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978-1-107-03864-6 - European States and Their Muslim Citizens: The Impact of Institutions on Perceptions and Boundaries

Edited by John R. Bowen, Christophe Bertossi, Jan Willem Duyvendak and Mona Lena Krook

Excerpt

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1 An Institutional Approach to Framing Muslims in Europe

John R. Bowen, Christophe Bertossi, Jan Willem Duyvendak,
and Mona Lena Krook

Across Western Europe, public discourse has been suffused by claims about Muslims and Islam. These claims are mainly negative. Across a wide political spectrum, public figures denounce Islam for its retrograde values. Some claim that Islam is incompatible with the values of Europe and European states, that Muslims are irreducibly foreign because they will not or cannot abandon pre-Enlightenment ideas. Framing Islam as a set of values intrinsically incompatible with Europe implies that Muslims must choose between abandoning their religion and remaining outside the boundaries of the true European citizenry.

This representation was at the heart, for instance, of the 2004 ban on wearing the Islamic veil in public schools in France. As Joan Scott (2007: 8) argues, “Outlawing the veil . . . was an attempt to enact a particular version of reality, one which insisted on assimilation as the only way for Muslims to become French.” The notion that Islamic moralities and “modern” Europeanness are mutually exclusive has also played a key role in Dutch debates. The highly influential late right-wing populist Pim Fortuyn argued that Islam was a backward religion. Unlike Islam, Fortuyn argued, Judaism and Christianity had been transformed by “the Enlightenment,” during which the essential “Western” values such as individual responsibility, the separation of church and state, and the equality of men and women – among others – had developed. Fortuyn described Islam as a backward culture and a threat to his personal way of life: “I refuse to start all over again with the emancipation of women and gays.”¹

¹ *de Volkskrant*, February 9, 2002, <http://www.volkskrant.nl/vk/nl/2824/Politiek/article/detail/611698/2002/02/09/De-islam-is-een-achterlijk-cultuur.dhtml>. Another example: the Iranian-Dutch professor of law Afshin Ellian published a lecture in 2002 in which he argued against “the relativism of the Dutch state in dealing with Muslim homophobia.” Ellian asked: “Do we want to transform Muslims into citizens on the basis of the constitution? Or do we want

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Thus the notion of “Muslim citizens” appears as an oxymoron: their presence as citizens would challenge the essential values constitutive of European civilization. We read, nearly every day, stories about Islamic challenges to gender equality, in the form of head scarves in schools or refusals to allow male doctors to examine female patients, or about Muslims weakening civic life either by introducing religion into the public sphere or the opposite, by isolating themselves in religious enclaves.²

The response has been varied, and often desperate. Western European states have tried to define national identities as reservoirs of values for citizenship: Dutch values, French *laïcité*, Danish identity, Britishness, or Italian national culture. By doing so they have transformed what had been values of liberal citizenship into values of cultural distinctiveness. To a great and perhaps increasing extent, these nationalist cultural claims are confused with claims about the principles that guide how a particular Western European country works. Some French social scientists use *laïcité* to explain particular laws and policies, writing as if the term had a stable, agreed-on meaning. Others, writing about the Netherlands, argue that “multiculturalism” was once the Dutch national model, and their arguments converge with populist and nationalist uses made of “multiculturalism” in Dutch public debates. Disputes about the future of “British multiculturalism” are structured along similar lines. In these and other instances, it becomes difficult to pry apart national ideologies from analytical models.³ More often than not, both political and analytical discourses on citizenship share a common concern about the so-called multicultural crisis of European immigration societies and the role played by Islam and Muslims in this crisis. They both identify national idioms of citizenship as the framework of reference at once to assess, explain, and resolve the crisis.⁴

Of course, cross-national differences are real and important. We argue, however, that to understand these variations we must take into account two

them to become citizens of a political Islam which violates human rights?” (*Trouw*, February 2, 2002).

² On the claims about enclaving and its supposed cause – multiculturalism – see Bowen (2011a).

³ On these uses of the notion of national models in the comparative scholarship, see Bertossi and Duyvendak (2012); Bertossi, Duyvendak, and Schain (2012); Bertossi (2011); and Bowen (2007b).

⁴ On French *laïcité*, see Baubérot (2004) and Bowen (2012). The Dutch case illustrates the same point, when some authors combine social scientific analysis with normative arguments. On the one hand, they analyze Dutch integration policies as based on a “multiculturalist model” (Joppke 2004: 248; Koopmans 2002: 91; Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007). On the other hand, they blame these policies for “feelings of homelessness and alienation among native Dutch” (Sniderman and Hagendoorn, 2007; see Koopmans et al. 2005: 143). For a different position on the Dutch case, see Chapter 10.

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important sets of dynamics. One is the *relative autonomy* of what takes place in different institutional settings. Each of these locations – for example, the army, the school, or the court – has its own repertoires of “practical schemas” for action, namely complexes of ideas, norms, values, and emotions that are not reducible to a national model or ideology. As such, similar trends can be observed across national borders. At the same time, however, national ideologies do have strong effects of shaping patterns of reasoning and practices. Rather than assuming these effects prior to the analysis, it is essential that such influences be traced and demonstrated, underscoring how they interact with specific institutional logics.

STUDYING INSTITUTIONS

In line with these insights, this book examines both institutional properties and national ideologies, emphasizing one or the other in different analytic moments, in order to accentuate the dual character, national and institutional, of the mechanisms and processes shaping perceptions and boundaries regarding Muslims in Europe. The authors collectively look at schools, courts, hospitals, the military, electoral politics, the labor market, and civic education courses. We analyze representations and policy framings across strategically chosen countries and across institutional locations in order to compare the shaping effects of these particular institutions on the one hand and of national ideologies on the other. Whether institutions provide more or less accommodation to Muslims or, on the contrary, impose negative framings on them cannot be explained by a national ideology about immigrant integration, citizenship, and religious diversity. What we propose here is precisely an analytical framework that emphasizes the different and complex dimensions of this question.

In so doing, we take as our object the relationship of European states to those residents and citizens sometimes viewed as Muslims, and we analyze that relationship through the workings of certain key public institutions, from courts and the military to schools and hospitals. It is through participating in the social life of these institutions that most residents and citizens encounter “the state”: as a regulator of citizenship, a provider of services, or a source of employment. It is in these varied and relatively autonomous social contexts that boundaries are created or reaffirmed in ways that have the sanction of the state behind them. It is also in these institutional settings that employees interact both with “clients” (like job seekers, students, litigants) and with the broader political and public settings of state offices, elected officials, and representatives of the media. It is also with regard to these settings that the most

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visible conflicts have emerged about Muslims and Islam in today's Europe: on clothing in schools and hospitals, ethnic representation in the army or on electoral lists, and challenges from "sharia councils" to the legal system.⁵

These examples should make clear that we do not wish to suggest, either by our title or in our approach, that "the state" and "Muslims" form two homogeneous blocs, facing each other. "Muslims" is used here in the sense of "sociological Muslims" – that is, people whose background and traditions form part of the long history of Muslim civilization, regardless of whether they worship regularly or what they believe. It is very important not to ascribe a uniformity of religious observance to Muslims, but most of them consider themselves to be Muslims, and they are seen as such by others around them. For that reason, we retain "Muslim" as a socially relevant characteristic applying to a broad category of residents and citizens of Europe. But it does not mean that all Muslims always highlight that dimension of their identity in their everyday lives (see Bowen 2010: 11).

Nor do we intend that "citizens" be read in an inordinately literal sense, in terms of the precise requirements for nationality. In this period of increasingly complex and multiple senses of citizenship (Soysal 1994), residents of Europe may be on diverse pathways to permanent status, and, increasingly, they are measured in terms of their potential fitness for citizenship.⁶ This "interpellation" of Muslims, their call to present themselves in suitable form for integration, is constitutive both of national imaginaries (can Islam fit into visions of Norway, or France?) and of specific institutions' relationships with Muslims, as Muslims are imagined as components of the army or targeted by citizenship courses and tests. Even those who are recent immigrants, as Sargent and Erikson show in their study of hospitals (Chapter 2) in this volume, are called and measured in this way.

Precisely how specific actors draw on their repertoires of ideas and emotions concerning others – defined in terms of ethnicity, religion, color, origin, or in other ways – is what we wish to uncover, not what we assume. As Glick Schiller, Çağlar, and Guldbrandsen (2006: 613) put it, we are interested in documenting "institutional processes through which ethnic categories and identities are constructed and naturalized." The term "Muslims" is only a starting point, and then it needs to be unpacked and contextualized. For example, although the French media looks for stories about troubles originating from "Islam" and

⁵ In a few places, as in Chapter 9 by Birte Siim, we also consider the contrasts between private and public institutions (in that case, regarding resolutions of employment discrimination cases).

⁶ Of course this sense of pathways was endemic to colonial strategies of promotion and status-granting. For an acute recent analysis, among many, see Davidson (2012). In the sentence that follows, we owe the observation on interpellation to James Beckford.

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“Muslims” in public hospitals, hospital workers more often draw on schemas concerning the behavior of “Africans,” reserving the religious framework for situations when they are faced with specific requests for religious exemptions. German workers in some hospitals are more likely to categorize patients as “Turks” than as “Muslims” (see Sargent and Erikson, this volume; Bertossi and Bowen [Chapter 5], this volume). Along slightly different lines in Sweden, the concept of immigrant replaced the term “foreigner,” reflecting a shift in how the state theorized citizens from other countries (and their children).

How does this approach fit into the literatures in politics and sociology on institutions? The institutions studied in this volume shape social life within a broader field of power, but their relative autonomy means that they cannot be *defined* by their roles in distributing power, as is often done in political science for the class of institutions – usually formal political arrangements – on which they focus (see, for example, Moe 2005). A public school, for example, can be located in a broad field of power and accountability, in which ministries, syndicates, and local funding authorities play their role. However, what we take to be the institutional dimensions of a school – ideas and practices about curricula, diversity, responsibility, pedagogy, discipline, play, proper ways of speaking – are not mainly concerned with distributing power, but rather with teaching, producing a certain type of citizenry, and other functions. As Sunier shows in Chapter 4, these features of schools are shaped by shorter- or longer-term historical pathways regarding the place of schools in society.

In this respect, we find ourselves agreeing with those in political science who emphasize the shaping power of institutions, but differing from them in the explanatory role assigned to power and resources, because *our objects differ*. Whereas those scholars ask how national political institutions interact to produce public policy, and therefore focus their studies on the shifting balance of power relations between legislatures, organized interest groups, the electorate, and the judiciary, we look at institutions charged with a wide variety of tasks that include educating, healing, fighting, and judging and examine them only insofar as they structure perceptions and boundaries concerning Muslims and Islam.⁷ In some cases, such as elections and the judiciary, our objects overlap, but our focus remains quite different. The chapter by Krook (Chapter 8), for example, explores not the effects of electoral systems per se, but rather the dynamics of electoral competition and how it shapes the initiatives taken by

⁷ On institutionalist approaches to politics, see Hall and Taylor (1996); Knight (1992); Mahoney and Thelen (2010); March and Olsen (1989); Schmidt (2008); and Steinmo et al. (1992). The chapter by Mona Lena Krook in this volume comes closest to an institutionalist approach in politics, but also with an attention to cultural schemas that moves her analysis toward cultural sociology.

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political actors to incorporate particular marginalized groups as candidates. Our questions concern the practical schemas employed by institutional actors – for example, how judges or teachers perceive, justify, and treat others. In this sense, these schemas, rather than policies, constitute our outcomes.

In our approach we might seem closer to institutional analyses in sociology, which employ a broader sense of institutions than those prominent in political science, and train attention on the importance of culturally specific practical schemas.⁸ Although economic organizations constitute a central domain for this approach, sociologists also examine schools, professional associations, cultural institutions, and so on. Here again, our questions differ from those that animate most of this work. Because the sociological approaches arose within the study of formal organizations (and in reaction to the assumption that rationality and efficiency explained how these organizations worked), the outcomes of much of this work are explanations of how organizations look and why they function the way they do. One major line of inquiry, for example, concerns how the organizational forms of institutions are reproduced across time and space: why schools, or firms, resemble each other across different countries.⁹ We ask different questions; our outputs are not institutional forms, but rather the schemas and boundaries particular to treatment of Muslims and Islam within those institutions.

Our approaches do, however, converge with those adopted by sociologists who seek to combine macro and micro approaches. An important line of sociological inquiry has focused on the flow of everyday social life, and we join with those approaches in looking at everyday ways of classifying soldiers, patients, students, and other actors. Others in sociology have sought to capture the rules and practices underlying an entire domain, whether schools, law courts, or churches.¹⁰ We converge with their concerns, not to explain the forms taken by a school or a hospital, but rather to show how those rules and practices shape the formation of schemas concerning Muslims and Islam. However, because we also ask about the role of institutions in shaping national-level cultural phenomena of racism, Islamophobia, multiculturalist tolerance, and so forth, we pay attention to links between institutional specificities and national discourses. For example, we ask how public intellectuals and journalists have treated particular events in schools, neighborhoods, electoral campaigns,

⁸ See Dobbin (1994); Meyer and Rowan (1977); and Stark (2009).

⁹ See, for example, Scott and Meyer (1994).

¹⁰ We are inspired by the work of Goffman (1974) for the former emphasis; on the latter, see the formative collection edited by DiMaggio and Powell (1991); for an example of the sociological study of a specific type of organization in terms of its institutional properties and its cultural dimension, see Becker (1999) on religious congregations.

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or hospitals as instances of something purportedly nationwide, namely a supposed general threat posed by Islam to social life.

THE ROLE OF NATIONAL IMAGINARIES

The aforementioned relationship between national ideologies or imaginaries, on the one hand, and the social lives of particular institutions, on the other, becomes a key object for our study. We wish to question more centrally the ways in which institutions shape a sense of cultural citizenship, precisely because we wish to move beyond a perspective that sees in national cultures of citizenship and integration the central building blocks of comparative analysis: France as an open and universalist culture versus the “multicultural” cultures of Britain and the Netherlands, so claimed because they organize immigrant inclusion and religious diversity along the idea of “group-based rights” and collective identities, versus Germany’s relatively “closed” approach, and so on.

We opt not to follow this approach for two major reasons, perhaps best seen in terms of space and time. First, any approach that seeks to define a single national model tends to *flatten out* the highly complex set of institutions and public actors within any one country, such that they are seen as simply implementing a consensual model: French people execute *laïcité*, Dutch people previously applied multiculturalism but now have seen the light, Germans follow the model of public corporations, Norwegians emphasize social equality, and so forth. In stressing the existence of cross-national differences, this approach may at times provide a useful starting point, but it cannot take account of the highly contested nature of these concepts within each country. For example, in Britain there are powerful voices raised in favor of allowing communities to resolve problems according to their religious values, and equally powerful voices raised against community isolation. Both sets of voices gained strength in the years after the July 2005 bombings. Neither defines a British national model of how to treat religious or ethnic diversity. In Norway there are powerful movements against racism and also powerful movements attacking Muslims as culturally inassimilable – both gaining strength after the 2011 massacre committed by Anders Behring Breivik. The former type of movements draws on Norway’s commitments to human rights, whereas the latter type – seen as well in Denmark – views Muslims as posing a threat to widely accepted commitments to gender equality.¹¹ Neither defines a “Norwegian model” – such a phrase could usefully refer only to a particular form of welfare state nourished by its oilfields.

¹¹ Breivik himself, however, viewed gender equality as part of the problem of decline of Norwegian society, for which he blamed the Norwegian Labour Party.

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Nor can a top-down approach capture the degree to which actors in specific institutions employ specific working models. As Bertossi shows in Chapter 4, the French army does not perceive Muslim recruits as simple citizen-soldiers, as the ideology of republican integration and *laïcité* would predict, but as instrumentally useful because they can appear as Muslims or as Africans to others in French society. As Siim shows for her Scandinavian cases in Chapter 9, it is the specific judicial competences of bodies in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, and not a national ideology, that best explains outcomes of cases involving women wearing Islamic scarves. Instead of assuming the existence of an unequivocal and stable constellation of meanings in a national context, this institutional complexity must be brought back into the analysis. What we must explain is the capacity of a national imaginary to maintain a moral balance between the given country's most valued principles (e.g., color-blindness, universalism, and *laïcité* in France and other principles elsewhere) and the social and institutional realities of competing values and adaptive responses. This uncertainty and these contradictions are part of the factory of cultural citizenship in a country.

The second limitation of national model approaches has to do with time: that they *telescope* the social, political, and legal history of each country into one or more crucial dates or events, which then are given a pan-historical meaning. For example, rather than tracing the shifting political agendas that gave rise to conflicting French laws and policies on religion during the early twentieth century (as in Baubérot 2004), many French public figures and even some social scientists claim that over the past century, France has followed a single model of *laïcité*, and that this model was implemented by the law of 1905 on separation of churches and state. This claim ignores the long-term practices of regulating religion in France and rests on a law that does not use the term "*laïcité*," was not accepted by the Catholic Church, and was in part superseded by subsequent legislation. It cannot account for the continued highly active support the French state gives to religious institutions, nor can it account for the radically different schemas followed by national actors at different points over the past two centuries. In such ex post reconstructions of institutional national histories, national cultures are seen as stable and all-encompassing.

To summarize, national model approaches may usefully point to important cross-national contrasts, and in this regard we, too, invoke them in this volume as part of an initial level of analysis. In doing so we must take care to distinguish between two quite distinct analytical approaches based on cross-national contrasts. We join in spirit with other authors who seek to base such contrasts on the analysis of specific institutions or policy debates, be it citizenship policy

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(Brubaker 1992), juridical traditions and legal debates (Joppke and Torpey 2013), or historical patterns of church-state relationships (Fetzer and Soper 2004). We distinguish this approach from one that takes a national ideology as itself providing a useful analytical model.¹² French approaches to religious governance are indeed based on a very long-term Gallican Church model of supporting and regulating recognized religions, more recently inflected by the twentieth-century legal apparatus often (and incorrectly) glossed as “separation.” These approaches can be usefully distinguished at this cross-national level from German forms of decentralized corporatism and from the British tradition of privileging religious communities as bases for education and morality. However, saying this should not then lead us to take the ideological (and “essentially contested”) concepts of *laïcité*, *leitkultur*, or multiculturalism as if they could explain or analyze these cross-national distinctions.

We argue that even the most nonideological analyses of cross-national contrasts cannot adequately account for the practical schemas that shape how particular Swedish, German, or Italian actors, working in specific institutions, perceive and discuss Muslims and Islam. The studies in this volume, by examining in greater depth the dynamics at work in particular institutional settings, allow us to ask how certain elements of national ideologies articulate with representations and practices in institutional contexts. Under what conditions do certain actors working in a public hospital or in a court deploy schemas that reflect national imaginaries? Under what different conditions do these or other actors instead highlight norms and practices linked more directly to the type of institution concerned? If we would see in the former case an instance of top-down shaping by a national ideology, we would need to specify the conditions and mechanisms for such a shaping effect to take hold. If we would see in the latter case an example of the modular argument advanced by John Meyer and his colleagues (Scott and Meyer 1994), namely that types of institutions reproduce their tokens across specific national contexts, we would also need to specify the mechanisms by which those resemblances take on social reality. We note in passing that those practices that tend to be more “accommodative,” in the sense advanced in Québec (Bouchard and Taylor 2008), are found across national contexts in schools, hospitals, and armies, where administrators and frontline workers find themselves facing strong pressures to accomplish tasks linked to the specific function of each such institution.

¹² We have in mind work in the comparative study of the integration of immigrants, which seeks to explain national differences in terms of national imaginaries, or ideologies, or ways of thinking about citizenship, rather than in terms of legal or political institutions; see, for example, the references in note 3 to this chapter, and also Favell (1998) and Schain (2009).

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CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND INSTITUTIONAL DIVERSITY

The preceding discussion ought to have made clear that we wish to bring more centrally into our analyses both social imaginaries and the institutions in which actors live and work. When national ideologies have a shaping effect on ideas and practices, they do so in specific contexts of enactment. Take, for example, the matter of Islamic garments worn in schools, which in many ways has been a proxy for debates about tolerable social diversity (see Chapter 3 by Sunier in this volume). The fact that the debate in France concerned students whereas in Britain and Germany it focused on teachers indicates differences in national approaches that do indeed concern national cultures. That the French government decided to ban “ostentatious religious signs” – that is, Muslim headscarves – cannot, however, be understood without looking at lobbying by school heads for the ban. Such lobbying certainly would have been more difficult in Britain, where visible diversity is less likely to be seen as a social issue. Here is where a cross-national contrast provides a starting point. But neither would it have been possible without the efforts of certain school heads to frame the issue as one of protecting schoolgirls from unruly Muslim boys, and a high level of receptivity such arguments received among members of the Stasi Commission. It is noteworthy that prior to 1989, there were girls with scarves in schools, but no one was lobbying against them, for reasons explored elsewhere (Bowen 2007a).

At this general level, there is an obvious interplay between a national repertoire on the one hand (the *laïcité* grammar) and, on the other, a specific belief that the state should protect schools from simple manifestations of religious diversity. At other moments, however, teachers preferred to frame the matter in another way, namely about accommodating in practical fashion the ethnic and religious diversity encountered in the classroom. Similar divergences in practical schemas are found in other settings, such as hospitals and courtrooms (as shown in the contributions by Bertossi and Bowen [Chapter 5], Sargent and Erikson [Chapter 2], and Siim [Chapter 9]).

In the following chapters, we observe interactions, repertoires, symbols, and formal organization within the settings of concrete institutions. But to do that, we must avoid a dual drawback that bringing institutions back to the center stage of comparative sociology of citizenship could cause. The first drawback would be to replace the reified conception of the national with a reified conception of institutional thinking and culture. When we explore how institutions impact boundaries and perceptions, we obviously look for aspects of institutional cultures. However, these cultures are not a single set of dispositions distributed evenly to members of a school, an army, or a law court. For example, if some military sociologists emphasize the role of military