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‘Doomed to Fail’: Dutch and West German Consulates Warning Against Mixed Marriages, 1950s–70s

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journals.sagepub.com/home/jch**Betty de Hart** 

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Abstract

This article demonstrates how official discourses in Western Europe warning against mixed marriages were built on colonial continuities as part of shared European heritage, as well as the importance of race and gender ideologies in those discourses. It addresses the exchange across borders of approaches to regulating ‘mixed’ marriages among Dutch and German consular officials, strongly advising European White women not to emigrate and not to marry Muslim men. Based on research in the archives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs as well as newspaper archives in the Netherlands and West Germany, this article demonstrates the central role that consulates of both countries played in developing these official discourses. This study contributes to literature on female (e)migration as well as literature on present-day restrictive migration control practices by demonstrating the historical and colonial roots that still serve to justify state practices of regulating mixed intimacies in surveilling women’s partner choice.

Keywords

gender and emigration, gender and race, ‘mixed’ marriage, consular services, colonial continuities, regulation of mixture

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In 1966, a Dutch father wrote to the Netherlands embassy in Sudan:

Excellency, in relation to the fact that our daughter has gotten acquainted with a Sudanese [man] in Amsterdam, I want to politely request information from you. The youngsters have a serious love for each other, so that plans to get engaged or even married are considered. (...) Our question: are white women accepted according to this predominantly Mohammedan society? Will she be accepted by the family without pressure from the family (given her independence, she would never accept that [pressure]). Can you provide general impressions? What about the children born if they got married? Are there examples of how people react to a mixed marriage? What nationality will my daughter possess and at what point in time (before and after marriage or divorce, which cannot be hoped for)?

In response, the embassy sent a letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Netherlands, suggesting to invite the father to the ministry for a talk. Among other things, the Ministry informed him that:

Several European women married to Sudanese [men] have demonstrated to have never foreseen the consequences. In conversations, several of them have expressed a certain regret, a desire for Europe, and a feeling of disappointment that their children will not grow up in European conditions, and are [instead] connected to this country [of Sudan] of which the future is also uncertain.¹

Correspondence such as the letters above strikingly illustrate some of the key issues related to the official discourse on mixed marriages between European White women and foreign men, particularly from Muslim countries. As we will demonstrate in this contribution, postwar Dutch and West German consulates were key players in initiating and shaping this discourse. The consular discourse that is the focus of this article represented official governmental attitudes that had very real legal consequences for these mixed couples. The consular outposts did not just respond to individual inquiries such as the one above, but also generated the information that was reproduced in the media.²

1 National Archives Netherlands, Toegang: 2.05.313, Inv. Nr.4877, Letter to the embassy 25 September 1966, Letter embassy to the minister of foreign affairs 10 October 1966.

2 Quite a bit has already been written on the mixed marriage discourse in the media and women's grassroots activism in the West German and Dutch context. See, e.g., Julia Woesthoff, "'When I Marry a Mohammedan': Migration and the Challenges of Interethnic Marriages in Postwar Germany," *Contemporary European History* 22, no. 2 (May 2013): 199-231; idem, "'Foreigners and Women Have the Same Problems': Binational Marriages, Women's Grassroots Organizing, and the Quest for Legal Equality in Post-1968 Germany," *Journal of Family History* 38, no. 4 (October 2013): 422-42; idem, 'Equality Before the Law?: The Inter-marriage Debate in Post-Nazi Germany,' in *Marriage and Modernity: Global Histories*, ed. Julia Moses (London: Bloomsbury, November 2017), 204-21. de Hart, B. (2017). Protecting Dutch girls from the Harem: Premarital counselling for mixed marriages with muslim men. *Journal of Migration History*, 3(1), 78-103. Dienke Hondius, 'De "trouwlustige gastarbeider" en het Hollandse meisje. De bezorgde ontmoediging van Italiaans- en Spaans-Nederlandse huwelijken', *Migrantenstudies* 16:4 (2000) 129-45. Marga Altena, *A true history full of romance. Mixed marriages and ethnic identity in Dutch art, news media, and popular culture (1983-1995)* (Amsterdam 2012).

Furthermore, the consulates' information served as the basis for advice literature that was used widely to inform European White women of the consequences of marriage to a Muslim husband.

As the exchange between the father and the consulate demonstrates, the concerns about European women's emigration due to marriage to a non-European foreigner mentioned the practical legal problems she could expect to encounter (the daughter's citizenship status), but it also reflected the racialized and gendered ideologies on mixed marriages. It exemplifies the generalizing use of the term 'Europe', as a geopolitical space where gender equality and political rights prevail while they are seen as absent in Arabic countries. The letters also illustrate the expectation, based on the primacy of family unity, that the women would follow their husband to his native country. The result was the circulation of information in which mixed marriages with Muslim husbands were seen as doomed to fail so that, evidentially, European White women had to be warned against such marriages.

The literature on migration has long described the differential treatment of international migrants depending on their gender, race, sexuality, and class. Historical studies have revealed the centrality of these categories in policing state borders in the context of nation-building since the nineteenth century, as well as the transnational circulation of racialized and gendered ideologies.³ Feminist scholars have demonstrated how ideas regarding gender, race and class shaped the colonial discourse and justified colonial projects, and they have also revealed the lasting power of gendered and racialized hierarchies after decolonization.⁴

This literature has focused largely on immigrants rather than emigrants. However, nations have not only defined themselves by their policies towards those who come into the country, but also by their response to those who leave it.⁵ For states, emigration of its citizens could be a strategy that served national interests, including colonialism, but was also seen as a threat to national interests.⁶ It has been well documented how states have intended to preserve ties to their emigrants abroad. Offering consular services was one way to maintain those links, functioning not only as a form of remote control, but also providing help and support for emigrants facing problems abroad.⁷

Female emigration has always drawn particular attention, as women have been ascribed particular responsibility for the reproduction of the nation and the continuation

3 N. Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (Los Angeles and London 2008 [1997]).

4 A. McClintock, *Imperial leather: Race, gender, and sexuality in the colonial contest* (London 2013). A.L. Stoler, 'Tense and tender ties: The politics of comparison in North American history and (post) colonial studies.' *The Journal of American History* 88.3 (2001), 829–65.

5 N.L. Green, and F. Weil (eds.), *Citizenship and Those Who Leave: The Politics of Emigration and Expatriation* (Urbana-Champaign 2010). Michael Collyer, 'Introduction: Locating and Narrating Emigration Nations', in Michael Collyer (ed.) *Immigration Nations: Policies and Ideologies of Immigrant Engagement* (London 2013), 1–24.

6 R. Bauböck, 'The rights and duties of external citizenship', *Citizenship Studies* 13, 5 (2009), 475–99.

7 C. van Eijl and L. Lucassen, 'Holland Beyond the Borders: Emigration and the Dutch State, 1850-1940', in N.L. Green, and F. Weil (eds.), *Citizenship and Those Who Leave: The Politics of Emigration and Expatriation* (Urbana-Champaign 2010), 156–75.

of national identity.⁸ As reproducers of the nation, by bearing children but also by transmitting cultural traditions, language, and religion of the nation, they were faced with specific rules and regulations if they crossed the borders to foreign countries. Especially the discourse on 'White slavery', built on images of White migrant women as hapless victims ending up in prostitution has worked to draw national borders and to police women's emigration. Race and gender converged in the production of such White slavery stories.⁹ This meant that often the emigration of women was more heavily regulated than that of men, for instance by refusing them passports.¹⁰

The women discussed in this article were not only leaving the nation by emigrating, but also by marrying a foreign husband. Consequently, they were potentially faced with two forms of state regulation, those directed at emigrants and those directed at so-called 'mixed marriages'.¹¹ Regulation of these relationships can be found in various contexts throughout the world. Although it is often assumed that such regulation never existed in Europe, as we will demonstrate in this contribution, it was anything but exceptional, affecting the domain of intimate relationships, including marriage. 'Regulation of mixture' here refers to any state or institutional action designed to prevent or restrict mixed relationships.¹² Despite their varied histories, the mixed marriage discourse exhibited remarkable similarities across the European continent, as scholarly literature on the subject published in recent years has convincingly shown.¹³

Based on empirical research conducted in the respective countries' archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and embassies abroad, as well as newspaper archives, this article focuses on the role of the Dutch and German consulates in regulating the (planned) marriages of White European women with non-European Muslim men, highlighting the striking discursive similarities in the institutional debates related to mixed marriage. Since the early twentieth century, it has been a long-standing practice for

8 N. Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (Los Angeles and London (2008 [1997])).

9 D. J. Guy, *Sex and Danger in Buenos Aires: Prostitution, Family, and Nation in Argentina* (London, 1991); B. Donovan, *White Slave Crusades: Race, Gender, and Anti-Vice Activism, 1887-1917* (Urbana-Champaign 2010).

10 M. Schrover, 'Feminization and Problematization of Migration: Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. In D. Hoerder and A. Kaur (eds) *Proletarian and Gendered Mass Migrations* (Leiden 2013), 103–31. J. Bush, "'The Right Sort of Woman": Female Emigrants and Emigration to the British Empire, 1890–1910', *Women's History Review*, 3, 3 (1994), 385–409.

11 We use the terms 'mixed marriages' and 'mixed couples' despite their problematic character. As all marriages contain aspects of sameness and difference, it is only those differences that are marked as significant, especially by the social environment, that make a marriage 'mixed'. The marker of difference in this article is 'race' and/or 'ethnicity'. The authorities discussed in this article considered the marriages they worried about 'mixed' because they involved what they called 'Western' or 'European' woman with a 'Muslim', 'oriental' or 'Arab' husband.

12 D. Thompson, 'Racial Ideas and Gendered Intimacies: The regulation of Interracial Relationships in North America', *Social and Legal Studies*, 18, 3 (2009), 353–71.

13 C. Caballero, and P.J. Aspinall, *Mixed race Britain in the twentieth century* (London 2018); R. Franco, *Between Problematisation and Invisibilisation: The Regulation of Interracialised Intimacies and (Post) Colonial Immigration in France (1954–1979)* (Thesis VU Amsterdam 2023); C. Lorke, *Challenging authorities through 'undesired' marriages: Administrational logics of handling cross-border couples in Germany, 1880–1930*. *Journal of Migration History*, 4, 1 (2018), 54–78;

consular staff to counsel European White women against marrying an 'oriental'.¹⁴ Our study demonstrates how these practices were further developed, formalized and standardized in the postwar period. The German and Dutch embassies at the centre of this article developed extensive counselling practices in various Muslim majority countries in which the message was always the same: European women would do best not to marry Muslim men. This study also highlights the transnational character of these discourses: the responses by the West German and Dutch embassies reflect the pervasiveness of orientalist and gendered ideologies. At times, consular staff also drew on and looked at each other as well as embassies from other European countries for ideas on how to respond to the issue of mixed marriage. These transnational discourses directly and indirectly affected the regulation of intimate relations in various local contexts, and in the process shaped the boundaries of 'race'.¹⁵ Thus, this article understands the regulation of 'mixture' as a transnational project, transcending national boundaries involving both state and non-state institutions. Although the article focuses specifically on West Germany and the Netherlands, it does not address them as separate national units, but rather explores their relationships not just to each other, but also to other European states, as well as to the countries in which the consular outposts were located.

Furthermore, Europe was shaped by its colonial projects and by the conflicts within Europe, which extended beyond the period of formal empires. Understanding the regulation of 'mixed' intimacies and marriages requires an analytic framework to comprehend the contexts in which local specificities were generated and similar discourses on 'racial mixture' could still result in very distinct regulations.¹⁶ A number of studies have demonstrated that the racial divides of the colonial past are part of the genealogy of European modes of exclusion.¹⁷ Hence, the metropole and colony were not separate but part of the shared and differentiated space of empire, in which discourses, knowledge, ideas and scholarship circulated. One central 'tension of empire' shared between the colony and metropole was that notions of otherness were not stable or obvious but had to be defined and reproduced.¹⁸ The Federal Republic of Germany and the Netherlands have distinctive histories of racism and colonialism that have left their imprint on the postwar period. The Netherlands was a longstanding colonial power whose main colony Dutch East Indies (nowadays Indonesia) – home to a large Muslim population – was 'lost' in

14 G. Frost, 'Not Always Logical: Binational/Biracial Marriages in Britain, 1900–1940', *The History of the Family*, 24, 3 (2019), 585–607.

15 L. Boucher, K. Ellinghaus, and J. Carey (eds), *Re-Orienting Whiteness* (New York 2014). Oliver Janz, Daniel Schönplflug, eds., *Gender History in a Transnational Perspective: Networks, Biographies, Gender Orders* (New York 2014). J. Burbank and F. Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton 2010). L. Jörn, 'Comparison, Transfer and Entanglement, or: How to Write Modern European History today?' *Journal of Modern European History*, 14, 2 (2016), 149–63; E. Buettner, 'Europe and Its Entangled Colonial Pasts: Europeanizing the "Imperial Turn"', in B. Timm Knudsen, E. Buettner, E. Zabunyan (eds) *Decolonizing Colonial Heritage: New Agendas, Actors, and Practices in and beyond Europe*, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2021), 36.

16 K. M. O'Donnell, 'French and German Women's Colonial Settlement Movements, 1896–1904', *Historical Reflections*, 40, 1 (2014), 92–110.

17 F. Cooper and A.L. Stoler, *Tensions of empire: colonial cultures in a bourgeois world* (California 1997). E. Balibar, *We, the people of Europe?: reflections on transnational citizenship* (Princeton 2004).

18 F. Cooper and A.L. Stoler, *Tensions of empire: colonial cultures in a bourgeois world* (California 1997).

1949 after a bloody colonial war. Germany held overseas colonies only briefly in comparison. As recent research has shown, however, the German colonial imaginary persisted well into the twentieth century, informed policies and actions during the Nazi period, culminating in World War II and the Holocaust.¹⁹ Shaped by their respective experiences, not only of colonialism but also of Nazism, both countries came to identify as colour-blind after the Second World War.²⁰ The countries in which the embassies discussed in this article were located are the (former) colonies not of Germany and the Netherlands but other European countries, mainly France and Britain. Nevertheless, as we aim to demonstrate, colonial continuities are evident in the ways in which discourses on regulating mixed marriages travelled across European borders. This was part of the late- and neo-colonial ideology that was an inherent element of the establishment of the European Economic Community, of which the Netherlands and the Federal Republic were founding members.²¹

That the West German and Dutch consulates' concerns about European women marrying Muslim men gained new vigour in the early postwar decades can be explained by three developments. First, it built on older state concerns about European girls and young women traveling abroad. Fuelled by racism, nationalism and religious prejudices, European states disapproved of their migration. The fear was that, uncontrolled by family and nation, they might find themselves in sexual danger and end up marrying unacceptable foreigners.²² These concerns had their roots in the late nineteenth century's twin developments of industrialization and urbanization and the concomitant growing alarm over relaxed social mores and the threat of sexual exploitation that might await women who ventured overseas. The White slavery movement of the interwar period was built on such concerns. After World War II, the discourse extended to girls travelling abroad to work as au-pairs or governesses, or who emigrated by themselves. In both countries, especially religious NGOs were involved in counselling women traveling abroad. In West Germany, both Protestant and Catholic organizations were able to draw on a long history of advising women traveling – and potentially settling – abroad. This mission continued in the postwar period when it included efforts to dissuade West German women from marrying Muslim men and moving abroad with them.²³ Newspapers and

19 See, e.g., G. Eley, 'Empire by Land or Sea? Germany's Imperial Imaginary, 1840–1945,' in B. Naranch and Geoff Eley (eds) *German Colonialism in a Global Age* (Durham 2014), 19–45, E. Buettner, 'Europe and Its Entangled Colonial Pasts: Europeanizing the "Imperial Turn"', in Britta Timm Knudsen, Elizabeth Buettner, Elvan Zabunyan (eds) *Decolonizing Colonial Heritage: New Agendas, Actors, and Practices in and beyond Europe* (New York 2021), 25–43.

20 H. Fehrenbach, *Race after Hitler* (Princeton 2005). G. Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham 2016).

21 P. Hansen and S. Jonsson, 'Eurafrica Incognita: The Colonial Origins of the European Union', *History of the Present: A Journal of Critical History* 7, 1 (Spring 2017), 1–32; Andreas Eckert, 'Westdeutsche Entwicklungszusammenarbeit mit Afrika: Ein Blick auf die 1950er bis 1970er Jahre', in Alexander Gallus et al. (eds), *Deutsche Zeitgeschichte—Transnational*, ed. (Göttingen 2015), 33.

22 D. J. Guy, *Sex and Danger in Buenos Aires: Prostitution, Family, and Nation in Argentina*, vol. 1 (Lincoln 1991), 7.

23 J. Woesthoff, "'When I Marry a Mohammedan": Migration and the Challenges of Interethnic Marriages in Postwar Germany', *Contemporary European History* 22, 2 (May 2013), 199–231.

magazines often amplified the organizations' messaging, reporting on the tragic stories of failed marriages in the 'Orient', complementing their reports with excerpts of the advice literature the organizations produced.²⁴ In the Netherlands, religious (Catholic) NGOs for the protection of girls were concerned about these young women travelling to London or Paris, even more so if they travelled to Muslim Majority countries. Media reports with alarming headlines reported on the regulations that should be taken to prevent girls from doing so, such as an information leaflet that was distributed to Dutch girls who applied for a passport for the first time, and restrictions on leaving the country without a working permit.²⁵ In the postwar period, these concerns were increasingly expressed in the context of (the specter of) mixed marriage. These concerns seemed disproportionate to the number of West German and Dutch women actually getting married to Muslim men at the time. In 1960 West Germany, marriages between West German women and men from 'Africa and Asia' made up a little over 0.1 per cent that year among all marriages in West Germany (less than 200 weddings total).²⁶ In 1966, they still made up less than 0.2 per cent.²⁷ The statistics that are available for the Netherlands show that in 1966, 98 Dutch women were married to a Turkish husband and 47 to a Moroccan husband.²⁸

As explained in the introduction, the problematization of European girls travelling to Muslim majority countries and the problematization of mixed marriages also had colonial roots. In colonial contexts, mixed marriages upset the racial and gendered orders, and the mixed marriages of White European women with 'native' men – however rare – were a cause for concern.²⁹ In fact, the first mention of Dutch civil registrars providing counselling regarding mixed couples occurred within the context of political debates about marriages between Dutch girls and Indonesian men from the Dutch East Indies in the 1930s. The few marriages that occurred caused an uproar in the Netherlands and the colony and was covered in the media. Such discourses suggested that these marriages would certainly result in 'a world of marital misery' and 'endless tears' linking the marriages to polygamy and repudiation.³⁰ In the German context, similar trends can be observed in the late

24 J. Woesthoff, 'Equality Before the Law?: The Inter-marriage Debate in Post-Nazi Germany', in Julia Moses (ed) *Marriage and Modernity: Global Histories* (London 2017), 204–221.

25 'Meisjes zoeken het vreemde avontuur', *Maasbode* (24 September 1955).

26 The available statistics are flawed as they only provide information of couples who married in W. Germany, not abroad. See Bundesverwaltungsamt – Amt für Auswanderung, Rundschreiben Nr. 458/1962, Inhalt : A. Allgemeines; Frauenauswanderung; hier: Statistik über die Eheschließungen deutscher Frauen mit Ausländern in den Jahren 1959, 1960, und 1961, 10 December 1962, Archiv des Diakonischen Werkes der EKD (hereafter: ADW), HGSt 2512.

27 Bundesverwaltungsamt – Amt für Auswanderung, Rundschreiben Nr. 51/68, Inhalt : A. Allgemeines; hier: Statistik über die Eheschließungen deutscher Frauen mit Ausländern im Jahre 1966, 10 February 1968, ADW, HGSt 2991.

28 These numbers are about marriages in the Netherlands. D. Hondius, 'Gemengde Huwelijken, Gemengde Gevoelens: Aanvaarding en Ontwijking van Etnisch en Religieus Verschil', PhD diss., University of Amsterdam/SDU Publishers, The Hague (1999), 69.

29 A. L. Stoler, 'Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies', *The Journal of American History* 27, ¾ (2001), 829–65.

30 B. de Hart, 'Protecting Dutch Girls from the Harem: Premarital Counselling for Mixed Marriages with Muslim Men', *Journal of Migration History*, 3, 1 (2017), 78–103.

nineteenth and early twentieth century. While Germany, unlike the Netherlands, had been a colonial power only for a short time, ‘colonial excitement’ continued in ‘the exoticization of the “other”’, fundamentally expressed in gendered and racialized stereotypes, informing requests that reached West German consulates to intervene in relationships between White West German women and Black foreigners.³¹ This article points to the continuity apparent not just in these colonial racialized discourses but also the embassy staff. Several of the ambassadors involved in the counselling practices discussed here, as well as some civil registrars in the Netherlands, had experience in the Dutch East Indies. In the West German context, a number of officials staffing the consulates and embassies abroad in the postwar period had been members of the foreign service already during the Third Reich.³²

Second, the renewed attention paid to young women traveling abroad was due to the professionalization of consular services after the Second World War. Already in the early twentieth century, consulates took on responsibility for protecting the interests of emigrants and mediating between the country of origin and expatriate community. Emigrants as well as family left behind sought their help. The consulate’s official role in aiding emigrants stemmed from international agreements established in the first decade of the twentieth century on female trafficking.³³ After WWII, European states refocusing on the duty to care for citizens abroad has been linked to the development of the Western welfare state, and the growth of international travel driven by the introduction of passenger aircraft and concomitant growth of mass tourism in the 1960s and 1970s.³⁴ The enhanced role of consular services in protecting their citizens abroad was formally recognized in international law by the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations that vaguely defines consular functions as ‘Protecting in the receiving State the interests of the sending State and of its nationals, within the limits permitted by international law’ (Article 3.1.b). While the US has historically taken a more hands-on approach in the protection of its citizens abroad, this has historically been less the case in the nations discussed here.³⁵ Although neither the Dutch nor the West German state placed much emphasis on care for its citizens abroad in the postwar period, this article argues that female nationals of these countries who emigrated after marrying a (Muslim) foreigner were the notable exception.³⁶

31 C. Lorke, *Liebe verwalten: ‘Ausländerehen’ in Deutschland, 1870–1945* (Paderborn 2020), 267.

32 See, e.g., E. Conze, N. Frei, P. Hayes, M. Zimmermann, *Das Amt und die Vergangenheit: Deutsche Diplomaten im Dritten Reich und in der Bundesrepublik* (Munich 2010); T. W. Maulucci, *Adenauer’s Foreign Office: West German Diplomacy in the Shadow of the Third Reich* (DeKalb 2012); Eckart Conze, *Das Auswärtige Amt vom Kaiserreich bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich 2013).

33 E. Camiscioli, ‘Trafficking Histories: Women’s Migration and Sexual Labor in the Early Twentieth Century’, *Deportate, esuli, profughe. Rivista telematica di studi sulla memoria femminile*, 40 (2019), 1–13.

34 A. Tsinovoi and R. Adler-Nissen, ‘Inversion of the “Duty of Care”: Diplomacy and the Protection of Citizens Abroad, from Pastoral Care to Neoliberal Governmentality’, *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 13, 2 (2018), 211–32.

35 J. Jansen and R. Goverts, ‘Diaspora Policies, Consular Services and Social Protection for Dutch Citizens Abroad’, in J.-M. Lafleur and D. Vintila (eds) *Migration and Social Protection in Europe and Beyond*, vol. 2 (Cham 2020), 357–67.

36 A. Klekowski von Koppenfels, ‘Diaspora Policies, Consular Services and Social Protection for German Citizens Abroad’, in J.M. Lafleur and D. Vintila (eds) *Migration and Social Protection in Europe and Beyond*, vol. 2 (Cham 2020), 207–26.

The third development contributing to the German and Dutch consulates' concerns was the introduction of gender equality in nationality law. This made consulates responsible for women who married foreigners for the first time, as they continued to be citizens. Since 1953 in West Germany and 1964 in the Netherlands, women who marry a foreigner no longer automatically lose their citizenship. However, gender equality in citizenship law was far from complete and often resulted in legal uncertainty that could precipitate the couple's move abroad. Although their wives could remain citizens of their country of origin, the foreign husbands had no right to citizenship or establish family life with them in West Germany or the Netherlands and could only acquire a residence permit independently, based on employment. Furthermore, the children of these mixed couples were only eligible for their father's citizenship as women did not gain the right to pass on their citizenship to their offspring until 1975 in West Germany and 1985 in the Netherlands. Hence, the move to the husband's country of nationality may not always have been voluntary, and once there, it may have been difficult to return. For instance, when the civil war broke out in Lebanon in the 1970s, Dutch women living there with their Lebanese husbands asked the Dutch government for protection and claimed Dutch citizenship for their children. The government answered that nothing could be done because the families' Lebanese citizenship prevented such aid.³⁷ In the West German context, government officials also discussed the impossibility for native West German women (and their offspring) to return to their home country if they had taken on the citizenship of their husbands' home country and given up their West German citizenship in the process – a fact of which many seem not to have been aware until it was too late.³⁸

At the same time, naturalization of foreign women marrying Dutch or West German men became a mere formality the same year that gender equality in nationality law was introduced. This was informed by the assumption that foreign women would adapt quickly to the national way of life. Foreign husbands, on the other hand, were denied this access until 1969 in West Germany and 1985 in the Netherlands. Governments justified this by referring to 'matters of state security and foreign policy concerns', painting male third-country nationals as inherently suspicious if not outright untrustworthy and threatening the domestic and ethnic order as well as the natural gender order in which women followed their husbands and not the other way around.³⁹

Against this background, it is no coincidence that the discourse about unions between female citizens and Muslim or Arab men began to unfold and circulate between West German diplomatic outposts in Egypt and various governmental offices in the Federal Republic in 1955 – two years after the state introduced gender equality in nationality law.

37 National Archive Netherlands, Beleidsarchief IND, 1955–1985, Toegang 2.09.5027, Inv. nr. 2688, Letter dated 11 June 1978 signed by 12 Dutch women living in Lebanon.

38 Konsulat der BRD Alexandrien an den Herrn Regierungspräsidenten in Detmold, Betr.: Beibehaltung der deutschen Staatsang.; hier: Frau B.B. verh Z. [name anonymized to protect privacy], wohnhaft in Alexandrien, 8, rue Pietri, Saba Pach, 5 March 1962, PAAA B82 Nr. 902.

39 K. Schönwälder, *Einwanderung und ethnische Pluralität* (Essen 2001), 516. For the Dutch context, see B. De Hart, 'The morality of Maria Toet: Gender, citizenship and the Construction of the Nation-State', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 32, 1 (2006), 49–68.

The West German consulate in Alexandria reported that it had been repeatedly contacted by German women and their relatives to request information about the expediency of marrying an Egyptian national.⁴⁰ Since it was to be expected that the consulate was to continue receiving inquiries of this nature and that it might not be able to accommodate the workload that came with it, it suggested to refer general questions to emigration information centres in West Germany and continue to respond to individual requests for information about prospective partners. Illustrative of how information circulated is a letter from the German Ambassador in Egypt von Wahlert whose content ultimately became received wisdom that was widely disseminated by the various authorities advising the women. It was a response to a query sent by a staff member of the Near- and Middle East Association (*Nah- und Mittelost Verein*) in Hamburg. Apart from being posted to the staff of the association, the consulate also sent a copy to the Office of Emigration. Another copy made its way to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which forwarded it to the Embassy in Cairo with a request for comment.⁴¹ The consulate in Alexandria shared the letter with the Office of Emigration to make it aware of the requests the consulate received from women seeking information not only on marriage laws and customs but often also on their prospective marriage partners. As a result of these efforts, in 1961, the Office of Emigration within the Administrative Office of the Federal Republic published the first edition of the supplement 'Muslim Marriage Contracts' in its *Bulletin for People Working Abroad and for Emigrants: Women's Emigration*, becoming one of the key texts that aided advising efforts.⁴² The new fact sheet meant not only that civil registrars were now able to work with federally approved forms; by 1963, drafts of new service regulations for civil registrars also circulated, now *mandating* that registrars inform brides about the advantages of a marriage contract according to Muslim law and advising them to seek further information at emigration information centres. These mandates ultimately found their way into the revised version of the *Instructions for Civil Registrars and their Supervisory Authorities* published in 1968.⁴³

The German practice was at least partly influenced by information from Switzerland. In a October 1955 circular, the German Office of Emigration reprinted a newsletter by the Swiss Federal Office for Industry, Trade and Labor (*Schweizerisches Bundesamt für Industrie, Gewerbe und Arbeit*), which requested that on the issue of marriage to an 'oriental,' 'the emigration advising centres inform the women and girls particularly emphatically about the consequences of their far-reaching decision' to marry an 'oriental' due to the resurgence of international student exchange and commerce.⁴⁴ The Swiss bulletin outlined what would become the cornerstones of the discourse on 'marriage to

40 Konsulat der Bundesrepublik Deutschland an das Bundesamt für Auswanderung über das Auswärtige Amt Bonn, Betr.: Auskünfte über Eheschliessungen mit ägyptischen Staatsangehörigen, 9 August 1955, PAAA B84, Nr. 299.

41 Auswärtiges Amt to the Botschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Kairo, Betr.: Auskünfte über Eheschliessungen deutscher Frauen mit ägyptischen Staatsangehörigen, 24 October 1955, PAAA B84, Nr. 299.

42 Merkblätter für Auslandstätige und Auswanderer: Frauen-Auswanderung. Beilage: Islamische Eheverträge no. 10 (Cologne: Informationsstelle für Auswanderer und Auslandstätige, Bundesverwaltungsamt, 1961).

43 R. Baumann, *Dienstabweisung für die Standesbeamten und ihre Aufsichtsbehörden (DA) Neufassung 1968* (Berlin: Verlag für Standesamtswesen).

44 Bundesverwaltungsamt—Amt für Auswanderung, Rundschreiben Nr. 413/1955, 17 October 1955, ADW HGSt 2512.

Orientalists' for at least the next two decades, not only reflected in the German but also the Dutch debates on mixed marriage.

The discussion on warning Dutch girls about marriage to a Muslim or Arab seems to have started with a letter by the Dutch ambassador in Cairo, Egypt, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in July 1964, who mentioned the continuous requests by parents for information, just after a law had been passed that allowed Dutch women who married a foreigner to remain Dutch citizens.⁴⁵ The Dutch ambassador mentioned that the Dutch embassy in Egypt had been in touch with the German and British embassies, who explained that they never answered such individual requests for information directly, but sent them to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Dutch ambassador suggested to follow this example and added a draft information leaflet that will be discussed in more detail later. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs subsequently distributed this leaflet to other Dutch embassies in Muslim Majority countries, requesting their feedback. All the embassies supported the distribution of the leaflet among Dutch girls who wanted to marry Muslims.⁴⁶ The archives of the Dutch embassy in Algeria also contained the German leaflet, which staff suggested would be useful to warn Dutch girls against such marriages – explicitly using the word 'warn'.⁴⁷

Letters by German and Dutch embassy staff responding to information requests were considered authoritative reports on life in the Middle East, typically drawn from the experiences of the diplomatic staff, and were often not just sent to whoever had made the initial inquiry, but were widely passed around among different agencies, creating a mid-twentieth-century version of an information echo chamber, thereby reinforcing a unified message on the regulation, that is, prevention of mixed marriage. Infantino has typified today's consulates as belonging to a 'community of practice': a group of people who share a concern for something they do and want to do 'better,' and we suggest that this may also apply to consulates discussed in this article. They share and apply knowledge, and thus learn from each other to improve their practices. It explains why, despite diverging national paths, standardized practices were developed.⁴⁸

This does not mean that there was no discussion among authorities. One such discussion – stretching out over a number of years – ensued in 1957 after Syrian diplomats contacted the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany and demanded that it

45 National Archives Netherlands, Toegang: 2.05.313, Inv. Nr.4877, Opmerkingen betreffende huwelijken met islamieten uit diverse landen. 1964-1966, 9 July 1964, Cairo, letter from Ambassador De Ranitz to Minister of Foreign Affairs.

46 See the letters from Dutch ambassadors in Algeria, Ethiopia, Iran, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, Turkey. Archive Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Toegang: 2.05.313, Inv. Nr.4877, Opmerkingen betreffende huwelijken met islamieten uit diverse landen. 1964-1966.

47 National Archives Netherlands, 2.05.157, inv. 39. Stukken betreffende de nationaliteit- en huwelijkswetgeving van Algerije en de positie van de buitenlandse gehuwde vrouw in Algerije, 1968.

48 Infantino applied the concept 'community of practice' to present-day consular activities. See F. Infantino, 'How Does Policy Change at the Street Level? Local Knowledge, a Community of Practice and EU Visa Policy Implementation in Morocco', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 47, 5 (2021), 1028–46. R. Freeman, 'Learning in Public Policy', in M. Moran, M. Rein, and R. E. Goodin (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Public Policy* (Oxford 2006), 367–88. P. Duguid, 'The Art of Knowing: Social and Tacit Dimensions of Knowledge and the Limits of the Community of Practice', *The Information Society* 21, 2 (2005), 109–18.

investigates a fact sheet about Muslim marriage that the registrar's office in Frankfurt/Main was apparently using when German women and Muslim men came with the intention of getting married.⁴⁹ When German embassies in the Middle East responded to queries by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the content of the fact sheet, the delegations in places such as Iraq and Afghanistan merely confirmed or corrected the claims made in the original document, but the response from the embassy in Amman, Jordan proved more critical.⁵⁰ While it agreed that creating a fact sheet on Muslim marriage laws was important indeed, it cautioned that such a document would have to be carefully crafted by an expert in the field because of legal as well as social differences between the countries. According to embassy officials, the information in its current form had been 'rightly rejected [by the Syrian delegates] and would, if maintained in its current form and content, raise further objections'. By March 1959, the office of the Federal Minister of the Interior determined that the info sheet had to be reworked, based on the information it had received from its various delegations abroad. After numerous queries and exchanges of information, the revised document was approved on the federal level in 1960, three years after the initial complaint by the Syrian embassy.

Although the West German and Dutch authorities seemed eager to exchange information with other European embassies, they were more reluctant to exchange information with the authorities where their embassies were based. Indeed, there was ongoing concern that the information provided to West German and Dutch women would end up in the 'wrong' hands, namely that of the husbands, and subsequently the authorities of the husbands' respective countries of nationality. The main concern was that diplomatic relations with those countries would be harmed.⁵¹ For the Dutch ambassador in Egypt this was the reason to favour a standardized leaflet rather than provide individual advice. The latter ran the risk that opinions critical of the husband and his milieu as well as Islam and Muslim marriage mores would be shared, which would then inevitably end up in the hands of Egyptian authorities and would harm Egyptian-Netherlands diplomatic relations.⁵² The complaint lodged by the Syrian embassy in 1957 with the West German authorities proves that these were valid concerns. A similar incident occurred in the Netherlands in 1966. That year, the Dutch Ambassador in Algeria wrote to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs after learning that some municipalities in the Netherlands had put up leaflets in the registry office warning not to marry Algerians. The Ministry responded that although 'the information may be correct', out of courtesy to the Algerian authorities, such information should not be published. Although the Ministry

49 Syrische Gesandtschaft to Auswärtiges Amt, 2 July 1957, Bundesarchiv (hereafter BArch), B 106/42596.

50 Report from the Botschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland Bagdad, 14 May 1958, BArch, B 106/42596; report from the Botschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland Kabul re 'Eheschliessung deutscher Frauen mit afghanischen Staatsangehörigen,' 21 December 1958, BArch, B 141/49488; report from the Botschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland Amman re 'Eheschliessung einer deutschen Frau und eines mohammedanischen Staatsangehörigen,' 7 May 1958, BArch, B 106/42596.

51 It is possible that these concerns also existed for consular reports that expressed critical views on topics other than mixed marriage.

52 Archive Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Toegang: 2.05.313, Inv. Nr.4877, 9 July 1964, Cairo, letter from Ambassador De Ranitz to Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

denied that such information was indeed put up in registry offices, earlier research has demonstrated that the opposite was true.⁵³ Registry offices in the Netherlands provided such leaflets to women or put them up on the office wall to warn against marriages with Muslims and guestworkers. The West German ambassador von Wahlert had requested 'mutual discretion' regarding the information he had provided to avoid not just unpleasant but also potentially long-lasting consequences for diplomatic relations. This was a common element of the day-to-day mixed marriage discourse among government officials at the time.⁵⁴ For this very reason the Dutch ambassador in Algiers also suggested that more subtle and indirect information could be presented in Dutch women's magazines, which he also expected to be more effective. Evidence indicates that both Dutch and German consular authorities and state departments requested that the material be distributed by NGOs without crediting the original sources of the information so that it could not be traced back to official government sources.⁵⁵

The material provided by embassies gained overall support from NGOs in the Federal Republic and the Netherlands. In fact, NGOs also turned to authorities with requests for information, often on behalf of individual women. In West Germany, Christian welfare organizations supported state efforts to protect its young female citizens intent on marrying foreign, particularly Muslim, men – who had come to the Federal Republic as students or interns – primarily by discouraging them to enter such unions. These sentiments were often reflected in newspaper reports, as well.⁵⁶ In the Netherlands, the Ministries of Social Affairs, Justice and Cultural Affairs developed a Working Group Marriage and Family at the beginning of the 1960s, in response to the problems that they identified in marriages between labour migrants and Dutch girls. The Working Group included representatives from churches, and social work organizations such as the *International Social Service* and the Catholic NGO *Peregrines* which worked with migrants. The Working Group aimed to provide information and advice, and listed the problems of mixed relationships, based on actual cases presented

53 Archive Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Toegang: 2.05.313, Inv. Nr.4877, Opmerkingen betreffende huwelijken met islamieten uit diverse landen. 1964-1966, Embassy Algeria, Letter 30 July 1966 to Minister of Foreign Affairs. B. De Hart, 'Protecting Dutch Girls from the Harem: Premarital Counselling for Mixed Marriages with Muslim Men', *Journal of Migration History*, 3, 1 (2017), 78–103.

54 Von Wahlert, Konsulat der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Alexandrien, to the staff of the Nah- und Mittelostverein, 7 February 1955, PAAA B84 Nr. 299.

55 For the German context, see, e.g., Bundesminister der Justiz an die Landesjustizverwaltungen, Betr.: Eheschließung deutscher Mädchen mit Orientalen 28 Aug. 1961, PAAA B84 Nr. 409; An den Herrn Bundesminister der Justiz, betr.: Betr.: Eheschließung deutscher Mädchen mit Orientalen, 16. April 1963, PAAA B84 Nr. 409. National Archives Netherlands, Letter 15 October 1964 embassy Algiers to minister of foreign affairs. Toegang: 2.05.313, Inv. Nr.4877, Opmerkingen betreffende huwelijken met islamieten uit diverse landen. 1964–66.

56 This was not always the case, though, leading to major criticism from those focused on preventing these unions.

to them by social workers, and its content was very similar to the information provided by the embassies.⁵⁷

The information leaflets were partly developed in response to a continued stream of requests for information by women and their parents. In fact, sometimes authorities and parents worked together to agitate against couples' desire to marry. At times, embassies made inquiries about a prospective husband and provided this information to parents or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to do so.⁵⁸ Families contacted consular services when they had not heard from their daughters in a while and feared the worst or when they did not trust the positive news the correspondence provided. One particularly illustrative example is the case of Helga R, née S., who had been in a relationship with an Afghani partner for seven years, and whose mother from Hamburg contacted the West German Foreign Office to request help, because she had only gotten sporadic letters from her daughter whose messages made her concerned about her welfare.⁵⁹ Correspondence spanning at least six months and involving the Foreign Office and the consulate in Kabul shows the extent to which West German officials got involved in the fate of their (former) female citizens. The Consulate in Kabul was surprised to encounter Helga R. 'in European dress and appearing well-kept', when she showed up at the embassy to ask for help to find employment in Kabul, her relationship seemingly intact. For the Netherlands, the father's letter with which this article opened is just one example of a variety of similar letters parents in similar circumstances wrote to consulates in Egypt, Ethiopia, Libya and other countries. Among them is an inquiry from parents to the Dutch consulate in Lebanon to inquire about a 23-year old Lebanese man who had contact with their daughter although the parents had tried to prevent this contact. The parents expressed their concern about their daughter and asked for information on this man's 'antecedents, family and relations', as well as the situation and culture in Lebanon. The parents wrote to be very worried about their daughter and hoped for the consulate's cooperation.⁶⁰

These examples speak to how deeply entrenched racial and gendered perceptions were about these women and their Muslim partners and how the link between family and nation served to control the women's behaviour.⁶¹ At times, the women also really needed and appreciated the help they were offered. This was the case for a Dutch woman who lived with her Iranian husband in Iran and intended to leave him due to his violent behaviour towards her. The Dutch consulate aided her in developing a

57 On the activities of this working group, see D. Hondius, 'De "trouwlustige gastarbeider" en het Hollandse meisje. De bezorgde ontmoediging van Italiaans- en Spaans-Nederlandse huwelijken', *Migrantenstudies* 16:4 (2000) 129–145. B. De Hart, 'Protecting Dutch Girls from the Harem: Premarital Counselling for Mixed Marriages with Muslim Men', *Journal of Migration History*, 3, 1 (2017), 78–103.

58 Archive Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Toegang: 2.05.313, Inv. Nr.4877, Opmerkingen betreffende huwelijken met islamieten uit diverse landen. 1964–1966. Letter Dutch Embassy of Sudan to Ministry of Foreign Affairs the Netherlands, 10 October 1966.

59 Martha S., Hamburg, to Carl Carstens, Auswärtiges Amt, 21 November 1963, PAAA B82 Nr. 445.

60 Archive Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Toegang: 2.05.313, Inv. Nr.4877, Dutch embassy Lebanon, Letter of 4 January 1973

61 Botschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Kabul tot he Auswärtiges Amt, Betr: Deutsche Frauen im Orient, hier: Helga R, née S., Kabul, 18 April 1964, PAAA B82 Nr. 445.

scheme to escape his violence and return to the Netherlands, however, the women were not always happy with the interference in their marital choice and at times actively resisted, as we will further demonstrate below.

The historical institutional context outlined above fundamentally informed the way state authorities understood the relationships between West German and Dutch women and their partners from Muslim majority countries, and the way those authorities communicated that understanding to the prospective brides and their families who sought the state's guidance. First, the information officials disseminated was built on strongly gendered discourses, portraying women as naïve, passive, unable or unwilling to grasp the seriousness of the situation in which they would find themselves in a Muslim majority country, married to a Muslim man. While the press also sometimes critically covered marriages between foreign women and West German men (particularly prominent were stories about middle-aged West German men and their young Asian so-called 'mail order' wives) these concerns not only occurred later, but more importantly, never led to the type of state interventions discussed here. Rather, the discourse about mixed marriage addressed in this article focused exclusively on the native female citizens of the Netherlands and West Germany and their Muslim partners, not the foreign wives of West German or Dutch men. In the West German context, officials argued, for example, that these women exhibited daring behaviour when they showed no 'inner restraint towards strangers'.⁶² Worse, not only did they welcome foreigners' advances, they initiated the contact themselves.⁶³ Such behaviour was considered proof that these women were 'afflicted with superhuman stupidity' despite the strenuous efforts to discourage them from entering into these relationships.⁶⁴ In the Netherlands, officials wrote that such marriages involved especially Dutch women 'who did not have a puritan outlook on life and could not find someone on the Dutch marriage market'.⁶⁵ These attitudes reflect the familiar discourse on White women marrying racialized men.⁶⁶ They supposedly did not understand the absolute male authority and female oppression in 'Arab' or 'Oriental' countries, including the husband's right to polygamy (making the women nothing but a 'a kind of better slave'), to end marriage through simple repudiation, and to physically discipline his spouse.⁶⁷ The fact that the vast majority of officials contributing to the discourse, including the non-clerical staff at Dutch and German embassies and consulates, were male, no doubt also explains this characterization, though it was not only the

62 Protokoll der 19. Konferenz für Ausländerfragen am 2. Juni 1966, p. 5, ADW HGSt 2513.

63 Letter from the Landesjugendamt Rheinland-Pfalz an das Außenamt der Evangelischen Kirche, Frankfurt, 21 Oct. 1963, ADW HGSt 2991

64 Letter from Dambacher to Mauritz, 26 Oct. 1965; ADW, HGSt 2512.

65 Th. J. Van der Heijden, 'Huwelijken tussen gastarbeiders en Nederlandse vrouwen. Deel I en ii', *De Praktijkids* (1967) 126–29, 151–62, 161.

66 J. Ryan, "'She Lives with a Chinaman': Orient-ing "White" Women in the Courts of Law', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 23, 60 (1999), 149–59; L. Tabili "'Women of a Very Low Type": Crossing Racial Boundaries in Imperial Britain', in Laura Frader and Sonya O. Rose (eds) *Gender and Class in Modern Europe* (Ithaca 1996), 165–90.

67 See, e.g., N. Zimmer, ed., *Heirat mit Ausländern* (Hofheim/Ts 1968), 16, 36; E. Volandt, *Ausländer zum Heiraten gesucht* (Gladbeck 1963), 4.

men whose perspectives were informed by these gendered assumptions.⁶⁸ Authorities also stressed that wives rarely had any recourse against such action, that in the majority of Muslim countries a difference in religion between the spouses meant forfeiting any inheritance rights; that children without exception would follow their father's religion and that the husband had the right to prohibit his wife from leaving the couple's residence. Islamic family law, as it had done in the colonies, served as a tool to depict Muslim majority countries as intrinsically different in a period when emancipation of women in West Germany and the Netherlands was far from complete.⁶⁹ Even if the husbands had adapted to life in Europe, once back in their home country, it was assumed that they would inevitably revert to his home country's customs, leaving the European wife stranded in an utterly alien world that she could not have previously imagined.

Second, the information was highly racialized, and generally made no distinctions between the different home countries of the husbands. While race became a taboo term in the aftermath of colonialism and Nazism respectively, it did not make racism disappear. Instead, postwar concepts of cultural difference served as a proxy for race. Avoiding arguments based on biological notions of incompatibility, they nevertheless justified discrimination on political, legal and economic grounds.⁷⁰ Evidence for these assumptions can be found in the leaflets generated by or with the help of the consular outposts that asserted that cultural difference could not be overcome. Rather, Muslim men were intrinsically 'Oriental' and their views on women, violence and marriage inextricably connected and unchanging. Thus, it is no surprise that the leaflets were thought to be applicable to all countries in the 'Arab world'. This is exemplified by the Dutch leaflet that was first developed in the United Arab Emirates and adopted by the embassy in Egypt under the heading 'Some remarks on Mohammedan Egyptians', which was crossed out and replaced by the term 'Arabs'. The Dutch draft leaflet was sent to countries ranging from Sudan to Turkey.⁷¹ The situation was similar in the West German context where the terms 'Mohammedan' and 'Afro-Asian' were used interchangeably. Furthermore, the women were often referred to as 'European' rather than Dutch in the Dutch correspondence, building on colonial racial categorizations of 'European' vs 'natives' as was common in the Dutch East Indies.

In this construction of the Muslim majority countries as inherently 'different', class seems to have been overridden by gender and race. The men were portrayed as merely pretending to be of a higher class when they were not. Many of the prospective husbands were students, and some of them received stipends from their host country's government. As a German official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs argued, however, those generous stipends might cause German girls who didn't know any better to have 'unreal

68 In the German context, Ruth Braun, the head of the Württemberg Association of the Friends of Young Girls and a prominent voice in the early decades of the mixed marriage debate, very much agreed with these assessments of the women who wished to marry Muslim foreigners.

69 J. Clancy-Smith and F. Gouda, *Domesticating the empire: race, gender, and family life in French and Dutch colonialism* (Charlottesville 1998).

70 Rita Chin and Heide Fehrenbach, 'Introduction', in Rita Chin et al., *After the Nazi Racial State* (Ann Arbor 2009), 29. Archive Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Toegang: 2.05.313, Inv. Nr.4877. Letter of 4 January 1973 to Dutch consulate in Lebanon.

71 6 August 1964, letter Directie General Affairs to Minister of Foreign Affairs, send to embassies in Rabat, Tunis, Tripoli, Algiers, Beiroet, Amman, Bagdad, Damascus, Teheran and Khartoum.

expectations,' leading them 'to believe that they found a fairy-tale prince or the son of an oil millionaire'.⁷² In the Dutch context, these assertions reflected the interwar discourse on Dutch 'girls' and Muslim Indonesian students mentioned earlier depicting 'common natives' as 'princes' who made Dutch women's heads spin so much that they wanted to marry them.⁷³ In West Germany, pre-1945 attitudes continued to inform perceptions of mixed marriage, as well. In one instance it originated an article published during the Weimar Republic and written by Ernst Brandis, who had become part of the Reich Ministry of Justice and served as a deputy member of the Reich Committee on the Protection of German Blood under the Nazis. In the 1927 article Brandis condemned 'marriages between German women and members of half-civilized nations that are more or less removed from European cultural circles [*Kulturkreis*]'.⁷⁴ The information was still deemed valid 30 years later when it informed advice given to German women before it came under scrutiny.

Given these views, German and Dutch authorities warned that women would inevitably end up in unbearable and unhygienic living conditions abroad, stuck with her in-laws; situations to which adaptation was hardly thought possible. As the Dutch ambassador in Ethiopia noted in response to an individual request of information: Even Ethiopians of the upper-class lived in unimaginably primitive accommodations. Rent had risen so much that only Ethiopians from wealthy families could afford 'European' accommodations. Even if there were other Europeans living in the country, Dutch authorities explained, one could not expect a western atmosphere and the comparison with European clubs in the colonies was completely flawed.⁷⁵

Finally, the overall message of the information provided was clear: marriages of European women and Muslim men were doomed to fail. In this sense, the aim of the brochures and leaflets was not to inform, but to warn: to advise against marriages with men from this region and implore women to rethink their decision. As the Dutch ambassador in Libya wrote: 'Many, if not most, marriages of Arabs, especially Mohammedans, with western women end in a disappointment for the latter, if not worse'.⁷⁶ Since the beginning of the mixed marriage information campaign in the Federal Republic, various experts had quoted failure rates of between 90 and 99 per cent for mixed marriages without hard evidence. As one official admitted in a news story, if the marriages 'fail, it happens abroad, and we [here in West Germany] don't hear about it... While I cannot rely on statistics, I

72 VLRI Dr. von Borries, LR Hamburger, Aufzeichnung, Betr: Helga Rahmatian geb. Spranger. Bezug: Schreiben der Mutter, Frau Schliep, Hamburg, vom 16. Feb. 1964, 28 February 1964, PAAA B82 Nr. 445.

73 B. de Hart, 'Protecting Dutch Girls from the Harem: Premarital Counselling for Mixed Marriages with Main Muslim Men', *Journal of Migration History*, 3, 1 (2017), 78–103.

74 E. Brandis, 'Zum Kapitel: Verehelichung deutscher Frauen mit Ausländern', *Zeitschrift für Standesamtswesen* 7 (1927), 199–200. Cited by the Higher Regional Court president in Frankfurt, Hesse, in a letter to the Hessian Minister of Justice, Betr: Eheschliessungen zwischen deutschen Frauen und Mohammedanern, 17 Sept. 1957, Bundesarchiv (hereafter BArch), B 106/42596.

75 Archive Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Toegang: 2.05.313, Inv. Nr.4877, Letter embassy Sudan to Ministry of Foreign Affairs 10 October 1968.

76 Archive Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Toegang: 2.05.313, Inv. Nr.4877, Letter Consulate Libya to Cairo, 2 May 1964. Living circumstances European woman in Libya.

estimate that 90 percent of these marriages fail'.⁷⁷ On the one hand, this failure was attributed to the Muslim men who reverted to supposedly backward patriarchal customs once they returned to their home country, forgetting the attributes of civilization that they had seemingly acquired in Europe. On the other hand, according to the authorities, women themselves were also to blame, as they did not possess enough 'stamina' to endure the circumstances in their husband's country, let alone thrive under them. They had not adequately thought through their choices, and the tragedy of it all was that they had no way of returning home. According to that narrative, at the mercy of the husband and his family, these women often had no inner reserves left to escape, and if they did, they found out that they could not count on help from the outside, that is, authorities of their country of origin. This was particularly true if they had acquired the husband's citizenship – their children automatically did so at birth. Ultimately, as the Swiss bulletin that became a model for German information material, summarized, 'The circumstances in these countries of the Middle East always prove to be stronger than the utmost good will and the strongest emotions for the [European] partner'.⁷⁸

As most of the sources informing this article are culled from archives holding official correspondence between institutions, they do not provide much in the way of couples' voices or agency – how they responded to warnings from the authorities. The few sources in the archives that do allow insight into those aspects of the discourse are usually limited to the voices of European women, hardly ever those of the Muslim partners. Still, we found that while parents and state at times worked together to keep the couple apart, the women themselves were not always happy with the information provided or even outright rejected it.

For the Netherlands, correspondence between the end of the 1940s and early 1950s shows, for example, that a Dutch woman who had worked with a British family in Iran and expressed the wish to the Dutch embassy that she wanted to work as a nanny for an Iranian family was advised by the embassy not to do so. She was warned that she would not feel at home in such an alien culture. The woman rejected this advice, answering that she had never felt at home with the British family and that she intended to stay in Iran and marry an Iranian husband – which she eventually did. She stated that she 'had lived abroad before and had always fared well in being responsible for herself'.⁷⁹

In West Germany, the (in)famous case of 19-year-old Heidi Dichter was the most publicized case of a woman going against official advice, receiving widespread media attention in 1961, also in the Netherlands. It was widely reported that she had married a Kuwaiti sheik more than 40 years her senior before being repudiated after three weeks, then reuniting three months later and eventually splitting up for good in early 1962. Lawyers and officials in the German state department and abroad were mobilized to

77 'Das Märchen kann leicht zum Alptraum werden. Jährlich heiraten rund 15 000 Deutsche einen Ausländer', *Neue Württembergische Zeitung*, 18 November 1972.

78 Bundesverwaltungsamt—Amt für Auswanderung, Rundschreiben Nr. 413/1955, 17 October 1955, ADW HGSt 2512.

79 National Archives Netherlands, archive Dutch embassy in Iran, Toegang: 2.05.342, Inv. Nr. 99, letter 30 May. Answer 11 juni 1949, by consul Montijn.

investigate the case's financial and legal ramifications after Dichter lodged a legal claim for damages. A German official at the embassy in Baghdad deemed Dichter's financial demands puzzling, as she could not have been 'more lucky to have been prematurely repudiated'.⁸⁰ Rather than returning to West Germany – the only sensible solution in the eyes of German officials – Dichter married a Lebanese businessman in 1962 and settled in Beirut. As the 1975 article 'Heidi Is Without a Sheikh, but Nevertheless Very, Very Rich,' published in the tabloid *Bild* reported, Dichter lived a happy, very comfortable life with her Lebanese husband and two children, defying common conceptions of the naïve, foolish European woman whose infatuation with an 'Oriental' ensured her own demise.⁸¹

The informational literature given to Dutch and German women also did not remain uncontested. In 1966, a Dutch newspaper reported that some couples rejected the flyer distributed by the registry offices in the Netherlands as racial discrimination. The Head of the Amsterdam registry office defended himself against these accusations, stating that the only intention was to warn the girls about what could happen. Directly linking the colonies and the metropole, the newspaper explained that the Head of the civil registry spoke from his experience as a former civil servant in the Dutch East Indies.⁸² In West Germany, as late as the late 1970s, mixed couples were confronted with and spoke out against news reports that were based on the well-worn tropes of predatory foreign men and 'sexually abnormal' German women or those in need of 'charitable care'.⁸³ And members of the Stuttgart branch of the grassroots organization IAF (Alliance of German Women Married to Foreigners) acknowledged in their annual report that they had let themselves be 'blindsided' by a reporter who had 'steered' the interview in a particular way: already before the interview commenced, the journalist 'had decided on the main focus together [not only] with Frau Braun,' – who, in her long-serving role the head of the regional branch of Württemberg Association of the Friends of Young Girls had diligently worked to dissuade German girls from falling for foreign Muslim men – but also 'consular officials and marriage counselling offices'. As the report maintained, the IAF members had been merely meant to serve as 'living examples that [marriages with foreign men] will most certainly fail', and ended with the bitter note that it was a 'very negative experience. We have learned from it'.⁸⁴ In the Netherlands, a NGO of Dutch

80 Botschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (hereafter: BRD) in Bagdad, an das Auswärtige Amt (hereafter: AA) unter Bezugnahme auf den Erlass vom 12. Mai 1961, 13 June 1961, BArch, gez. v. Barga, B 141/49488 (1955–64).

81 'Heidi ist ohne Scheich—und trotzdem sehr sehr reich', *Bild*, 1 April 1975.

82 'Soms verstrekkende consequenties. Huwelijk met arbeider uit hetbuitenland', *Leeuwarder Courant*, 15 October 1966.

83 Bundestreffen 1976 der IAF: Ausländer und Frauen dokumentieren Geschlossenheit *IAF-Informationen*, No. 1 (1977), n.p.

84 Berichte aus den IAF Gruppen: Stuttgart, Jahresbericht 1978/79, p. 18. Still in 1984, an article in IAF's magazine about the advising services the organization provided, challenged: 'where else should [the women] who come to us, go? To the emigration advising offices, even if they don't want to emigrate but stay here [in West Germany]? Or to the foreigner office that often only provides the bare minimum [of information]? Or to one of the church offices that more often than not still try to convince us that 'mixed marriages' are no good, won't last?' In: 'Komm doch mal vorbei', *IAF-Informationen*, No. 2 (1984), 32.

women with foreign partners established in 1984, frequently spoke out against the negative stereotypes of such marriages.⁸⁵

Exploring in tandem the attitudes and actions of Dutch and German consular officials toward (prospective) marriages between Dutch or West German women and third country Muslim men, this article brings to light how orientalist and gendered ideology suffused attitudes about mixed marriage in Europe, of which these two consular archives are examples. It also indicates the cross-fertilization of ideas about and the multiple, remarkable similarities in approaches to regulating 'mixed' marriages among Dutch and German consular officials. These similarities can be seen as indicators of the countries' shared colonial experiences despite their seemingly divergent national histories. As Elizabeth Buettner recently argued, they reflect that 'empire and colonialism [are] shared, if highly differentiated, European experiences'.⁸⁶ These transnational colonial continuities demonstrate that colonialism needs to be examined as a common European heritage, defining the continent and the wider world beyond the period of formal empires.

Race and gender ideologies have been key components of that heritage. In the mixed marriage discourse, it has been reflected in the (tacit) assumption that Muslim men would not make acceptable citizens in the respective European countries, due to supposed insurmountable cultural differences. These assumptions were underwritten by law. Consulates played a central role in shaping the mixed marriage narrative. Focusing on that aspect of the discourse illuminates a part of the history of the foreign service that has so far received little attention. While generally portrayed as hands-off, this article shows how heavily involved consular officials were in aiding efforts to prevent mixed marriage. A growing number of studies have explored recent forms of consular practices, showing how consular officials wield broad discretionary powers that play a crucial role in migration control. These works highlight European states' ongoing attempts to regulate mixed marriage by policing legal access of non-European partners *into* Europe.⁸⁷ In particular, attention has been increasingly on so-called 'sham' or 'fake' marriages, a concept created by bureaucratic practices also of consular officials to fight against unwanted migration. Here, too, the focus is on relationships and marriages of White women with racialized men. Our study contributes to and expands upon this scholarship by demonstrating that these restrictive practices are by no means new but rooted in historical and colonial practices that still serve to justify restrictive family migration policies and surveilling

85 B. de Hart, 'Protecting Dutch Girls from the Harem: Premarital Counselling for Mixed Marriages with Muslim Men', *Journal of Migration History*, 3, 1 (2017), 78–103.

86 E. Buettner, 'Europe and Its Entangled Colonial Pasts: Europeanizing the "Imperial Turn,"' in *Decolonizing Colonial Heritage: New Agendas, Actors, and Practices in and beyond Europe*, eds. B. Timm Knudsen, E. Buettner, E. Zabunyan (New York: Routledge, 2021), 36.

87 See, e.g., M. J. Alpes and A. Spire, 'Dealing with Law in Migration Control: The Powers of Street-Level Bureaucrats at French Consulates', *Social and Legal Studies*, 23, 2 (2014), 261–74; F. Infantino, 'Bordering "fake" Marriages? The Everyday Practices of Control at the Consulates of Belgium, France and Italy in Casablanca', *Emografia e ricerca qualitativa*, 7, 1 (2014), 27–48. S. Scheel, 'Appropriating Mobility and Bordering Europe through Romantic Love: Unearthing the Intricate Intertwinement of Border Regimes and Migratory Practices', *Migration Studies*, 5, 3 (2017), 389–408.

women's partner choice. As our work also shows, however, in the early postwar decades, the discourse on mixed marriage was focused on emigration, as states were fundamentally concerned about and heavily invested in regulating mixed marriage by preventing female citizens from marrying foreign men – particularly from Muslim majority countries – and moving abroad. Concerns about the immigration of male partners and the concomitant rise of the so-called sham marriage debates only (re)emerged in the late 1970s after foreign labour recruitment was halted and these men had a claim legal residence in West Germany or the Netherlands.⁸⁸ Crucially, the mixed marriage discourse has in many ways remained remarkably similar over the decades, employing tropes of the racialized Muslim man and the naïve White woman, even if the focus has shifted over time from emigration to immigration and from wives following their husbands to husbands following their wives. It shows the long history of the way concerns of the family aligned with those of the state, a history that needs to be remembered to fully appreciate contemporary debates on the issue of mixed marriage and family migration.

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88 For a comparison of earlier with more recent discourses of marriages of convenience, see B. de Hart, 'The Odd Couple: Gender, Securitization, Europeanization, and Marriage of Convenience in Dutch Family Migration Policies (1930–2020)', in A.-M. D'Aoust (ed) *Transnational Marriage and Partner Migration: Constellations of Security, Citizenship, and Rights* (New Brunswick 2022), 31–48.