



# Integrating Islam: Political and Religious Challenges in Contemporary France

*Jonathan Laurence, Justin Vaisse*

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Nearly five million Muslims call France home, the vast majority from former French colonies in North Africa. While France has successfully integrated waves of immigrants in the past, this new influx poses a new variety of challenges—much as it does in neighboring European countries. Alarmists view the growing role of Muslims in French society as a form of "reverse colonization"; they believe Muslim political and religious networks seek to undermine European rule of law or that fundamentalists are creating a society entirely separate from the mainstream. Integrating Islam portrays the more complex reality of integration's successes and failures in French politics and society. From intermarriage rates to economic indicators, the authors paint a comprehensive portrait of Muslims in France. Using original research, they devote special attention to the policies developed by successive French governments to encourage integration and discourage extremism. Because of the size of its Muslim population and its universalistic definition of citizenship, France is an especially good test case for the encounter of Islam and the West. Despite serious and sometimes spectacular problems, the authors see a "French Islam" slowly replacing "Islam in France"—in other words, the emergence of a religion and a culture that feels at home in, and is largely at peace with, its host society. Integrating Islam provides readers with a comprehensive view of the state of Muslim integration into French society that cannot be found anywhere else. It is essential reading for students of French politics and those studying the interaction of Islam and the West, as well as the general public.



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