
Muslim identities in new contexts:

Rijaset, Diyanet and interaction with regional actors in Bosnia Herzegovina and Southeast Europe

Kerem Öktem¹

Introduction

In this paper, I seek to find an answer to the question whether Bosnian Islam can be a model for state-community relations between Muslim immigrants and European states. I do believe that the answer to this question is no, and I will seek to give compelling reasons why I believe that Bosnian Islam cannot be a model for European states to deal with Muslim communities. This does, however, not mean that the historical experience and institutional example of Islam in Bosnia may not provide valuable insights and inspirations for the future of Islam in Europe. I will Yet, before we ask the question about Bosnian Islam, we need to examine two interrelated questions, i.e. why European policy makers seem to be obsessed to find models, and where the need for a 'European' or 'Bosnian Islam' originates. Few Jews or Hindus living in Europe would feel the need to make a case for 'European Judaism' or 'European Hinduism'. We should hence be aware of the anomaly, and also of the implicit assumptions inherent in this question. These assumptions, needless to say, are primarily rooted in European fears of Islam, which have been aggravated especially since the attacks of 9/11. A second justification for a model may be the much less ideological need of decision makers in European nation-states to engage with interlocutors representing Muslim communities, yet it is hard to believe that this more functional-pragmatic approach is not related to the perception of Muslims as a potential threat to law and order. It would be hence appropriate to signal at the outset my impression that despite calls for a 'single Muslim authority in Europe', which the leader of the Bosnian Islamic Community, Reis Mustafa Efendi Cerić made in 2007,² attempts by nation-states to unify and standardise what is by definition a very heterogeneous social reality are bound to fail.

This paper consists of four sections, and begins with critical remarks on what I call the 'European Islam discourse' and on the model character of the *Rijaset*: Here I ask whether and why we believe we need a model for European Islam. In the second section, I examine the specificity of Bosnian Islam and its distinctive quality as a body of self-government of the Muslim community independent from state intervention. I also argue that this specificity has been shaped in contested imperial contexts, i.e. during the Habsburg Empire, the two Yugoslavias and now operates under the conditions of a fragile con-sociational political regime, and hence cannot be easily universalised. Thirdly, I seek to contextualise the capacity and role of the *Rijaset* and the *Islamska Zajednica* and look at other institutional actors in the Balkans and Western Europe. I discuss the receding role of Jihadi and Wahhabi actors in the Balkans and the increasingly global mission of the Turkish *Diyanet* (the Presidency of Religious Affairs). In a fourth and concluding section, I suggest alternatives to the focus

¹ Research Fellow at St Antony's College, University of Oxford. Cf. www.keremoktem.com, also www.balkanmuslims.com.

This is the revised manuscript of a lecture delivered during the conference 'Bosnian Islam - A European model for the future', 18-19 November 2011, at the Catholic Academy of the Diocese Rottenburg-Stuttgart.

² Cerić, Mustafa (2007), The challenge of a single Muslim authority in Europe, *European View*, 6, 41-48.

on European Islam and the obsession with model. I seek to make the case for an analytical rather than a normative approach, and draw attention to the multiplicity of Muslim identities and organisations, which are operating in a transnational and increasingly globalized world. I also argue that it is this transnational Muslim space, for which decision-makers, interior ministers and integration experts in Europe need new ways of thinking. This new thinking might as well incorporate the historical experience of the Rijaset and the Islamska Zajednica. But as much, it has to be aware of national and doctrinal differentiations and the growing role of transnational actors, which cannot be reigned in by national models or discourses. These ultimately seem to aim at domesticizing what is considered to be a 'foreign' religion and rebranding a universal faith group through reference to Europe, which is, of course, a historically specific and geographically fuzzy area.

1. Why do we need a model and why does Islam have to be European?

It is one of the most basic human principles of human psychology to look for comparisons, when we encounter something new and uncommon. We often try to understand how people in other places and times have solved challenges, which are comparable to the ones we are facing today. In this process, we often tend to overlook the specific historical, political and cultural conditions, under which these comparative cases have emerged. To give just one example: In the Arab world's newly emerging public spheres, there is a passionate debate on the 'Turkish model'. I don't want to reduce this important debate, however, I can state that it is led without any serious deliberation of the historical conditions, under which this so called 'model' has emerged. To try to take over the arrangements between the state and the Islamic community or the relations between the political and the military sphere without considering the experience of late Ottoman modernization and secular authoritarianism during the Kemalist republic can only result in a superficial discussion, which does not really contribute to the emergence of authentic institutions.

I am therefore almost inclined to dismiss the model debate on theoretical grounds. But there are more details here, which we should be taking into account. So let us ask why we need a model for dealing with Muslims in Europe. I would suggest that the answer has a lot to do with the perception of Muslims as a problematic, if not dangerous immigrant community with potentially dangerous international connections. A community, in short, that does not readily integrate itself into the host society and is considered to be 'alien' or 'non-willing to integrate' (*integrationsunwilling* in German bureaucratic parlance). For many decision makers in EU countries, from the local level to the level of the ministries of interior, integration, and education, there is a need for simple, quick and workable answers to the question of how to deal with this complex immigrant community and their demands.

Probably the shortest answer to this question is that "We need a model so that Islam looks and feels more familiar and easier to deal with", and in short, we need a "European Islam". Indeed, the term 'European Islam' sounds –especially if you think of Europe as the land of human rights, religious freedoms and liberal democracy– like an enlightened, liberal idea. Likewise, the functional attempt at categorising and rationalise what is considered a complex challenge is understandable from the vantage point of a bureaucrat. Yet, the functional approach to European Islam is superimposed with other less enlightened discursive layers and implicit assumptions, and I would like to explore four of them: European Islam as 'otherising' discourse, as legitimising discourse, as a normative discourse and, finally, as analytical discourse or endeavour.

European Islam as an 'otherising' discourse is probably the most important discursive domain, and the most widespread one in European polities. The central assumption here is that Islam is essentially a non-European religion. This is, of course, a strand in European thinking (if certainly not the only one) that conceptualises the Muslim world as the linear opposite of Christian Europe. It has been massively reinforced after the bombings of 9/11 and the terror attacks of Al Qaeda and other Islamist

terrorists, when it trickled down from the strategic debates of International Relations into the mixed neighbourhoods of Europe. It is particularly widespread in euro-essentialist³ circles, as well as among conservative historians and some Christian Democrats in continental Europe, and is often used in public debates on Turkey's EU membership. It is also an argumentative tool that has been taken up by Serbian and Macedonian nationalists, as well as by Bulgarian politicians to discredit, respectively, Bosniak, Albanian or Turkish Muslims in their political struggles.

The second dimension refers to 'European Islam as a legitimising discourse', and is deeply connected to the preceding one in that it accepts that Islam might be foreign, and seeks to legitimise the presence of Muslims in Europe by distinguishing it as essentially different from the rest of the Muslim world. This legitimising discourse is akin to the discourses of 'national Islams', which we come across in much of the Balkans and Turkey. Both secular intellectuals as well as community leaders tend to speak of an uncontaminated 'Bosniak', 'Albanian', 'Turkish' Islam, which is supposedly much more tolerant, more westernised, more peaceful than 'Arab' or 'Iranian' Islam. In fact, however, Islamic traditions may operate in nation-state contexts, yet they are still shaped by external impulses from the larger *ummah* and the regional environment. Most scholars and *ulema* will of course reject such national appropriation of what remains a universal religion with universal aspirations. And nevertheless, this argument, I would assert, is at the root of many well-meaning adepts of the European Islam debate, including some of Reis Cerić's public statements. A case in point is Reis Cerić's 'Declaration of European Muslims'⁴ from 2006, in which he carefully balances the doctrinally unavoidable primacy of the 'universal umma' with the need to present 'European Islam' under Bosniak leadership as a peaceful alternative to Wahhabi or Shia' extremism.

This brings me to the third dimension of 'European Islam as a normative discourse'. Here we can cite the debate by Muslim thinkers such as Tariq Ramadan or Bassam Tibi,⁵ who make the case for a 'European Islam' that is freed from the cultural traditions of the countries of origin of Muslim immigrants. Particularly in the case of Ramadan, however, this project is not as reformist, as liberal as it might appear. It is, much more about establishing a Muslim identity that is emptied of cultural references and national experiences, which shape religion both in the Muslim world and elsewhere. This is a rather austere, almost Salafi shedding of Islam from all the unorthodox and sometimes syncretic traditions, which have shaped Islam anywhere outside Saudi Arabia. We can in fact also cite Reis Cerić here too, and his quest for a 'single Muslim authority' for a European Islam.⁶ As I will argue later, there is a case to be made for a cultural continuum from Central Asia via Turkey to the Balkans, which has a surprisingly coherent doctrinal as well as folkloristic tradition that sets it apart from Arab and Iranian traditions.

Fourthly, we can speak of 'European Islam as an analytical discourse', which is interested in the empirical reality of Muslims in Europe, be it in the case of long-established communities in the Balkans and in Turkey, or in the case of recent Muslim immigrant communities in Western, and increasingly in Southern Europe. 'European Islam' as an empirical reality in all its diversity and as a scholarly endeavour to understand this complexity is, I believe, the most important dimension. Yet, unfortunately, this is the one most neglected and least represented in many public debates.

³ Euro-essentialism here is meant to cover all views that believe a) in a particularly European essence rooted in Christianity and enlightenment and b) in the supremacy of this essential identity. A prime example for this ideological position is the book 'Deutschland schafft sich ab' (Germany abolishes itself) by former German Central Bank Board member Thilo Sarrazin (DVA, München 2010).

⁴ Cf. *Islam: A Declaration Of European Muslims* (2006)[<http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1066751.html>]

⁵ Tibi, Bassam (2008), *Political Islam, world politics, and Europe: democratic peace and Euro-Islam versus global jihad*. London, Routledge; Ramadan, Tariq (1999), *To be a European Muslim: A study of Islamic sources in the European context*, Markfield: Islamic Foundation.

⁶ Cerić, Mustafa (2007), The challenge of a single Muslim authority in Europe, *European View*, 6, 41–48.

Given the multitude of meanings infused into the European Islam debate, I suggest that we need to look into the context and conditions, when we discuss models and be aware of the many discursive layers, which an ostensibly straightforward term can have. This is what I would now like to do with regard to Bosnian Islam and its context.

2. Bosnian Islam and its distinctive characteristics

The constitution of Bosnian Islam is indeed different from many, if not all organised Muslim communities, above all due its autonomy and independence from state control.⁷ In this, it differs profoundly from the Turkish Diyanet, which, despite the country's nominally secular regime, is subordinate to the Prime Ministry's Office and a highly hierarchical and centralised state institution.⁸ As Mirnes Kovač of Preporod, the journal of the Islamska Zajednica reminds us

*When you look from the Diyanet, from Ankara, how can you understand that the Islamska Zajednica is completely independent from the state?*⁹

And indeed, the Islamic Community is organised, from the local level of the *jama'ah* (congregation), to the *majlises* (councils) and the *muftuluk* (the office of the Mufti) to the *Rijaset* and the *Reis-ul Ulema* (Leader of the religious scholars), in a grassroots, bottom-up fashion, and a consensus based structure.¹⁰ In this organisational principle, it reflects the community-based organisation of Ottoman Islamic institutions. The community and its organs are completely independent from the state, in organisational, financial and political matters, echoing the organisational and constitutional structure of the Catholic and Protestant Churches in the more secular European countries. It is generally accepted that this is owed, in significant measure, to administrative reform under Habsburg rule beginning in 1878. So, one could indeed argue that the 'Europeanness' of Bosnian Islam is based in the early, if traumatic, encounter with a major European power. Yet, this imperial heritage is much more complex, and also raises a number of obstacles for the appeal of Bosnian Islam beyond the remit of Bosniak communities within and outside Bosnia proper.

Considering that following the Austrian conquest of Bosnia Herzegovina, close to 200,000 Muslims fled for the territories still under control of the Ottoman Empire, the first 'European moment' of Bosnian Islam was about all a 'colonial' one. It needed the concerted efforts of community leaders and Islamic scholars to convince Bosnian Muslims to stay and to accept the Habsburg lands as part of the *Dar al - Islam* (the 'abode of Islam' as opposed to the *Dar al - Harb*, the 'abode of war'). The eminent scholar of Islam in Bosnia, Fikret Karčić mentions the '*hijra tract*', a scholarly opinion by Ahmet Azapagić, who argued that the laws of the new rulers "are legitimate [and] Muslims are obliged to obey it". He and many other *alim* repeatedly called that Muslims should not consider emigration, as these were Muslims lands under a non-Muslim ruler.¹¹

7 Tucaković, Ekrem (2011), The role of the Islamic Community, the Media and state institutions in finding solutions, in Wölkner, Sabina and Mensur Pašalić (eds.), *Islamska Scena u Bosni i Hercegovini • Islamic scene in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Sarajevo, Udruženje Ilmijje Islamske Zajednice u BiH, Fondacija Konrad Adenauer, p. 184.

8 In most Muslim majority countries, the head of the Islamic Community is appointed by the state. There are notable exception of two other Balkan countries with Muslim majorities, however, i.e. Kosovo and Albania, where complete disestablishment of state and religious community is anchored constitutionally (unlike in the Orthodox majority countries in the region).

9 Kovač, Mirnes, Editor of the Islamic Journal 'Preporod', Sarajevo, 7 April 2010. Also: Tucaković, Ekrem (2011), The role of the Islamic Community, the Media and state institutions in finding solutions, in Wölkner, Sabina and Mensur Pašalić (eds.), *Islamska Scena u Bosni i Hercegovini • Islamic scene in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Sarajevo, Udruženje Ilmijje Islamske Zajednice u BiH, Fondacija Konrad Adenauer, p. 185.

10 Alibašić, Ahmet (2007) The Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina. [http://www.rijaset.ba/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=48&Itemid=53].

11 Karčić, Fikret (2011), Alternative Muslim Groups between Shariah and secular law, in Wölkner, Sabina and Mensur Pašalić (eds.), *Islamska Scena u Bosni i Hercegovini • Islamic scene in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Sarajevo, Udruženje Ilmijje Islamske Zajednice u BiH, Fondacija Konrad Adenauer, p. 156.

While it is true that Bosnia-Herzegovina was the first territory in the Balkans to receive a religious administration independent from Constantinople, this administration was set up by the Austrian state with the explicit aim to reorient Bosnian Muslims away from the Ottoman Empire.¹² But nevertheless, as Mirnes Kovač emphasises, despite these efforts:

*the Reis-ul ulema [the holder of the high Islamic office created by the Austrian government] throughout the monarchy would be praising first Kaiser Franz Joseph in his hutbas, and then the Caliph and Sultan in Istanbul.*¹³

The final authority remained with the *Meşihat İstambulski*¹⁴, the office of the Şeyh-ül Islam in Istanbul. As Fikret Karčić reminds us, the office of the Reis-ul Ulema in Sarajevo and the organisation of the Bosnian Muslim community developed firstly as an Ottoman institution, and continued to accept the symbolic sovereignty of Istanbul until the proclamation of the Turkish Republic in 1923.¹⁵

In terms of context, therefore, we need to take into account the multiple imperial frameworks, within which Islam in Bosnia developed: The basis of those institutions were Ottoman, but they were shaped according to the imperial interests of the Habsburg Empire, and then later, during the two Yugoslavias, when the remit of the Rijaset went well beyond the confines of Bosnia. This was problematic, however, due to two reasons: Particularly in the Second Yugoslavia, the Islamic Community came to be seen as a tool of extending Slavic influence over non-Slav Muslim communities, i. e. the Albanians in Kosovo and Macedonia. Even today, members of the *Bashkësie Fetare* in Skopje will suspect a pro-Slav bias in Sarajevo, due to the Serbo-Croat language institutions of the Rijaset, which operated in Macedonia before independence.¹⁶

But even more importantly, historically the Islamska Zajednica has never operated under the conditions of an independent nation-state. It has had to make do under the relative controlling attitude of Socialist Yugoslavia, and now operates under the conditions of a fragile post-conflict society¹⁷ and a con-sociational political regime based on centripetal ethno-religious communities. This complicates the Rijaset's appeal, first because it has become part of the competing power centres within the political landscape of Bosnia Herzegovina, and secondly, because the arrangement between the Islamic Community and the fragile Bosnian-Herzegovinian state is all but certain. The role of the muftiluks outside Bosnia-Herzegovina, but particularly the contested role of the leader of the *Islamska Zajednica u Srbij* in the Sandžak are further aggravated by the unresolved question of the post-Yugoslav arrangements. We may add to these relative constraints the circumstance that Bosnia's Rijaset and Islamska Zajednica may be the most important example of a secular arrangement between state and mosque in the Balkans, but it is not the only one, as I will show in the next section.

3. The Rijaset, the Diyanet and the others in the Balkans and Western Europe

The Rijaset is the most well-established and institutionalised Islamic community in the Balkans. There is little doubt that it has some of the longest-standing *madrasas* in the region, the leading Faculty of

12 The appointment of Mufti Mustafa Hilmi Hadžimerović as *Reis-ul Ulema* in 1882 was a clear attempt to separate Bosnian Muslim institutions from the influence of the *Meşihat* of Istanbul.

13 Kovač, Mirnes, Editor of the Islamic Journal 'Preporod', Sarajevo, 7 April 2010.

14 Omerdić, Muharem, Senior functionary at the Islamic Community of Bosnia Herzegovina, Sarajevo, 7 April 2010

15 Karčić, Fikret (2008), *The Reform of Shari'a Courts and Islamic Law in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1918-1941*, in *Islam in Inter-War Europe*, Nathalie Clayer and Eric Germain (eds.). London: Hurst and Company, pp. 253-70. Also: Karčić (1997), *The Office of Rais al-Ulama among the Bosniaks*, in *Intellectual Discourse (Petaling Jaya Malaysia)*, Vol. 2, pp. 114-17.

16 Selimovski, Yakup Efendi, Former head of the Islamic Community in Macedonia and the last Yugoslav Reis in Sarajevo. Skopje, 9 June 2010.

17 Abazović, Dino (2011), *Bosnian Muslims at the beginning of a new Millennium*. Unpublished paper, Sarajevo, University of Sarajevo, Faculty of Political Sciences, p. 2. In this paper, Abazović discusses the conditions under which Bosnia is experiencing a resurgence of religion.

Islamic Studies and institutions of learning such as the Gazi Husrev Begova library. In many ways, Bosnian Islam, as it is practised in the mosques and institutions of the *Islamska Zajednica*, is 'high Islam' according to Ernest Gellner's typology.¹⁸ This does, however, not mean that it is the only, or even the most important Islamic actor even in the Western Balkans.

Much has been made of the role of Jihadi and Wahhabi actors in the region. As I have remarked in the beginning, the overemphasis on Jihadi and Wahhabi groups in the discussion on Muslims in the Balkans and Europe has distorted facts and realities on the ground. Many of these debates were indeed motivated by the goal to discredit particularly the struggle of Bosniaks and Kosovars against the genocidal campaigns of Serbian military and paramilitary forces. This is not to say that today there are religious re no extremists in Southeast Europe. There indeed are remnants of groups, who have been radicalised during the Bosnian War, yet such individuals and groups have mostly been pacified and find little space to operate. In their threat potential, they are less dangerous than the more radical Serbian Nationalists, while Serbian paramilitary groups like the 'White Eagles' are a much bigger threat to the future of Bosnia Herzegovina. There are also some isolated communities in Bosnia, in Macedonia and Kosovo, which have come under Wahhabi influence. Yet, the early fears of the established Islamic communities that Wahhabi mission would wipe away the local customs, traditions and even legal schools, which most Balkan Muslims adhere to, proved to be largely unfounded. As I have showed in my research on 'the transnational actors of Muslim communities in the Balkans',¹⁹ the Middle Eastern mission, with actors from the Gulf, Iran and Pakistan, had its heydays in the time before 9/11, and then was gradually pushed out by the governments in the region, on which the US administration has considerable political leverage.

In most countries of the region –with the partial exception of Bosnia-Herzegovina, I should add- the culturally and traditionally alien missionaries were gradually replaced with a multitude of Turkish-Muslim actors, ranging from state agencies, civil society organisations, *Nurcu* and *Naqshibandi* brotherhoods to social networks. I will focus here on the two most important actors, the *Diyanet* and the *Gülen* movement. The *Diyanet*, the Presidency of Religious Affairs in Turkey is the counterpart of Bosnia's *Rijaset*. Since the 1980s, the *Diyanet* has extended its vision beyond Turkey's borders, first to offer religious services to Turkey's diaspora communities, and after the fall of communism, to the Turkic peoples of Central Asia. Since the early 2000s, and especially after the election victory of the pro-Islamic Justice and Development Party, the *Diyanet* has become involved in the empowerment of the established Muslim communities and the reconstruction of their material and religious heritage. The Minister of State in charge of the *Diyanet*, Mehmet Aydın, did not hesitate, in 2008, to speak of the 'Diyanet's Global Vision'.²⁰

Today, the *Diyanet* is officially the 'primus inter pares' and in reality the leader of Balkan Muslim communities, through a number of platforms such as the 'Eurasian Islam Shura Council', but above all through the sheer weight of its organisational capacity, as İstar Gözaydın reminds us.²¹ As the most established Islamic Community in the Balkans, the *Islamska Zajednica* counts 1,700 mosques. The *Diyanet*, which is not organised in the Ottoman grass roots model of Bosnia, but top down, has a staff of more than 100,000, serving close to 80,000 mosques with Imams, who are now almost all graduates of the country's 27 Theology faculties. For many Balkan Muslim communities, the *Diyanet* is the first port of call in such vital matters as the *hajj*, but also in terms of higher religious education. And we should also not forget that with foundations such as the German *DITIB* (*Türkisch-Islamische Union der Anstalt für Religion*, Turkish-German Union of the Institution for Religion), the *Diyanet* runs close to 1,000 mosques in Germany alone and many more in other European countries of Muslim

18 Cf. Gellner, Ernest (1981), *Muslim society*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

19 Cf. www.balkanmuslims.com; Also; Öktem, Kerem (forthcoming 2012), *The Global Diyanet*, *Journal of Muslims in Europe*, 1(1).

20 Aydın, Mehmet (2008). *Diyanet's Global Vision*. *The Muslim World*, 98(April/July), 164 - 172.

21 Gözaydın, İstar (2008). *Diyanet and Politics*. *The Muslim World*, 98(April/July), 216 - 227; (2010). *Religion as Soft Power in the International Relations of Turkey*. *Political Science Association Conference Proceedings* (29 March - 1 April). Edinburgh

immigration.²² Considering that close to 70 percent of Muslims in Germany regularly attend Diyanet Mosques, we can already state that Turkey's Diyanet is a more significant provider of religious services, even if it does not take part in high-level debates on 'European Islam'.

The second most important actor is the Gülen movement. For the last decade or so, the educational networks inspired by the charismatic *Hocaeftendi* Fethullah Gülen have had an impact on how Islam is perceived and practised in many countries in the Balkans and beyond. Bekim Agai, Helen Ebaugh and Hakan Yavuz²³ have described the ethos and operational principles of this movement, which is often compared to the educational institutions of the Jesuit mission and the missionary zeal of the evangelical American Board school. Today, the movement runs leading international and largely secular colleges in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania. Significantly, it now also operates all five *medresas* in Albania.²⁴ It is not easy to foresee, what the impact of these schools and their mission will be. Yet, for the case of Albania, we can almost certainly expect an Islamic community that will be firmly looking towards Istanbul, rather than to Cairo or to Damascus.

Considering and comparing the institutional, personnel, educational and financial capacity of Turkish Muslim actors, we can state that Turkish actors have operated not so much through discourse and public debate, but through establishing religious and educational infrastructure. In this comparison, the *Rijaset* appears as an institution that grace to its charismatic leader Reis Cerić has played an important role in the 'legitimising and normative' discourses on European Islam, which I have alluded to earlier, while the Diyanet and other Turkish players have concentrated in capacity building and have actually laid the foundations of the practice of Islam in Europe.

Conclusion: European Muslim spheres

In this paper, I have sought to show that the search for models as a quick way to face complex challenges, and the discourse of European Islam might not be the best way forward. Acknowledging the historical context and organisational specificity of the *Islamska Zajednica*, I have also tried to hint at the gap between Reis Cerić's intellectual commitment to the 'European Islam' discourse and the *Rijaset*'s relative vulnerability and limited capacity. One could come to the blunt conclusion that the Reis's views are part of a meta-discourse on 'European Islam', whose constituent dimensions we have discussed above. One could continue to argue that in parallel fashion, Turkish Islamic actors have been engaged in educational and religious institution building, by which they have created facts on the ground, which are far more tangible than intellectual encounters.

In Germany, for instance, DITIB is not only the largest and single most important provider of religious services. Thanks to the Justice and Development Party's pro-Islamic policies, the old divisions between the hitherto *Kemalist* Diyanet, the Milli Görüş community as well as the followers of Süleyman Tunahan (called *Süleymancı*) appear to be largely healed, which means that DITIB now represents almost all observant Turkish and most Kurdish Muslims in Germany, and through the Milli Görüş organisations also other immigrant Muslims. I would hence argue that, particularly in Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium, the Turkish Islamic Community under the leadership of the Diyanet will be, by default and sheer numbers, the most important Muslim counterpart for any

²² A comparable organisational structure also exists as extension of the *Rijaset*, and to a much lesser extent, for Albanians from Macedonia and Kosovo.

²³ Ebaugh, Helen Rose (2009). *The Gülen Movement: A Sociological Analysis of a Civic Movement Rooted in Moderate Islam*. Springer Verlag, New York; Agai, Bekim (2008). *Zwischen Netzwerk und Diskurs. Das Bildungsnetzwerk um Fethullah Gülen (geb. 1938): Die flexible Umsetzung modernen islamischen Gedankenguts*. Hamburg, E-B Verlag, Dr. Brandt; Yavuz, Hakan and John Esposito (2003). *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement*. Syracuse, Syracuse University Press.

²⁴ Öktem, Kerem (2012), Projecting power: Non-conventional policy actors in Turkey's international relations, in: Öktem, Kerem, Ayşe Kadioğlu and Mehmet Karlı (eds.), *Another Empire. A decade of Turkey's foreign policy under the Justice and Development Party*.

decision makers. With Turkey's rising –if volatile- importance in the world, this dominance is likely to strengthen.

Yet, in other European countries, there are other religious and national subgroupings, which will necessitate different forms of incorporation, integration or confrontation. France has predominantly North African, and mostly weakly organised Muslim communities. In the UK, there are Muslim councils and organisations set up by the government and by the communities themselves, but they are also rather diffuse and fragmented. And in none of these countries, state efforts of co-optation through Islamic councils have shown great success.

This resistance to homogenisation is nor surprising, since Islam, as other world religions, is a highly dynamic, diverse and also fragmented social reality, which operates in transnational networks in an increasingly globalised world. To spell out what I mean by this transnational Muslim world, I propose a matrix of five overlapping spheres of Muslim interaction, identity and practice of faith, which are relevant for our understanding of Muslim communities in Western Europe as well as in the Balkans.

Table: European Muslim spheres

	Eurasian/Balkan Ottoman Muslim sphere	Balkan Muslim sphere	Immigrant Islam in Europe	Balkan Immigrant Islam in Europe
Community	<p>Sunni – Hanefi mainstream.</p> <p>Alevi and Bektashi minorities.</p> <p>Religious brotherhoods of the Mevlevi and other orders.</p>	<p>Sunni – Hanefi mainstream.</p> <p>Alevi and Bektashi minorities.</p> <p>Religious brotherhoods of the Mevlevi and other orders.</p>	<p>Different communities with various sectarian and doctrinal orientations and cultural traditions from the Middle East, North Africa and Southeast Asia.</p>	<p>Immigrants from Bosnia Herzegovina, Sandzak, Macedonia, Greece, Bulgaria as well as from Turkey.</p>
Historical Context	<p>This Eurasian Muslim sphere has been historically shaped by the Ottoman Empire, by Central Asian as well as Balkan Islamic traditions.</p> <p>In addition to the predominance of the historical Sunni Hanafi school, the Muslim communities in this region (Balkans – Turkey – Central Asia) all had to operate under some form of repression and state control (socialist/communist/secularist) in the 20th century.</p>	<p>Shaped by the Ottoman mission, the historical experience of the Habsburg Empire and the two Yugoslavias with the Rijaset as a leading actor.</p> <p>The Rijaset’s perception as a pro-Slavic institution limits its remit among the Albanian Muslim communities, which are the largest Muslim group in the Balkans.</p>	<p>This is a set of different set of religious schools, brotherhoods and mainstream Islamic interpretations.</p> <p>Unlike the Turkish, Bosnian and Albanian communities, however, most of the other immigrant communities tend to be less centrally organised in religious terms.</p>	<p>The Muslim immigrant communities from the Balkans form a continuum with their home communities.</p>
Organisation	<p>In this sphere, the Diyanet is the most powerful religious institution and it is getting more so, as the Diyanet is following its ‘global vision’. It already is acting as the ‘primus inter pares’ in large parts of Central Asia and the Balkans.</p>	<p>The Bosnian Rijaset is the most important Islamic institution in the Balkans, yet it competes with the Diyanet over dominance in the Balkans.</p>	<p>So far, there is no central organisation emerging out of these disparate groups, which tend to organise locally, transnationally or within the structures provided by the nation states.</p>	<p>Among the European Muslim immigrants, the Diyanet is the most influential institution, which tends to act as an umbrella for many Balkan Muslims, particularly if they are Turkish-speaking.</p> <p>There are also mosque associations associated with the Rijaset, and Albanian associations.</p>

All these overlapping spheres operate at the same time, as layers of a de-centred, de-territorialised transnational Muslim space, for which European politicians and decision makers need new ways of thinking that go beyond narrow security concerns. It would be fair to argue that there is no quick fix, no model and no single solution to the question of engagement and integration. No Islamkonferenz, or Muslim Council will evolve, in the foreseeable future, into the 'single Muslim' authority, which Reis Cerić proposed in 2007. Nor is it realistic to expect the emergence of a hegemonic 'European Islamic identity', as explored by Tariq Ramadan and others, that has no connections to the traditions and institutions of the countries of origin of the main Muslim immigrant communities. In times of globalisation, complex interdependences with the countries of origin remain strong, and a seamless integration into the host society is an increasingly less likely option. European decision makers and politicians will hence have to deal with the many representatives of different Muslim communities, which, despite the universal claim of an indivisible umma, remain robustly parochial and often national in their orientation and outlook.

For communities adhering to the Sunni-Hanefi tradition in Central Asia, the Caucasus and the Balkans, the Diyanet/ DITIB might evolve into the most influential religious authority and counterpart for national administrations, even though the status of the Diyanet as a Turkish state institution continues to raise questions. The diaspora organisations of the Rijaset and of Albanian mosques might become more closely associated with the Diyanet in the medium run, yet this would be dependent on many external factors.

And even if, in the long run, de-nationalised Muslim communities did emerge, widespread Islamophobic sentiment among European publics and the appeal especially of powerful Muslim majority countries like Turkey are likely to limit the power of such communities. The question of how to engage with and integrate Muslim communities into the post-modern, and at least for now, crisis-ridden societies of secular Europe, will continue to be one of the key challenges for a democratic, open and liberal future of the European Union. An approach aware of complexity, diversity and open-mindedness will certainly help.

Dieser Text ist ausschließlich zum privaten Gebrauch bestimmt. Jede weitere Vervielfältigung und Verbreitung bedarf der ausdrücklichen, schriftlichen Genehmigung der Urheberin/des Urhebers bzw. der Akademie der Diözese Rottenburg-Stuttgart. Alle Rechte bleiben bei der Autorin/dem Autor. Eine Stellungnahme der Akademie der Diözese Rottenburg-Stuttgart ist durch die Veröffentlichung dieser Präsentation nicht ausgesprochen. Für die Richtigkeit des Textinhaltes oder Fehler redaktioneller oder technischer Art kann keine Haftung übernommen werden. Weiterhin kann keinerlei Gewähr für den Inhalt, insbesondere für Vollständigkeit und Richtigkeit von Informationen übernommen werden, die über weiterführende Links von dieser Seite aus zugänglich sind. Die Verantwortlichkeit für derartige fremde Internet-Auftritte liegt ausschließlich beim jeweiligen Anbieter, der sie bereitstellt. Wir haben keinerlei Einfluss auf deren Gestaltung. Soweit diese aus Rechtsgründen bedenklich erscheinen, bitten wir um entsprechende Mitteilung.

Akademie der Diözese Rottenburg-Stuttgart
Im Schellenkönig 61
70184 Stuttgart
Telefon: +49 711 1640-600
E-Mail: info@akademie-rs.de