

France briefing: November 2022

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French Political Developments

2022 National Strategic Review launched, emphasis on Republican values woven in

- Emmanuel Macron launched the new [“National Strategic Review”](#) - a document which outlines the key guidelines of France’s international strategy.
- The document identifies 10 strategic objectives to be achieved by 2030 in order for the Nation to safeguard its sovereignty and reassert its influence.

Among them includes the aim to establish a *“united and resilient”* France through the promotion of a *“sustainable spirit of defence in society and the state”*, whereby

“The individual moral strengths of the citizen, especially our youth, are the foundation of collective resilience. They should be strengthened in the educational field, in order to increase the skills that strengthen the resilience of society (**transmission of Republican values**, first aid, etc.)” (emphasis added)

- In the French political context, “the values and principles of the Republic” are mainly used to oppose the constructed notion of “Islamist separatism” - often used to mask the targeting of Islam and Muslims by the State.

This conflict has materialised into the closure of numerous [Islamic schools and mosques](#), and fear-mongering controversy over [“religious attire” worn by Muslims in public schools](#) - all justified, according to the State, by the need to protect and implement ‘Republican values’.

- As a natural consequence of this reasoning, Islam and Muslims are overt factors undermining ‘cohesion’ and ‘resilience’. In other words, according to France's policy makers, the prerequisites conditioning France’s success on the international stage can be undermined by a minority’s way of life.

Belgium moves towards handing over Imam Iquioussen to France for deportation

- After a series of courts' rulings and appeals - some of which deemed the European warrant arrest issued at the request of French authorities as illegal - Belgian administrative courts ruled Iquioussen needed to be [handed over to France's authorities before being expelled to Morocco](#).
- This final decision, however, is yet to be implemented : [Belgian and French authorities continue to discuss the way forward](#).

Two Imams to be expelled for accusations including 'Salafism' and 'proselytism'

- Two imams - non French citizens - are also [being targeted by the state](#).
- Both have been subject to administrative procedures and will have to leave the country soon.
- The accusations levelled against them revolve around Salafism, proselytism and delinquency.

School religious attire controversy leads to Education Ministry "secularism plan"

- The controversy about religious attire in public schools, stirred by the media and major political figures as part of a supposed 'Islamist offensive', has led to the publication of a ["secularism plan"](#) by the Ministry of the Education.

It advises the systematic sanctioning of students whose behaviour challenges the principle of laïcité (French secularism).

- These sanctions include legal procedures to be applied in cases of alleged *"incitement to religious hatred, discrimination, defamation or terrorism apology"*, establishing a clear nexus between laïcité and policing within schools, and exposing young students to state security and harassment.