

THE TRANSATLANTIC TASK FORCE ON IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION

INTEGRATING ISLAM: A New Chapter in “Church-State” Relations

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MPI and Bertelsmann Stiftung have convened a task force to promote thoughtful immigration policies and assess and respond to the profound challenges of integrating immigrants and building stronger communities on both sides of the Atlantic. It addresses its recommendations to European Union institutions and Member State governments, the governments of the United States and Canada, and state and local governments and civil society everywhere.

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Introduction

Government engagement with minority communities has a long tradition in Europe. Efforts at reconciling the different interests and issues relating to diverse groups have often involved religious minorities, such as Jews, Protestants, and Catholics, or ethnic ones, such as Catalans and Basques in Spain.

Today, concerns about Europe's growing Muslim communities have placed intercultural dialogues back on the agenda. Islam is now the second-largest religion in the European Union. EU residents of Muslim faith total between 15 and 20 million¹ and represent approximately 8 percent of the population in France,² 4 percent in Germany,³ and 3 percent in the United Kingdom.⁴ Demographic trends are likely to push the total number of Muslims living in the European Union to over 20 percent by 2050,⁵ while in certain major cities it already exceeds 20 percent.⁶

Islam's status as an increasingly prominent religion has combined with several other factors to underscore the need for dialogue. These include the relative economic, social, and political marginalization of many Muslims and the association of Muslims with recent terrorist acts, which has heightened public anxiety. All this takes place against a global political landscape in which many perceive Islam and the West to be embattled.

As a result, over the past five years, governments have intensified productive dialogues with Muslim communities. Governments aim to reinforce religious freedoms, create a shared sense of belonging in Europe, tackle issues of racism and extremism, and confront problems linked to the segregation of faith communities. The regular interaction such councils afford enhances the mutual acquaintance of governments and minority communities.

EU Member States have had to struggle with a series of challenges in establishing these dialogues, including how to select participants; how to set a mutually acceptable agenda; whether dialogues work best at the local or national level; and how to prevent such forums from subverting mainstream political processes.

These questions are intrinsically connected to the purpose of dialogues. Intercultural dialogue and governmental engagement with faith communities should help to reinforce religious freedoms and create a shared sense of belonging in Europe while also presenting an opportunity to tackle issues of

racism and extremism. Consultations can force opposing movements within an organized religion to work together under the aegis of the state's neutral brokerage. Furthermore, the existence of such consultations tends to suck the air out of radicals' arguments.

The Benefits of Dialogues

In the first instance, intercultural dialogue between the state and minority communities can help ensure the basics of religious observance, such as securing adequate prayer spaces, appointing chaplains to serve in public hospitals and prisons, certifying kosher or halal food providers, and overseeing religious animal slaughter, as well as providing expert counsel for administrative queries. The regular interaction and growing familiarity between governments and minority religious communities enriches both sides in the discussion of coexistence and cohabitation. With such institutions in place, informed discourse can replace prevalent assumptions, and personally delivered clarifications can redress misunderstandings. Religious councils can help to create a positive environment, or, at the very least, a neutral forum for genuine discussion and debate. Since many members of the recently settled faiths across Europe still have foreign nationality, establishing religious councils as a space for intercultural dialogue represents a chance to improve integration in the absence of formal citizenship.

These dialogues are arranged mainly for the purpose of "state-religion" relations. The most vital instruments for other social and political integration initiatives will remain national political party recruitment, youth congresses, consultations with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and other types of ministerial-level outreach that gather the views of various civil society groups. Religious consultations should not be considered as, for instance, "Muslim Councils" but rather "Councils for the Muslim Religion;" what is being represented is the organized religion, not the masses of a specific religious origin.

Such councils have the merit of meeting separately from security or counterterrorism discussions, although some of the same leaders are likely to be involved in campaigns on related issues. Participating organizations maintain their strict independence: Community leaders take on an independent consultative role, not one of government agents. Even though national consultations will not have the competence to make pronouncements, their "approbation" as recognized participants can allow the individual leaders to speak out and represent their respective federations' interests in various forums,

from parliamentary hearings to media interviews. With maturity, such consultative councils may take on ceremonial and symbolically important roles; these include attending state receptions and officiating during moments of inter-faith prayer. They are the physical incarnation of their community's place at home in national institutions. Over time, representative bodies for religious communities may take on even more substantive roles: overseeing the flow of foreign funds that support prayer spaces, for example, as well as becoming involved with questions of religious interpretation and religious dispensations that allow one to be a good citizen while remaining devout.

Accomplishments of the *Conseil Français du Culte Musulman* (French Council for the Muslim Religion, CFCM)

In 1999, then-Interior Minister Jean-Pierre Chevènement re-launched the decade-old idea of creating an official Muslim umbrella body in France. In 2003, under the support of then-Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy, CFCM became the official representative body of Muslims in France. Its role is to address matters such as the building of mosques, burials, religious slaughtering of animals, and the training of imams. CFCM consists of elected members of a number of large Muslim organizations, including the *Grande Mosquée de Paris*, the *Union des Organisations Islamiques de France*, the *Fédération Nationale des Musulmans en France*, and the *Comité de Coordination des Musulmans Turcs de France*.

Institutional Stability

It has become commonplace to refer to the “blockage” and “stalemate” within the French Council for the Muslim Religion. Yet, after nearly four years of existence and two successful electoral cycles (in 2003 and 2005), there have been no significant resignations from CFCM, and the absolute and relative numbers of participating prayer spaces grew from 992 in 2003 to 1,221 in 2005; voting rates among prayer-space delegates also increased from 75 percent to 85 percent.

National Chaplains for French Muslims in the Military and in Prisons

CFCM nominated a national military chaplain in March 2006 following a Defense Ministry decree, and the council named a national chaplain for French prisons in January 2007 in cooperation with French penitentiary authorities. Although Muslims in France account for perhaps 8 to 10 percent of the general population, the number of prisoners of Muslim background might be as high as 50 percent of the roughly 60,000 individuals currently incarcerated.⁷ Yet, the number of Muslim chaplains available for spiritual guidance in French prisons — only 60 to 90 — has lagged considerably

behind the number of Protestant and Catholic chaplains, who have 284 and 505, respectively.⁸ Before the advent of CFCM, regional prison directors would solicit local religious authorities for names of potential chaplains, many of whom were foreign imams and were later rejected by the domestic intelligence service (Renseignements Généraux). The appointment of a national chaplain will facilitate the nomination and appointment of chaplains in prisons across the country as part of the general push for equal religious rights under the law, and also as a crucial instrument in the fight against religious radicalization in jail.⁹

National governments in several Member States have taken different paths toward the creation of interreligious councils or consultations where religious leaders can receive a hearing from the appropriate ministerial office. This has usually taken place in the ministry of the interior, which maintains similar contacts with a variety of the other major recognized world religions. These bodies might be advisory or consultative, and/or enshrined by decree or in legislation; they are either elected or appointed, or a mixture of the two. They are not intended to represent religious residents/citizens *politically*, but instead they provide a forum for regular administrative contact in which to discuss practical challenges where public policy and religious practice intersect, from ritual animal slaughter to mosque construction permits to Muslim cemeteries, e.g.. Additionally, they act as natural interlocutors to help governments address crises of religious sensibilities when they arise.

The Role of the European Union

Policies governing state-church relations will likely remain within the competence of the Member States for the foreseeable future. Declaration 11 in the Amsterdam Treaty's appendix, which made its way into Article 52 of the draft treaty establishing the European Constitution, states explicitly that "The European Union respects and does not prejudice the status under national law of churches and religious associations or communities within the Member States." And many members of religious minorities are still third-country nationals, stranding them even further out of reach of EU institutions. Yet, a further clause in Article 52 also places the onus upon the European Union to maintain open channels of communication with faith-based communities: "the Union shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with these churches and organisations."

Further justification for Europe-wide policies in this broad area can be found in the Treaties, as well as in the practice of EU institutions. The Treaty of Maastricht

included a potential avenue for guaranteeing religious rights in its Title IX (Article 128), concerning the contribution to the “flowering of cultures of the member states while respecting their national and regional diversity.” The Treaty of Amsterdam’s Title IV similarly opened a new era for minority protection in the European polity. Article 13, in particular, stated that “the Council, acting unanimously on a proposal from the Commission and after consulting the European Parliament, may take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.” Two progressive-minded directives regarding race and employment followed soon thereafter, setting new standards for Europeanization and harmonization because the directives apply to *all* EU residents, not just Member State citizens, opening up the possibility of creating policies that concerned third-country nationals.

One could imagine a day when national councils for Islam might come together to elect a consultative body for European Islam to meet with EU institutions. During the controversy over Danish caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed in late 2005 and early 2006, for example, the most visible EU-level dialogue occurred during a visit by the High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy to the Organization of the Islamic Conference, an inter-governmental organization of 57 countries that promote solidarity among the Member States and the interests of Muslims around the world.

Protestants, Catholics, and Jews in the European Union

The Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches (CEC)

Founded: 1958

<http://www.cec-kek.org/>

CEC brings together representatives of 125 churches of Protestant, Orthodox, Anglican, and Old Catholic variants. It has offices in Brussels and Strasbourg.

The Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE)

Founded: 1980

<http://www.comece.org>

COMECE assembles 21 bishops from the Catholic Bishops' conferences within the European Union. It has a Brussels office that acts as a liaison to European institutions.

The European Jewish Congress (EJC)

Founded: 1986

<http://www.eurojewcong.org>

EJC federates 40 leaders of European Jewish communities.

State-Islam Relations in the Member States

Interior ministries across the European Union have begun to open institutional channels to a broad set of reliable, reasonably representative religious leaders within their own borders. Over the past several decades, Muslims in Europe have developed an organized “civil society” and given life to thousands of prayer spaces that band together with other cultural associations into competing “peak” or “umbrella” federations of differing ideological and (sometimes) sectarian stripes. Given this rich diversity of Muslim organizational life within Europe, it is no longer too much to hope for local interlocutors. For this reason, responsive administrations should be well acquainted with religious civil society organizations and prayer spaces as they currently exist today. Could the spread of the caricature controversy beyond Danish and European borders have been prevented? European nations and the European Union owe themselves a determined effort at institution-building to avert or contain similar conflagrations in the future.

No one size fits all, and state-religion relationships are set up differently across Member States. The historical dynamics of national states and churches, the presence of territorial minorities, and patterns of labor migration and political asylum have shaped a diverse institutional landscape over centuries: from national churches (e.g., in the United Kingdom and Denmark) to protected minorities (e.g., in Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands) or regional exemptions (e.g., in France). But there is much that state-Islam consultations have in common, both from the perspective of governance as well as a simple reflection of the reality of religious “civil society” in Europe today.

The rest of this brief will address the “who, how, and why” of intercultural dialogue between state and religion by drawing upon the pressing example of Muslim communities and European governments.

I. Who: Choosing Interlocutors — the Case of Muslims in Europe

How “representative” can religious councils actually be? The most important index is a fair reflection of prayer spaces (designated areas to worship). After all, religious councils are not meant to supplant electoral institutions like parliament — where true *political* integration will take place. Instead, intercultural dialogues strive to bring together a full spectrum of authentic voices from among the religiously observant. Governments should aim to invite a broad swath of leaders. The most successful experiences have generally found 15 to 20 to be an appropriate number of participants.

Whose Consultation? France's CFCM vs. Italy's *Consulta Islamica*

In contrast with the French government's CFCM, which is explicitly aimed at representing the "6-7 percent of the mosque-going public," the Italian government's *Consulta Islamica* targets those whom the Italian interior ministry refers to as the "95 percent of moderate Muslims who do not attend mosques, madrassas, or Islamic cultural centers, and who only came to our country to improve their living conditions and with the sincere intention to respect our law and order." The chosen participants are thus not restricted to religious leadership. The *Consulta Islamica* reflects the range of Muslim civil society in Italy without any pretense of "representing" Muslims in Italy.¹⁰

Representatives ideally should be drawn from three main sources. This diversity allows for representatives of the three major "viewpoints" that one tends to find in Muslim civil society in Europe. These viewpoints tend to come from organizations that:

- A. Enjoy close relations with sending states;
- B. Are aligned with politicized forms of transnational Islam (Islamist Activists); and
- C. Represent a homegrown Islam indigenous to a particular European Member State (individual experts).

A. Organizations with relationships with sending states

The interests of sending states are generally represented through consular and diplomatic networks, and through an outgrowth of immigrant worker associations that sending states sponsor; the associations were often known as "amicales" during the early waves of immigrant mobilization across Europe. These organizations and networks — whether of North African, South Asian, or Balkan origin — usually served as a useful contact point for European foreign ministries and interior ministries in the oversight of religious practice among migrant workers in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s.

Previously, administrative practice dominant in the Member States granted oversight of organized Islam to foreign, usually diplomatic, representatives. What passed for consultation in the past was essentially an act of "outsourcing:" a parallel diplomacy, in effect, for migrant affairs. Nowadays, (former and) current sending states have a more complex relationship with national federations of prayer spaces and cultural associations, often wielding influence

over the choice of spokesmen and the content of demands made upon public authorities in European countries.

European governments cannot ignore these representatives; indeed their expertise and moderation remain relevant and useful. But these organizations, after years of enjoying a near monopoly, should be encouraged to share the roles of religious oversight. One would not grant exclusive representation of Jewish religious issues in Europe to Israel; but nor would one wholly ignore Israel's wishes. In the same way, governments of predominantly Muslim nations should be treated with respect for their concerns over the religious practice of their citizens (and their descendants) living abroad.

B. Islamist Activists

Beginning in the 1980s, a politically assertive brand of Muslim activist arose across Europe. Many dissidents from the Arab-Muslim world found a home in European states and established prayer spaces that became active in migrant and community affairs. The federations that grew out of this milieu emerged as among the most powerful and influential organized representatives of Muslim life in Europe.

Certainly, organizations whose leaders or press organs have made anti-Semitic, "fundamentalist," or "anti-Western" remarks, or whose family values and vision of domestic life are far removed from the current moral order of the host society, are difficult to accept as dialogue partners. Obviously, those who have been convicted of inciting hatred should be barred from such dialogues. However, the proper prerequisite for participation in intercultural dialogue should be the law-abiding nature of participants and a current openness to participate in dialogue with others of different origins and perspectives.

The option exercised in the German *Deutsche Islamkonferenz* (DIK) has been to include such associations at a lower, less visible level of cooperation, which is an acceptable medium-term solution. Full status will presumably be granted to the federation representing politicized Islam at a later date, providing the federation responds to incentives that seem to have worked in France and Italy.

Proximity to power has tended to inspire increasingly civil comportment rather than fanaticism. Participation in consultations — or, indeed, even the possibility of being chosen for government consultation — can have a moderating effect. For example, the absence of violence in Europe during the Mohammed caricature affair can be traced in part to the existence of institutional channels for

expressing outrage and insult in a legal fashion.

To give another example, the French organization *l'Union des Organisations Islamiques de France* (UOIF), reputed to be close to the Muslim Brotherhood, held a series of meetings with the Jewish umbrella group *Conseil Représentatif des Institutions juives de France* (CRIF) following an interior ministry request shortly after the *Conseil Français du Culte Musulman* (CFCM) was established. In response to a wave of anti-Semitic attacks and the discovery of a taped sermon by a UOIF imam that contained insulting language about Jews, the organization issued a memorandum denouncing anti-Semitism to all the prayer spaces under its control.

The Italian organization *Unione Comunità Islamiche in Italia* (UCOII), also known for its espousal of a politicized form of Islam, became an outspoken advocate of European hostages who were kidnapped in Iraq and Afghanistan after the Italian Interior Ministry launched the Islamic Consultation. In these cases, the incentive of having a voice in state-Islam relations proved to be a strong motivation to adapt to local political norms and demonstrate leadership within the Muslim community.

C. Individual Experts

Insofar as possible, governments should seek out some representatives from “minorities within the minority.” This is particularly important given the frequent predominance of first-generation migrants — who tend to be older and male — among the leadership of federations and prayer spaces. Their perspective might well be the most representative. But, for a council to have broad legitimacy, a plurality of views reflective of the community’s own diversity should be heard.

For this reason, many interior ministries have created a role for individual (nonelected) appointees. This has meant offering a small number of seats (perhaps on a rotating basis) to young people, second- or third-generation leaders born in the country, women, and intellectuals. In the French CFCM, they are called “*personnalités qualifiées*;” in the German DIK, ministerial appointees representing “modern” or “secular” strands of contemporary Islam have joined the association leaders representing the huge majority of Muslims who are not confessionally organized.

When computing the relative weight of this component on a given council, however, governments should use a light hand and consider the historical and

political development of migrant minorities in their countries, so as not to delegitimize the representative nature of the body. The greatest danger would be to give undue weight to those whom one simply likes best or those who are already the most “well-adjusted” to the European environment.

2. How to Set Agendas

For institutionalizing an orderly, lawful, and politically irreproachable consultation, the following initial steps could be envisaged:

- The initial task for governments should be establishing the purpose of the dialogue and soliciting the broad agreement or *confirmation* of respect for the rule of law among the council’s participants. It would not hurt to underline the historic nature of these accords. Other religions (Catholics, Protestants, and Jews) passed through a similar, sometimes even more severe, history of repression and institutional gauntlet before achieving recognition and equality. Acknowledging the momentous nature of the occasion would give participants a sense of the stakes and an appreciation and pride in their groundbreaking activity.
- The second step should be coordinating the formation of working groups or committees on concrete tasks to be accomplished. This would be the place for pragmatic agendas, from smoothing the way for building permits for mosques and overseeing halal regulations, to aiding the process of appointment for chaplains in hospitals, prisons, or schools, as specified by national legislation. For the annual Hajj, the council could be used to obtain Saudi visas directly (though many foreign Muslims would still need to go through Saudi representatives in their country of origin) thus protecting participants from consumer fraud by tour operators. Another task would be coordinating the observance of holidays, for example the Eid al Adha, as well as coordinating common timing for Ramadan’s beginning and end.
- As a third step, after a successful trial period to be determined on a case-by-case basis, governments should consider ways to make the consultations a permanent, institutionalized body capable of surviving political alternation. Thought should also be given to what, if any, electoral formula would best guarantee the representation of the diverse views of mosque-goers in the country.

What Is on the Agenda?

Working Groups of State-Islam Consultations

CFCM (France)

- 1) Imams and the training of imams;
- 2) chaplains in hospitals, prisons, and the military;
- 3) regulation of ritual slaughter for Eid al Adha;
- 4) audiovisual media (weekly Islam broadcast on France 2 and CFCM website);
- 5) interreligious dialogue;
- 6) organization of the pilgrimage to Mecca;
- 7) university diploma in Islamic studies;
- 8) teaching about Islam and Muslims in school texts;
- 9) membership dues and finances;
- 10) juridical statute of CFCM;
- 11) halal certification;
- 12) foundation for Muslim Works in France (creation of prayer spaces); and
- 13) regulations and structure of religious associations.

DIK (Germany)

Working Group 1: the German social order and values consensus;

Working Group 2: religious questions in the German constitutional context;

Working Group 3: the building of bridges in the economy and the media; and

Working Group 4: security and Islamism.

Consulta Islamica (Italy)

- 1) Integration issues at home, school, and the workplace;
- 2) safeguarding the specificities of religion and Muslim traditions including men's and women's rights, use of the veil, observance of Muslim holidays and precepts, ritual animal slaughter, and Muslim cemeteries;
- 3) Italian-language sermons in mosques and the training of imams;
- 4) registration of prayer spaces to normalize "critical situations" (e.g., in Conegliano, Gallarate, and Colle Valdelsa);
- 5) social conditions and rights of immigrants including asylum, humanitarian protection, residence permits, family reunification, and citizenship; and
- 6) access of Muslim chaplains to prisons and hospital.

The state's role is to provide a neutral forum, a place for perspectives and currents to cross paths when they otherwise might not have had the opportunity to be exposed to one another. But, beyond the basic demonstration of respect for the constitutional framework, consultation organizers should shy away from values-based discussions that do not directly pertain to religious practice.

The role of women, for example, is a theme of legitimate concern in contemporary societies. However, it should not be selectively highlighted under the rubric of intercultural discussions for one religion or culture and not others. It is possible to imagine an interfaith discussion of women's choices and options in marriage, childbirth, and domestic abuse in which representatives from the Islam council would participate alongside representatives of the other major monotheistic religions. The emphasis on "ideological correctness," requiring Muslim leaders to agree with aspects of current public opinion on certain questions, leads authorities naturally to problematize and stigmatize those currents of Muslim opinion that subscribe to one or another variety of Islamist thinking, including entirely nonviolent varieties, as inherently "un-European."

The more substantive agenda items — regarding mosques and imams — get to the heart of the matter: *Who* will provide funds for houses of worship, and *who* will do the preaching inside them? The councils' tasks, then, include ensuring the existence of proper administrative channels to allow for construction of prayer spaces and the development of local training programs for "clergy."

Given the reality of secular norms and the prohibition of public spending on religion in many European countries, these mosque constructions and imam trainings can be accomplished with the expertise or funding of foreign organizations and/or specialists. However, the role of these "outsiders" should be no more than supplemental and advisory. Naturalized residents or native-born citizens of European Member States should carry out the main design and implementation of religious education. While waiting for expansion of European seminaries and training programs for religious personnel, continued cooperation with homeland governments and sending states is to be expected. They have the practical capabilities and, after all, many Muslims in Europe are still foreign nationals and therefore understandably under the influence of their home states.

One model for such "clerical" cooperation can be found in the German Goethe Institut's cooperative relationship with Diyanet in Turkey, where several hundred hours of German courses are offered to Turkish-trained imams before their departure for Germany. This is only a temporary solution, which will

hopefully one day be obviated by the existence of local German theological seminaries for Islam. But it is a pragmatic response to the issue of imams' integration and familiarity with European norms of culture, state, and society.

There are also models outside of Europe, such as The Australian Muslim Community Reference Group (MCRG), that are worthy of consideration.

The Australian Muslim Community Reference Group (MCRG)

“The MCRG was established to advise the government on how both government and community can work together more effectively to address intolerance and achieve a more cohesive society. The MCRG is comprised of seven sub-groups, which work to support dialogue and cooperation between the government and the Australian community, to empower Australians to challenge violence, extremism, and ignorance. These seven subgroups focus on: engaging with youth; engaging with women; education and training of clerical and lay teachers and leaders; issues related to schooling; improving employment outcomes and workplace issues; improving crisis management; family and community.

“The Prime Minister met Muslim community leaders on 23 August 2005 and agreed on a Statement of Principles to promote harmony and understanding. The Statement commits all Australians to work together to protect Australia from intolerance and misunderstanding and to upholding the traditions, values, and institutions that unite us all. It has sought the development of *A Strategic Response and National Action Plan* involving all levels and areas of government. The Plan will be presented to the Council of Australian Governments in mid-2006. Community consultation through the Muslim Community Reference Group will continue throughout 2006 and will focus on implementing the National Action Plan.”¹¹

3. How to Structure Dialogues Locally/Regionally/Nationally

Having nationally recognized interlocutors brings great symbolic value to a religious council. Yet, in part because it is important to be so inclusive, it is by nature difficult to achieve total unanimity on prickly themes. For this reason, national councils should make sure to integrate regional participants; local leaders are likely to be lesser known, less politicized, and more experienced in pragmatic matters of religious practice. Everyday integration — and everyday intercommunity tensions — take place at the local level. In France, CRCM

mirrors that of the administrative regions; extra councils are added for especially populous regions. Twenty-five such regional councils are elected simultaneously, in a second round of elections several weeks after national elections for CFCM are held. Other à la carte solutions also provide a respectable model for local consultations, such as the Metropolitan Police Muslim Contact Unit in London. The German DIK also integrates representatives of the Länder and the communities.

Furthermore, while national dialogues are needed to address regulatory issues at the national level, local or regional dialogues may be more effective in reducing or avoiding clashes and conflict between faith communities in particular areas.

Local Dialogue: Regional Councils in France

CRCM in Provence-Alpes-Cotes-d'Azur — where Marseille is located — has become “the interlocutor *par excellence* for public authorities in the region,” said its first president Mourad Zerfaoui in a newspaper interview in 2005. “We are known and recognized.” Zerfaoui, elected to one term with the support of the Al-Islah mosque and the Islamic activist UOIF organization, was initially perceived as a radical; the mayor of Marseille waited four months before meeting with him. Yet a healthy relationship of mutual consultation has developed between the municipality and CRCM, in addition to the establishment of ties between CRCM and the regional branch of the Jewish civil society umbrella organization, CRIF. Zerfaoui’s successor, who headed a rival Algerian list, has continued to pursue a pragmatic relationship with local authorities, and cooperation on a major mosque project is underway.¹²

CRCM in Rhones-Alpes successfully organized the creation of five temporary slaughterhouses outside of greater Lyon; the slaughterhouses were for ritual purposes during Eid al Adha in December 2006. Working together with mosques, farmers, slaughterhouses, municipal governments, veterinary services, and local police, CRCM’s president congratulated his colleagues for the institution’s work in upholding “the right of the Muslims of France to live their faith like anyone else and thus to have become wholly French.”¹³

4. The Best Way Forward

Religious discrimination should never be allowed to give succor to extremists' recruitment strategies. Dialogue can help tamp down extremism through its "trickle-down" effects. Recruiters to extremist causes rely upon an adversarial relationship with the state; they point to wanton identification checks, refusals of construction permits for mosques, or the unavailability of halal food as proof of the inherently hostile nature of Western host societies.

Religious integration, on the contrary, would lead to the "banalization" of religious practice. In other words, religious practice becomes everyday and routine; instead of forcing Islam out of the public sphere, this approach allows Muslims religious expression to the same degree that other faiths are tolerated and protected. The goal of these consultations, therefore, is *not* political integration through religion. Rather, the objective is to normalize religious practice in the Member State and European contexts such that everyday matters of faith can no longer be sensationalized as "evidence" of the incompatibility of Islam and Western democracy.

The vast majority of secular Muslims might feel left out of the process of religious consultation. This can partly be redressed through ministerial appointment of civil-society leaders to serve on Islam councils (see section 1C above). And secular individuals have also chosen to organize. For example, France has the Council of Lay Muslims and the Council of Democratic Muslims. In Denmark, the prime minister invited the Moderate Muslims/Democratic Muslims for discussions in 2006.¹⁴

The path toward a European future, however, will take time. Only once the Member States pursue formal consultations with small and large religious minorities can a meaningful European superstructure be layered upon these existing structures.

Conclusion: Principles for Dialogue

The following five principles, drawing on the above survey of state-Muslim dialogues and the examples of best practice across Europe, are essential underpinnings to effective intercultural dialogues.

1. Clearly define the purpose of the dialogue

Dialogues can serve a number of useful purposes. Their parameters and goals should be clearly defined and agreed from the outset.

2. Provide a platform but ensure separation from the political process

Dialogues can provide Muslim advocates and community leaders with a greater voice in the political arena, but dialogues should never be a substitute for the political process. If defining the purpose explicitly (recommendation 1) sets the content for debate, then marking a separation between political participation and dialogue highlights the limits of what they are intended to achieve.

3. Focus on accommodating religious practices

In general, dialogues should be constrained to working with Muslim groups to accommodate — and “normalize” — the practice of their faith. While dialogues can serve other purposes, these are generally better addressed by ensuring that Muslims and other minorities are given a stake in mainstream political institutions.

4. Ensure that representation is guided by the purpose of the dialogue, respects the plural nature of Muslim communities, and is always rooted in the rule of law

The question of who should represent Muslims in dialogues with government is not easy to resolve and can be expected to generate controversy. Nevertheless, there are three useful guiding forces. First, representation should be guided by the purpose of the dialogue; thus dialogues will have different representation for different purposes. Second, Muslims from a variety of backgrounds should be represented in dialogues. Third, participants should conform to the laws of the land.

5. Consider that national and local dialogues can be mutually reinforcing

In general, local dialogues have proven more effective in addressing challenges related to the practice of the Muslim faith (securing permits for building mosques and cemeteries, for instance) and clashes between faith communities. However, national dialogues are better equipped to tackle national regulatory issues and the “values question.” Building both local and national dialogues, with dynamic interaction between them, is a key objective.

ENDNOTES

¹ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, "Integration Gateway: Muslims in Europe," http://www.integration-in-deutschland.de/nr_284652/SubSites/Integration/EN/03_Akteure/ThemenUndPerspektiven/Islam/Europa/europa-node.html?_nnn=true; Robert S. Leikin, "Europe's Angry Muslims," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2005, <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20050701faessay84409/robert-s-leiken/europe-s-angry-muslims.html>.

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