



MAGHREB ROUNDTABLE

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SPEAKERS

Jocelyne Cesari is a visiting associate professor at Harvard University and a principal research fellow at the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS). Cesari has been a pioneer in the study of Muslim minorities in Europe, authoring numerous books and articles on the subject. In 1998 she founded The Network of Comparative Research on Islam and Muslims in Europe (NOCRIME), comprising scholars from across Europe to study the integration of Muslims in Europe.

Peter Mandaville is the director of the Center for Global Studies at George Mason University and associate professor in the Department of Public and International Affairs. Much of his recent research has centered on transnational connections between religious social movements and organizations in the wider Islamic world with Muslims in the West. His current projects include a book, *Global Islam*, to be published by Routledge in 2006, and ongoing work on Muslim youth in Europe. ■

FOREIGNERS AT HOME: NORTH AFRICAN EMIGRANT COMMUNITIES IN CRISIS

"Muslim" is not the first category in which many European North African immigrants would place themselves, but there is a strong European tendency to see such communities through a religious prism. The tension that now exists between traditional European communities and second- and third-generation immigrants is the result of a stalled process of "partial assimilation." Children and grandchildren of North African immigrants have thus lost ties to the countries of their families' origin while facing rejection by their countries of birth. In some cases, pan-Islamic institutions in Europe help fill the gap.

On January 19, 2006, Jocelyne Cesari, a research associate at Harvard University's Center for Middle East Studies, and Peter Mandaville, director of the Center for Global Studies at George Mason University and associate professor in the Department of Public and International Affairs, spoke at the third session of CSIS's Maghreb Roundtable. The discussion focused on the problems faced by North African communities in Europe today, with special emphasis on the processes of self-identification and integration into their adopted nations.

Moroccans represent the largest North African immigrant group, followed by Algerians and then Tunisians, and the majority of Maghrebi immigrants reside in France. In an attempt to recreate links to their home countries in host societies, immigrants establish expatriate communities to form a diasporic culture. Cesari emphasized that these communities are often not centered around an "Islamic" or "Moroccan" identity, but are frequently based on regional, village, or even familial affiliations. Indeed, as immigrants' children and grandchildren integrated into European societies and lost their ties to their families' culture, many identify with Islam only culturally and never learned to speak Arabic properly.

Yet, much of the outside world sees these communities through a religious prism, and lumps them together as such. "[T]here has been all too much projecting of 'Muslimness' onto groups and peoples living in diasporic communities in Europe," said Mandaville. In recent decades, immigrant communities seeking to build communal institutions often found themselves building Islamic ones. As time passed and connections to communities in North Africa diminished, many felt a growing connection to Muslim organizations and institutions.

Discrimination and socio-economic deprivation have become a daily reality for many North
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THE MAGHREB ROUNDTABLE SERIES

The CSIS Middle East Program launched the Maghreb Roundtable in November, 2005 to examine the strategic importance of a broad range of social, political, and economic trends in North Africa and to identify opportunities for constructive U.S. engagement. The roundtable defines the Maghreb as Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Mauritania. The roundtable convenes monthly, assembling a diverse group of regional experts, policymakers, academics, and business leaders seeking to build a greater understanding of the complexities of the region. Topics for discussion include the role of Islamist movements in politics, the war on terror, democratization and the limits of civil society, the strategic importance of North African energy, the effects of emigrant communities in Europe, trade liberalization, and prospects for greater regional integration. ■

Africans and other immigrant communities in Europe. Such discrimination is institutionalized by the state and also practiced more discreetly by individuals. These practices only aggravate problems of chronically high unemployment and feelings of exclusion. Alluding to the November 2005 riots in France, Mandaville warned that "a number of European countries [have] allowed a set of major tensions to build up over decades . . . to a boiling point that we're very rapidly reaching." Both Mandaville and Cesari agreed that discrimination against North Africans has taken on an increasingly religious tone over the last two decades; Cesari marked the Salman Rushdie affair as the starting point for this change, with terrorist attacks in the U.S. and Europe exacerbating the phenomenon.

This environment has fostered the growth of pan-Islamic institutions in Europe that take religious identification as their primary point of entry. For young people who have lost ties to their communities of origin in North Africa, but who also feel barred from full citizenship in their countries of birth, explicitly religious institutions aimed at European Muslim youth can help fill the void. There is huge diversity among these groups, and by no means are all of them violent. Some, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, seek to assimilate into the societies in which they live, while others, such as the Jamaat al-Tabligh, seek to isolate themselves from those societies. These Muslim organizations in Europe are as European as they are Muslim.

Mandaville agreed, and suggested that viewing these communities primarily through the prism of security—as many have done since September 11—is distorting. It presumes that there is a "Muslim problem" in Europe, and that the solution is greater integration, or, conversely, that

less integration produces radical youth. This perspective, however, ignores a wider set of issues that influences how second and third-generation North African immigrants perceive living in European countries.

The problem is not a lack of integration, Mandaville argues, but rather a phenomenon of "partial integration." Recruits

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into Islamist movements in Europe are often educated, employed, and upwardly-mobile members of society. At the same time, however, they feel Europe rejects them; they see the majority of their countrymen and co-religionists living in poverty, and they are energized by the notion that Western materialism, imperialism, and globalization are inherently corrupt. A hybrid of European, Muslim, and North African, second- and third-generation immigrants have, as Mandaville describes it, a "worldview that is spinning," leaving them to feel as though they have no stake in any society. Islamist groups seize on this feeling of disenfranchisement

"European countries allowed ... tensions to build up over decades."

and offer the second- and third-generation immigrants a sense of belonging to a community and a vehicle for self-identification.

Regardless of political rhetoric, economic and demographic realities dictate that European countries keep their doors open to immigrants. Quite simply, Europe depends on immigrant labor, both to produce

goods and services and to support an increasing number of pensioners. Indeed, though temporary programs for immigrant guest workers began in Europe during post-World War II reconstruction, it is only within the last 20 years that individual countries have normalized immigrants' legal status, thus recognizing that their presence is, in fact, permanent.

As second- and third-generation North African immigrants come of age, Muslim institutions in Europe are becoming more 'European' – and more modern. Television preachers and even Muslim televangelists, such as Amr Khaled in the United Kingdom, have fragmented religious authority. Web sites offer a host of resources on religion. On the grass roots level, informal study groups and storefront mosques reach out to young people who are seeking to give purpose to their lives.

Islam in Europe is showing itself to be a vital force, as rooted in the European context as it is in that of the countries from which Europe's Muslim population originally came. In spite of societal exclusion – or, perhaps, because of it – European Muslims are developing avowedly modern understandings of Islam that are at their heart transnational and which explicitly confront the question of how Muslims should relate to modernity, secularism, and breakdowns of traditional authority. ■-JG 01/20/06

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