

# Introducing François Fillon (Part I)

by Hugh Fitzgerald



We hear a lot about possible victories this year in Europe of anti-Islam candidates. Some are well-known outside their own countries, such as Geert Wilders and Marine Le Pen, while others are not so well-known. One of them is François Fillon, who has a good chance to become the next President of France, and has now become outspoken on the menace of Islam. With his astonishing victory last fall in the two primaries of the Center-Right party in France, Fillon first knocked Nicolas Sarkozy out of the running, and then, in the runoff, had a landslide victory over Alain Juppé, garnering 66% of the vote. The pollyannish Juppé was known, among other things, for being soft on Islam, pushing a line about ***l'identité heureuse*** ("happy identity") supposedly making it possible, in a way he never could explain, Muslim immigrants to unthreateningly become part of French society while still refusing to assimilate. France would now be the sum of its separate communities, and everyone would live "happily" side by side, and for ever after. Just like in the fairy tales, and

fittingly, because it was sheer make-believe. For Juppé rejected the need for a "French identity" upheld by the traditional Right. This "happy identity," a plaintive why-can't-we-all-get-along welcome to foreigners, is based on a refusal to admit that there is indeed a difference between today's Muslim immigrants, so hostile to the values of their hosts, and the non-Muslim immigrants who came before, and accepted the values of the laic French state:

Juppé wants France "to be open both to its neighbors, and to the world." For "what would France be without Marie Curie, who came from Warsaw, or Apollinaire, who was born a Polish subject of the Russian Empire, or Picasso, who was born in Spain, or Ionesco, child of Romania, or Francis Cheng, who grew up in China and arrived in Paris at the end of his adolescence?" asked Juppé, proud of this very special kind of immigration. "We are proud of this tradition of welcome and we want to keep it vibrant."

Juppé did not appear to recognize that there might just be differences between those who arrive in France nowadays carrying Islam in their mental baggage, and those other migrants who came before – Picasso, Marie Curie, and so on – who had no such dangerous luggage, were not raised to despise the French as Infidels, and who, upon settling in France, had no trouble fitting in, obeying the laws and moeurs of the French. Juppé was suggesting there was no reason to think of the new immigrants as any different when, of course, the differences in views of today's Muslim immigrants and those of earlier non-Muslim immigrants to France and its values are enormous and impossible to reconcile.

That softness on Muslim immigration is, observers suggested, a main reason why Juppé lost to Fillon, who has a very different take on the matter. What does Fillon say about Muslim immigration? No pollyannish "happy identity" for him; he has described radical Islam as a "'totalitarianism like the Nazis." Catholics, Protestants and Jews "don't denounce the

values of the Republic,” he thundered – **“unlike the faithful of a certain other religion.”** He recognizes that Islam is a special case, represents a unique menace to the Republic of France, and to the French identity.

**“We’ve got to reduce immigration to its strict minimum,”** he said. **“Our country is not a sum of communities, it is an identity!”** It is this kind of identity – open to all as long as they fully accept the values of the Republic, but not to those who, having ended up on French soil, do not and cannot possibly share the “values of the Republic” – that Fillon wants to protect from Islamic dilution. On Islam, so far, so good.

Fillon has even written a book on how to defeat Islamic “totalitarianism” – **“*Vaincre le totalitarisme islamique*”** (“Conquering Islamic Totalitarianism”). The title is heartening – it’s good to recognize and call “Islamic totalitarianism” by its right name. But at the same time, it is mistakenly optimistic, because the word “*vaincre*” too hopefully implies a sense of an ending, a “conquering,” and then a doing away with, the threat. But Islamic totalitarianism cannot ever be “conquered,” its threat can only be reduced, through constant effort, to manageable size. The threat never ends, because Islam is naturally “totalitarian”; it offers a complete regulation of all aspects of life. “Islamic totalitarianism” will exist as long as Islam itself endures.

What François Fillon proposes in his 150-page book, however, are not ways to reduce Muslim immigration to “its strict minimum,” but rather, ways to fight the Islamic State abroad and Muslim terrorism at home. He wants a grand coalition of all those powers, including Iran and Hizballah, that are willing to fight the Islamic State, which he regards as Enemy No. 1. He wants a Europe-wide sharing of the costs of fighting Islamic terrorism. He wants a reorganization of the French security services, placing the prison system directly under

the authority of the Ministry of the Interior, and creating special courts to speed up verdicts in terrorism cases. He wants the police and gendarmes to be supplied with better equipment. He also wants to prevent any French citizens who have gone off to fight with Muslim terrorists from returning to France. He wants 30-year sentences imposed on anyone found guilty of supplying intelligence to the terrorist enemy, and the right to expel foreigners who are found on French soil and who are judged a "threat" to public safety. And finally, he wants the big Internet companies to be required to report their suspicions about users (and possible ties to terrorism) to the French government, the same way that banks must report doubtful transactions to the government.

Save for his suggestions that French citizens who leave France to join terrorists abroad should be prevented from returning, and that the state should expel foreigners from France who are deemed a "threat" to safety, Fillon focuses entirely on improving the investigation and punishment of terrorists. Fillon does not address the question of halting, and reversing, Muslim immigration in the West. It's still a dangerous subject to touch. But the beginning of wisdom in this matter is simply to refuse to recognize any specious "duty" to admit refugees from anywhere, for any reason. We in the advanced West can admit, or refuse to admit, whomever we want. Nothing requires us to allow into our countries, our homes, those who may be permanently hostile to us and to our values, and who may constitute a physical danger. This seems to have been forgotten by the angela-merkels and theresa-mays of this world. The Western world does not have to become Thidwick the Big-Hearted Moose. And we have a perfect right to deny admittance to those whom we have reason to believe are, as a group, *more likely* to commit terrorist acts, those whom we know are raised to regard us non-Muslims with hostility and hatred, and whose Qur'an urges acts of terror. We are allowed to take seriously what we know Muslims take seriously, and not to ignore what it says in the Qur'an and Hadith and Sira. It

doesn't matter if not all Muslims think a particular way; there will always be exceptions, but we can't build policies on exceptions; in protecting ourselves from the dangers that Islamic ideology poses, we are always dealing with likelihoods, calculating probabilities. Is a Muslim immigrant more likely than a Buddhist or a Hindu, a Christian or a Jew, to be a threat to public safety? What kinds of evidence do we already possess – textual, experiential – that supports that proposition? This is not something Fillon addresses.

Nor does he discuss, either, ways to make France less Islam-friendly, even Islam-hostile. This could include extending the current ban on the *hijab* in schools to universities, as Manuel Valls has proposed, and banning not just the *niqab*, as Sarkozy did, but also the *hijab*, from all public places. It could include continuing to refuse to yield to Muslim demands that pork-free meals be offered in prison and school canteens (Muslim prisoners and pupils could simply do without meat on those days when pork is on the menu), or what would be even more useful, banning halal meat, because of objections to the method of slaughter it requires. It could also mean remaining unyielding in the face of Muslim demands for prayer-rooms in schools and workplaces, and interruptions of classes and work for Muslim prayers. Muslim demands for women-only hours at public pools can be refused by municipal authorities upholding the laic state. The French state is under no obligation to accept Muslim segregation of the sexes; it is up to Muslims, just like other immigrants, to conform their behavior to that of those in whose lands they have been allowed to settle. We in the West do not share, and consequently need not support, the Muslim view that women are dangerously seductive, and therefore need to be covered up, nor accept its corollary in Islam that men are likely to behave like uncontrollable wild animals when confronted with females who are insufficiently covered.

A crackdown on Muslim abuse of government assistance programs,

especially the problem of support for plural wives and many children, would save a lot of money. The Economist estimates that 200,000 people are in 20,000 polygamous families in France, despite polygamy being prohibited, with the Muslim men exploiting the family allowances as salaries. France must become less like what it now is for many Muslims, the Big Rock Candy Mountain, where they cannot quite believe their luck, and contentedly pocket whatever benefits are on offer as a proleptic jizyah, or as Anjem Choudary has called all this Western largesse (free or subsidized housing, free education, free medical care, generous family allowances), the Jihad Seeker's Allowance. Those Muslims unhappy with this new and uncompromising state of affairs should be encouraged to leave France. Indeed, while cracking down on all the present benefits, one new benefit that the French government might wish to offer Muslims is passage home to their countries – or that of their parents or grandparents – of origin, or to other Muslim countries, where they will be among people who share the most important thing in their lives, Islam, and will be able to practice it to their heart's content. But in return, those for whom free passage is provided must agree not to return to France. Such subsidized out-migration would be far cheaper than paying for all those benefits to which so many Muslim migrants lay (often fraudulent) claim.

These are only a few suggestions that may prompt others to think of ways to make France distinctly less welcoming to Muslim migrants. Of course, it all begins with education, by having a truthful treatment of Islam in the schools. In history classes, French students should be taught about Islam, not the sanitized version, but the real thing, with copious quotations from the canonical texts that cannot be refuted. Let students become acquainted with the jihad verses of the Qur'an, and with piquant details from Muhammad's life, relying always on Muslim sources in the Hadith and Sira. Will this offend Muslims? Of course it will, but a French state sure of itself and its values will not back down. Too much is at stake

for continued pusillanimity in the classroom.

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