Debates over Islam in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland:  
Between ethnic citizenship, church-state relations, and right-wing populism

Abstract

This article explores debates regarding Islam and Muslim immigration in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland. To get a full picture of these debates we are interested in which issues dominate the debates, which actors participate, which positions are taken, and which arguments are mobilized. Exploring three countries with an ethnic model of citizenship allows us to control for important cultural factors and to focus on three other explanatory variables: the dominant model of political participation, the relationship between the state and church/Islam, and the strength of right-wing populism. To test our arguments, we rely on a new dataset based on content analyses of quality newspapers from 1998 to 2007 that enables us to go beyond existing studies that concentrate on state activities or on mass-level attitudes. We demonstrate that above all the relationship between the state and church/Islam, thus issue-specific opportunity structures, influence the debates to a great extent.
1. Introduction

As a result of rising immigration from Muslim countries, Islam has become an important religion in Europe at the beginning of the 21st 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 demanding religious and cultural rights as a consequence of their permanent settlement. Western societies are therefore 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. Cesari 2005; 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 often been linked to questions of public security.

While such conflicts exist throughout Europe, we will explore differences in the public debates over Islam in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland from 1998 to 2007. To gain a full picture we investigate different important aspects that make up and structure a public debate: Which issues dominate them and in which arenas do they take place? Which actors participate, what are their positions, and which arguments do they mobilize to justify them? Analyzing these three cases allows for making important contributions from a theoretical perspective. Besides some other common characteristics—like the structure of political cleavages, citizens’ attitudes towards Muslims, and the demography of Muslim immigration—the three countries under investigation share the same ethnic model of citizenship. It has been demonstrated 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 setting the model of citizenship as a constant across our countries, along with the attendant cultural and ideological factors, we are able to investigate other explanatory variables and to focus more clearly on institutional factors and the role of parties. Three crucial variables vary among our countries: the dominant model of participation, the relationship between the state and church/Islam, and the electoral strength of right-wing populism.

As far as the dominant model of participation is concerned, we will show that 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 shown that the church-state relationship influences the way how Muslims are accommodated. Our three cases not only vary with regard to the church-state relationship but also more specifically concerning the degree of Islam’s official recognition: While Austria has recognized Islam and given it equal status with other religions, Switzerland does not have specific religious provisions for Muslims. In Germany, Islam is not recognized as an official religion either, though Muslims living there have more cultural and religious rights than 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: 84–6). Austria and Switzerland are countries where right-wing populists have gained considerable electoral strength, whereas in Germany such parties are virtually absent—at least at the national level.
In the next section, we will present our arguments and the contextual factors of the debate in more detail. After introducing our methodological approach in part three, we will 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 will then consider which issues and arguments shape the debates, the actors appearing, their positions, and the crucial political arenas in which the debates take place. To test our arguments, we rely on a new dataset\(^2\) derived from content analyses of quality newspapers in the three countries from 1998 to 2007, which is an observation period that enables us to explore the potential impact of 9/11. 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 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 and mosques) are dominating this debate. Following a most-similar-systems-design (Przeworski and Teune 1970), context factors—or structures of opportunities—that influence how political actors mobilize 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.
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.\(^3\) Comparable data for Germany are difficult to obtain, because the last census was carried out in 1987. Then, Muslims made up 2.7 percent of the population. According to estimations by experts, their share had likely increased to 3.7 percent around the year 2000.\(^4\) Furthermore, as stated by recent approximations for Austria and Germany, Muslims made up 4.8 and 4.3 percent of the populations respectively in 2008.\(^5\)

In all three countries the vast majority of Muslim residents does 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. Most Muslims originally immigrated until the early 1970s as part of guest worker programmes, 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.\(^6\) This high proportion of Muslims without citizenship is a direct consequence of the countries’ rules, which are clear examples of the ethnic-based model, 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 central variable to accounting for different immigration and integration policies (e.g. Koopmans et al. 2005). But this factor has also been deemed important regarding the specific phenomenon of Muslim migration, since the model is strongly linked to the state’s treatment of Muslims’ claims (Favell 1998) and leads also 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.
But this is not the case in an ethnic context, where the extreme right is given more opportunities to articulate its ideas.

Considering the structure of the political space, the major lines of conflict are similar in the three countries analysed. As in other European countries, the space is structured by 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; b; 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 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. 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 attitudes across partisan groups is also quite similar: voters of left-leaning parties express the lowest amount of rejection, supporters of right-wing populist parties the highest. As part of a rising Islamophobia many Europeans also 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)\textsuperscript{7} 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 or failed due to technical incapacity, and where members-to-be of the 9/11 assaults were 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 debates: the dominant model of 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, Austria represents a state- or party-centred model, while Switzerland can be regarded as example of a civic one and Germany as a middle case. In Austria and Germany, conventional forms of participation are clearly focussed on the electoral arena and are therefore 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, on the contrary, direct democratic modes clearly dominate among forms of participation (Trechsel and Kriesi 1996). Looking at recent data on turnout and party membership, these 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 low importance of unconventional forms of political participation (Dolezal and
Hutter 2007) is a clear indicator of its 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 traditional state-church and more particularly state-Islam relations. In all three countries, a system of cooperation exists (Hafner and Gremmelspacher 2005; Rosenberger 2005: 68; Robbers 2005); none follows Britain’s system of an established church or the French model of separation. In each of the countries, religious organizations can be officially recognized by the state, providing them privileges that (traditional) Christian churches and Jewish communities typically hold. Islam, however, is officially recognized in Austria only. This recognition is a historical legacy of the Austro-Hungarian Empire which, in its last years, also included the former Ottoman provinces Bosnia and Herzegovina. Islam gained official recognition in the 19th century and was finally given equal status with other religions in 1912 (Ornig 2006: 107--32; Schmied and Wieshaider 2004: 202). After the monarchy’s breakdown in 1918 these regulations lost much of their de facto importance because no relevant Muslim community existed in the new state; nevertheless, they remained part of the legal system. In 1979, when the Muslim population began to increase, an official representative institution was founded: the IGGIÖ (Islamic community in Austria). Its status as a ‘public corporation’ and the state’s official recognition of Islam’s full equality with other religions, especially the dominant Catholic Church, represent a singular development.

In Germany, where, unlike in Austria, regional governments decide these rights, religious groups can achieve a similar status, but Muslims have yet to receive it. One explanation is that, due to national, ethnic, and intra-Islamic religious differences, no umbrella organization exists to represent German Muslims (Kogelmann 1999: 325--6). 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 all Muslims (Goldberg 2002: 43-4; Pratt and Göb 2007). The state, too, has increasingly worked to build official relations with the Muslim community and initiated the ‘German Islam Conference’ as forum of dialogue in 2006. In Switzerland, on the contrary, 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, the Austrian political system is by far the most accommodating, the Swiss the least, and the German situated in the middle throughout our research period (see table 1).

Coming back to the structure of the political space, we expect differences in the debates also to be caused 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, 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 the Christian heritage in their agitation. The FPÖ in particular was traditionally a secular and anti-Catholic party, 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 in their agitation against foreigners for a long time (Rosenberger 2005: 73). This is also the case for the SVP, which—despite its rural and
Protestant background—rarely resorted to religious arguments (see McGann and Kitschelt 2005).

**Hypotheses for the empirical analysis**

The struggle over Islam’s increasing visibility and Muslims’ claims appear to take place in a quite similar environment. But there are dissimilarities with respect to the three important context factors introduced before that should account for differences. Considering the various components of a public debate, i.e. our dependent variable, we have deduced the following hypotheses regarding its overall salience, the specific issues and actors involved, its context events, as well as the actors’ action repertoires and justifications.

(1) **From a temporal perspective**, we expect important differences regarding the salience of the debate in general and especially with respect to the terrorism-issue before and after the assaults of 9/11, which represent this conflict’s defining moment.

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

(3) **Regarding the electoral strength of right-wing populism**, we expect these parties to take on a dominant role in the debate in Austria and Switzerland. 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—especially if one looks at the specific issues raised and justifications put forward.

(4) We also consider whether the *model of citizenship* or the *relation between the state and Islam* shapes the debates more intensely. If the former is more important, we would expect 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. 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, above all the Austrian debate should be more pragmatic and focused on Muslims’ concrete demands.

3. **Method: quantitative relational content analysis**

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 proceeding 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). Our research period, therefore, accounts for the often-discussed impact of 9/11 on the debate about Islam and Muslims in Western Europe. Searching the electronic press archives 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 those 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, we concentrate on two four-year periods before and after 9/11 respectively: 1998-2001 and 2004-2007. Furthermore, we took a ‘temporal sample’ from all selected articles, so that the data set ultimately came to include 1,609 observations.

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 on the relations between two political actors with a thematic reference to Islam/Muslims (actor-actor-issue sentences) as well as on relations 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. With this information we measure the positions actors take in as well as the overall polarization of the debate. 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. 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 actually summarizes different aspects, but political actors as well as the media mostly treat them as similar social phenomena. The second category, ‘Islamic institutions and utilities’, contains issues like the construction of mosques and minarets, thus subjects 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—are dealt with. The fourth category, ‘integration of Muslims’, comprises 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; as an ‘original stimulus’ (Ferree et al. 2002) it is responsible for the dynamic of the debate. Contrary to the general focus on 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 core sentences. It is the way how actors gain media attention which allows us to assess specific action repertoires (Tilly 2008) across actors, issues, and countries. Both additional variables are classified in the same way as 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), they are also located at the core sentence level. We can, therefore, not only say how the debate in general is framed, but also by whom. To distinguish between different justifications, we draw on Habermas (1993) and differentiate between pragmatic, identity-based, and moral-universal frames. These exhaustive and mutually exclusive categories are sufficiently abstract to go beyond issue-specific frames but are nevertheless oriented towards thematic justifications. The ‘pragmatic’ type consists of arguments referring to particular interests, as well as to efficiency and cost-benefit (Lerch and Schwellnus 2006: 306). Actors might, for example, refer to the increasing number of Muslim citizens when arguing for the construction of mosques, or put forward security arguments when opposing it. ‘Identity-based’ frames legitimize policies by pointing to ideas or values inherent to a particular community. By means of such frames, for example, Muslims’ claims are refused because they might endanger one’s national culture. The third type of arguments, ‘moral-universal’ frames, is based on “universal standards of justice“ (Sjursen 2002: 494--5), which can be accepted by everyone, regardless of a particular interest or cultural identity. Politicians, for example, might support the construction of a minaret 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 first 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, thus its issues, frames, context events, action repertoires, and actors involved.
In Figure 1, we present the *dynamic of the debates*, based on the relative shares of selected articles and core sentences coded. The former illustrates how salient an issue is in the media, 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 year period and 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 quite silent, whereas we can observe a first 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, five (Germany) or six years (Austria, Switzerland) after 9/11, which appears to influence the timing of the debate less directly than it is often assumed.

Having shortly summarized the evolution of the debate, we will now focus on its content. First, we analyze which *issues* dominate, which arguments (i.e. frames) 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 two time periods before and after 9/11 respectively. In the first period, our hypothesis concerning the content of the debate is confirmed: the more Islam is recognized, the more the debates revolve 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 German dispute, whereas infrastructural questions are completely absent. In Switzerland, by contrast, the debate is much more general. It 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 the 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 have been made in this context. In Austria, the videos of the ‘Global Islamic Mediafront’ blackmailing the national (as well as the German) government as well as minor incidents have made this issue six times more salient compared to the earlier period. In Switzerland, on the contrary, this topic has actually lost some of its importance. This seems mainly due to the fact that more pragmatic subjects, such as institutions and customs, have reached a level 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. The findings meet all our expectations as far as the impact of state-Islam relations as an issue-specific context factor is concerned: the more Islam is recognized, the more salient are pragmatic frames. In Switzerland, for example, hardly any position is
justified using pragmatic frames. It is identity-based and moral-universal arguments that are used in more than half of all justified statements which reflects a rather general and abstract discussion. In Austria, on the contrary, the debate is framed much more pragmatically throughout the observed period. The share of identity-based frames does not vary as strongly across the three countries, which hints at their identical citizenship model.

Having analysed the thematic content of the debate, we are now concerned with its driving context events and the specific action forms political and societal 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,\textsuperscript{14} we focus on the ratio of state and non-state forms and events respectively when interpreting our data.

[Table 3]

In general, the results reported in table 3 confirm our second hypothesis that we derived from the general opportunity structures. Above all, the patterns in Switzerland, on the one side, and 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, what emphasizes its unique model of participation. The debates in Austria and Germany, by contrast, are set emphatically from above and are conducted by governmental means. The differences between these two countries, however, are not in line with our theoretical predictions because state forms are even more central in Germany. But the (extreme) focus on top-down context events and state-centered, legalistic action repertoires can be linked to the thematic structure of the German debate (see table 2), since its dominant issue—‘terrorism/fundamentalism’—is everywhere highly state-centered. By contrast, non-state
forms shape the contention on ‘Islamic institutions and utilities’ most forcefully—an issue that is almost completely absent at the national level in Germany.

In a 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 the debate and leaves a mark on it, 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 attest 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. Contrary to the general model of participation, we therefore cannot observe contrasting patterns between Switzerland and the other two countries in this context. 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 discourse, 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 involved—less important than the relationship between the state and the church/Islam.
Subsequently, we consider how visible the different *party political camps* are in the debate. As expected, right-wing populists emphasise the issue strongly in Austria and Switzerland. In the arena of party politics, we can even state that right-wing populists ‘own’ this issue, as they are the subject of about half the Austrian and Swiss party statements respectively, whereas in Germany, the radical right is almost nonexistent. 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: Swiss left-wing parties are comparatively silent because the context is characterized by a strong right-wing populist contender and rather unfavourable issue-specific opportunities. While the mean positions of statements referring to Islam/Muslims are almost the same in our three countries (see table 4), the debate is more polarized where right-wing populism is strong. Considering parties only, the Swiss are the most negative, followed by their Austrian and German counterparts. We therefore can conclude that the German moderate-right parties do not serve as functionally equivalent of inexistent right-wing populists. Comparing the Austrian and Swiss party camps, our hypothesized interaction effect once more becomes apparent as 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 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 observed in more detailed analyses 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, they are 2.7 and 4.6 times respectively overrepresented in this part of the debate.

Finally, we turn to the framing of right-wing populists. First of all, it is unsurprising 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. Contrary to other countries (see Akkerman and Hagelund 2007), they do not rely on moral-universal frames—most likely because of the 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 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, this is the only strategy available to them—whereas the Swiss can still rely on a more pragmatic framing to voice their opposition.

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 throughout Europe. 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 so far largely left out of studies on Islam, why we could go beyond the existing literature, which focuses mostly on classic immigration countries and former colonial powers. Since all three countries follow an ethnic model of citizenship and, thus, share several ideological and
cultural factors that determine how 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 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 the public debates 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 salient. We thus gained a full picture of public debates on Islam.

In terms of the issues that dominate the debates, we demonstrated that in 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 arguments used to justify positions towards Muslims have met all expectations: the more Islam is recognized, the more pragmatic are the justifications used. At the same time, it was interesting to observe that despite a similar model of citizenship the ratio of non-pragmatic frames strongly varies between the countries.

With regard to the general political opportunity structures our expectations have also been confirmed to a certain extent. In Switzerland, the driving events and action repertoires are foremost non-state and bottom-up types. In Austria and particularly in Germany, by contrast,
the debate is set from above 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. 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. Overall, our analyses forcefully underline the explanatory power of such issue-specific factors, which do not negate but rather complement more general ones. 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. The country mean positions on Islam/Muslims are almost the same, but the debate is more polarized and emphasizes the public visibility of Islam/Muslims where right-wing populist parties are strong.

As the public debate over Islam began rather recently in all three countries, further research should not only include more countries, but also trace how it develops in the near future. Studies of public debates should, furthermore, be linked to related empirical analyses that focus on policy-making and individuals’ attitudes regarding Islam and Muslims. In such a research strategy, mediated political communication is not only shaped by broader general and issue-specific opportunity structures, but also part of the context that influences policymakers as well as citizens.
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and the Differential Success of the Extreme Right in Germany and Italy", in Marco


<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Austria</th>
<th>Germany</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ritual slaughter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>calls to prayer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>burials</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>private schools</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>religious education in public schools</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>headscarf for teachers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>programs in public media</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mean</td>
<td>0,9</td>
<td>0,0</td>
<td>-0,7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 issues and frames (percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>terrorism/fundamentalism</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>10.1</td>
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<td>Islamic institutions and utilities</td>
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<td>3.1</td>
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<td>19.8</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>45.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>integration of Muslims</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>14.5</td>
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</table>

(n)  (38) (379) (94) (480) (24) (248)

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<thead>
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<tr>
<td>frames</td>
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<tr>
<td>pragmatic</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>identity-based</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>32.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>moral-universal</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>55.3</td>
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</table>

(n) (156) (198) (300)

Source: own data collection
Table 3: Context events and action forms (percentage)

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<th>Germany</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>action forms</td>
<td>context events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>state</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>42.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>non-state</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>others*</td>
<td>63.3</td>
<td>74.0</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n)</td>
<td>(488)</td>
<td>(727)</td>
<td>(404)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: own data collection
* see footnote 12 as well as section 3.
Table 4: Salience$^1$ and position$^2$ of actors

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<th></th>
<th>Switzerland</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>salience (%)</td>
<td>position (mean)</td>
<td>salience (%)</td>
<td>position (mean)</td>
<td>salience (%)</td>
<td>position (mean)</td>
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<td>executive</td>
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<td>.2</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>.1</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parties$^3$</td>
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<td>left</td>
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<td>.1</td>
<td>49.9</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>-.6</td>
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<td>moderate-right</td>
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<td>.5</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>populist-right</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>-.6</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>$^4$</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>-.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>civil society</td>
<td>58.1</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>.1</td>
<td>55.8</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>59.4</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>.4</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>others</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>.2</td>
<td>57.9</td>
<td>.0</td>
<td>81.9</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>all actors</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n)</td>
<td>(449)</td>
<td>(254)</td>
<td>(704)</td>
<td>(240)</td>
<td>(337)</td>
<td>(229)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: own data collection

$^1$ Only actors coded as subject of a core sentence.
$^2$ Only actor-issue sentences; the scale ranges from -1 to 1.
$^3$ 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).
$^4$ As the category includes less than ten cases, it is not as 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

1 Despite the fact that the German citizenship law has become much more liberal in the last years, all three countries can still be clearly distinguished from countries with a more liberal citizenship model such as France, Great Britain or the Netherlands (Koopmans et al. 2005: 73).

2 The data was collected as part of a larger project: “Political change in a globalizing world: a comparative study of national and transnational campaigns”. This project was 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).

3 Sources: Austria 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.

4 Source: the federal government’s response to a parliamentary inquiry; http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/14/045/1404530.pdf


6 Source: Federal Office for Migration; (http://www.bfm.admin.ch/bfm/de/home/themen/asyl/humanitaere_tradition.html).

7 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.

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

9 We deliberately disregard the situation in some French speaking cantons that follow a model of separation.

10 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.

11 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) to get a sufficient number of articles for each country.

12 Due to their different role in the three political systems, 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 observations were then assigned to the two coalition parties.

13 In line with our first hypothesis, we look only at the effect of 9/11 on the overall salience of the debate and the specific issues raised. For the other aspects of the debates we had no specific expectations and did not find any particular patterns.

14 Above all 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.

15 The figures do not include the statements on ‘terrorism/fundamentalism’ as they follow a rather different logic.

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