Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power

Conceptualising Euro-Islam: managing the societal demand for religious reform

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Conceptualising Euro-Islam: managing the societal demand for religious reform

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Political, public and academic debates about the need for a 'Euro-Islam' as a necessary condition for the full integration of Muslim are widespread and strong. For Muslims and Muslim organisations in particular, Euro-Islam can be understood as subverting the very nature of their religious identity, making change or reform impossible. This raises the question as to how Muslim organisations reject the idea of the need for a Euro-Islam by construing the core of their faith as not being contradictory with Western values, norms and beliefs. The current study examines this question amongst two major Turkish Muslim organisations (Milli Görüş and Fethullah Gülen) in the Netherlands and Germany. The analysis shows that in managing the demand for reform a distinction was made between Islam as a belief system and Muslims as a group of people, between religion and culture as two types of belief systems and between politics and the true nature of the West.

Keywords: Euro-Islam; essentialism; religion; culture; Turkish Muslims; reform

Introduction

Political, public and academic debates about the place of Islam in Western Europe and the need for a 'Euro-Islam' or 'Europeanised Islam' are widespread and strong. Islam has emerged as the focus of immigration and diversity debates in Western Europe. Muslims are increasingly scrutinised for their allegiance to a set of 'core liberal values', and public expressions of their religious identity (e.g. headscarves and mosques) are rejected because of the threat of 'Islamification' of the national culture (see Kundnani 2007, Vasta 2007). Many consider the development of a European form of Islam necessary for the full integration and participation of Muslims as European citizens.

For Muslims and Muslim leaders and organisations, Euro-Islam can be understood as subverting or fundamentally altering the essence of the group identity, making change or reform impossible (Bilgrami 1992). Muslims have established themselves in Western Europe and the great majority defines their future in the host societies (Gallup 2009). Yet, it is difficult to belong to the same national community when there is irreconcilable disagreement on identity-relevant matters. This raises the question how European Muslims respond to the societal pressure

to develop a Euro-Islam. How do they reconcile the perceived essence of their religious identity with Western values, norms and beliefs?

The current study examines this question by investigating two major Turkish Muslim organisations in the Netherlands and Germany, namely Milli Görüş (MG) and Fethullah Gülen. The perspective adopted is the proposition that identities are matters of debate (Billig 1987, Benwell and Stokoe 2006). Defining the essence of one's group identity and construing specific measures and policies as subverting that essence are both matters of argumentative accomplishments. They involve arguments about the nature of one's religious identity and whether it is (in)compatible with the Western way of life. Hence, our analytical interest is in identifying and analysing the types of argumentative 'identity work' that these Muslim organisations are engaged in, in relation to the Euro-Islam debate. Empirically we present an analysis of articles from three newspapers and magazines of the two organisations. The focus on written sources is deliberate because the newspapers and magazines offer an accessible and systematic public source for studying the type of identity work that we are interested in.

There are, of course, many factors involved in the activities of these organisations and in their success in convincing the wider society. Research, for example, has examined the role of opportunity structures and citizenship regimes for political claims-making amongst migrants and Muslim groups in particular (Koopmans *et al*. 2005, Statham *et al*. 2005). Furthermore, the social and political contexts in receiving countries can affect the transnational activities of migrant organisations, and the political context in the country of origin can be on the agenda of these organisations (Ostergaard-Nielsen 2001). Our aim, however, is to examine how Turkish Muslim organisations themselves define an acceptable Muslim identity. Our analytical interest is in identifying and analysing the types of 'identity work' in relation to the societal pressures to develop a Euro-Islam.

The need for Euro-Islam

Tibi (2002) claims to have coined the term Euro-Islam but the concept is defined and understood differently (see Meer 2012). Ramadan (1999) argues for a Euro-Islam that reconciles Islamic doctrines and European conventions. He prioritises the universal principles of Islam to which Muslims should be faithful and which would teach them to integrate and participate in the host societies. This prioritisation of Islamic doctrine and the notion of reconciliation are challenged by Tibi (2008), who argues that Muslims should acknowledge that the European *Leitkultur* is not Islamic and that they should become Europeans. This implies the incorporation of European values which requires doctrinal reforms, resulting in a Euro-Islam. Specifically, freedom of speech and other liberal and democratic principles as well as gender equality should be incorporated into Islamic thought. The need for this type of Euro-Islam is also discussed in public debates (Allievi 2009). For example, in the 'freedom of speech versus blasphemy' debate, freedom of speech is construed as a core western liberal value that would be

of minimal concern to Muslims, or even contradictory to Islam. In addition, influential scholars, politicians and commentators have claimed that Islam is a religion of violence. According to them, the acts of terror cannot be attributed to a few fanatic Muslims but rather form the essence of the Islamic faith (Pipes 1986, Lewis 2002). Certainly, not everyone agrees with this interpretation, but research shows that the public opinion in Western Europe tends to associate Islam with terrorism, fanaticism, radicalism and a threat to national and personal security (Noelle 2004).

These debates are all concerned with the perceived incompatibility of Islamic practices and values with those of the West. The implication is that it is necessary for European Muslims to reform Islam to the Western way of life. Islam is seen as the root cause of controversial practices and therefore would be irreconcilable with core Western values. As a consequence, Muslims face demands to adapt their faith to the conditions of their new homeland. For example, following the terrorist attacks in London and Madrid, the European Commission started to think about how to tackle radical Islam and create a European Islam which would be a more tolerant branch of the faith (Goldirova 2007). The Commission argued that Islam has to adapt in such a way that it enables Muslims to consider themselves full European citizens. Muslims and Muslim organisations in particular are expected to engage in an intellectual and practical endeavour of religious change in the direction of a European Islam. But issues of reform raise questions about religious doctrine and can be considered as threatening the very nature of one's belief system. Change and reform become impossible when Euro-Islam is seen as subverting the true essence of Islam leaving only the option of segregation and a life at the margins of the host society. Some orthodox believers and Islamist groups adopt this position (Buijs *et al*. 2006), but the great majority of Muslims, as well as established Muslim organisations, try to reconcile their religious identity with being part of the host society (Gallup 2009). There are, of course, many different ways in which they try to do this and the variety amongst Muslims and diversity within Muslim communities is considerable, but most of them try to find a balance between their faith and life in Western Europe.

This raises the question how Muslim organisations reject the idea of the need for a Euro-Islam by construing the core of their faith as not being contradictory with Western values, norms and beliefs. We will examine the different ways in which this is accomplished through arguments about identity essence and change.

Group identity and essentialism

In the past, words such as 'stability', 'unity' and 'certainty' were said to describe identity phenomena accurately, but now it is common to argue that identities are characterised by 'diversity', 'flexibility', 'contradiction' and 'ambiguity'. Depending on the groups, circumstances and local situations, identity would take many different and changing forms. Questions of identity are viewed as the result of a continuing process of construction, choice and negotiation. Social scientists

tend to examine group identities as forms of organising and maintaining social relations rather than in terms of inherent characteristics. For example, many authors have examined how essentialist group beliefs function in the justification of forms of racism and exclusion.

Essentialist notions about group identities are also strategic resources for minority groups to argue for minority rights and the recognition of cultural differences (e.g. Verkuyten 2003, Wagner *et al*. 2009). Similar to indigenous peoples, members of minority groups can resist stigmatisation by taking pride in their 'essence' or authentic group identity. Furthermore, the concept of 'essentialism' is complex and has several discernable elements or criteria such as ideas about exclusivity, uniformity, inherence and underlying similarity (Haslam *et al*. 2000). An understanding of group identities in terms of naturalness and immutability of group memberships is different from an understanding in terms of critical or essential attributes. Group identities tend to have an internally graded structure so that some features or characteristics define them better than others. This means that some characteristics are considered essential because they express the true nature of the identity whereas others are more contingent. The essential characteristics define the core of the identity, and their removal or change would subvert or undermine the very nature of who 'we' are.

Matters of identity are matters of debate (Billig 1987). There are always various possible criteria and characteristics for defining the nature of one's group identity, such as in terms of institutions, systems of belief, ritual practices and a group of believers. The implication is that the act of characterising groups and group identities can be treated as an argumentative one that performs a variety of social functions, each with different ideological and political consequences. For example, by representing religion as a system of belief (Islam), problematic group stereotypes about its believers (Muslims) can be avoided and discriminatory practices can be justified (see Verkuyten 2012). And by claiming that religious identities are voluntarily held it can be argued that Muslims are less deserving of protection than racial minorities (Meer 2008). Similarly, Muslim organisations can try to reject the notion of Euro-Islam by construing the core of their faith as not being contradictory with Western beliefs and values. We will examine this amongst two Turkish Muslim organisations, and in order to contextualise the research, a short description of the two organisations will be presented first.

Islamic Community of Milli Görüş

'*Islamische Gemeinschaft Milli Görüş* (*IGMG*)' (Islamic Community of Milli Görüş) is the daughter organisation of MG/National Outlook Movement in Turkey and the umbrella organisation of 13 federations in Europe. MG was established by *Necmettin Erbakan* in 1969 as a political movement and was transformed into a political party in 1970. The movement's *Welfare Party* became the first ruling party in 1996 with an open Islamic agenda in the Republican period in Turkey (Yavuz 1997). From the beginning MG has had a religious program with a focus on the

establishment of Qur'an schools and vocational Imam Schools, on campaigning against the bans on wearing headscarf in schools and public sectors, and on religious education in the schools (Yavuz 2003). This religious program can be seen as challenging the secular regime in Turkey but campaigns against the banning of the headscarf in schools and universities are also interpreted as trying to promote individual liberties and human rights.

In Germany, IGMG's origin dates back to the foundation of '*Turkish Union of Europe*' in 1976. The movement adopted its current name, IGMG, in 1995, and is located in Kerpen, near Cologne. IGMG maintains that they have 513 mosques and 87,380 members throughout Europe (323 mosques and 54,865 members in Germany) and that more than 300,000 people take part in their Friday prayers (*Perspektive* 2003).

In the Netherlands, informal groups connected to MG during the 1970s came together and established their first organisation, '*Federatie van de Verenigingen en Gemeenschappen van Moslims*' (FVGM; Federation of Associations and Communities of Muslims), in 1981 (Canatan 2001). There are two federations of IGMG in the Netherlands. The *'Dutch Islamic Federation – South'* (NIF) was established in 1987. It is located in Rotterdam and has 16 mosques (personal communication with Mehmet Yaramış, the president of NIF, 16 April 2009). '*Milli Görüş Netherlands – North Federation*' (MGN) was established in 1997 as an offspring of NIF. It is located in Amsterdam and has about 21 mosques.

In both countries, MG is involved in three types of activities. First are the activities related to the five pillars of Islam. The movement establishes mosques for daily prayer (*Namaz*), organises pilgrimage tours (*Hajj*), collects and distributes alms (*Zekât*) and organises the festival of sacrifices (Islamic Community of Milli Görüş e.V. 2007). Second, there are activities that are oriented at integration in the host society, like language and vocational courses, and educational assistance. Third, the movement is involved in the distribution of aid to deprived regions in the world, the helping of Muslims in conflict zones and countries hit by natural disaster.

Fetullah Gülen movement

This movement was established by an ex-preacher, *Fethullah Gülen,* in the 1960s. It mainly follows the writings of *Said-i Nursi* and the books, sermon records and conversations of *Fethullah Gülen.* Although the movement has been increasingly vocal in the Turkish context by 'demanding the recognition of faith-based and morally conservative ways of life', it has appealed to 'non-confrontational forms of interaction and cooperation' (Turam 2007, pp. 9–10). In the Western context, the movement emphasises the importance of building cohesion and dialogue in the light of the teachings of their religious leader.

The movement has been active in Europe since the second half of the 1990s. It is not a mosque community but is active in education, media, entrepreneurship and interfaith/cultural dialogue. The movement claims to represent many Muslims

in Europe because it has a long history of 'moderate' Islam and tries to advance a positive image of Islam (Erdal 2007). However, in countries like the Netherlands, doubts about the purposes of the movement have been voiced and official inquiries into a possible 'hidden agenda' have been requested (Sharon-Krespin 2009). This has led to a commissioned investigation, and the report concluded that the movement's activities were not hampering the integration of Muslims in the country (Van Bruinessen 2010). Similarly, in Germany, the leftist party, '*Die Linke*', asked parliamentary questions about the Gülen movement related to issues of integration, constitutional threat and extreme nationalistic feelings. In response, the government maintained that there was no evidence for constitutional threats but they did not respond to the other issues.

The movement has the same organisational structure in Germany and in the Netherlands. Education is the central activity. It has more than 300 high schools and 8 universities in more than 100 countries worldwide. It has about 20 high schools in EU countries (12 in Germany and 5 in the Netherlands) and has many educational centres which provide additional school support. In addition, the movement has established several business associations and two federations in both countries. The dialogue activities are divided into two types: one promotes the dialogue between different religious groups, and the other disseminates the teachings of the religious leader to the academic world and the production of knowledge about Fethullah Gülen.

Material

We analysed the written publications of the two Turkish Muslim movements. We collected all the issues of three newspapers and magazines: *Doğuş* (January 2003–April 2009) and *Perspektive/Perspektif* (January 2002–December 2009), which are connected to the 'IGMG', and *Zaman Hollanda* (January 2007–December 2008) of Fethullah Gülen.

Doğuş is the unofficial publication of IGMG in the Netherlands. The first issue was published on February 1999. It was a monthly newspaper until September 2007, and after that appeared bi-weekly. The main language of the publication is Turkish. However, the number of pages in Dutch has increased recently. The editor of the newspaper maintains that the publication, with 50,000 copies, has the highest circulation amongst (Turkish) Muslims in the Netherlands. In total, we collected 74 issues of *Doğuş*.

Perspektive/Perspektif is the official monthly publication of IGMG in Germany. The first issue was published in 1994. Turkish and German are the languages used in the magazine. Although there were more pages in German in the past (around 30%), the number of pages in German has been reduced since January 2005 (to around 15%). In addition, since January 2007, the pages in German mainly contain translations of key articles in Turkish. The magazine is an internal publication of the movement and its 15,000 copies are distributed to the members of IGMG in all European countries in which the movement is active. It represents the official position of IGMG. We collected 97 issues of *Perspektive/Perspektif.*

Zaman Hollanda is the publication of the Fethullah Gülen movement in the Netherlands. The first issue had 10,000 copies and was published in October 2005. It was a monthly tabloid newspaper until January 2007, and it turned into a weekly one since then. According to the former director of the Time Media Group, the newspaper did not reach its goal of establishing an intellectual magazine about Muslims in the Netherlands and therefore its publication was stopped in January 2009. We collected 83 issues of *Zaman Hollanda.*

In order to get a better understanding of the publications and organisations, we also conducted in-depth interviews with the editors of these publications and with organisational leaders. Three interviews were carried out both in Germany and in the Netherlands and for each of the two movements.

Analysis

Analysis proceeded by first building up a data file of all the articles related to debates about the compatibility of Western and Islamic values, and the Euro-Islam debate more specifically. The data were subjected to a form of thematic analysis (Kellehear 1993) in which 'Euro-Islam' was the central theme of concern. In total, there were 53 articles that discussed the topic of Euro-Islam and religious reform more generally: 22 in *Doğuş,* 14 in *Perspektive/Perspektif* and 17 in *Zaman Hollanda.* We examined these articles for each of the three magazines and in each of the two countries separately. The articles were analysed first in terms of identifying the main claims and arguments related to the Euro-Islam debate. Subsequently, analytical attention was focused on the ways in which arguments about essence and reform construe and accomplish a compatible relationship between Islam and life in the West.

There are important differences between MG and Fethullah Gülen, and there are national differences between Germany and the Netherlands. However, we found that there were very few differences in the argumentative strategies used in the three magazines and interviews in the two countries. This indicates that there are a limited number of ways for dealing with the demands for reform in Islam. The fact that there were a limited number of argumentative strategies to construe a particular identity is a common finding in discourse studies (Billig 1987, Benwell and Stokoe 2006). Because our central focus is on identifying these strategies, we treated the different articles as a single data set. We have included excerpts from the magazines and interviews to illustrate the ways in which these Turkish Muslim organisations deal with the demand for change while trying to maintain a 'true' Islamic identity. For reasons of space, we have only included a limited number of extracts but there are many that make similar points.

Findings

In this section, we first discuss the rejection of the label Euro-Islam as symbolising a fundamentally altered group identity. This is the first and necessary step to subsequently examine in what ways these organisations try to reconcile Islam with

the host society. Then, we will show that one of the ways to ward off the demand for reform is by making a distinction between group belief (Islam) and group psychology (Muslims). Subsequently, we examine how the distinction between types of group belief (religion and culture) can work in managing the demand for religious reform. Then, we want to show that the discussion about Euro-Islam does not only involve the nature of Islam but also the nature of the Western world and that both can be construed as being compatible.

Euro-Islam

We first examined the terms used in the publications for describing and defining the position of Muslims in Europe. In the 83 issues of *Perspektif* (from 2002 to 2009), the concept most often used was 'Muslims in Europe' (99 times), followed by 'Muslims living in Europe' (68 times). Terms such as 'Dutch Muslim' and 'German Muslim' were not used, and the term 'European Muslims' was used only eight times. Furthermore, when we asked in our interviews whether this term was used to define Europeanised Muslims, our interviewees said that this was not the case and that the term was a purely descriptive one, indicating that there are Muslims who live in Europe. So a distinction was made between Muslims living in Germany/Netherlands (being *in* the society) and German/Dutch Muslims (being *of* the society). In contrast to the former, the latter implies a qualified form of Islam which was considered impossible and given a clear question mark, like in the title of the present paper which was taken from the heading of an article in *Perspektive*. In one of our interviews, a member of IGMG stated that 'Muslims in Europe', 'Muslims living in Europe' or 'European Muslims' are all terms to identify those Muslims who understand and accept European democracy, secularism and the rule of law and who have chosen their country of resident as their new and permanent homeland. MG is engaged in an intellectual endeavour, he argues, to make Muslims organise their lives in accordance with these realities. This, he stressed, does not mean that a new European-Islam should be developed but rather that essential Islamic principles get rooted in the cultural reality of Western Europe.

The other two magazines that we examined provided a similar picture. For example, in *Zaman Hollanda* of the Gülen movement, there was an article addressing Euro-Islam (Demirhan 2006). According to this article, the notion of Euro-Islam transforms the belief and therefore potentially undermines Islamic identity. It was further argued that the Euro-Islam debate prevents Islam from being a religion only and forces Muslims to take positions on socio-political issues. The article refers to statements of the editor of *Jylland-Posten* newspaper, that published the Mohammed cartoons, who argued that he did not want to offend Muslims but rather to get Muslims involved in public debates about freedom of speech. According to the article, this undermines Islam as a religion and subverts the religious significance of Islam in the lives of Muslims.

For many Muslim organisations, any move that distances Muslims from the true nature of Islam represents a threat to their religious identity. In the Dutch and

German publications of IGMG, 'Euro-Islam' and 'moderate Islam' are presented as distortions and a degeneration of the faith. It is maintained that by acknowledging the 'Euro' aspect of Euro-Islam, universal values of Islam are distorted for the sake of integrating Islam into European cultural realities. In an article entitled 'The Language of Islamophobia' in *Perspektive* (2004), it is stated:

> In Europe, Euro-Islam, does not refer to the people called 'Muslim' who live by Islam, but, rather represents an understanding that denies the foundations of Islam and the Islamic acts and practices in particular. This understanding is illustrated by a recent joint statement of the German and Dutch Free Democrats that 'Muslims visiting mosques reject Euro-Islam, which is a dangerous development'.

It is maintained that European secularism is developing in the direction of a kind of inquisition that imposes a particular religious interpretation on Muslims. Restricting or even banning these practices that directly implicate and express Muslim identity would imply a distortion of the faith and would undermine people's ability to live by their religion. This subverting of the very nature of the group would also have important social and political consequences. It would mean a lack of a shared Islamic identity which undermines the political and legal claims of Muslims. Therefore, in their publications, the two Muslim organisations urge Muslims to be cautious about the detrimental social and political effects of Euro-Islam and to maintain their true Islamic identity.

Group belief and group psychology

Religions and religious groups can be represented in different ways. For example, religions can refer to systems of belief and a group of believers. Importantly, these different understandings make it possible to represent religions in flexible and discursively strategic ways. For example, Verkuyten (2012) shows how the politician Geert Wilders, a right-wing populist in the Netherlands, uses Islam as a system of belief to argue for discrimination against Muslims as a group of people, and how this distinction functions to mitigate against accusations of prejudice and racism.

The same distinction between group belief (Islam) and group psychology (Muslims) is used in the publications of the two Turkish Muslim movements, but with different ideological and political implications. The title of an article in Doğuş (Özcan 2011) asks, '*Is there fear of Islam or of Muslims in Europe?*' The article argues that there is a negative image of Muslims because of the media associating Islam with terror and violence. However, as is argued, there should not be a fear of Islam but rather of Muslim individuals who misunderstand and misuse their belief. The possible danger stems from misguided Muslims as people rather than Islam as a system of belief. The implication is that the monitoring of 'confused' groups and individuals is needed rather than a change in the religious belief system.

The distinction between group belief and group psychology is not only made in relation to terrorism but also in relation to individual experiences. A belief system

is something other than the way in which individuals experience and live their daily life. Individual experiences differ and people change but this does not imply that the belief system needs to be reformed. The following extract is from our interview with the president of the NIF:

> I certainly do not find it right to add an affix or suffix to Islam such as Euro-Islam or moderate-Islam. Huh! You may ask whether Muslims will not be influenced by certain elements of the existing culture in Europe. They certainly will, but it does not implicate Islam. It is related to individual experiences of the societal context. (Personal communication, 16 April 2009)

The responsiveness to the Western context of individual Muslims but not of Islam is emphasised in various articles. Individuals cannot stay immune to the context they live in, and in this sense Muslims in Europe differ from those living in the Muslim world. This, however, is not to be a problem for Islam because the system of belief does not depend on the followers. Muslim individuals adapt and have to adapt to the context in which they find themselves, but the divine revelation and genuine *Sunnah* that define the true essence of Islam cannot be changed and applies to all humans everywhere. Unchanging Islamic principles should be anchored in the everyday reality in which people find themselves.

   The distinction between group psychology (experiences of individual Muslims) and group belief (Islam) is rhetorically useful to argue simultaneously for the possibility of change in the ways in which Muslims experience their faith and live their lives, and for the eternal religious truths of the religious belief system. The distinction makes it possible to respond favourably to the societal demands for change but without in any way subverting the very nature or true essence of one's religion. Demands for change are typically directed at people as members of a particular social group. A religion without people believing in it is a powerless threat and would make the societal demand for change a kind of philosophical exercise. Therefore, a focus on Muslims as a group of people rather than on Islam as a belief system is useful for warding off demands that would imply potential subversions of the core of one's belief. People can adapt and change but the religious belief system is eternal.

Religion and culture

A strict distinction between Islam as a belief system and Muslims as a group of people is a delicate one and sometimes difficult to keep up. Talking about Muslims inevitably raises questions about Islam, and vice versa. Furthermore, the concept of Euro-Islam typically refers to a localised Islam with European influences. What European Muslims are expected to do is to accept the challenges of the encounter with the European culture context and to adapt by allowing changes to their faith (Tibi 2002). Muslim organisations often face these demands from European politicians and opinion makers. As a response, they try to find a way between, on the

one hand, dealing with the realities of European cultures and politics, and, on the other hand, maintaining their Islamic faith and a shared Muslim identity.

In addition to making a distinction between group belief and group psychology, it is possible to make a distinction between types of group beliefs, and between religion and culture in particular. This distinction allows one to argue that there are elements that cannot be changed because they constitute the true essence of the faith, but that there are also contingent aspects that are open to change. In our interview, the president of Gülen-inspired Dialogue Forum in Germany stated the following:

> Islam has already accepted diversity from the beginning on. Islam says that we cre-
> ated you differently so that you get to know each other. Now, these diversities will
> exist. It is clear that a Muslim in Germany is not the same as a Muslim in Indonesia.
> There are unchangeable and changeable things. What is unchangeable? Wherever
> you are in the world, daily *Salaat* is obligatory according to Islamic teaching. Fasting
> is obligatory, so is *Hajj*. Alms are obligatory. But, when it comes to dressing, you
> cannot say that you have to wear this colour or style. Here, traditions, customs enter
> into the picture. It means that there are requirements of Islam and that there are things
> which are not Islamic and are seen as beautiful according to the culture and customs.
> (Personal communication, 26 May 2009)

In this excerpt and in several articles in the magazines, there is acceptance of diversity within the Islamic world. This diversity refers to cultural differences and is presented as a logical and inevitable reality. Many aspects that are often seen as being Islamic actually would be rooted in customs and cultures, and not in Islam. Therefore, they would not undermine the doctrine and orthopraxis of Islam. It implies that these aspects can be changed when they contradict the European way of life. In addition, the beautiful things offered by European civil-isation can actually be adopted by Islam. It is this openness to cultural diversity and change that gives Islam a degree of flexibility in accommodating different cultures, leading to diversity within Muslim communities. However, change and diversity cannot apply to beliefs and practices that are intrinsically part of the faith. There cannot be qualified forms of Islam because the doctrinal requirements are clear and binding for all followers. The limits of change and the position of their organisation were explained in the same interview by making a distinction between 'tejeddut' and 'tajdid':

> If we understand reformation similar to what was initiated by Martin Luther and if
> the same changes would take place in our traditions, then it is a reform. If the same
> is not taking place then we should try to understand it, we should try to explain this
> with the terminology of these societies. Now, in Islam, the term 'tejeddut' should
> not be mixed up with 'tajdid'. Tajdid is about maintaining the essential elements
> while giving interpretations to new developments in the light of the basic sources,
> whereas tejeddud is to interpret and change the basic elements. These two concepts
> and endeavours are very different from each other. In one of them [tejeddud] you
> change the core. In the other [tajdid], you interpret an event on the basis of the core.
> These two concepts should not be mixed up. However, since there is no difference in

the eyes of a Westerner, they can only see things according to their own approach. But there is no possibility that Gülen movement is a reform movement because there is no novelty in what we are doing. Today, if you look at the discourse of Fethullah Gülen, you can find everything he says in the basic sources of Islam, Quran and Hadith.

Here, it is argued that in Europe religious reform is understood in relation to the reformation period, but this is not an option for Islam. Using the contrast-pair 'tejeddut' and 'tajdid', it is argued that Islamic principles cannot be changed but rather should be anchored in the European cultural reality. The Quran and Hadith contain the doctrinal nature of Islam, and Western-like reform would undermine the very nature of the faith (Bilgrami 1992). The core of Islam is universal and has a homogenising influence on Muslim believers of different cultural backgrounds. Moreover, it is argued that unlike cultural artefacts, this core is compatible with Western values.

Compatibilities: Islam and the West

Group identities are defined in relation to each other. Whether 'our' way of life is incompatible with 'theirs' depends not only upon how 'we' are but also on how 'they' are. Differences between groups can be represented as fundamental incompatibilities but it also is possible to define similarities. Furthermore, it is possible to characterise the position and demands of 'the other' as not reflecting their own true essence, making changes to one's identity unnecessary. This means that Muslim organisations can try to define the nature of Islam as being compatible with the nature of Western Europe, which would mean that the former is not in need of change and reform.

In the publications, there are various articles that discuss the key Islamic concepts in trying to show that these are compatible with the core values of the West. One of the most controversial concepts is Shari'a, which is discussed in several articles. An example is a long quote of a non-Muslim scholar, Prof. Heinz Halm, that is discussed approvingly in an article in *Perspektive* (Koyuncu, 2005):

> It is a misconception that German Basic Law and Shari'a are like "water and fire" and negate one another. Shari'a embraces practices including one's ritual prayer in a mosque or somewhere else, fasting during Ramadan which constitutes no legal, moral or medical problem for the society, the pilgrimage to Mecca, male circumcision. In this regard, it is not reasonable to demand from Muslims to renounce Shari'a. A Jewish-Orthodox believer has never been demanded to renounce the canon of Moses and adopt an idea called Euro-Jewism. Indeed, Shari'a contains certain traditional practices that are incompatible with the rule of law such as polygamist marriages, divorce rules, the prohibition of conversion, inhuman punishment during the middle ages, and death penalty. But it is clear that these practices are not lawful and will never be legalized in secular Federal Germany.

In this excerpt from a native German 'outsider' and expert, it is argued that Shari'a and the German constitution are not contradictory. Therefore, demanding changes

in Shari'a practices is not necessary or right, the more so because some traditional practices that clearly contradict the German law are not practiced. Hence, it is not meaningful to demand for a reformation of Islam by abandoning Shari'a and such demands must have other than legal reasons.

A similar interpretation is made in another article on Euro-Islam in *Perspektive* (Ünye 2005). According to this article, Islam does not reject endeavours to find contemporary and Islamic solutions to new problems. Muslims should engage in intellectual activities to offer solutions to the question how to live in democratic European societies while remaining loyal to the *Fıkh* (rules) of their religion. The essence of the faith, it is maintained, is not in conflict with the contemporary laws of the countries of residence. *Shura* (consultative body), equality, justice and the principle of not to harm and not to be harmed are unchangeable rules of Quranic revelation and entirely compatible with core Western values and principles. In addition, Muslims would not be against democracy, human rights, religious and cultural freedoms and civil society. As long as these freedoms are applied also to them and Muslims are not forced to practice *Haram* (forbidden), they have no problems at all with the juridical norms and values of their country of residence.

In the publications it is argued that the demand for a Euro-Islam would actually mean that Western Europe does not live up to its own core principles of tolerance and religious freedom. The demand would reflect an identity crisis in Europe and would have political reasons. Islam is defined as the new enemy and this serves the political interests of European politicians. Advocates of Euro-Islam are Westerners who would be in search of a new enemy and are increasingly hostile to Islam. Therefore, Muslims should be sceptical about the demands for reform that mainly would serve political purposes.

Conclusion

Muslim organisations face demands and pressures to reform their faith into a European Islam. The current study examined the argumentative strategies used by two major Turkish Muslim organisations to manage this demand for religious reform. It was shown that in rejecting the idea of a Euro-Islam, these organisations try to develop a societal acceptable position by making a distinction between the essence of the faith (group belief) and its followers (group psychology), by distinguishing between types of group belief (religion and culture) and by arguing for the compatibility between their belief and core Western values.

Similar to most Muslims living in Western Europe, the two Muslim organisations try to reconcile the 'true nature' of their religious identity with being part of the host society. In doing so, the distinction that the organisations make between group belief (Islam) and group psychology (Muslims) is an interesting type of rhetorical work. A focus on Muslims who as human beings need to adapt and inevitably will adapt to West European societies draws attention away from Islam as a system of belief. Interestingly, this same distinction is used by right-wing politicians to ward of accusations of prejudice when proposing discriminatory measures against Muslims (Verkuyten 2012). This shows that the

distinction between group belief and group psychology can be used rhetorically in very different ways.

The two Muslim organisations also made a distinction between culture and religion as two systems of belief, and this distinction was used to argue for the possibility of change but without religious reform. Cultures differ and change but the 'true nature' of Islam remains the same. Islam would be flexible enough to incorporate local cultural elements that are not in conflict with the Islamic belief. Furthermore, the practices that are considered to be incompatible with European cultural norms and values would not be Islamic but rather specific to particular cultures. Consequently, changing these practices to bring them more in line with West European values would not undermine Islam. Some other studies have also shown that in response to societal demands for change, Muslims make a distinction between Islam and ethnic cultures. Kahani-Hopkins and Hopkins (2002), for example, show that local born Muslims in Britain increasingly construct specific traditions as 'cultural rather than genuinely Islamic', such as the South Asian style of Islamic attire and male beards.

We focused on two Turkish Muslim organisations in two Western European countries. These movements differ in various respects such as organisational structure, engagement with the host society and aims and goals. In addition, there are differences between the Netherlands and Germany in integration policies, particularly in relation to Muslim communities (Yükleyen 2010). However, we found very few differences in the 'identity work' in relation to the Euro-Islam debate. There were a limited number of argumentative strategies used by both organisations and in the two countries for managing the societal demand for religious reform. This indicates that the discursive space for dealing with what is considered a problematic demand for a 'Euro-Islam' is restricted. There typically are a limited number of argumentative strategies and resources for challenging and justifying identity constructions and controversial ideological positions (Billig 1987, Kuroiwa and Verkuyten 2008). The discourse of the two organisations on Euro-Islam is more in line with Ramadan's (1999) position than with Tibi (2002). The organisations tried to argue for a reconciliation between Islamic doctrines and European values, and there are a limited number of ways for doing so. This implies that it can be expected that other Muslim organisations in other European countries who take this position will use similar argumentative strategies. However, it also implies that Muslim organisations in Europe that adopt a Tibi-like position probably will differ in their discourse about Euro-Islam.

The theoretical perspective in this paper is that group understandings are given shape through discourses and that there are a limited number of ways to fabricate identity definitions against alternatives. This focus on discourse and discursive strategies does not mean, of course, that various structural and political factors are not important for the ways in which Muslim organisations operate and present themselves. Opportunity structures and citizenship regimes differ between countries like the Netherlands and Germany and can have an impact on the quantity and

quality of the public claim makings and political activities of immigrant organisations (Koopmans *et al*. 2005). However, the level of group demands of Muslim organisations appears to be similar in different West European countries (Statham *et al*. 2005). More importantly, our aim was not to examine the role of opportunity structures but rather to identify the discursive ways in which the two Muslim organisations reject the idea of a Euro-Islam by construing the core of their faith as not being contradictory with Western values, norms and beliefs. We examined how in their official publications these organisations deal with the demand for developing a Euro-Islam by focusing on the ways in which they argue about identity essence and change. We do not know from our material whether these arguments represent explicit strategic choices. However, they do function in group relations and guide people's interpretations and self-understandings because social influence derives from the way in which group identities are defined (Reicher and Hopkins 2001, Benwell and Stokoe 2004). Arguments and acts of framing are key issues in determining how qualities, characteristics, events and circumstances are interpreted, presented and acted upon. This implies an analysis of the discourses of organisations and leaders that try to define a socially acceptable position without undermining the perceived essence of their group identity. This is what we have tried to present.

However, these definitions are never finished and the organisations' attempts and claims can be challenged by global and national developments. For example, political and economic developments in the country of origin can have an effect, like Turkey's possible EU membership. Turkish Muslim organisations in Europe have strong links to Turkey and give transnational support to groups, parties and organisations in Turkey, both politically and economically (Ostergaard-Nielsen 2001). In addition, the increased mobility of people can have an effect because it increases the ethnic and religious diversity of the Muslim population in Western Europe. Muslim immigrants from Somalia, Afghanistan and Iran may establish new associations and organisations and give a different interpretation of the Islamic faith and practices. This development may raise new questions and tensions for the ways in which Turkish Muslim organisations understand and define themselves. New developments create new commonalities and discrepancies in an ongoing attempt to define a viable and acceptable Muslim identity within a West European context.

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