Article

'Islamic Separatism': A Semantic Macrostructural Analysis of the Discourse of French President Emmanuel Macron

Omar El Hammoud [iD]
Pompeu Fabra University, Barcelona, Spain

Abstract – In the context of contemporary France, the relationship between the state and the Muslim community has been the subject of intense debates, especially regarding issues related to integration and secularism. Thus, this article explores Macron's speech titled "Islamic Separatism," which addresses the current state of Islam and the Muslim community in France. In this speech, Macron outlines the guidelines that must be followed to resolve the crisis that, according to him, Islam is facing, with the goal of creating a new Islam fully compatible with the values of the republic. This speech was broadcast by various media outlets on Friday, October 1, 2020, with an approximate duration of 45 minutes. The study is based on critical discourse analysis, primarily using the sociocognitive method, where we thoroughly analyze the macrostructure of the discourse, which includes the study of themes, ideology, and the social representations of the actors.

Keywords: Critical discourse analysis; Islamic separatism; French Republic; ideology; social representation.

Introduction

On October 2, 2020, French President Emmanuel Macron delivered a speech lasting at least 45 minutes about the fight against what he called "Islamist separatism." This speech was part of measures aimed at strengthening secularism and combating separatist ideas that, according to him, threaten national unity and republican values.

This speech marked a turning point in the way the French government addresses issues of integration, secularism, and internal security, in response to what Macron refers to as the rise of Islamist separatism, while emphasizing the need to uphold the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity that form the foundation of the Republic. As expected, the French president's speech provoked diverse reactions. It received support from those who believe France must defend itself against extremist ideologies, and criticism from those who saw it as stigmatizing Islam and Muslims.[1]

After President Macron's speech, the French Constitutional Council approved, with minor modifications, the "law reinforcing respect for the principles of the Republic" in August 2021. The measures can be summarized as follows:

- Imposing neutrality on organizations collaborating with public services.
- Allowing the government to exercise stricter control over associations, mosques, and Muslim charitable organizations.
- Requiring authorization for homeschooling.
- Limiting freedom of expression online.
- Banning "virginity certificates" and further strengthening the fight against polygamy.

This provision has been described by some as a clear violation of several political, associative, religious, and freedom of expression rights for the Muslim community in France.[2] This article explores, on one hand, Macron's discourse on what he called "Islamic separatism" in France, as well as examines the guidelines proposed by the French President to address this crisis.

In conclusion, the analysis conducted in the article on the thematic hierarchy in Macron's speech and the frequency of topics demonstrates a strong interest on Macron's part to reform Islam in France, with the aim of preserving the Republic and its secular values. The structure of Macron's speech suggests a coherent narrative that links the defense of republican values with the issue of radical Islamism, where the focus on Islamic radicalism and ideologies such as Salafism and political Islam reinforces Macron's approach to security and social cohesion.

This analysis is based on the approach of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), combining the socio-cognitive perspective of Teun A. van Dijk and the sociological perspective of Theo van Leeuwen. Both approaches help to understand how Macron's discourse on "Islamic separatism" constructs social representations, and how it reinforces power dynamics and regulates the inclusion or exclusion of social actors in his discourse.

Methodology

Critical Discourse Analysis is not simply a unified model, but rather a common perspective on linguistics, semiotics, and discourse analysis. What distinguishes CDA from other related fields of discourse analysis is its "critical" characteristic (Van Dijk, 1993). Fairclough and Wodak (1997) suggest that what is crucial for critical discourse analysts is explicit awareness and their role in society. Following a tradition that rejects the possibility of a "value-free" science, they argue that science, and especially academic discourse, is inherently part of and influenced by the social structure, and is produced in the social interaction that generates the text. Therefore, CDA is a form of analytical research of discourse that considers how abuse of power, domination, and inequality are embedded, reproduced, and resisted in texts and discourses within specific social and political contexts (Van Dijk, 2000).

Additionally, it is important to mention that some of the foundational concepts of CDA were already present in the critical theory of the Frankfurt School before World War II (Agger, 1992; Rasmussen, 1996). However, the current focus of CDA on language and discourse began with "critical linguistics," which primarily emerged in the United Kingdom and Australia in the late 1970s (Mey, 1985).

CDA also has certain counterparts in "critical" developments across various fields of knowledge, including sociolinguistics, psychology, and social sciences, some of which trace back to the early 1970s (Ibáñez & Íñiguez, 1997; Singh, 1996; Thomas, 1993; Turkel, 1996; Wodak, 1996).

The macrostructure of a text consists of a set of global propositions, or macropropositions, which are derived from the meanings of individual sentences (propositions) at the local level. This process is carried out through the use of abstract rules known as macro-rules. These allow for linking and establishing coherence between the propositions of the macrostructure and those of the

microstructure. Their function is to help extract the main theme or issue of the text, transforming complex information into simple, easy-to-understand fragments that can be stored and reproduced. By applying the macro-rules to summarize a set of propositions into a single macroproposition, we identify a common element that unifies them (Van Dijk, 1990).

There are three main macro-rules of semantic reduction:

i.   *Suppression*: This rule eliminates all information that is not relevant to the general understanding of the text.
ii. *Generalization*: This is a process where a propositional sequence is replaced by a generalization.
iii. *Construction*: This involves replacing a sequence of propositions that describe the conditions or consequences of an action with a macro proposition that focuses on the entire act or event.

Van Dijk (1990, 1997) uses a triangular framework to explain the macrostructure of a text. At the base of this triangulation are the sentences and specific details; at the intermediate level, the propositions or meanings of those sentences. At the top of the triangle are the topics or macropropositions, which are expressed in the title, subtitle, or the first sentence of the discourse. The hierarchical organization of the macrostructure is based on the discursive value that the speaker assigns to their statement. For example, in Macron's speech of October 2, 2020, titled "Fight Against Islamist Separatism," the president's statements stand out, as he emphasizes from the outset that this is a "war."

Based on the theoretical framework described, as an analysis methodology, we have classified the different macropropositions within the themes in which they appear. Furthermore, we have conducted a count of the number of times each theme appears throughout the entire corpus, ranked from highest to lowest frequency. To do this, we have combined critical discourse analysis with quantitative methodology in order to obtain results and make the analysis easier to understand for the readers. First, the object of study will be defined, focusing on Macron's speech of October 1, 2020, considering its socio-historical and political context. Subsequently, the macrostructure of the text will be analyzed, identifying the main themes, the hierarchy of ideas, and the argumentative coherence.

The analysis will proceed with the examination of social and ideological representations, exploring the discursive constructions of the in-group (the Republic) and the out-group (the Muslim community), as well as the strategies of inclusion, exclusion, and legitimization that shape the narratives of the discourse. At the socio-cognitive level, mental models and collective representations promoted, such as the crisis of Islam and the figure of the Muslim, will be examined, evaluating how these representations legitimize specific political measures.

Findings and discussion

President Macron's speech establishes a connection between "Islamist separatism" and the crisis currently facing France, linking them to the themes of his discourse. This connection creates a sense of responsibility between the status quo of the Republic and Islamic radicalism on one hand, and the Muslim community on the other. The precise and specific selection of these themes provides coherence and argumentative strength to the president's speeches. Upon analyzing these interventions, it is clear that the dominant theme is the reform of Islam in France. Although Macron addresses various issues, they all converge on one central concern: "France's problem is radical Islamism." This thematic centrality underlies almost the entire speech, with a constant focus on religious radicalism, specifically Islamist ideology. Therefore, there is an extensive religious backdrop with references to ideologies such as Salafism, fundamentalism, radicalism, and political Islam, which form the foundation for several thematic elements of the discourse.

Table 1: Themes and their frequency in Macron's speech

	Themes	*Frequency*
T1	Reforming Islam	22.58%
T2	Defense of the Republic	20%
T3	Radical islamis/Terrorism/Jihad	14.84%
T4	Education	12.26%
T5	Associations	9.03%
T6	Praise of the Republic	8.39%
T7	Social Services	7.1%
T8	History	3.23
T9	Others	2.58

Macron's speech on October 2, 2020, titled Fight Against Islamist Separatism, is structured around nine distinct themes, whose hierarchy reveals both the primacy of certain topics and the speaker's intent. The table displaying the frequency of these themes in the speech reinforces this thematic organization, highlighting the centrality of each one in terms of relevance and emphasis.

The main theme is Reforming Islam (T1), which represents 22.58% of the speech, where Macron proposes adjustments to align the religion with republican values. This emphasis on the reform of Islam underscores its relevance in the discourse and suggests a concern for integrating certain religious principles with the republican ideal. Following in importance is the Defense of the Republic (T2), with 20%, which emphasizes the need to protect republican values that, according to Macron, have been distorted or threatened by radical Islamism.

Radical Islamism, jihadist terrorism (T3) ranks third with 14.84%, highlighting the focus on security issues related to Islamic radicalism. Next, the theme of Education (T4) with 12.26% is presented as an essential tool for promoting civic values and countering separatism.

The themes of Associations (T5), with 9.03%, and Praise of the Republic (T6), with 8.39%, although in smaller proportions, remain relevant as they reflect support for social organizations and the promotion of republican values. Social Services (T7), occupying 7.1%, address practical issues such as transportation and housing, while History (T8), with 3.23%, helps strengthen republican identity. Finally, the category of Others (T9), with 2.58%, includes a variety of secondary topics such as immigration, racism, economy, and culture.

Overall, the analysis of the thematic hierarchy in the speech and the frequency of the themes reveals a strong concern for the reform of Islam and the preservation of the Republic. The structure of this discourse suggests a coherent narrative that articulates the defense of republican values with the issue of radical Islamism, where the focus on Islamic radicalism and ideologies such as Salafism and political Islam reinforces Macron's approach to security and social cohesion.

Reforming Islam

Macron addresses the need to reform Islam so that it is consistent with the republican values and secularism of the French state. His speech highlights the importance of countering radical Islamism and creating new alternatives for the integration of the Muslim community into French society. According to him, this reform is essential to ensure social cohesion and prevent radicalization, as Islam must align with the norms and values of the French Republic.

Macron's focus on the reform of Islam involves a series of actions and policies aimed at promoting a new "French model" of Islam, which emphasizes the separation of religion and state, as well as respect for human rights and gender equality. This may include measures such as controlling foreign financing of mosques, overseeing the training of imams, and promoting a more moderate and tolerant form of Islam. The theme of "Reforming Islam" stands out as the central axis of Macron's speech, as its constant presence makes it the main focus of the message, with other themes developing around

this central idea. The very name of this theme suggests the need for a profound revision of the religion, as it is perceived as being misaligned with republican values. This approach implies that Islam, as it currently exists in France, is incompatible with social cohesion and, therefore, requires reform. The macropropositions that stand out in this theme are presented and analyzed below:

Table 2: The Macropropositions of the Theme "Reforming Islam"

Mp1	Islam is a religion that is currently in crisis worldwide.
Mp2	We need to build together an enlightened Islam.
Mp3	We need to train a generation of imams.
Mp4	We must create an Islam compatible with the Republic.
Mp5	The French Council of Muslim Worship will be responsible for conducting the training and certification of imams.
Mp6	We need to create an institute of Islamic studies.
Mp7	We need to create our own model of Islam.

The macropropositions in Macron's speech on the reform of Islam in France reflect a structured and strategic approach in which the president articulates his vision for a "French Islam" aligned with republican values. Through a set of macropropositions, the speech suggests that Islam, in its current state, is perceived as incompatible with the republican model and, therefore, requires specific adjustments.

The deontic and emphatic modalities in these messages are crucial for understanding the urgency and importance of the proposed actions. The insistence on collective obligation and the repetition of calls to action not only convey a sense of necessity but also mobilize the community to participate in a joint effort for the reform and supposed modernization of Islam. These rhetorical strategies can be effective in promoting significant change in the perception and practice of Islam within French society.

By using the deontic modality, the speaker imposes normative changes on how the religion should be practiced in the French context, advocating for clear discursive control and delineating the principles expected of a republican Islam.

- *"We must build together an enlightened Islam"* (Mp2): The use of "we must" implies a collective obligation, meaning it suggests that it is necessary to work together to bring about a change in the interpretation of Islam. This expression of necessity emphasizes the urgency of the reform.
- *"We must create our own model of Islam"* (Mp7): This message also expresses an obligation to build a model that reflects the principles of the Republic, highlighting the importance of self-definition and cultural adaptation.

The emphatic modality refers to the use of expressions that reinforce the importance of an idea or a call to action. In the messages, this can be observed through:

- *Repetition of "we must" and "we have to"*: The repetition of these phrases in several messages acts as an emphasis mechanism, highlighting the urgency and necessity of the proposed actions. This repetitive use reinforces the idea that these actions are not only desirable but essential, if not mandatory, for republican Islam.
- *Construction of "we"*: The use of "we" in phrases like "we must build together" reinforces the idea that the responsibility is shared, which not only emphasizes the need for action but also creates a sense of community and belonging in the pursuit of solutions. At the same time, the speaker's "I" becomes diluted in the message, which helps to diffuse responsibility.

The use of ambiguous and implicative language allows Macron to highlight the need for reform without directly attacking the Muslim community. Instead, the discourse focuses on Islam as an abstract structure, employing terms such as "fundamentalism" or "radicalism" that create a negative representation of the religion in the collective imagination and, thus, provide a justification for

intervention and reconfiguration. On the other hand, the creation of institutions like the French Council of Muslim Worship and the Institute of Islamic Studies acts as an institutional instrumentalization, enabling direct regulation of religious practice, thereby imposing a structure of power and state supervision over Islam in France.

Finally, Macron's speech relies on a strategy of discursive influence, polarizing the values of the republic against the religious values of Islam, thus creating a hierarchy where the republic occupies a position of superiority. This speech, as a whole, presents a pragmatic and normative approach to addressing Islamism in France, in which the discursive hegemony of the state is used to impose a cultural and religious model that replaces the current one and aligns with republican principles.

Radical Islamism/Terrorism/Jihad

The theme of radical Islamism, terrorism, and jihad occupies a prominent place in Emmanuel Macron's political discourse, especially in the context of national security and immigration management in France. In his speech, Macron addresses these issues with a combination of political, social, and cultural approaches, reflecting the complexity of the phenomenon and the government's responses.

Firstly, Macron presents radical Islamism as a threat to the stability and security of France, emphasizing the need to combat this extremist ideology both nationally and internationally. This narrative is based on the association of radical Islamism with acts of terrorism and violence, justifying the adoption of stricter security policies and immigration control measures.

Furthermore, Macron articulates his discourse on radical Islamism within the context of integration and national identity, emphasizing the importance of promoting republican values and secularism as a counter to radicalization and religious extremism. A series of macropropositions (Mp) revolve around this theme, emphasizing the danger of the radical Islamist project, which, according to the message, seeks to divert and ultimately control the republic.

Table 3: The macropropositions of the theme of radical Islamism

Mp8	There is a conscious political-religious project that diverts the values of the republic, manifesting in the creation of a counter-society.
Mp9	Radical Islamism is a methodical and separatist organization that seeks to contradict the laws of the Republic.
Mp10	The goal of radical Islamism is to take control of the Republic.
Mp11	We must not forget the attacks of January 2015.

The macropropositions presented in Macron's speech on radical Islamism reflect an ideological and persuasive framework, centered around constructing a polarized narrative between the Republic and radical Islamism, which is presented as a threat to republican values and principles. The speech employs a strategy of othering, positioning radical Islamism as an "enemy" of French society and defining a conflict of identities between the "counter-society" of Islam and the French Republic. The selected terminology—such as "political-religious project," "counter-society," and "methodical and separatist organization"—helps create a perception of a meticulous and organized threat, which justifies, from the speaker's perspective, the implementation of control and security policies.

Macron appeals to previous collective experiences, such as the Charlie Hebdo attacks, evoking a mental model of vulnerability and danger in the French collective memory. This reference reactivates a sense of national victimization that supports the dichotomy between "us" (the Republic, republican values) and "them" (radical Islamism, portrayed as the aggressor). The macro proposition about freedom of expression and the right to blasphemy in relation to radical Islamism underscores a cultural and legal incompatibility, reinforcing the legitimacy of the Republic in its fight to preserve its values against a perceived invasive and oppressive threat.

- *Mp8: There is a conscious political-religious project that diverts the values of the republic, manifesting in the creation of a counter-society.*

Here, there is clear evidence of a careful selection of terms and the construction of a persuasive narrative by the speaker, aimed at influencing the audience towards a specific perception of the political-religious project presented. According to the statement, it is a conscious political-religious project that operates with the deliberate intention of merging political and religious elements.

The term "project" stands out as a crucial starting point, evoking meticulous and premeditated planning behind the proposed actions. This lexical choice suggests an intention of legitimacy and seriousness in the proposal, while also implying the existence of active agents behind its formulation. Moreover, by associating it with a political-religious context, it introduces a specific ideological charge that polarizes the perception of the recipients.

This project is characterized by diverting from the fundamental values established in the constitution of the republic, which serves as the normative and ethical framework for society. The mention of this deviation suggests a deliberate break from the principles and norms enshrined in the constitution, implying a reconfiguration of the core values that govern social coexistence. This action can be interpreted as an attempt to promote an alternative agenda that contradicts the established democratic and republican principles. Furthermore, there is reference to the formation of a "counter society," which represents an alternative social entity or one in opposition to the dominant society. This concept implies the creation of a distinct social structure with its own norms, values, and identities.

The existence and legitimacy of this "counter society" can be justified through narratives that critique or question the legitimacy and effectiveness of the dominant society, positioning it as a more just or legitimate alternative. In this context, it would be explored how identities are constructed and maintained within this "counter society" and how its relationship with the predominant society is established. The mention of religion, specifically radical Islamic extremism, not only identifies the actors involved in the project but also invokes pre-existing mental models in the audience, such as the dichotomy between religion and the republic. This dichotomy creates a conceptual framework that places the proposed project in direct opposition to the values of society, generating an emotional reaction of rejection in the audience. By using the term "conscious," the speaker is reaffirming that this is a project that has been pre-planned and premeditated. Thus, the subjects of this project are positioned on the opposite side of the speaker and, consequently, of their audience. They automatically become enemies of the republic, as their goal is the establishment of a counter society.

- *Mp9: Radical Islamism is a methodical and separatist organization that seeks to contravene the laws of the Republic.*

Here is another MP that continues the same line as the previous one, though it provides new information regarding this "other" radical Islam. It does so by using very technical terms in order to offer the most complete possible image, and evidently, the most negative one of them. A methodical organization points to the presence of a group of people who are scheming something against someone, a methodical group that has a pre-thought-out plan to carry out.

This statement directly triggers a specific mental model, as it refers to clandestine organizations, mafias, and criminal networks. In other words, the speaker institutionalizes radical Islam and places it within an organization aimed at fracturing society, disturbing the order, and acting against the laws of the republic, which means acting against us. Macron sees radical Islam as an opportunity to argue and ground his message, giving it logic and coherence, and what interests him most is to highlight their evilness, the others, at the expense of our republic and our goodness. Hence, the representation of Islam is as an active aggressor, confronting the passivity of French society, which in this case is the victim.

- *Mp10: The goal of radical Islamism is to take control of the Republic.*

This MP suggests the presence of a plan and a goal, which reaffirms the previous MPs where the speaker indicates that it is a methodical organization. Here, they continue in the same line of describing radical Islam in terms of a criminal organization, thus insisting on the evil of the other who seeks to subjugate us. It can be inferred from the expression "take control of the republic" that this refers to an act of war. Furthermore, this implies dominating those who believe in the republic and its values, that is, the French people in general. In this way, the current message hides a high degree of polarization, where the "other" is an active aggressor and "we," the republic, represent the passive victim being attacked. All of this contributes to accentuating the negative image of "them" and favoring the image of "us" as victims.

- *Mp11: One must not forget the attacks of January 2015.*

In line with the previous MPs, this one once again activates another mental model and another negative experience stored in the memory of the French. A direct reference to the terrorist attack carried out by radicals, a series of shootings against terraces of 5 bars and restaurants, and in the Bataclan concert hall. From this point, the president's discourse regarding Islam in France takes on an increasingly aggressive tone and an offensive character, creating tension and confusion in its recipients.

As we continue with the analysis, we observe how Macron insists that it is the government's responsibility to ensure that the law is enforced and to control all types of violations. In other words, there is an intent to apply the law of the republic rigorously. In this macro-proposition, the theme reaches its peak, as it is presented as a statement, an undeniable truth, as the result of all the other macro-propositions. What Macron intends is to make it clear that these new attacks are nothing more than new episodes that complement the series of wars that began at the end of the 11th century. Specifically, the discourse reminds us of the attacks, so that radical Islamism plays the role of the active agent. Macron discursively brings up past attacks, thus, in some way, reactivating a specific mental model—the presence of Islamic terrorism.

In conclusion, Macron's discourse uses a dialectical approach that frames radical Islamism as the antagonistic "other" to the values of the Republic. The use of polarized language and historical experiences of terrorism reinforces the narrative of national security and justifies policies of secularism and immigration control. The recurrence of pre-existing mental models of conflict and aggression in the audience fosters the acceptance of preventive and confrontational measures against this threat, thereby consolidating the official discourse on radical Islamism as a methodical entity that undermines republican cohesion and justifies the active defense of the principles of French society.

Defence of the republic

In his attempt to justify the actions that are intended to be taken, along with the search for consensus and acceptance from the listener, Macron exalts the values of the Republic, while simultaneously condemning the so-called "separatist groups." A discourse forged based on the logic of fear and the blaming of the other.

Table 4: The macropropositions of the theme of the defense of the Republic.

Mp12	We must attack Islamic separatism.
Mp13	We must fight against those who use religion.
Mp14	There is only one way, to isolate the problem, that of radical Islamism.
Mp15	We must reconquer/recover everything that the Republic has allowed to happen and that has led our youth or our citizens to feel attracted to this radical Islam.
Mp16	We will be united in the face of our enemies.

Macron's speech constructs a narrative in which the "Defense of the Republic" is reaffirmed as a necessary and urgent endeavor. Through the use of persuasive and imposing discursive strategies, the

speaker presents radical Islamism as an active-aggressor agent and positions the Republic and its society in a passive-victim role. The choice of terms such as "Islamic separatism" and the deontic modality ("we must attack/fight") evokes a binary representation in which republican values are seen as besieged by a radical and threatening "other." Furthermore, the use of a "we" strengthens collective identity, involving the audience in a "common battle" and denying any dissent.

This mechanism of identity cohesion seeks, in turn, implicit support for the measures proposed by Macron, by associating any form of opposition with a lack of commitment to the Republic. In the last macropropositions, Macron resorts to terms like "reconquest" and "recover," which evoke a historical imagery that adds emotional weight, establishing a narrative of urgency. Here, the shift is made from persuasion to imposition, as it indirectly nullifies the recipient's freedom of interpretation, urging them to adopt the speaker's stance as the only defense of republican values. The idea of "Defense of the Republic" becomes a totalizing moral endeavor, where both the preservation of national identity and obedience to state authority are merged. Through this, Macron seeks not only consensus but submission to a discursive hierarchy that positions loyalty to the Republic as an absolute duty.

- *Mp12: We must attack Islamic separatism.*

 The use of "we must" implies a collective and urgent obligation, positioning the act of attacking as the only way to confront a threat explicitly defined as "Islamic separatism." This construction reinforces the idea of shared responsibility between the speaker and their audience. The term "attack" introduces a direct and aggressive strategy, legitimizing decisive measures and eliminating any possibility of dialogue. Furthermore, the association of separatism with Islamism suggests an ideological framework that links this religion to threats to national cohesion, reinforcing negative and polarizing representations. Islam is portrayed as a discrete active-aggressor agent, while "we" play the role of a passive agent receiving the aggression.

- *Mp13: We must fight against those who use religion.*

Similar to the previous macroproposition, this one identifies and characterizes the enemy, though not explicitly: those who use religion, a deliberately vague phrase, allowing for a flexible interpretation that implicitly points to radical Islamists without directly naming them. In other words, it is understood that it refers to radical Islamists. There is nothing new in the description of the actors, as both are portrayed (as in other parts of the speech) as active-aggressor agents, while implicitly, the Republic appears as the passive patient receiving this aggression. All of this makes the effective meaning of this statement insist on the fight against radicals, who are described as active agents from whom protection is necessary. Within this dialectic, the president and his audience are presented as defenders of the Republic. The use of "we must" establishes an unavoidable need for struggle, presenting the action as a collective imperative. This discursive strategy reinforces the narrative of threat without specifying the limits of the enemy, thus expanding its symbolic reach. Furthermore, there is intense polarization, positioning the audience as defenders of secularism against those who instrumentalize religion for their own purposes.

- *Mp14: There is only one way, to isolate the problem, that of radical Islamism.*

Here, the speaker takes a step beyond persuasion toward an attempt at imposition, denying the audience the freedom of choice regarding a given fact (Breton, 2000:11). Any possibility of resistance from the recipients is nullified. In this regard, van Dijk (2006) notes that persuasion occurs whenever one attempts to convince the other without exercising domination over them. Seen from this perspective, Macron transcends the realm of persuasion and moves into the domain of imposition (van Dijk 2006).

- *Mp15: We must reconquer/recover everything that the Republic has allowed to happen and that has led our youth or our citizens to feel attracted to this radical Islam.*

Macron continues with the same idea of blaming the other; however, for the first time, he introduces a somewhat sincere statement acknowledging the Republic's involvement in exacerbating the problem of radicalism. The statement becomes ambiguous when addressing the Republic as if it were a person, a subtle and effective tactic to avoid blaming institutions or directly naming individuals as responsible. The use of the political "we" is repeated, even in the case of "we must," which encompasses his entire audience, including the Muslim community, softening the content of the statement. This is further complemented by the use of the possessive determiner "our youth/citizens." The speaker suggests a certain irresponsible abandonment of the youth (our youth), who places their hopes in "us" to preserve and develop the profession. A relationship of custody is established between the government and the citizens.

- *Mp16: We will be united in the face of our enemies.*

It can be said that they are trying to give a sense of strength and hope in order to ensure that their audience firmly supports their ideas, while also attempting to convince others of the validity of their project. These four macropropositions differ in terms of explicit content, but they share the same structure and focus on the same action, which is none other than defending the Republic. However, it can be observed that the speaker combines a series of actions that vary between attacking, fighting, isolating, and reconquering, thus giving some expressive intensity to his message. That is, Macron attempts to set the guidelines that must be followed to "defend the Republic." Another noteworthy fact is that in the first macroproposition, we see how the speaker directly informs his listener/recipient that the action he intends to take is to attack the Islamic separatist project led by radicals whose goal is "a parallel society." In the second, he names and faces it, specifying it further as "radical separatism." Therefore, in the first and second, the enemy is an active subject, occupying the role of aggressor and radical agent.

In conclusion, all these macropropositions, through the use of combined modalities, end up positioning the speaker as an authority. The expected consequences of these macropropositions are that the recipients will support the ideas presented by the President of the Republic.

Throughout the speech, the idea of Defense is closely linked to the idea of the lost Republic; as can be observed, all the macropropositions analyzed establish and reaffirm this relationship between defense and the Republic. Furthermore, the act of defense is amalgamated in all areas, including social and economic ones, among others. In other words, Macron gives it a totalizing sense. On the other hand, the description of defense as a moral endeavor responds to the desire to convince and persuade the recipients.

Table 5: The representation of social actors in Macron's speech (Outgroup).

Social Actor	*Van Leeuvan Categories*	*Description and Justification*	*Role*
Islam	Objectification / Differentiation / Passive agency	Represented as a cultural and religious phenomenon that needs modernization and alignment with democracy, without full autonomy; it is the object of change from the outside.	Active aggressor agent, passive agent in transformation.
Radical Islam	Externalization / Nominalization / Negative Activation	Described as a threat and something 'external' that must be fought. Its presence is objectified as	Active aggressor agent

		something dangerous and deviant in relation to republican values.	
Islamic separatism	Externalization / Negative Agency / Differentiation	Seen as a 'counterculture' or isolated and negative element, it is a problem to be controlled by positive social agents, suggesting an exclusionary stance	Active aggressor agent
Counterculture	Externalization / Differentiation / Negative Agency	Associated with elements that challenge and threaten the values of the State, it is an 'enemy' agent that must be fought and represents something 'external' and incompatible with republican society.	Active aggressor agent
Muslim community	Individualization / Identification / Inclusion	Represented as a diverse and active group, it is recognized for playing an important role in the modernization of Islam, showing agency and cooperation; it is also a victim of crisis and prejudice. .	Active agent victim
Imams	Nominalization / agency Active / Inclusion	They are crucial social agents, responsible for the formation of new generations and for guiding the Muslim community in the direction of republican values.	Active agent intermediator
Religious institutions	Inclusion / Identification / Agency/Active	Considered as mediators, these institutions have a structured and legitimate role in education and in the representation of Islam in an institutionalized and regulated context.	Active agent representative and mediator
Youth/Citizens	Individualization / Passivation / Victimization	Represented as a vulnerable population susceptible to the attraction of radical Islam, youth are seen as a group in need of protection and guidance from external agents.	Active aggressor agent/ passive victim

The table provides a detailed representation of how social actors are constructed and positioned within the discourse on Islam and its variants, according to the categories of analysis based on social representation theory. Through these discursive categories (such as objectification, passive or active agency, externalization, etc.), it is possible to observe how each actor is positioned in an ideological narrative that reflects the power dynamics and exclusion present in social representations.

In general terms, actors associated with Islam, such as Islam itself and Radical Islamism, are described through categories of externalization and negative agency, positioning them as 'others' or threats that must be fought and transformed. This approach reinforces a stance of exclusion and control over these elements, perceived as alien to the republican or democratic society. Islamic Separatism and Counterculture are positioned along similar lines, presenting them as negative phenomena that challenge the values of the State, and, therefore, they are assigned the role of active aggressor."

On the other hand, actors such as the Muslim Community and the Imams are described with a more inclusive approach, recognizing their active roles in the modernization of Islam and their participation in the integration of republican values. However, the Muslim Community is also presented as a victim of crises and prejudice, indicating a duality in its representation: on one hand, it is seen as an active agent contributing positively to society, and on the other, as a victim of stigmas and social conflicts.

Youth/Citizens appear with an ambiguous role, as they are seen both as an active aggressor (in relation to their vulnerability to radical Islam) and as a passive victim in need of protection and guidance. This approach reflects a concern for the fragility of this social group in the face of external influences and their inability to make autonomous decisions.

Finally, Religious Institutions and Imams are presented as key mediators in the formation of a moderate version of Islam aligned with republican values, playing an active role in mediation and guidance.

In conclusion, the table reflects how social representations of Islam and its actors are structured through a discourse that alternates between exclusion and inclusion, positioning certain groups as threats that must be controlled, while others are recognized for their more active role in constructing an Islamic identity that aligns with state norms. This analysis helps to understand how narratives about religion and culture can be used to justify policies of integration, exclusion, and social control.

Table 6: The representation of social actors in Macron's discourse (Ingroup).

Social Actor	Van Classfication	Description and Justification	Role
Emissary	Identification / Active Agency / Inclusion	Presented as the defender and guardian of the values of the Republic, he is attributed with the responsibility of safeguarding freedom of expression and conscience against external threats.	Active defending agent/Passive victim
Civil Liberties	Inclusion / Identification / Victimization	Represented as fundamental rights under threat, freedoms (expression, conscience, blasphemy) are pillars that legitimize the secular society and must be protected. .	Passive Agent/ Passive victim

Frensh	Identification / Active agency / Collectivization	Represented as a unified nation vulnerable to external threats; it focuses on the protection of republican values and the cohesion of its citizens.	Active agent / Passive agent
Secular society	Inclusion / Identification / Agency/ Active	Represented as a collective defender of the Republic, French society positions itself as a protector against threats; it emphasizes unity and leadership in the face of crisis.	Passive Agent/ Passive victim

The table shows how social actors within the ingroup are represented through discursive categories that reinforce the active defense of republican and secular values against external threats. These categories help construct a narrative in which the unity and protection of society are presented as fundamental.

The Emisor describes themselves through the categories of Identification, Active Agency, and Inclusion, positioning themselves as the main defender of republican values. They are attributed the responsibility of safeguarding fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of expression and conscience, highlighting their active role in preserving the republican and democratic order against external threats.

Civil Liberties are represented through Inclusion, Identification, and Victimization, positioning them as fundamental rights under threat. By being seen as victims of external forces, civil liberties are presented as essential pillars of secular society that must be protected, thus justifying the need for constant effort in their preservation.

France, as a nation, is represented through the categories of Identification, Active Agency, and Collectivization, highlighting its vulnerability to external threats. It is positioned as a unified nation that must protect republican values and ensure the cohesion of its citizens. The narrative presents France as a collective and active actor in defending these principles.

Finally, Secular Society is represented through Inclusion, Identification, and Active Agency, positioning them as a collective defending republican values against external threats. The unity and leadership of society in the face of crisis are emphasized, presenting them as active protectors of the Republic.

In summary, the actors of the Ingroup are represented as active defenders of republican and secular principles, with a focus on protecting fundamental rights against external threats. The discursive categories of active agency, identification, and inclusion highlight their crucial role in the preservation of society, while the victimization of liberties and the collectivization of the nation underscore the need for unity and joint action in response to perceived crises.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Macron's discourse on "separatist Islam" in France presents a complex thematic construction that articulates the relationship between religion and state, national security, cultural identity, and the rights of minorities. In this context, a narrative is established in which radical Islam is represented as a direct threat to the Republic, evoking a crisis of Islam in France that justifies measures of control over religious practice. Through a series of macro propositions, Macron promotes a "French Islam" aligned with republican values, which involves the regulation of religious discourse and the training of imams, seeking to standardize Islamic education in the country.

The representation of actors in this discourse reflects a dynamic of confrontation, where separatist Islam and radicals are considered an active threat, while the Republic is positioned as a passive victim and defender of its values. This dichotomy creates a block of "We" composed of the government, the French Council of Muslim Worship, and Muslims who accept this vision, in contrast to a block of "Them," which includes radical Islamists, Wahhabis, and Salafists.

The underlying ideologies in the discourse are diverse and reflect a combination of republican secularism, political liberalism, and counterterrorism concerns that include considerations of national identity and controlled multiculturalism. Macron carefully selects his terms, guided by an ideological system aimed at persuasion and influence. The choice of words such as "radical," "terrorist," "struggle," and "reconquest" underscores an ideological-strategic process that pits two models of life against each other: one negative, characterized by hostility and danger, and another presented as suitable and superior.

Ultimately, Macron's discourse stands as an attempt to reconfigure the relationship between Islam and the state, justifying interventions that promote a new model of Islam compatible with republican principles, while reinforcing the perception of threat and the need for control.

Notes

1. The al-Azhar institution, the highest religious authority of Sunni Islam, described the French president's speech as "racist" and denounced the "accusations" against Islam. Additionally, the mufti of the Sultanate of Oman, Sheikh Ahmad Hamad al-Khalili, called President Macron's remarks an unprecedented attack on Islam, coming from "a country that prides itself on freedom, democracy, and equality." Emmanuel Macron's comments resonated particularly in Turkey, where tensions are very high between the French president and his Turkish counterpart, notably due to their differences in the Eastern Mediterranean. "Who are you to talk about structuring Islam?" reacted Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday.

2. Fatima Khemilat, La loi contre le « séparatisme » : mort et résurrection d'une « justice d'exception », *Modern and Contemporary France*, volume 31, 2023, pp 183-198.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

Omar El Hammoud holds a PhD in Translation and Language Sciences from Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona, specialising in Critical Discourse Analysis. His doctoral research, supervised by Teun A. van Dijk, focused on Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb's jihadist discourse between 2007 and 2015. He is a member of the Discourse Study Group at Pompeu Fabra and the EDISO research network on discourse and society. His academic work centres on the critical analysis of religious and terrorist discourse, as well as media narratives on immigration. He holds a BA in Hispanic Philology from the University of Granada and Abdelmalek Essaâdi University, and two Master's degrees from the University of Granada in Advanced Spanish Language Studies and Arab and Hebrew Cultures. He has worked as a freelance journalist, contributed to publications such as *Al Qafila* and *Le Monde Humaniste*, and co-founded the Commission of Moroccans Abroad for the 2010 constitutional consultation.

ORCID

Omar El Hammoud https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5180-199X

References

Abdel Salam, R. (2022). *Dios y el sentido en la era de la modernidad: El discurso entre la hegemonía y la pluralidad*.

Agger, B. (1992). *The discourse of domination: From the Frankfurt School to postmodernism*. Northwestern University Press.

Bin Saeed, A.-M. (2010). *Al-Islam wa Al-I'lamwufobiya*. Dimashq: Dar Al-Fikr.

Bigo, D. (2002). Security and immigration: Toward a critique of the governmentality of unease. *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political, 27*(1), 63–92.

Bowen, J. R. (2007). *Why the French don't like headscarves: Islam, the state, and public space*. Princeton University Press.

El Karoui, H. (2016). *Un Islam de France*. Institut Montaigne. https://www.institutmontaigne.org/ressources/pdfs/publications/un-islam-de-france.pdf

Fairclough, N., & Wodak, R. (1997). Critical discourse analysis. In T. A. van Dijk (Ed.), *Discourse as social interaction* (pp. 258–284). Sage.

Fernando, M. (2014). *The republic unsettled: Muslim French and the contradictions of secularism*. Duke University Press.

Fukuyama, F. (1992). *The end of history and the last man*. Free Press.

Hajjat, A., & Mohammed, M. (2013). Islamophobia in France: Past, present, and future. *French Politics, Culture & Society, 31*(2), 5–25.

Huntington, S. P. (1996). *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order*. Simon & Schuster.

Ibáñez, T., & Íñiguez, L. (Eds.). (1997). *Critical social psychology*. Sage.

Keaton, T. D. (2006). *Muslim girls and the other France: Race, identity politics, and social exclusion*. Indiana University Press.

Laurence, J., & Vaisse, J. (2007). *Integrating Islam: Political and religious challenges in contemporary France*. Brookings Institution Press.

Leiken, R. S. (2012). *Europe's angry Muslims: The revolt of the second generation*. Oxford University Press.

Macron, E. (2020, October 2). *Discours sur le séparatisme islamiste*. Présidence de la République.

Mey, J. L. (1985). *Whose language? A study in linguistic pragmatics*. John Benjamins Publishing.

Mondon, A. (2013). *The mainstreaming of the extreme right in France and Australia: A populist hegemony?* Ashgate.

Rabi', H. (1981). *Al-Islam wa al-Quwwa al-Dawliyya*. Cairo: Dar al-Mawqif al-Arabi.

Rabaha, S. (1998). *L'islam dans l'imaginaire occidental aux sources des discours*.

Rasmussen, D. M. (1996). *Critical theory and philosophy*. Paragon House.

Scott, J. W. (2007). The politics of the veil. *Theory and Society, 36*(4), 325–341.

Singh, R. (Ed.). (1996). *Towards a critical sociolinguistics*. John Benjamins Publishing.

Thomas, L. (1993). *Beginning syntax*. Blackwell.

Turkel, G. (1996). *Law and society: Critical approaches*. Prentice Hall.

Van Dijk, T. A. (1993). *Elite discourse and racism*. Sage.

Van Dijk, T. A. (1998). *Ideology: A multidisciplinary approach*. Sage.

Van Dijk, T. A. (2000). Critical discourse analysis. In D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen, & H. E. Hamilton (Eds.), *The handbook of discourse analysis* (pp. 352–371). Blackwell.

Van Leeuwen, T. (1996). The representation of social actors. In C. R. Caldas-Coulthard & M. Coulthard (Eds.), *Texts and practices: Readings in critical discourse analysis* (pp. 32–70). Routledge.

Wodak, R. (1996). *Disorders of discourse*. Longman.

Wodak, R. (2015). Critical discourse analysis: Discourse-historical approach. In D. Tannen, H. E. Hamilton, & D. Schiffrin (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of discourse analysis* (pp. 523–540). Routledge.