In today’s Europe, it is clear that Islam elicits a sentiment of rejection among a growing majority of the population. The religion, present since ancient times, is nowadays more visible than ever. This is the result of two different movements. On the one hand, a wave of immigration to Europe originating largely from Muslim countries, due to our history and our geography. On the other, a process of demographic ageing that has made ours the world’s most elderly continent. The result is that multiculturalism, which nothing and nobody was prepared for, has now become an established fact of life. Consequently, tensions are starting to appear. It would be absurd to plead ignorance of the growing difficulties surrounding subjects such as secularism, equality between men and women, freedom of opinion, and others.

To these fault lines must be added the inescapable daily references to Islam by terrorist organisations whose unprecedented, deliberately shocking violence is perfectly designed to invade the media in the form of barbaric images, and ends up planting a direct correlation in the public mind between Islam and brutality. For twenty years, European citizens have been the victims of despicable, increasingly violent attacks. We need look no further than France in the year 2015. It started in January with the deadly attacks on the offices of Charlie Hebdo, quickly followed by the assassination of policemen and killing of customers at the Hyper Cacher general store at the Porte de Vincennes in Paris. This annus horribilis was rounded off on 13th November with the killings firstly in the vicinity of the Stade de France, and which then claimed the lives of happy, peaceful and friendly young people who were frequenting the café terraces, restaurants and Bataclan concert venue in the heart of Paris.

Slowly but surely, a polarisation is forming between Islamists and anti-Muslims; two forces, whose arguments each rely on the other to show that they cannot co-habit the same space, and which are communicated in the form of ideas that are simple, definitive and brutal. Our “jihadists” and Anders Behring Breivik are two defining figures of this polarisation.

Nevertheless, two things are for certain: that we will continue to live together, and that neither the French Republic nor Europe can abandon the high values on which they were founded, just as nobody can renounce their spiritual beliefs. It is up to us to explain, better and more consistently, that it is in recognising and respecting the
values of the French Republic that we are conditioned to recognise and respect spiritual convictions. All of us must be involved in this process; everyone must participate in this discussion. We must highlight a different reality of Islam, one that is no less tangible, even if it has become almost invisible, obscured from view by the colossal image of a hateful Islam. People, including Muslims themselves, do not tend to acknowledge or to even be aware of this other reality. We must never let up in the fight against ignorance.

This book, *Values of Islam*, compiles a series of papers published by the *Fondation pour l’innovation politique* between January and March 2015, to which we have added a study by Mathieu Terrier into the relations between Sunnis and Shiites.

With the *Values of Islam* series, we wish to make a contribution to improving the understanding of France’s second religion. This does not mean highlighting the humanist and progressive nature of Islam, for this is self-evident – we cannot claim to be unaware of this just because it is less visible, since it is necessarily the Islam of those Muslims who practise their religion quietly and unobtrusively. This work also aims to underline the reasons why it is this generous Islam that must be regarded as authentic, true to its original message, of fragile yet inspired humanity, with a unique destiny, and whose fundamental purpose can only be sincerely spread if accompanied by the recognition, reverence and protection of the dignity of all individuals.

The *Fondation pour l’innovation politique* has not suddenly become an authority on Islam. In order to carry out this work, we therefore called upon writers whose credentials are already well-established. Eric Geoffroy, a professor at the University of Strasbourg who has received praise for his numerous contributions to the field of Islamic Studies, has overseen the publication of the texts. I thank him warmly for his assistance. I also wish to thank the authors themselves: Ahmad Al-Raysuni, Ahmed Bouyerdene, Mustapha Cherif, Mohamed Beddy Ebnou, Éric Geoffroy, Bariza Khiari, Saad Khiari, Asma Lamrabet, Philippe Moulinet, Tareq Oubrou and Mathieu Terrier. They agreed to share their thoughts and knowledge, and in doing so are making a contribution to the preservation of our shared planet. I sincerely hope that many Muslims will wish to join us and take part in our forums and discussions.

Finally, I am duty bound to inform the reader that this series of texts would never have seen the light of day without the support and encouragement of Sheik Khaled Bentounès. Those lucky enough to have met him know that neither the nobility of his soul nor the importance of his role in today’s world can be overstated.

The present work is just the first chapter in a broader contemplation of Islam. The *Fondation pour l’innovation politique* intends to pursue its work on this political and religious issue, whose importance and seriousness can no longer be disputed.

*Paris, 18 November 2015*