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**Debates over Islam in Austria, Germany and Switzerland:**

**Between ethnic citizenship, church-state relations, and right-wing populism**

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**Abstract:** The article explores debates regarding Islam and Muslim immigration in Austria, Germany and Switzerland. We are primarily interested in which issues dominate the debates, which actors participate, which positions are taken, and what kind of arguments are used to justify them. Exploring three countries with an ethnic model of citizenship allows us to control for important cultural factors, and allows us to explore three other explanatory variables in more detail: the dominant model of political participation, the relationship between the state and church/Islam, and the electoral strength of right-wing populism. To test our arguments, we rely on a new dataset based on content analyses of the countries' leading quality newspapers from 1998 to 2007. Going beyond existing studies that concentrate either on state activities or on mass-level attitudes towards Muslims, our data allows for the inclusion of all relevant actors and action repertoires that are part of the public debates.

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## 1. Introduction

As a result of rising immigration from Muslim countries, Islam has become an increasingly important religion in Europe at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Islam's growing presence leads to new conflicts: While guest-workers have formulated claims that are predominantly social and political, Muslim immigrants are now claiming religious and cultural rights as a consequence of their permanent settlement. Because of this, western societies are more and more frequently confronted with questions of how to deal with religious rules and customs—especially those that conflict with the norms of a secular liberal state. Demands for the construction of mosques, Islamic religious education, and gender-separated sports-lessons, as well as protection for cultural practices (such as forced marriages and female circumcision which are also heavily disputed within Islam) are causing conflicts between immigrants and the host societies (e.g. Koopmans *et al.* 2005: 149; Wohlrab-Sahr and Tezcan 2007). In addition, since the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the debate on Muslim integration has increasingly been linked to questions of public security.

While such conflicts exist throughout Europe, we will use this article to explore differences in the public debates over Islam in Austria, Germany and Switzerland from 1998 to 2007. We are mainly interested in how the debates are structured: Which issues dominate these exchanges, and in which arenas do they take place? Which actors participate, what are their positions and which arguments do they mobilize to justify them? Contrary to most other studies, we will not focus on classic immigration countries or former colonial powers. Austria and Switzerland have been particularly neglected by the academic debate on Islam in Europe so far (Cesari and McLoughlin 2005; Cesari 2005; Fetzer and Soper 2005; Wohlrab-Sahr and Tezcan 2007).

Analyzing these cases also allows us to make important contributions to the literature from a theoretical perspective. Besides some common characteristics—like the structure of political cleavages, citizens’ attitudes towards Muslims, and the demography of Muslim immigration—the three countries under investigation here share the same ethnic model of citizenship. It has been demonstrated repeatedly that citizenship regulations and the understanding of nationhood strongly influence the relationship between majority and minority groups (Brubaker 1992; Favell 1998; Koopmans *et al.* 2005). By maintaining the model of citizenship as a constant across our three sample countries, along with the attendant cultural and ideological factors, we will be able to investigate other explanatory variables in more detail—focusing more clearly on institutional factors and the roles of political parties. Three crucial variables vary among our countries: the dominant model of political participation, the relationship between the state and church/Islam, and the electoral strength of right-wing populism.

As far as the dominant model of political participation is concerned, we will show whether Austria’s state-centered model has a different impact on who participates in which political arenas than the civic model of Switzerland, with its extended direct democratic institutions, or the German model that lies somewhere in-between. While the model of participation constitutes a more general factor, state-church/Islam relationships and the mobilizing activities of right-wing populists represent more issue-specific factors for understanding how debates on Muslims are structured. Fetzer and Soper (2005) have already shown that the church-state relationship influences the way how Muslims are accommodated. In our study, we attend three cases that vary with regard to the degree of Islam’s official recognition: While Austria has recognized Islam and given it equal status with other religions (indeed, this has been the case for more than 100 years), Switzerland does not have specific religious provisions for Muslims. In Germany, Islam is not recognized as an official religion either,

though Muslims in Germany have more cultural and religious rights than those in Switzerland. The three cases, finally, also vary with regard to the electoral strength of right-wing populist parties that are the driving force against Muslim immigration in many countries (Mudde 2007: 84-86). Austria and Switzerland are countries where right-wing populists have gained considerable electoral strength, whereas in Germany such parties are virtually absent in parliament and public debates.

In the next section, we shall present our arguments and the contextual factors of the debate in more detail. After introducing our methodological approach (part three) we shall preface our empirical analyses in part four with a brief summation of the development of the debates over the last decade, in order to assess their intensity. We shall then consider which issues shape the debates, the arguments, the actors appearing, the actors' positions, and the crucial political arenas in which the debates take place. To test our arguments, we rely on a new dataset derived from content analyses of quality newspapers in the three countries from 1998 to 2007. These data allow us to go beyond existing studies that concentrate either on state activities or the attitudes of citizens towards Muslims. Ultimately, we are in a position to include all relevant actors and actions that are part of the public debates and thus to draw a full picture of how Western societies react to the rise of Islam.

## **2. Context factors of the debates in Austria, Germany and Switzerland**

In Austria and Switzerland, and to a more moderate extent in Germany, the political debate over Islam began comparatively late; for a long time it did not reach such a high intensity as in other countries. Only recently, especially after the turn of the millennium, has dealing with Muslim immigrants and their religious and cultural claims become an important and controversial political issue. Critical questions concerning Muslims' willingness to integrate

into state and society, as well as local conflicts about Islamic buildings (especially minarets) are dominating this debate. The context factors – or structures of opportunities – that influence political actors' mobilization of this new issue are quite similar, when it comes to the three countries' demographic development, model of citizenship, major lines of conflict, and citizens' attitudes. Following a most-similar-systems-design (Przeworski and Teune 1970), three dissimilarities between the countries in question should account for variation in the dependent variable, i.e. the debate on Islam. These dissimilarities include the dominant model of political participation, the relationship between the state and the church/Islam, and the strength of party based right-wing populism.

Based on census results, the size of the Muslim population in both Austria and Switzerland quadrupled from around 1980 to around 2000—reaching 4.2 and 4.3 percent respectively.<sup>1</sup> Comparable data for Germany are difficult to obtain, since the last census was carried out in 1987 when Muslims made up 2.7 percent of the population. According to estimations by population experts, their share had likely increased to 3.7 percent around the year 2000.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, according to recent approximations for Austria and Germany, Muslims made up 4.8 and 4.3 percent of the populations, respectively, in 2008.<sup>3</sup>

In all three countries the vast majority of Muslim residents do not hold citizenship. As reported by the census data cited above, 71.1 percent of Muslims in Austria, 88.3 percent in Switzerland, and an estimated 86 percent in Germany are foreigners. In all three countries most Muslims originally immigrated until the early 1970s as part of guest worker programmes, and immigrated later on via programmes promoting family-reunification. In addition, each country accommodated refugees from the wars in the Balkans of the 1990s: about 70,000 Bosnians came to Austria and around 340,000 to Germany (Kogelmann 1999: 321). Roughly 30,000 arrived in Switzerland.<sup>4</sup> This high proportion of Muslims without

citizenship is a direct consequence of the countries' rules of citizenship, which are clear examples of the ethnic-based models, and of restrictive naturalisation policies in general (Bauböck *et al.* 2006; Helbling 2008). Following Brubaker (1992), the model of citizenship has been interpreted as a variable that is central to accounting for different policies of immigration and integration (e.g. Koopmans *et al.* 2005). But this factor has also been deemed important in regard to the specific phenomenon of Muslim migration, since the model in place is strongly linked to the state's treatment of immigrating Muslims' claims (Favell 1998) and also leads to different discursive opportunities (Koopmans *et al.* 2005). In a multicultural context, Muslims are given several chances to express their claims to the state and the public. This is not the case in an ethnic context, where the extreme right is given so many opportunities to articulate its ideas.

In considering the structure of the political space, it becomes clear that the major lines of conflict are similar in the three countries analysed. As in other European countries, the space revolves around an economic and a cultural cleavage (Kriesi *et al.* 2008). In Austria and Switzerland in particular, the cultural line of conflict has gained in importance and pushed back the influence of the once-dominant economic division; in Germany, by contrast, the economic conflict is still more salient (Dolezal 2008a; 2008b; Lachat 2008). In all three countries, however, the cultural line of conflict is no longer dominated by traditional issues such as those related to religion, or demands by the new social movements of the 1970s. Struggles concerning immigration and European integration (again, less so in Germany) are foremost.

The political struggle over Islam, and over Muslims' claims, finally, takes place in an environment that is increasingly shaped by Anti-Muslim sentiments. Results of the World Values Survey show that since the 1990s, all three countries have witnessed an increase in

negative attitudes towards Muslims, whereas resentments against foreigners in general have decreased markedly. According to data from 2007, 21.9 percent of the Swiss refuse to have Muslims as their neighbours, while 7.8 percent express this feeling towards foreigners in general. In Germany the equivalent rates are 24.1 and 13.2 percent. For Austria, the most recent data are from 1999: 15.2 percent disapproved of Muslims, 12.7 did so of foreigners. The distribution of these attitudes across the political parties is also quite similar: voters of left-leaning parties express the lowest amount of rejection, and voters of right-wing populist parties the highest. As part of a rising *Islamophobia* many Europeans no longer differentiate between Islam, fundamentalism, and even terrorism. With respect to the fear of Islamist terrorism, our countries vary sharply: Results of the European Social Survey (ESS)<sup>5</sup> indicate that 13.7 percent of the Austrians see their country as a potential target. In Switzerland about twice as many people do so (26.3 percent), but both countries are clearly below the western European mean of 36.3 percent. In Germany, by contrast, where several plots have been revealed in advance by security forces, or have failed due to technical incapacity, and where members-to-be of the 9/11 assaults were also enrolled as students, half of the population (50.4 percent) sees their country threatened.

Contrary to contextual factors discussed so far, there are three main structural dissimilarities that should account for differences in the debate on Islam. These include: the dominant model of political participation; the relationship between the church and the state/Islam; and the strength of right-wing populist parties.

As far as political participation is concerned, we follow a heuristic dichotomy. In such a perspective, Austria represents a state- or party-centred model, whilst Switzerland can be regarded as example of a civic model, and Germany as a middle case. In Austria and Germany, conventional forms of participation are clearly focussed on the electoral arena—

meaning, they are predominantly party-based. Direct democratic forms of decision making are available in Austria, but they are comparatively weak and predominantly initiated by the elites (Müller 2006, 109-10). In Germany no such institutions exist at the federal level. In Switzerland, though, direct democratic discourse clearly dominates among forms of political participation (Treichsel and Kriesi 1996). Looking at recent data on turnout and party membership, these systemic differences become easily quantifiable: Taking the mean value of the federal elections in the 1990s and 2000s, turnout in Austria (81.9 percent) and Germany (79.0 percent) is twice as high as in Switzerland (45.1). According to latest results of the ESS, rates of party membership vary between 15 percent in Austria, 7.4 in Switzerland, and 4.2 in Germany. But the high proportion of party members is not the only factor that sets Austria apart; the relatively minor importance of unconventional forms of political participation (Dolezal and Hutter 2007) is a clear indicator of Austria's character as a party state, too. In both Switzerland and Germany, by contrast, civic engagement is very important (Kriesi *et al.* 1995).

The political struggle over Islam also depends on the relationship between the state and the church. In all three countries, a system of cooperation exists, defining the relationship between the state and the church (Hafner and Gremmelspacher 2005; Rosenberger 2005: 68; Robbers 2005)<sup>6</sup>. It should be pointed out that these relationships are relatively nuanced; none follows Britain's system of an established church, or the French model of separation. In each of these countries, religious organizations can be officially recognized by the state, providing them privileges that Christian churches and Jewish communities typically hold. However, Islam is only officially recognized in Austria. This recognition stems from the historical legacy of the Austro-Hungarian Empire which, in its last years, also included the former Ottoman provinces Bosnia and Herzegovina. Islam therefore gained official recognition in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was finally given equal status with other religions in 1912 (Ornig 2006: 107--

132; Schmied and Wieshaider 2004: 202). After the monarchy's breakdown in 1918 these regulations lost much of their *de facto* importance, since no relevant Muslim community existed in the new state. Nevertheless, they remained a valid part of the legal system. In 1979 the IGGIÖ (Islamic community in Austria) was founded as an official representative institution. Its status as a "public corporation"—and the state's official recognition of Islam's full equality with other religions, especially the Catholic Church—represented a singular development.

Austria is not the only country in which this type of integration is plausible. In Germany, religious groups can achieve similar status, although Muslims have yet to receive this kind of recognition (it should be noted that Germany, unlike Austria, decides these rights at the regional level). One explanation for this is that, due to national, ethnic, and intra-Islamic religious differences, no umbrella organization exists to represent German Muslims (Kogelmann 1999: 325-6), as it does in Austria. In recent years, however, a trend towards the building of such organizations is apparent: The "Islamrat" (Islamic Council) and the "Zentralrat" (Central Council) have become established actors, and both claim to speak for Germany's Muslims (Goldberg 2002: 43f.; Pratt and Göb 2007). The state, too, has increasingly worked to build official relations with the Muslim community, initiating the "German Islam Conference" as forum of dialogue in 2006. In Switzerland no trend towards the building of a Muslim umbrella organization exists, and throughout the country Islam still lacks official recognition from cantonal governments (Hafner and Gremmelspacher 2005; Tanner 2008). These institutional differences have important consequences for Muslims' daily life, since they influence the regulation of religious and cultural practices. Analysing the states' responses to Muslim claims—such as those related to ritual slaughter, calls to prayer, funerals, religious education, the wearing of head scarves, and assigned time slots in public

broadcasting—the Austrian government is by far the most accommodating, the Swiss the least, and the German situated in the middle throughout our research period (see table 1)

[table 1]

Coming back to the structure of the political space, it seems that the existing differences in governmental accommodation can be explained by the strength of right-wing populist parties, who are responsible for the re-structuring of political competition in many European states (Kriesi *et al.* 2008). In Austria and Switzerland these parties are extremely strong. In Germany, however, they are very weak, at least at the federal level. With respect to the struggle over Islam, however, it is important to note that—contrary to similar parties (Mudde 2007: 84-6)—the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) and its split off, the Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ), as well as the Swiss People’s Party (SVP), rarely mentioned Christian heritage in their agitation. The FPÖ in particular reflected the aims of a secular and anti-Catholic party throughout the early years of our study period, and it was not until the mid 1990s that it integrated a commitment to Christianity in its manifesto (Luther 2006: 379). For this reason, religious practices did not play a prominent part for a long time in their agitation against foreigners (Rosenberger 2005: 73). This is also the case for the SVP, which—despite its rural and Protestant background—rarely employed religious arguments (see McGann and Kitschelt 2005).

#### *Hypotheses and questions for the empirical analysis*

The struggle over Islam’s increasing visibility and the debate over Muslims’ claims appear to take place in a very similar environment., But there are dissimilarities in three important context factors that should account for differences. These include: the model of political

participation; the relationship between the state and Islam; and the strength of right-wing populist parties. Based on this assumption, we have deduced the following hypotheses and questions for the empirical analysis:

(1) From a temporal perspective, we expect important differences regarding the salience of the debate before and after the terrorist assaults of 2001, which represent this conflict's defining moment.

(2) Considering the dominant model of political participation, differences between the three countries should exist regarding the type of actors involved and their action repertoires. We expect the biggest share of institutionalized actors and repertoires to be found in Austria, and the smallest share to be found in Switzerland. As an anti-thesis to this concept of general opportunities, it is plausible that issue-specific opportunity structures (Koopmans and Statham 1999a) will benefit Muslim actors—particularly those in Austria (see below).

(3) Regarding the ethnic model of citizenship and the electoral strength of right-wing populism in Austria and Switzerland, we expect these parties to demonstrate a dominant role in the debate in both of these countries. Their relative weakness in Germany may cause two different effects: On the one hand, moderate-right parties might serve as *functional equivalent* and dominate the debate expressing restrictive arguments. On the other hand, the absence of the far right might also lead to a more tolerant debate in general.

(4) We also consider the question of whether the model of citizenship (Favell 1998) or the relation between the state and Islam (Fetzer and Soper 2005) shapes the debate more intensely. If the model of citizenship is more important, we would expect to see almost no differences between the countries, since all three follow a similar ethnic type. Because of the

restrictive structures of opportunities, we would expect a low visibility of Muslim actors and in general little tolerance towards their claims (Koopmans *et al.* 2005). However, we must also consider the opposite scenario: if differences related to the relationship between the state and Islam are more significant, we would expect a high degree of visibility of Muslim actors, especially in Austria. Furthermore, it would seem that the debate should be more pragmatic and focused on Muslim's concrete demands, particularly in Austria.

### **3. Method**

The following empirical analysis relies on the coverage of national quality newspapers, since media attention indicates the relevance of a new political issue. Our method is a quantitative content analysis<sup>7</sup> that proceeds in two steps:

In a first step, we selected the news coverage on immigration issues from 1998 to 2007 in one quality newspaper per country: *Die Presse* (Austria), *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Germany) and *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (Switzerland).<sup>8</sup> Because of this, our research period accounts for the often-discussed impact of 9/11 on the debate about Islam and Muslims in Western Europe. Searching the electronic press archives<sup>9</sup> for relevant articles, we used an extensive list that combines thematic keywords with country-specific names of places and actors. From the pool of all articles, we then sampled the articles referring to Islam/Muslims for the following analysis.

We do not focus primarily on the general salience of the issue in the press, however. The main part of the analysis considers the political contention among governmental and non-governmental actors. In a second step, we therefore use a *relational, core sentence-based content analysis* developed by Kleinnijenhuis and colleagues (e.g. Kleinnijenhuis and

Pennings 2001). In this method, the smallest unit of information in a grammatical sentence – the *core sentence* – serves as unit of analysis, not the whole article. Due to the very time-consuming coding procedure involved in this type of analysis, we concentrate on two four-year periods before and after 9/11 respectively: 1998-2001 and 2004-2007. Furthermore, we took a ‘temporal sample’<sup>10</sup> from all selected articles, so that the data set ultimately came to include 1,609 core sentences relating to Islam/Muslims.

A relational content analysis is designed to code every relation between ‘political objects’— i.e. between two political actors or between a political actor and a political issue. In the following analysis, we focus our attention on the relations between two political actors with a thematic reference to Islam/Muslims (actor-actor-issue sentences) and between a political actor and an issue that belongs to Islam/Muslims (actor-issue sentences). The *direction of the relationship* between the two objects is quantified using a scale from -1 to +1 with three intermediary positions, where -1 indicates a critique or rejection of another actor or issue, and +1 an affirmative evaluation. For the sake of this analysis, *actors* are classified into three broad groups: executive, political parties, and civil society. ‘Executive’ includes all state actors that lack an explicit linkage to political parties (e.g. public administration, police, courts), whereas all actors with such a party link belong to the ‘political parties’ category.<sup>11</sup> Due to the comparative design, we divided the parties into left, moderate-right, and populist-right. Finally, all other societal actors were classified as ‘civil society’ (e.g. NGOs, scientists, church representatives) and subdivided into Muslim actors and others. Regarding the *issues*, we differentiate between four domains: ‘Terrorism/fundamentalism’ includes statements on Islamic fundamentalism and terrorist attacks by Islamists. This category is actually comprised of several different aspects, but political actors and the media mostly treat them as similar social phenomena. The second category, ‘Islamic institutions and utilities,’ contains issues like the construction of mosques, minarets and other public utilities—issues related to the

public visibility of Islam/Muslims. ‘Islamic customs and recognition of Islam’ refers to the degree of official recognition, and especially to the way religious and cultural claims—such as the wearing of headscarves or single sex sports classes—are dealt with. The fourth category, ‘integration of Muslims’, regroups general statements on Muslims and their integration into society.

We elaborate on Kleinnijenhuis’ approach with three additional variables, taken from other methods of content analysis (e.g. Ferree *et al.* 2002; Koopmans and Statham 1999b). The *context event* is the starting point of actors’ communicative activity: an “original stimulus” (Ferree et al. 2002) responsible for the dynamic of the debate. Contrary to the general focus on specific core sentences, this variable is placed on the article level, since the context event is identical for all actors reported. *Action form*, the second additional variable, is linked to a specific actor and, again, is coded on the level of single core sentences. It is the way in which actors gain media attention that allows us to assess specific action repertoires (Tilly 2008) across actors, issues and countries. Both additional variables are classified in the same way; we differentiate by ‘state’, ‘non-state’, and ‘other’ types. The ‘state’ category includes all state-based, top-down forms like government resolutions or parliamentary sessions; ‘non-state’ refers to bottom-up events and forms closer to the realm of civil society (e.g. meetings of NGOs, direct democratic campaigns and protest events). Finally, we coded *frames*, defined as patterns of justification. Unlike most other studies (e.g. de Vreese 2003; Trenz 2005), these are also located at the core sentence level, where up to five frames were coded. We can, therefore, not only say how the debate is framed, but also by whom. To distinguish between different frame categories, we draw on Habermas (1993) and differentiate pragmatic, identity-based and moral-universal frames. The ‘pragmatic’ type consists of arguments referring to particular interests, as well as of references to efficiency and cost-benefit (Lerch and Schweltnus 2006: 306). Actors might, for example, refer to the increasing number of Muslim

citizens when arguing for the construction of a mosque, or put forward security arguments when opposing it. The second type uses ‘identity-based’ arguments. These frames legitimize policies by pointing to ideas or values inherent to a particular community. By means of such frames, for example, Muslim’s claims for more cultural rights are refused because they might constitute a danger for one’s national culture. The third type of arguments, ‘moral-universal’ frames, is based on “universal standards of justice“ (Sjursen 2002: 494f.), which can be accepted by everyone, regardless of a particular interest or cultural identity. Political actors, for example, might support the construction of a mosque by referring to the freedom of religion, or may justify their opposition to the headscarf by stressing gender equality.

#### **4. Empirical results**

In view of our hypotheses, we are initially interested in how the debate on Muslims and Islam has evolved over time. Thereafter, the core of our analysis focuses on the country-specific content of the debate—i.e. its issues, frames, context events, action repertoires, and actors.

In Figure 1, we present the *dynamic of the debates*, based on the relative shares of selected articles and coded core sentences. The former illustrates how salient an issue is, whereas the latter, i.e. the number of concrete actor positions, is a good indicator for the political contentiousness of the issue.

[figure 1]

As far as the annual share of articles is concerned, all three countries demonstrate a first, slight peak around 2001 when the terrorist attacks of 9/11 intensified media coverage on Islam/Muslims. At the same time, the Austrian and German cases show a steady rise over the

ten period. In both countries, media attention to the issue was highest in 2006 and 2007. On the matter of core sentences, i.e. the public contention about the issue, the countries differ more substantively. Even in the crucial year 2001, the Austrian debate remained very muted, whereas we can observe an initial peak in the two other countries. However, as in the case of the latecomer Austria, the most contentious years are at the end of our research period, i.e. five (Germany) or six years (Austria, Switzerland) after the attacks in the U.S., which ultimately appear to influence the timing of the debate less directly than it is often assumed.

Having summarized the evolution of the debate, we may now focus on its content. More particularly, we may discuss which *issues* dominate, which arguments are mobilized, and how the argumentation is shaped by national discursive opportunity structures. Let us first turn to the issues. Table 2 shows the relative salience of the issue-categories for each country and for the time periods before and after 9/11. For the years from 1998 to 2001, our hypothesis concerning the content of the debate is confirmed: the more Islam is recognized, the more the debate revolves around concrete aspects of the rising presence of Muslims. In Austria, questions of infrastructure and Muslim customs are at the centre of the debate. This latter aspect also shapes the debate in Germany, whereas infrastructural questions are completely absent there. In Switzerland, the debate is much more general and turns around the question of how to integrate Muslims, and which positions should be taken towards Islam. There are hardly any discussions on Islamic infrastructure or cultural rights.

After 9/11 the situation is different. While it is not surprising that a focus on ‘terrorism/fundamentalism’ has increased in Austria and Germany, its extent is rather unexpected. In Germany, where several terrorist plots have been revealed in advance or failed, more than half of all statements in the post-9/11 period have been made in this context. In Austria, the videos of the “Global Islamic Mediafront” rallying against the national (as well as the German)

government, along with other minor incidents, have made this issue six times more salient compared to the period before 9/11. In Switzerland, on the other hand, the issue has clearly lost some of its importance. This seems mainly due to the fact that more pragmatic topics, such as institutions and customs, have reached a level they already held in Austria before. Perhaps 9/11 and subsequent events have forced Switzerland to deal more seriously with its Muslim immigrants, and to finally engage in a debate that had already started elsewhere. In Germany, it is surprising that on the national level no debate takes place about the construction of mosques. This might be explained by the absence of right-wing populist forces that exploit this issue in other countries (see below).

[table 2]

Besides the salience of the issues, the way actors justify their positions is another indicator of how the debate is conducted. Table 2 also lists the three categories of *frames* defined above. In addition, we have indicated the percentage of religious references in each category—delineating between arguments related to Christianity, Islam, their relation, or secularization. The findings meet all our expectations as far as the impact of state-Islam relations is concerned: *the more Islam is recognized, the more salient pragmatic frames become*. In Switzerland, for example, hardly any position is justified using pragmatic frames. On the other hand, identity-based and moral-universal frames that are part of rather general and abstract discussions are used in Switzerland in more than half of all justified statements. Due to their ethnic citizenship model, identity-based frames are important in all three countries. Regarding the religious component, 75 per cent of all identity-based and moral-universal frames taken together are related to it in Austria, as compared to Germany and Switzerland where only 36.5 and 28 per cent, respectively, relate to religious issues. This finding shows that strong state-church/Islam relations constitute discursive opportunity structures, enhancing

a more religious debate. In the matter of identity-based frames, we see that in Austria, almost 85 percent reflect a religious bent—meaning that only a very small part concerns aspects of national identity (something that is rather surprising for a country with an ethnic model of citizenship). In Switzerland, by contrast, almost half of these arguments consist of traditional references to the nation; Germany lies in between, but is closer to Austria.

In the following section, we are primarily concerned with the driving *context events* of the debate, and the specific *action forms* that the political actors use. As explained above, we differentiate between state, non-state, and other types of events and forms. Because it is rather difficult to interpret the category of ‘others’, which also depends on the newspapers’ coverage style,<sup>12</sup> we focus on the ratio of state and non-state forms and events respectively.

[table 3]

In general, the empirical results in table 3 confirm our second hypothesis that we derived from the general opportunity structures. Above all, the patterns in Switzerland, on one side, and the patterns in Austria and Germany, on the other, differ. In Switzerland, the driving events and action repertoires are influenced to a much greater degree by non-state and bottom-up types, which further emphasize its unique model of political participation. By contrast, the debates in Austria and particularly in Germany are set emphatically from above, and conducted by governmental means. The differences reflected in the German and Austrian cases are not in line with our theoretical predictions based on the general model of participation, however. State forms are even more central in Germany than in Austria; our data reflect the rather legalistic style of the German debate even stronger than we had expected. However, the focus on top-down context events and a state-centered action repertoire can be linked to the thematic structure of the German debate (see table 2), since its dominant issue—

‘terrorism/fundamentalism’—is highly state-centered in all three countries. By contrast, non-state forms shape the contention on ‘Islamic institutions and utilities’ most forcefully—an issue that is almost completely absent in Germany at the national level.

In our next step, we turn to the question of who takes part in the debate over Islam and Muslims. As we are mainly interested in who initiates and leaves a mark on the debate, we focus on the *subject actors* of the core sentences. Looking at actors enables us to assess further how the general and issue-specific opportunity structures influence the debate, and also provides more comprehensive explanations of the country-specific differences observed so far.

[table 4]

The relative salience of the three main actor types corresponds only partially to the differences we expect from the general model of participation (see table 4). Looking at the ratio of executive-to-party political actors, our data attests to the expected, stronger role of parties in the Austrian and German debate, as compared to the Swiss case. We coded three (Austria) and four (Germany) times more party political statements than executive ones, and found the Swiss shares to be rather similar. However, civil society actors are most visible in Austria, closely followed by those in Switzerland, and followed finally by those in Germany. Contrary to the general model of participation, we therefore cannot observe contrasting patterns between Switzerland and the other two countries.

How can we explain these deviant findings? The internal distribution of civil society actors, i.e. the ratio of Muslim to non-Muslim actors, indicates how strongly issue-specific opportunities shape the debate. Muslim actors dominate the Austrian debate, which is highly

opposite to the Swiss and the intermediate German case. Consequently, the ethnic model of citizenship as another issue-specific opportunity structure is – at least concerning the types of actors – less important than the church-state relation.

Subsequently, we consider how visible the different *party political camps* are in the debate. As expected, right-wing populist parties emphasise the issue strongly in Austria and Switzerland. In the matter of party politics, we can even state that the right-wing populists “own” the issue, as they are the subject of about half the Austrian and Swiss party statements respectively; in Germany, however, the radical right is almost nonexistent in the debate. Furthermore, it is quite interesting to look at the share of left-wing parties. With the exception of Switzerland, the shares of moderate-right and left parties are very similar. In this context, we observe an interaction effect between the presence of right-wing populist parties and state-Islam relations. In other words, only the Swiss left-wing parties are comparatively silent in a context characterized by a strong right-wing populist contender *and* rather unfavourable issue-specific opportunities. Overall, the mean positions of statements referring to Islam/Muslims are almost the same in our three countries (see table 4).<sup>13</sup> However, the debate is more polarized in the two countries with strong right-wing populist parties, which are most negative towards Islam/Muslims. In Switzerland and Austria, the means of the different actor categories differ more than in Germany. Furthermore, Swiss parties are most negative, followed by their Austrian and German counterparts. For these reasons, we can conclude that the German moderate-right parties are not functionally equivalent to the strong right-wing populists in the other two cases. Comparing the Austrian and Swiss party camps, it is clear once more that our hypothesized interaction effect is apparent. Only the Austrian left counters the right’s negative stance, and makes some positive and issue-oriented statements.

*Right-wing populist parties* do not only affect the distribution of actor types and the polarization of the debate, they are also closely connected to other country-specific differences regarding issues and frames that we observed so far (see table 2). ‘Islamic institutions and utilities’, i.e. the most visible Islamic signs in the public sphere, are important issues of the Austrian and Swiss debate. In a comparative perspective, such issues are, however, no substantial part of German political contention. Combining actors and issues, we observe how forcefully right-wing populists put forward these questions: 41.2 (Austria) and 66.0 (Switzerland) percent of the corresponding observations refer to them. Compared to their overall visibility in the debate, they are 2.7 and 4.6 times overrepresented in this part of the debate respectively.

Finally, we shall turn to the framing of right-wing populists.<sup>14</sup> First of all, it is interesting to note that they overwhelmingly stress identity-based arguments. More than half of their frames refer to the Christian tradition of Europe and fears of Islamization – leaving their secular heritage behind. They do not rely on the moral-universal frames observed in other European countries (e.g. Akkerman and Hagelund 2007)—most likely because of their ethnic citizenship model. Above all, the comparatively high salience of identity-based arguments in the Austrian debate (see table 2) can be explained by the strategy of Austrian right-wing populist parties. Compared to their Swiss counterparts (55.6 percent), they rely even more heavily on such justifications (82.6). We can hypothesize that, because of the specific relation between the state and Islam, it is the only strategy available to them—whereas the Swiss right-populists can still rely on a more pragmatic framing.

## 5. Conclusion

Since the early 1990s, and especially since the beginning of the new century, Islam's rising visibility has become an important issue on the political agenda in most European countries. The aim of this article was to investigate and explain how debates on this new issue are structured in Austria, Germany and Switzerland. The two cases of Austria and Switzerland have been largely left out of studies on Islam in Europe, and thus we were in a position to go beyond the existing literature, which focuses mostly on classic immigration countries and former colonial powers. Since all three of these cases follow an ethnic model of citizenship, and thus share some of the crucial ideological and cultural factors that determine how groups of immigrants are integrated, it was possible for us to explore the influence of other important variables: the dominant model of political participation; the relation between the state and church/Islam; and the electoral strength of right-wing populism.

Our study has also been innovative from a methodological point of view, insofar as we have systematically coded quality newspaper articles for an extended period of time (1998-2007). Our relational content analysis, conducted at the core-sentence level, has enabled us to draw a representative picture of public debates in three countries over ten years. By coding a large variety of different variables, we have been able to show which issues shaped the debates, which arguments have been mobilized, which actors have appeared in the debates, what their positions have been, and which political arenas have been crucial where the debates take place.

In terms of the issues that dominate the debates, we were able to show that for the period before 9/11, *the more Islam was recognized, the more the debate revolved around questions of infrastructure and Muslim customs*. For the second period under investigation, we observed

an unexpectedly sharp increase in the prevalence of the ‘terrorism/fundamentalism’ issue in Austria and Germany, and a similarly sharp increase in institutional and cultural issues in Switzerland. Our findings concerning the arguments used to justify positions towards Muslims have met all expectations. Pragmatic frames have increased in salience as Islam has become an increasingly recognized religion. At the same time, it was interesting to observe that, despite a similar model of citizenship, the ratio of non-pragmatic frames varies strongly between the three countries.

With regard to the general political opportunity structures—i.e. the general model of political participation—our expectations have also been confirmed. In Switzerland, the driving events and action repertoires are strongly shaped by non-state and bottom-up types. In Austria and particularly Germany the debate is set from above to a much greater extent, and conducted by governmental means. Moreover, our data have confirmed the expected, stronger role of parties in the Austrian and German contention, as compared to the Swiss case. Contrary to our general hypothesis, however, civil society actors are most visible in Austria, closely followed by those in Switzerland, and finally by those in Germany. This can be explained most readily by the strong presence of Muslim actors in Austria—a result of the issue-specific opportunity structures linked to state-church/Islam relationships. Finally, we were interested in how visible the different party families are. As expected, right-wing populist parties clearly dominate the debate in Austria and Switzerland. Overall, the mean positions on Islam/Muslims are almost the same in all three countries, but the debate is more polarized where right-wing populist parties are strongest.

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**Table 1: Regulation of Islamic religious practices: scale from -1 (forbidden or unavailable) to +1 (legal or available)**

	<b>Austria</b>	<b>Germany</b>	<b>Switzerland</b>
ritual slaughter	1	0	-1
calls to prayer	0	0	-1
burials	1	0	0
private Islamic schools	1	1	-1
Islamic religious education in public schools	1	0	0
headscarf for teachers	1	0	-1
Islamic programs in public media	1	-1	-1
<i>mean</i>	<i>0,9</i>	<i>0,0</i>	<i>-0,7</i>

Source: Adapted from Koopmans et al. (2005: 55-66) for Germany and Switzerland. For Austria see the literature in the main text.

**Table 2: Salience of sub-issues and frames (percentage)**

	<b>Austria</b>		<b>Germany</b>		<b>Switzerland</b>	
sub-issues	98-01	04-07	98-01	04-07	98-01	04-07
terrorism/fundamentalism	5.3	34.8	14.9	57.3	25.0	10.1
Islamic institutions and utilities	44.7	20.6	0.0	3.1	0.0	30.2
Islamic customs/recognition	36.8	19.8	71.3	24.4	16.7	45.2
integration of Muslims	13.2	24.8	13.8	15.2	58.3	14.5
(n)	(38)	(379)	(94)	(480)	(24)	(248)
frames	98-07		98-07		98-07	
pragmatic	33.3	(21.2)	19.5	(2.7)	12	(0)
identity-based	42.3	(84.9)	31.8	(69.8)	32.7	(55.1)
moral-universal	24.4	(57.9)	48.5	(14.6)	55.3	(12.1)
total	100	(57.1)	100	(29.8)	100	(24.7)
(n)	(156)		(198)		(300)	

Source: own data collection

\* Share of religious arguments within the frame-category

**Table 3: Context events and action forms (percentage)**

	<b>Austria</b>		<b>Germany</b>		<b>Switzerland</b>	
	context events	action forms	context events	action forms	context events	action forms
state	24.2	12.9	42.5	34.7	16.8	17.3
non-state	12.5	13.1	12.5	3.0	24.8	25.0
others	63.3	74.0	45.0	62.3	58.4	57.7
(n)	(488)		(727)		(404)	

Source: own data collection

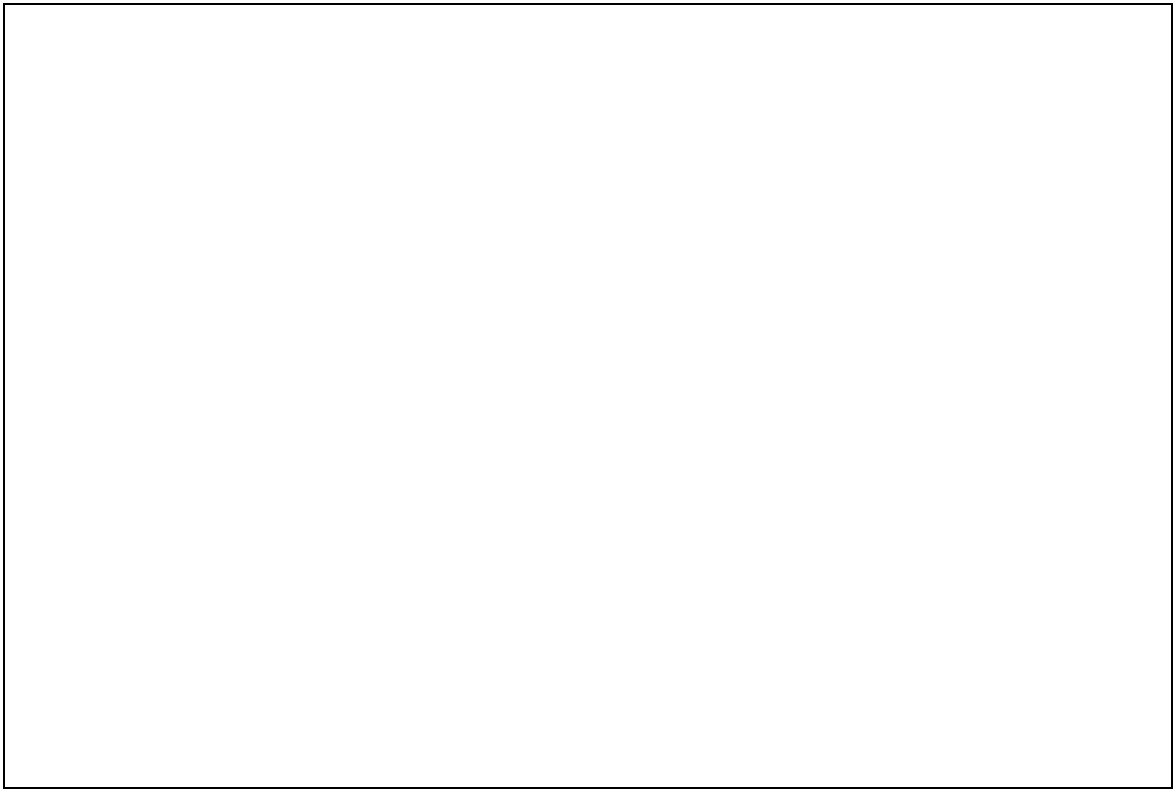
**Table 4: Saliency<sup>1</sup> and position<sup>2</sup> of actors**

	Austria		Germany		Switzerland	
	saliency (%)	position (mean)	saliency (%)	position (mean)	saliency (%)	position (mean)
executive	10.9	.2	12.4	.1	18.1	.5
parties <sup>3</sup>	31.0	.1	49.9	.3	26.1	-.6
<i>left</i>	23.7	.8	50.4	.4	11.4	— <sup>4</sup>
<i>moderate-right</i>	25.9	.5	46.7	.3	28.4	.3
<i>populist-right</i>	48.9	-.6	0.3	— <sup>4</sup>	54.5	-.9
civil society	58.1	.5	37.8	.1	55.8	.5
<i>Muslims</i>	59.4	.8	42.1	.4	18.1	.7
<i>others</i>	40.6	.2	57.9	.0	81.9	.5
all actors	100.0	.3	100.0	.2	100.0	.2
(n)	(449)	(254)	(704)	(240)	(337)	(229)

Source: own data collection

<sup>1</sup> Only actors coded as subject of a core sentence.<sup>2</sup> Only actor-issue sentences; the scale ranges from -1 to 1<sup>3</sup> Left (social democratic, green and radical left parties), moderate-right (Christian democratic and liberal parties), populist-right (Austria: FPÖ, BZÖ; Germany: small radical right parties; Switzerland: SVP and others).<sup>4</sup> As the category includes less than ten cases, it is not appropriate to calculate a mean.

**Figure 1: The rise of media attention and political contention related to Islam and Muslims, 1998-2007**



Source: own data collection  
Note: *Articles* shows the annual share of articles on Islam/Muslims over the whole research period (5033 articles for Austria, 19106 for Germany, and 6090 for Switzerland). *Core sentences* refers to the annual share of core sentences from 1998-2001 and 2004-2007 (488 core sentences for Austria, 729 for Germany, and 404 for Switzerland).

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Sources: Austria [http://www.statistik.at/web\\_de/statistiken/bevoelkerung/volkszaehlungen/index.html](http://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/bevoelkerung/volkszaehlungen/index.html);

Switzerland <http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/de/index/themen/01/05.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Source: the federal government's response to a parliamentary inquiry;

<http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/14/045/1404530.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Source: U.S. Department of State. International Religious Freedom Report 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Source: Federal Office for Migration;

([http://www.bfm.admin.ch/bfm/de/home/themen/asyl/humanitaere\\_tradition.html](http://www.bfm.admin.ch/bfm/de/home/themen/asyl/humanitaere_tradition.html))

<sup>5</sup> Questions C11 and C12 refer to terrorist attacks in general, but we assume that respondents in the three countries analysed equate the current threat of terrorism more or less exclusively with Islamist acts.

<sup>6</sup> We deliberately disregard the situation in some French speaking Swiss cantons that follow a model of separation.

<sup>7</sup> The data was collected as part of a larger project called „Political change in globalizing world: a comparative study of national and transnational campaigns”. This project is co-financed by the German Research Foundation (SFB 536, project C5) and the Swiss Science Foundation (project 100012-111756) and directed by Edgar Grande (Munich) and Hanspeter Kriesi (Zurich).

<sup>8</sup> Other investigations have shown that the focus on one quality newspaper is a pragmatic and efficient solution (e.g. Koopmans *et al.* 2005: 261).

<sup>9</sup> We used Factiva (<http://global.factiva.com>) for *Die Presse* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. In the case of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, we relied on CD-Roms for 1998-2006 and also on Factiva for 2007.

<sup>10</sup> To systematically cover condensations of media attention, we did not select specific weekdays or take a random sample. In contrast, we ordered all articles chronologically and chose every ninth (Austria), twenty-first (Germany) and eleventh (Switzerland).

<sup>11</sup> Due to their different role in the political systems of the three countries, statements by the federal government were coded differently. If the actor of a core sentence is the government as a whole we duplicated the sentences in the Austrian and German case, but not in the Swiss one. The duplicated cases were then assigned to the two coalition parties.

<sup>12</sup> E.g. mediated forms, such as interviews, belong into this category and they are, for example, more common in *Die Presse* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* than in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*.

<sup>13</sup> The figures do not include the statements on ‚terrorism/fundamentalism’ as they follow a rather different logic.

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<sup>14</sup> Due to the small number of cases (23 for Austrian and 36 for Swiss right-wing parties), these findings are very preliminary and in need of further empirical investigations.