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Islamophobia: Religious Affiliation, Religious Markets, and Attitudes towards Islam in Three European Countries

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## Abstract

The paper compares the effect of religion on public attitudes toward Muslims in three different countries; Germany (religiously pluralistic), Sweden (predominately Protestant) and Spain (predominately Catholic): Are religious affiliation and commitment more common in religiously diverse (competitive) countries? Does religious affiliation or commitment increase or decrease negative affect (feelings) toward Muslims in different religious markets. Catholic and Protestant respondents in Germany, and Protestants in Sweden, are more likely to accept Muslims as neighbors than are the religiously nonaffiliated. Self-reported Catholicism is not significantly related to attitudes toward Muslims among Spanish respondents.

The rise in the immigration population in Europe has caused a great concern for Europe, and has affected public opinion and public policy with respect to economic and cultural issues, as well as issues involved in EU integration. The increase in the Muslim population in Europe has manifested fear of a possible Muslim “takeover” and has caused an increase in anti-Muslim attitudes. The increase in the Muslim population of various European countries has also caused a number of European countries to implement anti-Muslim legislation.

“There is growing evidence of hostility between the indigenous European populations, and the minority Muslim community (Gallagher, Laver and Mair 2006, p.15).” The term of Islamophobia has been used in the English language since 1923; it is defined as, intense dislike or fear of Islam, esp. as a political force; hostility or prejudice towards Muslims (Oxford, 2015); Martias Gardell (2010) defines Islamophobia, as socially reproduced prejudices and aversion to Islam and Muslims, as well as actions and practices that attack, exclude or discriminate against persons on the basis that they are perceived to be Muslim and be associated with Islam.

Most of the studies on Islamophobia can be classified in four categories. The first category concerns the perceived Islamic threat to Europe, or “Eurabia (Ye’Or, 2005).” The second category consists of the historic analyses of the relationship between Islam and Europe. The third involves the manner in which Islamic beliefs and political movement clashes with Western secular institutions and Western democratic systems. Finally, a fourth category contains explanations of the social scientific aspects of Islam in Europe theoretically and with case studies. (Yilmaz and Aykac 2012).

There have been several notable perception studies on Islamophobia; Yilmaz (2005) conducted a qualitative survey in which European respondents from five major EU countries (Britain, France, Italy, Germany and Spain) who resided in Istanbul for three months or longer, were surveyed.

Yilmaz addressed the question, “What exactly do the European publics mean when they talk about ‘Islam’ in particular or ‘religion’ in general?” The study revealed that European respondents were opposed to Islam if it is mobilized as a social, political and cultural force to deny the rights of women and to drive people away from a modern life (Yilmaz and Aykac 2012).

The Transatlantic Trends, 2006 study found that 91 percent of the people in nine EU countries (UK, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia and Spain) believed that radical Islam poses an important threat to Europe (Yilmaz and Aykac 2012). A 2006 Pew Research Centre survey polled the largest EU countries, and found that the overwhelming majority of the public felt the Muslims were not respectful of women (Yilmaz and Aykac 2012).

One of the major studies examines perceptions and analyzes the conditions under which Europeans respondents from three nations have accommodated the needs of Muslims through measured public support for state accommodation of Islamic religious practices. This study was conducted by Roper Survey (Europe 2001, 2002), and these data are used in Fetzer and Soper (2005). The study shows an analysis of mass-level public attitudes toward state accommodation of Muslim religious practices. The respondents are drawn from a three-nation survey conducted in Britain, France and Germany. The item questions surround policy specific to each country; questions such as whether their government should increase, maintain, or restrict funding for Islamic schools, or allow wearing of hijab. In the results of the survey the variables that best explains public attitudes toward state accommodation of Muslim religious practices, are education and religious practice. Respondents who have has exposure to liberal arts education (in the Germany Gymnasium and French Lycee school systems) and to world culture favor pro-accommodation policies. The analysis calls into question the argument that religionists regard secularism as a danger; and that secularists support-public attitudes toward state accommodation

of Muslim religious practices. The study suggests that in a predominantly post-Christian Western Europe, secularists will not feel threatened by a few adherents of orthodox religions. Although Christians and Muslims may have some similar religious beliefs, the study finds that perhaps Muslims will be more adaptable or it would be easier to have their religion accepted if they join political force with a large number of pro-multicultural secularists than with small groups of orthodox Christians

The study included surveys taken before and after of the events of September 11, 2001; in which each country was asked if their attitudes had changed on public attitudes toward supporting state accommodation of Islam in state-run schools. France showed some decline in support, but the decline for among French respondents in attitudes for pre and post 9/11 surveys is not statistically significant. British and German respondents seemed similarly open-minded. Germans continued to be supportive of Islamic instructions in state schools, and the British continued to support state funding of Islamic schools (Roper Survey, Europe 2001, 2002; Fetzer and Soper (2005).

The data do not support Fetzer and Soper's prediction on the effect of church-state institutions. The study uses formal church-state relations as an independent variable which is used to measure the level of support that inherited church-state institutions and their public policy provide to the practice of religious newcomers in each state (Britain, France and Germany) (Fetzer & Soper 2005,147). That is, each country's institutions provide for a different relationship between religious bodies and the state, and that a given state's policies toward Islam largely reflects that overall pattern. Fetzer's and Soper's take on Church-State structure/history contends that Muslim demands and state adoption of proposals in area of Muslim religious rights differs; and "these differences resulted in large measure from dissimilar opportunities provided by the inherited church-state structures in each countries (16)." They focus their analysis on the policy legacy left

by a country's history of church-state relations (15). The elite views of public attitudes toward state accommodation of Muslim religious practices does not determine the individuals' views or attitudes among members of the mass public. The elites are simply more constrained to follow the rules about church-state arrangement than everyday people. (Fetzer and Soper 2005 pp. 142,147).

The present study seeks to examine the extent to which Islamophobia in selected European countries is enhanced or inhibited by the attitudes of European Christians in different religious contexts, which are called "markets" in the literature (Iannaccone,1991; Stark and Finke, 2000). In the context of the present study, the "markets" approach asks specifically whether religious affiliations and behaviors have greater effects on anti-Muslim sentiment in religiously pluralistic environments.

The motivation for the present study is to analyze the religious sources of anti-Muslim attitudes in Europe (based on how these attitudes are affected in different religious markets.) The increased number of immigrants in Europe has been the main source and character of Islamophobia and, more generally, anti-immigrant movements and attitudes. The population of Muslims in Europe has increased from 10 million in 1990 to approximately 17 million in 2010. The absolute number of Muslims, and the percentage of Muslims in a particular country's population, varies from nation to nation in Europe. However, in the three countries examined in this study, the percentage of Muslims in the population are quite similar. A 2011 PEW research reports that in Sweden (which is religiously homogeneous), there are approximately 433,000 Muslims, who constitute 4.9 percent of the total population. In Spain (which is predominately Catholic) there are 1,021 million Muslims, and Muslims are 2.3 percent of that country's population. Germany (which is religiously pluralistic) has 4,119 million Muslims, who represent about 5.0 percent of Germany's population (Pew, 2011).

The increase of Muslim population has been manifested in public concerns in a number of different areas. There has been a rise in the concerns about differential fertility. The Muslim population is generally more fertile than Europeans in the population as a whole. It is common for Muslims families to have 2.2 children per household, than the 1.5 average number of children for “native” Europeans. (Pew, 2011). Therefore government welfare provisions for school, housing, and healthcare budgets have been expanded for the growing population. This economic stress has cultivated fears of Eurabia. The fears of Eurabia is basically a concept articulated by Bat Ye’Ro (2005) who asserts that France and certain Arabs have a conspiracy to use Arabs to transform Europe culturally and politically, and that this transformation would challenge the United States’ relationship with Israel. The term has also been used by European right-wing parties in expressing legislation to slow down the influx of immigration of Muslims into Europe, which would decrease government budget allocations for the distribution of goods and services to new immigrants. Bat Ye’Ro (2005).

Another public concern is whether Muslims are attempting to subvert, and perhaps, to ultimately overthrow, Western regimes. For example, in a 2010 PEW research titled, “Muslim Network and Movement in Western Europe,” the study examines the effects of European Muslims having religious networks and movements outside of Europe. These groups are accused of moving European Muslims away from integration, and these groups are often labeled as radical. The study looks at how such movements and networks seek to influence the views and daily lives of Muslims in Western Europe (Pew, 2010).

Events such as attacks of September 11, 2001, the Madrid bombing of March 11, 2004, and militant responses to the Charlie Hebdo cartoons have fostered mistrust between the European States and their Muslim populations. These events, social and cultural conflicts, and movements



have exacerbated the tensions between Europeans and its Muslim community. The events have also affected agreements and aspects of integration of the European Union. After the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> attitudes about Muslim begin to intensify existing prejudices and increase fear about Muslims and Islamic culture , and fueled acts of aggression and harassment against Muslims in many European Member States (EUMC., 2002 p. 5). In response to these setbacks, the European Union's Council Regulation (EC, 2015) established the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) which is commissioned to generate publications and surveys on Islamophobia. The first report was published in 2002. The EUMC gathered comparative analysis of 15 countries report in EU Member States. The report found acts of aggression and changes in attitudes towards Muslims and other minority groups across the European Union after the events of September 11. The agency also found negative stereotyping of Muslims by the media, limited education and social opportunities and social advancement for young people, and also reported that Muslims are disproportionately represented in areas with poor housing conditions. (EUMC 2002; Aykac 2012 pp.89-105.) The EUMC made recommendations to EU Member States, politicians, media and citizens to reduce the tensions fears and prejudice. It was also suggested that the EU engage in promoting understanding among different faiths, cultures and ethnic groups, and attempt to rid the population of the EU of fears and prejudice (EUMC, 2002, 5). In 2007 the European Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) became the successor to EUMC. FRA makes regulations concerning broader issues of discrimination in the EU (e.g., anti-Semitism, Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Transgender rights).

The historical context in which Muslim politics occurs varies across different European states. British and French immigrants came from these countries' former colonies, and there existed legal agreements and expectations respecting the legal and social statuses of the immigrants. Germany

had decolonized earlier in the century, and had a labor shortage of workers after the war in the late 1940s. The German government recruited a large percent of “guest worker” recruitment treaties with it Spain, Greece, Portugal, Morocco, and Yugoslavia, and Turkey. Thus, the legal relationship between host countries and Muslim immigrants varies from country to country.

This study is based on the general hypothesis that differences in the nature of religious markets effect the outcome of regimes politically. This study compares the effects of religious affiliation and religious observance in three countries: Germany, Spain, and Sweden. Germany has a competitive religious market, and its religious population is divided among Protestants and Catholics; Spain is predominately Catholic; and Sweden’s religiously affiliated population is mostly Protestant (The World Value Study (WVS) data does not permit more precise distinctions among Protestants).<sup>1</sup>

There is a large literature (Finke and Stark 2000, Iannaconne 1991; see Jelen, 2002 for a general overview of this literature) which assert that religious pluralism/competition leads to greater overall religiosity. This literature in the sociology of religion (using economic models) suggests that religious competition and pluralism lead to greater religiosity (Finke and Stark 2000, Iannaconne 1991). The studies that comprise this literature are based on the hypothesis that, where there are multiple religions, denominations must compete, and make themselves more attractive to lay members and to potential members of the lay congregations. There is a great deal of evidence that suggests that pluralism increases religiosity. For example, the data presented here show that once other variables are controlled, Germans are likely to be more religious than Swedes

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<sup>1</sup> Many German Protestants describe themselves as evangelical, but the label does not have the same theological connotation as it does in the United States. In Germany, the evangelical label is commonly used to indicate generic Protestantism (Nelsen and Guth, 2015).

and Spaniards, since Sweden and Spain have effective religious monopolies (Lutheran and Catholic, respectively).

Some studies suggest that Catholic social teaching is more clearly transmitted in settings in which Catholics are minority. Dependent variables are typically abortion, gender role attitudes (Jelen and Wilcox, 1993; Cook, et. al. 1993; Jelen, O'Donnell, and Wilcox, 1993). The present study extends this research program by examining Islamophobia as dependent variable, and to apply the market model to a nation with a Protestant majority.

There are likely effects of religion on anti-Muslim attitudes. Religious Particularism (see Glock and Stark, 1968) deals with the issue of the dimensionality of religious commitment, which can possibly affect the willingness to accept the Muslim religion. The concept of religious particularism is when a certain religious group believe that their religious tradition or identity is the one true religion over other religious denominations. Religious particularists are likely to believe that becoming saved or having access to redemption can only be obtained when people are a member of their particular well-defined subgroup within a religion. Particularism can also cause fragmentation in religious coalitions, which can cause religious groups with similar beliefs on policy to lose sight of issue goals that could be won if they were in alliance.

Scholars have examined how religious people may dislike people from outside their own tradition. (Jelen, 1993). However, others have suggested that Protestantism (Woodberry, 2012) and post Vatican II Catholicism (Huntington, 1991) may increase tolerance. In particular, Huntington has suggested that the ecumenism associated with the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s has resulted in an increase in democratic values (such as tolerance) in predominately Catholic countries. Political Scientists have maintained in various studies that effects of religious

variables are likely to be strongest among frequent church attenders (Green, 2010; Cook, et. al.,1993) Religious socialization may occur as the result of exposure to religious messages, or as a consequence of interaction with co-religionists (Djupe and Gilbert, 2008.)

### **Muslim Politics in Three Countries**

As the immigrant population began to rise in Europe, attitudes of citizens of different European countries changed; changes in policy and laws concerning entry and citizenship status of immigrant followed in response, especially toward Muslim immigrants. In recent years, there has been right-wing anti-immigrant political parties that have exploited voters' xenophobic attitudes for electoral gains (Fetzer and Soper, 2005, p.104). A study by Benoit and Laver (2006) measures the manner in which academic experts rated the political orientation in their countries, and how they assess a score of 1 to 21 on whether parties supported the full integration of immigrants and asylum seeker in their countries. Political parties of 47 countries were given this type of score ratings by the experts. The largest vote-getting parties that had the highest xenophobia rating are the German National Democratic Party (NPD) and the Belgium VB, Flemish Block party at 19.8. The largest vote getting parties having the lowest xenophobia score was Spain's Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) and Sweden's Social Democratic Workers' Party (SAP), which both yielded a score of 7.4 (Taras, 2012) pp.97-98.) large increase in anti-immigration right-wing political parties in several European countries. Most conspicuously, the emergence of the UKIP (United Kingdom Independence Party) and the persistence and growing strength of the Le Pen movement in France show the pervasiveness of this phenomenon (Taras, 2012

The tendency for anti-immigrant parties to emerge includes the nations covered in the present study. Even though the German Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) not normally considered

a strongly anti-immigrant party, the party restricted the 1999 naturalization law that had ease the time length of citizenship process. The CSU, the Bavarian wing of the Christian Democrats embraced the status quo of Christianity in their platform.

Germany received the lion's share of "guest workers" from Turkey. Because these immigrants were treated as 'guest workers' and the Muslim religion was treated as 'guest religion;' the German government had no policies to address the education, cultural or religious needs of the Muslim population. The German state assumed that the Turkish government would provide those needs for the Muslim workers. Turkish organizations such as the Turkish-Islamic Association for Religious Affairs (DITIB), which is the Kemal Ataturk's Diyanet, and the Verband Islamischer Kulturzentren, VIZK, and organizations which are part of the Suleyman Movement tried to coordinate politics for Muslims in Germany (Fetzer & Soper, 2005 p.103), but failed (Fetzer & Soper p.105). By the 1980s Germany realized that the Turkish government could not control Islamic organizations and groups in Germany. Turkish nationals had independent thinking about how to live their lives, and the wide spread diaspora made it difficult for the Turkish state to control all Turkish migrants. (p. 104). This new trend of Muslims finding self-identity in Germany and independence caused two-third of respondents in 1989 to have repatriation sentiment for German Muslims, and by the early 1990s three-quarter of German respondents wanted Muslims to exit the country (pp.103-105). Other factors added to the existing anti-Muslim attitudes because of the fear of Muslims not adhering to German values, the loss of labor in the job market and strain on the public (education, health, etc.,) accommodation budgets. In 1990s German legislators made it more difficult for foreigners to attain asylum (Fetzer and Soper, 2005, p.104).

In Spain the leader of the right-wing People's Party, Mariano Rajoy, passed a 2000 organic law on the rights and freedoms of foreigners in Spain. This law provided that immigrants or foreigners

must be classified or identified in a community system that requires administrative approval or authorization to be able to work and reside in Spain. Employer who will hire foreigners must obtain authorization from the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (Spain Organic Law 2000). In 2012 Spain's People's Party passed a law to refuse immigrants medical care who do not have an up-to-date or any resident permit. The exception is that any immigrant over 18 years of age will be able to receive medical care only in emergency situations, or in case of childbirth or is pregnant (Giles 2010; Benitez 2012).

The Sweden Democrats (the *Sverigedemokraterna*) is a right-wing party of the Swedish Riksdag legislative body. They are also known as the anti-immigration party. This party rejects the policy of multiculturalism, and in 2005 they supported the Danish daily newspaper, the *Jyllands-Posten's* Muhammad cartoons, stating that the publication should be able to exercise its freedom of expression to continue printing the cartoons (Rydgren 2012; Euro-Islam, 2015). In 2007 the Sweden Democrats were able to make alliances with left-centre parties such as the Moderate Party to re-establishment support to facilitate the repatriation of those who have had their asylum applications rejected. Then in 2008 the Moderate Party's Ministry of Migration and Asylum Tobias Billstrom (who is now the first deputy speaker of Riksdag) was able to get the 2008 labor policy reform passed. The Sweden 2008 labor migration management policy model allows for employers to discontinue abuse of labor rules with more inspections, and has oversight of pay and conditions for immigrants. The reform allows workers with diverse skills and education into the country, and it has rules for entry based on whether immigrants can show that they will obtain a job with which they can support themselves (OECD, 2011).

In 2010 the Sweden Democrats recommended voluntary repatriation of immigrants. They gained 20 seats while promoting the implementation of this policy. The Sweden Democrats made

alliances with the left-centre coalition which aided the party to win several parts of legislation (Rydgren 2012). Recently on May 8, 2015 the Moderate Party proposed a “Renewed Integration and Migration Policy.” The group urged the EU, the Swedish governments and municipalities to use transparency and take responsibility regarding migration policy. Anna Batra the Chair of the party urged accountability to created jobs and to match skills immediately for immigrants’ asylum process, to educate and train them in Swedish, to expand the EU budget for smoother access to integration, and to sanction EU Member countries that do not follow immigration rules (Moderate Party, 2015).

Further, the issue of religion and the manner in which religion is connected to immigration is a re-evolving issue in European politics (Gallagher, Laver and Mair 2006, p.15). The contention surrounding Muslim immigration has ignited general trends of increase anti-Muslim legislation.

Not only have the three countries in this study have experienced an increase in the creation and support of anti-immigration political parties, they have implemented laws and policies concerning restrictions on hijabs (headscarves) and restrictions on Mosque construction. Germany’s Federal Constitutional Court (Bundesverfassungsgericht) has been influential in overturning implemented restrictions on hijabs (by the Land’s culture minister and the Federal Administrative Court) by female teachers. German has supported young Muslim girls to wear hijab to school, but the law forbade teachers from wearing hijab in the classroom. Germans felt that when teachers wear the hijab while teaching, the German state endorses the Islamic religion. Since the Court opined on the teaching and wearing hijab law, individual Lands in Germany are allowed to implement their own regulations on how and when teachers may wear hijabs (Fetzer and Soper, 2005, p.115-116).

Germany has experienced an attitude change about the construction of mosques, especially in response to the increase of population by Muslim immigrants. After long term settlement of

Muslim immigrants in Germany the number of mosque constructed went from 700 (including prayer rooms) in 1981 to approximately 2400 in 2002 (Fetzer and Soper, 2005, p.117). Germany's local governments' rules on the permission for construction of mosques are varied. (Britain's regulations on building mosques are broad and not explicit, and the politics of erecting mosques in France is sensitive and litigious.) Political mobilization of large Muslim organizations has helped to get mosques built in Germany. For example, in 1984 the efforts to obtain the permission for the construction of the Yavuz Sultan Selim mosque in Mannheim was halted by residents who campaigned that they feared that the building of the mosques would attract more Muslim immigrants in an area that was already settled predominately by Muslims of Turkish descent. The plan turned positive when Muslims groups formed alliances with local Catholic Churches, Evangelische churches, and the Mannheim Office of Foreign Affairs. On the other hand, in 1999 a plan to build a mosque in Stuttgart failed to get support of local religious leaders and politicians. The Christian Democrats and the Republikaners opposed the plan (The Green and Free Democrats supported the plan, and the Social Democrats supported some parts of the proposal conditionally). Substantively, the ability of Muslims to get civic support is viewed as being religiously moderate, politically civil and sophisticated (Fetzer and Soper, 2005, 118-119).

In 2010 a Madrid state-run secondary school decision banned a 16-year old female pupil from wearing of hijabs to the classroom. There has been previous cases concerning banning the wearing of hijabs to the classroom. There was no national ban implemented (as in France) and there were no explicit guidelines about the wearing a hijab. Each hijab issue was decided separately by individual school boards involved. Some cases were overturned, and some cases were won by schools based on their right to state a dress code that permits the institutions to provide a non-disruptive environment in which to educate students (Lyne, 2010). There are still occasional bans



that crop up, especially concerning women wearing headscarves in public. The (Spain) Socialist Party (PSOE) has been against the scarves in an act of activism for women. Their views on Muslim women wearing headscarves is in accord with French feminists groups; the party asserts that the headscarves delimits women's rights and that the idea of headscarves is about women playing a submissive role in a patriarchal religion (Korteweg and Yurdakul 2014). Spain's ruling Peoples' Party (PP) made immigration and headscarves part of their 2008 political platform, and they espoused an English only rule for immigrant seeking country documentation or asylum. (The Economist, 2010).

The continent of Spain's and its relationship with Muslims has existed for over 1200 years. In 2003 when the Spanish Muslims organizations requested that the Roman Catholic Church to allow them to worship in the Great Mosque of Cordoba, the request heightened much contention between the Spanish public and Muslims, and it especially caused a decline in granting permit to construct new mosques. (Citizens had complained about the disturbance of existing Mosque church bells for call to pray sessions.) Their request was denied by the Spanish Catholic Bishop and the Vatican. The Muslims based the premise of their request was the belief that the Spanish Catholic Church, the Great Mosque of Cordoba is rightfully theirs, because of the groups' past ownership of the structure. The Catholic Cathedral was taken over by the Muslims in the 1700s and the Catholics and Muslims shared use of the Cathedral, and later it housed only Muslim adherents under the rule of a Caliph. (Lewis, 1993). During and after the epoch of the Reconquista in Spain the Muslim population and Christians have tried to live peaceful with tolerance of each other under the new Christian established government (Lewis, 1993 p. 53). Spain has permitted a type of communal, legal autonomy to the Muslims living under it rule (Lewis, 1993 p. 55; Taras, 2009).

Overall, Sweden has had a neutral policy with the installation and construction of mosques. In 1980s Muslim organizations have been successful in obtaining permission for the constructions of mosques. In 2006 The Muslim Council of Sweden (SMR), an umbrella organization for Swedish Muslim organizations, sent a demand letter to each of the major political parties in Sweden. The group requested that Sweden implement more public funding for construction of mosques; and asked for recognition of Muslim school holidays, imam-led divorce approvals, and education rights in public schools (Berkley Center 2006; Radio Sweden 2006). The demand letter was turned down by all political parties, including the Liberal People's Party Folkpartiet liberalerna, (FP) which is known as the pro-immigrant party. The FP has implemented less constrained labor laws for migrant workers, and the party has proposed more relaxed visa processes for foreigners to visit with relatives in Sweden (FP, 2015). These progressive measures have been opposed by the governing Social Democrat Workers' Party (SAP, 2015) which is center-left, and by the right-wing Sweden Democrats (SD, 2015), generally regarded as the main anti-immigration party. The Sweden Democrats are not in accord with the proposal of any legislation concerning Muslim women's rights to wear hajib, they prefer laws (of repatriation) that propose immigrants and Muslims to emigrate instead of assimilating (Taras 2012, 99).

In December of 2014 three mosques in Sweden were bombed, with a total of twelve bombing attacks in which children and adults were injured. Sweden has established itself in the European Union (EU) as a neutral space for immigrants seeking asylum, which includes all religions. Although the Prime Minister of Sweden stated that the bombings were not condoned by the Swedish government; the organizational demands by the SMR has caused a backlash and a decline in acceptance of more Islamic religious issues and construction of mosques, and the recent violence was in response to the growing anti-immigrant sentiment for labor and asylum policy (Aljazeera,

2015; rt.com, 2015). The Liberal People's Party which is known as a pro-immigrant party has implemented less constrained labor laws for migrant workers, and the party has proposed more relaxed visa processes for foreigners to visit with relatives in Sweden. These progressive measures have been opposed by the anti-immigration party, the Swedish Democrats.

Thus, the policies of Germany, Spain, and Sweden have contained mixtures of resistance and accommodation to their Muslim populations. In particular, there has been substantial opposition to visible symbols of Islam, such as sites of public worship, or female attire. This study will examine anti-Islamic politics in three countries: Spain, Germany, and Sweden. It seeks to examine the effects of religious affiliation and behavior are likely to be stronger in religiously pluralistic Germany than in religiously homogeneous Spain or Sweden.

## **I. Hypotheses**

*A. Hypothesis I:* Religious observance (church attendance) will be higher among Christians in religiously pluralistic Germany than in more religiously homogeneous Sweden or Spain.

*B. Hypothesis II:* People with Protestant or Catholic religious affiliations are more accepting of Muslims than seculars.

*C. Hypothesis III:* The effects of religious variables (affiliation, observance) will be stronger in religiously pluralistic environments (Germany), than in religiously homogeneous Sweden or Spain.

*D. Hypothesis IV:* Religious effects of religious affiliation will be strongest among frequent church attenders.

## **III. Data and Method**

Data source for this study is World Value Survey (WVS) for Germany, Sweden, and Spain in 1999-2007 (Waves 4 and 5). The Dependent variable is: the respondent's willingness to accept a Muslim as neighbor. This is a dichotomous dependent variable. Respondents are given a list of ascriptive minorities (e.g. foreigners, immigrants, people of different races/religions/languages)

and behavioral minorities (e.g. homosexuals, drug addicts, alcoholics) and asked whether they would object to having Muslims as neighbors. This variable has the virtue of simplicity, since it simply measures acceptance of Muslims, and is not complicated by considerations of politics, taxation, or immigration. The dependent variable measured by the WVS is a very straightforward measure of affect toward people of the Islamic faith. Since the dependent variable is dichotomous, the estimation technique is logistic regression.

The units of analysis are individual respondents. Separate analyses are performed for each country under investigation. The main independent variables are dummy variables for affiliation as Roman Catholic or Protestant. A dummy variable measuring frequency of attendance at religious services is coded 1 if the respondent reports attending church once a week or oftener, and 0 if the respondent attends church less frequently. Control variables include respondent age, gender, education, and urbanization.

#### **IV. Findings**

Table 1 contains estimates of Religious Affiliation by country. The data in Table 1 show that the claim about Germany's diverse religious affiliation; Spain's homogeneous Catholicism, and Sweden's homogeneous protestant religious population are correct.<sup>2</sup> The table result shows that Germany is indeed more pluralistic, which provides empirical confirmation of the premise of the study.

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<sup>2</sup> Note: the number of respondents do not add up to one hundred, as the vast majority of people who are not Catholic or Protestant are 'nones'.

### **TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE**

In Table 2 *Hypothesis I* is confirmed for Protestants, but not Catholics. German Protestants are more observant than Swedish Protestants. This hypothesis is not confirmed for Catholics. Spanish Catholics are slightly, but not significantly, more likely to attend than German Catholics. The results reported in Table 2 are consistent with *Hypothesis I*, that religious pluralistic environments such as in Germany, people attend church more often than people who live in a religious homogeneous environment. German Protestants go to church more often than Swedish Protestants. Although the difference is not large, it is statistically significant. By contrast, Spanish Catholics are slightly more likely to attend church than German Catholics, although the difference is not significant.

### **TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE**

Table 3 shows an overview of the dependent variable, by country, and country differences in the willingness to accept a Muslim as a neighbor. Pluralistic Germany is least accepting of Muslims, followed by Catholic Spain and Protestant Sweden. The cross tabulations of acceptance by religion for each country show that Germans are least accepting of Muslims, and Swedes most accepting of Muslims. The results are going in the opposite direction of the *Hypotheses II* prediction. Over 25 percent of the people in Germany with Protestant religious affiliations are least accepting of Muslims. Spain has a smaller percentage of Catholics (14.8) that are not accepting of Muslims. Overall, Swedes are the most accepting of Muslim neighbors, with only 7.7 per cent

objecting. Swedish Protestants are slightly, but not significantly, less likely than non-Protestants to object to a Muslim neighbor (7.1 per cent, as opposed to 9.1 per cent.).

### **TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE**

Table 4 contains the results of multivariate models (logistic regression) for each nation, explaining attitudes toward Muslim neighbors. These data show that, in Germany, self-identified Catholics and Protestants are more accepting of Muslim neighbors than religiously unaffiliated respondents. Among German respondents, self-identification either Catholic or Protestant is related to greater acceptance of Muslims as neighbors. The relationships between Catholic and Protestant affiliation and tolerance of Muslims are negative and significant. Relative to the non-affiliated, Germans who describe themselves as adherents of Christian denominations are relatively tolerant of Muslim neighbors.

### **TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE**

Contrary to expectations, the effects of Protestantism in Sweden are quite similar to those observed in Germany. The relationship between Swedish Protestants and German Protestants affiliation and tolerance of Muslims are negative and significant. German Protestants and Swedish Protestants are relatively more likely to be tolerant of Muslim neighbors.

For Spain, the relationship between Spanish Catholics affiliation and tolerance of Muslims are positive but statistically insignificant. Spanish Catholics are no more or less likely than non-Catholics Spaniards to be tolerant of Muslim neighbors.

Thus, the data presented in Table 4 show that *Hypothesis II* is confirmed in Germany, and Sweden, but not in Spain, as is a homogeneously Catholic country. The logistic regressions show

that German Catholics, Protestants, Swedish Protestants more accepting than non-affiliates in each country. Spanish Catholics not significantly different from the “nones”, or religiously non-affiliated.

*Hypothesis III* is confirmed for Catholics, but not for Protestants. The effects of Catholic affiliation are not significant in Spain (there are too few Protestants for analysis). Catholics more accepting of Muslims in religiously pluralistic environments, such as Germany. The effects of Catholic and Protestant affiliation on attitudes toward Muslims is significant and negative in Germany. Substantively, this means that both Catholics and Protestants more willing to accept Muslim neighbor than the religiously non-affiliated. The effects of Protestant affiliation are significant and negative in Sweden. Substantively, which means that Protestant Swedes are more accepting of Muslims than non-affiliated (Sweden has too few Catholics to analyze). Thus, the pluralism hypothesis is not confirmed among German Protestants, since the coefficient relating Protestantism to tolerance for Muslims is strong and significant in Sweden. Pluralistic Germany and Protestant Sweden show similar relationships between Protestant affiliation and willingness to accept Muslim neighbor.

In Spain, Catholics are no more or no less likely to accept the Muslim neighbor than non-Catholics. The only variable that matters in Spain is age. Younger people are more accepting of Muslims in all three countries.

*Hypothesis III* predicts that the ‘Muslim as neighbor’ effect would be greater in pluralistic Germany than in either Spain or Sweden, German Catholics are more accepting than Spanish Catholics but *Hypothesis III* is not confirmed for Protestants. For both Sweden and Germany, being Protestant is associated with a higher acceptance of Muslims.

Religious markets (concerning religiously pluralistic versus religiously homogeneous) seem to matter for Catholics. If Huntington (1991) is correct, increased tolerance for other religions for Catholics is stronger in a setting in which there is greater religious pluralism (and perhaps competition). However, Protestant affiliation seems to increase tolerance of Muslims regardless of the nature of religious market. In the multivariate models, the effects of Protestant affiliation on tolerance of Muslims seem uniform, regardless of religious context.

Finally, *Hypothesis IV*, in which it is predicted that acceptance of Muslim neighbors will be greater with church attendance, is not confirmed in any of the three countries examined in this study. Attendance is not significantly related to acceptance when included in the models as a separate variable, or as an interaction term with religious affiliation. This means that attendance is not a general source of tolerance or intolerance, nor does attendance have an effect on tolerance for either group of Christian respondents. Thus, *Hypothesis IV* is not confirmed in Table 4. Church attendance does not matter as separate independent variable, or as interaction term with religious affiliation.

The Hirschmann (1970) theory of *lazy monopoly* may possibly explain the difference in attitudes among the Germans, Swedes and Spanish. “Lazy monopolies” are organizations that fail to satisfy their members (who either “exit” or stay but “voice” their displeasure) and yet do little to address the concerns of their (ex) constituents. (This concept has been applied to the study of religious markets (Stark and Finke, 2000; Tamadonfar and Jelen (2014).

In countries without religious competition, or in religiously homogeneous countries it is easier to understand why a member would not have much voice or any voice. Without the need to compete for members with other faiths, and with the possibility of some level of government



support, religious denominations in monopolistic religious markets may lack incentives to engage in active religious or political socialization, and may seek instead to emphasize the communal or consensual aspects of their respective theological traditions.

In religiously competitive markets, adherents of traditions such as Catholicism may be aware of the distinctive nature of their religious affiliation. Such identification, which is not strongly related to citizenship, may make members of non-majority religions sympathetic to the needs of other religious minorities (such as Muslims). Since shared church membership is not a characteristic of the laity in competitive markets, religious adherents may be more receptive to church teachings, and may feel a common bond with adherents of other traditions (such as Islam).

## **Conclusion**

Why does public opinion about Islamophobia matter? It matters because in democracies, governments are accountable to citizens, and this tendency may be stronger with respect to highly emotional issues such as immigration or political Islam. All three nations in this study are democracies. Thus, the opinions of ordinary citizens can be expected to affect public policies toward Muslims in these countries. The European electorates have more control over the action of political parties in government because they are not tied down to voting for people or persons in constituent-based representation. Voters can leave that party (or stay with it) if the action does not match their public opinion (Dalton, 2014) or their political consequences of religion.

Although voters may not get explicit laws written in agreement with their opinions (or they may not be able to determine which way the party they support will follow on positions); they do feel somewhat confident the elites will produce similar measure on issues preferences close to their public opinion (Dalton, 2014, p.243).

Nevertheless, religion does seem to have an effect on attitudes toward Muslims, which seems likely to affect the behavior of political parties and elected officials. This seems especially likely, since issues of religion and immigration are likely to be “easy” issues (Carmines and Stimson, 1980), on which voters have coherent opinions.

Churches in Sweden and Germany are sources of greater tolerance/acceptance of Muslims. Perhaps counterintuitively, seculars seem less tolerant in Germany and Sweden which could be an explanation for the apparent similarities between the two countries. There are many unaffiliated citizens in both nations.

Woodberry (2012) offers a possible explanation of why Protestant churches in Sweden and Germany are sources of greater acceptance of Muslims. Woodberry asserts that it is because the Protestantism laid the foundation and conditions for democracy and economic growth. Later the Catholic Church after Vatican II followed suit (Huntington, 1991). Although Woodberry’s focus is primarily devoted to the effects of Protestant missionary activity, his account suggests that Protestantism in general is associated with characteristics of Western-style democracy. In the Sweden and Germany greater tolerance result it may be that the logic of relating Protestantism to democracy applies in this case.

Protestants used education to convert by translating the Bible in their own language and expanded religious liberty, overcame resistance to mass education and printing, fostered civil society, moderated colonial abuses, and dissipated elite power. In Western Europe, Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, European-settler colonies, and mission territories, Protestantism is associated with democracy. Comparative historical analyses show that Protestants consistently initiated and spread factors that past research suggests promote democracy: mass printing, mass

education, civil society, and rule of law. Protestants did not plan for those developments, the development happened indirectly as a cause and effect of those conditions. (Woodberry 2012).

On the other hand, there is difference in how the Catholic Church pursued its religious market. Although the Conversion Protestants were the catalysts to educate and create civil societies, the Catholic Church began to provide education and political resources after Vatican II because they had to compete with the Protestant Church in making active markets and increasing religious pluralism (Tamadonfar and Jelen 2014, p.245; Trejo, 2012).

The Catholic Church was historically able to block competition in countries like Mexico and Spain (predominately Catholic countries), in which there was relatively little religious competition, and they offered fewer education and political resources to those countries. In countries such as the United States, Ireland, India, Germany and Sweden, the Catholic Church was more aggressive in vying for the religious markets in those countries, and provided more education and political resources to those countries because competition was greater (Woodberry 2012).

This difference can possibly explain why churches in predominately Protestant Sweden and in religiously pluralistic Germany are sources of greater tolerance of Muslims. Germans allow for more inclusion of varied religiosity because of effects of a pluralistic, competitive, religious market. At the same time, because of the idea of open religious markets, Germans may have more fear of Muslims' "takeover" than Spain, where the competition and the religious market is more difficult for Muslims in historically dominated Catholic countries.

By contrast, Protestants in Sweden seem more accepting of Muslims than the non-affiliated, despite the lack of religious competition in this Scandinavian country. Perhaps, as suggested by Woodberry (2012) it is the theological and social context of the dominant religious

tradition, rather than the existence of competition among diverse religious bodies, which accounts for the greater acceptance of adherents of Islam, relative to the non-affiliated.

The results of this study show that religious contexts (specifically religious markets) affect the political consequences of religion, but do so inconsistently across traditions. Theology may matter, and the individualistic nature of Protestantism may render some Protestant traditions relatively resistant to the political effects of religious competition.

**Table 1 Religious Affiliation by Country**

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	Catholic	Protestant	N
Germany	20.8	33.1	2064
Spain	80.0	0.4	2197
Sweden	1.4	69.3	1716

---

**The response categories:** was 1= protestant or Catholic, and 0= something else.

*Source:* Computed by author from World Value Survey Wave 4 and Wave 5.

**Table 2 Church Attendance by Religious Affiliation and Country**

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	Catholic	Protestant	N
Germany	21.2	8.2	1337
Spain	23.9	----	2169
Sweden	----	1.5	1187

---

Entries reflect percentage reported weekly or more frequent attendance at religious services.

*Source:* Computed by author from World Value Survey Wave 4 and Wave 5

**Table 3 Rejection of Muslims as Neighbors, by Country**

---

Muslims mentioned as Bad Neighbor	
	N
Germany	26.8
Spain	14.8
Sweden	7.7

---

*Source:* Computed by author from World Value Survey Wave 4 and Wave 5.

**Table 4**  
**Multivariate Models of Rejection of Muslim Neighbors**

	Germany	Spain	Sweden
Catholic	-.384* (.011)	.374 (.177)	-----
Protestant	-.260* (.034)	-----	-.468* (.023)
Attendance	.214 (.284)	-.112 (.612)	-.1544 (.132)
Age	.007* (.021)	.015* (.011)	.017** (.006)
Education	-.119*** (.000)	-.027 (.555)	-.105* (.027)
Sex	-.079 (.465)	.288 (.132)	-.490* (.015)
Urbanization	-.032 (.167)	-.044 (.278)	-.002 (.972)
Constant	-.541	-2.895***	-1.694**
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	.036	.036	.049
N	2064	2197	1716

Dependent Variable: Attitudes of the respondent's willingness to accept a Muslim as neighbor.

N = N=

\*significant at .05

\*\*significant at .01

\*\*\*significant at .001

*Source:* Computed by author from World Value Survey Wave 4 and Wave 5.



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