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On: 27 May 2013, At: 14:46

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



The International Spectator: Italian Journal of International Affairs

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rspe20>

Editorial Note

Erik Jones^a & Saskia van Genugten^b

^a The Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies and Oxford Analytica.

^b Senate of the Netherlands

Published online: 10 Apr 2013.

To cite this article: Erik Jones & Saskia van Genugten (2013): Editorial Note, The International Spectator: Italian Journal of International Affairs, 48:1, 1-4

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03932729.2013.761745>

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Editorial Note

Erik Jones and Saskia van Genugten

Postwar Europe is committed to equality, non-discrimination and individual dignity. Nevertheless, recent trends across Europe suggest that commitment is starting to erode. The integration of a large number of immigrants from Islamic countries has been challenging. Sometimes, the political response has been excessive. The Council of Europe, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have called upon European governments to oppose bills aimed at restricting Islamic customs, such as the use of the full veil, ritual slaughtering and the building of minarets.¹ In the words of the Council of Europe's Human Rights Commissioner, Thomas Hammarberg, what is needed is nothing less than a "European Spring to overcome old and emerging forms of racism and intolerance".²

This is hardly the first time that Europe has experienced challenges in its relationship with Islam. However, the recent change in the pattern and volume of immigration into Europe from Islamic countries makes a qualitative difference. For centuries, Islamic communities dwelled in the European periphery, but only in the past decades have several strains of Islam introduced themselves in the continent's core, its main cities and its political hearts. In a very short period of time, Islam has become a European religion. In fact, Islam is Europe's fastest growing religion and also the second largest after Christianity. The exact number of 'Muslims' in Europe is difficult to estimate, due to imperfect registration methods. Nevertheless, the trend lines are clear. According to one of the more reliable counts, Europe had 29.6 million Muslims in 1990 (4.1 percent of its total population), which grew to 44.1 million in 2010 (6.0 percent of its total population) and

Erik Jones is Professor and Director of European Studies at The Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies and Head of Europe at Oxford Analytica. Email: ejones@johnshopkins.it; *Saskia van Genugten* currently works for the Senate of the Netherlands. Email: svangenugten@gmail.com
¹ See, for example, Amnesty Report, *Choice and Prejudice: Discrimination against Muslims in Europe*, 2012, http://www.amnesty.nl/sites/default/files/public/religious_discrm_muslims_report.pdf, and Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2012: European Union*, January 2012, http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/related_material/eu_2012.pdf.

² Council of Europe, "Anti-Muslim Prejudice Hinders Integration", Press release CommDH034(2012), 24 July 2012, [https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=CommDH-PR034\(2012\)&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=DC&BackColorInternet=F5CA75&BackColorIntranet=F5CA75&BackColorLogged=A9BACE](https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=CommDH-PR034(2012)&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=DC&BackColorInternet=F5CA75&BackColorIntranet=F5CA75&BackColorLogged=A9BACE).

is predicted to reach 58.2 million by 2030 (8.0 percent of its total population).³ Moreover, the demographic structure of this immigration enhances its impact: by 2030, around 42 percent of Europe's Muslims will be under 30 years old. For the non-Muslim population, this is expected to be only 31 percent.

It is no surprise therefore that one of today's main social questions is how Europeans should respond to the influx of this new, organised life-philosophy into everyday life. The answer is neither self-evident nor innocuous. Not everyone views immigration as positive, as is clear from the rise of anti-immigration parties. For some, scepticism about a more diverse society is based on an idea (not necessarily a truth) that life was better before the age of mass immigration. Others are wary about seeing immigrant populations strain their already limited welfare-state resources, arguing that it is unfair for newcomers to have equal entitlement to state services and benefits even though they did not contribute to building them up. Still others justify attacks on Islamic practices as a legitimate defence against 'intolerance', arguing that anti-immigrant policies are necessary to preserve progressive values such as secularism or individual freedoms, including those of women, homosexuals and even animals. No doubt, a fringe group of Europeans simply dislikes other cultures, full stop.

The purpose of this special issue is to explore the many aspects of the relationship between Europe and Islam. The goal is to provide insights to help policymakers navigate the current debate – to recognise where there are simple misunderstandings and where there are real problems to be solved. For example, many European policymakers treat the Islam in Europe debate as part of a larger quest for identity in a globalising and individualising world, as a manifestation of cultural defence. This seems to hold true for both Islamic constituencies as well as non-Islamic constituencies in Europe. However, by doing so these same policymakers end up formatting Islam as a European religion. In turn, this leads to misunderstandings about who speaks for Islam, how Islamic communities are organised, and where the best points of contact for creating dialogue lie. This argument emerges in the paper by Olivier Roy.

Another tendency is to recast Islam and immigrants from the Islamic world as some sort of security problem. Almost everywhere in Europe, policymakers have begun not only to promote stricter rules for immigration and integration, but also to focus on Islamic practices as a source of social problems. How then should European foreign policymakers react to the call for freedom, democracy and dignity so clearly discerned in the early stages of the Arab uprisings that started at the end of 2010? And how should they react to the democratically chosen new Islam-oriented leaders? This challenge is addressed by Timo Behr.

³The Pew Forum, "The Future of the Global Muslim Population", January 2011, <http://www.pewforum.org/future-of-the-global-muslim-population-regional-europe.aspx#ftn34>.

The security dimension of the Europe and Islam debate is important. Events in the Arabic world influence the way Europeans consider the democratic and liberal credentials of their own national Muslim co-nationals. Nevertheless, while the big questions of identity, solidarity and fundamental values tend to surface in all countries, country-specificities abound. After all, individual European states have approached Islam in ways that reflect specific intra-European variations in church-state relations, state-minority relations, colonial histories, national identities, as well as differences in social welfare systems, electoral systems and geographic location. In addition, the state of the art of research and analysis on the domestic situation differs from country to country. The authors of the country cases in this collection had the liberty to pick the approach considered most appropriate for their specific country, in order to reflect best the idiosyncratic debate. Hence Jonathan Laurence and Gabriel Goodliffe focus on the identity debate provoked by Nicolas Sarkozy in France, Dirk Halm examines the discourse surrounding second and third generation immigrants in Germany, Karim Mezran looks at attempts to negotiate an *intesa* between the state and the Islamic communities in Italy, Saskia van Genugten examines the rise of anti-immigrant populism in the Netherlands, and Catherine Fieschi and Nick Johnson look at the reaction to immigrant sponsored terrorism in the United Kingdom.

An overarching element seems to be that in the past decade, the national models of immigration and integration that used to bring communities together have begun to reveal weaknesses. The multicultural model such as was known in the UK and the Netherlands has been scorned for creating parallel societies, providing a *carte blanche* for more extremist strains of religious thought and dangerously eroding social cohesion. In reaction, minorities are increasingly asked to be more like the majority and are expected to prove this for example through language command requirements and culture tests showing a basic 'ability' to embrace the dominant set of values. France, on the other hand, witnesses the limitations of the ideal of assimilating minority cultures to a strictly defined national identity.

In all such cases, the conflicts are about rules and accepted practices in the shared public space. Islam has brought a new set of values to the arena, thereby testing the limits and definition of concepts such as liberalism, tolerance and freedom of speech, whose validity until recently had been taken for granted in postwar Europe. At the same time, Muslims in Europe struggle to define the ways in which they can best practice their religion in a non-Islamic space. The lingering question is about the extent to which differing 'fundamental' principles and values can exist next to each other. This is the question addressed by Erik Jones.

The conclusion to the debate is not written. European politics has a long way to go before it adapts fully to the presence of Islamic immigrants; Europeans will work long to stabilise relations with Islamic countries on their borders as well. There is nothing surprising in the predicament. But successful reconciliation cannot be

taken for granted either. It is necessary to take stock of the situation, measure progress and regress, and look for new ways to move forward.

This special issue is one such stock-taking effort. It would not have been possible without the very generous support of the Wendy's-Arby's Group Foundation and the Jack and Carol Wasserman Fund. The original drafts of these papers were presented as part of a research seminar at The Johns Hopkins University SAIS in Bologna. The authors benefited from several rounds of comments from a talented group of students, including Geoffrey Cailloux, Hayat Essakkati, Mitko Grigorov, Allison Hart and Sarah Hexter. They also drew support from presentations made by, *inter alia*, Tariq Ramadan, Susanna Mancini and Meltem Müftüleri-Bac. The participation of these scholars in the wider conversation generated by the project is gratefully acknowledged. Finally, thanks go to Gabriele Tonne and her colleagues at the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) for their patient and constructive commentary. Such projects are necessarily collaborative and while the mistakes usually come from the authors, the insights often come from those who seek no credit for their involvement. This special issue is no different.