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Democracy & Society

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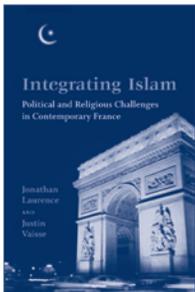
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■ *Integrating Islam: Political and Religious Challenges in Contemporary France* by Jonathan Laurence and Justin Vaisse

REVIEW BY ELIZABETH GRIMM, Ph.D. student in Government at Georgetown University



In the aftermath of the headscarf ban and the 2005 riots in the *banlieue*, alarmist stereotypes of the “Islamization of France” and the rise of “Eurabia” pervaded the media. *Integrating Islam*, by Jonathan Laurence, an American political scientist, and Justin Vaisse, a French historian, challenges this oversimplification of the Muslim experience in France and

presents a nuanced and ultimately optimistic analysis of the compatibility of minarets and the Marianne. The authors argue that the primary challenge of this current wave of immigrant integration is socio-economic rather than religious: rampant unemployment, chronic discrimination, and a lack of educational capital fuel domestic unrest among the Muslim immigrant population. *Integrating Islam* is a refreshing break from the superficial diagnoses of French and Muslim assimilation that frequently capture the media’s attention; Laurence and Vaisse point instead to the many positive sociological realities and trends in this relationship. Their work is an important read for anyone trying to understand

the complexities of Islamic integration into the European mainstream and an extremely valuable contribution to the field of migration studies.

The strict separation of church and state in France was enshrined in a 1905 law prohibiting both official recognition of religious communities and public funding of religion. Thus, many commentators see integrating Islam as a direct challenge to the separation of church and state and a catalyst for Islamophobia in France. Furthermore, France is home to the largest Muslim population in Europe. Muslims constitute the majority of the prison population and maintain high unemployment rates. Their population is steadily rising and the immigrant communities tend to concentrate in circumscribed poor neighborhoods.

Despite these facts, Laurence and Vaisse reject the argument that these conditions *ipso facto* incubate terrorism. They argue that the current problems are not novel, but typical of the immigrant experience. Immigrants are often poor, ill educated, under-employed, and alienated populations torn between two countries and two cultures—feeling neither at home in the place they live nor in their parents’ homeland. Ignorance of the integration process and its attendant social and economic challenges, rather than an inherent clash of civilizations, thus invites radicalization of immigrant youth. The current French case is consistent with this historical antecedent: Laurence and Vaisse argue

that poor future prospects and a lack of national identity drive Muslim youth to appropriate a religious identity. Fueled by foreign imams (only one in five imams is a French citizen), youth such as Zacarias Moussaoui may be propelled to extremism.

The authors are optimistic, however, about the profound desire of Muslims to integrate in France. The publication of the Danish cartoons of Mohammed and the notorious headscarf ban incited little domestic Muslim opposition in France. The violence during the summer of 2005 resulted from perceived alienation from French society and economic and social injustices—not from a larger religious intifada. In fact, the optimistic outlook of *Integrating Islam* is confirmed in a Pew Global Attitudes study, published in July 2006 after the book went to print. According to their survey results, French Muslims consider themselves French at rates greater than other European Muslim immigrants identify with their respective host countries.

Despite the importance Laurence and Vaisse ascribe to domestic politics and the need for internal reforms, they do not consider how the upcoming presidential elections in April 2007 will affect the prospects for Muslim integration. Though they acknowledge the different approaches to integration held by President Chirac and the right-wing Interior Minister and presidential hopeful Nicholas Sarkozy, they decline to address how this difference may play it self out in the upcoming elections.

Yet, the authors conclude that the current trends are promising. Despite the reforms already made, future Muslim compatibility with the Republic will only occur when the French government fosters greater educational and job opportunities for Muslim youth and when the individual French citizens overcome their allergy to Islam.

By presenting a thorough background of France's history as a country of immigration as well as the unique contours that the Muslim population adds to French domestic and foreign politics, Jonathan Laurence and Justin Vaisse proffer a rich assessment of the everyday realities of Muslims in France. Accessible to readers with varying levels of familiarity with French or Islamic culture and tradition, *Integrating Islam* is an essential work for anyone who wishes to develop a textured understanding of this internationally relevant issue.

■ *Migration and Citizenship. Legal Status, Rights and Political Participation* by Rainer Bauböck (editor)

REVIEW BY RICARDO CRUZ-PRIETO, Ph.D. student in Government at Georgetown University.

Migration and citizenship are core political concerns in Western democracies. These are closely interrelated issues whose meaning, trends and



consequences for politics are undergoing complex and difficult processes of redefinition. Europe, in particular, has become a privileged laboratory for studying and understanding these processes and interrelationships, a situation that is immediately evident in reading this report edited by Rainer Bauböck.

Migration and Citizenship is a report of the working group on citizenship, legal status and political participation of the International Migration, Integration and Social Cohesion network (IMISCOE). It provides a descriptive overview of the main areas of research in the intersections between migration and citizenship, a discussion and evaluation of influential theories, and current research perspectives and topics in need of further exploration for each of the areas.

Even though the authors did not conceive it as a “comprehensive and high level overview,” and the area of study is geographically restricted, this book presents a systematic introduction to a growing and important field of interdisciplinary research. And it illustrates the advantages and deficiencies of the genre. The first chapter, by Bauböck, outlines the main conceptual discussions around citizenship and migration studies, provides clarifying definitions, and delineates the complexity surrounding notions of citizenship, nationality, membership, identity, belonging, and associated concepts and typologies. The review and evaluation of related theories about the developments and trends in the regulation of these statuses across countries is also instructive.

The book's streamlined approach allows for covering a lot of ground in the three main areas investigated: the legal status of immigrants and their access to nationality (Albert Kraler), the rights of third country nationals and European citizenship (Bernhard Perchining), and political participation, mobilization and representation of migrants (Marco Martiniello). The down side of this streamlined approach is that it does not address two central areas of widespread interest directly connected to these topics—issues of identity and the economic aspects of migration—because they belong to other research areas within the IMISCOE project.

The authors competently address the main areas of debate in the literature, and they provide quick and reasonable evaluations of the limitations of the most influential theories in the fields of citizenship and migration. The book highlights the inadequacy of categories developed in recent but already classic works, such as those of Rogers Brubaker, as a basis for fruitful research and the weak evidence for optimistic post-national accounts, such as those of Yasemin Soysal. The report also describes the uncertainties about the standing and sustainability of interim statuses like den-