

Promoting Belonging through Religious Institutionalisation? The French Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM) and the German Islamkonferenz

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines recent state efforts in France and Germany to promote the integration of Muslim immigrants and their children through the creation of institutions specifically designed to represent Islam. By symbolically recognising the importance of Islam in both countries, while also engaging in dialogue with representatives from the main Islamic federations and other Muslim public figures, both states hope to promote a greater sense of national belonging amongst their Muslim citizens. However, as I argue in this paper, the actual reality of how Islam-related issues are managed in France and Germany continues to involve an interstate cooperation which blurs the boundaries between internal and external affairs. Along with the broadening of national security concerns post-9/11, this involvement of states of origin in the religious affairs of their communities abroad undermines the receiving state efforts at promoting national belonging through the domestication of Islam. Moreover, it ultimately underscores the ambiguous status of the 'Muslim citizen' in France and Germany, whose demands are seen as those of a 'Muslim' first, and a 'citizen' second.¹

Keywords: Islam; Europe; National Belonging; Religious Diversity; Migration; Integration

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Introduction

A significant number of immigrant workers who arrived during the 1960s in France and Germany, as well as many other countries in Western Europe, came from Muslim countries. Despite the different historical relationships between sending and receiving states, these immigrants, whether Turkish, Maghrébin, or otherwise, were seen in both countries as temporary (*Gastarbeiter*). Under the assumption of the “myth of return,”² local politicians and governments cooperated with the states of origin in numerous domains, most significantly education and religion, with the goal of facilitating the awaited departure when it arrived. This “outsourcing” of state services was ostensibly logical, given that the foreign workers in question were very rarely citizens of the receiving states. However, with the rise of family reunification programmes and the growth in numbers of naturalised foreign workers, the myth of return vanished and the demands and concerns of these communities became questions of internal politics.

The question of religion has proven to pose particular problems for the French and German governments, given that each state’s understanding of the issue is the product of specific historical evolutions and is coloured by current debates. The shift from external to internal is thus one of the most challenging aspects of current debates on the place of Islam in French and German societies, forcing receiving states to integrate the Islamic faith into their pre-existing state-religion frameworks and philosophies. These range from the highly charged debates surrounding the relationship between French *laïcité* and Islam (Roy, 2005) and national philosophies of integration (Favell, 2001), to the complicated juridical processes by which religion and citizenship are recognised in Germany (Amiriaux, 2001: 100-107; Faist, 2007). However, this shift has not taken place on a solely internal level, and the continued involvement of foreign states in local or national-level Islamic religious questions highlights the ambiguity of the internal/external political boundaries.

In this paper, I will explore the founding and evolution of the French Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM) and the German Islamkonferenz. These organisations, both created within the last ten years following the initiative of their respective Ministries of the Interior, have largely been seen as responses to internal political concerns surrounding the integration of immigrants. They have been created with the goal of providing an interlocutor for state and government officials, while also responding to the desire of local Muslim religious groups to receive state-backed legitimacy. However, other factors such as national security concerns as well as the desire to decrease the involvement of foreign governments in what are now seen as constituting internal affairs have also been important motivating factors.

The establishment of these two institutions can be seen as an attempt by both states to promote a feeling of belonging on the part of Muslim citizens. More specifically, this is done by symbolically recognising the place of Islam in both societies, while also encouraging dialogue with local religious federations and Muslim public figures. However, as I will show in

² Also called the “myth of temporary migration” by Stephen Castles (1992: 549), the “myth of return” refers to the tendency on the part of public officials, scholars, and receiving societies to believe that the *Gastarbeiter* were one day going to definitively return home, and not become permanent residents (see Tripier, 2004: 175 and Weil, 2004: 18).

this paper, these two institutions equally underscore the continuing ambiguity that the Muslim citizen presents for the French and German states. Though the CFCM and the German Islamkonferenz may both be attempts to domesticate Islam, they have not replaced the long-running cooperation with sending states concerning Islamic religious affairs; in some instances, they have even encouraged it.

Insiders or outsiders: what kind of belonging for Muslim migrants and their children?

The concept of national belonging in the case of international migration needs to take into account an array of factors which are closely linked, though the degree of influence of each of these factors (language, physical appearance, religious, etc.) on feelings of belonging can vary greatly depending on specific contexts.

Belonging is usually taken to involve subjective and discursive dimensions of commitment, loyalty and common purpose. On the one hand, therefore, there is no exact correspondence between belonging and formal membership (in this case national citizenship); on the other hand 'membership in the formal sense is inextricably tangled with social constructions of belonging that make it meaningful' (Crowley, 1999: 38, cited in Gustafson, 2005: 6).

The question of national belonging goes beyond an individual sentiment, and is also a means by which societies and their institutional structures can effectively exclude certain groups. "Most nation-states have had groups on their territory not considered capable of belonging, and therefore either denied citizenship or alternatively forced to go through a process of cultural assimilation in order to belong" (Castles and Davidson, 2000: vii). Belonging is determined not only by the individual, but is subject to majority society perceptions.

As Jocelyne Cesari (2009: 195) points out, "since the Second World War, immigration to France has been dominated by Muslims to such an extent that 'immigration' and 'Islam' are now virtually synonymous terms in both public and academic discourses." Similarly, under the rubric "Muslims in Germany" on the German *Islamkonferenz* (DIK, 2010a) website, following "How many Muslims live in Germany?" appear the questions "What countries do they come from?" and "Why have they immigrated to Germany?" Muslims in France and Germany, despite the decades and the succeeding generations, are still very much linked with concrete ideas of foreignness.

This linkage between immigration and Islam points to a first kind of obstacle to the idea of belonging for Muslim citizens. This obstacle is the general idea which characterises Islam as a foreign religion that foreigners brought with them through immigration. The question of converts in the imaginary of the majority populations is thus of relatively minimal importance: the foreign nature of the religion is predominately derived from the fact that those who practise it hold or once held foreign citizenship. Of course, the causal nature of this relationship becomes problematic when the foreign nationals become citizens. Does the foreign religion, 'Islam,' become any less foreign thanks to the naturalisation of individual Muslims? This distinction has been discursively highlighted numerous times in French political discourse and with changes in Muslim associations' names, emphasising the need for an Islam *of* France, as opposed to an Islam *in* France. The idea of an Islam *in* France

essentially continues the vision of Islam as a foreign religion, and consequently leaves naturalised Muslim French citizens in an ambiguous position.

At the same time, the rise of 'Fortress Europe' following the creation of the Schengen Area has also led to illegal immigration becoming increasingly presented as a security issue for many European states. The events of 9/11, the 2004 Madrid train bombings, and other similar events have exacerbated the tendency to underline the security aspect of immigration. The measures taken to fight illegal immigration have led to the rise of a "technology of *anti-citizenship*, portraying those to be excluded from citizenry, and impl[ying] crucial issues of belonging, identity, inclusion and exclusion" (Kaya, 2009: 9). Ayhan Kaya mentions that alongside a number of sordid characters (muggers, murders, prostitutes, etc.), whom the state attempts to exclude, "the archetype of this *anti-citizen* is the North-African in France, the Turk in Germany, Belgium or the Netherlands, and African-American or Latino in the United States" (2009: 10 [italics in text]).

Kaya's assertion brings up another type of obstacle to belonging: the question of ethnicity, or national origin, which equally shapes the contours of the distinction made between insiders and outsiders. If, as mentioned above, the acquisition of citizenship may help to promote the perception of an Islam which is *of* Germany or France, rather than simply *in* those countries, Islam remains a religious feature of *certain* citizens. In Germany, this corresponds to those Germans "with a migratory background" (*mit Migrationshintergrund*), an official category for state statistics, which attributes this status up until the third generation (Statistisches Bundesamt Deutschland, 2005).³

Furthermore, extremist critics of Muslims and Islam are just as often called 'racist' as 'religiously intolerant,' consequently leading some scholars such as Cesari to posit the development of a "Muslim ethnicity": "ethnicity in this case refers to a shared system of values and symbols among individuals who consider themselves members of the same group" (2009: 205). Though Cesari adds that this "ethnicity" should be seen as a "series of often fluid identifications," it is coherent enough to "serve to create boundaries between 'us' and 'them,' which can also vary according to different situations and contexts" (2009: 205).

The confluence of ethnic and religious otherness is one of the most significant ways by which the majority population's perception of Islam varies between different European societies, as evidenced by Kaya's characterisation above of different archetypal *anti-citizens*. Moreover, at times it proves to be difficult to distinguish discrimination based on ethnic otherness from discrimination based on religious difference. One recent quantitative study by David Laitin *et al.* (2010) in France has attempt to specifically target the "Muslim effect" by comparing the potential employment opportunities of two fictive Senegalese women, one Christian and the other Muslim, with a third "typical Frenchwoman," as a control.⁴ The results of the study

³ It would be more accurate to state that while the majority of German Muslims have a migratory background, not all those who have a migratory background are Muslims. Numerous sub-categories exist, and many specifically apply to the *Spätaussiedler* background: ethnic Germans who 'returned' from Russia, Central Asia, and Eastern Bloc countries, and automatically received citizenship following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

⁴ The study was based on the results of the responses received by each candidate after having sent their CVs to different job offers. The distinguishing religious differences between the two was primarily their names (Marie and Khadija), while to make the distinction even more evident "Marie" had volunteered at *Secours Catholique*,

seem to indicate that even once the factor of ethnic difference has been taken into account, there still exists another level of discrimination specifically linked to religion.

State-Islam-society relations: the background and lead-up to institutionalisation

The view that religion is a factor that must be taken into account in its own right has taken some time to be accepted by academics and policy-makers. The change has been in part due to the decline in “unidirectional and simplistic versions of the secularization hypothesis,” which Paul Bramadat describes as a “belief that religion... would not only eventually shrink in the face of the development of complex, rationalized [sic], and increasingly differentiated democracies, but ought to do so” (2009: 4, 11). In academic circles religion was thus often side-lined, owing to the influence of sociological theories which played down its importance and which focused more on questions of class and economic circumstances as elements capable of mobilising migrant communities.

On the other hand, it took until the late 1980s for most state institutions and the majority of public opinion to understand that the *Gastarbeiter* and their families were not temporary residents, and that there were here to stay. The oft repeated assertion by German politicians that “Germany is not a country of immigration (*Deutschland ist kein Zuwanderungsland*)” continued well into the 1990s, and was only truly laid to rest with the reform of the citizenship laws in 2000. In other words, not only did it take a long time for policy-makers to accept the permanency of Muslim immigrant communities within their countries (especially as citizens), but reflecting the general trend in academic research, religion as an independent variable was often passed over and simply not addressed.

Of course, the historical background and relations between the state, Islam, and society in France and Germany exhibit very significant differences. France, whether as a republic or an empire, was intimately involved in the management of Islamic religious affairs during the 19th century. Moreover, this did not change following the 1905 law separating church and state – even in Algeria, which, having been officially divided into three *départements*, should have followed the same course. As Bernard Godard and Sylvie Taussig (2007: 160) explain, “the status of the *indigénat*,⁵ established in 1865 and within which were confined Muslims, brought about a Muslim-specific policy.”

Nonetheless, Islam was not absent from metropolitan France during the first half of the 20th century. One of the most significant events to occur in the French state’s relationship with Islam occurred following the First World War, with the founding of the Great Mosque of Paris (GMP), inaugurated in 1926. The mosque was designed to be a sign of gratitude towards colonial Muslim soldiers who had died fighting for France. Its placement in the 5th

while “Khadija” had done the same at *Secours islamique*. The third candidate, “Aurélie Ménard,” did not have anything listed indicating possible religious beliefs on her CV (Laitin *et al.*, 2010).

⁵ The *code de l’indigénat* was a separate set of laws applicable solely to the ‘natives’ of the French colonies, which “was based on the (constitutionally illegal) premise that certain acts not normally punishable under French criminal law were in fact crimes if committed by persons of ‘native personal status’ (i.e. after 1870 and until 1944, most Algerian Muslims)” (McDougall, 2005: 130).

arrondissement in the centre of Paris, along with its high visibility and size, carried heavy symbolic weight attesting to an *inclusion* of the Islamic religion at the heart of the imperial capital. This move could be seen as shifting Islam to an insider-like position, yet on the other hand it also served to highlight the continuation of a policy of religious control employed by the French state in the colonies. Regardless, this symbolic importance would grow all the more contested following the independence of Tunisia and Morocco, and especially Algeria, as the director of the mosque Si Hamza Boubakeur had been supportive of French Algeria (Boyer, 2005: 9). The GMP and its director Boubakeur would continue to be interested “almost exclusively in French Muslims,” meaning ‘repatriated’ North Africans who had been supportive of the French regime, until it “fell into the hands of Algeria in 1981” (Boyer, 2005: 13).

If the Algerian government in the 1980s became involved in the management of the most important mosque in France, this obviously reflects a continued ambiguity as to where to place such an institution within the framework of the French republic: does it represent *foreign* interests or *French* interests? Does it serve the French population or foreign citizens?

As already shown, the freeze on migration and the settling of Muslim migrants and their families in Western Europe starting in the mid-1970s began unsettling the myth of return, and forced state authorities to reconsider their role and responsibilities *vis-à-vis* Muslim communities. Islam became an important feature of the rising focus on identity politics, especially as it proved to be a common denominator around which specific demands could be formulated. These demands are the concrete issues which, though sometimes very practical and straightforward, have sparked passionate debates across Europe on state-religion relations and on how best to accommodate Islam within different national legal and historical frameworks.

Examples of these concrete issues are numerous: regulation of *halal* meat, and more specifically the festival *Eid al-Adha / Kurban Bayramı*; training of local imams; zoning permits and funding for mosque construction; Islamic education in schools; arranging Muslim plots in local cemeteries; providing Muslim chaplains in the army, prisons or hospitals, etc. From the 1970s until the 1990s, states such as France and Germany viewed many of these demands as going beyond their responsibility – whether because they constituted issues in which the state would not normally become involved, or simply because they were considered to be questions principally affecting foreign citizens. Consequently, it seemed logical that if these were questions concerning foreign citizens, it should be their home states who should be responsible for addressing them.

Jonathan Laurence characterises this period as a first phase of *laissez-faire* “outsourcing” to foreign states, during which “with the minor exception of prayer spaces created in some workplaces and public housing units, governments outsourced relations to Muslim representatives to the embassies and consulates of sending states and the regional religious powerhouse, Saudi Arabia” (2006: 267). Thus during this period of outsourcing, Islamic religious demands in France and Germany were not only seen as being beyond the responsibility of the state, but rather as falling under the jurisdiction of foreign states. Regardless of citizenship, this practice clearly places Muslims and their religious concerns as outside the purview of the French and German governmental responsibility. As mentioned above, Islam and immigration remained intimately linked. Programmes such as ‘Home-

Country Language and Culture Lessons' (*Enseignements des langues et cultures d'origine*, ELCO) in France, would mix religious affiliation with migrant background: Algerian imams, for instance, were quietly imported into France starting at the end of the 1980s as 'teachers' for the ELCOs (Godard and Taussig, 2007: 43).

In Germany, Turkey began sending state-employed imams in earnest following the 1980 coup d'état, with an accord between the then Minister of the Interior C. Zimmermann granting the Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs, the *Diyanet*, a monopoly with regard to the importation of imams (Amiriaux, 2001: 57-58). A similar accord was reached between the French Ministry of the Interior and the *Diyanet* on the number of imams to be imported and the modalities for this process in 1991 (interview with Bernard Gaume and Bernard Godard, 2009). This foreign involvement in local Muslim affairs is to be found not only with other sending states such as Morocco or Tunisia, but also with transnational religious networks, such as the Saudi Muslim World League, the Muslim Brotherhood, the *Milli Görüş* network, and many others, as well as increasingly private donors from Gulf states such as Bahrain or Kuwait (Laurence, 2005: 43-46; Godard, 2010).

With the end of the myth of return, the realisation that immigrant Muslim populations were not leaving led policy-makers in France and Germany to seek a change in the existing policies employed by the state to manage Islam. This meant decreasing the influence and the degree of foreign involvement in religious affairs, whether it be emanating from foreign states or from transnational networks. Laurence characterises this second period, starting in 1989, as that of "incorporation," since states such as France and Germany began to become more proactive in the religious-related issues of their Muslim populations as part of a "gradual institutional process of 'de-transnationalizing' [sic] the practice of Islam" (2006: 268-271). This institutional process is the fundamental basis for the founding of the CFCM and the *Islamkonferenz*, which I will now turn to in greater detail.

Institutionalising Islam: the CFCM and the *Deutsche Islamkonferenz*

Laurence (2006: 268) situates the beginning of this second phase in 1989 specifically due to two factors: firstly, a number of international developments (specifically the Ayatollah's *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie and the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan), which pressured Western European states to be more attentive towards their Muslim populations; and secondly, French Interior Minister Pierre Joxe's launching of the *Council for Reflection on Islam in France* (CORIF). According to Laurence, this latter initiative was the result of a Joxe's "hav[ing] been unsettled by the fact that President Mitterrand did not receive any Muslim representatives for his annual new year's wishes to France's religious communities," despite Islam having come to constitute the second-largest religion of France (Laurence, 2005: 47). The CORIF, while not bringing about many concrete changes itself, was the trigger that set off a 14-year long process that would ultimately lead to the founding of the CFCM in 2003. The German *Islamkonferenz* is the result of a much younger initiative, begun in 2006, though it follows a similar pattern of having been brought about by the Minister of the Interior with the ultimate goal of creating an institution capable of acting as an interlocutor for the state with respect to Islamic religion-related questions. I will start with a brief overview of the creation of both organisations before analysing in more depth the similarities and differences between them.

CFCM – from the CORIF to the elections of 2003

The creation of the CFCM has been lauded by commentators such as Alain Billon (2005: 35) as being an issue where “public authorities proved themselves loyal to their commitments and capable of transcending traditional political cleavages to attain an objective for the national interest.” Indeed, throughout the 1990s the alternation between centre-right and centre-left politicians at the head of the Ministry of the Interior did not impede the process begun by Joxe (socialist), which was taken up again by Charles Pasqua (centre-right) and carried on by Jean-Pierre Chevènement (centre-left), and finally Nicholas Sarkozy (centre-right).⁶

Joxe’s 15-member CORIF had brought together a very diverse group of religious leaders and Muslim public figures, representing many different currents in French Islam. Charles Pasqua, on the other hand, attempted to re-centre the administration’s focus on the GMP. Controlled by directors dispatched from Algeria since 1981, the departure of Tedjini Haddam for Algeria in 1992 had opened the way for Dalil Boubakeur, a French citizen and the son of Si Hamza Boubakeur, to become director of the GMP. Pasqua’s decision to privilege the relationship with the GMP, most notably by granting it a lucrative monopoly in *halal* meat certification, succeeded in bringing about the creation of a ‘Charter of the Muslim Religion’ (Boyer, 2005: 15). However, the focus on the GMP was disputed by other associations, most notably Moroccan ones, and eventually led to the failure of this particular initiative.

It would ultimately be Jean-Pierre Chevènement, newly arrived as Minister of the Interior in 1997, who would set in motion the process leading to the creation of the CFCM with the ‘Consultation,’ or *Istishâra*. The cornerstone of this consultation was the signing of a text, largely based on the earlier ‘Charter of the Muslim Religion.’ This text obliged the Muslim leaders present to “solemnly declare their attachment to the fundamental principles of the French Republic” (République Française, 2000), and essentially served as the “entry ticket” for the associations which had been invited to participate in the Consultation; at the same time, it also responded to “the need for Islam to catch-up” with the other organised religions, which had already recognised the 1905 separation of church and state (Billon, 2005: 26-27). In other words, in an odd twist the foundational document of the CFCM was based on the official recognition of the state and its laws *by Muslim leaders*, and not the recognition of the Islam by the French state (which is legally prohibited by the law of 1905).⁷

The entry ticket for the consultation had been accepted by three different categories of actors, corresponding to the ministry’s desire to achieve maximum representativeness and inclusivity:

1. The large associative federations. This included the GMP; the Union of Islamic Organisations of France (UOIF), close to the Muslim Brotherhood; the National Federation of French Muslims (FNMF), a loose network of Moroccan Muslim associations; two organisations linked to the *Tabligh* movement: Faith and Practice, and Tabligh and Dawa illa Allah; a re-organised representative for Turkish Islam, the Coordination Committee of Muslim Turks in France (CCMTF), to the detriment of the

⁶ For a more complete list of the intervening Interior Ministers and their contributions to eventual creation of the CFCM, see Laurence, 2005, especially p. 51.

⁷ “The republic does not recognise, employ, nor subsidise any religion.” Article II, Loi du 9 décembre 1905 (République Française).

Milli Görüş movement; and the French Federation of African, Comorian and West Indian Islamic Associations (FFAIACA).

2. The 'independent' mosques, not officially linked to any association, though of regional or local importance: the mosques of Evry, Mantes-la-Jolie, Lyon, Islah (Marseilles), and Saint Denis de la Réunion.
3. Six "independent, qualified individuals," including one woman, and designed to represent currents that may be overshadowed by the federations and mosques mentioned above (for the above, see Billon, 2005: 28-30).

The next step in the consultation was the permanent establishment of this council, both centrally (the CFCM), as well as regionally, organised around 25 Regional Councils (the CRCMs). The legitimacy of these councils would be founded on one central element: the organisation of elections in order to determine their composition. This course of action led to two significant problems. On the one hand, the intransigence of Dalil Boubakeur and the GMP, which potentially had the most to lose, and on the other hand, the difficult practical questions surrounding how to determine the number of delegates from the different regions and mosques.

The first problem would be overcome following the direct intervention of the new Minister of the Interior, Nicolas Sarkozy, and thanks to an agreement between the main three federations (GMP, UOIF and FNMF). This agreement conferred the presidency to the GMP and the two vice-presidencies to the UOIF and the FNMF, no matter the outcome of the elections (Billon, 2005: 32-34), as well as the post of secretary general to Haydar Demiryurek of the Turkish CCMTF. This balance between the main parties "was established as a rule not to be violated" (Godard and Taussig, 2007: 172). However, this agreement would also lead other associations and outside commentators to call into question the proclaimed democratic legitimacy of the institution.

The second problem was perhaps the most visible of tip an iceberg of negotiations concerning the electoral process. The final decision was that the number of delegates would be proportional to the *surface area* of the mosque or prayer space in question, ranging from one delegate for a surface area smaller than 100m², to fifteen delegates for 800m² or more (and a "bonus" for the GMP, at eighteen). Once more, this would be a highly contested decision as the surface area did not necessarily reflect the number of people attending – some prayer spaces would even have people spilling out into the hallways. However, given that French *laïcité* prohibits the creation of lists based on confessional background, and the fact that the prayer spaces, on the other hand, could be "counted," due to their status as declared associations, this system was finally unanimously agreed upon, because "no one managed to propose another more simple and operational system" (Billon, 2005: 30).

The elections on the whole were considered a success, in that "eighty percent of eligible prayer spaces voluntarily participated in the government consultation (since 1999) and CFCM/CRCM elections" (Laurence, 2005: 55). In another paradoxical instance linking inclusion and exclusion, Alain Boyer states that "many Muslims, still foreign citizens, made the surprising discovery of free elections... [due to which] they felt a great satisfaction and a certain pride" (2005: 19).

In this perspective, it seems the French state has managed to include foreign residents and spread democratic principles by targeting them *as Muslims*; religion has become a vehicle for

the state's promotion of democracy among non-citizens. The implications of this idea are rather confusing: on the one hand it seems that non-citizen Muslims are now integrated into some kind of national and regional structure, which not only proclaims its attachment to the laws of the republic but also reproduces certain values, such as free and (relatively) fair democratic elections. On the other hand, it could be seen as a failure to find a way to integrate non-citizen Muslims as well as Muslim citizens into the larger majority society, both of whom are thus addressed by the category of 'Muslim' *instead of* citizen. Laurence states that "Islam policy in France has evolved into an attempt to integrate second and third generation immigrants by encouraging the cooperation of the main organizational forces vying for control over them" (2005: 55), while Çitak agrees that "religion in general [has become] a policy tool for integration in France" (2010: 630). However neither of these scholars draw attention to the fact that in having done so, the state may have not officially recognised *Islam* (which would be against the principles of *laïcité*), but has nevertheless indirectly recognised *Muslims*, and regardless of nationality, as a category unto itself.

The implications of *Muslims* as a citizenship-blind category can be seen in the results of the 2003 CFCM/CRCM elections. The campaign period saw a significant mobilisation of the Moroccan, Algerian, and Turkish consulates (Billon, 2005: 34), and Godard and Taussig (2007: 175) point out the paradox that "the elections led to a reinforcement, if not the constitution of a new influence of sending states over the places of worship... This return of the chancelleries and the consulates, still discrete in 2003, would become obvious in 2005." The influence of the sending states was primarily to be seen in the electoral defeat of the GMP and the significant scores attained by the FNMF and the UOIF. According to Godard, under his pseudonym Hervé Terrel, the GMP's defeat was due primarily to the fact that the network of Algerian mosques in France has difficulty in recognising the Algerian government's official representative as their own; meanwhile on a more practical level, the victory of the FNMF showed the numerical domination of Moroccans in places of worship, while the UOIF reaped the rewards of its activism and its tactical alliances with other federations (2004: 91).

The paradox that Godard and Taussig mention above is a result of what I indicated earlier: the recourse to a citizenship-blind category which does not clearly set any boundaries between the national and the international. This move, ironically promoted in order to domesticate Islam, has rendered the field of Muslim issues in France open to outside influences in a way which provides entry opportunities for foreign states and transnational networks. This *Muslim* category is inviting for sending states, who instrumentalise Islam as a vehicle of cultural identity and lasting ties with the home country – in some cases, the state is even constitutionally obligated to promote this identity abroad (as in the case of Turkey⁸). Nonetheless, as the election results demonstrate, the particular history of each ethnic group is important to bear in mind: the greater degree of secularism and integration among Algerian communities effectively proved detrimental to the GMP's electoral strategies, while reliance on home state governmental support benefitted the FNMF and the CCMTF. Before going

⁸ Article 62 of the 1982 Turkish Constitution, under the heading "Turkish citizens Working in Foreign Countries," reads: "The state will take the necessary measures in order to provide for family unity, children's education, cultural needs, and the social security of Turkish citizens working in foreign countries, as well as in order to protect their ties with the homeland and to help with returning from abroad" (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Anayasası, 1982).

further in this analysis, I will now turn to an overview of the creation of the *Deutsche Islamkonferenz*.

The Deutsche Islamkonferenz

To begin this section there are three elements which need to be highlighted. The first is that Islam carries no colonial baggage in Germany. The second element is that there exists a pre-established framework within which religious affairs are recognised and managed, which differs considerably from that in France. The third element is that Germany is a federal state, and thus highly centralised government initiatives, such as that which led to the creation of the French CFCM, are more complicated, as they need to take into account the jurisdictional rights of the *Länder*.

Prior to the creation of the *Islamkonferenz*, questions concerning the institutionalisation of Islam in Germany revolved around one issue: attaining the status of 'corporation of public law' (*Körperschaft des öffentlichen Rechts*). This status differs both symbolically and concretely from the status which almost all Muslim associations in Germany have, that of 'registered association' (*eingetragener Verein*). The status of corporation of public law is granted by the individual federal states (Tietze, 2008: 286), thus the list can vary from one state to another. However, certain religions, such as the Protestant and Catholic churches, are present in all states.

The status of corporation of public law most notably gives the right to levy a 'church tax' (*Kirchensteuer*), which is administered by the state and redistributed to the religions concerned, as well as the right to sole decision-making power over "the content of religion courses; the opening of confessional schools and places of worship; the management of chaplaincy services in public services; and finally, a right to free broadcasting on public television and radio" (Amiriaux, 2001: 102). Thus, the fight for this status has both significant material consequences as well as symbolic ones. Furthermore, due to the fact that attaining this status is an important goal for many associations, especially the Union of Islamic Culture Centres (VIKZ) and *Milli Görüş*, the fight for a pre-existing legal status has led a large number of developments in state-Islam relations in Germany to be more focussed on legal questions than political ones.

The reform of the citizenship laws in 2000 had great symbolic importance, in that Germany finally recognised that it was a "country of immigration,"⁹ and was followed by initiatives such as the Integration Summit of 2006. The most visible political component began in 2006, when then Minister of the Interior Wolfgang Schäuble called for a conference on Islam, and brought together fifteen state representatives with fifteen so-called Muslim representatives in order to form workgroups and establish a "continual dialogue... since Muslims in Germany no longer represent a foreign population, but rather have become a part of our society" (Schäuble, 2006).

In a similar fashion to Pierre Joxe's CORIF, or perhaps even more so to Jean-Pierre Chevènement's Consultation, the *Islamkonferenz* was meant as a forum for discussion and dialogue, and brought together representatives of different levels of government, the leaders

⁹ This should not distract, however, from the fact that the new laws *did not* result in an increase of naturalisations of Turks, though this was the general trend for other foreigners (see Kaya, 2009: 48-49).

of the main associative federations, as well as other Muslim public figures. The main five associative federations included the Turkish Islamic Union for Religion Affairs (DITIB), close to the Turkish government; the Central Council of Muslims in Germany (ZMD), bringing together converts, Arabs, and Bosnians; the Union of Islamic Culture Centres (VIKZ), representing the Turkish Sufi *Süleymanî* order; the Alevi Community of Germany; and the Islamic Council of the Federal Republic of Germany (IRD), a group heavily dominated by *Millî Görüş*. They were accompanied by other associative leaders and public figures of the Muslim community, as well as notable critics of Islam, such as author Necla Kelek (DIK, 2010b).

One of the most cited accomplishments of the *Islamkonferenz* has been the commissioning of a study entitled “Muslim Life in Germany,” as well as the issuing of recommendations on public policy issues such as Islamic religious education in public schools and mosque construction. Also, similarly to Chevènement’s Consultation, the *Islamkonferenz* was followed up by an attempt to unify the most important federations in order to create a single interlocutor for state-Islam relations. The result of this was the founding of the Coordinating Council of Muslims in Germany (KRM) in April 2007, bringing together the DITIB, the ZMD, the VIKZ, and the IRD (and most notably leaving out the Alevites). Ayyub Axel Köhler, head of the ZMD, has acknowledged the importance of the *Islamkonferenz* as a triggering factor in the creation of the KRM (Lau, 2007). Nonetheless, the KRM is far from an institution like the French CFCM: it has no official legal status and is not the product of an electoral process. More than anything, it functions as a coordinating body of the four aforementioned federations, with a six-month rotating presidency and special privileges given to DITIB (which were its preconditions for joining) (Enzyklopädie des Islam, 2006).

The second *Islamkonferenz* is more recent, and began on 17 May 2010, following the three years and four sessions which had constituted the first. Now under the direction of the new Minister of the Interior Thomas de Maizière, the conference has run into a number of significant problems. The first was the Ministry’s suspension of the IRD from the conference, due to an ongoing investigation of *Millî Görüş* for tax evasion. The IRD has rejected this explanation, claiming that the “actual reason... must certainly be the decidedly critical position taken by the IRD during the former *Islamkonferenz*-process” (Kızılkaya, 2010). Secondly, the *de facto* exclusion of the IRD has since led the ZMD to refuse to participate as well, while also citing other reasons such as the lack of a clear goal, underrepresentation of Muslim communities, and unwillingness on the part of the Ministry of the Interior to seriously combat Islamophobia (Köhler, 2010). The absence of two of the largest federations in the country has consequently led many commentators to cast doubt on the conference’s ability to promote dialogue, as well as to lay claim to representativeness (Sezgin, 2010; Rieger, 2010). The Ministry’s decision to suspend the IRD shows that there are limits to the inclusivity of the *Islamkonferenz*-process, though by doing so they run the risk of deligitimising the process itself.

Beyond national models: “institutionalisation” revisited

In more general theoretical analyses of the institutionalisation of Islam, the difficulty of comparing common elements across different national and regional contexts has led some scholars to highlight certain aspects more than others.

Brigitte Maréchal describes the institutionalisation of Islam as being a question of “its official recognition by state agencies” as well as the “processes of constitution of organisations representing Muslim communities in their relations with various European states” (Maréchal *et al.*, 2003: 151). Laurence uses the term “incorporation” (of Islam by the state), as does Riva Kastoryano, who couples “recognition” with “institutional assimilation” (2004: 1245). Others such as Claire De Galembert and Mustapha Belbah use the expression “normalisation” of Islam, in the “double sense of banalisation and the application of norms” (2005: 76). In a similar vein, Nicolas Sarkozy stated that what was needed was “the ‘dedramatisation of the problem [of Islam]’” (cited in Çitak, 2010: 623).

There are two main proposals to be highlighted here: one is that the state needs to undertake some kind of action with regard to Islam which manages to symbolically confer state recognition onto the religion (though perhaps not officially stating it, as in the French case), while at the same time bringing about the creation of a representative organisation, capable of acting as spokesperson for the Muslim community in its relations with the state. However, these twin goals wade directly into the immensely complicated terrain of state-religion relations, which vary not only between states but within them, as well as the complexity of the Muslim community itself.

Given the different legal frameworks and historical evolutions which have contributed to the current status quo, many scholars agree that the evolution of state-religion relations has been “path-dependant” (Bader, 2007: 882). In other words, despite international agreement between many Western European states on issues such as fundamental human rights and liberties on the one hand, and different opportunity structures on the other, the specific national-institutional framework within which Islam (more specifically Muslims) finds itself will ultimately be the determinate factor in the evolution of state-Islam relations. Joel Fetzer and J. Christopher Soper (2005) have thus prominently argued that Muslim-state relations in Britain, France, and Germany, are fundamentally conditioned by the pre-existing church-state arrangements. Similarly, Matthias Koenig has highlighted the divergences in the institutionalisation of the individual in corporatist and liberal polities:

in nation-states oriented towards statist or corporatist polity models, such as France, Germany and the Netherlands, the incorporation of Muslim minorities is co-ordinated by the organizational centre of the state, while in liberal polities, such as Great Britain, it rather takes the form of civil negotiations, mostly at the local level (cited in Kaya, 2009: 195).

Nevertheless, Koenig and Bader have both acknowledged the danger of ‘modelling,’ as these “models often mirror the dominant normative self-understandings of national publics or elites, rather than capture the complicated politics of religious diversity on the ground” (Koenig, 2009: 310; Bader, 2007). These models have also been ‘tested’ by scholars such as de Galembert, who has emphasised the importance of local regulation and the similar displacement of questions concerning Islamic religious affairs from the local level to the national level in both France and Germany (2003: 70-72; and 2005: 194).

But how to understand the similarities that exist in the outsourcing of Islamic religious services *vis-à-vis* the different processes that have led to the institutionalisation of Islam in France and Germany? One possible explanation is linked to the common security threat posed by non-state Islamic terrorist groups. Though I cannot properly address the issue of

national security in this article, it is a factor of constant relevance for the French and German authorities due to the possibility of terrorist attacks linked with Islamic extremism. Following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, and the Madrid (2004) and London (2005) bombings, receiving state actors have seen cooperation with foreign states in religious matters as a way of better controlling and keeping watch over non-state religious actors. Seen from this perspective, the initiative of the state in organising a CFCM or an *Islamkonferenz* is not opposed to, but complements the outsourcing of religious services. It is the result of a desire to better control and watch over Muslim populations, which the state considers as prone to radicalisation, and potentially dangerous to the rest of society.

Interstate cooperation in religious affairs

The first explanation for the institutionalisation of Islam and the continued outsourcing of Islamic religious services is primarily based on the danger presented by extremist, non-state actors as a potential terrorist threat. However, the CFCM and the *Islamkonferenz* were both primarily created with the ideal of promoting an Islam of France and Germany, and not first and foremost as instruments of surveillance. In other words, promoting a sense of belonging by domesticating Islam is a necessary condition for Muslim immigrant integration, and continuing the outsourcing of religious activities to foreign states actually runs contrary to this goal.

This position is taken by numerous public figures and scholars: in his analysis of the CFCM, Alain Boyer is adamant about the necessity to fight against foreign actors' interference in French Muslim affairs (2005: 12), a view shared by Oliver Roy (2007: 12). Meanwhile, Jonathan Laurence states that during the period of incorporation, starting with Joxe's CORIF in 1989, "authorities' attitudes towards 'official' Islam changed significantly," because the sending state "religious emissaries perpetuated a competing foreign tie among populations of immigrant origin" (2006: 270).

One of the French Interior Ministry's first accomplishments during the Consultation serves an example of this change: the creation of the Turkish CCMTF. Similar to other *Diyanet*-linked associations in Europe, the French DITIB has as its president a Turkish bureaucrat, who occupies the role of religious counsellor at the Turkish consulate. This direct diplomatic link was inadmissible for the Interior Ministry's Central Office for Religions in the run-up to the CFCM, and thus following extensive negotiations with the Turkish representatives, the CCMTF was founded (interview with Gaume and Godard, 2009). This reorganisation was also done with the hope of broadening the CCMTF's appeal during the CFCM elections, due to the at times entrenched division between *Milli Görüş* and *Diyanet*-linked associations. Despite the fact that the differences between the CCMTF and DITIB continue to seem superficial,¹⁰ the pressure brought to bear on the DITIB to reorganise itself does show a desire on the part of the French authorities to de-transnationalise Muslim organisations, and highlight a new form of national belonging.

Nevertheless, on the whole the tendency has been much to the contrary. On the one hand, I do agree with Laurence (2006: 261) that the "*similarities* in the patterns of institutional

¹⁰ They share the same office space in Paris and the CCMTF leader, Haydar Demiryurek, was previously secretary of the DITIB in France (Bruce, 2009: 89).

outcomes [are] striking, given distinctive national approaches to citizenship, divergent state-religion regimes and the political traditions of state-society relations.” On the other hand, I disagree with him that receiving states have significantly changed their attitudes with regard to ‘official Islam.’ In fact, the similarities which I find to be striking are the continuing tendencies for states such as Germany and France to resort to interstate cooperation in order to deal with Islamic religion-related issues.

Laurence notes himself that Charles Pasqua in 1995 had “aimed for a diplomatic solution to the question of Muslim representation in France, even encouraging an alliance between the GMP and the Saudi Muslim World League” (2005: 49). This was not the only example of such behaviour. In the final stages before the establishment of the CFCM, then Minister of the Interior Nicolas Sarkozy held numerous meetings with the ambassadors of Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Turkey, and even the secretary-general of the Muslim World League. He presented this information to the members of the Consultation with the added comment that “all expressed to me their desire to see the Consultation succeed” (cited in Billon, 2005: 33). Why would an organisation ostensibly created to anchor Islam in the French institutional landscape need approval from foreign ambassadors? Furthermore, since when does a Minister of the Interior convince his own citizens (or at the least, residents of his country) on matters of internal politics by referring to the desires of foreign states?

Ironically enough, this was the same Sarkozy who, one year later, would travel to Cairo’s famous Al-Azhar mosque in order to obtain the following statement from Sheikh Mohamed Sayed Tantawi: “The headscarf is a divine obligation, but if a woman lives in a non-Muslim country, such as France, and the authorities wish to adopt laws that are opposed to the headscarf, it is their right and I cannot oppose it” (cited in Claude, 2003). The law prohibiting the headscarf in French public institutions, as well as other religious symbols, was adopted in 2004, and had been unanimously contested by the CFCM. After having gone to such an extent to create the CFCM in order to have a French consultative institution on issues relating to the Islamic religion, it seems absurd for a French Interior Minister to travel to a foreign country to secure the assent of a religious leader, whose legitimacy among the Muslims of France is by no means self-evident. Indeed, this move was seen as contradictory and aberrant by the secretary-general of the CFCM (interview with Haydar Demiryurek, 2009).

The electoral victory of the Party for Justice and Development (AKP) in Turkey created similar waves in Germany. The AKP had come from a line of Islamist political parties founded by Necmettin Erbakan, whose European branch was the *Milli Görüş* network. The rise to power of the AKP in Turkey was met with the criticism by the German-Turk socialist parliamentarian, Lale Akgün, that the *Diyanet*-linked DITIB had consequently become “politicised” (cited in Tosun, 2009). Though such a stance might seem to portend a decline in German-Turkish cooperation with regard to religious affairs, precisely the opposite has occurred: the German government has become more involved in promoting German-language and culture programmes for *Diyanet* imams, even involving the Goethe Institute in Turkey (Auswärtigesamt, 2009). France has recently set-up a similar programme with the *Diyanet* as a part of a larger revised agreement augmenting the number of *Diyanet* imams allowed in the country (interview with Gaume and Godard, 2009).

The explanation for this cooperation is twofold. On the one hand, the old argument for the outsourcing phase still holds partly true, despite the years of conferences and public debate: states such as France and Germany have a hard time accommodating a number of demands related to Islamic practice, as well as elaborating public policies that can effectively respond to those demands. However, there exists a more subtle and pervasive reason, which I have already discussed above. As in the case of the CFCM elections, which have been shown to reinforce the influence of sending states consulates, the reason for the continued importance of sending states in Islamic religious affairs is the ambiguous status of the Muslim citizen in France and Germany.

As the CFCM elections have shown, the creation of a representative body for Islam in France, in its quest for legitimacy, has reinforced the idea of a Muslim category which exists independent of citizenship. This complements a point raised by Dijkstra *et al.* (2001: 64), namely that “national citizenship, however, turns the national majority culture into the standard that migrants must meet to attain equal rights.” The ‘culturalisation’ of citizenship creates extra exclusionary categories which leave the Muslim citizen somewhere beyond Thomas Hammer’s “denizen” (1990), in other words with full social, economic, and political rights, yet somehow still occupying a gray zone and issuing demands which do not fully enter into what the state considers to be the scope of its responsibility. Furthermore, in both France and Germany demands from residents concerning religious questions often include *both* citizens and non-citizens, providing a common denominator between the two groups based on a question of identity which serves to keep the terms ‘Muslim’ and ‘immigrant’ highly synonymous. Additionally, sending states such as Morocco and Turkey are quite interested in keeping this ambiguity alive, in order to continue to have an influence within their overseas communities.

The interstate cooperation evidenced here is symptomatic of the dislocation between governments and certain segments of their societies in Western European states that have received significant Muslim immigration during the last half century. It also testifies to the persistence of ideologies fixing the cultural boundaries of both the state and the nation. On another level, this cooperation is the result of a generalised mistrust of non-state religious actors by receiving states, a sentiment often shared by the ‘official Islam’ of the sending states. The generally friendly relations maintained by these states, as well as their complimentary sets of interests, facilitates the development of interstate cooperation in managing the religious affairs of Muslim populations in states such as France and Germany.

At issue is the capacity for questions concerning Islamic religion-related issues to be treated as *internal* problems, of significance to national society at large. In other words, in order for the national imaginary to integrate and understand the demands of Muslim citizens in France and Germany, these demands need to be considered by public authorities as first and foremost the demands of citizens who belong to the national polity, and not the demands of a citizenship-blind category of Muslims. The CFCM and the *Islamkonferenz* can only do this if, in the words of UOIF-leader Fouad Alaoui (2005: 117), “everyone recognises that the CFCM is a French issue, not an international one. States which have nationals in France have no need to intervene. It is up to French Muslims to organise their faith, not states.”

Conclusion

One of the principal *raison d'être* for the CFCM and the *Islamkonferenz* is to promote a sense of belonging for Muslim citizens by anchoring Islam firmly in the institutional landscape of both countries. Both institutions are founded on the realisation that Islam has become the second-largest religion of both countries and not simply *in* both countries, and that close to or well-over the majority of these Muslims are citizens. Not 'subject/citizens' as were Algerians during the Third and Fourth French Republics, nor as the second- or third-generation German Turkish denizens, but citizens with equal rights and responsibilities, and whose demands for religious accommodation need to be understood within their national context. Presumably this is what the German Minister of the Interior Thomas de Mazière refers to when he characterises the *Islamkonferenz* as a "bridge to society...anchoring the idea deeper in society" (IGMG, 2010).

The processes leading up to the establishment of the CFCM and the *Islamkonferenz*, as well as the controversies and crises that have beset both of them, bear witness to the mined terrain that constitutes state-religion relations. However, as stated by Alfred Stepan (2010), the relationship does not stop there: state-religion relations are always necessarily state-religion-*society* relations. Consequently, when factors such as international migration bring about changes to that society, it follows that the rest of the relationship will be obliged to adjust accordingly. However, legal and political belonging is not always perceived as enough by the majority receiving society, and Islam thus becomes a constitutive element in determining that which *does not* belong.

This paper has shown how the ambiguity that has overshadowed the idea of the Muslim citizen, at once insider and outsider, has led to paradoxical policies on the part of the French and German states. These policies have sought to de-transnationalise Islam and domesticate it within national political and legal frameworks through a process of institutionalisation with the goal of promoting a sense of national belonging. However, the inability of the receiving states to treat Islam as a question of internal politics has also led to the heightened involvement of sending states in the internal Islamic religious affairs of each country. The primary explanation advanced by this paper for this contradiction is that Muslims (regardless of whether citizens or not) remain in an ambiguous no man's land for the French and German states, which justifies the continued reliance on foreign governments as intermediaries.

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