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The Limits of European Islam: Turkish Islamic Umbrella Organizations and their Relations with Host Countries—France and Germany

Z. AYCA ARKILIC

Abstract

This article discusses how Turkish Muslim leaders perceive and respond to host-state policies engineered to incorporate Islam into French and German societies. It shows that the Turkish Islamic umbrella organizations are more critical of host-state policies in Germany than in France. More specifically, for leaders in both France and Germany, the French Council for the Muslim Faith is regarded as a more legitimate and effective institution compared with its counterpart, the German Islam Conference. Even though in France the constitution demands a strict separation of church and state, in reality, rules are relaxed in a way to provide benefits to Islamic organizations. In contrast, while the constitution is more accommodating in Germany, this flexibility has not led to favorable relations with Islamic organizations. Based on interviews conducted with organization leaders and policy-makers, this article delves into the gap between the legal rights reserved for Muslim organizations and their implementation in practice.

Introduction

Large-scale Muslim migration to Western Europe began in the aftermath of World War II, supplying low-skilled workers needed for rebuilding Europe's devastated economies. As the economic decline of the 1970s led to a decrease in the demand for low-skilled laborers, Muslim migration flagged during this period. With the introduction of expansive policies on family reunification and political asylum, however, the Muslim population in Europe increased again during the 1980s and 1990s.¹ Over time, European policy-makers have come to the realization that Muslim migration is not a passing phenomenon. As a result, the incorporation of Muslims into the political, economic, and social structures of European societies has become one of the most important policy questions faced by Europe today.

The majority of Muslim migrants in Western Europe emigrate from Turkey. France and Germany not only host the largest Muslim populations in Europe, but they are also the most popular emigration destinations for Turkish citizens.² France and Germany constitute ideal cases for comparison also because these states have different political systems and institutional patterns of church–state regimes. Specifically, Germany is a federal republic that blends Catholic and Protestant traditions, whereas France is a unitary state with a dominant Catholic tradition. More importantly, in France, there is a strict separation between church and state. German constitutional law, on the other hand, paves the way for many different types of cooperation between the state and religious communities.³

The goal of this study is to examine how Turkish Islamic organization leaders based in France and Germany perceive and respond to host-country policies constructed to incorporate Islam into European societies. This paper specifically analyzes how the contemporary Muslim Councils and theology institutes built in France and Germany have been received by Turkish Islamic umbrella organizations. So far, only a few studies have embraced a bottom-up perspective, and even fewer have examined how Islamic umbrella organizations respond to changes in the political climate and discourse on integration and Islam.⁴ The existing analyses, however, are restricted to either a single organization or a single host country, and they do not focus on a comparison of a specific Muslim community's perceptions of the Muslim Councils and theology institutes established in two different countries. Moreover, the existing large-scale surveys examining the incorporation of Islam in Europe lack rich empirical data on Turkish Muslim leaders' interactions with policy-makers in host states.⁵

This article focuses on the three largest and most important Turkish Islamic umbrella organizations operating in France and Germany: (1) the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Türk İslam Birliği* or DİTİB); (2) the Islamic Community of the National Vision (*İslam Toplumu Millî Görüş* or Millî Görüş); and (3) the Union of Islamic Cultural Centers (*İslam Kültür Merkezleri Birliği* or Süleymancılar). The scope is limited to these organizations because they have each served as bridges between host states and the Turkish Muslim population through their participation in the French Council for the Muslim Faith (*Conseil Français du Culte Musulman* or CFCM) and the German Islam Conference (*Deutsche Islam Konferenz* or DIK).⁶ Focusing on Islamic umbrella organizations is essential because as the de facto representatives of Islam in Europe they constitute the most important claims-making actors.⁷ Furthermore, Islamic organizations have become especially important players in the wake of the "Islamization" of migration since the 9/11 attacks.⁸

I argue that the Turkish Islamic umbrella organizations in Germany are more critical of host-state policies and policy-makers than those in France. This finding is surprising given that scholars have claimed that France has been less accommodating than Germany to the religious rights of Muslims,⁹ and that Germany "upholds an even more protective regime for religious freedoms than one can find in the United States".¹⁰ Other scholars have found that France ranks lower than Germany with respect to citizenship rights.¹¹ In Germany, Turkish Muslim leaders feel resentment when constitutional guarantees of religious freedom and dual citizenship rights do not apply to them but are granted to other religious groups. This is because "in Germany, the bigger issue is to treat organized Islam on an equal footing with the historically established religions (...) and the equality claim is not rebutted in principle but contingently, and on thinning empirical grounds".¹² Accordingly, one needs to pay special attention to how the legal rights reserved for Muslim organizations in the constitution are applied in practice.¹³

Turkish Islamic organization representatives are also critical of Germany's excessive state intervention in the German Islam Conference and theology institutes. Muslim leaders claim that policy-makers' emphasis on security and terrorism in approaching Muslim organizations has further complicated Turkish Islamic organizations' relations with German authorities. These officials identify practical difficulties originating from the federal structure of Germany and bureaucratic hurdles faced while attaining building authorizations and work permits as other factors obstructing harmonious relations with state representatives. These grievances affect the attitudes and behaviors of Muslim leaders. A good example is the creation of the Coordination Council of Muslims in

Germany (*Koordinationsrat der Muslime in Deutschland* or KRM) as a bottom-up alternative to the DIK. Turkish Muslim leaders view KRM as a more serious and legitimate interlocutor than the DIK. Such resentment has also precipitated an increasing number of protests and political campaigns, and the suspension of collaboration with the DIK and the German Federal Ministry of Interior Affairs at various points.

Contrary to Germany, France keeps an equal distance from all religious groups, which allows Turkish Muslim leaders to form better relations with state officials. First, Turkish Muslim organizations are recognized as respected cooperation partners by French authorities: *Millî Görüş*, which is viewed as a suspicious organization in Germany, is a permanent member of the CFCM in France. Moreover, DİTİB has been asked to chair the CFCM from 2017 to 2019, and it has played a dominant role in the construction and administration of the Strasbourg Theological Institute. Turkish Islamic organizations in France rarely come together to express demands or complaints. Finally, Turkish Muslim leaders in France receive subsidies for their cultural and sporting activities from local authorities. In other words, even though religious liberty restrictions are more severe in France, which is evidenced by the strict separation of state and religion and the 2010 *burqa* law, certain privileges, benefits, and substantial institutional recognition entitled to Muslim organizations have led Turkish Islamic umbrella organizations to evaluate state policies positively and prevented potential confrontations with state officials.

This article relies on extensive fieldwork conducted in France and Germany between 2013 and 2014. It employs a detailed examination of governmental and organizational publications and media reports. In addition, semi-structured in-depth interviews are conducted with chairs, spokespersons, and executive board members of Turkish Islamic umbrella organizations, as well as French and German policy-makers, who have been involved in the formation and operation of the Muslim Councils created in France and Germany.

The following section reviews how France and Germany have been compared in the existing literature with respect to their relations with Muslims. Next, I provide an overview of the Muslim Councils founded in France and Germany to compare how host countries have attempted to “institutionalize” Islam. Drawing on original data, this article concludes with a discussion of how three Turkish Islamic umbrella organizations have perceived and responded to host-country policies and policy-makers in France and Germany.

Muslim Religious Right in France and Germany

The political opportunity structure framework¹⁴ contrasts states with very different citizenship and nationhood configurations, arguing that the institutional dimensions of a state define the available channels of access to social, political, and economic opportunities for Muslims. While the political opportunity structure framework enables scholars to compare different countries on the basis of their institutional reactions to Muslims’ concerns and demands, others have suggested that this approach should be accompanied by a detailed analysis of church–state relations to account for host states’ relations with Muslim communities.¹⁵ A comparative analysis of national models of religious governance has become more relevant over time as the issue of the integration of Islam has attracted more scholarly interest.¹⁶ Most recently, scholars have criticized the static nature of the church–state relations account by pointing to changes these regimes underwent as they interacted with Muslims.¹⁷ The next section will take a closer look at the

accommodation of Muslim religious rights in France and Germany at the organizational level.

France: Strict Separation of Church and State

In France, the state cannot intervene in religious affairs and fund or cooperate with religious communities. A strict church–state separation prohibits France from recognizing or subsidizing any religion, as stated in Section II of the Act of 9 December 1905. Accordingly, France does not grant any special legal status to any religion. In France, minority identity does not provide legitimate grounds for making claims directed at the state, and as a result voting along lines of religious identity has been limited. Thus, several scholars have argued that political mobilization within the French political system has been especially difficult for French Muslims.¹⁸

The Islamic scarf controversy (*l'affaire du foulard*) became one of the most contentious debates for Muslims after the wearing of the headscarf, along with the Jewish kippa and large Christian crosses, was prohibited in 2004 by the French law on secularism and ostentatious religious symbols at school. The 2010 Gerin Report initiated by André Gerin, a member of the National Assembly, escalated the politicization of full-face veils (*voile intégral*), such as *burqas* and *niqabs*.¹⁹ Influenced by this report, the law prohibiting clothes covering the full face came into force in 2011.²⁰ In addition, despite the existence of 20 private Islamic schools,²¹ no public school provides religious education in France.

In France, religions can be represented by organizations in two ways. First, Muslims are entitled to establish associations under the 1901 Act, which recognizes the freedom of association as a fundamental public right. According to this Act, organizations can be freely formed by obtaining legal personality through mere declaration, and can only be abolished under limited circumstances related to offences against public policy. However, in practice, certain relaxations are allowed. For instance, under specific conditions, associations forged under the ordinary law of associations governed by the 1 July 1901 Act can be categorized as “public utility” associations, and can receive tax benefits.²² Foreign associations were long prohibited due to specific legislation that required prior authorization for foreign associations. The Act of 9 October 1981, however, abolished this requirement. After this modification, a plethora of Islamic organizations were founded with religious, cultural, charitable, and educational goals. Islamic organizations, similar to any organization covered under the 1901 Act, can apply to public authorities for subsidies for cultural and other activities. Legally, they can only receive hand-delivered gifts with no tax benefits. Significant tax exemptions, however, are granted on goods if the organization falls under the category of a “public utility” association.²³

Second, the 1905 Act allows denominational groups to form religious associations. The organization must have a solely religious purpose, and cannot receive any subsidy out of public funds according to Section 4 of the Act of 9 December 1905. In practice, however, they benefit from tax exemptions when they receive donations if they claim to practice a religion and if the French state openly recognizes their status as a religious association. As soon as its charter is prepared, an organization can declare itself a “religious” association. The authorities, however, ultimately decide if the association can benefit from the tax exemptions granted to this category of association.²⁴ Even though the neutral French legal structure²⁵ poses threats to individual liberties, as seen, France has provided certain benefits to Muslim organizations.²⁶

Germany: Pluralism and Cooperation

Contrary to France, the German legal system is more accommodating when it comes to providing freedom for the practice of religion, including Islam. Germany is a secular state and does not have a state religion.²⁷ Religious freedom and public law are discussed under Article 4 and its Sections 1 and 2 of the German Basic Law.²⁸ In Germany, religious communities in general are not recognized. Under the legal provisions on civil associations, the preferable forms of organizations can be chosen, and organizations are capable of holding and exercising legal rights. The same regulation is valid when forming organizations under private law. German constitutional law on religious organizations paves the way for many different types of cooperation between the government and religious communities in the public sphere, including religious instruction at public schools and the provision of social welfare services.²⁹

Since German law does not provide a broad system of legal recognition of religious communities, each group can choose the form of organization it prefers, and obtain legal rights on this basis.³⁰ The law governing the relationship between church and state (*Staatskirchenrecht*), which entailed a special form of status for religious communities called the status of corporation under public law (*Körperschaft des öffentlichen Rechts*) came into being with the Weimar Constitution. As Article 140 of the German Constitution adopted Articles 136, 137, 138, 139, and 141 of the Weimar Constitution, the religious communities operating at the time of the enactment of the 1949 Basic Law, including Evangelical, Catholic, and Jewish communities, automatically received the status of corporation under public law. Other foundations can be eligible for this status if they meet certain specific criteria regarding the permanency of their activities and the size of their membership. This status, for instance, requires that the community must have been in existence for 30 years. So far, 26 Christian organizations and several Jewish communities have attained this status: no Muslim groups have yet met this requirement.³¹

The status of corporation under public law is different from the religious community (*Religionsgemeinschaft*) status. The religious community status refers to areas of cooperation between the German state and religious groups in the public sphere and allows recognized religious communities to provide religious education in public schools. The teaching of religion in state-funded denominational schools is allowed, however proselytism cannot be part of the curriculum.³² The status of corporation under public law, on the other hand, enables religious organizations to enjoy public rights reserved for Christians and Jews. These rights include levying church taxes (*Kirchensteuer*) under the monitoring of regional states, establishing religious places, and being represented in public institutions and broadcast councils.³³

In Germany, mosque construction and religious clothing have been a less controversial issue than in France. Local authorities in large German cities have allowed the construction of large, traditional-style mosques.³⁴ Regarding the wearing of the headscarf, as of 2006 many German federal states had enacted legislation prohibiting headscarves for teachers. Unlike France, however, the wearing of headscarves by students is permitted.

Islam's recognition has expanded when some German states, including Bremen, Hamburg, Hesse, and Lower Saxony accepted some Muslim associations as religious bodies through state contracts (*Staatsvertrag*) signed between states and Muslim associations. This status, for instance, gives Muslim associations the right to provide their own religious classes in schools. German states had long declined Islamic organizations'

requests to do so on the basis that they failed to meet the legal and structural requirements. The Berlin Islamic Federation (*Islamische Föderation Berlin* or IFB) has provided Islamic education in Berlin since the late 1990s. Since 2012, Islamic religious education has been introduced in North Rhein-Westphalia and Hesse. In addition, some Islamic schools in Germany, such as those in Munich and Berlin, have received some state funding. Since 2010, Islamic celebrations are also recognized as religious holidays in some states. Moreover, officially recognized Islamic organizations are now allowed to minister to Muslims in prisons, hospitals, and other public institutions and bury their deceased according to their religious rites.³⁵ As for the provisions of Muslim burials, separate cemetery sections have been provided to Muslims in Germany.³⁶ French Muslims welcomed the inauguration of the first Muslim cemetery in Strasbourg as recently as 2012.³⁷ Due to these advantages, there is a tendency in the literature to argue that the German regime has been more favorable with respect to the accommodation of Muslim religious rights. While religious liberty restrictions are not very strict in Germany, and Muslim organizations have obtained remarkable advantages in the last decade, the state's relations with Muslim organizations are nevertheless more problematic in this country.

Muslim Councils in France and Germany

The French Council for the Muslim Faith (CFCM)

By the mid-1990s, all European governments had moved from purely “outsourcing” state–mosque relations to establishing contact with Muslim representatives to diminish the impact of foreign connections.³⁸ The French Council for the Muslim Faith (CFCM) was founded in May 2003 as a representative body enabling French Muslims to enter into dialogue with state authorities. One of the first attempts at such negotiation was put forward in 1990 by Pierre Joxe, the then Minister of the Interior as well as the Minister of Faiths (*Cultes*) in an attempt to form a representative body to discuss religious issues with Muslims. The result was the creation of the Council of Reflection on Islam (*Conseil de Réflexion sur l'Islam en France* or CORIF), which convened in March 1990.³⁹

Starting in 1992, Charles Pasqua, the then Minister of the Interior, reinforced relations with the Great Mosque of Paris (*Grande Mosquée de Paris*), which was seen as a critical institution for the moderation of Islam. Pasqua prompted mufti Dalil Boubakeur to form a team to discuss pressing concerns. Boubakeur eventually became the Rector of the Paris Mosque in 1992 and formed the Consultative Council in 1993.⁴⁰ The Consultative Council remained in existence and issued the “Charter of the Muslim Religion in France” in 1994, which reiterated the compatibility of the council with republican values.⁴¹

In 1999, the new Interior Minister Jean Pierre Chevènement encouraged the creation of a central body to represent Islam. This Consultation process (*Istichara*) served as a foundational step for the CFCM. This process invited Muslims to “set up a single national body to represent the Muslim religion, in the same ways as other religions present in France”.⁴² Following Chevènement, in October 2002, Nicolas Sarkozy invited the participants of the earlier consultation, to negotiations that would form the CFCM. In the aftermath of heated debates, Dalil Boubakeur was chosen as the chairman.⁴³ The main topics of discussion included the regulation of Islamic worship and public ritual practices, the allocation of Muslim cemetery spaces, the accreditation of *imams*, and the construction of mosques.⁴⁴

A reform process was triggered in 2008 due to financial problems, inefficiencies, and disagreements over the representativeness of the CFCM.⁴⁵ In the CFCM elections of June 2013, it was decided that there would be 45 permanent appointed delegates and 45 elected delegates. Even though 70–80% of the mosques in France participated in the elections, one CFCM official shared his concern that the new reform had turned the CFCM into a less democratic institution. This is because in the past 80% of the delegates were elected, whereas this percentage has now dropped to only 5%. In his view, the CFCM is not an effective institution, and the culprit is the organizations that created the CFCM. The current reform is weak, he argues, because it is in the interest of the participating organizations to have a dysfunctional reform so that they will remain the only authority on certain issues.⁴⁶

In the aftermath of the reform process, new electoral regulations and a new mode of governance within the CFCM have been introduced.⁴⁷ Currently, the CFCM is presented by three main organizations: the Coordination Committee of Turkish Muslims of France (*Comité de Coordination des Musulmans Turcs de France* or CCMTF) linked to DİTİB, the Great Mosque of Paris, which has ties to Algeria, and *Rassemblement des Musulmans de France* (the Assembly of Muslims of France or RMF), the pro-Moroccan Rally of French Muslims.⁴⁸

Over the course of the national identity debate in France, the CFCM has continuously reaffirmed its deep commitment to the principle of *laïcité* as the cornerstone of a harmonious life.⁴⁹ The CFCM officials retain good relations with policy-makers. Recently, they have welcomed French policy-makers' attempts to avoid associating the violent behavior of a minority of extremists with the overwhelming majority of peaceful Muslims.⁵⁰ Another example is the CFCM's positive response to President François Hollande's "precautious and careful" steps not to conflate Islam with terrorism.⁵¹ The CFCM had also referred positively to Nicolas Sarkozy's moral support and promise to monitor the rise of Islamophobic acts closely.⁵² In a similar vein, in 2010, when an extremist *imam* of Egyptian nationality was expelled from France, the CFCM pointed to the urgency for a strong and concerted effort to improve the training of *imams* and their statutes.⁵³

As an official from the CFCM's board of directors notes, significant decisions taken by the CFCM in the last few years have included the resolution regarding the finalization of the establishment of the lunar calendar based on the principles and purposes of Muslim law and the creation of Islamophobia Watch (*Observatoire*) to monitor and condemn Islamophobic acts targeting Muslims.⁵⁴ Today, despite heated debates regarding the representativeness and composition of the institution, the CFCM is still regarded as an important platform for discussion and consultation by the majority of Muslim umbrella organizations.

The German Islam Conference (DIK)

Despite the long-term existence of Muslims in the country, German policy-makers at the federal level did not "discover" Islam until 1999, when the Christian Democrats invited the representatives of several Islamic umbrella organizations, including DİTİB, the Islam Council for the Federal Republic of Germany (*Islamrat für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland* or IRD), and the Central Council of Muslims in Germany (*Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland* or ZMD) to a hearing held at the German Parliament. This hearing was the first symbolic step to recognize Islamic organizations as important actors in the political arena, and discuss important issues, such as the introduction of religious education

in public schools.⁵⁵ The then Federal Minister of the Interior Wolfgang Schäuble launched the German Islam Conference (*Deutsche Islam Konferenz* or DIK) on 27 September 2006 as the first attempt at institutionalized dialogue between federal, state, and local German governments and Muslims in Germany:

In opening dialogue with Muslims, my hope is that everyone understands that Muslims are welcome in Germany. [...] One of the effects that this conference should have is that our society will appreciate to a greater extent that Muslims are a part of this society. [...] I hope that the German Islam Conference will succeed not only in finding practical solutions but also in creating more understanding, sympathy, peace, tolerance, and above all, more communication and diversity, thereby contributing to enriching our country [...].⁵⁶

The DIK convened a few months after the first annual National Integration Summit of 2006, aimed at creating a joint strategy for integration with the participation of migrants. In the context of the Integration Summit, representatives from the German federal government, local authorities, and migrant organizations formed six working groups to tackle issues such as integration courses, language training, education, women's status in social life, and civil society. The outcome was the National Integration Plan. Although the first Integration Summit did not include any representatives from Islamic umbrella organizations, several Turkish Islamic umbrella organizations, such as DİTİB, had participated in the workshop for the preparation of the Integration Summit.⁵⁷

The DIK was the "first national reaction, involving federal, regional and local authorities, to the relatively recent presence in historical terms of Muslims as a significant population group in Germany".⁵⁸ At the third Plenary Session of the DIK, Schäuble defined integration as "[a]cknowledging the German legal system and our value system and showing a willingness to learn and speak the German language. [...])".⁵⁹ Four plenary meetings took place in the DIK I process between 2006 and 2009, which focused on several policy areas: (1) the German societal system and value consensus; (2) religious issues and understanding the Constitution; (3) the private sector as bridge builders; and (4) security and Islamism.⁶⁰

After the formation of the coalition between Christian Democrats and Liberals in 2009, Germany's new Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziére started the DIK II process. In 2010, following the conference plenary's comprehensive work program, three key fields of concentration were chosen for the period between 2010 and 2013: (1) promoting institutionalized cooperation and integration-related projects; (2) gender equality as a common value; and (3) preventing extremism, radicalization, and social polarization.⁶¹

At the DIK, the Muslim community is represented by various key Turkish Islamic organizations, such as DİTİB, the Union of Islamic Cultural Centers, the Alevi Unions Federation of Germany (*Alevitische Gemeinde Deutschland* or AABF), and the secular Turkish Community in Germany (*Türkische Gemeinde in Deutschland* or TGD) in addition to various influential individuals as well as other Muslim organizations. The inclusion of individuals and female voices in the DIK shows that its composition differs from that of the CFCM.

Currently, the DIK is undergoing a process of reformation. The second phase led to the combining of the four separate working groups into a single task force.⁶² The rationales behind this change are efficiency and flexibility. Another goal of the second phase of the conference is to enhance communication with officials at the *Länder* and local levels. More importantly, on 27 January 2014, the DIK convened with the

participation of the banned IRD and sent signals to Islamic organizations that the new phase will focus on concrete issues while moving away from the focus on security.⁶³

The Umbrella Organizations and Relations with Host Countries

The Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DİTİB)

The Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Türk İslam Birliği* or DİTİB) offices in Europe are linked to Turkey's Directorate for Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* or DİB), which was founded in 1924 in Turkey to provide religious services and represent "official" Islam.⁶⁴ DİTİB defines itself as an organization that keeps an equal distance from, while maintaining good relations with, all other religious organizations.

The first DİTİB branches in Europe were formed in 1984. Turkish guest workers began to request religious personnel from DİB starting in the 1970s. However, it was not until the mid-1980s that the state began to send *imams* to Europe and pay their salaries. DİTİB is the largest umbrella organization in Europe, supported by around 70% of Turkish Muslims. It has 896 member associations in Germany and 215 in France.⁶⁵

Although both DİTİB France and DİTİB Germany are respected as dialogue partners in their host countries, DİTİB France is less critical of its country of settlement. In the CFCM, DİTİB is represented by CCMTF. In choosing a different name, DİTİB's intention was to show that it is a French-Turkish civil society organization without symbiotic ties to the Turkish state. Due to its diplomatic status, and its "all-encompassing" role in the Turkish associational field, DİTİB refers to itself as the most legitimate interlocutor between European states and Muslim publics. DİTİB officials have maintained good relations with French policy-makers, and the organization has never received a warning from the French government to refrain from extremist acts.⁶⁶ According to an agreement between DİTİB and the French government, 151 DİTİB personnel are allowed to work in France. This is the highest quota allocated to a Muslim organization. Even though Algerians outnumber Turks in France, only 100 *imams* are sent from Algeria. DİTİB officials cite this as an example of how respected the organization is in the eyes of French authorities.⁶⁷

DİTİB bureaucrats have expressed their satisfaction with this quota. Nevertheless, Turkish Muslims have demanded more religious personnel. As a solution, under the guidance of DİB in Turkey, DİTİB branches created the "International Islamic Theology Program" (*Uluslararası İlahiyat Programı*) in 2006. This program enables students, who have completed their high school education in host countries to obtain a bachelor's degree in Theology from universities in Turkey and return to their host countries upon completion. In addition, DİTİB France founded the Strasbourg Theology Institute in 2011 in cooperation with French authorities. Students who successfully complete this program will receive a bachelor's degree from the Faculty of Theology at Istanbul University. The goal is to train religious personnel who can speak both Turkish and French and possess knowledge of both countries. The Strasbourg Theology Institute has 55 students, all of whom are of Turkish descent. In France, except for DİTİB, no other Muslim organization has its own such institute.⁶⁸

The level of trust that has developed between DİTİB and French policy-makers has enhanced DİTİB officials' positive perception of the French state. Turkey's DİB funds the Strasbourg Theology Institute, and DİTİB has the final say in the design of the curriculum and the appointment of teachers. This is different from the theology institutes

built in Germany, which mostly rely on Germany's financial assistance, and their approval of the curriculum and appointment of teachers. Germany does not allow this project to be steered from Turkey. Meanwhile, France supports Turkey in this project enthusiastically because policy-makers believe that the alternative—the importation of *imams* who have lived and studied primarily in the homeland—hinders the integration of Muslims. According to a board member of the Strasbourg Theology Institute, France also backs this project because it cannot directly fund a religious project itself due to its *laïc* regime. France, he argues, also sees Turkey's experience in religious education as a key contribution to the advancement of the program.⁶⁹

According to the CCMTF representative in the CFCM, in the long-term, DİTİB's goal is to open other theology institutes in other parts of France.⁷⁰ DİTİB's plans of opening a kindergarten in the future have not encountered any objections from French officials either, according to a DİTİB representative.⁷¹ An official from the French Ministry of the Interior's Central Office of Faiths (*Bureau Central des Cultes*) complains that French bureaucrats are less cautious about the theology institutes than their German colleagues. In his view, France needs to adopt a more "hands-on" approach in administering the Strasbourg Theology Institute because it is not only an educational project but also a political and cultural one shaped by the homeland.⁷²

Another reason why DİTİB officials hold a positive perception of French policies is that DİTİB has been one of the founder organizations of the CFCM. DİTİB was also the only organization invited to the *Istichara* process in the 1990s. When the CFCM was launched, DİTİB had two representatives on the CFCM's board of directors, while another big Turkish Islamic organization, Millî Görüş had no members.⁷³ In the 2005 CFCM election, DİTİB-linked CCMTF won a seat. Currently, CCMTF has six representatives in the CFCM. In accordance with the CFCM's new governance reform, it has been agreed that the CCMTF representative will serve as the CFCM's vice-president from 2015 to 2017, and president from 2017 to 2019 for the first time in DİTİB's history. According to an advisor from the French Ministry of the Interior, the CFCM was initially designed for North Africans in order to diminish North African governments' influence on French Muslims. However, DİTİB's upcoming presidency will reinforce Turkey's role in the CFCM.⁷⁴

DİTİB officials acknowledge that the CFCM is still not entirely functional because of financial problems and ongoing political rifts among different organizations. According to the CCMTF representative in the CFCM, other weaknesses of the CFCM include young Muslims' limited role in the organization, and the CFCM's unnecessary focus on political issues rather than religious issues. Nevertheless, overall, DİTİB leaders concur that the CFCM has been a groundbreaking step in making Muslims' voices heard in the public sphere. The general view among DİTİB officials is that the current reform process is very promising, and the CFCM will become a more credible and democratic institution in the future.⁷⁵

A DİTİB official, who is also a board member of the Strasbourg Theology Institute reports that as a community, Turks are the least organized and the least politically active. He advises that Turks should also turn to each other when they face structural barriers and xenophobia. In his view, Turks should work toward enhancing their unity and political consciousness and invest in their social capital rather than blaming French politicians for turning a blind eye to their integration.⁷⁶

Compared with DİTİB officials in France, DİTİB leaders in Germany are more critical of their host country. First, DİTİB's close relationship with the Turkish state has created a more heated debate within German policy circles.⁷⁷ Normally, the president of DİTİB

serves as the counselor for religious services at the Turkish embassy in Germany. Holding a diplomatic status, his salary is paid by DİB. DİTİB presidents are trained theologians and experienced diplomats. Accordingly, they possess both religious and administrative qualifications. The dual role of DİTİB presidents and the administration of DİTİB from a centralized federation have long been criticized by Germany.⁷⁸ In order to retrench DİTİB's ties to the Turkish state, Germany urged DİTİB presidents to prioritize their religious task over their diplomatic service. DİTİB bureaucrats, however, see administrative skills as a necessary requirement for running such a big organization, and find it unfair that Germany tolerates the dual responsibility exercised by bishops and rabbis of big Christian and Jewish organizations, who serve as both theologians and administrators.⁷⁹

DİTİB officials draw attention to what they see as another “double standard”, in that Christian and Jewish groups are granted the status of corporation under public law as opposed to Muslims. In Hesse in 2012, DİTİB became one of the two Muslim organizations to be granted the right to offer religious education. Nevertheless, DİTİB executives contend that there are more rights to be gained. According to DİTİB leader, lacking such privileges puts DİTİB in a very disadvantaged position:

Turkish Muslims face economic hardship in Germany because they do not receive state subsidies or tax revenues. On the other hand, every year tax revenue given to Christian churches equals to ten billion euros. Other Christian organizations, such as CARITAS and DIAKONIE receive 50 billion euros. Under these circumstances, I find it unsurprising that DİTİB relies on Turkey's financial assistance.⁸⁰

The German Council of Science and Humanities provided the impetus for the creation of Muslim theology as a university course in 2010. Similar to the Strasbourg Theology Institute in France, the centers of Islamic Studies came to fruition in Münster, Osnabrück, Paderborn, Tübingen, Frankfurt, Hamburg, and Erlangen-Nürnberg to train academics in Islamic theology.⁸¹ The federal government's estimation that 2200 teachers will be needed to develop Islamic religious education in public schools led policy-makers to create these institutes because the majority of *imams* residing in Germany are foreign-trained, and cannot speak German. These Islamic Theology centers aim to train theologians, social workers, and religious educators, who will work in mosques. While the creation of theology institutes serves as a major step in building a dialogue with Islam, there are doubts that this endeavor may entangle with disciplining rules ordained by the German state and the state's focus on securitization.⁸²

DİTİB authorities have suggested that students who will receive diplomas from DİB's International Theology Program should be appointed to German public schools to teach Islamic religious courses upon the completion of their studies in Turkey, given that they will be fluent in both Turkish and German, and there is still a big demand for religious personnel in Germany. Contrary to this expectation, as DİTİB's spokesperson concludes, German states neither secure position for these graduates nor do they provide any financial assistance to this program. Instead, Germany gives priority to students graduating from its own theology institutes, which is disappointing for DİTİB.⁸³

DİTİB finds it onerous that each Islamic umbrella organization must file a new application in each state to be granted the status of religious community and to be certified to provide religious education in public schools. To decentralize, and to weaken its ties to Turkey, DİTİB has reconstituted itself in the form of 15 regional associations. This has not solved all of its problems, however, as the organization grapples with forming a

new charter and adjusting to the requirements in each state. DİTİB's spokesperson complains about the hurdles stemming from the federal structure of Germany: "Under the unitary system, once recognized as a religious community, all of our 910 associations would have the right to provide religious education. Now we need to make a new effort every single time."⁸⁴ In the words of another DİTİB official:

Different German states have different regulations. For instance, some imams encounter bureaucratic problems in certain states. However, in other states, imams have easier access to naturalization or residence. Likewise, in some states, we have good relations with local municipalities, whereas in others, it is hard to obtain authorization for *masjids* (prayer rooms). There are many discrepancies.⁸⁵

DİTİB was present in the DIK I and the DIK II. DİTİB was also the only association invited to the National Integration Summit. However, DİTİB's inclusion led to debates in the German media due to its close link to the Turkish state. Eventually, the German state decided to revoke DİTİB's invitation to participate in the working group. DİTİB leaders suggest that DİTİB's inclusion could have laid the foundation for improved DİTİB–Germany relations. However, suspicions regarding DİTİB prevented such collaboration. DİTİB officials do not find this prejudice well grounded, given that DİTİB is an authorized German institution complying with the German law that works toward enhancing peaceful co-existence. In 2007, DİTİB officials boycotted the second National Integration Summit because of a law tightening immigration and family reunification policy.⁸⁶ Currently, DİTİB is a member of the National Integration Summit.

Millî Görüş in France (CIMG) and Germany (IGMG)

Founded in 1969 in Turkey by Necmettin Erbakan, Millî Görüş is a political Islamist movement. Today, it has 514 mosque organizations in Europe. Of these, 323 are located in Germany and 70 are located in France. In Germany, the Islamic Community of the National Vision (*Islamische Gemeinschaft Millî Görüş* or IGMG) has 30 regional centers. The organization's branch in France (*Communauté Islamique Millî Görüş* or CIMG) has four regional centers.⁸⁷ Since its existence in Europe dates back to the 1970s, Millî Görüş opened the first mosques in Europe even before DİTİB.

Although officials from Millî Görüş in France and Germany have less favorable relations with their host countries compared with other Turkish Islamic umbrella organizations, Millî Görüş leaders in Germany, like those at DİTİB, are more critical of their host state compared with their counterparts in France. Millî Görüş France's (CIMG) leaders suggest that the CFCM's *raison d'être* was to create *Islam de France* (Islam of France), rather than *Islam en France* (Islam in France). They identify the ongoing turf war among different sending countries and Islamic organizations and the outsized role played by some mosque federations as the serious drawbacks of the CFCM. According to CIMG's chairman, the most concrete accomplishment of the CFCM, namely the agreement on the lunar calendar is a superficial success given that the institution has the capacity to shape more important debates, such as Islamophobia.⁸⁸ CIMG's women's unit head, likewise, suggests that the creation of a bottom-up organization initiated by Muslim leaders would be a better alternative as opposed to the CFCM, which is a top-down institution imposed by policy-makers.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, these

leaders are content that CIMG has secured a seat in the CFCM, becoming a permanent member in the CFCM charter.⁹⁰

CIMG's spokesperson and representative in the CFCM shares the view that the CFCM is a "one of a kind" organization that enables Muslim leaders from different groups and backgrounds to sit around one table. In his opinion, CIMG executives do not have a problem communicating with French policy-makers unlike Millî Görüş leaders in Germany. For instance, he argues that, CIMG was not a part of the CFCM in the early 2000s because of DİTİB's reluctance to include Millî Görüş in the process rather than French policy-makers' objections.⁹¹ This leader is optimistic that CIMG will gain more seats in the CFCM in the future.

This official also suggests that Turkish Muslims are overlooked by society because they have shown little interest in French politics, despite having the right of dual citizenship. Only a small minority of dual citizens, he points out, goes to the ballot box. He has observed that Millî Görüş leaders in Germany are struggling with larger bureaucratic hurdles and prejudices since they lack dual citizenship. In his words:

Germany implements a very strict inspection of passports when Turkish imams enter the country. In general, imams who come to Europe on temporary contracts are middle-aged men retired from DİB. These imams own green passports granted to public servants. While imams mostly encounter problems in entering Germany and renewing their passports, they enjoy favorable conditions in France.⁹²

CIMG officials in Paris conclude that most of the time, French municipalities tolerate large cultural centers, which are later turned into mosques. Moreover, some cities, such as Strasbourg, have even more flexible regulations that permit mosques with minarets.⁹³ In Paris, even though no government subsidy is allocated for religious activities, Millî Görüş associations sometimes receive financial support from French municipalities for some cultural and sporting activities.⁹⁴ CIMG leaders also note that as long as they comply with the law, it is easy to open schools. In Paris, for instance, 7 of 10 Millî Görüş associations operate as mosques with *imams* and 3 provide educational services. In a few years, CIMG aims to open new primary and high schools in Paris, Strasbourg, and Lyon. Moreover, schools can receive government subsidies after five years of successful instruction. For example, there is a Muslim high school in Lille that receives such subsidy. The number of Millî Görüş mosques continues to increase as well. In the last two years, CIMG purchased three new buildings in Paris that will serve as mosques.⁹⁵

Millî Görüş Germany (IGMG) executives have tense relations with their host country compared with Millî Görüş France. First, Millî Görüş organizations do not receive any kind of financial support from German authorities. However, this is not the case in France. Second, in Germany, IGMG is under surveillance by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (*Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz*) due to its alleged extremist political agenda. IGMG was present in the DIK I. However, its participation in the DIK II has been suspended due to the ongoing allegations against IGMG leaders. IGMG officials question what it means to be "radical" or "extremist". The former head of IGMG sees contradictions in the state policy: "If we are a radical organization, and if we pose a threat to the public order, then why are we allowed to operate as an organization? Why don't they abolish us?"⁹⁶

While the state contracts have introduced new rights, such as the right to practice religious holidays and teach Islamic courses in public schools, IGMG's spokesperson finds the existing state contracts inadequate given that they only merge separate regulations

that have already been in practice for years. Moreover, despite these new rights, he argues, Muslim organizations still do not receive subsidies for kindergartens and social services nor do they receive church taxes or civil service duties.⁹⁷

IGMG leaders are disturbed that the integration of Muslims has often been discussed in terms of security in policy debates.⁹⁸ They suggest that as long as the “parallel societies” and “core culture” (*leitkultur*) rhetoric dominates the public discourse, the state contracts and Germany’s shift toward a more inclusive regime are bound to remain as shallow demonstrations of rapprochement. Even though a small percentage of voters choose the radical right in Germany, these leaders refer to the xenophobic publications and politicians, such as Thilo Sarrazin and Heinz Buschkowsky. In their view, the DIK has no credibility if these publications continue to sell hundreds of thousands of copies and attract popular attention.

IGMG officials emphasize that among the Muslim Councils established in other European countries, the DIK is the weakest one. These leaders find it problematic that the DIK is connected to the Ministry of Interior Affairs unlike the Dutch and Belgian Muslim Councils, which are connected to the Ministry of Justice. Moreover, they condemn the participation of individuals, such as Necla Kelek, a sociologist, and Seyran Ateş, a lawyer in the DIK due to their harsh statements on Islam and women wearing the headscarf.⁹⁹

An advisor from the Federal Ministry of Interior Affairs does not agree with the argument that the reason why the Muslim Council in Germany is tied to the Ministry of Interior Affairs is to link religion to security. In his view, this is only an administrative decision originating from Germany’s federal system, and the DIK focuses more on practical issues rather than security or identity issues. For him, the main question is also different: “Are Muslim organizations capable of cooperating with the German state in the same ways that Christians and Jews do?” In comparing the federal system with the unitary system, this policy-maker admits that there are obvious disagreements among regional states regarding which organizations qualify as cooperation partners. The fact that each state has different criteria may lead to inconsistencies, he suggests. According to him, even though the federal system is more democratic, another disadvantage of this system is that decisions are taken very slowly. When asked how the DIK views different Turkish Islamic organizations, he reports that DİTİB’s close ties to the Turkish state, Millî Görüş’s links to the Muslim Brotherhood, and the Union of Islamic Cultural Centers’ relatively limited role in the Islamic associational field call into question their ability to serve as the primary dialogue partner.¹⁰⁰

In comparing Germany to France, IGMG leaders point out that Millî Görüş leaders in France find it much easier to adjust to their host country because CIMG enjoys institutional recognition. IGMG representatives view the French state’s friendliness toward Muslim organizations as genuine. Due to its colonial experience, they claim, the way France transforms state–Islam relations is more careful and empathetic. As a result, French Muslims do not have problems internalizing *identité française*. Moreover, according to IGMG leaders, the inclusion of CIMG in the CFCM signals that the French state perceives Millî Görüş as an important and irreplaceable civil society organization. They note that, especially after being included in the CFCM, the majority of Millî Görüş leaders in France applied for dual citizenship.

These leaders draw attention to the excessive state intervention in the formation and administration of theology institutes. One leader notes: “If French policy-makers say ‘I do not want to see your religious symbol’, that is understandable. I think the headscarf ban should be seen as a benevolent policy to respect other faiths.”¹⁰¹ He asserts that

even though the legal structure in France is more exclusionary, in practice, France has a participatory political culture. To the contrary, Germany fails to embrace pluralism despite its liberal constitutional background.

IGMG officials agree with DİTİB authorities in Germany that the federal structure of Germany creates disadvantages for their organization with respect to adjusting to the varying laws of different states and being represented at the national level. Each German state, another leader complains, has a unique legal structure that requires different expertise and personnel:

Depending on the dynamics of each federal state, Islamic organizations either choose to collaborate or compete with each other to be the single provider of Islamic education. Given that Islamic organizations already suffer from weak infrastructure, the majority of organizations lack resources to undergo modifications. Different regulations lead to fragmentation and tension among Islamic organizations. They refer to us as an extremist organization, and warn other Turkish organizations not to collaborate with us. Their intention is to pit us against each other so that they can “divide-and-rule”.¹⁰²

For this representative, the crux of the issue is that normative basic rights reserved for Muslims in the constitution are not applied in practice. He advocates for an application of the constitutional rights to daily practices, equal political participation, institutional recognition, termination of the *leitkultur* and security rhetoric, and extension of dual citizenship to Turks.¹⁰³

IGMG is a member of two broader Islamic umbrella organizations, namely the Coordination Council of Muslims in Germany (*Koordinationsrat der Muslime in Deutschland* or KRM) and the Islamic Council for the Federal Republic of Germany (*Islamrat für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland* or IRD). KRM is founded in 2007 by DİTİB, IRD, ZMD, and the Union of Islamic Cultural Centers’ Germany branch (*Verband der Islamischen Kulturzentren* or VIKZ). Different from DİTİB and VIKZ, IRD and ZMD are broader umbrella organizations that convene Islamic organizations from different ethnicities under one roof. KRM’s creation was a turning point for Muslims as these four organizations joined forces to speak with one voice when negotiating with policy-makers on important issues affecting Muslims.

IRD was established in 1986 as an umbrella organization to summon Islamic organizations under one roof. IRD’s biggest member is IGMG. Therefore, IRD is accepted as the substitute for IGMG ever since IGMG has been put on the black list. IRD was excluded from the DIK II process due to its organic links to Millî Görüş. IRD executives complain that the German state makes a distinction between “good Muslims” and “bad Muslims”, and pushes them to the margins. Following arduous talks, IRD was invited to the DIK again however it quickly removed itself realizing that Islam was being treated as a “problem” in the DIK. According to IRD’s chairman, the DIK is a state-imposed platform, while the CFCM is a bottom-up civilian institution composed of competent Muslim actors. In his words, “the DIK is about *Islah* (taming), not *İslam*” [*‘İslam Konferansı değil Islah Konferansı’*].¹⁰⁴ KRM’s establishment in 2007 thus marked a fresh beginning for IRD leaders.

IRD’s main demand is to open a theology institute under the full control of Muslim organizations and to obtain the right to provide religious education. IRD leaders argue that the way theology institutes are administered in Germany is very biased. A council (*Beirat*) comprising eight individuals monitors the administration of the Islamic theology departments within public universities. Four *Beirat* members are representatives from

Islamic umbrella organizations, and the rest are Muslim individuals. The same procedure is used in monitoring Islamic religious course curricula. The state governments appoint these individuals; however, the Islamic organizations must certify that they are qualified. IRD's chairman notes that, for the most part, individuals are chosen in a biased manner to align with state interests.¹⁰⁵ The clash between the state-appointed individuals and Islamic organization members came to the surface once again when IRD was removed from the supervision board of the theology institute in Tübingen.¹⁰⁶

IRD is the only Sunni Islamic organization that holds the right to provide Islamic religious classes in Berlin. When asked if this is seen as a breakthrough, IRD Berlin's spokesperson gives a puzzling answer:

After a grueling legal battle that lasted 18 years, we attained this right. Of course this is a major achievement. However, since we began offering religious courses, our school has been inspected 360 times. Only in North Rhein-Westphalia, there are 380,000 Muslim students. However, currently only 5000 students can take this course. We are allowed to reach out to a very small community".¹⁰⁷

The regional state of Berlin created the "Islamforum" in November 2005 as a platform for exchanging information among bureaucrats and representatives of various religious communities. In 2008, the Islam Forum initiated a training program called *Berlin Kompetenz* (Berlin Competence), which allocated a budget to Muslim organizations to train 28 *imams* to help Muslim prisoners.¹⁰⁸ The Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution decided to cancel this agreement in December 2013 with the claim that 22 of the selected *imams* hold extremist views.¹⁰⁹ This incident led to an outcry among Muslim organizations, which eventually prompted them to withdraw from the Islamforum. IRD officials refer to this incident as another tacit "double standard". IRD leaders also find it unfair that Alevi (a branch of Shi'a Islam) and Ahmadiyya (a religious movement originating from East India) communities are recognized as religious communities despite their limited number of followers.¹¹⁰

In February 2014, IGMG chairman Oğuz Üçüncü, who served as the leader of the organization since 2002, resigned. This development created a new window of opportunity for IRD's future relations with the German authorities. In March 2014, Thomas de Maiziére invited seven representatives from Islamic umbrella organizations, including IRD¹¹¹ and pledged to modify the DIK's working objectives. Even though this is a promising start for the normalization and improvement of IGMG and IRD's relations with the German state, time is needed to erase the traces of the past.

The Union of Islamic Cultural Centers

The Union of Islamic Cultural Centers (VIKZ) is a Turkish Sunni organization whose members practice Islamic mysticism related to the Sufi Naqshibendi order. The organization follows the teachings of Süleyman Hilmi Tunahan Efendi and focuses on strict Islamic training.¹¹² Compared with Millî Görüş, the Union of Islamic Cultural Centers has better relations with authorities in both France and Germany. However, similar to the views shared by DİTİB and Millî Görüş officials in France, leaders of this organization in France view their host state more positively than those residing in Germany.

In France, the first center of the Union of Islamic Cultural Centers was founded in 1981 to provide spaces for daily religious practices and Islamic education for children. As the organization expanded over time, the existing branches were united under the

Federation of Islamic Cultural Centers in 1996. Today, the organization has 40 mosque associations in France, and it has channeled its resources toward the creation of boarding schools where Islamic training is offered.¹¹³

Currently, the organization owns 12 boarding schools throughout France. The organization faces no obstacles in the construction of new buildings and enlargement of the existing ones. In the aftermath of 9/11, some municipalities initially delayed granting authorization to the organization's buildings. However, local authorities, especially mayors, have become very accommodating in providing necessary authorization for boarding schools in the last decade. As one official puts it, receiving boarding school authorization is much harder in Germany:

The Union of Islamic Cultural Centers has over 300 associations in Germany, however only 11 of them are authorized to build boarding schools. In France, we have 40 associations, and 12 of them include boarding schools. The regulations are even more restricting in North Rhein-Westphalia, where the Turkish population is very dense. Recently, we built a new mosque with a boarding school in Nancy, France. It has 6 floors, and the mosque can host 815 people. All the important local authorities were present in our inauguration ceremony. Our mosques in Nantes, Rouen, and Lyon also obtained boarding school authorization very easily. Officials trust us when we explain them who we are, and what we do. Here in Pantin, we are in the process of enlarging our mosque. Our new mosque will host 910 people, and 19 students will reside in the boarding school.¹¹⁴

In France, even though the central federation receives no funding, local municipalities provide subsidies and space for organizational activities to organization's branches. The Union of Islamic Cultural Centers leaders in France also have a positive perception of the CFCM. For them, bringing key Muslim leaders together to exchange views on important issues is a remarkable success. The organization collaborates with DİTİB in the CFCM. Despite being an apolitical organization, thanks to its alliance with DİTİB, which has several seats in the CFCM, the Union of Islamic Cultural Center contributes to the discussion of political and cultural issues that are of special interest to Muslims. An executive suggests that local authorities have adopted a milder stance than in the past due to Turks' right to dual citizenship, and their growing importance as a voting bloc. As Muslims' political participation increases, French politicians have established better relations with Islamic organizations, he argues.¹¹⁵

The first Union of Islamic Cultural Centers branch in Germany (*Verband der Islamischen Kulturzentren* or VIKZ) was founded in 1973. Today, it has 300 mosque organizations and 21,000 members in the country.¹¹⁶ VIKZ trains its own *imams* rather than importing *imams* from Turkey. The organization is a participating member in the DIK I and the DIK II.

VIKZ refers to itself as a "German" institution oriented toward the host country, which works for the preservation of language, culture, and religion. VIKZ officials emphasize that the organization respects and acts according to the German constitution. VIKZ has been recognized as a religious community in Hamburg and Bremen along with the Council of Islamic Communities (*Schura*) and the Alevi community. However, a series of practical problems exist with respect to the recognition of their official curriculum. These problems must be resolved before they can provide religious education. Moreover, VIKZ had been campaigning to be recognized as a religious body in North Rhein-Westphalia since 1979.¹¹⁷

VIKZ joined KRM due to its desire to provide Islamic religious courses in North Rhein-Westphalia. Regional governments had long denied Muslim organizations' right to teach Islamic education on the grounds that Muslim organizations lack a clear hierarchy and centralization. As one official from VIKZ explains:

When the German state asked for a single body to provide religious education, KRM said "here we are!" But the German state kept finding excuses. They said KRM fails to speak with one voice, so it should not be recognized as a religious community authorized to provide religious education.¹¹⁸

VIKZ officials also see discrepancies in the way the German regional states administer Islamic education. They observe that in some states, such as North Rhein-Westphalia and Bavaria, the German state is very much involved in the process and offers courses with a light theological content. VIKZ also had a clash with the University of Münster's theology institute when the director of the university questioned the legal status of VIKZ before approving it as a monitoring member.

VIKZ officials in Cologne hail the DIK's first two working groups as successes since these sessions triggered the creation of Islamic religious courses in several German states. Even though the extent of privileges given to Muslim organizations is not comparable to those enjoyed by Christian and Jewish communities, VIKZ officials are satisfied that there has been important progress with respect to the introduction of religious education. They have hope that the status of religious community will be given to other Muslim organizations in other German states in a few years.¹¹⁹

VIKZ also characterizes its relations with German offices as positive, due to its involvement in common projects with German officials. In the past, the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Family, and Youth allocated funds to two different VIKZ projects, one focusing on helping students with their school assignments and another focusing on empowering migrant parents. A VIKZ official in Cologne adds that local municipalities provide assistance for different VIKZ projects related to vocational training, education, and sporting activities. In his view, German authorities are now working harder to communicate with migrant organizations.¹²⁰ VIKZ delegates in Berlin, on the other hand, are more critical:

The DIK is full of enforcements. We froze our relations with the DIK a few times. Likewise, the National Integration Summit never takes our suggestions into consideration. We have disagreement over how one should define integration. The German definition of integration is to drink beer, and eat pork.¹²¹

VIKZ officials complain that their associations in Berlin hardly receive any funds from local municipalities. They highlight that mosque-themed projects are always rejected. When asked why one sees disparity between VIKZ leaders' experiences in Berlin and Cologne, a VIKZ official in Berlin asserted that their perceptions are shaped by how accommodating each city is, and that Berlin is more coercive compared with Cologne. In some lenient states, such as Hamburg, VIKZ is recognized as a religious community along with DİTİB. VIKZ faces no bureaucratic challenges in buying new buildings or renewing authorizations in such states. In other cities, like Berlin, there is more prejudice. This official complains that the state contracts are not very detailed, and Muslim organizations are not consulted when states appoint teachers or design curricula. In his view, the theology institutes operating at German universities cannot replace religion classes provided by Islamic organizations.¹²²

When it comes to improving Muslim relations in Germany, VIKZ officials have four principal demands: (1) dual citizenship should be extended to Turkish Muslims; (2) Muslim organizations should be recognized as a religious community and obtain the status of corporation under public law; (3) Turkish should be one of the main languages taught at schools; and (4) the stigmatization of Islam as a security threat should be deemphasized. VIKZ officials in Berlin are especially outspoken in decrying Germany's distinction between "good Muslims" and "bad Muslims". They also call for IGMG's inclusion in the DIK. In comparing France and Germany with respect to the accommodation of religion, VIKZ leaders in Berlin refer to France as a flexible and inclusive host country. In their view, *laïcité* treats all religious groups equally.

In June 2011, DİTİB and VIKZ agreed to cooperate with the Minister of the Interior to combat radicalization in the context of the Security Partnership Initiative program. In 2012, the Ministry of the Interior launched a campaign to inform Muslim families about the perils of the radicalization of young Muslims. Accordingly, the Ministry disseminated English and Turkish *Vermisst* (Missing) posters to social media sources and Turkish neighborhoods in Berlin, Bonn, and Hamburg. One of the most controversial *Vermisst* poster shows a young Muslim man, and warns:

This is my brother Hassan. I miss him because I do not recognize him anymore. He is becoming a more reserved and radical person each and every day. I am afraid of losing him to religious fanatics and terrorist groups. If you think like me, get in touch with the counseling centers of radicalization.¹²³

After the poster incident broke out, together with other Muslim organizations, VIKZ suspended its cooperation with the Ministry claiming that the campaign stigmatizes Muslims and creates new areas of conflict. VIKZ leaders refer to this campaign as a critical moment signaling that Germany still has a long way to go in embracing pluralism.

Thomas de Maizière held the most recent DIK meeting with Muslim organizations in March 2014. VIKZ was one of the nine organizations to attend the meeting. Islamic organization leaders, including VIKZ officials, have welcomed IRD's inclusion in the DIK as an important act revealing the DIK's shift from a security-themed focus to a dialogue-themed framework. Nevertheless, it is too early for VIKZ leaders to expect a radical transformation of relations between the German government and Millî Görüş executives.

Conclusion

Through an analysis of the three largest and most important Turkish Islamic umbrella organizations operating in France and Germany, this article sheds light on the gap between the legal rights reserved for Muslim organizations and their implementation in practice. It shows that Turkish Islamic umbrella organization leaders refer to France as a more flexible and inclusive host country with respect to the accommodation of Islam. Although one might expect that Turkish Muslim organizations in Germany would have better relations with their host states due to the extent of constitutional guarantees of religious freedom, they feel the opposite when the full privileges enjoyed by other communities, such as the granting of the status of corporation under public law and dual citizenship rights are not granted to them. Even though a few federal states have recently taken positive steps by recognizing some Islamic organizations as religious communities, Turkish Muslim leaders still see the existing state contracts as shallow acts and criticize them for their limited protections.

Second, Turkish Islamic organizations in Germany are disturbed that the integration of Muslims into German society has often been cast in terms of security in policy debates. In France, no major Turkish Islamic organization is placed under surveillance. Moreover, fewer bureaucratic hurdles exist in France when attaining building authorizations or work permits for religious personnel. Several Turkish Muslim organizations also receive support for their cultural and sporting activities from local French authorities.

For Turkish Muslims in both France and Germany, the CFCM is regarded as a more legitimate and effective institution because Turkish Muslim organizations, including Millî Görüş have a say within the institution. Turkish Muslim leaders in Germany, on the other hand, criticize the DIK for electing controversial representatives, excluding IGMG from its board, pitting organizations against each other by creating a distinction between “good Muslims” and “bad Muslims”, and opposing the institutional recognition of KRM. Turkish officials also express their concerns regarding excessive intervention by the German state in the formation and administration of Islamic religious classes and theology institutes. To the contrary, Turkish leaders’ perception of the Strasbourg Theology Institute is positive since they have collaborated with French authorities in the design and operation of the institute.

Finally, Turkish Muslim leaders in Germany argue that Germany’s federal system creates disadvantages for their organizational structure because each state has different regulations that require specialized knowledge and experts. Different rules lead to fragmentation and tension among Islamic organizations. Under a unitary political system, these leaders note, Islamic organizations would become better organized and would be easily recognized as political actors.

Against the backdrop of these turbulent relations Turkish Islamic umbrella organizations have had with the German state, the DIK’s current process of reformation is of utmost importance for Islam–state relations in Germany. The future of Islam in Europe relies on a healthier collaboration and dialogue that should be forged between host states and Muslim leaders. Given that the incorporation period of European states began only in the mid-1990s, there is hope that both sides will embrace an attitude of mutual understanding and reconciliation.

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NOTES

1. See, for example, Gary P. Freeman, “Modes of Immigration Politics in Liberal States”, *International Migration Review*, Vol. 29, No. 4, 2005, pp. 881–902; Anthony M. Messina, *The Logics and Politics of Post-WWII Migration to Western Europe*, London: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
2. It is estimated that out of France’s 3.5 million Muslims, some 459,000 are Turkish. cf. Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques [The National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies], 2012, available at http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/document.asp?reg_id=0&ref_id=IMMFRA12_g_Flot1_pop; Pew Research Religion and Public Life Project, “The Future of the Global Muslim Population,” 2011, available at: <http://features.pewforum.org/muslim-population-graphic/#/France>. Of Germany’s 3.8–4.3 million Muslims, the Turkish population numbers around 2.5–2.7 million,

- making it the largest Muslim community in the country. cf. Sonia Haug, Stephanie Müssing, and Anja Stichs, “Muslim Life in Germany: A Study Conducted on Behalf of the German Islam Conference”, 2009, available at: <http://www.npdata.be/Data/Godsdiens/Duitsland/fb6-muslimisches-leben-englisch.pdf>; Deutsche Islam Konferenz, “Number of Muslims in Germany”, 2014, available at: <http://www.deutsche-islam-konferenz.de/DIK/EN/Magazin/Lebenswelten/ZahlenDatenFakten/ZahlMLD/zahl-ml-d-node.html>
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31. Gerhard Robbers, "State and Church in Germany", in *State and Church in the European Union*, ed. Gerhard Robbers, Baden : Nomos, 2005, pp. 77–95; Rosenow-Williams, *Organizing Muslims and Integrating Islam*, *op. cit.*, p. 107; Joppke and Torpey, *Legal Integration of Islam*, *op. cit.*, p. 50; Rohe, "The Legal Treatment of Muslims", *op. cit.*, pp. 86–87. A more up-to-date, rights-focused "Constitutional law of religion" (*Religionsverfassungsrecht*) brought about a new interpretation of the old law governing the relationship between church and state (*Staatskirchenrecht*), and facilitated the attainment of the status of corporation under public law. The Federal Constitutional Court's September 2000 decision granting the status of corporation under public law to Jehovah's Witnesses, for instance, shows that under the new legal framework, it is no longer expected that the religious community to receive this status must have a deeper "loyalty" to the state. See Joppke and Torpey, *Legal Integration of Islam*, *op. cit.*, pp. 55–57.
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93. This is because the Alsace-Moselle region is subject to the Concordat of 1801 rather than the 1905 *laïcité* law. Concordat grants Christian churches and Jewish consistories public subsidies and the right to provide religious education because this region was German in 1905. In Alsace-Moselle, the state also helps to finance the construction of places of worship and approves the appointments of clergy members and pays their salaries. However, the support given to other religions has not been extended to Islam. See, for example, Steven Erlanger, “A Pro-Church Law Helps A Mosque”, 2008, *The New York Times*, 6 October 2008, available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/07/world/europe/07alsace.html?_r=3&oref=slogin&ref=world&pagewanted=all&
94. Author’s interview with CIMG chairman, Paris, 17 May 2013.
95. Author’s interview with CIMG women’s unit head, Paris, 17 May 2013.
96. Author’s interview, Cologne, 19 November 2013.
97. Author’s interview, Cologne, 22 November 2013.
98. For example, 24.4% of the parliamentary debates associated Islam with fear and terrorism between 2003 and 2004. Before 2001, only 9.4% of the Bundestag debates linked Islam to terrorism. See Dirk Halm, “The Current Discourse on Islam in Germany”, *International Migration and Integration*, Vol. 14, 2013, p. 463. In Germany, the tone of the public debate on Islam is more negative compared to other European countries, and discussions are mostly set from above. See Marc Helbling, Martin Dolezal, and Swen Hutter, “Debates over Islam in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland: Between Ethnic Citizenship, State-Church Relations and Right-Wing Populism”, *West European Politics*, Vol. 33, No. 2, 2010, pp. 171–190.
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118. *Ibid.*
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122. *Ibid.*
123. Author's translation. The original "Vermisst" [Missing] poster is available at: <http://www.themuslimtimes.org/2012/09/religion/islamophobia/missing-posters-prompt-muslim-anger-the-german-interior-ministrys-controversial-poster-campaign>