France and hate speech

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On January 7, 2015, a black Citroën traversed through Rue Nicolas Appert in Paris and made its way to the Charlie Hebdo office. Upon reaching, two men dressed in black from head to toe, broke into the building and opened fire, killing 12 people including the editor at Charlie Hebdo, Stéphane Charbonne. Just as this vindictive bloodbath drenched the city of love in an uncanny abhorrence, it also virtually ensured the Muslims of a cessation of the satirical caricatures targeting their religion. Even so, the recent republication of such caricatures has sent tremors of rage across the Muslim world, especially in Turkey. Furthermore, upon president Erdoğan’s criticism of Macron’s mental state, the magazine published yet another obscene and derogatory sketch featuring the Turkish president.

So, why is France so adamantly mocking the Muslims? What is the cause behind the bitter tension between France and Turkey? Is the response of both presidents towards the resurgent sentiments of Islamophobia justified?

[Syria’s Post-WWII PM was Zionist spy who helped stop UK’s ‘Greater Syria’ scheme: Historian](https://nation.com.pk/14-Nov-2020/syria-s-post-wwii-pm-was-zionist-spy-who-helped-stop-uk-s-greater-syria-scheme-historian)

France’s condescending attitude towards Muslims and Islam in general isn’t new. Whether it’s the 2014 headscarf ban in public schools or the 2011 niqab ban, the countries never failed to reflect that it considers Muslims unfit for its land and often blames their inability to integrate into the French culture on their religion. It seems like the country continues to live in the long-gone days whilst it was still a colonial might. What it doesn’t realise is that the Muslim world no longer constitutes the post-world war, scrambled, Ottoman Empire or the 1947 nascent State of Pakistan but instead, some of the most powerful countries on the map. Slandering Islam and expecting inaction from the Muslim world would be delusional in the face of all the European nations who, for the longest time, have propagated their supremacy over the then-weak Muslim nations.

Further adding fuel to the fire is the harsh reality of the immigrant crisis in France which, according to the typical French narrative, ‘turns France into a third world country’. Though not a majority, a considerable amount of these immigrants are the Muslims who have sought asylum from the turbulent security conditions in Afghanistan, refugees from Syria or are immigrants from Algeria. This further amplifies the Islamophobic sentiment among the French who view these immigrant settlements as a non-productive encroachment over their land.

[QWP asks ECP to decide foreign funding case against PTI](https://nation.com.pk/14-Nov-2020/qwp-asks-ecp-to-decide-foreign-funding-case-against-pti)

What rings alarm bells for the West in the case of Turkey at the present time is the termination of the Treaty of Lausanne (1923). The slackening of this post-World War handcuff would return Turkey the territories it had lost during the war. In addition, it would also restore its ownership of the Bosphorus Strait and allow it to impose taxes on the incoming ships, boosting the economy as a result and promising Turkey an immense strategic importance.

As far as the response of both the presidents is concerned, it is feasible to argue that the West is already convinced that freedom of expression is subject to the law of first come first serve. Let me explain this further. When the blasphemous sketches first came out, they were fiercely defended by the French as freedom of expression. In fact, the teacher who was later beheaded for showing these sketches to his students, showed these during a class on free speech. However, when in response to this, President Erdoğan condemned President Macron for supporting this so-called freedom of expression and blamed his mental health, he was instantly cast out by the international community for his ‘hate speech’. Are we allowed to ask; why does freedom of speech, categorically apply towards the ridiculing of a faith followed by 1.8 billion people and not other things in the world?

[Locust attacks, bad planning, have resulted in shortage of wheat: PBF](https://nation.com.pk/14-Nov-2020/locust-attacks-bad-planning-have-resulted-in-shortage-of-wheat-pbf)

Lastly, Turkey is one of the leading Muslim nations and a source of unity amongst the Muslim countries all over the world as well. It has been the nucleus of the Caliphate for 600 years. President Erdoğan, consequently, is a representative of Islam.

The increasing violence against Muslims all over the world at the hands of the West could be an act of desperation against Turkey’s ever-increasing power and authority in the region. If this is true, it would not be an exaggeration to say that no matter what might be hurled in his way, the President of Turkey on the Anatolian Peninsula is soon to become one of the most powerful and strategically important countries in the years to come.