

COOPERATION WITH RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS AS A EUROPEAN POLICY TOOL

P. Sasnal (Ed.), S. Altuna, Y. El-Menouar, G. Fahmi



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Foreword

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For at least three decades now religion has been re-entering the public sphere and politics in Europe and globally. Its re-emergence, however, bears little resemblance to the past when the religion-state coupling was unequivocal. Today, in Europe, the values of freedom of religion and belief, free expression and non-discrimination take precedence over any single religion's domination – at least that is the prevalent aspiration. In the European neighbourhood, major social and political phenomena have acquired an increasingly religious angle: radicalisation – in the words of Olivier Roy – is becoming Islamised, intra and interstate conflicts have a sectarian character, and governments either want to increase their control over religion or the breakdown of local governance is making religious actors more legitimate representatives than the central government. Within EU member states, religion is resurfacing alongside two simultaneous trends: on the one hand, individualised, atomised urban life that requires more spirituality and a reference point to the realities of modernity and diversity; and, on the other, social polarisation around perceptions of secularisation and religions, particularly Islam.

The Joint Policy Study takes an institutionalist view of state-religion relations, although religious institutions are defined in a broad sense and encompass both official and unofficial religion. This leaves the field outside of the institutionalised religion-state relations either relatively small or down to individual expressions of religiosity. Institutionalism, so understood, is of a view that policy is carried out through and with institutions. These can vary in different aspects: dependence (state-dependent, state-controlled, independent of states), size, homogeneity, thematic focus, accountability, credibility, and so on.

The chapters in the study aim to provide both more generalised overviews (chapters 1 and 3) and case studies (chapters 2 and 4) to cover all levels of state-religion relations in Europe and MENA: (1) relations between state and religious institutions in Europe (chapter 1); (2) relations between state and religious institutions in the Maghreb (Tunisia and Morocco in chapter 3); (3) relations between institutions of different religions (the Vatican and al-Azhar in chapter 4); and (4) the role of Muslim religious institutions in advancing a state policy in an EU member state (Germany in chapter 2).

Chapter 1 by Patrycja Sasnal provides a theoretical basis to track the changes in state religion policy (SRP) in the EU and EU member states. It defines the elements and goals of SRP, and employs the theory of institutionalisation – in its historical and empirical variants – to group EU member state countries into five categories, depending on the level of their SRPs' institutionalisation and recent trends. The religion policy of the EU is also mentioned with a conclusion that it mimics the dominant tendencies in EU member states.

Yasemin El-Menouar's chapter 2, which examines the role that Muslim religious institutions play in the integration of refugees in Germany, shows that these institutions are both platforms for engagement and bridge-builders between the incomers and the host society. Her analysis shows the opportunities that cooperation with Muslim organisations brings about but it also demonstrates the difficulties. Based on the German case study, the paper argues for stronger cooperation with Muslim institutions also at the European level, calls for the acknowledgment of Muslim religious diversity, and finishes with a fascinating conclusion about the intriguing phenomenon of a European Islam.

Sergio Altuna's chapter 3 looks at key religious actors in Morocco and Tunisia. His paper follows the development of state-controlled religious institutions to show how the grip of the state on religion changes in these countries. The chapter shows that religious institutions should be regarded as dependent political instruments in the hands of local governments. Altuna argues, however, that since 2011 the religious arena has undergone significant changes: new voices and new modes of information dissemination entered the political sphere, broadening the religious spectrum for the public. The governments can no longer sustain their grip on religious institutions but deal with these changes differently – here he analyses interesting differences between the Tunisian model of exclusion of the Salafist current and Moroccan co-optation of it.

Interreligious dialogue is analysed by Georges Fahmi in chapter 4 by looking at the recent rapprochement between the Vatican (the highest authority in Catholicism) and al-Azhar (the main authority in Sunni Islam). Fahmi shows the build-up and the reasons behind the two heads of the two institutions strengthening their cooperation with utmost clarity and insight. Fahmi contends that Pope Francis, who genuinely believes interreligious dialogue is a force for good, found a suitable partner for dialogue in Ahmed al-Tayyeb, the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, and can thus support moderate currents in Islam and Christianity. For Tayyeb, dialogue is a tool for maintaining legitimacy and some sort of independence from the state. Fahmi finds that the rapprochement is a positive signal coming from religious authorities although it faces several challenges, which are set out in the chapter, and needs to be taken to the grassroots level in the next phase.

Points of Tangency between State and Religious Institutions in Europe – Institutionalisation of State Religion Policy

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The chapter maps formal interactions between state institutions in the European Union (EU) member states and the EU, on the one hand, and religious actors, on the other. Its aim is to identify if, how and in which domains the member states and the EU have formalised their religion policy (state religion policy, SRP) both internally and externally. The manners of formalisation are called “points of tangency” between state and religion. Building on historical and empirical institutionalism, the chapter finds that SRP formalisation allows for several preliminary conclusions, i.e. about the importance of SRP in relation to other policies, historical legacies of state-religion relations and categorisation of states according to institutionalisation of their SRPs.

Methodology

The paper builds on elements of historical and empirical institutionalisms. The former is interested in historical development of institutions, while being attentive to the way in which they distribute power unevenly across social groups (Hall & Taylor, 1996). The latter stipulates that there is a direct correlation between institutions and policy choices (Peters, 2000) in that it takes the way a particular state policy – SRP (Fox, 2019) – is formalised within state structures as indicative of the content and importance of that policy. The manner of formalisation is called “point of tangency” between state and religion – it is usually an office or a post within a state institution that is responsible for conducting SRP. It is different from the official relation between religion and state as these relations can be separationist (France), accommodational (The Netherlands), cooperational (Sweden), and so on, but they do not correspond with the level of SRP institutionalisation within a country (see Table 1). Instead of including all EU member states, the study analyses 11 EU countries that are most representative taking various terms into account, such as size, location, history, official relation between state and religion, and religious heterogeneity.

A religious institution is both a formalised organisation and informal influencer of religious background. Religion here is understood in a twofold manner: official religion and popular religion (Waardenburg, 1978; Grandin; 1978, Rodinson, 2007). Religious institutions can be part of both. For example, a ministry of endowments in Egypt is part of the official religion, and Mustafa Hosni, as a popular religious leader, is part of the popular religion but both are considered religious institutions in this paper. The term “religious institution” can be used interchangeably with “religious actor”.

Only Christian and Muslim organisations are taken into consideration unless data from the Religion and State project (RAS at Bar Ilan University) is used. Inclusion of both denominations is useful for two reasons. The former represents a majority religion in Europe

and the latter a minority (see Table 1). Points of tangency that were initially established to interact with the majority religion are sometimes reformulated or reactivated to interact with the minority religion. The important difference between Christianity and Islam that impacts the way relations with groups of one denomination or the other are institutionalised is that Sunni Islam (ca. 90% of Muslims) does not have clergy – a pyramid structure of mediators between human beings and God. This, however, does not mean that religious institutions are absent in Islam – they are indeed more fragmented and dispersed, yet they exist and can be actors in political and diplomatic relations, even if there is no single overarching institution as in the case of the Catholic Church, for example.

The Growing Importance of SRP

In the past two centuries in Europe the expansion of secularisation has not been questioned (Martino, 2014), particularly in comparison with other continents – United States (US), Russia, Asia, Latin America and Africa. The strong influence of the Church in European history and the creation of a plethora of denominations following the Reformation, together with their intertwinement with politics, have all left a permanent mark on the European state structure. Even the most secularised states in Europe maintain relations with key denominations, among which Christian churches are usually privileged (see Table 1). Throughout the 20th century and in line with the changes in the social fabric – secularisation, fragmentation, rise of new religions and religious movements – institutions of contact between state and religion have been adopted accordingly and following specific state policies. Only 3.7% of countries made no changes to their SRPs (Fox, 2019) while other countries have constantly reshaped them.

In politics, let alone policy formulation, and in the public space in general, religion is seen as problematic. References to God in public speeches, ostentatious religious signs, religion in public schools and in the curricula – these are manifestations of religion that European politicians have traditionally tried to avoid, even if their very political base would hail from a religious background (i.e. Christian Democrats). Religiosity in the political arena seems exclusivist or promoting a worldview that excludes dis- or non-believers. There is an element of a zero-sum game when it comes to religion: a mention of one denomination automatically excludes all others. Inclusivity was behind the idea of secularisation altogether. Yet, despite secularisation in Europe, not only did religion not disappear, shaping people's choices and worldviews, but it generally resurfaced in the world. It acquired a greater political meaning and influence. From attitudes to minorities and refugees to violent extremism, radicalisation, civil/international wars and conflicts, these political opinions became religious or, at least, of religious flavour. Even though throughout the 20th century moral matters have been gradually relegated to the private domain, today's secular society inherits from its religious past.

In an introduction to his highly influential work, Talal Asad asserts that “if anything is agreed upon, it is that a straightforward narrative of progress from the religious to the secular is no longer acceptable” (Asad, 2003). In the Durkheimian and Weberian tradition, religion is the major provider of meaning in societies (Robertson, 1969). Even if Americans declare themselves more religious than Europeans, it is in Europe that religion has been better organised politically in the form of political parties that hail from two major Christian faiths (Berger & Luckmann, 1969). Pre-1989 religion played an important role in European politics as an ideological opposition to the lay Communist bloc. It seems as if in the 21st century European religion again resurfaces internally in two political functions: (1) on the right (but not exclusively) as opposition or bulwark against Islam (which may be true for non-Islamic denominations and militant secularists) and (2) on the left and in the centre (more often than on the right) as a theme of religious freedom. In international relations (IR) religion has never lost its clout. If anything, religious actors gained importance as international partners in an increasingly globalised world. Since the upward trend in democratisation is no longer certain, their role is also strengthened in relations with non-democratic countries as legitimate and trustworthy representatives of local populations, i.e. in conflicts or instances when central government does not provide services. In democratic contexts too, in the US for example, the religious minority (evangelicals) is having a visible and direct impact on the foreign policy of the American administration.

Religion plays a role in the polarisation of societies, specifically across social strata. Max Weber found that “the sense of dignity of socially repressed strata or of strata whose status is negatively valued is nourished most easily on the belief that a special ‘mission’ is entrusted to them. (...) Their value is thus moved into something beyond themselves, into a ‘task’ placed before them by God” (Gerth & Wright Mills, 1946). Regardless of the many conclusions that can be drawn from these statements, of interest here is that the repressed or negatively valued by society have a tendency to turn to religion. It may also be a majority inclination of citizens in modern urban contexts. Weber, cited by Ernest Gellner, found that urban life, which is a majority experience in Europe and increasingly such elsewhere in the world, requires a specific mode of religiosity, one that provides a more direct contact with God, without intermediaries and a less ludic one (Gellner, 1968). Such a tendency allows for an even greater disconnect from society, in which the religious institution is closer to such an individual than any other social actor, making it all the more relevant politically.

Another aspect that elevates the importance of religious institutions in Europe and its neighbourhood is the importance of Muslim communities. Islam is part of the European religious scene and through perceptions of this community or the religion itself becomes a political theme. Many people believe that Muslims are committed to values that are at odds

with a modern secular state (Asad, 2003). A policy of no contact with Muslim institutions on the part of the European states can be seen as corroborating such a statement. For Muslims not only to be in Europe but also to be “of” Europe their religious congregations should be treated on a par with other religions that are historically seen to be European. More generally and philosophically, Talal Asad (2003) finds that politics and religion implicate each other more profoundly than previously thought and the concept of the secular is inseparable from the idea of religion. Because of its fragmentation and plasticity Islam poses a unique challenge for state policies – finding legitimate and representative actors. All this, however, is marred by an even greater problem of state relations with all religions, which is the tension between autonomy and control. Religions cannot be state controlled; neither can the state be controlled by a religion – striking the right balance in any form of cooperation remains the biggest difficulty and a condition, at the same time, of truly effective policies. Ultimately the question is not if but how a religion becomes public, for it to become public in cooperation with the state in a way that complies with the notions of the secular and modernity.

Therefore, foreign and internal European and EU member state policy cannot ignore religion as a factor in general attitudes of people – hence the presence of SRP in every EU member state and the EU itself. What are the components of this policy?

Identifying Domains of SRP

Formally, SRP is horizontal. Like, for example, a policy to prevent climate change it encompasses many sectors, the analysis of which allows for an assessment of the characteristics and the level of development of a given state’s SRP. The overarching goal of SRP is the inclusion of religious actors in state policy-making and/or execution. Primarily, cooperation with religious actors can be useful in policies that require direct contact with religious citizens, that necessitate spreading a message or obtaining information that would be difficult to gather other than through religious institutions or actors. The traditional SRP domain, which required intense cooperation with religious institutions, was security and social cohesion: preventing and countering violent extremism (PVE/CVE), de-radicalisation on the one hand and integration (including education in integration) and conflict prevention on the other. The new policies that are only beginning to emerge are connected with non-traditional political narratives and socioeconomic necessities of development, such as renewables, ecology and environment.

Since the deadliest terror attacks on European soil in the last two decades have been perpetrated by terrorists claiming religious vocation, much of policy interest and the relevant literature have focused predominantly on cooperation with religious institutions in security

policy. But there is too little data to state with certainty that a specific kind of policy of state cooperation with religious institutions in Europe would improve CVE measures. In fact, research (although mostly in Middle Eastern countries) proves the opposite: the greater the state grip on religious institutions, the more terrorist attacks there are (Henne, 2019), although several country-limited studies show the opposite (El-Katiri, 2013; Robbins & Rubin, 2017). British CVE policies of cooperation with Muslim institutions in Great Britain following the 7/7 attacks have corroborated that religious institutions are indeed willing to cooperate but that the community-policing has not managed to build trust among the Muslim part of the society and, overall, prevention comes at a cost of cohesion (Klausen, 2009). Others have found that de-radicalisation, rather than being the fruit of CVE policies, occurs as a result of tensions within extremist groups (El-Katiri, 2013; Robbins & Rubin, 2017). Henne's research proves particularly useful in identifying policies that increase terrorism ("restricting the ordination of minority religious clergy, restricting religious political parties and religious requirements for holding office") and inhibit it (i.e. funding religious schools) (Henne, 2019). He notes a negative correlation between political access and terrorism, concluding that promoting freedom of religion and applying "discrete" policies of support to religious communities (funding education) trump restrictions on the formation of religious parties and requirements to hold office as these may increase terrorism.

The problems with assessing the effectiveness of SRP in specific sectors leaves researchers with several research puzzles but also an opportunity to look at the meta level of the institutionalisation of SRP itself and, subsequently, draw conclusions from it. In this spirit, the paper asks the following research questions: how is cooperation with religious actors institutionalised? What are the differences between EU member states in such institutionalisation? Is cooperation with some religious actors more formalised than with others? Which state offices are responsible for cooperation with domestic religious actors and religious diplomacy, meaning cooperation and contact with international religious actors?

Points of Tangency between the State and Religious Actors in the EU Member States

High Formalisation and Important SRP (France, Italy)

France and Italy are examples of countries that have several intense points of tangency between state and religious actors. In France, the Central Office of Religion and Worship or the Central Bureau of Worship (*Le bureau central des cultes*) is an organisational unit of the Ministry of the Interior (the name is differently translated: Boyle & Sheen, 1997;

Chelini-Pont & Ferchiche, 2017). It was created by a decree of 17 August 1911, succeeded the Department of Worship (Religious Denominations), for which the separation of church and state in 1905 had removed the reason for existing. It is the platform of relationship between the state and established religious associations. The office of the Minister of Worship was merged with the office of the Minister of the Interior, although the Minister of the Interior exercises this function indirectly (Chelini-Pont & Ferchiche, 2017). It cooperates, among others, with the Catholic Church, the Protestant Federation of France (*La Fédération protestante de France*) and the French Council of the Muslim Faith (*Le Conseil français du culte musulman*), a body of Muslim representation institutionalised specifically by the state in 2003.

The Office of the Advisor for Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was created in 1920 in order to re-establish diplomatic relations with the Vatican after the introduction of the law on the Separation of the Churches and State in 1905. The advisor, since 2014 Jean-Christophe Peaucelle, engages in religious diplomacy, travelling in and outside Europe to meet politicians and religious leaders and organisations. In coordination with French embassies he organises talks and seminars on religion-related issues, i.e. the place of religion in IR or the French model of secularism. He is also one of the initiators of the French-Moroccan declaration on cooperation in educating imams, signed on 19 September 2015. Peaucelle's counterpart in that initiative was the Moroccan Minister of Endowments and Islamic Affairs.

Additionally, in 2007 an inter-agency Observatory of Secularism (*l'Observatoire de la laïcité*)¹ was created at the prime minister's office. It advises the government on the application of the principle of secularism, in compliance with the freedom of religion and belief. Furthermore, in 2009 the French Ministry of Defence (MoD) launched an office for religious issues in its division for future trends analysis, although it consisted of only one person who devoted merely a third of his time to religious issues and overall found it hard to convince people that religion was important (Birdsall, 2014). The MoD does not have a specific strategy for engaging religious institutions but on a case by case basis the French troops, for example, engage (often through army chaplains) with religious leaders or non-governmental organizations (NGO) where they are stationed, i.e. in Afghanistan. There has been no cooperation on religious issues at the European level between ministries of defence, which Eric Germain – responsible for religious affairs at the French MoD – attributed to a different understanding of secularism of European countries (Birdsall, 2014). He also thought there was little understanding for the strategic importance of religion at the EU and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) levels.

¹ The Observatory for Secularism, established on 8 April by President François Hollande, is composed of 15 members who are senior civil servants, parliamentarians, legal experts, intellectuals, and experts in secularism.

Overall and despite the separationist relationship between state and religion, the level of institutionalisation of SRP in France is very high (the highest in all analysed countries). Italy, where the state-religion relationship is much stronger (see Table 1), has equally numerous points of tangency as in France, although two of them were established in the last few years.

The Italian Directorate General for Religious Affairs (*Direzione centrale per gli Affari dei Culti*) at the Ministry of the Interior, also known as the Office of Politics of Cults and External Relations, has two departments: for the Catholic profession and for other professions. Much like the committee in Spain (see below) it examines the projects of bills concerning religious affairs but also coordinates external relations with central organs of the Catholic Church and the organisations of other confessions. It is in contact with international organisations, such as the United Nations (UN), the EU, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) or the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). Part of the directorate is the National Committee on Religious Radicalisation (*Co.Na.Ra.R.*), which prepares plans to prevent Islamist radicalisation processes. The plans are then approved by the Chief of Government, on a proposal from the Minister of the Interior. Within the Ministry yet another office was established in 1995: the Observatory on Religious Policies (*Osservatorio sulle politiche religiose*). Its task is to monitor the realities of religions other than Catholicism.

To be able to address cooperation with religious institutions abroad and following the lead of the US and Canada, the Italian government formed the Observatory on Religious Freedom in 2012. The Observatory was established by the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs and the City of Rome and is run by a coordinator, currently the sociologist Massimo Introvigne and four members: two diplomats and experts on human rights and two NGO representatives (forefeurope, 2012).

Despite a strong preference for Catholicism (Table 1), the Ministry of the Interior set up the Council for Relations with Italian Islam (*Il Consiglio per le relazioni con l'Islam*) in January 2016. It is an advisory body of the Ministry on issues related to the presence of Muslim communities in Italy, composed of teachers and experts on Islamic culture and religion. It succeeded the previously existing *Il Comitato per l'Islam italiano* (2010) and *La Consulta per l'Islam italiano* (2005). The Council established the National Pact for Italian Islam in February 2017. Its aim is to fight against all forms of radicalism. The pact was signed by the main Islamic associations in Italy, representing about 70% of Italian Muslims. It particularly highlights the importance of the formation of imams and religious guides.

Moderate Formalisation with Recent Emphasis on Foreign SRP (Germany, Sweden, Denmark, United Kingdom, Austria)

Germany

Several religious organisations cooperate with the federal government (*Bundesregierung*) – mostly the Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community and the Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. The Catholic Offices (*Katholisches Büro*, see Großbölting, 2016) are the connection points of the Catholic Church in Germany to political actors. The office informally contributes to the legislation process. Each Land has its own office. The Protestant Office (*Evangelisches Büro*) functions similarly to the Catholic Office. Even though Germany scores high in state favouritism of one religion (6.3 points on a 10-point scale, see Table 1), for a couple of decades now there have been attempts at stronger cooperation with German Muslims.

Fragmentation of the Muslim community in Germany makes it unclear to what extent the German state truly has contact with it. The Central Council of Muslims in Germany (*die Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland, ZMD*), founded in 1987 and consisting of 35 smaller Muslim organisations, municipalities and individual members, is a cooperation partner of many state agencies, ministries and NGOs. The fragmentation might have been the impulse behind the Ministry of the Interior proposing the German Islam Conference (*Deutsche Islam Konferenz*)² in 2006, the first forum for dialogue between federal, state and local authorities and Muslims in Germany. German SRP also involved funding of the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DITIB) connected to the Turkish government's Directorate of Religious Affairs and operating some 900 mosques in Germany. This cooperation showcased a difficulty and controversy of funding an institution that has ties to a foreign country with a conflicting SRP, the aim of which is strict control and instrumentalisation of religion.³ This and other controversies make cooperation with Muslim institutions problematic, i.e. in CVE/PVE (Said & Fouad, 2018).

Even though there has been no such tradition, the German Foreign Ministry recently announced after several high-level conferences with religious leaders from around the world that it would structure the dialogue with religions (Strack, 2015). In 2002 German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer established the ambassador-level post of Representative for Dialogue with the Islamic World. In 2005 the name of the post was changed to the Special Representative for Intercultural Dialogue. In 2017 a task force for the Responsibility of Religions for Peace at the Federal Foreign Office was

2 The organisations participating in the German Islam Conference are Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat (AMJ), Alevitische Gemeinde Deutschland, Islamische Gemeinschaft der Bosniaken in Deutschland – Zentralrat, Islamrat für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Türkisch-Islamische Union der Anstalt für Religion, Türkische Gemeinde in Deutschland, Verband der islamischen Kulturzentren, Zentralrat der Marokkaner in Deutschland, Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland, retrieved from http://www.deutsche-islam-konferenz.de/DIK/DE/DIK/01_UeberDieDIK/07_DIK_2014-2017/03%20Verbaende/dik2014teilnehmer-node.html. See also El-Menouar, Y. "The Role of Muslim Religious Institutions in Migration and Integration Policies: The German Case Study" in the same volume.

3 After it emerged that DITIB spied on German citizens for the Turkish government, Germany stopped its funding for programmes to prevent extremism and aid refugees, amounting to €6 mln since 2012. See "Germany cuts funding to largest Turkish-Islamic organisation, DITIB". (2018, August 20). Deutsche Welle. Retrieved from <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-cuts-funding-to-largest-turkish-islamic-organisation-ditib/a-45297763>

established. Its head Dirk Lölke acknowledged that “representatives of religious communities take a different view of conflicts, thinking more long-term and often appearing wiser. If foreign policy fails to leverage this potential, we will miss out on an important part of discourse in other countries” (“We Can Learn a Lot from Religions”, 2018). The goal of the office is to work for peace and stability with religious organisations around the world.

Sweden

Sweden is an example of moderate formalisation of SRP with emphasis on pragmatic, non-securitised cooperation. In Sweden, SRP has been undergoing fundamental changes for the past three decades. In 1998, the new Act on Faith Communities and a special Church of Sweden Act were introduced. “The legislation aimed at placing the various faith communities in Sweden on a more equal footing, while simultaneously preserving continuity with respect to the position of the Church of Sweden as the national church” (Pettersson, 2011). A major element of the reforms consisted of moving decision-making in Church affairs from the state to the Church itself and its own internal democratic organisation. The Church has thereby been given responsibility for its decision-making structures, the ordination of bishops, clergy and deacons as well as its financial administration. Nevertheless, the Church of Sweden maintained its privileged position due to the fact that it is required by law that the monarch, as the head of state, must belong to the Church of Sweden. Despite this and the fact that the state finances the state religion, government favouritism of one religion is very low (see Table 1).

The main state office that cooperates with religious actors other than the Church of Sweden is the Swedish Agency for Support to Faith Communities (SST - *Nämnden för Statligt Stöd till Trossamfund*). It is a government authority under the Ministry of Culture, which provides government support to faith communities, except for the Church of Sweden.⁴ The SST also cooperates with faith communities in coordinating emergency planning, provides a forum for discussion on values, respect, tolerance, and so on, and acts as an expert authority in dealings with the government on issues involving faith. Controversies arise occasionally if the communities, aided by the government, are known to be linked to authoritarian or dictatorial third countries – such was the case with the Santa Maria church in Stockholm, which had been proved to be connected to the Eritrean government (Radio Sweden, 2017). An aspect that problematises cooperation with religious institutions in Europe is their linkage to third countries, outside of the EU, which may have different systems (undemocratic) or their policies are not in line with EU member state and EU policies. It is important to note that the Swedish SRP has not

⁴ The Swedish Commission for Government Support to Faith Communities. Retrieved from <http://www.myndighetenst.se/download/18.49955727139d0ce5f5dc29/Fact+sheet%3A+the+Swedish+Commission+120919>

been securitised, meaning that cooperation with religious actors is not overseen by security agencies. A new agency that can cooperate with religious organisations in security matters was established in January 2018. It is the Swedish Centre for Preventing Violent Extremism under the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention. Still, the Council, as well as the Centre, are part of the Ministry of Justice.

Developing SRP in foreign affairs is a recent work in progress that started about a decade ago, also prompted by religious congregations' reports (Swedish Mission Council, 2010). In 2016 two envoys to the Minister of Foreign Affairs were appointed: one for inter-religious and intercultural dialogue and the other to combat anti-Semitism and protect religious minorities on a global level.

Denmark

The Danish “point of tangency” is unique in Europe in that it is a separate ministry. The Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs (*Kirkeministeriet*), currently with Mette Bock as minister, is the supreme administrative authority and the supreme appellate body in relation to decisions taken by church authorities. Despite high favouritism of one religion in Denmark (the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Denmark), relatively high state regulation of majority religion and state legislation index, societal and state discrimination of minority religions is low (see Table 1).

In spite of the Church of Denmark's legally and financially privileged position – few newer minority communities receive contributions through tax-deductible membership – scholars note its lack of autonomy (Nielsen & Kühle, 2011). It is in fact a state-controlled religion, more so than in the United Kingdom (UK), although the government plans to reduce its control. Around half of more than 50 recognised Muslim congregations receive tax deductible donations from their members. Denmark has one of the most decentralised territorial systems in the world. Building on it has implemented a highly successful model (the Aarhus model) for prevention of radicalisation, which at the lowest local level entails cooperation with religious communities as well, although it does not entail religious policing at any stage (Bertelsen, 2015).

Denmark's SRP recently puts the emphasis on its foreign dimension. On 1 January 2018 the office of the Special Representative for Freedom of Religion or Belief was established at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Its task is to mobilise the international community to promote freedom of religion, specifically in the Middle East and North Africa. Countries of particular interest to the Representative are Egypt, Indonesia, Iran and Lebanon, while thematically it monitors the cases of individuals persecuted for religious reasons.

United Kingdom

There is active state religion in the UK (the Church of England), with mandatory religious education, moderate religious legislation index, state funding of religion, state regulation of majority religion and moderate level of state favouritism of one religion. Yet, there are moderately numerous points of tangency between state and religion. Britain has a Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Minister for Faith (since 2017) – earlier the Minister of State for Faith and Communities (2012-2014) and Minister for Faith (2014-2015), who answers to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The Minister works with religious and community leaders to promote faith, religious tolerance and stronger communities with a view to strengthening social cohesion.

The main PVE programme, called Prevent, introduced in 2007, engaged three government departments: the Home Office (particularly the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism), the Department for Communities and Local Government, and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The disciplinary features of the programme and its overall negative assessment (O’Toole, Meer, DeHanas, Jones, & Modood, 2016) point to the securitised feature of the British SRP.

The British Foreign Office has also recently intensified its work in promoting the freedom of belief and preventing religious persecution, while simultaneously boosting education on religions among its staff. At the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Minister of State for the Commonwealth and the UN is responsible for freedom of religion or belief, counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism, among others. In 2018 the British Prime Minister appointed Lord Tariq Ahmad, serving in that position, also as her Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief.

Austria

The main “point of tangency” in Austria is the Office of Religious Affairs in the Federal Chancellery (das Kultusamt). As the supreme authority of religious affairs, it is responsible for implementing state regulations concerning religions (i.e. registration and recognition). These decisions are made while preserving the fundamental religious neutrality of the state. The Office of Religious Affairs is a go-between for other parts of the administration and religions: it plays an informative and advisory role when other ministries, governments of the lander, courts, authorities and governmental offices come into contact with religious communities. These activities are of particular importance in the system of state-religion cooperation that prevails in Austria with mandatory religious education in state schools (see Table 1).

Foreign SRP gained importance in Austria in the last decade. In 2007 the “Dialogue of Cultures” task force was established in the Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs. It is meant to coordinate intercultural and interreligious dialogue activities, serving as a liaison office to Austrian governmental institutions, religious organisations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and so on.

Moderate SRP Formalisation with Emphasis on Freedom of Worship and Non-Securitised Cooperation with Muslim Institutions (Spain)

Even though Spain scores high on the favouritism of one religion index, the formalisation of SRP is moderate and both state and societal religious minority discrimination indexes are low (see Table 1). In Spain the main point of tangency is at the Ministry of Justice, which oversees the Office of Religious Affairs. Additionally, the Committee on Freedom of Worship in the Ministry of Justice (*La Comisión Asesora de Libertad Religiosa*) is an advisory body whose membership is divided equally between the representatives of the central government and of the corresponding churches, faiths and religious communities with the participation of persons of renowned competence (historically mostly professors of law). The functions of the committee consist of reviewing, reporting on and setting forth proposals with respect to issues relating to the freedom of worship. Experts point to a rather small influence of the committee on the legislative substance but highlight the importance of the committee in serving as a dialogue platform between the government and faith communities (Martínez-Torrón, 2018). Since 2013 the committee has been presided by the Minister of Justice, alongside other members of the administration⁵ and representatives of churches, confessions and religious communities (such as the Catholic Church, Federation of Evangelical Religious Entities of Spain, Federation of Jewish Communities of Spain, the Islamic Commission of Spain).

For three decades now the state has also collaborated with Muslim organisations, granting Islam a series of privileges (Burchardt, Yanasmayan, & Koenig, 2018), although due to poor organisation the development of this process has been slow (Pena-Ramos & Medina, 2011). The Islamic Commission of Spain (*La Comisión Islámica de España*, CIE) is the representative entity of the Islamic religious communities in Spain. It combines the Union of Islamic Communities of Spain (UCIDE) and the Spanish Federation of Islamic Religious Entities (FEERI). For a long time, policies that could logically require cooperation with these institutions, such as counter-radicalisation or CVE/CPE, did not necessitate such cooperation because 90% of Jihadists convicted in Spain since 2004 were foreigners rather than

⁵ Director of the Cabinet of the Government Vice Presidency, Ministry of the Presidency and for Territorial Administrations, General Director of Foreign and Security Policy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Technical General Secretary of the Ministry of Finance and Public Function, General Director of Internal Policy of the Ministry of the Interior, General Director of Evaluation and Territorial Cooperation of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, General Director of Migrations of the Ministry of Employment and Social Security, Director of the Institute for Women and Equal Opportunities of the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality.

Spaniards. Since 2013 this tendency has started to change and the ministries of interior and justice intensified exchanges with leaders of the CIE. As part of the Ministry of Justice, in 2004 the Pluralism and Coexistence Foundation (*Fundacion Pluralismo y Convivencia*) was created in order to advance Islam's regulation in Spain (Vidino, 2018). Cooperation with Muslim institutions in Spain did not securitise despite several religion-related terrorist attacks in recent years. Indeed, in July 2017 the Ministry of Justice and the Centre for Intelligence Against Terrorism and Organised Crime (CITCO) held their first meeting with CIE leadership to discuss the National Plan Against Radicalisation (PNCR) but it happened long after PNCR's introduction in 2015 (US Department of State, 2017).

Low Formalisation and Lesser Role of SRP (The Netherlands, Poland)

Two Dutch ministries integrate elements of SRP in their activities: the Ministry of Justice and of Home Affairs. The Minister of justice deals with a variety of issues that are relevant to churches and religious communities, such as criminal law, but the institution is also a successor to the 19th century department of the "Dutch reformed religion" (Bijsterveld, 2010). The Ministry of Home Affairs incorporates SRP in its de-radicalisation and integration programmes. However, no specific units within these ministries have been appointed to deal specifically with religious affairs or contact religious institutions. Although, as Bijsterveld suggests, "these departments are more aware of the religious dimension in policy issues" (Bijsterveld, 2010, p. 528).

If recent media news is to be believed there is internal awareness at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs that it lacks religious literacy, which is a deficiency in the current international context (Orban, 2018).

In Poland there is no general administrative body in the administrative system responsible for relations with all religions. The main point of tangency in Poland is the Joint Commission of representatives of the government and the Polish Episcopal Conference, limited to the Catholic Church. It was created after the Second World War to keep constant contact between the Church and the government.⁶ The Government Concordat Commission operates on the basis of the Concordat between the Holy See and the Republic of Poland signed on 28 July 1993 in Warsaw. The Chairman of the Commission is the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The domination of the Catholic Church in state affairs in Poland is such that almost all newer political parties advocate reducing the imprint of the Catholic Church on the Polish state. Therefore, rather than expecting more institutionalisation of state-religion relations one should anticipate less of it.

⁶ Government representatives currently include: Minister of the Interior and Administration, Minister of Culture and National Heritage, Minister-member of the Council of Ministers, Chancellery of the Prime Minister, Minister of National Education, Minister of Family, Labour and Social Policy, Undersecretary of State in the Ministry of the Interior and Administration. Retrieved from <https://bip.kprm.gov.pl/kpr/bip-rady-ministrow/organy-pomocnicze/komisje-wspolne/3944,Komisja-Wspolna-przedstawiceli-rzadu-i-Konferencji-Episkopatu-Polski.html>

Other religions came into the orbit of the government's interest after 1989. The Joint Commission of the Representatives of the Government of Poland and the Polish Ecumenical Council was created in 1990. Its establishment coincided with the creation of similar commissions with representatives of the Evangelical Alliance, Evangelical-Augsburg Church and the Holy Council of Bishops (Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church). There is no official cooperation with Muslim organisations, of which there are at least five in Poland, and despite the fact that the second oldest Muslim organisation in Europe was founded in Poland in 1925.

Low Formalisation and Politically Instrumentalised Role of SRP (Hungary)

The point of tangency in Hungary should be the State Secretary for Church, Citizenship and Civil Society Relations within the Ministry of Human Capacities. Even though less than half of the Hungarian population identify as Christians, the state has focused on them in its SRP. The post of the Deputy State Secretariat for the Aid of Persecuted Christians within the Ministry of Human Capacities was created in 2016 and is responsible for “raising awareness and providing humanitarian aid in regions of crisis (e.g. financing/co-financing the construction of schools, hospitals and community centres, and launching a special scholarship programme). The ultimate goal is to help persecuted Christians remain in their ancient lands and to strengthen their communities” (Ministry of Human Capacities, n.d.). The work of the office is not limited to non-European countries – it is also to fight discrimination against Christians in Europe (Gagliarducci, 2016). The creation of this office in 2016 – immediately after the peak of the 2015 migration crisis and in the midst of an intense European debate about the future of European migration policy – may indicate that the Hungarian government is using its SRP to supplement its broader anti-immigration and anti-refugee policy.

Points of Tangency at the EU Level

The EU is gradually institutionalising its contacts with religious communities within and outside Europe. It has been the task of the European Parliament (EP) and the European Commission (EC) much more than the European Council, which only occasionally included the topic of cooperation with religious actors depending on individual member state's presidency goals (Silvestri, 2009). The legal framework for such cooperation was laid out in art. 17 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) although it drew from Jacques Delors' initiative of 1994 called *A Soul for Europe*. The goal of the dialogue was to facilitate a better, smoother European integration, anticipating that the Eastern European countries that were going to join the EU were more religious, with

perhaps lesser secularisation. Art. 17. lists partners for cooperation – religious and spiritual institutions predominantly in the EU but it also mentions third countries. It stipulates, however, that state-religion relations lie in the competence of the member states.

The implementation of art. 17 is the task of the Deputy Head of the European Parliament – currently Mairead McGuinness (EP, 2018). She is responsible for dialogue with representatives of religions and non-confessional organisations. Activities promoted by her office include mostly meetings with European and non-European representatives of religious institutions. Since the 1990s the goals of EU religion policy have changed in line with the changes both in and outside Europe. The EU, with its ambition to be a global actor that helps resolve conflicts and build trust among the main social actors in the global arena, and with its internal diversity experience, which it views as a major value, set its corresponding religion policy goals. In 2014 an Intergroup on Freedom of Religion or Belief and Religious Tolerance was created at the EP – it wants to work to ensure that the EU, in its external action, promotes and secures the right of individuals to manifest their faith freely. It also publishes an annual report about freedom of religion or belief.

At the EC the developments in relations with religions were slow but continuous and are well researched (see Silvestri, 2009). Internally the EC has met with “churches, religious associations or communities and philosophical and non-confessional organisations” since the 1990s when Jacques Delors established the format. The definite qualitative change, specifically with consequences for the EU’s foreign policy, was brought by FAC Guidelines of 2013. As they stipulated, EU foreign policy would since focus on monitoring and promoting Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB). It takes freedom of belief as a basic right and therefrom assumes legitimacy in pursuing religious diplomacy. The Guidelines focus on the unity of member states rather than security issues. The Guidelines anticipate cooperation with the UN but also announce unilateral EU measures, such as financing actors who promote human rights, including the FoRB.

On 6 May 2016 Ján Figel’, Special Envoy for Promotion of Freedom of Religion outside the EU was appointed by the President of the EC Jean-Claude Juncker. The Envoy answers to DG DEVCO and is appointed for a one-year term, which has since been extended several times. His office is to move to the European External Action Service (EEAS). The EEAS in particular has adopted an approach to religion that focuses on FoRB. Foret finds that it is in line with the importance of religion in IR, the goal of the

EU to play a global role and present itself as unified also around common values, but at the same time it “displays, in a hybridised version and with less political audacity, the practices of member states” (Foret, 2017, p. 23).

Conclusions

Religion is not a self-evident category but is a part of culture that forms the milieu of every human existence (Hurd, 2017). To avoid the trap of simplifying the effect of religion on politics and vice versa, religion ought to be taken as a prominent cultural aspect in EU policy creation. The danger is particularly great in domains of security and defence: in conflicts and surveillance plans. There is always a tension between control and autonomy in state-church relations. Ultimately, only a fine line exists between cooperation and interference with religion – working towards robust linkages and dialogues with religious leaders without attempts to directly influence their actions or teachings is a safe way of striking the right balance between cooperation and control.

Undoubtedly, in the past two decades EU member states' SRPs have undergone significant changes: greater institutionalisation (new offices and posts have been established) or the SRP has gained a specific angle (security, foreign or otherwise). These changes have come in line with both the new societal necessities of urban, individualised life and global IR, which have religions as important actors. The paper finds that the way of formalisation of SRP in EU member states and at the EU level itself allows for several preliminary, open to further verification, conclusions about the importance of SRP in relation to other policies, the correlation with historical legacies of state-religion relations and attitude to religious minorities.

Firstly, based on empirical institutionalism and the number and stature of identified points of tangency between state and religion, EU member states can be grouped into at least five categories: (1) countries with highly institutionalised SRPs, which are an important part of internal and foreign state policy overall; (2) countries with moderately institutionalised SRPs, which have recently extended them to foreign policies; (3) countries with a moderate formalisation of SRPs that have extended their scope internally (the case of Spain); (4) countries that have historically institutionalised their relations with religions at a relatively lower level and are not expanding their SRPs outreach; (5) countries with low institutionalisation of state-religion points of tangency, which, however, have instrumentalised their SRPs in advancing other, broader, internal

and external policies (the case of Hungary). The dominant trend in Europe is expansion of SRP with a particular focus on foreign policy although it would seem more plausible in terms of policy efficacy to simultaneously improve and expand partnerships with religious actors internally.

Secondly, the level of institutionalisation often has no relation with the modus of historical state-religion relations (see “The formal relationship between religion and state” in Table 1), except for Muslim communities. Both at the state and EU level, relations with Muslim communities are undergoing “churchification” – a process of moulding relations with Muslim communities into institutional relations that have historically evolved for relations with Christianity. The process, although requiring further research, may be changing and centralising the European Muslim communities altogether. Fragmentation of the Muslim communities is still problematic but is also subject to slow but gradual unification. Establishing an office of the national advisor on religious affairs facilitates contact with religious institutions, both domestically and abroad, and creates an institution for direct contact with religious actors that is often lacking in secular systems. The advisor serves as a natural counterpart to ministries of religious endowments in Muslim countries. The very fact of having a high level official responsible for religious affairs can generate trust in Muslim communities, well acquainted with such functions. It is however important that the adviser does not limit the office’s operation to Islam, which may be a primary temptation given the communities’ fragmentation. The adviser should closely cooperate with other religions to avoid a clear focus on Islam. An aspect that problematises cooperation with religious institutions in Europe is their linkage to third countries, outside of the EU, that may have different systems (undemocratic) or policies not in line with EU member states and EU policies. Europe has a unique possibility of serving as a land of religious transformation because of the strength of nation states and their integration in the EU. The secular character of these state institutions impacts Islam and Muslims in Europe who, through their transformative religion, mould the tenets of it accordingly, discovering new interpretations and, thus, shaping their religion in new directions.⁷

Thirdly, among other general findings it should be noted that “points of tangency” between state and religious institutions in policy formulation are dispersed in different places in the European governments: from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Culture. There is a logical differentiation between posts for international contact with religions at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the post for contact with domestic religious actors at the Ministry of the Interior. State institutions responsible for religious freedom are

⁷ For more information, see El-Menouar, Y. “The Role of Muslim Religious Institutions in Migration and Integration Policies: The German Case Study” in the same volume.

Table 1. State-religion features of selected EU member states

	France	Italy	Germany	Sweden	Denmark	UK	Austria	Spain	Netherlands	Poland	Hungary
Religious Adherents Christians (%)	64.9	80.4	64.3	61.5	80.6	59.9	67.6	71.5	40.1	87.9	48.1
Muslims (%)	7.6	2.7	5	4.4	4.6	5.1	7.3	2.5	5.6	0.1	unknown
Not religious (%)	24.1	16.5	26.6	32.8	13.9	29.7	18.2	25.7	51.6	4.8	19.6
Preferred religion	Catholic	Catholic	Protestant	Protestant	Protestant	Anglican	Catholic	Catholic	Protestant	Catholic	Catholic
State Religious Minority Discrimination Index (0-108, lower means less discrimination)	17.0	11.0	30.0	12.0	10.0	9.0	14.0	10.0	3.0	5.0	13.0
Societal Discrimination of Minority Religions Index (0-81, lower means less discrimination)	31.0	9.0	32.0	14.0	10.0	18.0	17.0	6.0	13.0	12.0	12.0
Freedom of Religion (government restrictions on religious practice)	severe and widespread	practically absent	practically absent	practically absent	practically absent	practically absent	practically absent	moderate	practically absent	practically absent	practically absent
State Regulation of Majority or All Religions Index (0-87, lower means less regulation)	11.0	0	9.0	6.0	17.0	10.0	2.0	2.0	3.0	6.0	3.0

Religious Legislation Index (0-52, lower means less religious legislation)	6.0	12.0	13.0	14.0	17.0	13.0	3.0	9.0	8.0	14.0	12.0
The formal relationship between religion and state⁸	Separationist	Multi-Tiered Preferences 1	Cooperation	Cooperation	State Controlled Religion, Positive Attitude	Active State Religion	Multi-Tiered Preferences 2	Multi-Tiered Preferences 1	Accommodation	Multi-Tiered Preferences 1	Multi-Tiered Preferences 2
	3	8	6	6	11	10	7	8	4	8	7
State Funding of Religion Summary (0-10, lower means less state funding)	2.0	4.0	7.0	6.0	6.0	4.0	2.0	4.0	4.0	6.0	8.0
Extent to which religious education is mandatory in public schools	None	Optional, or there is a choice between a religion and a non-religion course	Optional, or there is a choice between a religion and a non-religion course	Optional, or there is a choice between a religion and a non-religion course	Optional, or there is a choice between a religion and a non-religion course	Mandatory, but upon specific request, a student may opt out of the course	Mandatory, but upon specific request, a student may opt out of the course	Optional, or there is a choice between a religion and a non-religion course	Optional, or there is a choice between a religion and a non-religion course	Optional, or there is a choice between a religion and a non-religion course	Mandatory, but upon specific request, a student may opt out of the course
Extent to which government funding is exclusive to one or a few religions	Funding goes to only some religions for which there are a substantial number of adherents in the country	Funding goes primarily to one religion but at least some other religions receive some funds	Funding goes to only some religions for which there are a substantial number of adherents in the country	Funding goes primarily to one religion but at least some other religions receive some funds	Funding goes primarily to one religion but at least some other religions receive some funds	Funding goes primarily to one religion but at least some other religions receive some funds	Funding goes to only some religions for which there are a substantial number of adherents in the country	Funding goes primarily to one religion but at least some other religions receive some funds	Funding goes roughly equally	Government funding of religion goes to only one religion, no other religions receive funds.	Funding goes to only some religions for which there are a substantial number of adherents in the country
Government Favoritism of Religion Index (0-10, lower means less favoritism)	5.0	6.2	6.3	2.9	7.3	5.5	6.1	7.9	4.7	4.0	5.6

Source: Compiled by the author based on data from the Religion and State project at Bar Ilan University (<http://www.thearda.com/ras/>).

8 These manners conform to a scale from 0, which is hostility to everything religious, to 13, which is a religious state 1: 0) specific hostility; 1) State-Controlled Religion, Negative Attitude; 2) Non-specific Hostility; 3) Separationist; 4) Accommodation; 5) Supportive; 6) Cooperation; 7) Multi-Tiered Preferences 2; 8) Multi-Tiered Preferences 1; 9) Preferred Religion; 10) Active State Religion; 11) State Controlled Religion, Positive Attitude; 12) Religious State 2; 13) Religious State 1.

qualitatively different from units responsible for cooperation with religious institutions in advancing policy goals. It is not uncommon for EU member states to locate the office covering religious freedom at the Ministry of Justice (e.g. Spain). There is a direct link between the approach to religion at home and in international affairs. The attitude to religious diversity internally translates to a similar attitude internationally.

Fourthly, on the EU level the changes in religion policy reflect the dominant tendencies in member states (identified here as those with moderate formalisation and a recent accent on foreign SRP), although they have an additional aspect – the aspiration of the EU as a global actor that plays a role in conflict resolution and peace implementation. Internally and through points of tangency in the EP, the EU is also steadily increasing dialogue with religious denominations within Europe. The fruits of this growing interest in collaboration with religious partners in EU foreign policy are yet to be seen but internal initiatives are already relevant, e.g. the EC consultations on the draft of “Ethics guidelines for trustworthy AI” (EC, 2019).

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The Role of Muslim Religious Institutions in Migration and Integration Policies: The German Case Study

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Introduction

Late summer 2015 in Germany was marked by an unprecedented engagement for refugees. Voluntary refugee aid, which had already experienced an unusual growth in previous years, became a social movement. In 2015, 890,000 refugees arrived in Germany, one year later another 280,000 (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge [BAMF], 2017). Three quarters of the refugees were Muslims, especially from the Middle East (BAMF, 2016; BAMF, 2017). Thus, the focus shifted increasingly to the question of the connection between religion and flight.

It also became clear that people of religious faith have an above-average willingness to become involved in refugee aid. Religion as a central resource of value can be an essential force and motivation for social commitment. Religious institutions have also always provided important basic social services. In addition, religious actors are often among the most important forces of civil society. They maintain networks that influence social developments at local, national and global level. They reach people, often across borders, even where politics no longer works. Transnationally, they can act as instances of transmission between the society of arrival and the countries of origin. Last but not least, religion can strengthen individual and social resilience by providing patterns of explanation and rituals to deal with loss, defeat, suffering and catastrophe.

There are good reasons to include religions in migration and integration policy and to cooperate with religious institutions. However, religion has ambivalent tendencies. Often the positive and negative potentials are close together. Religion can create identity and bring people together but it can also exclude people. In order to be able to use the positive potentials of religion sustainably, a more differentiated view is needed.

Therefore, the following case study on Germany first addresses the question of what role religious factors play in the commitment to refugee aid. The focus is on the engagement of Muslims. While the Christian churches have traditionally been important platforms for voluntary work in Germany, Muslims are often confronted with the prejudice that they are not sufficiently engaged for refugees. The empirical results, however, show that Muslims are significantly more active than Christians and non-denominations. Orientation of everyday life towards religious principles is particularly influential, as is involvement in the Muslim congregation outside Friday prayer.

Religious Muslim institutions function, on the one hand, as platforms for engagement and, on the other, act as bridge-builders for refugees into the society of arrival. The

Islamic organisational landscape in Germany, which has grown from the bottom up in a conflict-ridden learning process over decades, is today a very complex and dynamic network. Its development is traced in the second part. It is argued that the organisational behaviour of the various institutions can only be adequately understood in their interaction with the respective environment. The negotiation processes take place in the tension between (1) the society of origin and the society of arrival, (2) the logic of membership and influence, and (3) the binding and bridging forms of religious capital.

In the third part of the case study, this observation scheme is applied to the refugee aid of the Islamic associations, on the one hand, and the Muslim congregations and societies, on the other. While current developments at the association level have rather slowed down the coordination of Muslim refugee aid, the examples of congregations and societies at the basic level show that the engagement of Muslims has proven to be extremely helpful for the integration of refugees. Factors for success are a public welfare orientation in civil society in relation to the society of arrival, cultural and religious competences specific to the country of origin, and the suppression of self-dynamic member logic in favour of the development of structures and networks by means of bridging social capital. However, the environment also has a decisive role to play here, which must allow sufficient space for the unfolding of the potential of Muslim engagement.

The example of Germany shows the opportunities that lie in cooperation with Muslim organisations, but also illustrates the difficulties that can arise. In the final part of the case study, conclusions are drawn for cooperation with Muslim religious institutions as an EU policy tool. It is argued that religion as social capital can have a confidence-building and networking effect. Cooperation with Muslim institutions characterised by religious competence and a culturally-sensitive approach can certainly advance European refugee and integration policy in certain areas.

Muslims in Germany and their Commitment to Refugee Aid

Between 4.4 and 4.7 million Muslims were living in Germany at the end of 2015 (Stichs, 2016). This corresponds to a population share of 5.4 to 5.7%. Islam is the third largest religious group in Germany, behind 23.6 million Catholics (28.5%) and 21.9 million members of the Protestant Church (26.7%) (Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz [DBK], 2017).

Around a quarter of Muslims living in Germany have arrived in the country since 2011, most of them from the Middle East as a result of their plight (Stichs, 2016). As a result of this strong immigration, not only the number but also the structure of Muslims in Germany has changed. Muslims of Turkish origin are still by far the biggest group of origin. However, their share of all Muslims has fallen by more than 15 percentage points since 2011 and now stands at 50.6%. The proportion of Muslims from the Middle East has almost doubled in the same period. With a share of 17.1%, they are today the second largest group of origin.

Table 1. Countries of origin with more than 50,000 Muslims in Germany
(number of Muslims as of 31.12.2015)

Turkey	2,295,308
Syria	458,482
Former Yugoslavia	453,475
Afghanistan	235,886
Morocco	156,327
Iraq	135,210
Lebanon	116,634
Southern Africa	114,563
Pakistan	110,691
Iran	84,956
Russia	73,476
Albania	61,323

Source: Stichs, 2016.

In the representative survey “Religion Monitor 2017”, 61% of Muslim respondents in Germany described themselves as Sunnis, and 8% as Alevis and Shiites respectively. 13% made no statement about a denomination (Halm & Sauer, 2017). 54% claim to have immigrated to Germany themselves (first generation of immigrants). 41% belong to the second generation and were born in Germany. 4% belong to further generations or have converted to Islam. At an average age of 38, Muslims are significantly below the German average age of 51.

After access to German citizenship was facilitated in the 2000s, about half of Muslims now have a German passport. Muslims who immigrated to Germany before 2011 are also comparatively well integrated, actively involved in working life and have meanwhile arrived in the middle of society. As a result, 96% of the Muslims surveyed in the “Religion Monitor 2017” feel extraordinarily close to Germany, 78% often have contact with people

outside their own religious sphere, and 64% say that at least half of their circle of friends is non-Muslim. Only 2% of Muslim respondents have no leisure contacts with non-Muslims (Halm & Sauer, 2017).

Despite the numerous empirical findings proving the integration of Muslim immigrants and their descendants, the negative prejudices remain in the public perception of Islam (El-Menouar, 2017; El-Menouar, 2018). The majority of non-Muslim Germans are opposed to Islam: 57% see Islam as a threat, and 61% believe that Islam does not fit into the Western world. Only a quarter of the German population perceives Islam as an enrichment (Vopel & El-Menouar, 2015). In view of the Islam-hostile opinion climate in the German public, it is not surprising that Muslims comparatively often report experienced discrimination: 63% of the Muslims surveyed in the “Religion Monitor 2017” claim to have been disadvantaged in the last twelve months (Halm & Sauer, 2017).

An example of the gap between the reality of Muslim life and the distorted perception of Islam in Germany is refugee aid. At the peak of the immigration of war refugees from Syria and other Islamic countries in late summer 2015, Muslims living in Germany were confronted with accusations that they did not participate enough in refugee aid and were shying away from social responsibility (Nagel & El-Menouar, 2017). It was said that mosque associations had fundamental fears of contact with the fugitives because they would regard them as “traitors to religion”. At the same time, Muslims were suspected of abusing refugee aid for religious influence and radicalising refugees. In this context, fears of a “foreign control” of Islamic associations in Germany were played out.

A study by Nagel and El-Menouar (2017) based on data from the “Religion Monitor 2017” on the influence of religion on voluntary work for refugees disproves these prejudices. In fact, Muslims living in Germany are significantly more involved in refugee aid than, for example, Christians (18% more likely in the multivariate analysis). 44% of Muslims surveyed were committed to refugees in 2016, compared with 21% of Christians and 17% of non-denominational people (Nagel & El-Menouar, 2017). Overall, 22% of West Germans and 14% of East Germans stated that they had been active in refugee aid in 2016.

By far the largest proportion of committed people is characterised by the combination of a tolerant attitude towards other religions with a non-missionary impetus (Nagel & El-Menouar, 2017). This is the case for 73% of Christians, 70% of Muslims and 78% of non-denominations. Even where a religious or political sense of mission is combined with a pluralistic orientation, this is not yet problematic. 24% of Christians, 27% of Muslims

and 17% of non-denominational refugee workers are characterised by such an attitude of “inspired openness”. Especially towards refugees from countries where freedom of opinion and religion is restricted, an inspired and open attitude can demonstrate the compatibility of one’s own religion or worldview.

Almost all those involved in refugee aid have a comprehensive and cross-religious openness and communication orientation, which withdraws their interest in promoting their own convictions. Only in 1% to 2% of those engaged can one speak of the intention of a radical, fundamentalist-coloured influence (Nagel & El-Menouar, 2017). This applies not only to Muslims but also to non-denominational and Christian refugee helpers. Reports of missionary attempts and “mass baptism” of fugitives by evangelical groups and Jehovah’s Witnesses confirm this observation.

If one asks about the reasons for the strong Muslim commitment, the fact that Muslims living in Germany share migration experiences and religious affiliation with the refugees plays a decisive role. Almost three quarters of those who fled in 2016 were of Muslim faith (BAMF, 2017). It can be assumed that because of this shared background Muslim refugee helpers have a specific empathy and special cultural competences.

However, it is noticeable that Muslims from the regions of origin of the refugees are more frequently involved in refugee aid. More than half of the Muslims from the Middle East (53%) and South Asia (54%) are engaged, while Muslims from Turkey (42%) or South Eastern Europe (30%) are engaged to a much lesser extent. At the same time, Muslims from the regions of origin of the refugees are also more intensely involved. While around a third of committed Muslims from the Middle East and South Asia support refugees several times a week, this is only the case for about 10% of Turkish Muslims (Nagel & El-Menouar, 2017).

Common experiences of migration and shared religious affiliation therefore only develop their full potential for refugee aid when there is a cultural reference point to the refugees. In this way, the common link of origin leads to greater solidarity with the refugees and promotes individual motivation to become involved in refugee aid. Also, with regard to the shared religious background, one must take a more differentiated view and consider the diversity of the religious approaches of Muslims.

But there are only a few multidimensional approaches that try to make the complexity of Muslim religious practice more transparent (Glock, 1961; Roof, 1979, Huber, 2003, El-Menouar, 2014). Until now, empirical research has mostly used instruments that measure

Muslim religiosity as a one-dimensional construct. This promotes essentialist ideas of a uniform form of expression of Muslim religiosity. Religiousness, however, is a very different expression of how individuals and groups acquire religion and use it as a resource.

The differences in the way religion is lived become particularly visible in the dimension of “orthopractice”, i.e. the observance of ethical and ritual codes of conduct (El-Menouar, 2014; El-Menouar, 2017). The importance of religious commandments in everyday life is a meaningful indicator of the religious pervasion of the way of life in the sense of an intensive religious practice. With regard to the engagement for refugees, there is a clear connection: the more people orient their daily lives towards religious commandments, the more active they are in helping refugees. More than half of the Muslims in Germany, 56%, whose everyday life, according to their own statements, is very strongly influenced by religious commandments, are engaged. For Christians, this share is 30%. If less or no importance is attached to the religious commandments in everyday life, the proportion of committed Muslims drops to 37% and Christians to 20% (Nagel & El-Menouar, 2017).

A similar positive correlation can be seen in relation to the religious connection to the congregation (Nagel & El-Menouar, 2017). Measured by the indicator of regular participation in Friday prayers or worship services, however, the connection is relatively weak. If, on the other hand, one asks about the frequency of the congregation visit beyond the Friday prayer or worship service, there is a pronounced effect of the congregation connection on the willingness to engage. The proportion of engaged Muslims who visit the congregation several times a week is 72%. The figure for Christians is 41%. In comparison, 40% of Muslims and 17% of Christians, who never visit the congregation in their daily lives, are involved in helping refugees.

In addition to the religious way of life in everyday life, the daily connection to a religious community promotes the commitment to refugee aid. Congregations are not only places of ceremonial services, but above all also social places of support and networking. According to the concept of social capital, social networks are important resources from which individuals, communities, regions or nations can benefit (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1995; Putnam, 2001). Accordingly, social capital is formed through social relations, norms of reciprocity and trust, and can be used as a means to achieve common goals (Putnam, 1995). Religious communities in particular are suitable for the production of social capital because all members share a common faith by definition (El-Menouar, 2013; Elwert, 2007; Furbey, 2006). Solidarity and moral commitment do not need to be established first, but are already generated by a shared faith.

In summary, it should be noted that Muslims in Germany make a central but often overlooked contribution to refugee aid. However, in order to use the potential of Muslim engagement more effectively and in the long term, the different origins of Muslims and the various aspects of experienced Muslim religiosity should be considered more closely. Religiosity not only proves to be an important source of commitment, but also an integration-promoting resource: practising Muslims can serve the fugitives as a model for how to find a religious identity in the midst of the pluralistic German society. The integration into the religious community in everyday life is also proving influential: on the one hand, Muslim religious institutions have a high capacity for mobilisation engagement platforms; on the other, they assume the function of bridge-builders for refugees in the host society.

The Landscape of Muslim Religious Institutions in Germany

In Germany there are 2,342 Muslim congregations with a prayer room. About three quarters of the communities are organised in one of the numerous regional or nationwide Islamic umbrella organisations (Chbib, 2011; Halm et al., 2012; Halm & Sauer, 2013; Spielhaus & Mühe, 2018). The Muslim organisational landscape, which has grown from bottom to top and continues to grow, has become a very complex and dynamic network. Its difficult-to-understand appearance reflects decades of conflict-laden learning both on the part of the Muslim minority and on the part of the majority society and German Islam policy. In this respect, the current status quo can only be opened up through a historical approach.

In general, Islam in Germany has been regarded as a consequence of the labour migration from Islamic countries since the 1960s. Indeed, the history of Islam in Germany dates back to the 17th century, when Muslim prisoners of war first came to Germany from the so-called Turkish Wars (Rohe & Jaraba, 2018). Until the middle of the 20th century, the history of Muslims in Germany remained closely linked to warlike conflicts and a German Islam policy that recognised Islam as a strategic resource and tried to mobilise Muslims for German war goals (Motadel, 2017). This was accompanied by essentialist assumptions and ideas about Islam as a coherent religious instrument, which continue to have an effect today.

Muslims' attempts to self-organise in Germany began with the founding of the first congregation between the two world wars in Berlin, where 1,800 to 3,000 Muslims from over 40 countries lived at that time (Motadel, 2009). The first Muslim congregation was

registered there in February 1923 as the Islamic Community of Berlin. In 1925 the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement opened what is now the oldest mosque in Germany in Berlin-Wilmersdorf (Heimbach, 2001). During the Second World War, all Muslim communities in Germany were dissolved (Lemmen, 2001).

In 1954 Muslims of German origin founded what is now the oldest Islamic association in Germany, the German Muslim League (DML) (Lemmen, 2002). It is remarkable that the German Muslim League submitted two applications for the granting of corporate rights as early as the 1950s, thus pressing for public equality with the Christian churches. This “institutional leap” has been denied to almost all religious Muslim organisations to this day. The only exception is the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat (AMJ), which achieved corporate status in 2013 in the federal state of Hessen and in 2014 in Hamburg. The community, which is rejected as heretical by most other Muslims because of its interpretation of faith, has been based in Germany since 1955 (Lemmen, 2001; Lemmen, 2017).

Because of the state’s neutrality, German law normally does not regulate the “recognition” of religious communities but the “public corporation” is a special legal form for religious communities (Garnter, 2011). This “limping separation” is intended to facilitate the cooperation between state authorities and religious communities. Historically, however, this “model of cooperation” is tailored to the Christian churches and their hierarchical organisational structure. But a church-like form of organisation is not part of Islam. That is why Muslim communities are still dependent on the private association as a form of organisation in order to be able to act as legal persons in Germany (Lemmen, 2001).

For West German authorities, the Association for the Spiritual Administration of Muslim Refugees in the Federal Republic of Germany, founded in Munich in 1958, a support association for former Muslim members of the Wehrmacht, remained for a long time the primary partner in Islam matters (Lemmen, 2017; Motadel, 2017; Rohe & Jaraba, 2018). In 1960 the association established a Mosque Construction Commission. In the cooperation with the Arab students close to the Muslim Brotherhood around Sa‘īd Ramaḍān, conflicts soon arose. The association left the commission in the end.

The Islamic Community in Germany (IGD) emerged from the Commission in 1982, which renamed itself German Muslim Community (DMG) in 2018 and is classified by the German secret service as the “most important and central organisation of followers of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in Germany” (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz [BfV],

2018). Also observed by the secret service is the Shiite Islamic Centre Hamburg (IZH) established in 1961 in Hamburg (BfV, 2018), on whose initiative in 2009 the umbrella organisation Islamic Community of the Shiite Communities of Germany (IGS) was founded.¹

Thus, even before labour migration from Muslim countries in the 1960s, the first approaches to the institutionalisation of Islam in Germany were already underway. But, for the first time, the recruitment agreements with Turkey (1961), Morocco (1963) and Tunisia (1965) brought a significant number of Muslims to Germany. Both the countries of origin and Germany, however, had no interest in the religious development of the so-called “guest workers”, who were mostly housed in dormitories and met in dreary surroundings to pray together. In many places in Germany, migrant workers quickly founded the first local mosque associations, which were marked by the religious imprints they had brought with them from their country of origin (Rosenow & Kortmann, 2013). Thus, a religious association landscape emerged right across Germany that reflects the diversity of Islamic traditions but also their lines of conflict.

However, Islam remained virtually unknown to the majority of Germans. The recruitment freeze in 1973 then fundamentally changed the situation and the visibility of Muslims. At that time, there were about 2.6 million migrant workers (“guest workers”) in Germany, 900,000 of them from Turkey. Since it was no longer possible to return to the German labour market after a temporary return to their homeland, many Muslim migrants developed a perspective to stay and catch up with their families. This meant that religion was no longer only a part of life in the former homeland but also became a part of life in the “new homeland” (Lemmen, 2001).

The mosque communities now tried to form associations according to criteria of origin, denomination or interest. From below, an extremely heterogeneous and fragmented structure of organised Islam developed in Germany. Since both the Muslim countries of origin and German politics had regarded the stay of migrant workers as temporary, the Muslims remained on their own when it came to building up the organisational structures. This is still evident today in a lack of financial and human resources as well as deficits in professionalisation (Ceylan, 2010). In this respect, the process of institutionalisation was asymmetrical and not equal.

At first, the development followed a line of conflict with a strong Turkish reference (Rosenow & Kortmann, 2013; Jonker, 2002; Schiffauer, 2004). As early as 1973, the Sunni movement of the Suleymancilar, in opposition to Turkish secularism, organised

¹ The Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution accounts for 25,810 persons in the Islamist milieu. That is about 0.5% of all Muslims in Germany. 20 Islamic organisations are being observed. Salafism accounts for 10,800 persons, 760 of whom are classified as “Islamist endangerers” (BfV, 2018).

itself as the Association of Islamic Cultural Centres (VIKZ). The most important Turkish-Sunni oppositional movement is represented by the Milli Görüş movement, which also founded its own association, the Islamic Community Millî Görüş (IGMG) in 1976. In 1984, the Turkish religious authority Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı reacted by founding a third nationwide association (Wissenschaftliche Dienste des Deutschen Bundestags [WD], 2015). The Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DİTİB) aims to ensure that the official Turkish-Sunni understanding of Islam is also practised in the context of immigration. In the past, the close connection to Diyanet and the resulting influence of the Turkish state on DİTİB has repeatedly led to problems both in cooperation with other Muslim associations and with state institutions.

Turkey's example illustrates that Muslim religious organisations in Germany have their own specific development history in relation to their country of origin, often as opposition movements. They not only ensure the religious and cultural support of Muslims in Germany but also draw their members' attention to developments in the context of their country of origin, which can lead to conflicts within the Muslim community (Ceylan, 2010). Thus, the competition between DİTİB on the one hand and the IGMG and the VIKZ on the other, caused by the contrasts related to the country of origin, prevented the formation of a unified Muslim representation (Rosenow & Kortmann, 2013; Blätte, 2014).

Since the early 1980s the Islamic organisational and community landscape in Germany has become increasingly pluralised due to the arrival of refugees from Afghanistan, Lebanon, Bosnia, Albania and various African countries. Germany's Muslims today offer an image of the Islamic world community with all its ethnic and religious orientations. With the establishment of the Alevitic Community of Germany (AABF) in the early 1990s, a further line of conflict was established within the Muslim association landscape (Lemmen, 2002; Sökefeld, 2005). With a share of 8%, the Alevis represent today the second largest religious group among the Muslims living in Germany after the Sunnis (Halm & Sauer, 2017).

The association landscape became more and more confusing. During this time, two umbrella organisations were formed: the Islamic Council for the Federal Republic of Germany (IRD) in 1986 and the Central Council of Muslims (ZMD) in 1995. The aim of IRD and ZMD, but also of the independent Turkish-Sunni associations DİTİB and VIKZ, is not only to offer the government a central Muslim contact but also to be recognised as a legal religious community. However, the longer Muslims lived in Germany, the higher their expectations became (Rosenow & Kortmann, 2013). Thus, in 2009, only 23% of Muslims felt represented by at least one of the associations: IRD, ZMD, DİTİB, VIKZ and AABF; another 19% felt "partially" represented (Stichs, Haug & Müssig, 2010).

The hitherto competing Muslim central and umbrella associations tried to counter the representation crisis by cooperation, starting in 1997, initially in the form of SCHURA associations at the level of the federal states. In 1999, the ZMD and the IRD founded the joint Commission for Islamic Religious Education (KIRU). Since 2002, all leading associations have also participated in the German Islam Forum, which is financed by private foundations (Rosenow & Kortmann, 2011). In the context of the German Islam Conference (DIK) established by the Federal Ministry of the Interior in 2006, one year later IRD, ZMD, DİTİB and VIKZ formed the Coordination Council of Muslims in Germany (KRM).

The associations thereby hoped to achieve recognition as a legal religious community. Politicians, on the other hand, expected clear common statements from the associations. Hopes on both sides were dashed in the first phase of the DIK (2006-2009), which led to a “distrust effect” among all participants (Rosenow & Kortmann, 2011). The political attempts to force individualistic Islam with the diversity of its interpretations to an organised united positioning were seen by many Muslims as a state intervention into religious affairs. As late as in the third phase (2013-2017), the DIK slowly began to develop into an authentic platform for dialogue (Lemmen, 2017).

However, the DIK also revealed lines of conflict between the participating Muslim associations (Rosenow & Kortmann, 2011). To date, for example, the KRM member associations have not been able to reach an agreement on drafting a statute because the ideas regarding the intensity of cooperation and the establishment of common fixed organisational structures are far apart. The VIKZ and the DİTİB, in contrast to the ZMD, see the Islam Conference as a means of pursuing their specific interests (Meyer & Schubert, 2011). And while the ZMD as an interest group is even prepared to dissolve its own structures, should there be a successful establishment of an Islamic religious community at federal and national level in Germany, DİTİB, IGMG and the VIKZ assume that their organisations will continue to exist in parallel (Rosenow & Kortmann, 2013).

The current new round of the DIK is now trying to break new ground and realign the Islam Conference. Instead of fixed committee structures with permanent members appointed for a certain period of time, variable and flexible formats in different compositions are being developed. This should give greater consideration to the broad spectrum of Muslim civil society in Germany (Deutscher Bundestag [BT], 2018c). In the run-up to the conference, statements from the Federal Ministry of the Interior that the goal was to define a “German Islam” led to discussion. Such statements are related to the recurring debates about whether Islam belongs to Germany or not. And this question

refers to the polarisation of attitudes towards Islam. For about ten years, since the so-called “Sarrazin debate” in 2010, there has been a constant division of opinion among the German population regarding Islam.

In summary, it should be noted that the fragmented landscape of Muslim religious organisations in Germany can be considered as the result of a long and eventful history, whereby six phases can be distinguished: (1) the early phase of “Berlin Islam” in the 1920s and 1930s; (2) the formation of new associations in the post-war years; (3) the establishment of mosque societies by labour migrants from the mid-1960s; (4) the merger of mosque societies into umbrella associations after the recruitment stop in 1973; (5) the phase of inter-organisational competition until the end of the 1990s with simultaneous religious and ethnic pluralisation by newly-arrived refugees; and (6) the phase of ongoing negotiation processes, both in terms of inter-organisational cooperation and cooperation with the state.

The cooperation deficits, which are becoming clearly visible especially within the framework of the Islam Conference as the need for cooperation increases, refer to immanent aspects of organisations. For an adequate understanding of the dynamic organisational landscape of Muslim associations in Germany, their organisational behaviour needs to be considered in the internal and external organisational context.

Table 2. German Muslim organisations at national level by year of foundation

German Muslim organisations at national level	Year of foundation	Individual members	Congregations
German Muslim League (DML)	1954	500	
Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat (AMJ)	1955	40,000	225
German Muslim Community (DMG); until 2018: Islamic Community in Germany (IGD)	1958	1,300	50
Islamic Community Millî Görüş (IGMG)	1972	31,000	406
Association of Islamic Cultural Centres (VIKZ)	1973	24,000	300
Federation of Turkish Democratic Idealist Associations in Germany (ADÜTDF)	1978	7,000	
Islamic Community Jama't un-Nur	1979	8,000	120
Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DTB)	1984	150,000	960

Islamic Council for the Federal Republic of Germany (IRD), member associations are among others IGMG Jama't un-Nur and IGBD	1986	50,000	448
Union of Turkish-Islamic Cultural Associations in Europe (ATIB)	1987	100,000	123
Alevitic Community of Germany (AABF)	1990	20,000	130
Islamic Community of Bosniacs in Germany (IGBD)	1994	30,000	76
Central Council of Muslims (ZMD); member associations are among others DML, IGD, ATIB, DMLB and IGBD	1994	20,000	300
Cem-Foundation	1996	1,000	10
Coordination Council of Muslims in Germany (KRM); member associations are DITIB, IR, ZMD and VIKZ	2007		
Islamic Community of Shiite congregations in Germany (IGS)	2009	28,000	138
Central Council of Moroccans in Germany (ZRMD)	2008		47
Liberal-Islamic Alliance (LIB)	2010	300	2

Source: WD, 2015; WD, 2018; websites (as of March 2019) of the organisations, DIK and BAMF.

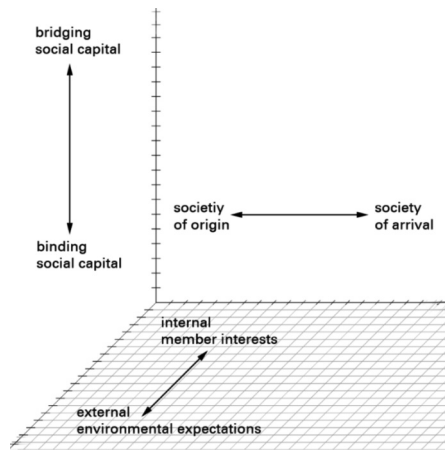
Thus, the Muslim religious institutions are, on the one hand, straddled between the societies of origin and the societies of arrival (Pries, 2010). Only in this “hybrid” perspective it is possible to understand how they work and interact. Although the Islamic associations in Germany have generally shifted in the direction of a stronger orientation towards the country of arrival, there are still gradual differences in their orientation. For example, DITIB is still characterised by a strong Turkish focus, while IGMG now only maintains loose contacts with Turkey and has developed into a hierarchically organised European association with its centre in Germany (Rosenow-Williams, 2013).

On the other hand, Muslim religious institutions operate in the tension between the logic of membership and the logic of influence (Schmitter & Streeck, 1999). The negotiation processes concerning legitimacy, status, financial support and functions of the individual institutions take place in an organisational field that is determined by different external (transnational) expectations and opportunity structures. On the other hand, Muslim religious associations must consider the interests of their members in organisation-internal negotiation processes (Pries, 2010; Rosenow-Williams, 2012).

The interaction between the individual institutions and their environment reflects the development of the German association landscape: while the exclusive environment, which dominated Germany until the 1990s, primarily promoted the emergence of Muslim associations that were shaped by the logic of membership, today the logic of influence tends to dominate in the associations because of the changed, more favourable political opportunity structures (Rosenow-Williams, 2012; Pfaff & Gill, 2006). In this respect, it can be assumed that the higher the supply of resources from the German side, the more probable it is that the associations will adapt to the political demands (Rosenow & Kortmann, 2013).

In this context, social network relationships that justify the extent and type of social capital play a decisive role. It has already been pointed out that religious communities are ideal places for the production of social capital. Here a distinction can be made between “binding” and “bridging” social capital (Putnam, 2001, pp. 28-29).

Figure 1. Model of Muslim religious institutions in interrelation to their environment.



Source: Own illustration.

Close-knit, binding relationships between the members of a congregation or a religious association strengthen their cohesion, which does not necessarily lead to segregation (El-Menouar, 2013). For example, the ability of Muslim institutions to mobilise for refugee aid is based on such internally-binding religious capital. Religiously bridging social capital in the form of heterogeneous relationship networks facilitates (transnational) cooperation with external institutions in the environment. Here, too, supporting opportunity structures are decisive (Traunmüller, 2014). To what extent Muslim associations adapt to their environment or choose strategies of decoupling respectively invest in binding or bridge-

building social capital does not only depend on the organisations themselves but also on the social environment in which they operate. In this respect, the individual activities of Muslim institutions must always be viewed in the context of the interrelation with their environment.

In the following, the empirical results already presented on Muslim volunteers in German refugee aid are extended to include the organisational perspective on the role of religious institutions. To date, hardly any empirical data is available (Karakayali, 2018). Therefore, the framework of observation derived from the analysis of the Muslim organisational landscape – (1) relation to the society of origin and arrival; (2) tension between the logic of membership and influence; and (3) binding and bridge-building form of religious capital – is applied.

Activities of Muslim Institutions in German Refugee Aid

Just like churches and other civil society organisations, Islamic institutions have been involved in refugee aid for years. However, the public rarely noticed this commitment before the increased migration of refugees in September 2015 (Krüppner, 2016). After the number of refugees increased, the activities of local Muslims for the new arrivals shifted into the focus of public perception. On the one hand, it was claimed that Muslims were not engaged enough, while, on the other, Muslims were suspected of abusing their engagement to exert influence (Nagel & El-Menouar, 2017).

At the peak of refugee immigration in November 2015, the Muslim associations represented in the German Islam Conference (DIK) explicitly requested to be included in the state programmes of refugee aid and refugee integration. The Federal Government of that time welcomed the proposal. Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière considered the German Islamic associations to be “bridge-builders” for the refugees; Federal Family Minister Manuela Schwesig spoke of “cultural translators” (BT, 2016b, 1). Since then, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Family Affairs have been supporting projects of Muslim institutions in refugee work. The Federal Ministry of the Interior provided €2.5 million in 2016 (BT, 2016a) and €2.3 million each in 2017 and 2018 (BT, 2017b; BT, 2018b). In addition, there are project funds from the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs for “counselling and support for foreign refugees”.

Politically, this was linked to the expectation that the funding of refugee work by Muslim associations would lead to the establishment of an Islamic welfare association in the

medium term. In Germany, Muslim commitment in the associations and communities has so far been based entirely on voluntary work. There is a lack of professional staff and financial resources. Unlike Christian welfare associations, Muslim institutions do not receive state subsidies for their social work. In this respect, the projects supported by the state concentrated on professionalising Muslim involvement in refugee aid. An example of this is the project “Structure development and support of volunteers in the mosque communities for refugee aid by associations of the German Islam Conference” (SUEM-DIK). In addition, Muslim mentoring programmes for fugitives were supported by the state, for example the ZMD project “We are Mentors” (Krüppner, 2016). Another focus was the support of the Federal Voluntary Service in refugee aid, which can also be provided by an Islamic institution.²

However, the political hope of persuading Muslim associations to adopt a common concept, at least in the field of welfare care, under the influence of the number of refugees, was quickly dashed. As early as March 2016, three associations of the Islam Conference – the ZMD, the IRD and the IGS – made their own move and offended the other participants by founding the Association of Muslim Refugee Aid (VMF). According to self-representation, the VMF’s aim is to coordinate the existing refugee aid of the three Sunni and Shiite associations regardless of denominational boundaries and “to support the integration of the refugees into our society.” In this step under the leadership of the ZMD, a clear strategy of orientation towards the country of arrival with the use of bridging social capital in the sense of German logic of influence can be recognised. However, this was at the expense of binding social capital, which is important for the cooperation of all Muslim associations.

The Turkish-Sunni associations changed their strategy only a few months later but in the opposite direction. After the failed coup in July 2016 in Turkey, the German government noted “an intensification of the Turkish state’s attempts to exert influence on the Turkish diaspora in Germany” (BT, 2017a, pp. 5-6). As a result, organisational changes could be observed within the associations. In DİTİB, for example, the regional associations were more strongly linked to the head office, and the youth association was directly subordinated to the DİTİB chairman. On the other hand, DİTİB attracted attention several times through activities such as the spying out of Turkish government opponents and propaganda for Turkey’s nationalist government policy. This first led to a significant reduction and finally to the cancellation of German subsidies (BT, 2018a).³ The development of DİTİB and other Turkish-Sunni associations can be described as a decoupling from the country of arrival in favour of the influence logic of the country of origin, whereby investments are primarily made in binding social capital in the sense of identity preservation.

² The state subsidies include the Turkish Community in Germany (TGD), which is a member of DIK but does not see itself as a Muslim organisation. An overview of all state-sponsored projects (in refugee aid) of Muslim associations can be found in BT, 2017a, pp. 21-62.

³ AFP report dated 30.08.2018: Federal government no longer supports DitiB projects for now. Retrieved from <https://www.zeit.de/news/2018-08/30/bundesregierung-foerdert-vorerst-keine-ditib-projekte-mehr-20180830-doc-18p70c>

That binding social capital does not necessarily have to be accompanied by segregation is shown by the example of Ahmadiyya, who, with 79% committed people, are significantly more active in German refugee aid than Sunnis (46%), Shiites (39%) and Alevis (50%) (Nagel & El-Menouar, 2017). In particular the institutions of Muslim minorities, whose members often cultivate a strictly religious lifestyle and have a stronger community connection (Haug, Müssig, & Stichs, 2009), show that binding social capital resources can also constitute a strategy for the social contribution of existing cultural and religious resources of origin (El-Menouar, 2013; Putnam, 2001). In the case of the AMJ, however, there were also allegations in 2016 that it had given incorrect certificates to its own members regarding their reasons for fleeing.

These organisational developments have slowed down the coordination of Muslim refugee aid in Germany. The enormous potential of Muslim involvement at the grassroots level could not be realised as hoped. The final report of the third phase of DIK (2013-2017) is correspondingly sobering. The report states the associations would keep the foundation of a Muslim welfare association open. The professionalisation of refugee assistance and social work would still remain the greatest challenge (Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend [BMFSFJ], 2017).

Muslim congregations not only provide religious services but also social services. A survey of 885 communities in Germany in 2014 found that they offer around 6,000 social services, which are provided by around 10,000 voluntary and 900 full-time employees and used by at least 150,000 people (Halm & Sauer, 2015b). The social commitment of the congregations became clearly visible during the arrival of refugees in Germany in late summer 2015 (Khallouk, 2018; BT, 2016b).

In summer 2015, the mosque association Haus der Weisheit in Berlin-Moabit became particularly well-known in refugee work (Bartholdy, 2017; Gerlach, 2017; Krüppner, 2018). Since its foundation in 1995, the mosque association has been actively shaping its own district. The association originally started as a native language school for children from Arab families, soon also functioned as a mosque and has served as a centre of social encounter and interreligious dialogue for more than 20 years. As HaDeWe Integra gGmbH it is the carrier of the first Arab-German kindergarten in Berlin. The Berlin authorities, who were completely overwhelmed with the initial care for refugees, approached the community in August 2015 with the request to accommodate about 50 refugees for one night. This request led to a rarely trusting cooperation between local authorities and an Islamic community. The mosque association was soon entrusted with the care of an emergency shelter. The strong societal incorporation raised the

commitment of the mosque congregation to a new level. The congregation was able to make its social work more professional and expand it to include further offers – such as an integration café and a clothing exchange – that not only address Muslims.

The success of the project is based on the interaction of internal and external factors. The strong local roots of the congregation, its orientation towards the common welfare of civil society and its willingness to cooperate with state authorities have ensured the trust of the society of arrival. The members of the congregation also contribute origin-specific cultural and linguistic skills, which were appreciated and requested for the first time by the society of arrival as part of the refugee support. But these competences also ensure the trust of the refugees, who have often experienced terrible events. As Muslims with a similar migration biography, the members of the congregation as spiritual carers are in a position to build a bridge between the culture of origin and the peculiarities of life in Germany. This also includes the way Islam is experienced in Germany. However, the community could only realise this positive potential for the integration of the refugees because the local authorities were open. Public recognition was the first step in the development of the community's capacity for self-organisation and increased investment in bridging social capital.

The services provided by Muslim communities are often poorly structured and strongly internalised. The lack of structures often means that a lot depends on individual persons. In addition, the civil society capacities of Muslim congregational work are often subject to strong dynamics of their own in the sense of the logic of membership (Gerlach, 2017; Nagel, 2016). The example of the mosque association House of Wisdom shows the opportunities that refugee aid offers Muslim communities to professionalise their services.

The spectrum of Muslim congregations active in refugee aid extends across the German association landscape. Among the successful projects are DITIB communities – e.g. the women's association from DITIB communities in Baden-Württemberg, which provides help in refugee homes (Gerlach, 2017) – as well as congregations that belong to an Islamic association affiliated to the VMF – e.g. the al-Nour congregation in Hamburg, which accommodated very many refugees in 2015 (Gerlach, 2017). Even non-organised Muslim congregations do outstanding refugee work. One example is the newly-formed el-Furkan mosque association in the East German town of Merseburg, which, in close cooperation with the municipality, provides a home for Afghan youths in its buildings (Gerlach, 2017).

In addition to the Muslim congregations, other Islamic societies are also involved in shaping the structures of refugee aid in Germany. An example of local voluntary work is

that of the Salam organisation in Frankfurt/Main (Bartholdy, 2017). As an organisation for Muslim pastoral care, Salam has conceptualised and built up an education of voluntary pastoral workers for refugees. Another example of local commitment is the model project of the Cologne Centre for the Encounter and Further Training of Muslim Women, which integrates a comprehensive and sustainable advisory service for refugees into the existing structures of social institutions (Bartholdy, 2017).

In all cases of successful refugee work by Muslim congregations and societies it can be seen that they are tailored to a certain need, to a specific situation and to the very specific abilities of the stakeholders (Gerlach, 2017). All initiatives are characterised on the one hand by a strong orientation towards the common welfare of civil society with regard to the society of arrival, and on the other hand by competences specific to the country of origin. In addition to this hybrid orientation, Muslim organisations have succeeded in giving their activities a formal structure and in networking with the environment. They have broken away from the dynamics of membership logic and invest above all in bridging social capital. However, this also requires the openness of the respective environment and public recognition.

It should be noted that Islam in Germany has become a little more domestic since the influx of refugees in late summer 2015. In the course of refugee work, Muslim communities have taken on a new role in civil society and have received recognition for it. For the first time, the social work of Muslim communities and associations is being subsidised on a larger scale with public funds. However, the process of professionalisation and institutionalisation is in its early stages. So far, organisational developments at the level of the associations have had a rather slowing effect on the coordination of Muslim refugee aid in Germany.

Conclusions for Cooperation with Muslim Religious Institutions as an EU Policy Tool

A policy on refugees and integration that focuses on individuals must also address their culture, religion and ideology. In today's networked world, most people live in conditions characterised by cultural and religious diversity. Culture and religion should and can help to promote the strengthening of mutual respect and tolerance. Cooperation with religious communities at eye level can make a decisive contribution to the successful arrival and integration of refugees.

The example of Germany shows the chances for successful refugee work, which are based on cooperation with religious Muslim institutions, but also highlights the difficulties

that can arise. Many of these difficulties in Germany are unique and have grown historically. Behind this, however, it becomes apparent that cooperation with religious organisations in general has some specific features if – as in the model presented above – the interrelations between Muslim religious institutions and their environment are taken into account. Islam political discourses exert considerable pressure on Muslim associations and communities in Germany to justify themselves. This puts a heavy strain on their already limited capacities and considerably slows down the development of structures. Sustainable structures are, however, the prerequisite for the self-positioning of Muslim institutions in civil society, for the professionalisation of their services, but also for their ability to deal with and cope with crises on their own.

For this reason, more religious literacy is needed in politics as well as more culturally sensitive cooperation with Islamic representatives. This is the only way to realise the potential of Muslim engagement in the long term. There are already examples of such a religiously informed and culturally sensitive strategy. In recent years, for example, efforts have been stepped up in international development cooperation to consider the potential of religion systematically and to integrate faith-based organisations (FBOs) as “agents of change” in the activities (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit [GIZ], 2015b). The United Nations Population Fund developed guidelines for its own work under the heading “Cultural Lens” in 2001 and established the Interfaith Network for Population and Development. The World Bank has also regularly held a World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD) with religious representatives since the turn of the millennium. In the EU countries, the Faith Partnership Principles of the UK Department for International Development are one example.

The German Federal Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation (BMZ) also implemented a strategy “Religions as partners in development cooperation” in 2016 and applies it in various projects (BMZ, 2016; GIZ, 2015a). A major focus is the integration of diaspora communities in Germany (GIZ, 2013). There are studies available on a number of religious and secular diaspora communities and their respective potentials, e.g. on Moroccan (Metzger, 2016), Tunisian (Ragab, McGregor & Siegel, 2013), Senegalese (Faye, 2008) and Egyptian and Afghan migrant organisations in Germany (Mundt & Kausch, 2008).

From the example of Germany, a development can thus be traced that is also to be found at EU level. For a long time, Germany tried to keep Islam out of the political arena. It regarded it as a matter for the countries of origin. Slowly, a change was made from a strategy of containment to a strategy of commitment and partnership. Today, Germany

is one of the few countries that has institutionalised the dialogue with Muslim religious players at state level, in the form of the German Islam Conference.

In a similar way, the EU considered religions to be an almost exclusively foreign policy issue for a long time (Silvestri, 2009). Until 2009 there was not even a legal basis for the development of mechanisms for the analysis and dialogue with religious organisations (Perchoc, 2017). In the past ten years, however, there has also been some movement in religious affairs at the EU level. The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, has repeatedly stressed the constructive role that religions can play in political processes (Mogherini, 2015). In contrast, reducing religion to a demarcation criterion would be a political weakness. In this respect, for Mogherini, Islam and Europe belong just as much together as the other monotheistic religions, which all have their roots not in Europe.

Thus, there is a comparable development in Germany and at EU level towards a recognition of the potential of religion for political processes and towards an intensified cooperation with Muslim religious institutions. To this end, however, expertise and dialogue with religious organisations must be significantly improved. The following recommendations for action at EU level can be derived from the German case study:

Recognise Religious Muslim Institutions as Partners in EU Migration and Integration Policy

Due to their hybrid orientation towards both the host society and the society of origin, Muslim institutions have specific and valuable knowledge that should be taken up in the strategies of European migration and integration policy. Muslim engagement depends on how much space and opportunity structures are granted to it by the EU and the individual EU countries. The visibility of Muslim members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and EU staff should become clearer. 2014-2019, only seven out of 751 MEPs were Muslim, four of them from the UK. The low representation of the second largest religious group in Europe should encourage parties in the EU member states to nominate more Muslim candidates for the EU elections. Furthermore, consideration should be given to how Muslim religious institutions can be better represented in the EU.

Encourage Mosque Communities to Become More Involved in EU Policies and to Cooperate with EU Institutions

The German case study shows that Muslim congregations have particularly strong civil society potential at the local level. In view of the above model of interaction between

Muslim religious institutions and their environment, mosque congregations are highly dynamic and responsive due to their local roots. Muslims in Europe also have an above average level of trust in the institutions and public organisations of the EU (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights [FRA], 2017). A “grassroots strategy” should primarily address the resources of the communities and make concrete offers for cooperation. This can be done, for example, through topic-specific participation platforms, which at the same time promote cross-border networking among municipalities. In particular, refugee aid offers good starting points here. Incentives can lie in the targeted support of existing community resources in the direction of a more professional approach (capacity development). Conversely, there should also be incentives for EU institutions to cooperate with the mosque communities.

Support Existing Structures of Muslim Institutions in EU Countries

EU policy should support the structures and networks of Muslim religious institutions already established in the individual EU countries. It should not assume that there is initially a need for external mobilisation. Due to the binding religious capital, communities and associations have a great ability to mobilise, especially when it comes to voluntary commitment. Furthermore, it is important to give room and promote the ability for self-organisation and production of bridging social capital and not to impose a religious-political corset from outside. Support is possible, for example, through actions to increase recognition and public awareness of Muslim religious institutions and through their networking via dialogue platforms. The platforms should also explicitly be used to initiate the inner-Islamic debate on socio-political issues.

Promote the Diversity of Religious Muslim Institutions in the EU

The results of the German case study show that the heterogeneity of Muslim institutions is transformed into a correspondingly diverse commitment to refugee aid. Especially from a transnational perspective, Islamic institutions in the EU countries can build bridges to the countries of origin. At this level, religion as social capital can have a confidence-building and networking effect. In this respect, cooperation with Muslim organisations also offers important potential for EU migration and integration policy. To find suitable cooperation partners, the EU should take into account the full range of Muslim institutions, communities, women’s groups and youth organisations, which often have particularly valuable, specific competences and contacts. Larger umbrella organisations may be helpful as intermediary institutions in identifying them. In addition, the promotion of cross-origin and inter-denomination networking initiatives is recommended. In this way, new Muslim cooperation partners can be won for the future.

Promote Mutual Contact and Information between EU Policies and Muslim Institutions

European societies should overcome their Eurocentric view and realise their claim to be open-minded and pluralistic. Europe needs more openness and more direct dialogue with Muslims, both at the level of individual EU member states and at the level of the EU institutions. Only through continuous exchange is it possible to reduce fears and build trust on the one hand, and to transform Muslim institutions into a natural part of Europe on the other. A native Islam is not a threat, but, like every other faith, an enrichment for the lived diversity in Europe. The path taken by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, is a step in the right direction. This strategy of recognition and inclusion of all religions in Europe should be further consolidated and extended to other policy areas. Following the example of the Religion and Global Affairs Office set up by Obama in 2013, a Religion and European Affairs Department could be established to promote the contact with religious actors in EU policy.

Exploit the Chances of a European Islam

From an empirical point of view, Islam has long been on the way to Europeanisation. Muslims in Europe have found independent, pragmatic ways to balance their religiosity with life in a predominantly non-Muslim society (El-Menouar, 2017). Unobserved by the general public, a Muslim civil society has meanwhile established itself across Europe, demanding equal participation in everyday life (Göle, 2016). Thus, on the one hand, Muslims are particularly suited to take on a living role model function, especially for refugees from Islamic countries. On the other hand, Islam in Europe can have a positive retroactive effect in the sense of brain circulation on those countries where religious freedom and human rights have a difficult status. Therefore, the cooperation of Muslim religious institutions and human rights actors should be strengthened, whereby the cooperation should not be limited only to freedom of religion. In general, religious communities are powerful social actors who can do a lot for human rights. This chance should be taken by setting up interreligious working groups on human rights at EU level.

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Evolution of Religious Institutions and their Political Role in the Greater Maghreb: The Cases of Tunisia and Morocco

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Introduction

Religious beliefs and practices have been expressed in key institutions constructed in uniquely different social and historical contexts. The caliphate, as a universal political and social order, was without any doubt the most important religion-based institution developed in the first years after the appearance of Islam. This was followed by more clearly defined religious institutions like the different schools of law (*maḏāhib*) and, precisely in North Africa and the Sahel, religious – mostly Sufi – orders (*ṭuruq*) based on a method of discipline, meditation and mystical insight. Modern times have given birth to different kind of religious institutions in the Muslim world closely tied with local and regional historical contexts, but still drawing their inspiration from the Middle Period of Islam and only through political control over them and a quasi-monopoly of Islam in these modern states prevents uncontrolled proliferation.

As one goes in depth into the study of religiosity and religious perceptions in the Maghreb, it does not take long to notice that homogeneity is definitely not the most accurate term to describe the state of affairs. Although, if compared to the Middle East, the Great Maghreb seems homogeneous when focusing on the credo of its peoples – mostly Sunni Maliki –, modernity and globalisation, as everywhere else, have brought a clear internationalisation of the religious offer. Sources of information, religious education, resolution of religious doubts or queries, Koranic debate circles, exegesis groups or simple preaching as in the past are not only to be found in the nearest mosque, Koranic school or *zāwiya*, but quite the opposite, in fact. Both individuals and groups nowadays have plenty of tools, channels and spaces available for them to choose freely, from satellite TV channels to social media and other online platforms where information, direct interaction and exchange happen in a way that avoids traditional institutional channels.

If we focus on the recent history of the different countries that geographically shape the Great Maghreb, not only Morocco and Tunisia, we immediately notice that – even with differences – appropriation of Islam by political powers began immediately after each country's respective independence. This process sought to legitimise the nascent states and create national consciousness through religion after the colonial period.

Recent events that have gone down in history, due to the worldwide impact caused, allow us to draw few general parallelisms regarding inflection points as to how the role of religion has evolved. A very clear one took place shortly after the fateful date of September 11 when the role of religious institutions in the Maghreb as a whole witnessed noticeable changes. Although with nuances among the different countries, the evolution

of religious institutions from a tool of state legitimisation to a means of security control is clearly perceptible. A decade later, the revolutionary wave of demonstrations and protests that came to be known as the Arab Spring meant another turning point in the transformation not only of religious institutions and their role but also of religiosity and religious perceptions alike.

Now, more than fifty years after their independence, the quasi-monopoly exercised by the different states back in time has disappeared, and total control of religion, religious opinions and the religious offer has become impossible.

In order to better understand the structuring of religious institutions in the Maghreb today we will narrow the focus to the cases of Morocco and Tunisia. The analysis of these two cases, broadly perceived as different or even antagonistic, but which nevertheless share several characteristics, will help us learn how states try to exert control over the religious spectrum through their institutions.

Purpose of the Research

Taking Morocco and Tunisia as case studies, the main objective of this paper is first to analyse the gradual development of religious institutions since both countries' independence as well as to assess their evolving role. On the other hand, through the analysis of their political role, this paper delves into the questions of how the states seek to frame religion and control the religious spectrum through official institutions. As a result, by way of conclusion, a set of policy recommendations for a better European policy formulation regarding cooperation with religious institutions has been included to summarise the most important points emerging from the document.

On a lower level, the document will also aim at briefly describing and categorising Islamic religious institutions according to the most evident divisions. This will also help to assess their degree of manoeuvrability independent of the central political power in order to better articulate a set of recommendations for European policy formulation.

As an international debate is currently taking place regarding claims that increased control over religious institutions is an important way to stop terrorism, it is important to define religious institutions. For the purpose of this research, the term institutions has been treated in its broad and non-restrictive sense, meaning visible and organised manifestations in a particular context. Those bodies, depending on the country, can range

from ministries and relevant administrations attached to or dependent on them to places of worship, *zāwāya*, academic and scholarly religious centres of thought and other relevant more or less structured organisations providing religious-oriented or religious-related services.

Tunisia: Secularisation under Guardianship of the State Religion

Nowadays religious dynamics in Tunisia, whether at an institutional or an individual level, are to be understood – like everywhere else – through the lenses of history. Few will dare to argue that today's state of affairs regarding the subject of analysis in this paper is not linked to the country's policies oriented towards the westernisation and secularisation of the religious national sphere since its very independence.

The very first thing to consider as an important characteristic of Tunisia is the existence of a national state since the country's independence, on 20 March 1956. The particular historical evolution of Tunisian society, the noticeable and very characteristic organisation of administrative structures inherited from the French protectorate and the elements drawn from the country's geography explain the presence of this relatively centralised state (Ben Achour, 2000).

Immediately after gaining independence and led by Habib Bourguiba and his Neo-Destour party, the country engaged in a reform process aimed at redefining and transforming Tunisian society. Bourguiba, a remarkably charismatic politician, had a special talent for building trust and confidence around his figure; as a matter of fact, he ended up being considered as the father of Tunisia as an independent state and the architect of its national unity, even at the expense of sacrificing parts of the country's identity, such as the Arab (championed by Salah Ben Youssef, his main competitor) and the Amazigh (Pouessel, 2016). In his view, the heritage of colonialism was the main barrier towards progress and modernity, and the transformation of people's consciousness was to be done by focusing on three main axes, namely education, religion and the status of women (Zeghal, 2013).

Bourguiba's approach, heavily influenced by French laicism, sought among others to solidify the state's control over a traditional society through the weakening of the existent traditional Islamic institutions. This choice is reflected in the nationalisation of religious institutions and bringing religious personnel into civil service (Zeghal, 2013). A noteworthy example is that of the University of Ez-Zitouna, one of the oldest and most

important centres of Islamic learning worldwide founded more than 1,300 years ago, which, under Bourguiba, was transformed into the Faculty of Theology and attached to the newly created Université de Tunis.

One of the most important milestones – if not the most important one – on Tunisia’s path towards its very own concept of *laïcité* was the adoption of the 1956 Code of Personal Status (*Majallatu al-Aḥwāl al-Shakhsīya*) that continues to be applied today. Through it, Bourguiba outlawed several deeply-rooted elements in Islamic tradition, such as polygamy, forced marriage and repudiation. This Code of Personal Status is almost entirely secularised, except for some provisions related to inheritance – an issue now in the spotlight – and filiation (Khedher, 2017). Unlike what Islam states, under the Code of Personal Status adoption, monogamy, marriage, divorce, and so on, were to be based on principles other than those broadly accepted by the Ummah (consensus - *ijmā*).

The Code of Personal Status also set up equal divorce rights for men and women. Of course, this sparked outrage among the ulema, as they saw their domain of activity gobbled down by the new government. As underlined by Malika Zeghal (2013, p.16): “The provisions of these seven articles (referring to articles 14-18-19-21-30- 35-88) out of the 170 of the original 1956 Code were unacceptable in their substance to most Tunisian ulama except for a few who agreed to officially support the project on behalf of the state (sic). The articles, which presented a significant departure from Muslim law, made repudiation a legal impediment to the remarriage of the husband, criminalised polygamy, and mandated that all divorce requests go through the courts.”

It is nevertheless important to note that Bourguiba’s goal was not to eliminate the existing religious institutions at the time but empower the state over the religious sphere, modernise Islam from within, portraying himself as a reformer and a moderniser, not as a radical secularist capable of breaking completely with Islam, as he himself saw Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Proof of that is the first article of the Tunisian 1959 Constitution: “Tunisia is a free, independent, sovereign state; its religion is Islam, its language Arabic, and its system is republican” (Tunisian Constitution, 1959). The formula of Islam state religion does not mean anything other than that religion will now be exercised within the limits of the state framework.

However, an important fact to highlight is that even the 1861 Constitution of the Tunisian Regency settled the basis for creating a secular Supreme Court empowered to review statutory rulings emanating from Sharia courts. Sharia itself was dealt with in great detail, unlike the 1959 Constitution in which Sharia itself or Sharia-based laws had disappeared

completely (Tunisian Constitution, 1861). In fact, one of the measures almost immediately applied upon the successful independence of Tunisia was abolishing the existing Sharia courts, whose personnel, civil servants, were immediately integrated into the unified justice system by state decree in 1956.

On several occasions, Bourguiba's actions, focused on advancing different aspects of his political agenda, would give rise to deep uneasiness within religious authorities and exacerbate their sensibility. Well-known examples of his behaviour surpassing some deep-seated recognisable limits of Islam were not following Ramadhan principles, therefore attacking one of the five pillars of the Islamic faith, or encouraging women not to wear the *hijab*.

When confronting traditional sources of religious guidance in Tunisia, Bourguiba would mainly use two strategies: that of control and that of interpretation of the sacred texts. Control, which in later stages after Bourguiba's regime has been implemented differently, was imposed both on preachers and places of worship putting them under the guardianship of the prime minister himself through the Direction of Religious Affairs. Bourguiba's preferred strategy, however, was that of interpretation: being in possession of the official version of Islam was fundamental to his objectives, and Bourguiba often took advantage of his position to grant himself the authorisation to interpret sacred texts.

When he came to power, Zin el Abidine Ben Ali lacked the popular legitimacy that Bourguiba had due to his starring role in the country's path to independence. Ben Ali's regime used its own policy: building on the lessons learned from his predecessor's experience, he tried to avoid direct conflict and kept himself away from adopting religiously controversial stances, as Bourguiba often did. Ben Ali quickly understood that religion was not only a source of national identity but also a very useful tool to build public and institutional legitimacy around him. Among other things, during his mandate he opened the door to Islamic banking in the country and created Radio Zitouna (McCarthy, 2014).

The very first visible sign of change during Ben Ali's regime was the declaration of 7 November 1987, which began with the *Bismillah*. Although this formula is nothing but the norm in the Muslim world, it meant a significant change in Tunisia as Bourguiba had always made sure to avoid it in his official speeches (Frégosi & Zeghal, 2005). This was not the case for the new Tunisian president, who would not only use it during his speeches but also often recited Koranic surahs in order to reaffirm the Arab-Muslim identity of the new government. In his first years, Ben Ali endeavoured to demonstrate the regime's commitment to Islam both as part of the popular culture and the idiosyncrasy of Tunisia (Mokhefi, 2015).

At the beginning of the 1980s, Bourguiba had already become aware of the increasing political ambitions of the Islamist movement as well as its capacity to mobilise broad popular support, among others by preaching in mosques. Ben Ali, shortly after coming to power, had already placed the designation of all mosque personnel (imams, muezzins, and so on) under the authority of the prime minister himself (Journal Officiel de la République Tunisienne [JORT], 1989).

It was also under his government in 1992 that the Ministry of Religious Affairs was established. Although by law religious institutions fell under the authority of the newly-created Ministry of Religious Affairs, which soon saw its resources increased, it was the Ministry of the Interior that held real control through its widespread apparatus and assured the loyalty of imams, constantly monitored prayers and Friday sermons, and so on (Frégosi, 2003). Another distinct feature of the 7 November regime, that of Ben Ali, was the monopolisation of religious traditional culture. During that period, state control also extended to religious cultural spaces through the monitoring of saint's tombs or *zāwāya*, which became the object of public endowments and regular visits of government officials, Sufi manifestations, and other expressions of Tunisian popular Islam.

Secularisation in Tunisia could be defined as a process of appropriation by the state of the functions traditionally performed by other religious institutions and personalities, now considered archaic. Religion today is no longer a structuring axis of society but rather works as a tool for the state, a state that can no longer be defined entirely by Islam (Zeghal, 2008). It is true that religion in Tunisia still enjoys a certain status as the first article of the recently approved constitution states clearly. It must be emphasised, though, that although Tunisian law is no longer based on Islam religion still holds great importance if not *de jure*, then *de facto*. In any case, Tunisia is without any doubt the heir of a long reformist tradition and is perceived as the most secular country in northern Africa.

What this journey through the evolution of religion as a tool under state guardianship shows is that a very institutionalised presence of Islam, although strictly supervised, has been effective throughout more than sixty years since its independence.

Official Tunisian Religious Institutions

According to the Tunisian Constitution, the Ministry of Religious Affairs is in charge of overseeing Islamic prayer services, appointing imams, and paying their salaries. The Grand Mufti, appointed by the President of the Republic, is in charge, among others, of

declaring religious holidays, answering citizens' inquiries and solving their religious dilemmas and inspecting the different school curricula to provide a justified opinion. Although the Tunisian Ministry of Religious Affairs suggests themes for Friday sermons, it does not directly regulate their content.

The Higher Islamic Council is the highest religious consultative body in the country, and it is responsible for examining all questions submitted by the Government concerning the application of the provisions relating to the field of Islamic doctrine. This body also examines and manages all issues relating to the functioning of other Islamic institutions and the means to accomplish their mission. The Council is headed by the Mufti of the Republic, the Dean of Ez-Zitouna and the General Director of the General Direction of Religious Affairs in the Ministry of Religious Affairs and includes other recognised members for their knowledge of Islamic sciences (JORT, 1988).

Diwān al-Iftā' is a religious consultation body headed by the Mufti of the Republic. The Mufti himself has become a statesman and his main role now does not exceed the declarations of religious holidays, the management of conversions to Islam, and so on. In this sense, the existence of this figure is a good example of the current balance of powers and of the submission of religious power to political powers.

Morocco: Restructuring Institutions and Fostering Political Diplomacy

Since its independence, complete control over the religious field has been an axis of the nature of political authority in Morocco. Nonetheless, when the first constitution was drafted under Mohammed V, Islam was placed at the core of the political structure of the state (Maghraoui, 2009). The King, *Amīr al-Mu'minīn* or Commander of the Faithful, the traditional title of Muslim caliphs claiming Prophetic descent,¹ is described in article 19 of the 1962 Constitution as the symbol of the unity of the nation, the guarantor of the continuity of the state and responsible for ensuring the respect for Islam and the Constitution. Later, the same text in article 23 reads "The person of the King is inviolable and sacred." As Mohamed Tozy (1999) accurately argues in his book *Monarchie et Islam Politique au Maroc*, religion in Morocco has become a fundamental element in the political sphere: it is in Islam that legitimacy for power is to be found and it also serves the purpose of de-legitimising political opponents when needed.

Morocco's current political and institutional stance of advancing a project of national Islam substantiated on preserving a local spiritual approach based on the Sunni Maliki

¹ The Moroccan monarchy does not use the concept of caliphate.

rite with a strong Sufi component is anything but new. Although in the last two decades the concept of a Moroccan Islam has gained importance, King Hassan II already enacted a reform of the religious sector during the 1980s in order to pre-empt what he perceived as a potential ideological threat emanating from Ayatollah Khomeini and his policy of exporting its religious inspired revolution to the rest of the Islamic world (El-Ayadi, Rachik & Tozy, 2007). The promotion of national spiritual values as a barrier against external interference has been the norm ever since.

What we nowadays refer to as the national Islam of Morocco, or Moroccan Islam, is a relatively new concept whose use has been growing in recent years. Moroccan Islam, in the way the concept is used both by Moroccan authorities and academics alike, is nothing but the shared local belief system, attached to the traditional Sunni Malikism, with a very high and rich component of cultural expressions and popular practices that are to be framed within *marabutism*² and that have already been present for centuries in the country. Moroccan authorities, in addition, usually promote it as a tolerant and open Islam in opposition to the more fundamentalist trends coming from the Gulf and other places.

The approach of promoting a Moroccan Islam is indeed the product of decades of adapting Malikism to the social and political demands beholden to the principles of deductive legal analogy or *qiyās*, juristic discretion to determine the best solution or *istihsān* and the pursuit of the general interest of the community (Tozy, 2009). This should not come as a surprise to anyone; Mohammed VI has stressed this clearly several times, as in his speech on the restructuring of religious institutions in front of the Higher Council of Ulema back in 2004: “Our approach is an extension of the path our venerable ancestors took to preserve the spiritual security of Morocco and the unity of the Maliki rite. [...] This strategy [...] is based on three foundations, and aims at stimulating and renewing the religious field in order to protect Morocco against extremism and terrorism, and to preserve its identity that carries the seal of deliberation, moderation and tolerance” (Royal Speech, 2004).

Perhaps one of the most remarkable characteristics of what is being promoted as Moroccan Islam is the fact that, since 2006, *murshidāt* or female religious guides are being trained and gradually incorporated into state institutions. Morocco first began training *murshidāt* as part of a cross-cutting counter-radicalisation strategy following the 2003 bombings in Casablanca. In addition to providing religious guidance and monitoring possible extremist discourses at a local level, the strategy also aimed to gradually provide more empowerment and economic opportunity to women.

² Popular devotion to various Sufi saints or Marabouts.

As their main task is to provide religious guidance to Moroccan women and despite the fact that they are not entitled to lead prayers, their inclusion in the institutionalised field of religion is regarded as highly symbolic; nevertheless, it is a one-of-a-kind experience in the region. A potential growing implication of *murshidāt* in institutional life is to be expected as Mohamed VI has reiterated on several occasions, explicitly before the Higher Council of Ulema, his desire of seeing their presence increased and their gradual adoption of more important roles, such as heading a Regional Council of Ulema.

Mohamed VI's regime has oriented his religious policy towards continuity of the project carried out by his father. In fact, deep reformism has not been a predominant feature in the recent process of evolution of the religious institutions in Morocco; the path followed both by Hassan II and Mohamed VI is that of modernising the discourse more than the institutions themselves. In their book on Moroccan religious values and practices, El-Ayadi, Rachik and Tozy argue that traditional Islam continues to be not only a crucial part of Moroccan identity but also still plays a very important role in Morocco's legal system (El-Ayadi, Rachik & Tozy, 2007).

The 2003 terrorist suicide bombings in Casablanca, together with the September 11 attacks in the United States (US) and the 2004 Madrid train bombings put the field of religion in the spotlight again, although from a different angle, again that of security. The context that shaped the last package of administrative reforms with respect to religion is very much determined by the beginning of the so-called war on global terrorism. Nonetheless, proof of this is the eruption in the Moroccan scene of the concept "spiritual security", now widely used by administration officials and politicians to promote reforms and much of the like of European institutions seeking to enlarge institutional and interreligious cooperation.

During the last 30 years, following the Alawite Kingdom's withdrawal from the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1984 (the predecessor of the African Union [AU]), and subsequent deprivation of the possibility to exert its influence in the continent through political diplomacy, Morocco has tried to get closer to the African continent by two means: through education, having become a great academic hub for other African students, and by exercising a vibrant religious diplomacy thanks to its credentials as a moderate Muslim country. West Africa and the Sahelian region have historical religious ties with Morocco; not only is the most followed *madhab* also the Maliki but several of the most popular mystical orders present in the region also find their roots in Morocco. The *Tijāniya* order, for example, which is one of the most important *turuq* in Senegal, Mali and also present in other countries in the area, traces its origins back to Morocco,

where its founder Ahmed el Tijani is buried. The importance of French as a vehicular language is not to be underestimated in such a linguistically heterogeneous region where Islam is the dominant religion. In this context, Morocco champions what it calls a moderate Maliki Islam with a strong Sufi traditional component opposed to a more extremist, restrictive and ultra-conservative Islam – often branded as Salafist – that is becoming increasingly influential in the Arab world but also in black Africa. Through its religious diplomacy, also called “spiritual diplomacy”, Morocco has achieved a certain recognition, and several African and Arab countries are now turning to it for religious advice instead of resorting to Egypt or Saudi Arabia, traditional referents of Islam.

Official Moroccan Religious Institutions

Commander of the Faithful is the Islamic title given to Morocco’s king, now Mohammed VI, as the protector of Islam and guarantor of the freedom to practise religious affairs in the country. Formalised in 1962, this title is in fact a tacit function long exercised by the king before acquiring the title. Like the ancient caliphs, the king is considered the direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, hence his uncontested powers over the religious sphere that empowers him to manage the religious policy of Morocco.

This, however, does not make Morocco a theocratic state as the parliament holds the legislative power to a certain extent, but the figure of the king is the only institution that is constitutionally allowed to combine both political and religious powers (El-Katiri, 2013). Nevertheless, article 41 of the 2011 Constitution reads as follows: “The King, Commander of the Faithful, sees to the respect for Islam. He is the Guarantor of the free exercise of beliefs.” Not going any further in the description of his competences as Commander of the Faithful could well mean that the text is meant to be malleable when it comes to interpretation, leaving the door open to grant him more prerogatives if necessary.

The Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs is the main government institution responsible for shaping the country’s religious sphere and promoting its own interpretation of Sunni Islam. Among other competences, the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs is responsible for providing government-required training to imams as well as to instruct the topics to be covered during Friday mosque sermons by providing approved materials. It also monitors Koranic schools in order to prevent what the ministry considers to be inflammatory or extremist discourses and to ensure teaching follows approved doctrine based on a Sunni Maliki traditional Islam.

Following the terrorist attacks of 2003 in Casablanca, it was restructured in a way that it oversees the religious discourse thoroughly, from Friday sermons to what is broadcast in the media. The monitoring of religious discourse is understood as a fundamental tool to prevent independent discourses – whether fundamentalist or not – from finding refuge in mosques or other meeting centres that would enable the amplification of their message. While effectively controlling mosques and monitoring sermons may prove to be an effective control tool in the short-term, the homogeneity of views, perceptions over an imposed speech and the inexistence of a minimum degree of debate may also prompt conflicting individuals and groups to look for clandestine alternatives.

The High Council of Ulema is a group headed and appointed by the king himself, which includes representatives from all religious confessions in the country. This Council was created in 1981 with the aim, among others, of “carrying out a coordinated and sustained action in an institutional framework against the dangers that foreign ideologies pose to the morality of the Moroccan nation and its authentic values.” In parallel and applying a proximity approach, regional and local councils have also been created in order to raise awareness regarding the nation’s spiritual values and to continue to preserve the unity of the country in matters of dogma and doctrine at a local level. These proximity councils have a more widespread range and work as a proximity tool whose purpose is to supervise religious issues – such as the appointing of imams – at a local level as well as to guide and bring people closer to the official state religion.

This Council is the only authorised body to issue fatwas (*fatāwā*), non-binding authoritative legal opinions. However, fatwas issued by the Council will only become legally binding if endorsed by the king through a royal decree subsequently approved by the parliament. If the king or the parliament fails to endorse a decision emanating from the High Council of Ulema, it will remain non-binding and unenforced. By institutionalising and restructuring the management of fatwas and its issue, the country has made significant changes in regards to the work of *ijtihād*,³ transforming it from an individual practice to a collective one, under the umbrella of a state institution (El-Katiri, 2013).

Other important religious institutions in the country, though dependent on the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, include the Rabita Mohammadia of Ulema and the Mohammed VI Institute for the Training of Imams *Murshidīn* and *Murshidāt*. The Rabita Mohammadia, also founded by King Mohammed VI, establishes itself as a public utility foundation with full legal capacity whose main objectives are to promote the prescriptions of Sharia, to contribute to liven the field of Islamic studies and to consolidate the bonds of cooperation and communication between the ulema, associations, scientific bodies

3 Independent reasoning pursued trying to find a solution to a legal question based on religious grounds.

and national and international cultural establishments. On the other hand, the Mohammed VI Institute for the Training of Imams *Murshidīn* and *Murshidāt*, another recently created institution (inaugurated in 2015) and dependent on the king, is responsible for providing training for Sunni religious preachers and imams, both at a national and international level. This and other initiatives show the country's initiative and increasing willingness to use religion as another tool within their diplomatic strategy as well as a foreign policy tool.

Trends after the Arab Spring and Other Religious Actors

As the first Arab country to experience a genuine transition to democracy, Tunisia constitutes an exceptional case insofar as the relation between state power and Islam gradually become part of the public debate. The 2011 Revolution in Tunisia brought a sudden political liberalisation and the weakening of general state control over Tunisian society (Chomiak, 2011). Among the outcomes of this weakening, we can definitely note the resurgence of religion as an important matter in public life. That fact is evidenced, among others, by the reappearance of religious movements like the quasi-extinct Muslim Brotherhood-linked Ennahdha Movement party, the birth of new Islamist movements – from Salafist to Salafist-Jihadist ones –, the increase of religious debates over religion on TV, open discussions over state control over mosques to ensure the neutrality of religious spaces and, more importantly, the questioning of the role of religion in the identity of Tunisians.

In Morocco, the 2011 popular uprisings that came to be known as the Arab Spring ended up bringing a set of constitutional reforms. The new text, drafted by a commission of experts in collaboration with a consultative council rather than by an elected constituent assembly, bears no changes regarding the prerogatives of the king and leaves his status as the country's chief religious authority untouched. The new constitution still defines the country as a Muslim state and Islam as the state religion from the very preamble of the text. Beyond strengthening the king's control over religious institutions, constitutional changes did not translate, again, into profound reforms. The government, however, has continued to apply reforms to the educational curricula and has issued several decrees further bringing institutes of higher Islamic learning under state supervision.

It is worth noting that after the Islamist party PJD (French acronym for the Justice and Development Party) won the legislative elections of November 2011, some changes in the monarchical rhetoric regarding the religious identity of the country have been noticed. On

several occasions, namely in 2012, 2013 and 2015, the king referred in his official speeches to the “secular identity of Morocco” (Feuer, 2018). This suggests the monarchy may well be aware of the dangers that a possible change in society’s perceptions of the main source of religion power would imply, therefore establishing in some way the limits regarding where religious power rested entirely upon.

The post-2011 context in the Great Maghreb broadly speaking has definitely increased the visibility both of mainstream Islamist parties in Maghreb politics as well as Salafist movements and it has also shown the growing influence of Sufi orders in North African societies. In a climate of great diversification within the religious sphere compared with previous decades, fierce competition for religious influence and leverage has been unleashed (Meddeb, Colombo, Dalacoura, Kamel & Roy, 2017). Tunisia, for example, witnessed unprecedented changes in religious local authorities; the newly-emerged religious voices, unlike their predecessors supported by the state, substantiated their legitimacy from grassroots support. These new religious voices, ranging from independent individuals appointed by popular demand to imams and preachers linked to the Salafist-Jihadist Anṣār al-Sharī’a (AST) or even the caliphate-focused Hizb ul-Tahrir and everything in between, ended up seizing control of hundreds of mosques. As a matter of fact, Ben Jeddou, Minister of the Interior back in 2014, stated that at the time there were as many as 380 mosques out of state control, roughly 10% of the total.⁴ Furthermore, despite the negative image from new independent religious actors – many of them Salafist – portrayed both by the media and political discourses alike, local communities did not perceive them as a foreign body. Quite the contrary, given their halo of independence and their clean service sheet in the eyes of the community compared to years of state-controlled preachers and sermons.

One of the best examples of that is Anṣār al-Sharī’a; although the study of the factors that contributed to the rise of militant Islamism in Tunisia deserves a separate chapter, it is worth highlighting some of the aspects that facilitated the appearance and subsequent expansion of this phenomenon in Tunisia. Among them, the repression of fundamentalist religious currents during the dictatorship, the amnesty granted to historical militants of al-Qaeda and the subsequent mobilisation that they were able to generate, the weakness and lack of experience in anti-terrorist matters evidenced by the political class during the process of democratic transition, the endemic corruption of the state, and the scepticism towards institutions incapable of managing the enormous social inequalities are definitely worth mentioning. All this without underestimating AST’s elaborate strategy of supplanting the state, the provision of services at the local level and the extension of its efforts throughout the country, which led to an exponential increase in their popularity and whose consequences extend to this day (Altuna, 2015).

⁴ According to the data provided by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, there were 4,480 mosques in Tunisia as of 2017.

If Tunisian Salafists and other non-mainstream Islamists have struggled to make their voice heard after the banning and subsequent crackdown on Anṣār al-Sharī'a and have – for the most part – been relegated to a kind of political limbo, Morocco has dealt with Salafism in quite a different way. Following the rising concern regarding what was happening in the rest of the region, Mohammed VI issued royal pardons in March 2011, February 2012 and again in November 2015 to a group of prominent ex-Jihadist Salafists that after having been convicted on charges of extremism and terrorism had abandoned violence. This initiative, as accurately calibrated by Salim Hamimnat, together with the aforementioned constitutional amendments, “indicates a rethinking of some components of the government’s approach to combating extremism” (Hamimnat, 2016), but not only. Indeed, during the last few years the country has succeeded both in categorising the different Islamism groups and subsequently incorporating the more moderate ones not only into the political life but also into the national strategy of countering violent extremism (CVE) – as is the case of Abu Hafs, former radical preacher now turned President of the al-Mizan Center for Counternarrative – while isolating the most radical elements.

Since the terrorist attacks of 2003 in Casablanca, the Alawite monarchy has sought to promote Sufism as one of the most important features of Moroccan Islam. The Moroccan government through its CVE strategy has tried to tackle the root causes of radicalisation (i.e. socioeconomic inequalities and extremist discourse) and even if no major terrorist incidents – other than the two Scandinavian tourists recently killed in the Atlas Mountains – have taken place during the last decade, statistics are still worrisome and prove the limited success of their strategy (Masbah, 2018). Between 2004 and 2018, more than 3,000 alleged Salafist-Jihadists have been arrested, more than 150 cells dismantled, adding to the estimated 1,500 which, according to the Soufan Group, would have joined Islamic State (IS) since 2011 (Barrett, 2015).

On the other hand, apart from the growing influence of organised Islamism, it is necessary to take into account the increasing importance that many preachers are attaining whether through the numerous satellite channels dedicated to full-time religious proselytism or through any of the multiple platforms that are available in today’s globalised society. What is at stake, the control over the religious sector, can no longer be reduced to a matter of political struggles between Islamists and their secular counterparts in Tunisia and the *Makhzen* and its opponents in Morocco. Other external factors have nonetheless to be weighed properly and assessed prospectively to avoid unintended surprises.

With all these in mind, several determining factors can be highlighted as the main axis having a real impact on the evolution of relations between religion and politics in the

region today: first of all, social change and the gradual opening of the political arena for Islamist tendencies, which has resulted in the increasing range of political religious options available to the public. Secondly, the transformations suffered by the channels of transmission of information; the modernisation undergone in the field of content dissemination – particularly that of religious material – has resulted in a quantitative and qualitative increase in the religious offer available to the public, which results in the most autocratic regimes not being able to further exercise a total blockade and, last but not least, the ever changing geopolitical dynamics in the region.

Conclusions and Recommendations Regarding EU Cooperation with Religious Institutions

Official religious institutions in the Maghrebi context have to be regarded as political instruments more than anything else, mere tools serving the different governments and regimes to exert political control and gain leverage over their political adversaries. Moreover, the lack of credibility of religious officials is determined by the limited autonomy granted to the institutions. What has to be stated clearly is that few doubts remain regarding the tangency points between religious institutions and the central states themselves. While the possibility of fostering a greater degree of independence exists, this will undoubtedly result in the loss of control and power probably triggering the emergence of discordant voices from within the institutions themselves. This is, however, a crossing point that has to be dealt with by the authorities if willing to implement fundamental changes favouring a greater degree of democratisation and decentralisation of the sector, a field in which Morocco can definitely profit from Tunisia's experience, which has undergone a noticeable evolution following the different steps of its transition towards democracy.

Additionally, there is already a far from negligible part of North African societies that perceives religious institutions as monolithic unchangeable structures and have already started to practise their faith outside the state-established mainstream channels. Given the great diversity of ideas among religious players, the different states' efforts to enforce squared policies face increasingly big difficulties to harvest good results. Those policies, mostly oriented towards a tighter control of the religious discourse, risk causing exactly the opposite of what they seek, meaning both a clandestinisation of those currents of thought far from the official line and an increased de-legitimisation of the institutional apparatus, resulting, of course, in a greater erosion of their authority and setbacks in the impact of their policies.

Diversification within the religious sphere has increasingly challenged the authority of official religious voices and this pluralisation of the religious offer leaves a complex panorama concerning the exercise of religious authority in a traditional way. Not only has getting around state religious positions become easier but having access to exogenous religious currents of thought – whether through the internet or via satellite TV channels – is a practice that continues to spread. As Brown (2017) rightly points out, Islamic revivalism has been fostering the individualisation of religion since the 1990s and this has also contributed to the de-legitimisation of traditional religious institutions which, prior to 2011, used to serve as moral backing in the political regimes' fight against Islamism. The strong presence of religious institutions has not been able to prevent the increasing individualisation of religiosity and the fast changing trends, which leave little space for regimes to exert an effective control on ideological positions of its citizens. Furthermore, it seems like this tendency will continue in the foreseeable future.

Feuer (2016) argued that state-controlled religious institutions are effective in the struggle against extremism and, indeed, foreign institutions and governments alike tend to look at these structures as potential partners in the task of countering violent extremism and their strategies as a model from which to learn. However, reducing cooperation with these institutions to yet another security tool will further damage the credibility of their discourse and the legitimacy of the voices emanating from official institutions will be gradually eroded. Apart from that, focusing on building solid religious Euro-Maghrebi cooperation initiatives based exclusively on the binomial religion-security could be perceived as interference. To avoid that, it is necessary to reassess the approach on which inter-institutional relations should be based and reformulate the priorities on which the future cooperation relationship could be substantiated. If possible, opening new spaces of cooperation in underexplored shared fields of interest should be favoured. Expanding cooperation, diverting priorities out of the security sector and opening new fields and working horizons with official institutions remains a solid option. Nevertheless, evaluating the option of establishing cooperation relationships with independent religious figures of recognised prestige is an unexploited alternative that, if correctly assessed, could also give good results, especially if we take into account the evolution of trends as explained through the text.

Furthermore, Europe could profit from both Morocco's and Tunisia's different experiences in dealing with Salafists, co-optation and mostly exclusion. Although Salafism has been present in both countries for quite a long time now, politically speaking they have not had active participation in political life until recent years. At the same time, integrating not only mainstream but also non-mainstream Islamist currents of thought into European

public political life is one the challenges of the future and definitely a field open for new strategies of interinstitutional cooperation. Even if it is difficult to effectively assess the success or the failure in the short and mid-term of the approaches implemented by Tunisia or Morocco, it seems peremptory to follow both strategies closely as they continue to evolve. Assessing their outcome in the long term can provide policy-makers with invaluable information for a more nuanced policy formulation. In that sense, choosing an existing framework (such as the office of the Special Envoy for the promotion of freedom of religion or belief outside the EU) or setting up a new one to share success stories, lessons learned and monitoring and evaluation strategies applied to the approach adopted by both countries can be of use for policy-makers.

Dell'Aguzzo and Sigillò (2017) argue that secularisation and de-secularisation strategies can be better explained if considered as country-specific processes and that power relations between secular and religious social forces should be adequately taken into consideration. In that sense, the EU can no longer understand the region as an indivisible block, either for policy-making or for cooperation programmes. Religious institutions in the Great Maghreb are complex state structures, often carrying very diverse – and sometimes conflicting – agendas even within the borders of the same country. Consequently, the screening and decision processes carried out in order to design tailor-made strategies have to be done by selecting partners considering the particularities, not only at a country level but also of each institution individually.

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The Rapprochement between Al-Azhar and the Vatican: Opportunities and Limits

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In February 2019, Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayyeb signed a historic declaration of fraternity, calling for peace between nations, religions and races in Abu Dhabi. The document states “Al-Azhar Al-Sharif and the Muslims of the East and the West, together with the Catholic Church and the Catholics of the East and the West, declare the adoption of a culture of dialogue as a path, of cooperation as a way, and of reciprocal understanding as a method and approach.” The two religious leaders also insisted on their “firm conviction that the authentic teachings of religions bid us to cling to the values of peace, to defend the values of mutual understanding, human fraternity and harmonious coexistence, to entrench wisdom, justice and love, and to reawaken religious awareness among young people.” And that “dialogue, understanding and dissemination of a culture of tolerance, acceptance of others and peaceful coexistence would contribute significantly to containing many economic, social, political and environmental problems that bear down on a large part of humanity.”¹

In order to reach this end, the two religious leaders called upon religious figures all over the world, regional and international organisations, civil society organisations and religious institutions to disseminate the principles contained in their declaration at regional and international levels, and request that they be translated into policies, decisions, legislative texts, courses of study and materials to be circulated. They also asked that this declaration become the object of research and reflection in all schools, universities and educational and pedagogical institutes in order to help educate new generations to bring goodness and peace to others, and to be defenders of the rights of the oppressed, the persecuted and the wretched everywhere.

This document was not only the outcome of the February 2019 meeting between the two religious figures but it is also the outcome of several rounds of dialogue between the Vatican and al-Azhar that started in 2016.

This chapter analyses this rapprochement between al-Azhar and the Vatican over the past few years. It answers a number of questions: What are the interests of both religious actors? What are their strategies? Do they share the same views? What are the challenges facing their cooperation? What policies shall be adopted by both institutions to maximise the outcome of their cooperation and avoid any damages?

The chapter is divided into four main parts. The first part offers a historical overview of the dialogue process between the Vatican and al-Azhar. The second seeks to understand the drivers behind the last round of dialogue between the two religious institutions that started in 2016. The third part looks at the challenges facing the cooperation between

¹ To read the full document: <http://www.azhar.eg/observer-en/details/ArtMID/1153/ArticleID/41379/Document-on-Human-Fraternity-for-world-peace-and-living-together>

the two institutions. Finally, the fourth part offers some policy recommendations on how to deal with these challenges and to take the dialogue one step further.

The Religious Dialogue between Al-Azhar and the Vatican: A Historical Overview

The dialogue process between al-Azhar and the Vatican has gone through different phases over the past four decades, including crises that led al-Azhar to freeze the dialogue twice. The relation between the two religious institutions can be divided into four phases: first signals, official start, time of crisis, and the fresh start in 2016.

First Signals

Al-Azhar's call for interreligious dialogue as a tool to achieve international peace dates back to 1936. In his statement to the World Council of Faiths in London in 1936, Sheikh al-Azhar Mohammed Mustafa Al-Maraghi (Sheikh of al-Azhar from 1928-1930 and 1935-1945) addressed the conference with a speech on the foundations of brotherhood from an Islamic perspective. He suggested creating a body to cleanse religious consciousness of hatred and jealousy and to strengthen religious awareness, especially among the intellectual classes ("From al-Maraghi to al-Tayyeb", 2019).

From the Vatican side, the Second Vatican Council held between 1962 and 1965 represented a shift in the relation between the Catholic Church and non-Christian religious communities in general, and Muslims in particular. Since the Second Vatican Council, the engagement of the Roman Catholic Church in interreligious dialogue and interfaith relations has developed and expanded. While Muslims were once regarded as the hostile "other", Islam has become the first among the faiths with which the Church engages in dialogue. In 1964 and while the Second Vatican Council was still in session, Pope Paul VI established the Secretariat for Non-Christians (SNC) for relations with the people of other religions, especially Islam (Pratt, 2010). In 1965, the Church issued the *Nostra Aetate* declaration by the Second Vatican Council on the relation of the Church with non-Christian religions. The declaration stated:

The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God. Though they do not acknowledge

Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honour Mary, His virgin Mother; at times they even call on her with devotion. In addition, they await the day of judgment when God will render their deserts to all those who have been raised up from the dead. Finally, they value the moral life and worship God especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting.²

In 1988, the SNC was renamed the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID). The PCID has the following responsibilities: to promote mutual understanding, respect and collaboration between Catholics and the followers of others religious traditions; to encourage the study of religions; and to promote the formation of persons dedicated to dialogue.³

The first step towards the establishment of dialogue channels between al-Azhar and the Vatican came in April 1994 when the Swiss theologian Hans Kung, visited the Grand Imam Jad al-Haq Ali Gad Al-Haq (Sheikh of al-Azhar from 1982-1996) during Sheikh Gad Al-Haq's treatment in Berne, Switzerland. The two men met in two sessions lasting five hours in an important step that paved the way for dialogue between the two institutions.

The Official Start

The official start of the dialogue only came in May 1998, when al-Azhar and the Vatican signed the document for the formation of the Joint Committee for Dialogue between al-Azhar and the PCID. At the religious level, Pope John Paul II received the delegation of al-Azhar on the day following the signing of the agreement and delivered an official speech welcoming this step. In February 2000, Pope John Paul II visited Cairo to be the first Catholic Pope to visit Egypt. The Pope visited Sheikh of al-Azhar Mohamed Sayed Tantawi (Sheikh al-Azhar from 1996-2010) and the Coptic Pope Shenouda III, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St Mark (1971-2012).

Times of Crisis

However, the al-Azhar-Vatican dialogue process faced a serious crisis in 2006 after now-retired Pope Benedict XVI gave a speech in Germany that was perceived by many Muslims as making the link between Islam and violence. Pope Benedict XVI quoted from a medieval text that declared that the Prophet Mohammed was "evil and inhuman." This speech created a wave of anger across the Muslim world. Sheikh Tantawi responded to this incident by freezing the dialogue between the two institutions.

Although in February 2010, the Dialogue Committee resumed its sessions under the leadership of Dr. Mohamed Abdelaziz Wassel, Chairman of the Dialogue Committee, and

² To read the full document: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_1965_1028_nostro-aetate_en.html

³ Official website of the PCID: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/index.htm

Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, Chairman of the PCID, tensions rose again in January 2011 after Pope Benedict XVI made a statement following the terrorist attack on the Church of the Saints in Alexandria on 31 December 2010 that left more than 21 dead. In his statement, the Pope cited the attack on the Copts of Alexandria as one of the reasons why there is an “urgent need for the governments of the region to adopt, despite the difficulties and threats, effective measures for the protection of religious minorities” (“Address of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI”, 2011). The statement was perceived by the Egyptian regime as interference in Egypt’s internal affairs and reacted by calling back its ambassador to the Holy See. For its part, al-Azhar reacted by suspending again the dialogue with the Vatican. Sheikh al-Azhar Ahmed al-Tayyeb (2010 to date) asked for an official apology from the Pope, as a condition for restarting any talks between al-Azhar and the Vatican.

Fresh Start

After Pope Benedict XVI’s resignation, Pope Francis assumed the leadership of the Catholic Church in March 2013. The new Pope insisted on dialogue as one of the main pillars of his agenda. Within this framework, he sought to resume the dialogue with al-Azhar. Whereas al-Azhar insisted that the return of relations between al-Azhar and the Vatican is subject to the Vatican’s positive steps to show respect for Islam and Muslims.

In May 2016, the Grand Imam Dr Ahmed Al-Tayyeb visited the Vatican to meet with Pope Francis. It was the first visit for a Grand Imam of al-Azhar to the Holy See. This visit marked a major step in softening relations between the two religious institutions and paved the way to restart the dialogue.

The two sides discussed the needed efforts to spread peace and co-existence, as well as the coordination of efforts between al-Azhar and the Vatican in order to promote the culture of dialogue and coexistence between Muslims and Christians in the East and the West. The May 2016 meeting marked the resumption of collaboration between al-Azhar and the Holy See.

In addition to his talks with the Pope, Ahmed Al-Tayyeb supported also the East-West dialogue initiative launched by the Community of Sant’ Egidio. The result was five rounds of dialogue between the East and the West, which started in June 2015, and toured the cities of the world: Florence, Paris, Geneva, Abu Dhabi and finally Cairo. This initiative insists on dialogue between the East and the West, aimed at promoting ways of coexistence and intensifying joint efforts to foster world peace and counter extremism and intolerance.

During the period between 2016 and 2017, Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayyeb took on many trips, calling for peace and spreading the spirit of tolerance and coexistence and renouncing

violence and hatred. In France, he led a visit to the memorial of the victims of terrorism at the Bataclan Theatre, where he declared “I have suffered for the victims, for their families, for their friends. And we are very hopeful that the French people, who are free, peaceful and loving of life, will overcome this tragedy. I pray that God protect all from any evil” (“Andrea Riccardi and the Grand Imam Al Tayyeb Pay Tribute to the Victims of the Attack at the Bataclan”, 2016). In Germany, al-Tayyeb spoke at the German parliament, declaring that religious opinion leaders have a great responsibility in spreading the culture of coexistence and tolerance, and that all religions renounce terror and murder. And in Italy, he declared from the Vatican that Islam encourages a culture of dialogue, especially with the different religions, and that peace, tolerance, dialogue and respect for other humans, whatever their religion, colour or race, are the teachings approved by all divine traditions and norms (“Al-Azhar and the Vatican”, 2018).

In February 2017, al-Azhar hosted a seminar attended by a number of al-Azhar scholars including the head of al-Azhar’s Dialogue Centre, Mahmoud Hamdy Zakzouk. The Vatican was represented by the former head of the PCID, Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran. The meeting between the Sunni and Catholic institutions came under the name “The role of al-Azhar al-Sharif and of the Vatican in countering the phenomena of fanaticism, extremism and violence in the name of religion.” The meeting concluded with a number of recommendations, including fostering dialogue between the two institutions and tackling causes of extremism and violence. This seminar was perceived as another step towards officially restoring ties between the two institutions.

In April 2017, al-Azhar hosted the Peace Conference, with a focus on the role of religious leaders to eliminate intolerance and terrorism and its fragile and misleading theories. The conference was attended by Pope Francis and Patriarch Bartholomew I, the Archbishop of Constantinople.

The Grand Imam Ahmed al-Tayyeb insisted in his opening speech that al-Azhar continues to seek cooperation in the field of advocating for the consolidation of the philosophy of coexistence, revival of dialogue, respecting the beliefs of others and working together in an area agreed upon by believers in religions (“Al-Azhar and the Vatican”, 2018). Pope Francis from his side highlighted that “we are always invited, in particular in the field of dialogue, especially religious, to walk together, believing that the future of all is also related to the encounter between religions and cultures.” He added, “we are called Christians and Muslims, and all believers, to make our contribution, live under the sun of one merciful God, and we can call each other brothers and sisters.” The Pope also referred to St Francis of Assisi, who came to Egypt eight centuries ago, and met with the Sultan al-Kamel, in order to avoid conflicts and to ensure peace-building.

Motives of Pope Francis and Sheikh al-Tayyeb. Why Now?

This new wave of dialogue between the Vatican and al-Azhar clearly differs from previous rounds. The talks between Ahmed al-Tayyeb and Pope Francis came after several years of restrained relations between the two religious institutions, and they went beyond the formal channels of dialogue to reflect rather a political project for both men in forming a platform for the promotion of peace and justice on the national and international level. In principle, the two institutions have always insisted on the importance of dialogue between Islam and Christianity. However, this new wave of dialogue also seems to reflect the interests of both Ahmed al-Tayyeb and Pope Francis themselves.

Pope Francis: Looking for a Sunni Partner

From his first day in office, Pope Francis has made dialogue with other religious communities one of the main pillars of his vision. In fact, he believed in dialogue with Muslim communities long before he was even chosen for the papacy. As Archbishop of Buenos Aires, the then Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio made regular visits to the city's Islamic Centre and was on good terms with the local Muslim community in Argentina. He even criticised Pope Benedict XVI's Regensburg address in 2006, declaring his “unhappiness” with the statement. In his own words, he believes that “these statements will serve to destroy in 20 seconds the careful construction of a relationship with Islam that Pope John Paul II built over the last 20 years” (Baverstock, 2013).

Since he became the Pope in 2013, all his teachings have been an encouragement to build bridges, not walls, and to work with other religious communities for the good of human beings. Therefore, for Pope Francis, interreligious dialogue is a key tool in the establishment of peaceful coexistence. This view is also shared by his main assistants. Monsignor Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, Secretary of the PCID, for example believes that the Vatican is committed to building bridges with the followers of other religious faiths and to seek alliances with them in order to prevent violence. Former President of the PCID Jean-Louis Pierre Tauran shares the same belief. He argues that “dialogue represents the best alternative to war.” According to Tauran, the past is now behind us, today's pressing issues, such as the violence of the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS), education, migration, must overcome any distrust between the different religious communities.

The Vatican divides interreligious dialogue into three phases: John Paul II's dialogue of peace, Benedict XVI's dialogue of charity, and today's model referred to as the dialogue of friendship announced by Pope Francis. The key element of the dialogue of friendship

is that it does not seek to negate the identity of the others but rather to acknowledge these different identities and engage it. This model relies on the fact that without deep-formed identity the dialogue process risks being fruitless or, worse still, it could be harmful and lead to relativism and syncretism.

According to the Vatican logic, Christians and Muslims account for 58% of humanity. If we want humanity to be at peace, the members of this 58% should be brothers and sisters.

While the situation seemed clear on the Vatican side, the political developments in the Muslim world since Pope Francis assumed the papacy in 2013 have been alarming to say the least. This is the case in particular with the rise of the self-proclaimed Islamic state in summer 2014. These troubling developments have made dialogue with Islam both urgent and challenging.

The Muslim religious sphere has experienced an increasing fragmentation of religious authority between various groups including Sufis, Salafists and the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) since the religious revival in the 1970s. Although this fragmentation dates back at least four decades, this fragmented religious sphere, together with the increasing weakness of state institutions in the post-Arab Spring era, has led to a very fluid religio-political sphere. Salafist Jihadist groups perceived this phase of limited statehood as an opportunity to advance their project as argued in their book *The Management of Savagery*. Interestingly, *The Management of Savagery* was originally written for al-Qaeda but the strategy explained in the book has become the guidebook for IS in Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Libya. The document identifies three stages towards the establishment of the Islamic state: the stage of “the power of vexation and exhaustion” where the failing state’s power remains contested, then the stage of “the administration of savagery,” and the last stage is that of establishing the Islamic state.

The rise of IS in summer 2014 and the atrocities it has committed, not only against religious minorities but also against Sunni Muslims, have shocked the world. Such an environment left the Muslim religious sphere with contradictory readings of the religious text in the absence of final authority in the Muslim world, and the fatal attraction of the model of IS for many frustrated Muslim youths.

Meanwhile, the Vatican perceived this situation as alarming. This unprecedented level of violence has made interreligious dialogue with Sunni religious institutions an urgent matter to, but not only, maintain the security of Christian minorities in the Muslim world.

However, at the same time, the extreme fluid religious sphere has rendered finding a Sunni partner that enjoys a minimum level of legitimacy for such a dialogue a very difficult mission. Pope Francis has made several trips to different Muslim countries such as Palestine, Turkey and Egypt. However, it appeared that al-Azhar is the only Sunni institution that enjoys such legitimacy and could at least claim to represent Sunni Muslims all over the world.

In this phase of turbulence in the Middle East, Pope Francis believes that he is following St Francis's footsteps by pursuing dialogue with the Islamic world at a time of violence and upheaval, as St Francis did when he came to Egypt during the crusades.

Engaging in dialogue with al-Azhar satisfies two main interests for the Vatican:

First, it offers the new Pope the partner he needs for his dialogue project in this dangerously fluid era of IS. Dialogue is the priority of Pope Francis. However, dialogue needs a partner, and only al-Azhar seems to be able to play that role.

Second, by engaging in a dialogue with a moderate voice such as Ahmed al-Tayyeb, the Vatican is offering support for moderate religious actors in their struggle against radical voices. In a meeting with a Catholic religious figure who plays an active role in the interreligious dialogue between the two religious institutions, he framed this issue clearly when he said "if al-Azhar is down, whom shall we talk to, Isis? (personal communication, Florence, 11 May 2018).

Al-Azhar: Strengthening its Internal Legitimacy

As for Ahmed al-Tayyeb, he also has his own interests in engaging in dialogue with the Vatican, which is his own political survival in the post 2013 era.

Since the overthrow of the MB rule in July 2013, al-Azhar and its Grand Imam have been under increasing pressure from the new political regime to give up on the independence it enjoyed during the transitional period after 2011 and to strictly follow the regime's political line. Hence, al-Tayyeb saw in its relation with the Vatican a tool to resist the regime's pressure by increasing its international legitimacy.

Although al-Azhar supported the military intervention against the MB rule in July 2013, it has tried to play the role of the mediator between the different political parties to reduce social divisions at the national level.

Under the MB rule, the Islamic movement and its opponents were sharply polarised. In addition, tensions also rose between the Brotherhood and state institutions, in particular the judiciary and security agencies, over which the group attempted to tighten its control. On 30 June 2013, the opposition forces took to the streets to demand early presidential elections. Within such a polarised environment, the military forces supported by the judiciary, political opposition and prominent religious representatives, including al-Azhar, intervened to remove Morsi. The MB and its supporters rejected these procedures and staged sit-ins at Rabaa al-Adawiya and al-Nahda Squares in Cairo to oppose this new political process.

During the post-July 2013 era, al-Azhar called upon the different political groups to engage in discussion, and to avoid incendiary language and violence. For example, on 6 July 2013, al-Azhar released a statement in which it presented ten points of advice for the state and society, including that it was necessary “for the transitional period [not to exceed] the minimum time necessary to amend the constitution. For parliamentary and presidential elections to be held as soon as possible, in order to return to a normal state of constitutional democracy that satisfies the people.” The statement also demanded “the immediate release of all prisoners of conscience, political activists, and party leaders not needed for criminal cases, and genuine national reconciliation across the political and ideological spectrum, without exceptions or exclusions” (Abdel Aziz, 2016, pp. 248-251).

Al-Azhar also issued a statement on 14 August 2013, the day that the protests in Rabaa al-Adawiya and al-Nahda Squares were forcibly dispersed, in which it warned against the use of violence and bloodshed. It stressed that violence could not be a substitute for political solutions, and that immediate, honest dialogue was the only way out of the crisis. It called on all sides to show restraint, and respond to national efforts for dialogue and comprehensive reconciliations. The Grand Imam’s efforts towards national reconciliation were unsuccessful, however. Both sides maintained their positions, refusing to engage in dialogue, and the political and social polarisation continued.

Al-Azhar’s logic behind supporting the military intervention against the MB rule on 3 July 2013 followed the Islamic jurisprudence rule of accepting lesser harm to prevent greater harm, meaning preventing violent clashes between those supporting the MB and those opposing it by accepting Morsi’s ouster and holding early elections. However, the use of violence to disperse the sit-in at Rabaa Square in August 2013 represented a clear divide between al-Azhar and the new regime.

As the new regime consolidated its power by adopting a new constitution and holding presidential elections in 2014 and the parliamentary elections in 2015, al-Azhar came under increasing pressure to follow the regime's line.

The political struggle between the Egyptian regime and al-Azhar has often been framed over the issue of religious reforms. The political regime has accused al-Azhar of failing to lead the task of reforming the Islamic jurisprudence. Sisi highlighted on different occasions the need to formulate a religious response by religious bodies against radical Islamic philosophies. In January 2015, he leaned on al-Azhar to undertake what he called a "religious revolution" to reform the institution's Islamic thought and correct the concepts it teaches (Ford, Abdelaziz & Lee, 2015).

However, the struggle reflects a deeper divide over the relation between Egypt's religious institution and the new political regime. The main clash between the political regime and Egypt's largest Islamic institution is about how to draw the lines of engagement between the two actors.

Tensions between the regime and al-Azhar reached alarming levels by 2015 with a widespread pro-regime media campaign against Ahmed al-Tayyeb asking him to step down and holding him responsible for failing to reform his religious institution. Many pro-regime media outlets have framed the conflict as an attempt by religiously conservative voices to resist Sisi's reformist and progressive vision. These same media outlets accused al-Tayyeb of protecting members of the MB inside al-Azhar. Some of these voices went as far as asking Ahmed al-Tayyeb to resign. According to the Egyptian Constitution, al-Azhar's Grand Imam is independent and may not be dismissed. However, one member of parliament (MP) close to the regime proposed a draft law that would allow the president to dismiss Sheikh al-Azhar. However, he withdrew the draft bill as al-Azhar and some other MPs fiercely resisted it.

Another example of these battles between the regime and al-Azhar over the past few years is the debate over verbal divorce. Calling divorce a threat to social stability, Sisi proposed in a public speech drafting a new law to end the practice of verbal divorce. While giving his speech, he addressed Ahmed al-Tayyeb, asking him: "What do you think, Grand Sheikh?" "You've exhausted me, honorable Imam," Sisi told al-Tayyeb.

This call by Sisi has been met with fierce resistance from al-Azhar. In a statement issued by the Council of Senior Scholars, all members of the Council rejected Sisi's call. The senior scholars' statement insisted first that verbal divorce is Sharia-compliant, and

second that changing Egypt's divorce laws is not the right approach to counter rising divorce rates. Instead, al-Azhar scholars suggested to state institutions another approach to address broader social issues, including better education and good guidance through the media. The statement insisted at the end that instead of changing the rules of divorce, it is more urgent to dedicate all efforts to the benefit of the people and contribute to solving their problems on the ground.⁴

Through its relation with the Vatican, al-Azhar is able to achieve two main interests:

First, it reinforces its legitimacy with the Egyptian regime. The dialogue with the Vatican allows al-Azhar to claim to represent all “Muslims in the East and the West” as mentioned in the Abu Dhabi Declaration in February 2019. Hence, instead of being merely a state employee, the dialogue with the Vatican allows al-Azhar to claim an international status. Such a status makes it much more difficult for the regime to eliminate the Grand Imam or to marginalise its institution. The dialogue with the Vatican has thus offered al-Azhar and its Grand Imam an important tool to strengthen its legitimacy with the Egyptian regime.

Second, it consolidates al-Azhar's image as a moderate religious actor open to dialogue with other religious traditions. Hence, it answers the accusation of the pro-regime voices that al-Azhar is a conservative institution offering religious justification for terrorist groups.

Challenges to the Rapprochement between the Two Religious Institutions

The rapprochement between al-Azhar and the Vatican faces three main challenges. The first challenge is that it revolves around the personalities of the Grand Imam and the Pope, and seems less like a dialogue between two institutions. The second challenge is the asymmetries between the Vatican as a state that claims to represent all Catholics, and al-Azhar as a religious institution operating within a state with no religious authority over all Muslims. And the third challenge is the lack of an action plan that would translate the joint declarations by both actors into concrete projects.

Dialogue between Two People or Two Institutions

The first challenge to the rapprochement between al-Azhar and the Vatican is that it seems so far like dialogue between two individuals, rather than two institutions. The rapprochement over the last few years was mainly due to the interests of Pope Francis

⁴ To read the full statement in Arabic: <https://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/1084514>

and Sheikh al-Tayyeb and their personal agenda as explained in the previous section, not necessarily between the PCID and Al-Azhar's Center for Dialogue (ACD), not to mention the two religious institutions. In fact, both men, Pope Francis and Sheikh al-Tayyeb, are facing resistant voices to their rapprochement. Resistance, detraction and criticism from within both religions are constants (Pratt, 2015). In particular, conservative voices from within both al-Azhar and the Vatican are unhappy with the speed and direction of the dialogue between the two institutions.

Inside the Vatican, Pope Francis faces two types of resistance. The first comes from those who are already engaged in the theological dialogue with al-Azhar but do not agree with the speed with which the Pope is leading this process. For example, this group objected to Pope Francis' visit to Cairo in April 2017. According to these voices, the papal visit should have come in return for a "real" achievement on the religious dialogue level between the two institutions. Thus, the Pope should have waited until he "could get something" on the theological level from al-Azhar and then he could have made his visit. Otherwise, al-Azhar scholars would be less enthusiastic in making any progress on interreligious dialogue. However, Pope Francis insisted on the timing of the visit as he thought that the world needed a picture of him and Sheikh al-Tayyeb together (religious figure, personal communication, Cairo, 2 April 2018).

Other voices from within the Vatican object to the idea of dialogue with Islam in general, not only the speed of it. Surprisingly, many of these voices are Arabs themselves. According to one senior member who took part in the interreligious dialogue sessions, some Arab Christian voices are very sceptical about the recent rapprochement between the two institutions. They think that the Pope is "naïve", "he doesn't know the Muslims well", "we live with them, we know them better" they would often say (religious figure, personal communication, Cairo, 2 April 2018).

From the Muslim side as well, many conservative voices have expressed their reservations about the discourse on the common humanitarian side of all religions. In particular, Salafist preachers have warned against the danger of what some of them labelled the new humanitarian religion, which according to them constitutes a violation of the Islamic doctrine under the pretext of seeking common humanitarian values between Islam and Christianity.

Asymmetries between the Two Institutions

The second challenge is the asymmetry between al-Azhar and the Vatican, both on the political and the religious levels. On the political level, while the Vatican is a state and

the Pope is treated as a head of state, al-Azhar is a religious institution operating within the Egyptian state, and Sheikh al-Azhar is a state employee. On the religious level, while Pope Francis could claim to represent all Catholics in the world, it is much more difficult for Ahmed Al-Tayyeb to claim such authority over all Sunnis in Egypt, not to mention in the world.

These asymmetries between the two institutions become a challenge when it comes to protocol arrangements. In an interview with one member of the Vatican dialogue team, he stated that “you might think that the main challenges we are facing are theological, but sometimes dealing with protocol is more complicated than our theological discussions” (religious figure, personal communication, Cairo, 2 April 2018). For example, in preparing al-Tayyeb’s visit to the Vatican, al-Azhar objected to the fact that Sheikh al-Azhar should first meet Cardinal Turan who would then accompany him to the office of Pope Francis. They argued that that would not happen if Pope Francis would come to al-Azhar, and the two men should be treated equally. However, the Vatican has very strict and old rules when it comes to the diplomatic protocol. Similar concerns were raised during Pope Francis’ visit to Egypt, including how Ahmed al-Tayyeb would address him in his speech. Sheikh al-Azhar felt uncomfortable in calling Pope Francis “your holiness”, and only one day before al-Tayyeb’s speech, he decided to use the formula “my dear friend” (religious figure, personal communication, Florence, 11 May 2018). According to one member of the Vatican delegation, Pope Francis made what would have been problematic much easier as he agreed not to follow the protocol rules strictly (religious figure, personal communication, Cairo, 2 April 2018).

Action Plan: Who Will Implement It? With Which Tools?

The third challenge is how to translate the different joint declarations between the two institutions over the past few years, including the Abu Dhabi Declaration in February 2019, into an action plan. For now, it seems that the whole process is only about the rhetoric and pictures, but not actions. According to one of the participants from the Catholic side: “The aim is only to offer a suitable environment for actions, but it won’t be up to the Vatican and al-Azhar to act. It’s the role of civil society actors on both sides to take advantage of this, to get things moving and start to act” (religious figure, personal communication, Cairo, 2 April 2018).

For both religious leaders, they perceive their meetings themselves as the outcome. When Pope Francis received Sheikh al-Tayyeb in the Vatican in May 2016, he made it clear that “our meeting is the message,” said the Pope to Al-Tayyib, as reported by his entourage (Scaramuzzi, 2016). Both men wanted to send this positive image to the world but with no concrete plan on what should come next.

Policy Alternatives? What Could Be Done?

In an era that witnessed unprecedented levels of violence and fear with the establishment of the self-proclaimed Islamic caliphate in Syria and Iraq, civil wars in Libya, Syria and Yemen, the migration wave of thousands of refugees to Europe and the rise of right-wing populist discourses on both shores of the Mediterranean, the dialogue between Francis and Tayyeb appears as one of the few positive pieces of news coming from the Middle East over the past few years. As pointed out by Pope Francis, the meeting of the two religious authorities sent a positive sign for peace and coexistence.

However, as the dialogue between the two men reached its pick with the Abu Dhabi Declaration in February 2019, the serious question is now: What next? How can we ensure that this process remains alive and does not fade away? In order to do so, there is a need to work on two levels: vertically, by linking this process to religious civil society organisations, both Christian and Muslim, working on the ground with local populations; and, horizontally, by seeking to establish a sustained platform that brings together religious and political leaders. Through these two mechanisms, a third measure that seeks to turn words into actions should emerge on the national and international levels.

In order to achieve this aim, three measures need to be considered: to disseminate the dialogue vertically from the religious leadership to religious actors operating on the ground. Second, horizontally to create a sustained structure for dialogue that brings together religious and political leaders. Finally, on both vertical and horizontal levels, there is a need to develop an action plan that would translate the outcome of the dialogue on these two levels into concrete projects on the national and international levels.

Involving Christian and Muslim Civil Society Organisations

The dialogue between al-Azhar and the Vatican will not stop at the level of Pope Francis and Sheikh Tayyeb and their religious institutions but should also reach religious civil society organisations, both Muslim and Christian. These organisations have the advantage of being directly in touch with the people through their religious and welfare activities. However, in most of the countries in the Middle East, these organisations work separately in serving their respected religious communities without coordination. In Egypt, for example, Christian and Muslim associations are the most active in offering services for Egyptians. However, these organisations, although doing exactly the same type of activities and in some cases in the same areas, rarely, if ever, talk to each other. By establishing dialogue between Muslim and Christian organisations, the shared values of

human rights, peace and coexistence will find their way to the larger Muslim and Christian audience, instead of only being shared among the religious elite. This is particularly important in countries experiencing religious sectarian tensions between Christians and Muslims, as is the case in Egypt, Syria and Iraq.

To Create a Sustained Structure of Dialogue that Brings Together Religious and Political Leaders

The dialogue is still only an agreement between two moral authorities with no direct political impact. In order for this initiative to be sustained, and to have an impact on national and international politics, there is a need to create a permanent platform that brings together religious and political leaders. In particular, since the world of international diplomacy, including the European Union (EU), has already acknowledged the importance of dialogue and engagement with religious institutions and organisations as vital resources for achieving stability, security and peace.

In a roundtable organised by the Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI), European policy-makers shared the same view. As argued by Pasquale Ferrara, Italian Ambassador to Algeria, diplomats and policy-makers should consider religious leaders and communities as partners. For Jean-Christophe Peaucelle, Advisor for Religious Affairs at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, states should encourage religious actors to engage in interreligious dialogue, as it has become a tool for peace inside societies and between nations.⁵

From the Vatican side too, according to Cardinal Parolin, Secretary of State of the Holy See, in a speech at the Senate of the Italian Republic: “A new challenge lies ahead for interreligious dialogue that includes the commitment to encourage religious leaders and their communities to be present, to take action as instruments of peace and for peace-building, also involving their national governments” (Biagioni, 2016).

To Develop an Action Plan that Translates Declarations into Actions

Finally, and based on the first two recommendations of linking the dialogue process vertically to religious civil society and horizontally to political leadership, there is a need to transform its principles into concrete projects that seek to reinforce its values both on the national and international levels. These concrete projects can be in the form of societal initiatives that bring together Muslim and Christian local actors in order to face the problems of their societies, such as sectarianism and violent extremism. On the political level, political and religious leaders should work to transform the values of the dialogue into policies, decisions and legislative texts.

⁵ Interreligious engagement for inclusive societies and sustainable development, Public Roundtable, ISPI, Bologna, 6 March 2019.

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EuroMeSCo

Founded in 1996 and comprising 102 institutes from 30 European and South Mediterranean countries, EuroMeSCo (the Euro-Mediterranean Study Commission) is the main network of research centres on politics and security in the Mediterranean, striving at building a community of research institutes and think tanks committed to strengthening Euro-Mediterranean relations.

The objectives of the network are to foster influential quality analysis and reflection on Euro-Mediterranean politics and policies; to serve as a platform for dialogue between the members of the network and key stakeholders to discuss the key trends and challenges on the region's agenda; to increase the impact of think tanks and research institutes and to actively contribute to policy-making through dissemination of research outputs of the network to experts and national, European and international institutions linked to Euro-Mediterranean relations.

The EuroMeSCo work plan includes a research programme with five publication lines (Joint Policy Studies, Papers, Briefs, Spot-Ons and reports), as well as numerous activities, including annual conferences, seminars, workshops, presentations, formal and informal meetings with policy makers on the key political and security dynamics. It also includes communication and dissemination related activities (website, newsletter and targeted institutional dissemination) to raise awareness and promote the work of the network and to stimulate debate on Euro-Mediterranean affairs.

IEMed.

The European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), founded in 1989, is a consortium comprising the Catalan Government, the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation and Barcelona City Council. It incorporates civil society through its Board of Trustees and its Advisory Council formed by Mediterranean universities, companies, organisations and personalities of renowned prestige.

In accordance with the principles of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership's Barcelona Process, and today with the objectives of the Union for the Mediterranean the aim of the IEMed is to foster actions and projects which contribute to mutual understanding, Exchange and cooperation between the different Mediterranean countries, societies and cultures as well as to promote the progressive construction of a space of peace and stability, shared prosperity and dialogue between cultures and civilisations in the Mediterranean.

Adopting a clear role as a think tank specialised in Mediterranean relations based on a multidisciplinary and networking approach, the IEMed encourages analysis, understanding and cooperation through the organisation of seminars, research projects, debates, conferences and publications, in addition to a broad cultural programme.



PISM | POLSKI INSTYTUT SPRAW MIĘDZYNARODOWYCH
THE POLISH INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

The Polish Institute of International Affairs, based in Warsaw, is the main Polish analytical institution, established by an act of Parliament in 1996 to carry out research and provide expertise in international affairs. PISM disseminates information on contemporary international issues and maintains contacts with academic and political centres in Poland and abroad. The Institute runs courses for public servants, maintains a library (open to the public; 165,000 books and journals), organises conferences, and publishes books, periodicals and documents on Polish foreign policy and international matters.

PISM's Middle East and Africa Programme, established in 2011, is one of seven research programmes of the Institute. Its focus are political and societal changes in the Arab world, Israel, Turkey and Sub-Saharan Africa.