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# Will a Million Muslims March?

## Muslim Interest Organizations and Political Integration in Europe

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Presently, Islam in Europe has a weak and divided political voice. This article draws on collective action theory and the religious economies model to analyze Muslim interest organizations in democratic polities. The authors develop general theoretical propositions and apply them to a case study of mosque–state relations in the federal state (*land*) of Berlin. The study shows that institutional features of the German polity and diaspora Islam make collective action difficult and provide opportunities for factions (“spoilers”) to undermine broad-based collective action if they perceive centralizing organizations as compromising doctrinal and organizational autonomy. In addition, conflicts between organizations representing conservative Muslim interests and secularly oriented ones further complicate collective action. The result is narrow interest articulation by smaller, less diverse groups. Based on our study, the authors consider the general applicability of our propositions and their implications for European polities.

**Keywords:** *Muslims; Europe; politics; interest organizations; mobilization*

In the wake of recent terrorist attacks, scholars and the media have focused attention on Islamic extremism as a threat to pluralist democracies (cf. Dershowitz, 2002; Lewis, 2003; Rabasa et al, 2004). Most observers recognize that organized extremists are a tiny faction, but little work has

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been done to understand the conventional political engagement among the vast majority of Muslims (Hartmann & Krannich, 2001; Henkel, 2004; Klausen, 2005). This article draws on collective action theory and the literature on the economics of religion (cf. Iannaccone, 1998) to examine Muslim interest organization in European polities.

Numerous studies of Muslim immigration to Western Europe exist (cf. Buijs & Rath, 2002), but researchers are only beginning to analyze how religion may influence political behavior and integration (Fetzer & Soper, 2005; Klausen, 2005; Warner & Wenner, 2005). The politics of Islam have broader implications than those generally associated with immigrant affairs such as employment, welfare, housing, health care, and education. And concern about Muslim integration is simply not a matter of national security; with native European birth rates slipping below the natural rate of replacement and immigrant populations growing, the continent is facing a significant demographic and cultural shift. As Europeans become more secular in their worldviews (Inglehart & Baker, 2000) the apparent persistence of strong religious values among Muslim immigrants could become a significant point of contention (Norris & Inglehart, 2004). Most Europeans see the assimilation of Muslim immigrants into secular society as essential to preserving their heritage.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, what may be at stake is the core political identity of Europe as it moves toward future rounds of European Union (EU) enlargement scheduled to include the Turkish Republic.

We contend that the study of Muslim political integration must take the organizational character of Islam seriously, the experiences of ethnic groups that may influence attitudes toward public exercise of religion, and the existing institutions of church–state relations wherein immigrants reside. We focus on Germany, a particularly good case from which to understand the salience of these factors. There is a growing awareness in Germany of the dangers of a marginalized Muslim population (cf. Bundesministerium des Innern, 2003). Government officials have professed a desire to bring a moderate Islam into the political system with the hope of forestalling both the entrenchment of radicalism and a nativist backlash. Yet even as anxiety surrounding Muslim integration has risen, politicians worry that there is simply no “Islam of the German stamp” (Islam deutscher Prägung)—i.e., a corporatist, centrally organized body that represents the majority of Muslims—with which the state can work. In fact, only a fifth of Muslims are represented by

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1. For instance, in the May to June 2003 Eurobarometer 59.2 survey, about 80% of respondents believed that immigrants “should adopt the national customs” of the host country.

one of several competing nationwide Islamic umbrella groups (Cziesche et al., 2003; Ögelman, 2003).

For the most part, Muslims have yet to become an organized force in European politics. The lack of substantial political organization is not because of a lack of salient political issues, as the rioting in France and the furor over Danish cartoons in the autumn of 2005 indicate. German Muslims share many of the same concerns as their European counterparts: resentment of police scrutiny, restrictions on immigration, chronic unemployment, conflicts surrounding the wearing of religious attire, and the availability of Islamic instruction in public schools among them.

Given this, we might expect to see large-scale political mobilization. However, there has been no Muslim civil rights movement, and no principal interest organization has arisen to speak for Muslims in the political realm. Religiously active Muslims remain divided among rival groupings despite the efforts of political entrepreneurs to unite them. This seems contrary to a dominant stream of social movement theory that expects mobilization to occur when a substantial minority population finds itself facing discrimination in a pluralist polity (cf. Meyer & Tarrow, 1998; Minkoff, 1995; Tarrow, 1994; Tilly, 2004). Expanding citizenship rights, government efforts to reach out to these groups, and material incentives for cooperation would further raise expectations for broad-based organization by Muslims.

To understand Muslim political organization and the barriers to integration, we consider the basic collective action problems facing Muslims in Europe and then test those propositions on a case study of interest organizations and mosque-state relations in the federal state (*land*) of Berlin. Our case study draws on official data on organized Islam and immigrant associations alongside semistructured interviews with public officials, clergy, and representatives of Islamic and immigrant organizations conducted in June 2004. For the purposes of our study, the size and sophistication of Berlin's Muslim communities and the Turkish majority helps to control for difficulties that could arise from cross-cutting ethnicities. Based on our observations, we conclude with thoughts about the general applicability and broader implications of our propositions for European polities.

## **Muslim Sociopolitical Integration in Europe: Current Interpretations**

During the past two decades, a number of scholars have hypothesized how religiously (and ethnically) distinct Muslim populations would be incorporated

into European society. One line of argument claims that the emerging EU would accord immigrants—regardless of national citizenship—many of the standard rights of native Europeans (Soysal, 1994). Another is that liberal democracies would be ideologically compelled to expand immigrant rights even in the face of hostile public opinion (Joppke, 1999). Both of these arguments anticipate that polities will take up the interests of immigrants and move to integrate them. The implication is that Muslim political organizations would either be unnecessary at the national level or be quickly assimilated as interest groups by the host country.

Recent events seem to belie such optimism. On June 29, 2004, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that policies to regulate religious expression in public institutions were permissible. This decision resolved the legal issue that followed the dismissal of an immigrant teacher who wore a headdress in the classroom in favor of a state's position that this was illegitimate advocacy of religion by a public official—a position then upheld by Germany's highest court (Cziesche et al., 2003). Following the European Court's decision, other states moved ahead to limit religious dress in public employment.

Although the former center-left government of Federal Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder discouraged such laws (Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration [BBfM], 2003; C. Martini, Federal Commission on Migration, Refugees and Integration, personal communication, June 28, 2004), at least two states ruled by conservative parties, Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg, passed legislation specifically forbidding headscarves. Even the state of Berlin, ruled by a center-left coalition and famed for its cosmopolitan multiculturalism, passed legislation banning headscarves and other demonstrations of religious piety in public workplaces in 2005. These developments suggest the limits of liberal inclusion, at least as they regard religiously active Muslims.

Other explanations focus on the extent to which the dominant national ideologies of European polities or the ideological characteristics of Islam impose barriers to immigrant mobilization. Brubaker (1992) and Joppke (1999) note varying levels of inclusivity in national ideologies across European states. However, if France is taken as the prime example of civic nationalism, and Germany of ethnic nationalism, that hardly explains restriction of Muslim religious liberties in both cases. Lewis (2003) and Henkel (2004) see the problem in terms of how Muslim theological conceptions of the state and ambivalence toward pluralism make social integration more difficult. But there is substantial variance across Muslim communities in working within pluralist democracies (Fetzer & Soper, 2005; Klausen, 2005).

Soysal (1997) argues that the Muslim immigrants prefer to act within transnational diaspora networks instead of European polities. Yet Koopmans shows that Muslim immigrants have attempted to pursue their political interests through their host nation's political institutions (Berger, Galonska, & Koopmans, 2004; Koopmans, 2004; Koopmans & Statham, 1999). Fetzer and Soper's (2005) comparative study finds that political incentives and the extent to which Muslims can effectively organize are more proximate causes of variance in political integration in Western Europe. Rather than Muslim hostility to pluralism, church-state institutions are often ill-suited to assertion of Muslim interests.

These observations point us toward institutional variables, including not only European church-state institutions but also the institutional structure of Islam itself (cf. Laurence, 2005). Although European states have traditionally worked with hierarchically organized religions with definitive leaders, Islam—particularly the Sunni varieties prevalent in Europe—is highly decentralized and nonhierarchical. Add to this a multitude of competing legal traditions and theological conceptions among Muslims, and one can see the enormous barrier against the traditional political corporatism that has defined religious organization across the continent (Kalyvas, 1996; Warner, 2000). Muslims are also cleaved along lines of ethnicity, national origin, and citizenship status.

## **Collective Action and Mosque-State Relations in Europe**

Drawing on interest-based and supply-side theories of collective action (e.g., Hardin, 1982; Hechter, 1987; Lichbach, 1996; Olson, 1965), we present a series of propositions to explain why Muslims have yet to organize broad-based interest organizations. Following Burstein (1998), we define *interest organizations* broadly as collectivities that “link citizens and government and seek to influence public policy using a variety of means” (p. 47). This definition treats these organizations as distinct from political parties, as their leaders do not seek direct election to public office, and from social movements because they need not engage in popular mobilization or non-institutional forms of protest to be effective.

Interest organizations are often formed by political entrepreneurs because party formation is out of the reach or is perceived that parties have failed to address the needs of a constituency. Muslim immigrants in Europe fit both of these categories as they have been largely excluded from membership in

parties (often lacking voting rights), are too small a proportion of the population to vote as an effective bloc, and have been regarded as marginal communities (Fetzer & Soper, 2005). Indeed, despite the Turkish population's size, German law previously blunted its political impact by rarely granting citizenship and by blocking noncitizens from forming political parties and holding elected office (Ögelman, 2003).

Olson's (1965) seminal work on collective action argued that even though a latent demand for an interest organization may exist, it often will not be supplied because of the free-rider problem. The focus on supply-side barriers to organization presupposes some latent demand because no informed entrepreneur would provide a good that no one wants. However, finding evidence for latent demand is often difficult precisely because there is no organized presence to give it voice. There are clear reasons to expect such demand among European, and specifically German, Muslims. Governments have introduced policies that directly affect the interests of Muslims—from headscarf bans that impinge on religious rights to tougher immigration and welfare policies that affect their families and communities. The size of the Muslim population offers an adequate number of constituents for the public goods that interest organizations would provide. Furthermore, European governments are interested in providing organizations with substantial benefits and assistance; in other words, public goods do appear to be available if an adequate number of interested and enterprising actors could organize supporters (Oliver & Marwell, 2001).

Evidence for the presence of latent organizational demand can also be seen in initial attempts to mobilize. There have been efforts to form national umbrella organizations both to defend Muslim interests and to exploit government incentives for integration (Laurence, 2005). There is no shortage of second-generation and third-generation Muslims familiar with government. Interest organizations should yield opportunities for some to gain leadership and enhanced social status, much in the way that established immigrants mobilized Catholic newcomers in the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

In fact, German Muslims have organized at the local and regional levels, yet efforts at building an effective, widely recognized national coalition remain stalled. The creation of the Central Council of Muslims in Germany (Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland) is perhaps the best example, yet it only represents a fraction of Muslims (N. Elyas, chairman of Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland, personal communication, July 1, 2004). The question remains: With substantial latent demand for immigrant organization, governments willing to subsidize cooperative religious organizations, and incentives for political entrepreneurs, why has Muslim organization been so difficult in Europe?

Olson (1965) noted that large groups would face enormous difficulties in organizing. However, cooperation was still possible under certain conditions—namely when some pre-existing third party subsidizes organizational costs or if pre-existing small groups federate. Others have since shown that collective action is possible when an activist minority has an incentive to bear the initial start-up costs of organizing (Lichbach, 1996; Oliver & Marwell, 2001), when groups develop mechanisms of dependence and control that affirm commitment and sanction free riding (Hechter, 1987), or when morally credible leaders provide assurances that others will cooperate (Chong, 1991; cf. Levi, 1997, on contingent consent).

All these conditions are seemingly present in Europe. Governments have shown a willingness to help organize and subsidize religious organizations. There are a number of Muslim organizations with leaders who could serve as an activist core and coalesce into federated structures. Common ethnicity and religious values provide the means of cultivating dependence and sanctioning noncooperators. Although Muslims are ethnically diverse, certain ethnicities tend to cluster within certain countries—e.g., Turks in Germany, Algerians in France, and Pakistanis in Britain—making cooperation more likely. Finally, advances in telecommunications have lowered the costs associated with organizing, providing credible assurances, and monitoring cooperation. As Rabasa et al. (2004) observe, “Muslim diaspora networks have encouraged the exchange of significant resources, specifically money, manpower, political support and cultural influence” (p. 453).

We argue that the highly decentralized nature of Islam complicates organizational strategies and creates an environment in which even a minority of cultural separatists (“spoilers”) can undermine integration. These spoilers will seek to denounce integrationist leaders for assimilationism or secularism, thereby reducing the status and political benefits organizational entrepreneurs would receive in the immigrant community. Moreover, although subsidies may offer an attractive incentive for organizing, government involvement would likely limit the autonomy of Muslim interest organizations. Any strong association with the government or dependence on it for resources would bolster accusations against sellouts that undermine the integrity and interests of the Muslim community. Thus, the dominant strategy in a heterogeneous population with separatist spoilers is to avoid government sponsorship. The resulting political pattern will be of low-level and mid-level organizations that avoid official affiliation or state-sponsored centralization.

Unlike the predominant Christian churches, Islam is decentralized and diverse. Most mosques have their own imam and are responsible for their own administration, including clergy salaries. Although some are associated with



denominational groupings based on shared theology or ethnic origin, there is generally no overarching religious hierarchy. Sunni Islam does not have the equivalent of a pope, bishops, or regional superintendents with final doctrinal authority (Shapiro, 1981). Thus, the cost for any Muslim leader, who represents a fraction of all adherents, to undertake collective action is remarkably high, and spoilers are difficult to suppress. Local administration takes precedence above higher level organization, and without a coordinating leadership structure above it, collective efforts are difficult. Hence, the lack of a religious hierarchy within Islam serves as a major impediment to broad-based organizing (cf. Warner & Wenner, 2005). This leads us to our first proposition:

**Proposition 1:** The decentralized character of Islam imposes high costs of organization, reducing the likelihood of large-scale group cooperation even in the presence of state-provided incentives.

So far, we have given the impression that there is a homogeneity of demand among Muslim immigrants—i.e., that their interests with respect to state policy will be similar. However, Muslim political attitudes appear to be heterogeneous. Some religionists favor integration, some endorse submission only to Muslim rulers, and many are skeptical of integration into an avowedly secular polity. Many Turkish Muslims are disenchanted with government secularism dating to the era of Mustafa Kemal (Kuru, 2006; Ögelman, 2003).

To the extent that a small minority within the Muslim community prefers not to be aligned organizationally with the state, it can refuse to cooperate in a larger political coalition. Moreover, this faction can actively seek to undermine the efforts of those seeking political organization. And separatist factions need not act in concert; they could accomplish their goals by simply denouncing cooperators. This would serve to reduce the prestige potential organizational entrepreneurs would have among the most devout Muslims—i.e., those most active in the pursuit of their religious interests.

With no overarching religious hierarchy to prevent this behavior, the spoilers hold a distinct advantage in undermining cooperation (cf. Kalyvas, 2000).<sup>2</sup> Paradoxically, European attempts to include as many Muslim groups as possible in the political process may have the unintended effect of empowering separatists:

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2. In his comparison of 19th century Belgium with 20th century Algeria, Kalyvas (2000) argues that the hierarchical nature of Catholicism made it possible for a central authority (the Vatican) to displace Catholic opponents to Belgian democratization, whereas Muslim democrats could not contain radical Islamists in Algeria who sought to undercut elections.

Proposition 2: Broad-based collective action among Muslims will be undermined by separatists that seek to raise the costs of cooperation between the state and the general Muslim population.

Finally, the structure of church–state relations may play a critical role in diminishing the prospects for collective organization among Muslims. Unlike the religious free market of the United States (Finke & Stark, 1992), European states maintain strict regulations that favor the development of a religious oligopoly (Finke, 1997). Germany’s establishment of Catholic and Protestant Churches led to only a limited degree of religious pluralism and limited their institutional authority (Froese & Pfaff, 2005). Religious economy scholars demonstrate that oligopolistic and state-controlled religions create lax clergy and reduce religious participation in society (Iannaccone, 1991; Stark & Finke, 2000). When dependent on government support, church decision making will be partly devoted to maintaining ties with the governing elite (Gill, 1998). Both of these tendencies may threaten pious Muslims.

As suggested by Hechter’s (2000) theory of nationalism, European states may now wish to reorganize Islam, but it should not surprise us to encounter the resistance of local religious elites threatened by centralization. Efforts to integrate into European society via peak organizations can easily be viewed as an effort to contain Islam, promoting an organizational structure that is more homogenous and more ideologically accommodating than some interpretations of Islam allow. Leaders seeking to preserve their autonomy and local status will thus be more reluctant to push for broad-based organizations that promote political integration.

Proposition 3: Muslim religious leaders will prefer not to organize broad-based interest organizations if state-initiated recognition threatens doctrinal and organizational autonomy.

Although evaluating these propositions fully would require an analysis of Muslim-state relations across Europe, it is useful to examine a critical case study to probe their plausibility.

## **Muslims in German Society and Politics**

There are more than 3 million Muslims in Germany, representing more than 4% of the population (BBfM, 2005). Fewer than 2% are German converts

to Islam. The Muslim population chiefly originated as guest workers from Turkey, recruited to help sustain the postwar economic miracle of the 1950s and 1960s (Bark & Gress, 1993; Lucassen, 2005). Today, people of Turkish descent number about 2 million in Germany, and more than 90% identify as Muslims. In recent decades, Muslim immigrants have generally suffered from relative economic hardship, including poverty, joblessness, and discrimination (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2002). A fifth of ethnic Turks are estimated to be unemployed (Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Ausländerfragen, 2002), and nearly three fourths are classified as unskilled or semiskilled workers as opposed to less than a fourth of ethnic Germans (Lucassen, 2005).

Germans increasingly debate the putative failure of Muslims to assimilate and have imposed new forms of surveillance over mosques and Islamic organizations (Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Ausländerfragen, 2002; Bundesministerium des Innern, 2003; Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland, 2002). Mistrust of the Muslim minority, unease about immigrant traditions, and attention to a small but radical Islamist underground are inviting hostile public scrutiny (cf. National Public Radio, 2004; Schneider, 2005). Conservatives call for a reaffirmation of Western values against Islam, liberals proclaim the end of feel-good multiculturalism, whereas even proimmigrant politicians of the left warn of Islamism (Seidel, Dantschke, & Yildirim, 2003). In June 2005, Germany's center-right leadership under Angela Merkel called for a reappraisal of EU foreign policy, attributing the failure of France and the Netherlands to ratify the proposed constitution to fear of prospective Turkish membership.

These controversies reflect a history of social marginalization:

Turks became the prime target of anti-foreign sentiment in German society. . . That Turks were singled out can be explained by a combination of their large numbers, their high concentrations in certain city quarters, and their adherence to the Islamic faith, which in the eyes of the German population made them more alien culturally than, for instance, Italians or Yugoslavs. (Lucassen, 2005, p. 151)

In 2000, the German social survey found that less than half of Germans reported having contact with foreigners either in their workplace or as friends and acquaintances (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2003). About a third agreed that foreigners should be forbidden from political activity, and nearly a fifth agreed that they should be forbidden from marrying ethnic Germans (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2003).

Hence, as much as public opinion insists on assimilation, social marginalization may work against it. A 1997 study of foreign residents found that less than a fifth wished to become full German citizens (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2000). And among Turks, although nearly 60% intended to reside permanently in Germany, less than a fifth self-identified with the German nationality. In general, Muslims in Germany appear to be more religious and more socially conservative than Germans are. For the Turkish community, religion provides a common core for collective identity, and there is evidence that this identification is growing stronger (Karaksoglu, 1996; Lucassen, 2005).<sup>3</sup>

Until recently, the law defined citizenship in ethnonational terms and required that at least one parent be an ethnic German. Immigrants originally admitted under the provisions of guest worker policies were not meant to be naturalized (Joppke, 1999). Yet in 2000, more than half of the 7 million "foreigners" in Germany had lived in the country for a decade or more, and a third had lived there for two or more decades (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2003). In January 2000, the Social Democratic Party–Green Party coalition government passed a major revision of citizenship law, making it easier for non-Germans to apply for citizenship. It legislates that children born in Germany automatically receive citizenship when at least one of the parents has been a legal resident for no fewer than 8 years. About six hundred thousand people of Turkish origin had become citizens by the end of 2003 (BBfM, 2005; Statistisches Bundesamt, 2003).

Expanding citizenship rights would seem to create the potential for a Muslim vote in German politics. However, the Christian Democratic Union's, and especially the Christian Social Union's, emphasis on a German-Christian *Leitkultur* ("leading culture") appears hostile to Muslims. That the parties of the left are often friendlier to immigrants, however, need not mean policies

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3. In the most recent World Values Survey (1999-2001), German Muslims report nearly a universal belief in God (95.5%), and about 70% consider religion to be *very important* or *rather important* personally, compared with fewer than 30% of non-Muslims (self-identified Catholics 51.8%, Protestants 36.4%). Nearly 50% of Muslims consider divorce "never justifiable" versus about 12% of non-Muslims (Catholics 17.6%, Protestants 15.1%). More than 65% oppose abortion and homosexuality, compared with just more than a fifth of non-Muslims (38% of Catholics find abortion never justifiable). However, as is common in European polling, the share of Muslim respondents for Germany in the survey is about half its share of the total population (just 1.9%). Because of underrepresentation and the small number of Muslim respondents (23), these differences must be considered merely suggestive, even though they are statistically significant at the .05 level or below.

friendly to Islam. The Greens are an avowedly secular party. Likewise, although the labor unions and the Social Democratic Party have been strong advocates for immigrant workers, the secularism of the left and the fact that younger Muslim residents are less integrated into the labor force make it unlikely they would promote specifically Muslim interests. And whatever their stated positions, German politicians tend to advocate for Muslims in opposition but retreat once in government (Fetzer & Soper, 2005).

Even though individuals enjoy religious freedom under the German constitution, full exercise of religious liberties by a group is predicated on state recognition of a religion as a corporate body (Hildemann, 2000; Jonker & Kapphan, 1999). Officially recognized religious “corporations” (*Körperschaften des Öffentlichen Rechts*—KÖR) are entitled to offer instruction in the schools, receive public funds, have a say in cultural affairs, and have tithes collected for them by the state. An expanding number of religious minorities and the Jewish community have been recognized (Fetzer & Soper, 2005; Hildemann, 2000).

As of yet, no Muslim group has won KÖR status in any state, as the conditions have been difficult for Muslim leaders to meet. These include that the religious group must have a single organization with a formally constituted leadership and rules; that its members equal one thousandth of the federal state’s total population; that it recognizes the constitutional order as the supreme political authority; and that it can demonstrate it has been constituted in the state for at least 30 years. As an unwritten condition, it must convince the authorities of its “loyalty to the democratically constituted state” (Jonker & Kapphan, 1999, p. 23). Officials say that the inability of Muslims to organize a peak organization, acknowledge a single religious leadership, and demonstrate continuity of organization prevents KÖR recognition.

An additional obstacle is that for some Muslims, KÖR conditions are inconsistent with the organizational and doctrinal principles or with their understanding of religious liberty. In most majority-Muslim countries, religious pluralism is severely regulated and some form of Islam is privileged, “[Muslim] nations institutionally prohibit the ‘free commerce’ of religion” in favor of religious and cultural “monopolism” (Swatos & Christiano, 2000, p. 14). But German Islam is organized neither in the typical homeland fashion nor according to the model of a European confessional group with its bureaucratic Episcopal authorities. The usual religious form is the voluntary association (*eingetragener Verein* or e.V.) registered with the state’s administrative court. The conditions for registration are few, and mosques, charities, and other Muslim associations are usually organized in this way.

As is evident in the case of Berlin, the resulting structure is a highly decentralized, denominational Islam that influences mosque–state relations and the character of political mobilization.

## Organized Islam and the State in Berlin

Berlin is a sprawling metropolis (population 3.4 million) with the second highest concentration of foreign-born residents in Germany (ca. 13%). The city has a reputation for Turkish ghettos (e.g., the Kreuzberg neighborhood as a so-called *Klein-Ankara*). However, the ghetto imagery is misleading. Even in immigrant districts, the share of the foreign population is around 40% (Caglar, 2001).<sup>4</sup>

State authorities estimate that there are more than two hundred thousand Muslims in the city. Turkish migrants (including Kurds) and their German-born children comprise about 70% of the local Muslim population. Nearly a third of the Turkish population was born in Germany, and another 45% has lived there for 10 or more years (Beauftragte für Migration und Integration des Senats von Berlin, 2000). Muslims originating in North Africa and Middle Eastern countries compose an additional 15% of Muslims, whereas about 10% originated in the Balkans. Ethnic German converts comprise only about 2% (Jonker & Kapphan, 1999).

The unemployment rate for foreigners in Berlin is about double that of natives (Beauftragte für Migration und Integration des Senats von Berlin, 2000). The Türkischer Bund (TBBB) estimates that the local unemployment rate for Turks is worse, about 40%. It also reports that less than 10% of Turkish youth completes *Gymnasium*, which prepares students for university enrollment (one fourth the rate of Germans), and that a quarter leaves school without educational qualifications (K, Kolat, director, personal communication, June 29, 2004).

According to government registers, Berlin has 75 mosques and prayer rooms (D. Kroegel, Commission for Churches, Religions, and Spiritual Communities of the Berlin Senate, personal communication, June 18, 2004). Nearly 80% of Berlin's Muslim congregations are Turkish speaking (and principally Sunni). The rest are divided among other ethnolinguistic groups (Kurds, Arabs, Bosniaks, Albanians, South Asians, etc.). There is

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4. Although more than half of all Turkish residents live in just eight large cities, the index of segregation for Turks in Germany is substantially lower than that of North Africans in France or African Americans in the United States (Lucassen, 2005).

substantial diversity among these religious communities, including traditional religious orders, Shiites, Alevites, and other sects, as well as groups linked to Islamist reform orders. Two mosques are primarily German speaking (Jonker & Kapphan, 1999).

Among Berlin's mosques, 34 (45%) are unaffiliated with a denominational organization (*Dachverband*). The remainder is affiliated with one of four major religious groupings, all Turkish speaking. The largest grouping is the Turkish-Islamic Union of the Institution for Religion (DITIB) with 14 registered mosques (19% of the total). DITIB is affiliated with the Turkish State Office for Religious Affairs. In Germany, it focuses on religious instruction, charity and social assistance, and social integration. Originally, the involvement of the Turkish state was encouraged by the German government as a way of organizing a temporary Muslim community through a homeland agency (Laurence, 2005).

DITIB competes with the Islamic Federation of Berlin (IF), which squarely opposes the Turkish religious establishment and its historical subordination to *Kemalism* (i.e., laical secularism). Eleven mosques (15%) are affiliated with the IF. Its Islamist reform agenda is critical of secularism and assimilation, although it downplays links to the European-wide Turkish religious nationalist organization *Millis Görüs* ("National Worldview"; Jonker, 2001). Also deeply influenced by Turkish religious culture are the Union of Islamic Cultural Centers, active in Berlin with nine mosques (12%) and the Turkish Federation with five (7%). The Union of Islamic Cultural Centers is influenced by the Suleymanci tradition, promoting traditional piety and Koranic religious instruction (Jonker & Kapphan, 1999).<sup>5</sup>

As with other immigrant groups worldwide, religion provides a distinctive social and cultural milieu for Muslims (Breton, 1964; Stark & Finke, 2000). Many Berlin mosques and all of the major Muslim associations offer day care for children, German language and literacy courses, youth activities and counseling, lectures, excursions, and special events (Lemmen, 2000).

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5. The level of formal Muslim religious organization in Berlin (3.75 mosques per 10,000 adherents) is substantially less than that of Catholics and Protestants (5.7 and 4.9 churches per 10,000 adherents, respectively) and far below the average for Muslims in Germany (6.57 per 10,000; cf. Lemmen, 2000). Whether this is the result of supply-side or demand-side factors is not clear. Berlin's denominational configuration is similar to that which prevails in most areas of Germany (Karaksoglu, 1996). However, a greater proportion of Berlin's mosques are unaffiliated with a major denominational grouping than is the case across the country, in which about a third of mosques are affiliated with DITIB, more than a fifth are associated with *Millis Görüs*, and more than 12% with Union of Islamic Cultural Centers (Lemmen, 2000).

Muslim community organizations and service agencies are also forming outside of mosques. Although often identified with promoting religious affairs (40% of listed organizations), more than half identify themselves as providing charity and social assistance, youth counseling, cultural understanding, and women's services (Deutsche Telekom, 2003/2004).

Debates surrounding the religious liberties of Muslims and security concerns have called the loose organization of German Islam into question. State officials fear that the failure to integrate moderate elements into the polity strengthens the hand of Islamist extremism, even though the numbers reportedly involved in radicalism are not very great.<sup>6</sup> Yet the decentralization and fissiparous tendencies of Islam make officials skeptical that KÖR status is appropriate. Barbara John, the former Berlin commissioner for immigrant affairs, explains,

Islam did not fit religiously or institutionally into our conception of a religious community. . . in particular, Islam in its European diaspora lacks a clear and binding organization as do comparable Christian churches. As a result, it lacks a single legitimate representative (*Ansprechspartner*) to communicate with the state administration. (Jonker & Kapghan, 1999, p. 21)

In the summer of 2004, when the interviews for this study were conducted, there was considerable public debate surrounding the headscarf issue, Islamic instruction in public schools, and state recognition of Muslim religious organizations. Examining each of these issues reveals hurdles to effective collective action among German Muslims and the difficulties of assimilating Muslims into the German polity.

## The Headscarf Controversy

Contrary to expectations that Muslims would secularize as part of their assimilation, many youth in Berlin are affirming religious identities and are calling for the normalization of Islam in everyday life (Jonker & Kapghan, 1999). A new generation has appeared that is educated, fluent in German, and outspoken in claiming broader civil rights. In Berlin, some informants report that a vocal segment of Muslims craves an authentic Islamic identity and religious life, whereas others report that women are coerced into traditionalism

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6. According to police authorities, about four thousand Muslims in Berlin are suspected of having links to radical Islamic organizations.



by their families and religious authorities. Both sides profess to extend civil liberties.

The Berlin government's plan to introduce legislation to protect the appearance of religious neutrality by agents of the state was seen as a grave affront by many Muslims. For some, the headscarf controversy has become symbolic of illegitimate pressure to force them to choose between being German and being Muslim. Indeed, community organizers and social workers report that the proportion of young Muslim women wearing headscarves increased in response to the controversy (C. Salih, Organization for Cultural Interaction, personal communication, June 25, 2004; D. Nahawandi, Immigration Commission of the Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg district [Berlin], personal communication, June 29, 2004).

The leaders of the predominantly Turkish IF are explicitly antiassimilationist; its leaders want to create a parallel culture that will live under German law and respect the constitution and yet still confidently declare, "We are different." For the IF's public affairs director, Muslim customs are contrary to how most Germans live and must remain so; public adherence to religious teachings is an important outward expression of this inviolable fact (B. Kesici, personal communication, June 22, 2004). However, neither Islamic identification nor support for the headscarf is universal among Turks. Although Muslim interest groups, including the IF, opposed it, the TBBB, an influential Turkish civil rights organization, played an advisory role in drafting the legislation. Its leadership argues that negative religious liberties—freedom from Islamic dictates—are more important to Germany's Muslims than positive ones and that religious identities must not be allowed to trump others. TBBB's director insists that Turks will only prosper if they participate fully in secular society unhindered by religious traditionalism (K. Kolat, personal communication, June 29, 2004).

Secular Turks criticize Islamists for persuading Muslims to see themselves "in but not of" Germany. One Turkish-born member of the Berlin Senate declared of the IF,

It is a political organization; it represents political Islam. I feel they do a good job in many ways, like teaching Muslim women to read and setting up programs to help children with their homework. But they also say: 'We don't belong to this society. We are different.' (Bernstein, 2004)

The TBBB's Kolat faults officials for failing to confront creeping separatism and not enforcing secular law among Muslims. "This is a false use of tolerance. These Germans say, 'Poor Muslims. Let them do as they will. They are

so ignorant,' but deep down, this is racism. They treat us like second-class citizens" (National Public Radio, 2004). For the time being, secular interests prevailed. In January 2005, Berlin passed legislation to regulate religious attire in public employment, specifying that not only headscarves but all outward symbols of piety cannot be worn on duty by employees of the schools, courts, and law enforcement agencies (Emmerich, 2005).

## **Islamic Religious Instruction in Public Schools**

Politics surrounding religious instruction in public schools also divide Berlin's Muslims. In Berlin, religious instruction is not part of the regular school curriculum as in most other German states. Instead, parents decide if they want their children to have instruction provided by state-approved religious groups. Although 90% of the costs are borne by the government, the teachers of these classes are employees of their respective religious organizations. In Berlin, several privately run Islamic schools have long received public funding (Mohr, 2000), but more recently, Islamic instruction has also become available in the public schools. Citing the support of thirty thousand members, the IF has been the first Muslim organization to gain access to the public classroom.

The IF's legal and administrative struggle for this privilege, which began in 1981, was successful 17 years later when a court of appeals ruled it qualified to offer public school instruction. As of June 2004, the IF offered classes in 28 primary schools and had immediate plans to expand to more than a dozen additional schools. It enrolled more than three thousand pupils, about three fourths of whom are of Turkish and about a fifth of Arab origin (B. Kesici, personal communication, June 22, 2004). The sizable proportion of Arab students enrolled in IF classes would suggest its multi-ethnic appeal; however, because only IF religious instruction is available, this is not yet clear. Moreover, as there are more than thirty thousand Muslim primary-school pupils in Berlin, the overall level of support among Muslims is difficult to assess. Following the lead of the IF, Alevites, Buddhists, and other religious groups have also sought instructional privileges (BBfM, 2005).

The IF's program has been controversial. Officials worry about the qualifications of teachers, that the curriculum is not inclusive, and that they cannot easily monitor the content of learning because instruction is often conducted in Turkish (D. Kroegel, Commission for Churches, Religions, and Spiritual Communities of the Berlin Senate, personal communication, June 18, 2004). Teachers complain that IF instruction is too conservative

and portrays women exclusively in traditional roles, wearing headscarves. Educators accuse the IF of promoting separatism and fundamentalism. One official declared, "I do not believe that they are teaching their pupils to make bombs but I think they are rejecting our society and are teaching an intolerant form of Islam" (Bernstein, 2004). Although IF officials reject the charges, they offer no apology for teaching Islamic values at odds with aspects of secular society.

### **Official Recognition of Muslim Organizations**

The Berlin Commissioner for Immigrant Affairs has consistently advocated Muslim immigrants' rights during the course of both centrist and leftist coalition governments (R. Schneider, Commission for Immigrant Affairs of the Berlin Senate, personal communication, June 17, 2004). However, Berlin is highly secular in its public culture. The largest group of Berliners, more than half of the population, is religiously unaffiliated. The authorities embrace multiculturalism; they are uneasy about public expression of religious piety.

In this context, although it has not yet achieved KÖR status, the IF has become an important force in religious affairs. Offering religious instruction demonstrates the IF's effectiveness as a proponent of Islam and that it can serve and enlarge its own clientele; government funding employs 22 religious instructors largely at public expense. The IF's larger ambition is to be the umbrella organization for all Berlin's Muslims, offering religious, cultural, and social services. And it expects to be the first Muslim organization to be granted KÖR status (B. Kesici, personal communication, June 22, 2004).

Kesici rejects the position that there are no valid negotiating partners within Islam, claiming that the IF and the three other denominational associations in Berlin (Dachverbände) each could meet the legal standards. What is lacking, he argues, is genuine political will on the part of the authorities to work with pious Muslims. Kesici insists that the constitutional order does not contradict Koranic teaching and that the legal system and its protection of human rights are all the IF requires. Indeed, he proclaims the German Basic Law (the *de facto* constitution) the IF's "greatest ally" in the struggle against the "prejudices and insensitivity" of politicians (B. Kesici, personal communication, June 22, 2004).

The increasing influence of the IF is considered by some officials to be a challenge to the secular multiculturalism on which Berlin's minority policies are built. Officials fault the IF's separatism and religious fundamentalism for its unwillingness to engage in ecumenical cooperation (D. Nahawandi,

Immigration Commission of the Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg district [Berlin], personal communication, June 29, 2004). Roman Catholics see a “community of interests” with pious Muslims in matters of “common moral concern” but fear Islamic fundamentalism and the fractiousness of Muslim leaders (A. Schmid, Berlin Diocese, personal communication, June 22, 2004). The Protestant Church is convinced that without a centrally organized Islam under the leadership of distinct authorities, it could not assume the responsibilities of a religious corporation or of a reliable negotiating partner (Rat der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland, 2000).

Under the leadership of an active Bishop, Berlin’s Protestant Church has been outspoken in its criticism of how religious instruction is managed by the state. It argues that in properly constituted religious instruction, all students would have access to religious instruction of their choice, but it would be part of the regular school curriculum. This would make it possible to enforce norms of impartiality (Mässigungsgebot). The schools could then create an Islamic curriculum that focuses on “religious awareness and moral and ethical values” rather than advocacy (H. Thomä, Commissioner for Immigrant Affairs of the Evangelical [Lutheran] Church of Berlin-Brandenburg, personal communication, June 15, 2004).

The alleged noncooperation officials decry among conservative Muslims is hardly surprising given that the IF, at least, rejects the normative principles of multiculturalism and ecumenicalism and emphasizes differences with other religions and Islamic associations. Nor does the IF perceive interest in a serious dialogue on the side of officials who only expect Muslims to compromise (B. Kesici, personal communication, June 22, 2004; National Public Radio, 2004).

Berlin’s Muslim organizations and mosques indicate that religion is an important part of the public life of the Turkish community. There is considerable support for Islamic revival and cultural authenticity among second-generation and third-generation Muslims who wish to avoid becoming culturally German. At the same time, however, religion does not appeal to all Turks or satisfy all needs. The primary goal of most Turkish organizations is providing cultural and social services (Vermeulen 2005). Indeed, a 1998 Berlin government report lists 185 registered Turkish organizations (excluding mosques), of which just 19 (10.3%) focused on religious affairs (Greve & Çinar, 1998).<sup>7</sup>

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7. More organizations promoted sports (19.5%), family and youth services (17%), and Turkish-language media (12%) than religion. And 15 organizations (8%) were devoted to explicitly secular politics, civil rights, and immigrant affairs.

The Berlin case indicates that Muslims are largely organized as Turkish Muslims or as immigrants in support of nonreligious goals. Cross-cutting mobilization as German Muslims or as part of a Euro-Islam does not seem strongly in evidence despite local and national efforts (C. Salih, Organization for Cultural Interaction, personal communication, June 25, 2004; N. Elyas, chairman of Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland, personal communication, July 1, 2004). Instead, to a substantial degree, the political life of Germany's Muslim population continues to be shaped by homeland politics. Many of Berlin's religious organizations were actually founded by or with the assistance of a Turkish organization, as is evident both with DITIB and the IF. And the clergy are almost entirely recruited from among native-born Turks.

Indeed, even as German Turks in the second and third generation develop new definitions of Muslim identity, the organizations and issues that promote those identities are largely colored by Turkish political and religious debates. A study of immigrant political activities found that about a third of all political claims in Berlin were directed toward the homeland (Koopmans, 2004). The division between immigrant organizations and Islamic organizations on an issue as fundamental to the religious liberties of the Muslim population as headscarves—largely by reference to Turkish politics—underscores factors that undermine effective, unified Muslim politics in Europe.

## Discussion

The central thesis guiding this inquiry can be stated as a combination of our initial propositions: The decentralized structure of European Islam provides opportunities for factions ("spoilers") to undermine broad-based collective action if they perceive centralizing interest organizations as compromising doctrinal and organizational autonomy. As devout Muslims will likely be more suspicious of state integration, leaders seeking prestige within the broader community will defer to their preferences. In short, even if a majority of Muslims preferred to have their religious and secular interests represented in conventional European politics, a small faction of separatists could block broad-based collective action. We expect that the result will be a tendency toward narrow interest articulation by localized groups.

Our case study largely supports our theoretical insights. At present, Islam in Germany has a weak and divided voice. We have shown that institutional features of the German polity and Islamic religion make collective action more difficult. A long period of official disregard worsened matters;

Koopmans and Statham (1999) find that foreigners in Germany have little institutional access to the political process. Lacking direct access to government, Muslims rely on their own denominational structure to pursue religious interests.

We expected that broadly based interest organization would be more likely to occur among Muslims of the same ethnicity. However, we found that many issues divide Turkish residents along homeland lines. To our surprise, differences were often cast in terms of Turkish history and its experience of mosque–state relations. The split between the most outspoken advocacy groups for Muslim immigrants in Berlin—who denounce each other variously as Kemalists and Islamists—reflects the long struggle between religion and secularism that shaped modern Turkey (Kuru, 2006).

In previous decades, with the activities of Islamic groups severely limited at home, Europe's Turks became an important target for proselytizing and organization. Secular immigrants opposed this. Divided by these conflicts, Ögelman (2003) finds in his national survey of German Turkish interest organizations that they have largely failed to mobilize Turks into public affairs. Instead, they focus either on trying to influence Turkish society and politics (55% of the associations) or on promoting integration into German society (45%). These divided priorities obstruct effective organizing and political integration.

Presently, building on their own well-organized milieu, many Muslim leaders in Europe promote religion as an alternative source of social identity and a defender of group interests. This is hardly unique; it has long been observed in ethnic immigrant communities around the world (Breton, 1964). For decades, the German state defined citizenship in ethnic terms and treated Turks as a social problem. When compelled to choose, a vocal segment of second and third generation Muslims now embraces Islam instead of German nationality.

When connected to a separatist or fundamentalist agenda, this is consistent with our second proposition concerning the ability of separatists to build on their own organizational milieu to undermine state-affirming interest organizations. The growing politicization of transnational Islam may intensify the difficulties facing integrationists. As Göle (2002) observes,

Who will decide what is licit and illicit in Islam? Who has the authority over the interpretation of religious texts? Who can give a fatwa and declare a jihad? These questions all become very problematic as Islam is de-traditionalized in the hands of Islamism in particular, and in the face of the modern secular world in general. (p. 342)

In the absence of state Islam, European Muslims created diverse religious structures. Sometimes supported by subsidies from the home country or from diaspora organizations, individual imams or associations of believers can form religious communities as they please without submitting to ecclesiastical authorities in matters of governance or doctrine. Disputes can be resolved through the exit to rival or newly formed associations. From the perspective of the German state, this gives Islam a sectarian impulse quite at odds with a religion of the German stamp. For Muslims, such pluralism and autonomy may now be cherished. As our third proposition states, Muslim organizations may come to see state involvement as a threat to their religious interests and their doctrinal and organizational autonomy.

In the long run, the easing of religious tensions in Turkey with the participation in government by the Islamist Welfare Party on the one hand (Öniş & Keyman, 2003) and competition with pan-ethnic Muslim interest groups such as the Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland on the other hand may compel Turkish organizations to focus more attention on domestic politics. The nearly fifty thousand Turkish entrepreneurs in Germany have become, by necessity, more cosmopolitan and more active in asserting the interests of immigrant communities (Pecoud, 2004).

Religious interest organizations may follow suit. Yet if mobilization is difficult for Muslims in Germany, it would certainly prove more difficult in less tolerant countries with a greater diversity of immigrant nationalities originating in countries without secular regimes. Whether Islam will be integrationist or separatist depends on a cross-cutting Muslim political agenda and the terms of inclusion. If second and third generation Muslims continue to feel estranged, then Islam may well remain an ersatz homeland, displacing the adopted nation. If integration requires conformity to alien conceptions of religion, resistance will flourish. Europeans may have little choice but to tolerate greater expression of public religiosity among their Muslim residents and may profit from an inclusive reform of existing state-religion institutions.

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