François Dubet, *Immigrations : Qu'en Savons-Nous ? , Un Bilan des Connaissances, Notes et Études Documentaires, 0029-4004 ; 4887* (Paris: La Documentation française, 1989).

⁷⁹ Magdi Abdelhadi, "Controversial Preacher With 'Star Status'," *BBC News*, 7 July 2004.

suicide bombings targeting Israeli citizens: “I consider this type of martyrdom operation as an evidence of God’s justice.”⁸⁰

Additionally, the UOIF also maintains ties with Hamas, the militant political party that is now in control of the Palestinian Government. “The group’s short-term aim has been to drive Israeli forces from the occupied territories, through attacks on Israeli troops and settlers in the Palestinian territories and against civilians in Israel.”⁸¹ Historically, Hamas has always openly said that its aim is to reclaim all former Palestinian land—including what is now Israel—and that it views violence as an acceptable way to accomplish this goal. While the current image that Hamas may be trying to portray is one of a group that is using legitimate means to gain control, it has a long history of violence.⁸² Several watchdog groups on anti-Semitism have noted UOIF ties with Hamas, including the Wiesenthal Center - Europe, in Paris.⁸³ Although the UOIF has denied these ties, the general public assumption is that they do exist. What this means for the UOIF is dangerous: while the UOIF publicly presents an agenda of neutrality (keeping foreign Muslim-involved conflicts out of France as its party agenda), its reputation is that it has ties to fundamentalist and ultra-conservative factions of Islam, and seeks to promote these values in France. This background information about the UOIF is relevant for illustrating the extreme nature of the group.

If the UOIF is as extreme as outlined above, what value does inclusion of the UOIF have for a greater question of representation? In addressing the fundamental question of whom, exactly, does the CFCM represent, it is hardly appropriate to say that

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ "Politisation."

⁸² Marie-France Etchegoin, "Sarkozy, L'islam et La Laïcité," *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 2 February 2006.

⁸³ *Le Vrai Visage de l'UOIF : Antisémitisme, Apologie et Financement du Terrorisme, et Appel au Djihad* ([cited]).

it represents all Muslims living in France, especially if many Muslims are secularly oriented, and are not regular practitioners of their faith. If a large segment of Muslims in France identify themselves by cultural association only, and were actually raised in France with French as their first language, from the perspective of representation, what place does a group like the UOIF with such extreme ties have in the CFCM? The reasoning behind this inclusion was articulated by Sarkozy himself: including such an extreme group may thereby help to temper it in such a way as to reduce its extremist and violent tendencies.⁸⁴ By giving it an official status, and a prominent role, then the group may be compelled to achieve its agenda through discursive means rather than violent ones. Were the UOIF not included in the CFCM, the UOIF would likely be incited to anger; giving it a space to act in appropriate ways and a sense of legitimacy that is contingent upon nonviolence, ideally, should move it in a more desirable direction. Although the UOIF does not necessarily represent a huge segment of Muslims in France, its inclusion is important. While not representing a majority of Muslims, it does represent a significant portion of them, even if the represented portion does not have allegiances or beliefs consistent with French culture.

Based on the history of the UOIF's problematic relationship with the CFCM's actions and decisions, the UOIF does not appear to have been 'tempered' to reduce its antagonistic nature. While there is no evidence of violence on the part of the UOIF that I have uncovered, their fundamentalist belief system and extra-French allegiances have rendered the UOIF a problematic and often ineffective member of the CFCM. As the following section will show, the UOIF's relationship to the CFCM has been rocky from the start, and the UOIF has showed no signs of changing.

⁸⁴ "Boubakeur Attache a La Loi de 1905, Kabtane Applaudit Sarkozy."

Controversies Troubling the CFCM

In the brief history of the CFCM, several controversies have troubled its existence. Many of these controversies stem from the ideological differences of each group that were discussed in the introduction of this chapter. These differences mainly are a result of the different national allegiances of each group. Other controversies are the result of tension over secularism. All of these controversies have troubled the CFCM to the extent that it has been unable to serve as an effective representative of collective Muslim interests in France.

Prior to the election of June 2005, a controversy over the appointment of a Muslim prison chaplain troubled the CFCM to the extent that the UOIF “froze” its participation and Fouad Alaoui, who was secretary general of the greater UOIF party and vice president of the CFCM resigned his post.⁸⁵ “I’ve decided to end my participation in the executive bureau of the CFCM.”⁸⁶ The French press widely contended this was in direct response to the nomination of Moulay el Hassan el Alaoui Talibi as the national Muslim chaplain of prisons. One of the official roles of the CFCM is to appoint prison chaplains for Muslim prisoners in France; this is to stave off a trend toward conversion of Muslim prisoners to a more fundamental brand of Islam, one that could incite violence. Talibi is Moroccan by origin, and thus closer politically and religiously to the FNFM. After becoming national chaplain, Talibi would then be charged to appoint regional chaplains as well. Alaoui expressed his discontent with Talibi’s overarching power by his resignation. “It is unacceptable that he [the newly appointed chaplain] would be

⁸⁵ Keaten, "New Muslim Chaplain for Prisons Part of French Effort to Curb Extremism Behind Bars."

⁸⁶ Ibid.

given, *carte blanche*, as national Muslim chaplain, the power to appoint regional chaplains as well. The CRCMs should have their own power of appointment in this instance.”⁸⁷

Whether Boubakeur or other CFCM leaders specifically orchestrated this in order to prevent the fundamentalist UOIF from augmenting its already strong regional power, or whether this was simply the way that the position of national chaplain was set up is unclear. Probably Talibi was appointed because of his long history of serving as an informal chaplain in the Northern regional jail system.⁸⁸ In any instance, it is clear that the UOIF, which has long expressed overall dissatisfaction with the CFCM, feels left out. Alaoui has stated of the CFCM that he is “Sick of its incapacity to be an effective representation of Muslims in France, and the character [of the CFCM is] excessive and unfounded.”⁸⁹ This chronic disenchantment with the CFCM is in all likelihood a product of the UOIF’s minority status since the Council’s inception in December 2002, as well as its decreased number of seats after the June 2005 elections.

In any case, after Alaoui’s resignation, the UOIF “announced that it has frozen its participation in the executive bureau of the CFCM until a new order is established.”⁹⁰ Subsequently, Mme. Fatiha Ajbli, the second representative of the UOIF on the Council announced her resignation as well. In this wave of resignations and crisis, Boubakeur respectfully stated, “It is in the name of the interest of the Republic that the CFCM demands the instant return of Fouad Alaoui from his resignation to the executive

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Cécilia Gabizon, "Prisons Un Prof de Maths Choisi Par Le CFCM " *Le Figaro*, 3 Mai 2005.

⁸⁹ "L'UMP Se Félicite du Taux de Participation Aux Elections du CFCM."

⁹⁰ Barzegar, "Un CFCM Pour Lutter Contre "Un Islam des Caves et des Garages"."

bureau.”⁹¹ He then stated, “After discussion between the members of the executive bureau of the CFCM, it was decided unanimously, in the greater interest of the Republic, to preserve the unity of the CFCM, and together ask for the immediate return of Alaoui to the CFCM.”⁹² Whether acting in the interest of the interior minister, or in the true name of unity, Boubakeur made a wise political move to aim for the reunification of the CFCM. On 11 May 2005, Alaoui stated that his Council [of the UOIF] would convene to decide which future action it would take, saying “This is a turning point in the history of the CFCM. This isn’t only about the return of the UOIF to the CFCM, but the perpetuity of the CFCM itself.”⁹³

Although the UOIF has ultimately continued to participate in the CFCM, this perpetual internal conflict has been a setback to the legitimacy and efficacy of the Council. Including the UOIF in the CFCM in the first place was out of a desire to tame the UOIF, and give it some sort of legitimate voice, rather than making it contribute to “An Islam of basements and garages.”⁹⁴ During the last CFCM election, as discussed in Chapter One of this work, the UOIF actually lost some seats, and the more centrist FNMF gained seats. While this was publicly cited as a shift toward moderate Islam, this enraged the UOIF. Again, the UOIF threatened withdrawal from the Council. This outrage exemplifies a continuation of the ongoing conflict between the UOIF and Boubakeur’s faction, GMP, as well as the FNMF. Boubakeur had these words to say about why the UOIF should be allowed, and encouraged, to participate in the CFCM: “Within France, there is a long history of some Islamic factions that are ‘spicier’ than

⁹¹ Cécile Brisson, "Le CFCM Demande a Fouad Alaoui de Revenir," *AP French Worldstream*, 11 May 2005.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ "L'UMP Se Félicite du Taux de Participation Aux Elections du CFCM."

⁹⁴ Barzegar, "Un CFCM Pour Lutter Contre "Un Islam des Caves et des Garages"."

others. I don't think these are less French than any other; they are just of a belief more fundamental. I don't condemn them for now. From the moment their actions violate the laws of the Republic, I will have cause to condemn them."⁹⁵

The conflict that arises from the issue of secularism is one that impedes the capacity of the CFCM to represent Muslims in France. Many Muslims in France identify themselves by cultural association only and do not necessarily adhere to religious practices; an organization intended to represent faith matters alone does little to help all Muslims in France, such as those that feel alienated living in France, and those that feel they are denied jobs and benefits as a result of discrimination. When asked why there should be a CFCM in the first place, particularly when there are so many secular Muslims, Boubakeur offered this, "Secular Muslims are citizens like anyone else. They don't need representatives [in a religious Council] any more than secular Catholics do. This is good because the principle vocation of the CFCM is to represent only the Muslim *faith*."⁹⁶ While Boubakeur may have said this, the evidence I show presents a different picture; the Council is trying to represent, or at least speak for, all Muslims in France: those practicing and those by association only.

One stinging conflict that is a result of the tension between religion and secularism is the resignation of Dounia Bouzar right around the time of the 2004 elections. Bouzar's resignation was widely covered in the French media; *Agence France Presse* stated, "One of two woman members of the CFCM has stepped down, complaining that the body is failing to tackle the problems of the country's estimated five

⁹⁵ "L'UMP Se Félicite du Taux de Participation Aux Elections du CFCM."

⁹⁶ Jonathan Laurence, Allain Billon, Michele Tribalat, Alain Boyer, and Aslam Timol, "L'imposition de L'Etat ? Débat. (IV Débats)." *French Politics, Culture and Society* 23, no. 1 (2005).

million-strong community.”⁹⁷ Bouzar is a French anthropologist born in France to a mixed-faith family who ultimately remained with the Muslim religious roots of her father. She is completely French culturally, and does not speak any Arabic.⁹⁸ She is also the type of Muslim that Sarkozy was advocating with the formation of the CFCM: a secular one; she does not even wear the headscarf. Bouzar’s research as an anthropologist is on Muslims born in France, and their subsequent integration (or lack) into French society. In the beginning of the formation of the CFCM, Bouzar was optimistic that the Council could prevent French-born Muslims from turning to outside (foreign) examples of the faith for guidance, foreign strains of Islam that often advocated fundamentalism and sometimes violence and extremism. Instead, Bouzar was frustrated that the main business of the CFCM was to resolve internal disagreements by men who, in her mind, were not even French, and were arguing about the disparity between one another’s home-brand of Islam.

Bouzar herself gave her reasoning behind her resignation when she said, “For two years now, I have been waiting for discussion to begin, but we never talked about anything. I don’t see what qualified people like me are there for.”⁹⁹ She continued, “All they talk about is procedures: who gets what positions, and the modalities of the elections. ...I do not see why I should continue with a mere walk-on part.”¹⁰⁰ A Reuters article from a short series covering her resignation states, “The fact that immigrants ran the CFCM meant that young Muslims felt unrepresented there and got no guidance on

⁹⁷ Le Lievre, "Conseil Régional Du Culte Musulman. Malgré La Progression de Nouvelles Listes..."

⁹⁸ "L'UMP Se Félicite du Taux de Participation Aux Elections du CFCM."

⁹⁹ Le Lievre, "Conseil Régional Du Culte Musulman. Malgré La Progression de Nouvelles Listes..."

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

how to live as Muslims in a secular Western state.”¹⁰¹ Bouzar said, “As long as there is not a majority of French-born Muslims on the board, the CFCM will suffer from rivalries that divide its members according to their countries of origin.”¹⁰² Boubakeur only said that he “regretted her decision.”¹⁰³

Bouzar’s resignation is very important because it highlights a problem that is intrinsic to the Council’s structure: if the majority of Muslim representatives on the Council are only able to attain seats because they are affiliated with a particular group, then the large Muslim body in France that has little faith or ‘group’ affiliation is underrepresented, and ultimately left out. Bouzar’s original place on the Council was for whom she represented: the secular Muslim, the Muslim-by-association only. If the Council has no room for Muslims of this variety then there is little chance that it will ever be an effective representative of many Muslims in France.

Conclusion

The issue raised here is that of religion versus secularism which Boubakeur alluded to earlier when he said “Secular Muslims are citizens like anyone else. They don’t need representatives.”¹⁰⁴ If the stated aim of the CFCM in the first place is to ‘represent’ Muslims in France on religious matters, would it not be necessary that the Council also represent non-practicing Muslims as well? If a perceived problem in France is a large and growing group of non-French, of Maghrebi or Arab people, a Council that would better ease their frustrations and stave off potential conflict might be one that had a

¹⁰¹ "L'UMP Se Félicite du Taux de Participation Aux Elections du CFCM."

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Laurence, "L'imposition de L'Etat ? Débat. (IV Débats)."

more secular focus. True, while many terrorist incidents involve those that claim to be faithful, a religious Council that is designed to temper hard-line Islam is a step in the right direction. What would be more beneficial in this case would not be to implement or change the CFCM's focus to one of secularity, but one that is inclusive of secular Muslim's interests. Where Bouzar felt alienated and left out of participation, a purely secular Muslim group—with secular interests—might further temper the Council's rivalries that are a direct result of competing religious and national factions, as well as provide more of what the Council is lacking: representation of Muslims in France.

CHAPTER IV

The CFCM's RESPONSE to RELIGIOUS and SOCIAL ISSUES

Introduction

Officially, the CFCM has been charged with overseeing the following: construction of mosques, establishing guidelines for Muslim burials, organization of religious festivals, naming of Muslim chaplains for hospitals, prisons, schools, and colleges, and the education of imams.¹⁰⁵ When investigating the CFCM, however, there are several issues, including these and others, that repeatedly appear in scholarly work, news articles, and on websites. Some of these are issues that the CFCM was originally charged to oversee; others involve events that have occurred about which the CFCM spoke or acted in an official capacity. Many of these issues are in some way centered on the 1905 Secularity Law, which states that the French state shall not subsidize any religion. Other issues are directly related to the ones expressed in the charter of the Council, such as the funding of mosques and the education of imams. Other issues to discuss will include the recent cartoon controversy, the youth riots from Fall 2005, the *foulard affaire*, and an appeal for hostage release from Iraq.

This chapter examines the role played by the CFCM on a range of issues. First in this chapter, I will give background information on the 1905 Secularity Law, particularly as it relates to the CFCM. Second, treatment is given to the issues relating directly to matters of faith, and then to matters that affect Muslims in France generally; this will show that at a basic level of dealing with issues of faith—the ones outlined in the initial

¹⁰⁵ Coroller, "Les Grandes Ambiguïtés du Rôle du CFCM."

CFCM charter—the Council can act with some efficacy in terms of representing faithful Muslims in France. In some instances, the CFCM has been effective at ensuring that Muslims who practice their faith in France are able to do so in a manner that is consistent with their beliefs; as shown below, the basic issue of mosque construction, for example, is one in which the CFCM has made major headway. Conversely, on other issues with which the Council was initially charged, such as chaplain appointment, the Council has been unable to make headway. Such issues have largely served to trouble the weak association of the different Council groups to the extent that the Council has been rendered impotent on them. I will show why some issues are troubling and others are not. As the evidence further indicates, when the CFCM steps outside of its initially prescribed boundaries of dealing with faith issues, it is rendered unable to represent all Muslims in France, the faithful and, importantly, those that are culturally Muslims, because it loses its capacity to speak as a body of unity and authority.

In this chapter, I will use these issues and instances where the CFCM has acted to draw conclusions relevant to my discussion of representation. In Chapter Three, through an examination of the constituent groups of the CFCM and their rivalries, I concluded that the extra-French ties of the constituent groups often crippled the groups' cooperation to an extent that greatly impaired the CFCM's representative capacity for all persons with Muslim affiliation in France. I further concluded in Chapter Three that because the Council was exclusionary to secular Muslim's interests, it is not an effective representative of all Muslims. Correspondingly, the issues discussed in this chapter will partly reflect the ideological rift of the Council members in regards to secularism. In this chapter, I will build on these conclusions to discuss the representative capacity of the

CFCM with respect to certain actions of the Council. After the discussion of the 1905 Secularity Law, this chapter is divided into two sections, one on issues relating directly to faith, and one on issues beyond faith. The second section illustrates instances where the CFCM has presumed to speak and act on behalf of all Muslims. Based on examining these instances, I conclude that in some areas the CFCM is effective at achieving its goal and as a result is an effective representative of some Muslim interests. In other areas, the CFCM is ineffective and thus falls short of its goals. Finally, I will use instances of the CFCM's official statements to demonstrate a trend toward expansion of its original faith-oriented role and to show that the CFCM does purport itself to be a representative body for all Muslim interests in France.

The 1905 Secularity Law and the CFCM

To understand the controversies surrounding the 1905 Secularity Law, some background information on the law itself is helpful. The 1905 Law was passed to establish the strict separation of church and state in France. The line from the law most familiar to many acquainted with French secularism is that the state "neither recognizes nor subsidizes any religion."¹⁰⁶ This law, which is as well-known in France as the First Amendment rights in the United States, establishes the strict separation of church and state, as well as three principles: the neutrality of the state in all religious affairs, the freedom of exercise of the powers of religion, and the powers of the church in the public sphere.¹⁰⁷ This law has been used both to criticize and affirm the existence of the CFCM. (This is the same law that was invoked to ban the wearing of head-scarves by girls in

¹⁰⁶ "Boubakeur Attache a La Loi de 1905, Kabtane Applaudit Sarkozy."

¹⁰⁷ Coroller, "CFCM : Les Organisations en Guerre Avant La Réélection."

French schools.) The questions that many critics raise when citing the 1905 Law, are “How then can the state establish a Muslim council? “Is this not recognition, and even subsidy of a religion?” Concerning Boubakeur’s opinion on the law, as head of the CFCM, in a 2005 article from *Agence France Presse*, Dalil Boubakeur is quoted as having a “profound attachment to the 9 December 1905 Law” on the separation of church and state.¹⁰⁸ Boubakeur’s stance is what made him favorable to Sarkozy as the initial head of the CFCM; Boubakeur and Sarkozy both believed the CFCM had a place in the French state that was compatible with the 1905 Law.

One interpretation of the 1905 Law is that the CFCM violates the mandate of neutrality of the state in religious affairs because it was the Interior Ministry that established it initially. Conversely, because of the freedom of religion that the law provides, Sarkozy claims the CFCM is necessary as a bureaucratic authority to oversee the Muslim faith so that it might be freely practiced. Sarkozy’s logic is this: France is not the democratic society it claims to be if an entire segment of its population perceives large-scale discrimination. Muslims residing in France should have equality of opportunity to practice their faith as they desire, especially in keeping with the established tradition of political equality in France. Persecution is inconsistent with liberal democracy. It is this argument that enabled the creation of the CFCM in the first place by a government entity, the Department of the Interior, so as not to violate the Secularity Law. About the law itself, Sarkozy had this to say in a speech he made to the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences in Paris in September of 2005, “I am very fascinated by the fact that one can change the [French] Constitution every year, even several times a year, yet there exists a school of thought that holds the Law of 1905 can’t

¹⁰⁸ "L'UMP Se Félicite du Taux de Participation Aux Elections du CFCM."

be touched by anyone for any reason.”¹⁰⁹ Regardless how one argues the legitimacy of the CFCM, the long history that France has of secularism dating from the French Revolution as codified in the 1905 Law of Secularity is one that has put the CFCM on shaky ground from its inception.

Actions of the CFCM Concerning Issues of Faith

Construction of mosques has been a troublesome issue related to faith. As a gesture of goodwill, Sarkozy wanted publicly-funded mosques for several reasons; the most important was that if Muslims in France see the government making an effort with public funds—those that are collected through taxation of all people in France, including Muslims—then they are less likely to feel alienated and set-apart from the society in which they live and to which they contribute. Sarkozy made this point in the speech mentioned above, to the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences; he said, “When [Muslim] people do not have the means [for such as mosque construction] and they’re not given the means, they will turn to other and foreign sources, and the influence is negative.”¹¹⁰ Another is that if the state finances mosque construction, the state is viewed by Muslims to have a greater degree of legitimacy and is seen as an ally with whom Muslims should cooperate rather than against which more radical sects might plot. Sarkozy acknowledged the 1905 law, but claimed that he has not violated it: “The State must finance the construction of mosques. ...All of the religious [Roman Catholic] edifices constructed before 1905 are considered properties of the State. Consequently,

¹⁰⁹ "Boubakeur Attache a La Loi de 1905, Kabtane Applaudit Sarkozy."

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

their upkeep and maintenance is sponsored by the public.”¹¹¹ He argued that in order to win favor from Islamic groups, as well as demonstrate to them that France was in the business of inclusion, not exclusion, publicly financing mosque construction would be acceptable. (Sarkozy had initially called for the dissolution of the 1905 Law, but this was out of the question.)¹¹² By the same token, Sarkozy argued, with Islam being the second largest religion in France, the state should finance and maintain all religious edifices, including non-Catholic ones: mosques. No matter how much Sarkozy pushed for it at the time, at a basic level, the public funding of mosques *is* in direct violation of the 1905 Law. The wording is clear: “the state may not subsidize any religion.”¹¹³

The ensuing outcry against publicly funded mosque construction, as vocalized in the press, led to the creation of the Islamic Foundation, a private entity, on 21 March 2005.¹¹⁴ The foundation is official because it is the only one recognized by the CFCM as responsible for financing the construction of new mosques. The foundation is private because monies funneled into the foundation are to come from private sources—not public funds. “Relying on private donations from France and abroad, the Foundation will spend money on building and renovating mosques and prayer halls, and training imams and chaplains for the estimated five million strong community.”¹¹⁵ The implementation of a private foundation would solve many of the problems critics had with Sarkozy’s plan to publicly fund mosque construction. Creating a private foundation for Islamic works, including privately funding new mosque construction, removed the burden of responsibility from the state, and placed it directly on the CFCM and the managers of the

¹¹¹ Etchegoin, "Sarkozy, L'islam et La Laicite."

¹¹² "L'UMP Se Félicite du Taux de Participation Aux Elections du CFCM."

¹¹³ "Boubakeur Attache a La Loi de 1905, Kabtane Applaudit Sarkozy."

¹¹⁴ "L'UMP Se Félicite du Taux de Participation Aux Elections du CFCM."

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

foundation.¹¹⁶ The foundation would “handle funds from donors now holding back because of confusion, corruption, and post-9/11 uncertainty.”¹¹⁷ In this way, Sarkozy’s initial desire to separate mosque construction from outside influences is met: because the funds must be channeled through the French foundation, there is a degree of separation between the Muslims that are building mosques and the foreign donors who might be inclined to wield influence along with their donations.

The Board of the foundation is comprised of 15 members, two from the Grande Mosque de Paris, two from the National Federation of French Muslims (FNMF), two from the Union of Islamic Organizations of France (UOIF), one from the Coordinated Committee of Turkish Muslims (CCMTF), eight “qualified persons,” and one *ex officio* representative of the state, whom the Interior Minister may appoint.¹¹⁸ In this way, the explicit demand for a separation between religion and state as outlined in the 1905 law is met.

The implications of the creation of the Foundation for Islamic Works are huge for the CFCM, in that this is a serious and important issue where the Council was able to make progress. While the Council had had a rocky and tumultuous first two years, successfully creating the Foundation helped to win the Council legitimacy and showed that it was gaining legitimacy as an authority on affairs dealing directly with matters of Muslim faith. This is also an instance where the Council has been effective at representing the interests of faithful Muslims, but also narrows the scope of the Council’s representative power to all Muslims in France. In other words, the Council’s power became more defined: if the Council is seen as authoritative on mosque construction, it

¹¹⁶ Ibid.2

¹¹⁷ Heneghan, "Competition Lively as French Muslims Elect Leaders."

¹¹⁸ Crumley, "A Good Idea That's Off to a Bad Start."

has less ability to appear authoritative on non-faith issues. While this was a major milestone for the CFCM itself, it significantly narrowed the scope of the CFCM's influence by relegating it to its initial mission of simply acting as an authority for the Muslim *religion* in France. If a large segment of persons who claim ties to Islam are non-practicing, and those ties are by cultural affiliation only, the CFCM does little to better the standing of *all* Muslims in France. Again, while this is important in strengthening the Council's authority in matters of faith, it falls short of any need to elevate the vast majority of Muslims in France from a position of second-class citizen.

While the Council was able to make limited headway with respect to mosque construction, an issue with which it failed was in the appointment of chaplains. The issue of chaplain appointment has been the most troublesome and controversial to the CFCM. In September of 2005, the CFCM announced the names of six chaplains that it had appointed for the prisons.¹¹⁹ As discussed in detail previously in Chapter Two, the Council proved ineffective at accomplishing this goal as outlined in its original charter, because this served to enflame the differences between the constituent members of the Council, and ultimately resulted in conflict that injured the stability and efficacy of the Council. Superficially, the Council did meet the need to appoint Muslim chaplains for prisons, hospitals, and the military in France, but it was not without great cost. The controversy generated from chaplain appointment highlights a conclusion I draw about the CFCM in this thesis: the ideological and extra-national loyalties of each constituent group within the Council are so great that a task as charged as chaplain appointment is not accomplished without great conflict.

¹¹⁹ Sophie de Ravinel, "Six Aumôniers Musulmans Avant Fin 2005," *le Figaro*, 23 September 2005.

The degree to which each group tries to preserve its own national and ideological loyalties is the crux of their disagreements. This is why the Council is effective at making decisions and implementing them on some issues but not others. The different constituent groups of the CFCM are so antagonistic about this issue because a chaplain is charged with delivering the core message of the faith to those that are in most need of it. When the constituent groups of the Council consider who will be charged to administer in chaplaincy the core tenets of Islam, this is a very serious matter that is not decided lightly. In the CFCM's role of appointing chaplains, the national and ideological differences of the constituent groups render the Council unable to act as a single authority. Giving the CFCM responsibility to decide who will become chaplains for all French institutions that have Muslim chaplains on staff is like trying to organize a single ten-member Christian Council to appoint a few chaplains to represent the Christian faith to all Christians: Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Protestant alike. In this sense, the CFCM falls short of its goal to represent any significantly large group of Muslims, let alone Muslims that are not devout in the practicing of their faith.

The Council was effective at filling the roles of regulating halal meat and the observance of Muslim holidays. These roles of the CFCM also achieved little media coverage; with respect to the old cliché, "no news is good news," this signifies that in some respects, the Council was effective at regulating these issues. In overseeing them, it is gaining authority, legitimacy, and in its representative capacity, if only to a faithful minority of all Muslims in France. With reference to both of these, the Council endeavored to ensure that halal meat was available to Muslims, particularly during the Feast of Sacrifice that occurs during the time of the pilgrimage to Mecca, even by those

Muslims who remain at home. This feast requires that Muslims kill a sheep and keep one third for a feast for their family, give one third to relatives and friends, and give a final third to the poor. According to press reports, during the feast there was widespread selling of lamb carcasses by large grocery stores, such as Carrefour, Intermarche, Auchan, and Metro, with sales equaling 20 million Euros. In Boubakeur's and the CFCM's opinion, this meat was not actually halal, and Muslims were being exploited.¹²⁰ A second dimension of this issue of halal meat is also one of sanitation. If the feast requires Muslims to dole out two thirds of an entire lamb carcass, the meeting of sanitation standards is paramount. The Council was able to ensure that the lambs were slaughtered in a way consistent with Muslim beliefs, as well as encourage sanitary practices on the part of the butchers at the time of distribution.

Regulating halal meat and the setting of feasts are decisions executed by the Council with ease, compared to its other decisions, and has been generally free of conflict. In Islam, the universal practices of eating halal and celebrating holidays are practices that transcend ideological differences. Chaplain appointment invites conflict because no one group is comfortable with the religious values of another being promoted above its own. Halal meat and feasts such as Ramadan are central to all strands of Islam. If, for example, there is an Islamic group that does not fully fast as some traditions require during Ramadan, this group still recognizes the significance of the holiday and the dates on which it occurs. Similarly, halal meat is halal meat. More secular Muslims that do not keep halal are not concerned with its proper preparation. In these instances, there is not internal conflict between constituent groups of the CFCM because of the nature of the issues.

¹²⁰ "Politisation."

The relative ease with which the Council regulated the above issues also applies to the pilgrimage to Mecca. This issue is not directly stated in the charter, but it does deal with an issue central to the Muslim faith that transcends ideological boundaries between different factions of Islam. Boubakeur asked Chirac on behalf of the CFCM to facilitate the pilgrimage of French Muslims to Mecca by engaging in diplomatic dialogue with Saudi Arabia to make it easier for French Muslims to obtain visas for this purpose.¹²¹ There was little disagreement among Council members, and ultimately the visas were facilitated for those wishing to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. The requirement of pilgrimage being one of the Five Pillars, or central tenets, of Islam is one that all faithful Muslims, regardless of ideological affiliation, regard as central to their faith.

The expressed purpose of educating imams has not really received much media attention that I could discover. The French government wanted to establish the equivalent of seminaries for imams at a French university. The purpose behind this was two-fold: the education of imams would become official and reduce the perception that Muslim clerical leaders are second class compared to ‘officially’ trained Christian, notably Catholic, clergy. Secondly, this would remove the necessity that foreign clerics come to France; foreign clerics can bring radical or anti-establishment ideologies with them. In this manner, and in the mind of Sarkozy and Villepin who pushed for this role of the Council, this would be a win-win situation for all parties involved: Muslims would gain a degree of sectarian legitimacy and the French state would have some control over the particular brand of Islam that would be preached to the faithful in France, hopefully establishing a precedent for a more moderate brand of Islam. In a press conference on 24 June 2004, Villepin is quoted as saying, “I have great confidence [in the CFCM] to make

¹²¹ "L'UMP Se Félicite du Taux de Participation Aux Elections du CFCM."

headway on the subject which I view as most pressing: the education of imams. If we want a French Islam, French Muslims must have access to imams that speak our language and know our culture. Today, they [imams] are of a foreign nationality and from a foreign education. This cannot be a solution for incorporation [of Muslims into French society]. This satisfies no one.”¹²²

Several places were proposed for an institute for imam education, with little immediate result. As reported in *Ouest France* in 14 January 06, the desire to establish an institution at *la Sorbonne* was rejected by the university. The University of Paris VIII (Saint-Denis) is engaged in talks with Boubakeur to establish an institute there.¹²³ Also, the impression is that this is still a young initiative, and there has not been a lot reported or implicated from it. Although it is my understanding that progress has been made in establishing a seminary for imams in Strasbourg, this issue is still very much a work in progress. I suspect that this issue will become controversial when a faculty is hired, in the same way that chaplain appointment is controversial: the different groups of the CFCM might be uncomfortable with having a teacher who represents a different nationality than theirs educating imams. However, I am inclined to think that this issue will ultimately be resolved successfully because most Maghrebi Muslims ascribe to Sunni Islam.

Issues that Reach Beyond the Faithful

In dealing with issues beyond the ones of faith with which the Council was originally charged with regulating, the Council is acting in a way that engages society as

¹²² . Dominique de Villepin, "24/06/2004 - Conférence de Presse " (2004).

¹²³ "Politisation."

an alternative to remaining silent. By engaging the larger public, the Council tries to legitimize the place of Muslims within French society, and promotes a definition of French culture that is not exclusive of Muslims, requiring their assimilation, but rather the Council is trying to demonstrate that French culture can be inclusive of Muslims as it currently is. Official statements demonstrate that the Council is assuming a role to speak on behalf of all Muslims from a faith-oriented standpoint and it is aiming to demonstrate a degree of authority. The Council, by publicly acting on matters that it believes are important to *all* persons of Muslim association in France, is showing that it desires to act in a way that is representative of a collective Muslim interest. These public statements and actions set the tone for religious discourse in France in a way that models how the French might perceive Muslims within their culture, and how Muslims might assert their own culture and interests in an acceptable manner.

The headscarf affair was the singular event in which the Council crossed the Rubicon that entered it into the secular arena and set a precedent for the Council to publicly speak on matters it considered central to all Muslims in France. On 17 March 2004, the French legislature passed a law that banned the display of any sign of religion in public schools.¹²⁴ In September 1989, three Maghrebi school girls residing in Creil who insisted on wearing their head coverings to school were expelled. This launched a public debate about the “right to difference” that would continue for many years even unto the passing of the 2004 law.¹²⁵ When the law was finally passed, a large portion of the Muslim community was outraged.

¹²⁴ *Le Vrai Visage de l'UOIF : Antisémitisme, Apologie et Financement du Terrorisme, et Appel au Jihad* ([cited]).

¹²⁵ Feldblum, *Reconstructing Citizenship, the Politics of Nationality Reform in Contemporary France*, 129.

Initially, in the early part of July 2004, and in response to threats on some Muslim's parts to do so, Boubakeur "branded a pro-veil march...as a 'very dangerous measure that could frighten voters [into electing a more right-wing parliament]."¹²⁶ He continued, "Demonstrations in the name of religion are very dangerous."¹²⁷ Because the CFCM did not protest the headscarf ban and actually let it stand, this won the Council the respect of the French government, but hurt its reputation with the Muslims it is supposed to represent. To find evidence of opposition to the ban on the part of Muslims in France, one only has to enter "*affaire du foulard*" in any search engine to uncover many Muslim-oriented websites in opposition to the ruling.

In any case, this likely gave the Council legitimacy in the eyes of the government and encouraged hopefulness that this Council, while an overtly sectarian organization created by the government, would fulfill its purpose of maintaining the status quo of French secularism. In actuality, the obviousness of the issue is that under a government that claims to subscribe to ideals of individualism and sanctity of personhood, a woman's decision to cover herself in accordance with her belief system should not be something that the government should attempt to regulate. Fueling the controversy is the absence of any specific reference to head scarves, stars of David, or crosses. The direct wording of the ban prohibits "any display of religion in any public school."¹²⁸ I was unable to uncover evidence that there were significant internal disagreements among the CFCM members concerning the decision to support the ban, but there is indication that a significant portion of Muslims in France were opposed to the ban, and thus, would find

¹²⁶ Tom Heneghan, "French Pro-Hijab March Branded Dangerous," *The Muslim News Online*, 7 January 2004.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ *Le Vrai Visage de l'UOIF : Antisémitisme, Apologie et Financement du Terrorisme, et Appel au Djihad* ([cited]).

fault with Boubakeur's and the CFCM's official stance. As an example of the initial backlash to the law, a BBC News article from 17 January 2004 states, "Up to 5,000 protestors, mainly women in scarves, rallied in Paris. ...Many of France's five million Muslims see it as an attack on their religious and human rights."¹²⁹

Another instance where the issuance of official public statements by the CFCM demonstrate a self-expanding role of the Council as representative to a greater Islam, and subsequently Muslims in France, was during several incidents of hostage taking in Iraq. On 4 March 2005, several journalists were kidnapped in Iraq. Mohamed Bechari, vice president for the CFCM said "We call for the immediate release of Florence Aubenas and Hussein Hanun al-Saadi [Saadi is her interpreter in Iraq]".¹³⁰ Bechari went on to say that "Abductions are not part of our Arab or Muslim traditions, particularly when the victim is a woman who should be well treated."¹³¹ When Aubenas and her translator were released, it was said that Boubakeur exhibited "great joy."¹³² When Jill Carroll was abducted in January of 2006, Boubakeur called also for her release, saying "We demand her release, in the name of our religion which promotes tolerance, dialogue, and equality among creatures of God. ...Islam is against the taking of hostages. For us, life is sacred, even for a criminal."¹³³

While these two incidents are neither a sign of weakness nor strength on the part of the Council, they are important in the chronology of events in which the CFCM has attempted to wield influence on behalf of Muslims. The implication here is that the

¹²⁹ Ibid.([cited]).

¹³⁰ "L'UMP Se Félicite du Taux de Participation Aux Elections du CFCM."

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² "Libération des Otages: "Joie Immense" de Dalil Boubakeur (CFCM)," *Agence France Presse*, 12 June 2005.

¹³³ "Politisation."

CFCM is further assuming a role beyond that of simply being a leader on matters of faith (hallal meat, imams, et cetera). Although I argue that the Council does not fully represent all Muslims in France, these examples of public statements suggest that the Council is assuming a role of authority that lies outside the scope of decisions on matters of faith. In this sense, the Council is trying to expand its role, both to a greater French public, and to a greater French Muslim body. It is easy to be dismissive of the Council's ability to represent all Muslims in France by arguing that it is an entity whose sole responsibility is to faithful Muslims in France. However, as these public statements demonstrate, the Council itself is attempting to expand its role and scope of influence by engaging a wider French public by speaking to issues it believes are central to all Muslims in France, and to Islam itself.

Another instance when the CFCM issued an official statement, via Boubakeur, was its response to the London bombings of July 2005. Boubakeur stated, 'In the name of the Muslim Faith, in the name of French Muslims, we condemn as forcefully as possibly, with strong seriousness, the horror, the horrible attack which hit the city of London.'¹³⁴ While not as grave as the London attacks, two other events were briefly mentioned in the media: On 18 July 2005, to commemorate the second anniversary of the Bosnian genocide in Srebrenica, an official statement was released, "The CFCM shares in the sadness of the families of all victims of Bosnia-Herzegovina."¹³⁵ Both of these instances serve to show that the CFCM is attempting to fill a role inclusive of all Muslims that is beyond the scope of its representative capacity for all Muslims.

¹³⁴ "L'UMP Se Félicite du Taux de Participation Aux Elections du CFCM."

¹³⁵ Ibid.

The publication of the Mohammed cartoons in late 2005 in a Danish newspaper was an event that illustrated the tension between the dual role of the Council as arbiter of faith issues and secular representative. When the cartoons were republished in France by *France Soir*, the CFCM's initial response over involvement was tepid; "The CFCM hesitated to become involved in legal terrain," an article from *Le Monde* stated.¹³⁶ This hesitancy can be attributed to the original intent for the CFCM to be a Council whose authority encompasses only matters of Faith. However, based on the trend I have identified of the Council to speak publicly about matters it believed were central to either all Muslims or Islam, the CFCM ultimately spoke publicly through Boubakeur. Dalil Boubakeur stated in frustration, "If the CFCM does not play its role in this situation, then when will it do so?"¹³⁷ The constituent members of the CFCM did act; for example UOIF issued a fatwa against the violence, but the CFCM's response was slow to materialize. Within France, there was not much media attention to this matter with respect to the CFCM. The minor part in the controversy initially played by the CFCM was marked only by the occasional message for a desire for peace, and a condemnation of the publications of the cartoons, first in Denmark and then the reprint by *France Soir*.

Finally, pressures on the CFCM from other Muslim groups, such as the UOIF, were effective in getting it to display a semblance of action. It was not until early 2006 that the CFCM did act. A BBC newswire from 3 February 2006, concerning the entire cartoon scandal, the CFCM leaders are described as "outraged."¹³⁸ Later, on 10 February 2006, the CFCM decided to take legal action against *France Soir* and four other French

¹³⁶ "Politisation."

¹³⁷ "L'UMP Se Félicite du Taux de Participation Aux Elections du CFCM."

¹³⁸ "Politisation."

papers that republished the cartoons.¹³⁹ Eventually, “The judges rejected demands by French Muslim organizations, including the CFCM, ...which had argued the paper was undermining the principle of the respect of faiths.”¹⁴⁰ On 7 February, Boubakeur said, “This is a foreign war, started in Scandinavia. I wish it would stay there! But it marks a return of religious feelings; a respect of the sacred. However, this [violence] contains aspects of war, not religion.”¹⁴¹ This statement of Boubakeur’s implies that he is glad to see Muslims in France taking issue with matters of faith by expressing their disapproval of the cartoons, but that Boubakeur believes there should not be violence. Here, as before, Boubakeur as representative of the CFCM, is trying to speak on behalf of all Muslims in a secular capacity. Additionally, the Council is trying to publicly demonstrate to the French that, while Islam does forbid images of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the kind of Islam the CFCM wishes to promote is one that also excludes violence. Additionally, this reflects a greater tension between the formal role of the Council as arbiter of faith issues and the informal role or greater Muslim leader in France.

In November 2005, there were large youth riots that exploded in the suburbs of Paris. According to *The Economist*, “Two incidents triggered the rioting. On October 27th, two teenagers, one of North African origin, the other of Malian—apparently believing themselves pursued by the police, were electrocuted in an electricity substation in the suburb of Clichy-sous-Bois.”¹⁴² The article goes on to say that a few days later, a tear-gas canister “ended up—under unexplained circumstances—inside a prayer hall in

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² "L'UMP Se Félicite du Taux de Participation Aux Elections du CFCM."

Clichy.”¹⁴³ This fanned the flames of an already-angry Muslim population and started mass rioting in the French suburbs by mainly Muslim residents. A 13 November article from *Agence France Presse* reported what was launched into Muslim meeting houses was not merely one canister of tear-gas, but was rather two Molotov Cocktails.¹⁴⁴ Regardless of what was thrown, the CFCM had strong words: “The CFCM strongly condemns the aggression which has victimized Muslim places of worship, particularly the mosque of Carpentras most recently.”¹⁴⁵ While the rioting is not exactly a religious issue, the aggression toward Muslim places of worship is. As a public statement, this is further evidence of the CFCM attempting to take a larger role in the lives of all Muslims in France.

Boubakeur expressed his frustration that foreign media had portrayed the riots and rioters as Muslim. “There weren’t just Mohammads and Alis in those groups (of rioters) [sic]—there were Tonys and Daniels too.”¹⁴⁶ The problem that Boubakeur was expressing on behalf of his colleagues on the Council was that the picture the media was painting was one of stereotyping, one of pigeon-holing the rioters into a single category. Granted, while the majority of rioters were young Muslims of differing faiths, ethnicities, and national heritages, Boubakeur was echoing the very common critique of the CFCM: it is an organization which attempts to make many different groups into one. Either way, Kamel Kabtane, rector of the Grande Mosque of Lyon and treasurer of the CFCM’s Administrative Council from 2003-2005, said “They [the rioters] didn’t act like that

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Heneghan, "Competition Lively as French Muslims Elect Leaders."

because they're Muslims, but because of the misery they're living in."¹⁴⁷ It seems that the 'unofficial official position' of the CFCM as expressed by its leading members was one of tacit agreement over the roots of the problems plaguing the very segment of society which they had been charged to represent. In an *Agence France Presse* article from early November, Boubakeur was quoted as saying, "Our immigrant brothers in Paris and in France must be given the conditions to live with dignity as human beings, not in disgraceful squalor."¹⁴⁸ Other than edicts of an appeal for calm, the CFCM seemed to quietly agree with the catalyst for the events, while not advocating the violence, furthering the notion that the CFCM is assuming a role outside of its original purpose, to act as an authority only on matters of faith. This greater role, while an expansion of the Council's original role, is evidence of somewhat effective representation for all Muslims in France because these official statements aim to portray Muslims and Islam within France as positive and peaceable.

Conclusion

When initially established in December of 2002, the CFCM was intended to act as an authority for the entire Muslim faith in France. By including the various groups that had acted as regional or local authorities in their own right, such as the UOIF, the FNMF, and the GMP, there was hope that a single umbrella organization would bring unity among Muslims in France, as well as ensure that they had a legitimate voice on their behalf to the French government. I have pointed out in this chapter that the breadth of official decisions and actions of the CFCM indicates that its leaders perceived it as an

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ "L'UMP Se Félicite du Taux de Participation Aux Elections du CFCM."

entity inclusive of all persons in France who have some affiliation with Islam, whether spiritual or cultural. Official statements are evidence of an attempt by the CFCM to expand its scope of influence, and at a minimum are effective at bringing Muslim issues to the mainstream of French thought, but on a whole do not represent the interests of all Muslims in France.

In the previous chapter I showed that the differing ideologies and extra-French national allegiances of the CFCM constituent groups have often hindered the Council's ability to represent Muslim interests in France. In this chapter, I have shown that the CFCM is effective at representing faithful Muslims on issues that transcend all strands of Islam, such as halal meat and setting of feasts. However, the CFCM is ineffective on many divisive issues that highlight ideological differences between the constituent groups, such as chaplain appointment. While the conclusion is that the CFCM is an effective body on a few key issues central to a greater Islam, as well as limited effective representation of all Muslims in France in some instances of engaging the French public, the CFCM is not effective acting as a representative for all Muslims in France.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Is it possible to represent Muslims that live in France given the French tradition of secularism, Jacobinism, and republicanism? The introduction to this thesis demonstrated that the established political structure in France intrinsically provides resistance to what the CFCM does: establish and legitimize Islam and Muslims in France as a distinct entity within a French social and political structure. What I have shown is that the CFCM is unable to represent Muslims in France as a result of its own structure.

Findings

In this thesis, it was my intention to show that the CFCM is not effective in representing the interests of all Muslims in France. After the introductory Chapter One and its literature review, I systematically tried to present evidence for this contention in subsequent chapters.

In Chapter Two, I summarized the Protocol d'Accord which outlined the political and electoral structure of the CFCM as, and then looked at electoral results from both the 2003 and 2005 elections. Using data from French media reports, as well as my own analysis, I showed that the CFCM is structurally incapable of representing the interests of all Muslims in France. My final conclusion was that because the representatives to the Council are elected by spiritual leaders from their respective Mosques or places of prayer, they will be primarily men, and considered highly faithful to Islam. This structure excludes women and the large number of persons in France who are cultural Muslims

only—meaning they come from a Muslim heritage but are not necessarily devout practitioners of their faith. Secondly, because the constituent groups of the CFCM maintain ties and loyalties to leaders and nations that are outside of France, the CFCM is not effective at representing Muslims who are French culturally—in that they were born in France and speak French as a primary language.

In Chapter Three of this thesis, I looked at the constituent groups of the CFCM themselves. The three main constituent groups of the CFCM are the Union of French Islamic Organizations (UOIF), the Grand Mosque of Paris (GMP), and the National Federation of French Muslims (FNMF). Each group has extra-French ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, Algeria, and Morocco, respectively. My more detailed discussion of the constituent groups affirms my conclusion in Chapter Two that ties of the constituent groups to entities outside of France render the Council ineffective at representing all Muslims in France, particularly the large portion that is culturally similar to the French, save for their Muslim heritage.

My main contention in Chapter Three regarding representation for Muslims in France is based on the antagonistic nature of mainly the UOIF. Throughout the brief history of the CFCM the UOIF has expressed strong disdain for actions of the Council and has threatened withdrawal from the Council several times. These recurrent conflicts mainly revolved around the charged issue of chaplain appointment, in which the UOIF was in strong disagreement with the Council's appointment of Fouad Alaoui as national chaplain. I contend that these conflicts impede the Council's efficacy because it is preoccupied with resolving these conflicts and thus was unable to be effective in other areas.

Finally, I concluded Chapter Three with a discussion on the tension between religion and secularism that is exemplified by the resignation of Dounia Bouzar from the Council. Bouzar is a secular Muslim who speaks French as her native language and does not wear a headscarf. Bouzar's initial inclusion in the Council was to be a representative of secular Muslims in France; she became so frustrated with the inter-group controversies in the Council that she resigned. I conclude that the tension between religion and secularism is so great that the Council is unable to represent the interests of secular Muslims.

In Chapter Four, I looked at specific official actions of the CFCM and weighed the Council's representative capacity to Muslims in France. This chapter was divided into two main sections, one in which the Council ruled on matters of faith concerning the Muslim religion, and another on instances that concerned all Muslims, faithful or secular. I ultimately concluded that the Council is effective in some areas and ineffective in others. The Council was effective in matters of faith that are universal to Islam. These matters include the regulation of Mosque construction, the regulation of halal meat, and the pilgrimage to Mecca. The Council was ineffective in ruling on matters that reflected differing versions of Islam, such as chaplain appointment and education of imams. In some of these cases, the Council demonstrated effective representation to at least faithful Muslims.

Matters that expanded beyond issues of faith mainly revolved around the issuance of public statements by Boubakeur in his role as president of the CFCM. What Boubakeur and these public statements demonstrated was an expansion of the Council's role from faith-authority to attempted representation of all Muslims. What I ultimately

concluded in this section was that while the CFCM was not effective at bringing great positive change to the lives of all Muslims in France, he at least brought issues that were relevant to all Muslims into a mainstream setting. In this sense he engaged a greater French public in dialogue that was inclusive of Muslims within France to promote tolerance and understanding to provide limited representation for all Muslims in France. In other issues, like riots that involved large numbers of Muslims, the CFCM's appeal for calm not only demonstrated an attempted authority over Muslims in France, but aimed to demonstrate a legitimacy of Muslim interests to French people.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

As I repeatedly highlighted throughout this project, the differing loyalties of the CFCM constituent groups largely impeded the representative capacity of the CFCM. One challenge is defining these differences. The differences which define the groups are far greater than simply their extra-French ties and allegiances. The groups also embody religious differences, particularly in the way they incorporate secularism into their practice of Islam. Data have been very difficult to find in gauging the differences in religious practices that were a likely source of their conflict. Secondly, I have no real 'secularity scale' with which to comparatively rate groups. The only inference I can make is that the UOIF is likely more religiously conservative than the other groups because of its ties to the Muslim Brotherhood. Finally, although most of the Muslims in France are Sunni, the implications from the differences and subtleties among the different Sunni groups are too complex for me to tease out in this project.

Secondly, the representation that the CFCM is charged with providing for all Muslims in France is so monumental that it is nearly an impossibility. On a superficial level there is a duality to the identities of groups of Muslims in France: secular and faithful. However, there are categories upon categories that are so much greater than this perhaps oversimplified divide. The groups that comprise the CFCM and their respective extra-French ties reflect cultural extra-French ties of Muslims in France as well. Even if Muslims in France are culturally 'French,' speaking French as their native language and living a secular lifestyle, they are descendents of immigrants from places like Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon, and others, and these cultural affiliations still exist.

Another dimension to this issue that was not addressed in this thesis is one of class. Some Algerians whose families have been in France for several generations, for example, are business owners, politicians, and other societal elites, rather than laborers. The perceived discriminations that caused riots in the ethnic neighborhoods in Paris are likely not problems that these societal elites experience. All of this shows that not only is the CFCM going to have difficulty representing all Muslims in France because of their secular or religious values, but because of their class, social, and economic stations as well. This suggests that the difficulties of representation reach deeper and span wider than this thesis could address.

In sum, I believe that my main findings still stand: representation for all Muslims in France is not achieved by the CFCM, and that what representation is achieved by the CFCM is largely to faithful Muslims. However, this research could be expanded to include treatment of the differences that encompass religious and secular values, and

class divisions among all Muslims in France would have made my findings richer and more thorough.

Implications for an Improved Representation of Muslims in France

After showing that the CFCM in its current state is incapable of representing all Muslims in France, I would suggest several changes to make it more inclusive. First, an electoral system that is not based on a few representatives of mosques electing delegates to the CFCM would be better. I would suggest a system that invites all Muslims to vote on their representatives. I concede that having mosques and places of prayer as being where CFCM delegates are elected is a necessity of convenience, but at least allowing every congregant at the mosque to vote would be more democratic. Alternatively, setting up polling stations in predominantly Muslim neighborhoods might be an alternative to this that includes secular Muslims. Another alternative might be to allow voting in mosques and by secular Muslims.

Regardless of how it is obtained, the message is clear: the CFCM must find away to incorporate the interests of all Muslims in France that is insulated from external influences. I concede that the inclusion of the already-established Muslim organizations in France was probably the most effective way to incorporate already existing Muslim leadership at the time of the CFCM's formation. However, these groups' blatant ties to entities outside of France are a significant barrier to the CFCM's representation for Muslims within France and Muslims that consider themselves French. A way around this might be to allow the election of at-large members that are not affiliated with these already established Muslim groups (in the sense that Bouzar was initially included in the

CFCM). Alternatively, the inclusion of already existing secular Muslim associations in France would be a good start.

In any instance of attempted representation of Muslims in France, the implication I take from this project is that any well-intentioned attempt is better than none. While this project has shown difficulties, shortcomings, and limitations of the CFCM in its representative capacity, the CFCM represents a unified attempt to bring together all Muslims in France in order to promote reconciliation with the French host-culture. The CFCM has much it can do in way of improvement, but it is off to a fair start.

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Responsibilities:
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Research

- Master's Thesis research on the *Conseil Francaise du Culte Musulman* (French Council for the Muslim Faith), a council that was established in 2003 to serve as mediator between Muslims in France and the French government, as well as ease dissent among multivocal Islamic groups by providing them a univocal leadership
- "Immigration and the Upcoming 2002 French Presidential Election" 40+ page undergrad. Political Science Thesis (examining immigration in France, primarily Muslim/North African, and its implications on French government and society)
- "The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict *vis à vis* Historic U. S. Peace Churches" 20 page undergrad. History Thesis (examining the role that peace churches played in this conflict, including conflict resolution, humanitarian aid, and peace-promotion)
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Professional Development

- Training in Human Subjects Protection, by the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board, November 2005
- AP Mini Course (Political Science) in curriculum, materials, and testing, Charlotte, NC, November 11, 2003
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References

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