Article

# Muslims' integration as a way to defuse the "Muslim Question": insights from the Swiss case

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## Abstract

The article argues that in European public debates the Muslim Question is performed by and linked to the issues of Muslims' integration and recognition as political (unthreatening) subjects. I suggest that, in order to defuse the performative negative effects of the Muslim Question on Muslims' democratic agency, we should address it without rendering them invisible in the public sphere and in enhancing their political agency. Drawing from an analysis of the Swiss case I show that integration because adjustment entails a depoliticization and a normalization of Muslims'political agency. In this way, integration as a process acts as an alternative and as a way to empower Muslim political subjectivity and therefore the fairest way to tackle the undemocratic impact of the Muslim Question.

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Insights from the Swiss Case *

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# Muslims' Integration as a Way to Defuse the 'Muslim Question':

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## 1. PUTTING THE 'MUSLIM QUESTION' INTO PERSPECTIVE

Muslims form a substantial share of the population in Western Europe, and in the last decade, have reached a high level of religio-cultural, social, and political visibility. Their presence fosters heated social and political reactions in European countries (Meret and Betz, 2009; Parekh, 2008). In particular, the steady media coverage of their putative acts, claims, and behaviors (from terrorist acts and the radicalization of jihadists to headscarves, *burqas*, prayers in the streets, cemetery space, halal food, etc.) has contributed to spread of the idea that Muslims are at odds with the requirements of democracy and liberalism (see Deltombe, 2007; Poole, 2002). Radical right-wing parties strongly and efficiently voice these issues as they constitute a central part of their programs and electoral successes (Van der Burg at al., 2015). Still, evidence shows also that anti-Muslim sentiments are spread across the entire political spectrum of European party systems (Klausen, 2005: 20).

Social scientists have increasingly acknowledged that "'Muslim' designates not a homogeneous and solidary *group* but a heterogeneous category" (Brubaker, 2013: 6). Muslim immigrants in Western Europe differ in ethnic backgrounds as well as in their religiosity. Many unobservant or even irreligious individuals nonetheless identify

themselves as "Muslims" because of their family backgrounds, their personal attachments, their ethnic and group allegiances, or the social and cultural environments in which they were raised (Gianni, Giugni, and Michel, 2015). These Muslims are often categorized as "cultural" or "nominal" Muslims (Ruthven, 1997). However, in public debates, Muslims are represented very differently. They are *essentialized*, viewed as being internally consistent, clearly bounded, natural, and unchangeable religious subjects. The essentialization of Muslims entails an over-culturalization of their agency and a deterministic view of its impact on secular institutions. In particular, these representations have undemocratic, performative effects for they crystallize Muslims' social and political visibility in a way that calls into question their social and political integration[1].

These negative social and political representations of Muslims are at the core of what, broadly speaking, can be called the "Muslim Question." Unsurprisingly, this expression is very controversial. It harkens to the Jewish Question and to the *Shoah*, and for this reason it must be used very carefully. In particular, it should not be used to compare historical experiences, discourses, and representations of Jewish and Muslims *alterities,* which are particular and raise different issues. There are two uses of the notion of the 'Muslim Question': the first focuses on the social, legal, and political problems raised by the accommodation of Muslims in Western societies, with an emphasis put on the issues raised by Muslim immigration and Islam for

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[1] The distinctive aspect of performative utterances is that they do not merely name, they also perform what they are naming and represent it at the same time (Hermansen, 2004: 390). The notion of performative effects refers here to the discursive constructions of normative conception of Muslimness and the subject-positions attached to them in given polities or societies. For an exemple of the use of this analytical category, see Ringrose and Renold (2010).

secular and democratic societies (Godard, 2015). The second consists of a critical tool in order to unveil discourses and practices of racialization and of Islamophobic representations that locate Muslims in subordinate status positions (Hajjat and Mohammed, 2013). The latter are produced more by reference to an *imagined* Islam (Deltombe, 2005), which contributes to a symbolic ordering of Muslim subjects, than to clearly defined factual issues. Modood (2005) uses the notion of Islamophobia to capture this trend.

In this article, I use the expression of the "Muslim Question" (MQ) to refer to representations relying on the pervasive conglomerate of social discourses, normative stances, and empirical statements that perform and construct Muslims as figures of otherness, namely those that represent them as a threat that must be securitized and assimilated to protect democratic values, procedures, or institutions. This general characterization captures one of the main aspects of the MQ: that, in a logic similar to the influential *Clash of Civilizations* thesis (Huntington, 1993), Muslims are portrayed as possessing given and fixed cultural-religious attributes, as being deeply opposed to the ethos of democracy and gender equality, and, more generally, as being a problem for democracy. These discourses construct a "generalized Muslim" possessing given and fixed cultural-religious attributes (van den Brink, 2007: 352). These representations serve to ground Islamophobic stereotypes of Muslims' social, political, and cultural lack of skills, willingness, and capability to integrate themselves in democratic countries. Following this perspective, the contemporary moral panic provoked by Muslims' otherness relies neither on the cultural complexity inherent to the encounters between so-called Western and Muslims values, nor on the issues that

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specific Muslim groups, because of their religious radicalism, terrorist acts, and existential threat towards democratic values, are causing for the stability of democratic countries, but on *longue durée* representations of otherness.

In particular, the MQ is the product of historical narratives informed by orientalist and colonial contents that perform the inadaptability of Muslims, depicted as being inherently illiberal and undemocratic, to the standards of reason and democracy. It is through the intertwining of these different stories that the MQ has become a hegemonic way to define Muslims as figures of otherness. In a sense, the main performative force of the MQ is to fix the social ontology of Muslimness. Indeed, the default position of Muslims' subjectivity is being "bad"; but they can become "good" if proven "good," namely if they are recognized as such by non-Muslims (Mamdani, 2004; Selby, 2016 in this issue). Therefore, characterized as such, the MQ is broader than Islamophobia. The latter refers mainly to an attitude of prejudice and a fear about religion, while the former is a conglomerate of discourses, attitudes, and practices that call into question the agency, subjectivity, and moral equality of Muslims as individuals, as bearers of religious values, and as citizens. In this sense, Islamophobia is a component of the MQ, but the MQ is not reducible to it. The former results from the intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) of forms of oppression and domination which produces discourses of essentialization that define Muslimness as a mode of being that is inferior, dangerous, and in need of normalization.

What are the democratic implications of this status subordination of Muslims? To better understand the interplay between political positions of "good" or "bad" Muslim

subjects, this article focuses on the implications of the MQ on Muslims' integration within democratic societies. It argues that while the MQ reinforces the lack of political and social integration for Muslims, a democratic conception of political integration can be seen as being a fair and efficient way to counteract the effects of the subordination played by the MQ, and hence to overcome it by the transformative potential inherent in democratic practices. In other words, I argue that to defuse the undemocratic effects of the MQ, one needs to not protect democracy against Muslims, but to provide Muslims the democratic resources to be empowered to transform and re-signify the narratives that oppress them (Young, 1990).

This stance may appear counterintuitive. In some European countries, it is often asserted that to elude the reproduction of figures of Muslims as abnormal or as threats to democracy, scholars and public authorities should avoid using the category of Muslim, or to deconstruct it. This intellectual and political choice is the only way to progressively defuse the performative effects attached to the category of Muslim and reduce their power as a technology of governance (Lentin and Titley, 2011: 130). In other words, focusing on more general categories of citizens or members of a political community is necessary to foster a sense of commonality transcending cultural and religious particularisms. The French policy of forbidding the use of ethnic and religious statistics similarly attempts to avoid giving an institutional existence to cultural groups through the creation of a statistical category and measures (see Simon, 2007). Its declared purpose is to avoid transforming Muslims into a category of governmentality, and hence to treat them as citizens, like others. My argument goes in part against this position. I maintain that the deconstruction of the MQ, namely the

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operation that aims to show the contingent political character of dominant and essentialist representations, is certainly necessary but should not lead to the disappearance of the category of Muslim. The use of the category is needed at least until when, for a number of reasons, social groups and individuals employ such a label or identity referents as an important aspect of their subjective or public self-definition. For these social actors, the invisibility of Muslims both as a category of analysis and as a category of practice (see Brubaker and Cooper, 2000) does not seem suitable to allow room for their recognition as social and political subjects who have the democratic right to exist and operate in a polity. In sum, if the disappearance of the category entails the social and political invisibility of Muslims, the results will not live up to democratic standards and would reinforce Muslims' subordination. Therefore, there are sound theoretical, normative, and empirical reasons to keep the MQ in our analytical toolbox, while at the same time trying to disrupt and call into question its intrinsically undemocratic contents and effects. In particular, a well understood conception of Muslims' democratic integration can theoretically and politically function as a way to conceive the (progressive) decrease of the performative relevance of the MQ without, at the same time, discarding the existence of Muslim subjectivity (whatever the latter might be).

To present this argument, this article is structured as follows: in the next section, I address the relation between the MQ and integration, showing that the latter is a contested concept that is too vague to be used without careful analytical scrutiny. Then, in order to provide a more fine-grained understanding of the way the MQ operates with regard to political integration, I present the main features of the Swiss

case, and discuss its dominant philosophy of integration toward immigrant groups, namely integration as adjustment. After a criticism of this conception, I then suggest in the final section an alternative that seems to be more suited to defuse the undemocratic effects of the MQ without denying Muslims as political subjects.

## 2. THE MUSLIM QUESTION AND INTEGRATION

The politicization and securitization of the Muslim threat performed by Western states has had significant consequences. In particular, given that Islamic values are often purported as being intrinsically illiberal and hence in support of undemocratic practices, issues related to the integration and/or accommodation of Muslim minorities in Western countries have become central features of public debates. According to several observers, this debate has strongly contributed to the multiculturalism backlash (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010; Modood, Triandafyllidou, and Zapata-Barrero, 2006), which has in turn called into question policies aimed at recognizing cultural differences. In the Netherlands and Britain, for instance, two countries where multicultural policies have been extensively implemented, public authorities and public opinions have become increasingly hostile toward the multicultural project and Muslims' visibility  (Sniderman and Hagendoorn, 2007; Razack, 2008). This is also the case in Québec, where the debate on the Charter of Values was aimed to limit, as in France, the presence of conspicuous religious symbols in the public sector (see Barras, 2016 in this issue). In all these contexts, it is argued that the multicultural model of integration has failed and that the recognition

of cultural practices is at odds with democratic liberal values — in other words, to show what David Cameron called a more "muscular liberalism" (Joppke, 2014).

Although empirical data shows that, globally, because of the high internal heterogeneity of the Muslim population, essentialist representations of Muslims are sociologically and culturally misleading, one of the most common political implications of such narratives has been the injunction of a stronger cultural and political adaptation required of immigrants before becoming citizens or receiving residency permits. The spread of citizenship tests (see Bauböck and Joppke, 2010; Carens, 2013) shows the logics of normalization (Connolly, 1995) and assimilation that permeate the modes through which integration is becoming more restrictive. What is integration?[2] It is a controversial notion. Empirically, it takes different political forms, and normatively, it is justified by different moral standards. There are different public philosophies of integration (Favell, 1998) leading to different ways to transpose it in actual public policies and to different understandings of what values and behaviors of cultural or religious minorities are acceptable in the public sphere. There is therefore a broad typology of integration policies that is implemented by Western states; some allow culturally different groups and/or individuals to keep an important part of their ethnic-religious particularities, but others implicitly or explicitly consider assimilation as the only possible way to promote integration and

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[2] Several scholars prefer to use the concept of inclusion rather than integration (see Carens, 2013, chapter 4). In this paper, I use integration not only for empirical reasons (i.e., integration is used by the state in its political actions) but also because, as I will argue, integration offers a more dynamic and processual understanding of mutual adaptation than inclusion. Moreover, I will not directly respond to the critical debate concerning integration policy, particularly the idea that integration can be seen as a technology of governance leading to a "technocratic depoliticization" of social and cultural conflicts between majorities and minorities (see Lentin and Titley, 2011). I broadly share this perspective and will refer to it when needed for the sake of my argument.

social stability (see Laborde, 2008; Koopmans et al., 2005). Although I cannot provide a fully-fledged conceptualization of it here, in this article, I rely mainly on a political conception of integration that argues for: (1) having a say about the norms and values which govern one's life; (2) relying on an institutional framework to protect basic freedoms against the will of a cultural majority that intends to restrict them; and (3) feeling publicly accepted as an equal member of a society despite cultural, religious, or social differences.

Conceptually, the difference between integration and assimilation is that the "term integration implies the idea of a process of give and take on both sides [and] the term assimilation suggests that the immigrants must do the adjusting" (Klausen, 2005: 10). More specifically, integration can be seen as a long lasting process of inclusion and acceptance of migrants in the core institutions, relations and statutes of the receiving society (Heckmann, 2005, quoted in Grillo, 2007). Such a process allows migrants to progressively become member of a new society, to learn a new culture, to acquire rights, and more importantly to develop personal relations of trust with members of the receiving society and to feel accepted as belonging, despite different ethno-cultural origins, to a common society. In this light, integration as an intersubjective dimension; it cannot be accomplished alone, but need to be supported by both immigrants and nationals. In contrast, assimilation entails that the processes affecting the relationship between newly settled social groups and the members of the national community are seen as one-way, as a unilateral adaptation of immigrants to the ways of doing things of the majority of the country and its institutional policies. In sum: "[T]he preferred result is one where the newcomers do little to disturb the society they

are settling in and become as much like their new compatriots as possible (Modood, 2007: 47-48). It is therefore the intersubjective dimension inherent to integration that differs from the mere unidirectional adjustments in which foreigners assimilate into a society.

In particular, there are good reasons to consider that, to be distinguished from assimilation, an effective and just conception of integration policy must entail some form of recognition. The idea is that it is not possible to integrate cultural minorities or subjects in a polity without recognizing them in significant ways. Although political theorists have conflicting views about how groups should be recognized and the normative reasons legitimizing such recognition,[3] the link between integration and recognition is generally asserted, and the two notions are supposed to be related. Nonetheless, this quasi-symbiotic relationship does not mean that democratic integration can be supported by any form of recognition. Some types of recognition are more suited to fostering democratic integration than others. I suggest here that the MQ is a form of social and cognitive recognition of Muslims, but that it hampers democratic integration because it is not up to the standards required by recognition (Honneth, 1995). It is necessary to provide a more precise understanding of democratic integration and how it can reframe the MQ in a fair and emancipatory way. Some answers are more suited to democratic standards than others. Ultimately,

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[3] Several specifications of recognition have been suggested in order to improve the integration of cultural, religious or social minorities in the democratic polities, including reciprocity (Gutmann and Thompson, 1996), parity of participation (Fraser 2005), precondition to deliberation (Pourtois, 2002), and struggle against disrespect (Taylor, 1994; Honneth, 1995).

these standards are what make the difference between a democratic and undemocratic conception of integration.[4]

In order to address these issues, I focus on the Swiss case. It offers an interesting example to analyze the modalities through which a multicultural society copes with the integration of culturally and religiously distant or exogenous groups. The consideration of a specific case allows for a more fine-grained analysis of the issue of the democratic integration of Muslims. The broad, cross-national MQ (as defined above) is in reality constituted by a set of narrow contextual declinations: the different ways Muslimness is represented and constructed according to historical narratives and contextual specificities. As I show below, political and symbolic categories such as citizenship, naturalization, and integration are the main fields of confrontation between competing conceptions of accommodation of the Muslim presence in the Swiss multicultural system. Moreover, what is peculiar about the Swiss case is that through direct democracy citizens can actually influence the accommodation of Islam and Muslims.

3. MUSLIMS IN SWITZERLAND: CONTEXTUAL ELEMENTS

Scholars have argued that the Swiss political system has successfully defused the centrifugal forces inherent in multinational states (Deutsch, 1976; Linder 1994). In particular, federalism, direct democracy, and consociational politics (Lijphart, 1999)

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[4] For the sake of the argument presented in this article, I reference a very general and minimal conception of democracy based on the principles of equal respect, moral equality, and political equality of all individuals (see, e.g., Carens, 2013).

are seen as the key elements explaining the settlement of potentially threatening (multi)cultural tensions (Linder, 1994). Driven by the state and strongly influenced by direct democracy (Vatter, 2011), immigration policies have traditionally been thought of as needing to be consistent with the specificities of Swiss (multi)cultural complexities. Therefore, these policies are seen as devices to control the "excess of alterity" (Grillo, 2007), namely the fact that countries are becoming increasingly diverse because of immigration flows and that such diversity results in tensions fueled (supposedly) by groups asserting their ethno-cultural and religious distinctiveness. The Swiss model of incorporation appears as strongly assimilationist: 1) it is based on an ethnic conception of citizenship (Koopmans et al., 2005); 2) it entails a naturalization procedure that is (according to international standards) very restrictive (Huddleston et al., 2011) and, in some cases, unfairly discretionary (Helbling, 2008); and 3) it is complicit with the constant politicization of the immigration issue. This politicization has characterized the Swiss political landscape from the xenophobic popular votes of the 1960s (regarding traditional immigration) to the more recent debates on the effects of bilateral agreements with the European Community (see Mahnig, 2005). Indeed, the Swiss philosophy of accommodating multiculturalism is grounded on the formal recognition of the original, territorialized, ethno-linguistic minorities, which, at the same time, follows a strict liberal-individualistic view when non-territorialized minorities are at stake. In other words, it has always been reluctant to adopt forms of vertical political recognition regarding immigrant cultural minorities.

*Muslims in Switzerland: A brief overview*

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The settlement of Muslims in Switzerland is a very recent phenomenon. The Muslim population increased almost twentyfold between 1970 and 2000 (from about 16,000 to 311,000), amounting to 4.3% of Swiss residents. According to the most recent estimations (from 2010), the Muslim population has increased to 440,000, or 5.5% of the overall population. While the presence of the first generation of immigrants was considered to be temporary (because of their guest worker status), many Muslims are now permanently settled in Switzerland. They come from three main geographic areas: Turkey, the Balkans and North Africa. Thus, a social and ethnic heterogeneity characterizes this population and not a homogeneity, as is suggested by the essentializing representations voiced in the public debate. It is also important to note that, unlike in other European countries, Swiss Muslims are mainly foreigners. However, the proportion of Muslims holding a Swiss passport is increasing. While in 2000, only 11.7% were Swiss citizens, estimates based on recent data suggests that 31% or more are now citizens (Conseil Fédéral, 2013). At an individual level, according to survey data, Muslims feel well integrated in Switzerland (Gianni, Giugni and Michel, 2015). This means that some associational leaders voice the need to partially reinterpret the content and the application of some civil laws in order to provide better ways of accommodating Muslim religious practices. In some cases, these leaders wish to obtain pragmatic or legal exemptions in order to promote opportunities to live according to their religious values and practices. They claim these exemptions at work, school, and in the army. These requests do not reflect a societal claim for the recognition of Islam as an official religious faith or one needing differential treatment.

It is interesting to note that, until a decade ago the Swiss cantonal and local public authorities mainly followed a pragmatic accommodation of individual claims to recognize some Muslim religious practices. This has been the case, for instance, in managing Muslim workers' demands to pray during working hours, allowing children to wear headscarves in public schools, burying some Muslims according to Muslim ritual in public cemeteries, and providing some exemptions for Muslims students in swimming classes. However, this pragmatic logic has progressively changed in the last decade. Now that Muslims have become a salient political issue and their claims or practices have been made visible in the public debate, a formalist and legalistic approach toward Muslim claims has become dominant. This shift has generally led to a literal application of existing legislation (Gianni, 2005), a fact that has left little room for a rule-and-exemption approach on religio-cultural grounds. Interestingly, practices that have been tolerated for years have suddenly become illegal or illegitimate. They have become political problems and are considered threats to the foundations of the state. Instead of pragmatic accommodation of individual claims, the political securitization of the MQ has now become the main issue regarding the integration of Muslims (Edmunds, 2012; Kaya, 2010).

One can explain this change in the governmentality of Muslims in two ways. The first factor is the shift from seeing Muslims as individuals to seeing them as a collective, homogeneous group, putatively having a common intentionality. For the Swiss logic of accommodation, a collective *other* claiming recognition is the equivalent of a threat that must be securitized, as it conflicts with the non-negotiable criteria that foreign

individuals are supposed to fulfill in order to be integrated into Swiss society. In this case, such integration requires assimilating into and endorsing existing rules and values. According to this view, the recognition of Muslim values and practices would entail a slippery slope leading to colonization (by cultural difference) of the public space and institutions, leading to social and political instability in an already complex (because of its territorialized multiculturalism) and fragile society.

The second factor is related to the settlement of Muslims in Switzerland. They can no longer be considered individuals who, like guest workers in the 1960s or 1970s, can be sent home or who want to live their 'real' lives in their home countries. Muslims have become a permanent component of Swiss society, which causes defensive reactions from the majority of Swiss citizens.

What is peculiar about the recent politicization of the MQ by right-wing parties (in particular the Swiss People's Party [SPP]) is that it has been done using direct democracy. Over the last decade, the political context of the MQ has fostered several votes and political campaigns asking for more restrictive measures on the integration of foreigners. The most well-known is the ban on minarets. It is important to notice that Swiss society's anxiety about foreigners is not new; there is a historical path-dependency underlying it, namely the fact that decisions a state faces today for any given circumstance are limited by the decisions it made in the past. Such a path-dependency can contribute to make sense of the contemporary Swiss attitudes toward immigrant groups, in particular Muslims. In this light, it is reasonable to think that the decision taken in November 2009 by Swiss voters to ban (new) minarets is the result

of not only contingent factors (e.g., terrorist threats and Muslim radicalism) but also a wider structural framework of representations that constructs Muslims as (the new) figures of otherness in the country (Gianni, 2013; Behloul, 2009). This popular initiative was seen as respecting the right of Muslims to practice their religion, but as providing a clear and formal message to stop to what the SPP termed the "Islamization" of Swiss public space. More than 57% of Swiss voters accepted the ban. The public debate created by and around this initiative has strongly contributed to the idea that Muslims are a problem in Switzerland and that public institutions must put a clear limit on the social and political visibility of their cultural and religious values and practices. On the one hand, this vote can be seen as the crystallization of the MQ that has grown in prominence in Switzerland, especially since a 2004 popular vote on the facilitated naturalization of second- and third-generation immigrants (Gianni and Clavien, 2013; Ettinger and Imhof, 2011). On the other hand, the vote can be seen as an engine that reinforces the MQ on the basis of an argument that the Swiss people's will legitimizes measures regarding Muslims' visibility and religious practices.

While the right-wing SPP is certainly the most vocal on the implications of the Muslim presence in Switzerland, *almost all* political actors (left, center, and right) have expressed, formally or informally, the idea that it is important to enforce strict limits on the demands for recognition claimed by Muslim leaders or inherent to Muslim practices (for instance, Muslim parents' requests for implementing non-mixed-gender swimming lessons). The idea is, on the one hand, to introduce forms of integration to assess individuals' democratic compatibility, while, on the other, to

limit some visible Muslim practices in the public sector. Empirical data shows that a large majority of Swiss citizens believe that authorities have to adopt an assimilationist approach to accommodate the Muslim population (Gianni et al., 2015).

*Integration as Adjustment*

As argued before, in contemporary Switzerland as in other European countries, the social representations voiced by populist parties strongly contribute to the negative symbolic and political characterization of the overall Muslim population's attributes. Therefore, the social and political construction of the Muslim threat enforces a hegemonic logic according to which, in order to integrate and remain in the country, Muslims must accept and adjust their behavior toward what are considered to be dominant Swiss values and practices. This is what I call integration as adjustment (Gianni, 2013).

At first glance, this characterization of integration might seem quite uncontroversial. That forms of adjustment are necessary to accommodate the relationships between majority and minority groups or individuals is hardly a controversial statement. It is generally accepted that the inclusion of immigrants entails modes of mutual adjustment to common practices and values (Carens, 2013). After all, to maintain that citizens must accept a minimal core of common values as a means to promote social stability and justice is legitimate and acceptable in liberal and democratic terms (see Rawls, 1993). This conceptualization is plausible, but the legitimacy of such a requirement depends on the specific characteristics of the mutual adjustment,

particularly with regard to the common definition of the values to which it must be adjusted, the reciprocity of the adjustment, and their political consequences. In the Swiss case, integration is seen as an adjustment that goes far beyond what justice requires in these matters. This is for at least four reasons.

First, integration as adjustment is based on the idea (which is very close to assimilation) that Muslim immigrants should demonstrate a willingness to adjust to Swiss values. However, this willingness is unilateral, which means that the receiving society does not fairly share the burden of integration. While immigrants' duties are clearly established in Swiss law, the host society's duties toward the immigrant are much more vaguely expressed.[5] In this light, integration as adjustment calls into question the give-and-take dynamic that is generally supposed to characterize integration. It is worth stressing that with the emphasis put on the individual's willingness to integrate, Muslims' claims for recognition are perceived as demonstrating a lack of willingness to adjust to the existing norms and rules, hence confirming the (supposed) ontological and radical incompatibility between Muslims and Swiss society. Therefore, it is plausible to think that any Muslim actor's contestation of Swiss conventional legal or political norms will directly or indirectly reinforce the MQ (i.e., the idea of Muslims' radical unwillingness to meet democratic values and practices).

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[5] According to the Law on Integration, "integration requires willingness on the part of the foreign nationals and openness on the part of the Swiss population" (Swiss Federal Assembly, 2005, art. 4, al. 3, official translation).

Second, a conception of integration based on the unilateral requirement to adjust to existing norms and laws entails important forms of misrecognition that ultimately call into question the moral and democratic character of such a policy of integration. Theories of recognition (see Thompson, 2006) provide several reasons to support this view. For instance, the ban on minarets can be seen as the manifestation of the belief that the cultural particularities of Muslims are not worthy of being socially visible: "if a social difference is denied public visibility and legitimacy in the polity, the group associated with it inevitably bears social stigmata" (Galeotti, 1993: 597). This denial can impact on that group's societal esteem, respect, and autonomy. For Honneth (1995), such a rejection of social esteem is a case of misrecognition.[6] This can lead to Muslims suffering a condition of status subordination (Fraser, 2005). According to such theoretical standards, therefore, there is little doubt that the pressure put on Muslims to unilaterally adjust their behaviors and beliefs to integrate into the Swiss polity and society is at odds with the theory of democratic recognition. Obviously, to call into question the idea of adjustment to common norms and principles is not to deny Muslim groups' requests for exemptions or limits on the demands for recognition in the name of (supposed) Islamic practices; neither does this deny that certain minimal democratic principles must be preserved in all democratic multicultural societies. However, unilateral adjustment denaturalizes the meaning of integration itself. If integration means a total adaptation to the majority's norms and

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[6] According to Taylor, "equal recognition is not just the appropriate mode for a healthy democratic society. Its refusal can inflict damage on those who are denied it . . . . The projection of an inferior or demeaning image on another can actually distort and oppress, to the extent that the image is internalized" (1994: 36).

values, then this is not political integration (i.e., empowerment and political agency) but political disempowerment and cultural assimilation.

Third, integration as adjustment entails the restriction of activity as a political subject or citizen and the subsequent normalization of citizenship as a category of practice. The moral perfectionism inherent in the requirement to adjust to preexisting norms *de facto* normalizes one's activity as a citizen. Besides the fact that it creates an opposition between "good" and "bad" citizens (respectively, those who adapt and those who resist), the requirement to adapt to norms represented as nonnegotiable implies a drastic reduction (if not annihilation) of the give-and-take dynamic that is supposed to be present in most conceptions of social and political integration. This formulation goes against the idea that integration should be conceived of as an opportunity to be part of the process of intersubjective determination and revision of the best modalities to implement democratic principles. To avoid misrecognition, citizenship rights and resources should be enriched by democratic procedural opportunities, allowing Muslims to be integrated into the arenas where the collective determination of common values takes place. Like all other citizens, loyal and integrated Muslims should not be expected to uncritically adjust to Swiss democratic values and practices. Requiring an uncritical adjustment would mean that Muslims are not considered capable or autonomous enough to participate in decisions or deliberations concerning their identities and interests, which calls into question both their moral equality and autonomy. Moreover, integration as adjustment implies a

tendency to *depoliticize* citizenship as a category of practice.[7] This means that it provides a quasi-extrapolitical status to the values, laws, and practices to which immigrants should adjust. In other words, these become almost nonnegotiable, which significantly reduces Muslims' political agency as citizens. Instead of being a practice in which common values can be intersubjectively reassessed, citizenship turns into a practice in which the values that characterize and constitute the polity itself are only reaffirmed. Therefore, citizenship as the locus of the political definition of common values is so constrained by the symbolic imposition of *prepolitical* assumptions that political deliberation becomes an actualization of these assumptions. The requirement of unilateral adjustment appears to be a technocratic depoliticization (Lentin and Titley 2011: 133), which is inconsistent with a basic democratic moral principle: the idea that citizens are allowed to freely determine (in liberal terms, to revise) the terms of their social and political contracts—and thus, those contracts' underlying values.

Last but not least, integration as adjustment is based on a categorical mistake. Although it is presented as requiring the endorsement of fundamental or (putatively) universal values, it actually consists of an adjustment to local, particular, and historical norms. It is precisely this misinterpretation that spoils integration as adaptation at its core. In the public debate, it is often asserted that Muslims should adapt to fundamental liberal-democratic norms and principles. Taken as such, this requirement is intuitively fair and legitimate. It is quite uncontroversial to say that the democratic character of a polity is enhanced when principles such as liberty, equality,

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[7] According to Wendy Brown, "depoliticization involves construing inequality, subordination, marginalization, and social conflict, which all require political analysis and political solutions, as personal and individual, on the one hand, or as natural, religious, or cultural on the other" (2006: 15).

and autonomy are protected and that they are fundamental components of its symbolic and moral grounds. Nevertheless, it is also evident that the collective acceptance of such general principles does not logically entail that there is just one *way* of implementing them in actual laws and public decisions. Politics is precisely the human activity that allows social actors to allocate specific material, symbolic, and legal resources to translate general and ideal principles into actual collective decisions. However, some aspects of this ideal are inevitably lost in translation. There is a substantial difference between the contestation of (supposedly) fundamental democratic principles and the criticism of *one* of its possible interpretations or embodiments in public policies or legal-political decisions. Such a criticism does not necessarily entail an opposition to the general principle itself. This is the case, for instance, when Muslims refer to the constitutional principle of religious freedom in order to contest the ban on minarets or when they argue that the protection of the equality between men and women does not necessarily require a ban on the Islamic headscarf—or a moral obligation to allow it without any restrictions. Therefore, the fact of contesting a particular implementation of the principle does not necessarily entail being at odds with the principle itself. To the best of my knowledge, none of the controversial issues leading to the opposition of Muslims and Swiss public authorities directly calls into question the intrinsic validity of Swiss democratic values; mostly, what is questioned are these values' contextual interpretation and the modalities of their actualization in legal and political acts or decisions (see Kymlicka 2000: 148).

In sum, these four aspects call into question the democratic potential of integration as adjustment. The injunction to adjust contributes to the survival of essentialist

representations of Muslims in the MQ. Integration as adaptation blocks Muslims'
opportunities to be part of the process of renegotiating and reinterpreting common
norms, which leads to forms of democratic misrecognition and the consequent
reinforcement of the MQ. Thus, a more just and efficient alternative conception of
integration is needed, both to avoid the democratic deficit inherent in the injunction of
adjustment and to provide symbolic and political resources to thwart the spread of the
MQ in order to transform its performative negative effects.


## 4. TAKING INTEGRATION SERIOUSLY: TOWARDS A PROCESSUAL EMPOWERMENT OF MUSLIMS

What I call integration as process may be such an alternative (Gianni, 2013). This
concept is based on the assumption that democratic integration should not be
conceptualized as an end state but as a continuous and conflicting intersubjective and
inclusive process. More specifically, following Tully (2000: 477), "struggles over
recognition, like struggles over distribution, are not amenable to definitive solutions
beyond further democratic disagreement, dispute, negotiation, amendment,
implementation, review." It is precisely on this ontological assumption that
integration as process is grounded. Its main normative intuition relies on the idea that
democratic justice requires that all subjects affected by political acts or decisions
should be included in an intersubjective process of redefinition, reinterpretation, and
resignification of common norms. Indeed, this deliberative process can create
conflicts and disagreements; it is not social harmony that it is sought, as in some

liberal thinking, but democratic agency and empowerment. Therefore, processual integration consists of a political and procedural framework in which the effects of misrecognition and the acts producing it can be voiced, discussed, assessed, revised, and—hopefully—transformed.[8]

Conceived in this way, integration is less about protecting the (supposedly) authentic values of the majority than providing political resources and opportunities to minority groups so that they have a say in the content of society's common values. Put differently, this conception transforms integration into a political modality. To use a Rawlsian expression, integration, in order to be democratically just, should be political, not metaphysical. Integration is a democratic imperative needed to provide moral and political legitimacy to the overall democratic polity. In other words, the general standard for assessing the need to foster integration should not be the intrinsic quality of the culture to be recognized but the recognition that individuals and groups do not have equal political power in the public realm due to cultural differences. Such a situation is in conflict with intuitive ideas about democracy, so liberal states should conceive of mechanisms to reestablish a minimal political equality among actors. In order to make this possible, some social and political resources must be granted to subjects, in particular to the members of disadvantaged and marginalized groups, in order to empower them (Young, 1990). Such resources, which can be material, symbolic, and political, are key preconditions to making democracy work.

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[8] On the idea of transformative modalities to realize social justice, see Fraser (2005).

In Switzerland, Muslims have very few opportunities and resources to enter into the political process. For instance, almost nothing has been done with regard to providing political opportunities for leaders of Muslim communities to be included in common decisions on norms regulating religious practices.[9] In addition, very few Muslim associations have obtained public recognition from the state as associations of general interest (Monnot, 2013). Clearly, such an absence of political measures is consistent with the conception of integration as adjustment, which is grounded on the idea that the existing norms and principles are intrinsically good and non-negotiable. Therefore, the current process precludes the imagination of procedural-democratic modalities to promote integration through a process of collective reinterpretation or revision of common norms. This is particularly surprising because the original Swiss multicultural model was managed precisely and had many pragmatic, democratic procedures that led to respect and political recognition for the cultural differentiation of the Swiss nation. In other words, Switzerland has the cognitive and political resources to promote a more inclusive and processual integration and inclusion of its Muslim population. However, because of its historical tradition and the contemporary relevance of the MQ, the opposite integration regime is now being used. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that such governmentality is not a fixed and unchangeable feature of Swiss politics. Indeed, examples of fruitful collaboration between public authorities and Muslim associations to settle a conflict over a religious question exist. For instance, the Canton of Neuchâtel has found, through a deliberative and inclusive procedure, a solution to a controversy about religious cemeteries. This solution

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[9] This does not mean that Muslim associations are excluded from all domains of Swiss society. As civil society actors, they participate in several national and local interreligious dialogue initiatives. I thank one of the anonymous reviewers for having raised this point.

informs a new understanding of the meaning and implementation of the principle of

*laïcité* (the secular organization of the state) in this specific context. This example

shows that an inclusive political process can lead to a productive intersubjective

definition of new common norms (Gianni et al., 2015). In other words, changing the

focus from unilateral to processual forms of integration allows an increase in

everyday conviviality between Muslims and non-Muslims. In introducing some

distance from fixed and essentialized notions of identity, conviviality might constitute

new spaces that allow for the renegotiation of common norms and the reorganization

of discursive power (see Gilroy, 2004). In this light, integration as a process can be

considered as a way "to move beyond a perspective that merely and one-sidedly

registers deficiencies in the 'normalization' of Muslim life in Europe and instead offer

a more nuanced and realistic account" (Burchardt and Michalowski, 2015: 4-5).


## 5. CONCLUSION


If the argument presented in this paper holds, the solution to the MQ in Switzerland

and in other Western democratic societies depends less on the MQ itself (and its

specific transnational or national contents) than on the conception of integration or

accommodation of cultural difference as it is politically, socially, and legally used

toward Muslims. To put it differently, the most legitimate and efficient way to cope

with the performative effects of the MQ—particularly the fixing of the social

ontology of Muslimness—does not challenge metaphysical and ultimately

undecidable narratives about the (supposed) cultural or religious specificities of

Muslim or non-Muslim worldviews. Rather, this solution considers such narratives as political issues that must be framed and processed through democratic practices in order to avoid oppression and a lack of political agency. Integration as adjustment does not allow such a process to take place because it ultimately reproduces forms of normalization, binary categories, hierarchies, and a lack of moral and political agency among Muslim subjects. On the contrary, integration as process is part of a political project of emancipation and empowerment that, although difficult, might increase democratic legitimacy. Indeed, as scholars, we should continue to keep the analytical category *Muslims* in the debate. In my view, to refrain from using it in order to avoid categorical essentialization or contributions that fuel populist arguments (although understandable) ultimately will not defuse the performative effects of the MQ. In fact, refraining from the processual definition will indirectly legitimate the unilateral adjustment of Muslims to majority hegemonic values.

At a historical moment marked by a widespread feeling that both Muslims and Western countries are existentially threatened by terrorists and acts of war, the view I present here may seem excessively utopian. Yet, this characterization is misleading. On the one hand, empirically, the historical Swiss accomplishments in the accommodation of multiculturalism show that the cultural and political resources to accommodate religious minorities in a fair democratic way exist in Swiss political culture. Obviously, such accommodations have not always been easy to settle, as it is demonstrated by phenomena of discrimination against religious minorities (e.g., prejudice against Catholics in some Protestant cantons or anti-Semitic laws and constitutional articles) which have occured in the country. On the other, analytically,

the question is how to understand integration as adjustment as a form of governmentality that has been politically created and that can be politically challenged. The way to accomplish this goal is to focus on the political condition of Muslims instead of on their supposed religiosity or conception of the good. Taken as a political goal, the integration of Muslims and of other minorities is not an issue of charity, politeness, or altruism; it is a question of democratic justice—of rights—and it must be dealt with through political devices.

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