

SWETLANA POGORELSKAYA. THE TURKISH COMMUNITY IN GERMANY: THE ISLAMIC FACTOR

Keywords: Internal politics of Germany; Turkish community; Turkish Sunnis; DITIB; Islam in the EU.

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Abstract. The Turkish community in Germany is well structured, has its own organizations and unions, maintains contacts with Turkey, and is represented in German political parties. From a civilian point of view, Turks are immeasurably integrated into German society better than people from other Moslem countries. However, the full integration of the Turkish population into German society depends on the degree of integration of Islam professed by them. And its integration is obstructed by the fact that both major religious unions are inextricably linked with Turkey. Is it possible to solve the problem? In the article, after a brief overview of the civil situation of the Turkish community, it is supposed to investigate to what extent its activities today are determined by the religious factor, what influence it has on its position in German society and to what extent, in cooperation with the institutions of the state, it manages to solve practical issues of the life of Turkish Moslems in Germany.

The Turkish community of Germany is an interesting and, perhaps, from a social point of view, rare phenomenon. Large,

active and well-structured ethnic communities in modern Western states are not uncommon, but the opportunity for their emergence is either the historical status of the state as the host country, or the presence of colonies in the past. Germany never was a host country and didn't want to be it. On the contrary, this prospect frightened the Germans in the 1990s in connection with discussions about the need to change immigration legislation urgently. It had no colonies at the time of the collapse of the colonialism system. Meanwhile, its Islamic community is one of the most powerful in Europe, and the pace in it is set by the unions of Turkish Sunnis, due to their number and good organization.

There are many problems with the Turkish community in Germany, since it is heterogeneous and, along with the law-abiding population, also includes elements dangerous to internal security. Moreover, the German authorities are less ready to tolerate its diverse connection with Turkey, especially after Erdogan came to power, who repeatedly emphasized that he considers the Turks living in Germany to be some kind of mediators between the two states.

In the short article, after a brief review of the civil situation of the Turkish community, it is supposed to explore one, but very important aspect – to what extent its activity today is determined by a religious factor and what effect it has on its position in German society.

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The emergence of the Turkish community in Germany took place due to the imperfection of its immigration law, and what they obtained in the end – the clumsiness of domestic politics and the underestimation of the role of Islam, which has long been considered something of a harmless cultural feature of migrants. From a modern perspective, one could reproach West German politicians for the lack of strategic thinking - however, in the Cold

War era, the entire world political process, and even more so, the life of such a "front-line" state as West Germany, went on in the shadow of bloc confrontation. Strategic thinking focused on issues of nuclear confrontation, and not on Islamic topics, which, in the context of the life of Western societies, became truly relevant not even in the 1990s, but only after 11.9.2001. At first, they just did not pay attention to the culture of labor migrants, then they did not pay attention to it within the framework of the ideology of domestic political "multiculturalism." Hardly anyone assumed that of the limited contingents of unskilled Turkish workers, working on temporary contracts in heavy, primarily in the steel industry and professing their religion in "yard mosques," on cartons from package boxes instead of prayer carpets, over time there will grow a new, well-structured community, an ethnic minority of Germany with a high-level cultural and religious claim – for example, building mosques whose minarets would be taller than the spires of nearby Christian churches. West Germany did not officially accept immigrants permanently unless they had German blood. Guest workers had to leave it after the expiration of their contracts. Workers from poor southern European countries – Portugal, Greece, Italy and Yugoslavia, basically did so, the Turks became an exception. The United States recommended the Germans to accept the Turkish contractors as part of the strategy of those years, to tie Turkey to the West. The integration of illiterate immigrants from rural Anatolia into German society was not required – they were settled in hostels at industrial enterprises. However, as families were reunited, guest workers moved from hostels to old working-class quarters, creating infrastructure for "their" consumer. This is how the Turkish regions of Frankfurt, Cologne, Berlin, and other industrial centers were formed. Having lived in the country for a certain period with a working visa, workers, according to the law, could receive a permanent residence permit. In 1973 (at that time 910,500 Turks lived in Germany), the mass importation of labour from non-EU member

states was banned. It did not work, because according to the Regulator of Exceptions to the Ban, entry and subsequent reunification with families continued. The number of family members quickly exceeded the number of guest workers themselves. By 1983, migrant workers made up only a quarter of the entire Turkish community – 53 per cent of the Turkish population were families who entered in accordance with family reunification, and 17 per cent were born in Germany. In 1983, Helmut Kohl, who headed the conservative-liberal coalition, raised the issue for the first time at a high level. The Return Assistance Act was adopted – migrant workers who decided to return to Turkey were paid 10,000 marks for an adult and 1,500 marks for a child – fair amount of money at the time. However, the law did not work. The returnees (only about 250,000 people) could not take roots in Turkey, many of them soon returned to Germany.

Over time, the social composition of the Turkish community has changed significantly. In the time of the “guest workers,” it was relatively homogeneous in material terms. In the second generation, the processes of property stratification and the ongoing creation of infrastructure “for themselves” led to the emergence of their own “middle class” – doctors, teachers, lawyers. Labour organizations arose. The third generation went into German politics, citizens with Turkish roots were in almost all significant parties, most of them at the territorial levels, but there are Turkish deputies of the Bundestag, and Gem Ozdemir at one time was the leader of the Green party. The number of deputies was consistently growing. In 2009, there were five deputies of Turkish origin in the Bundestag. In the last Bundestag elections in 2021, there were 18 of them, most of them from the SPD and the Greens. In matters significant for Turkey, however, the Turkish political lobby is forced to be torn between Turkey and Germany.

Intriguingly, the fourth generation, the late 1990s – early 2000s, turned back to Turkey and Islam. At first, the reason for

this was the fact that the process of integrating the Turks into German society paralleled the process of their disintegration from the same society. This was due to the status of “guest workers,” even in the 1980s, more than twenty years after their arrival, they were still expected to leave, taking with them German-born children and grandchildren. Three generations grew up in a situation unclear from an administrative and psychological point of view, living between countries. After the modernization of the immigration legislation of the Federal Republic of Germany at the beginning of the 2000s, their situation stabilized, but the consciousness of their specialness in comparison with the Germans was thoroughly strengthened among young people. With the strengthening and politicization of Islam after the end of the era of confrontation of the blocs, and, at the same time, with the growth of Turkey’s ambitions as a regional force, there was an opportunity not only for a new self-identification, but also for hopes to transform the country in which they were born and raised – Germany. It’s interesting that, by the end of the 2000s, according to polls, almost 40 per cent young Turks who lived in Germany and had German citizenship considered Erdogan to be their leader, and not Angela Merkel.

The processes of structuring the civic institutions of the community formally established in the 1990s. In 1995, a parent organization, the Turkish Community of Germany, was created in Hamburg, declaring itself a representative of all Turks living in Germany, regardless of their citizenship; it currently includes 260 organizations and unions. The “Turkish Community of Germany” has political goals regarding vitally important issues for Turkish fellow citizens in their daily lives in Germany.

However, a significant part of these issues was somehow related to issues of practical profession. These were primarily issues of teaching Islam in schools. One can also recall the initiatives and even lawsuits of the Union of Turkish Parents, which demanded Turkish girls to be out of swimming as part of physical education lessons and not be involved in overnight

excursions. The same topic included processes in which Turkish women working in state structures (for example, in schools) defended their right to wear a hijab.

It can be said that despite the laicist and liberal (in matters of Islam) intellectual and political stratum, the strata of the community remains conservative and traditionalist. Therefore, its religious organizations define its life sometimes much more than German politics. Moreover, Islam of the Turkish community, which for the most part tends towards stability and strengthening of its life in Germany, is much more intense than Arab Islam, runs to interaction with the state in solving important issues for itself.

The Union of Islamic Cultural Centers (VIKZ), the oldest Turkish-Islamic cultural union founded in 1973, during the years when Islam of Turkish migrant workers developed in Germany under the auspices of cultural affiliation, contains about 300 mosques and Koran schools, was one of the four co-founders of the Coordination Council of Muslims of Germany, created in 2007 as a working platform for cooperation with the Islamic Conference of Germany.

The Union of Turkish-Islamic Cultural Associations in Europe (ATIB) is the main agency of Turkish cultural organizations that united in Cologne in 1987.

Both of the largest Turkish Islamic unions in Germany - DITIB and Milli Gorus - are continuance of Turkish religious structures.

The Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DITIB), founded in 1984 in Cologne, is subordinate to the official Turkish structures (religious affairs departments, Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı), the most powerful organization of Turkish Sunnis today, one of the four co-founders of the Muslim Coordination Council. The respectable, socially well-integrated and interested in stability and good relations between Turkey and Germany residents, the strong middle class of the Turkish community participate in these organizations or sympathize them. Imams in

the mosque of this union were sent from Turkey for a period of 5 years and worked in contact with consulates, its main language was Turkish. This union today unites the vast majority of the Turkish population (and according to its own data, 70 per cent of all Muslims living in Germany), its functionaries cooperate with both the Turkish and German authorities. By the time of its foundation, it contained 135 mosques, now 960 (out of 2600 of all mosques in Germany).

Founded in 1976 in Cologne and officially registered in 1995, the Islamic Community of Milli Gorus (IGMG), the "National View," also had its roots in Turkey, supporting the Islamist Nekhmaddin Erbakan. It has kept in contact with Turkey's radical Islamist organizations opposed to Laicist politics. In the 80s, the movement was replenished mainly by Islamist oppositionists of the Turkish government, who at that time received the status of "political refugees" (as clobbered on "freedom of belief") in West Germany. Having an extensive structure throughout Europe, in Germany it belonged to one of the largest organizations after DITIB. According to its own data, it united more than 500 communities around the world (communities are grouped around mosques), of which 304 communities in Germany. In Germany, it was popular primarily among the population of industrial metropolis. In 1984, in Cologne a radical wing broke away from it - the Union of Islamic Associations and Communities (ICCB, banned in December 2001), grouped around Gemalettin Kaplan (known as the "Cologne caliph") and later headed by his son Metin. Both lived in Germany with "political refugee" status.

After 11.9.2001, Milli Gorus became the object of close attention of the German special services, since the initiators of the terrorist attack, who lived in Germany as students, were members of the community around one of the mosques belonging to Milli Gorus. And in 2009, the prosecutor's office became interested in him - suspicions arose that terrorist associations in the Middle East were supported at the expense of

this organization. Therefore, in 2010, the Islamic Conference of the Federal Republic of Germany, despite the protests of other participants, suspended the union from cooperation.

In religious terms, the Turkish community of Germany, even in modern times, is still much more conservative than the population of Turkey as a whole. The reason is the social origin of Sunni "guest workers" who came out of the underdeveloped rural regions of Anatolia. Using the hatches of German legislation, the Turks of Germany had a better chance of asserting their religious rights than if they lived in Turkey.

In the negotiation process aimed at integrating Islam, which started the German government, creating the Islamic Conference of Germany, its main partners were Turkish religious unions, as representatives of the most part of the Muslim population in Germany.

Training imams for German mosques of Islamic unions remains a central issue of cooperation. Germany, in the interests of its internal security, would like to go back completely on the "import" of imams, preparing them in German educational institutions. As a rule, imams arrive at German mosques only for a limited period. So imams of DITIB mosques are sent by the Turkish Department of Religious Affairs to Germany in a rotational manner and paid by Turkey. Similarly, it was in the interest of the state to teach Islam to Muslim schoolchildren in German schools as part of the subject of "religion," and not in the "schools of the Quran" at mosques.

In 2019, the state started training imams in Germany, opening the Islamic College at Osnabrück University. The subject of "Islamic studies" began to be offered at theological faculties in German universities since 2010. Since, however, the decisions of the Islamic Conference serve as guidelines, both Turkish unions – DITIB and Milli Gorus, do not participate in it, offering their own projects, as well as concerning the teaching of Islam in the framework of the school subject "religion."

Thus, according to the DITIB project, from 2020, Turkish graduates of German schools wishing to receive the major “imam” go to Turkey, where they get religious education. Then they return to Germany, where in universities they are trained in Islamic studies - after which they acquire the right to teach in schools. Prior to this, DITIB, without waiting for a single decision of the Islamic Conference, at the level of its land unions concluded agreements with the governments of the federal states on the teaching of Islam within the framework of the subject of “religion.”

The German state (the project is carried out at the level of federal states) requires one thing - ensuring sufficient independence from Turkey. In this regard it tried administratively to prevent the implementation of the project in schools in the state of Hesse, however, with no success. Somewhere cooperation overcomes the “red lines” of Islam - for example, the state of Lower Saxony demanded that the teaching of Islam comply with the general rules of the school subject “religion,” prescribing “the thematization of the diversity of sexual identities and the rejection of their discrimination,” which the Islamic Union interpreted as interference with theological postulates.

Conflicts between the German land authorities and Islamic unions in the course of practical interaction on this pressing issue are a clash of two paradigms: the government would like to have in Germany a “German Islam” focused on theological issues, free from ethnic roots, but the Muslim diaspora of Germany is not only theologically diverse, but also multi-ethnic. Islamic unions have their own limits, which they cannot exceed if they want to keep themselves. Obviously, the optimal partner for the authorities in terms of political correctness would be the unification of “progressive Islam,” but it does not represent the diaspora. German liberal critics indignantly point out that land authorities (e.g. in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia) are negotiating with two major Turkish unions, DITIB and the

“Islamic Religious Community of North Rhine-Westphalia” (behind which the Islamist Milli Gorus hides), while the Liberal-Islamic Union has not even been invited to develop programmes. However, if its representatives start teaching their version of Islam in schools, Muslim parents will again send their children to the “Koran schools” at mosques, to imams appointed from abroad.

If the government wants to integrate Muslims, it has to learn to work with what it is – and in this case, the large and influential unions of Turkish Sunnis as DITIB, in turn interested in collaborating with the German authorities, are partners that cannot be ignored.

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The reasons for the complex integration of the Turkish community are primarily in its constant replenishment from the outside. It did not limit itself to guest workers and their offspring born and raised in Germany, but grew up by reuniting families, they preferred marrying children to members of their clans from the same rural regions of Anatolia, from where guest workers came to Germany. In addition, it was replenished with political refugees, also reunited with families. As a result, while the upper intellectual and socially successful layer gave Germany lawyers, doctors, scientists, journalists, teachers, politicians and even writers, the diaspora remained as conservative and traditional as decades ago.

In such conditions, the ties with Turkey, with the “roots,” was inevitable – economic, political, personal. Now this connection is successfully used by Erdogan. The Islamic factor plays a huge role in this. It is by virtue of the traditional community, which is still dominated by people from conservative areas of Turkey and their offspring, that it is an integral identity factor.

The German authorities, far from decrying Islam as a world religion, neglected their own, intra-German Islam for too long, since its believers (Turks, Arabs, Kurds and many others who profess various directions of Islam) were formally in a country with a temporary residence status. Too late, starting to correct mistakes and to integrate “own” Islam, but not realizing the specifics of this religion, the authorities again began to make mistakes, demanding from internal Islam the same clear domestic political organization as from Christians or Jews. It is not surprising that it has so far managed to achieve success only with a small Ahmadiyyah Jamaat.

The powerful unions of Turkish Sunnis, primarily DITIB, having behind them Turkey (a NATO member growing into a regional force) and the dominant part of the diaspora, can afford a more independent position in negotiations with the authorities rather than small Islamic organizations. The DITIB negotiations with the authorities on the practical aspects of the life of Muslims in Germany (especially on the training of imams and on the teaching of Islam in schools) sometimes seem to be Turkey’s negotiations with Germany on the amenities of the religion of the Turkish population, despite the fact that DITIB in these negotiations emphasizes its independence in force.

However, having allowed the creation of a powerful diaspora from Turkey, with which, within the framework of Western blocs and alliances, good relations are needed in strategic interests, the German government is forced to reckon with the peculiarities of Turkish Sunnis – if, of course, it does not want to lose them again within its own country, turning away from their faith or trying to remake it into a convenient option for itself.

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ALEXANDER GORDON. MOSLEM IMMIGRATION AS A THREAT TO EUROPEAN IDENTITY: THE DOCTRINE OF THE GREAT REPLACEMENT

*Keywords: immigration; Islam in
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Abstract. The article examines the circumstances of the spread in the socio-political life of the West of the doctrine of the French writer Renaud Camus about the “Great Replacement,” implying the loss by European peoples of their identity under the influence of Islam and immigration from Africa and Asia. When assessing the particular popularity of Camus’ ideas in France, attention is drawn to both objective demographic prerequisites and collective neuroses caused by the depressive state of national consciousness, as an example of which the phenomena of xenophobia in the history of the country are analyzed.

The social and political life of many European countries has recently been strongly influenced by the immigration issue.