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SWETLANA POGORELSKAYA. MOSLEMS IN GERMANY: IS RADICALIZATION POSSIBLE?

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Abstract. The potential danger of radicalization of the Islamic diaspora of Germany is considered in connection with the ethnic composition, religious characteristics and in the context of measures taken by the state to integrate Islam and to prevent Islamic terrorism.

The involvement of the EU countries in the Russian – Ukrainian conflict on the side of Ukraine and the related debate about the intensity and limits of participation in it, displaced from the news feeds of the Western media the topic of Islamic radicalism in the EU as thoroughly as this topic for Europe no longer exists. However, has Europe ceased to exist for radical Islam, has it lost interest in it in the same way as Europe (at least on paper) – in it?

The proposed short article on the German example will attempt to show that the constellations that took place in previous years, seriously disturbing the German security services and reflected in the German media, aren't going anywhere. In theory, radicalization of the Muslim diaspora is still possible. However, by what parameters?

In the article, the likely radical potential of the Muslim community in Germany will be considered in connection with the ethnic and religious diversity of this community and in connection with the measures taken by state structures to prevent and combat Islamic terrorism.

Due to its internal political characteristics and the nature of its legal system, Germany has for too long rejected the very idea of obligatory integration of its Muslim diaspora into the life of the country, which originated with immigrant Islam, as well as the need to closely monitor the activities of its organizations. It was assumed that most of its members (migrant workers, refugees, members of their families) are in the country temporarily (from a

legal point of view, that is so), and Islam, especially during the period of opposition of the blocs, was generally considered an insignificant cultural feature of this social stratum, especially since the ideas of multiculturalism dominated domestic politics.

Thus, by the beginning of the new millennium, when the danger of Islamic terrorism acquired an obvious character for the Western countries and was widely thematized in politics and in the media space as a new threat, in Germany there was a very strong Muslim diaspora, diverse both ethnically and in the versions of Islam, functioning on parallel ways of the state's life and, in its nature, prone to radicalization. By this time, it was also clear that Muslims in Germany were for a long time, if not forever. They are part of the life of the country and, therefore, their own life, as well as the functioning of their organizations, must be integrated at least into the existing legal system.

The perception of the need to integrate Islam prompted German politics to dialogue with Muslim organizations and unions interested in it. At the same time, there was a political and legal marginalization of Islamic organizations that were not capable of internal political integration or were not interested in it. The government's course towards radical Islamic associations was significantly stiffened during the immigration crisis of 2014–2017, when the country received large contingents of Muslim refugees from the Middle East and when Islamic terrorism, which the Germans had previously heard only in the news from abroad, came to Germany, or rather returned Germany. As it was represented in it for a long time, it did not advertise its considerable potential in it, and even more so did not demonstrate it in terrorist actions within the country. It lived in Germany, and went to fight to other countries. During the confrontation of the blocs and in the first ten years after its end, Germany – out of ideological grounds and within the framework of its own, legislation on the provision of “political asylum” which has not changed significantly for many years, – generously endowed the status of political refugees with persons persecuted for beliefs in

their countries. On these ways, it, among other things, absorbed the powerful and diverse forces of Islamists, from venerable ideologists-preachers (later called “preachers of hate”) [1] to radical militants, and these forces came to the country not to fight the German order, but to live in it legally and constantly. They reunited with families, bringing wives and numerous kinship to themselves, forming entire clans, recruited supporters from among the local Muslim youth, mainly the notorious “fourth generation of migrant workers” (youth who rejected integration and returned to their religious and ethnic identity), as well as from students and young scientists from Arab space who came to Germany to study.

The perception that for radical Islamic forces Germany of the 1990s became the country where they lived, consolidated and developed, emerged into German politics only after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in the United States. At this phase, German politics first paid close attention to its internal Islam and officially recognized that from the “cultural peculiarity” of migrants (migrant workers, refugees), Islam has turned into a powerful force that determines the daily life of a huge diaspora, i.e. part of the country’s permanent population, not to mention even more formally “temporary” migrants. The branching and formalization of Muslim structures within the country, the politicization and radicalization of professed Islam, as well as the fact that all this, being formally within the state, develops, nevertheless, in fact, outside it, became obvious.

Terrorist Islamist acts overtook Germany only as Salafi groups strengthened and during the migration crisis of 2014–2016 when the country was filled first with “wild” Muslim “refugees” not integrated into local structures, those who came to fight as soon as possible, and secondly, very young, poorly educated and poor people, leaving families in their countries and, by virtue of this, vulnerable to IS pressure and blackmail. At this time, Germany has been implementing a new strategy for several years to tame its internal law-abiding Islam through the permanent

institution of cooperation between the state and diaspora organizations – the Islamic Conference under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, encouraging moderate organizations and marginalizing the radicals. The new, radicalized masses have significantly slowed down the process of Islam integration.

A few words about what the diaspora is currently ethnically and religiously. Its most significant part is still Turkish, consisting of descendants of migrant workers who came to the country in the early 60s, as well as “refugees” accepted at different times due to their “persecution for beliefs” in Turkey. [2]

Guest workers, their offspring and their continuously replenishing kinship from Turkey are traditionally loyal to both Germany and the Turkish state, their mosques belong to the Turkish-run DITIB union and accept muftis appointed from Turkey. The second flow, which formed the Turkish diaspora for the most part in the 1980s and 1990s, consisted of persons admitted under the “Law on the Provision of Political Asylum” (until its first tightening in 1993). It consisted not only of Kurds, [3] but, often, of radical Muslims, and radical so much that they were persecuted by the Turkish authorities. It was such refugees who made a considerable contribution to the radicalization of Turkish Islam within Germany. Their mosques are mostly owned by the Milli Gyorush Union.

Germany’s next flow of Muslim diaspora formation is refugees from Arab space. The social structure of the Muslim population of Germany changed with their arrival, – the Turks from a social point of view represented a relatively prosperous group, while Arab refugees created a layer of socially needy and at the same time criminogenic Muslims (an example of the Abu Chaker clan in Berlin).

Before the immigration crisis in 2015–2017 about 63 per cent of Muslims living in Germany were of Turkish origin. In addition to them, Arabs, Bosnians, Pakistanis, Afghans, Chechens, Kosovo Albanians were represented. Due to the ethnic diversity of Muslims in Germany, almost all significant areas of Islam were

also represented: Turkish Sunnis dominated in number, they were followed by Shiites (Alevites, Iranian Imamites, Turkish Shiites, Ismailis), Sufi groups.

Having received during the migration crisis of 2014-2016, more than a million Muslims at once, Germany became the owner of the largest Islamic community in Europe (more than 5 million people).

The relatively stable Turkish diaspora and the rest, represented in Germany by Muslim organizations and unions, were opposed by a huge number of disorganized, restless Muslims from Arab countries after 2015. Germany formally accepted Syrian refugees in the first turn, but a considerable number of supposed Syrians were migrants from the Maghreb countries who bought Syrian passports in Istanbul. These were usually young men, sometimes even minors according to documents or without them at all.

Turkish Sunnis were concerned about the quantitative strengthening of Arab Islam. With the increase in the share of Arabs, organizations and groups belonging to the Central Council of Muslims of Germany, already known for their radical positions and competing with the Islamic Council of Germany intensified. [4] A stable conservative majority of the Turkish community does not support the radicalization of Islam in Germany.

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In the last decade, Islam has been a matter of state concern and control in Germany. The country has a (mainly) well-coordinated, structured struggle against Islamism, involving both preventive and repressive measures and covering all levels of society - from state bodies to civil organizations. For this, the state has developed the appropriate tooling.

Since 2006, during the reign of the Grand Coalition (conservatives and social democrats), under the auspices of the

Ministry of Internal Affairs in Germany, the “Islamic Conference of Germany” began its work, which in our time has already justified itself not only as an institution of interaction between the state and a part of the Muslim community capable of integration, but also as a way to select Islam operating within the country in order to identify radical forces and prevent terrorist danger. Currently, special emphasis is placed on the “Germanization” of Islam so that within the framework of the subject “religion” it is taught to Muslim schoolchildren by teachers educated at German universities and that muftis educated in Germany, and not from Islamic countries, preach in mosques owned by organizations cooperating with the state. Thus, as the then Minister of the Interior Horst Seehofer said in 2020, it is possible to “create alternatives to influence from abroad” [Deutsche Islamkonferenz...]. This new generation of imams has the hope of emancipation from Turkey, which controls the Ditib union and from Saudi Arabia, which maintained the “King Fahd Islamic Academy” [5] in Germany and offered Germany (indignantly rejected) assistance in the construction of new mosques.

Dialogue between the state and Islam is only one side of the state's activities aimed at preventing further separation and radicalization of Islam within the country. However, there is, of course, the other side – the direct struggle of the state with internal Islamism, the neutralization of its terrorist potential.

The anti-terrorist initiatives of the German authorities take place in the general legal field of the anti-terrorist struggle in the EU, since many European countries have strong Muslim diasporas. Suffice to say that in 2014–2015 more than 7,000 Islamists known to local intelligence agencies went to Syria and Iraq from the EU countries to fight for IS [BPB, Syrien...]. In Germany, Islamic terrorism is dealt with by several state security services. So, for example, the Federal Criminal Service, usually dealing with police issues, actively joined the fight. It began investigating Islamist-motivated crime back in 2000, but it ended up in the

crosshairs after information that terrorist Islamist attacks in the United States in 2001 were prepared by the Hamburg Cell.

In addition to it, the Federal Constitutional Defense Service, the Federal Intelligence Service, and the Military Intelligence Service deal with Islamism and Islamic terrorism, in the context of warning and combating it.

In 2004, the special services and the police created the Joint Center for the Prevention of Terrorism [BKA, Gemeinsames...] in Berlin, which, among other things, persecutes Islamic terrorism. This center was not allocated into a separate service, it was a coordination platform in which 8 federal and 32 land services combined their efforts, including internal, external and military intelligence, police, and the federal service for migrants and refugees.

In 2012, a similar "Joint Center for the Prevention of Extremism and Terrorism" was established in Cologne. The work of the services presented in it is coordinated in the following areas: daily monitoring, risk management, operational exchange of information, analysis of specific manifestations of Islamist terrorism, transnational aspects, personnel potential of Islamist terrorism, legal measures against Islamist terrorism, deradicalization.

During these years, according to the assurances of the special services, they managed to prevent several terrorist actions in Germany, which, according to them, were confirmation that Germany, like other European countries, "came in view" of terrorists. In fact, it, of course, has been in the field of view for a long time, but not as a place of assassination, but as a place of life. And the first successful Islamist terrorist attack in Germany was not directed against the Germans, and against American soldiers at Frankfurt Airport on Main in 2011. The situation transformed during the migration crisis, as noted above, the Muslim population of Germany in the course of receiving refugees has changed not only quantitatively, but also qualitatively, in connection with the increase in the share of IS militants or young

people, who left families at home and therefore easily became victims of IS blackmail.

Since that time, there have been terrorist attacks against the local population. In 2016, several events occurred in Germany, overcrowded with “refugees,” defined by the police as terrorism on the portal of the Federal Criminal Service: a knife assault on a policeman in Hanover (February), a bomb explosion in a Sikh prayer hall in Essen (April), [6] an ax attack on passengers of a regional train in Würzburg (July), [7] an explosion in Bavarian Ansbach (July). [8] The largest terrorist attack of 2016 took place in December, at the Christmas market near a church in the Berlin district of Charlottenburg. [9] Again and again, the special services, according to their own data, prevented small terrorist acts (according to the Constitutional Defense Service, 15 Islamist assassination attempts were thwarted from 2016 to 2022) [BfV – Islamismus...], however, even in 2020, during a pandemic, a series of assassination attempts took place in Waldkreiburg (April), [10] shooting in Berlin on the Autobahn (August), [11] stabbing in Dresden (October). [12]

In addition to instant terrorists, the “Islamist scene” is monitored, i.e. the entire circle, to one degree or another associated with Islamism, as well as sympathetic to it. Here young people are radicalized, here new members are recruited into terrorist cells and they leave for training in boot camps of IS militants, [13] the so-called “German-speaking jihadism” is being formed. There is an increase in motivated young women, mainly family members who have taken over the “home office.” [14] Of the 1,150 Islamists known for 2022 to the German special services permanently residing in Germany who left for the Middle East in Iraq and Syria with the aim of training in Islamist camps or with the aim of supporting radical Islamist organizations - and are still there - 5 per cent are women. The vast majority of those leaving- are under the age of 30. [BfV – Islamismus...].

The returners, who are known to have been in IS training camps or fought for IS, are arrested at airports. The rest are

observed by the special services. The reasons for the returns are different, [15] someone (most often German convertibles) follows family pressure, others return to families living in Germany to relax and gather strength, although recently it has been noted that whole families travel to training camps, taking their children with them.

German special services also track the so-called "Dangerous persons" (Gefährder) who commit minor crimes and are seen in ties with Islamists known to the special services. For 2022, 630 such persons are under supervision, with 217 of them European convertibles, and 119 have German citizenship. Therefore, the issue of Islamic terrorism in Germany cannot be resolved by deportations alone.

As of July 2022 (these are the latest statistics so far) in Germany, according to the Constitutional Defense Service, 28,290 people identified as Islamists with terrorist potential lived. The largest group (over 11,000) are Salafis, followed by Milli Gyorush with 10,000, Muslim Brotherhood (1450) and Hizb ut-Tahrir (international pan-Islamist party) Hizb - 700 registered members. [16]

The growth of Islamism leads to structural reorganization of the security services. The Federal Criminal Service, for example, allocated in 2019 from the general department of "Police Defense of the State" the department of "Islamist Motivated Terrorism" [BKA - Islamistisch...]. Islamism is conducted in it under the heading "religious ideology" as part of all "politically motivated crime" (which includes right and left terrorism).

In the Federal Service for the Protection of the Constitution (internal intelligence service), Islamism, which used to be part of the "Department of Extremism of Foreigners," is also now allocated a special department "Islamism and Islamic Terrorism" (department 6) [BfV - Islamismus...]. The Federal Ministry of Defense and Military Intelligence deal with Islamism in the army. [17] However, according to military experts, only right-wing extremism is growing in the Bundeswehr, and Islamism is

decreasing – in 2019 they recorded only 78 suspicious cases [BMVg.], and the only study cited has not been updated since then. The foreign intelligence service is connected with the topic related to the external relations of German Islamists and their interaction with foreign Islamism and coordinates its work here within the framework of the Joint Center with other German special services.

Along with structural changes in the security services, improving the logistics of the anti-terrorist struggle, the legal situation is changing. Laws are being issued aimed at anticipating and preventing Islamist danger. Thus, the activities of the IS and its symbols in Germany were banned back in September 2014 [BMI – Presse...] The activities of associations and unions related to Islamism [BfV – Islamismus] in Germany are prohibited. The law adopted after the UN resolution of 2014 [18] in June 2015 allows the seizure of passports from militant Islamists in order to prevent them from leaving the country to places of hostilities [BMI – Alle Meldungen]. The criminal code has also undergone changes: now those traveling to countries where Islamist training camps operate are punished if their stay there and their preparation are proved.

Moreover, the state started information work with citizens, not only through the Federal Center for Political Education, [BPB. Bundesweite...], but also through the portals of ministries and services. The Federal Ministry of the Interior offers the citizens detailed answers to all possible questions about what is Islamism in Germany, how to recognize an Islamist, why the number of Salafis is growing in Germany and why Salafism is dangerous, how to behave in case of danger and how to help the special services [BMI – Islamismus...]. The Constitutional Protection Service informs about the groups represented in Germany (Salafi, jihadist, radical, legalist).

The criteria allowing Islamic unions to work in Germany are also being tightened. This makes it possible to ban a number of previously represented organizations in Germany.

* * *

“The threat of Islamism is still high. And in Germany, we must take into account the chance of Islamist assassination attempts every day. Therefore, the German security services are vigilant,” its head Thomas Haldenwang [BfV – Islamismus] says on the portal of the Constitutional Protection Service. The change in the foreign policy and internal situation in connection with the SMO and with the involvement of Germany in the conflict changed the information background in the country, but not the state's attention to the Islamist segment of terrorist danger. Having identified the Islamist threat, the special services pursue it with purely German pedantry, problems can arise only in the nature of the distribution and redistribution of funds towards the fight against threats that in the current conditions may seem more relevant to the state.

In conclusion, we can say that the situation with German Islamism is an example of how the state itself has made grow a threat within itself for decades. Almost until the beginning of the 2000s (2004, the new law on foreigners), Germany refused to recognize that it is a “host country,” i.e. a state, on a regular basis, and not by exception, accepting migrants. This led to the uncontrolled growth of the Muslim diaspora with an unsettled status of the stay of its majority in the absence of any state measures to integrate them into the social and legal order. The absorption of Germany into the “main conflict of the era” during the confrontation between the blocs led to an underestimation of the role of Islam, which was considered a “cultural feature” of foreigners temporarily living in the country. The liberal law on the provision of political asylum brought radical Muslims into the country, persecuted as terrorists in their own countries. The policy of multiculturalism, which was considered almost the responsibility of Germany in the context of its “historical past,” led to the formation of parallel societies. The nature of the Islamic diaspora under such conditions

contributed to its radicalization. The seeds of Islamist emissaries fell on favorable soil.

The political course began to change only after September 2001, as part of the general tightening of the West's course towards Islamism. The Aliens Act (2004) settled up regular entry and for the first time strictly linked naturalization to integration. The dialogue proposed by the state to Islamic organizations withdrew non-integrated organizations from the sphere of legality (Salafis), in 2014 the activities of the Islamic State were banned. In other words, Germany in the past years has had to invest forces and funds to neutralize or eliminate the prerequisites for the radicalization of internal Islam, which itself has created by decades of past inaction. There will most likely be no further radicalization of the diaspora, taking into account the measures taken by the state against this.

Notes

1. Hassprädiger, a hate preacher, is an established concept for the radical Islamist clergy in Germany.
2. In 2020, 1.461.910 Turkish citizens and about 3 million citizens with Turkish roots lived in Germany. In the past two years, the number of Turkish citizens has been declining due to their active acceptance of German citizenship. 63 per cent of Turks living in Germany are Sunni. [Statista...]
3. Kurdish refugees also had terrorist potential, though not Islamist. The PKK, which has been waging an underground struggle for "independence of Kurdistan" for decades, recruits its supporters in Germany and is under surveillance by the Constitutional Defense Service.
4. Both Councils were created in the 1980s; both claim to be the main one. The Islamic Council of Germany, united 37 mainly Turkish-Sunni organizations, the other, already mentioned above, the Central Council of Muslims of Germany, united 21 organizations, mainly Arab and multi-ethnic..
5. A Saudi-Arab school that, according to intelligence agencies, maintained contacts with bin Laden's terrorist network. Most of the Bonn Islamists known to the special services sent their children to this school [DPA: Bonn...], and others even specially moved to Bonn for this, creating the city the glory of the "bastion of Islamism." Closed only in 2016 after a long conflict with the authorities.

6. Detained Salafist teenagers admit planning explosion as act of 'fighting infidels [Hohe Jugendstrafen...]
7. A teenager from Pakistan, who arrived in Germany through Hungary in 2015 without documents and registered as an "unaccompanied Afghan juvenile refugee," hacked a family of Hong Kong Chinese with an ax. According to police, he was already radicalized in Germany in contacts with IS emissaries. IS claimed responsibility for the attack. [Friedmann J...]
8. The terrorist, a 27-year-old Syrian refugee who arrived in Germany via Bulgaria, inadvertently blew himself and 15 people up in a wine bar, instead of a planned blast in the crowd during a local music festival. Links with IG have been proven. [Anschlag in Ansbach...]
9. A young criminal, Anis Amri from Tunisia, who called himself an "IS soldier," arrived as a refugee through Italy during the Arab Spring 2011, drove a truck into the pedestrian area of the Christmas Market near the church, killing 11 and injuring 55 people. [DPA: Polizisten...]
10. An IS supporter in April-May blew up Turkish enterprises and shops, the target was Turkish cultural organizations, mosques and imams. The reason is hatred of Turkey by virtue of its position in the Syrian conflict. [Auftakt im Terror...]
11. An Islamist on the Autobahn preyed on motorcyclists, seriously injuring three people. [Morling U.]
12. Stabbing with two victims, staged by a Syrian refugee, an active supporter of IS. The victims are two homosexual people from Cologne living in a registered partnership who came on vacation to see Dresden. [Messerangriff in Dresden...]
13. Until 2011, they traveled mainly to the border area between Pakistan and Afghanistan, since 2012 - to Libya and Egypt, since 2014 - to Syria and Iraq. [BKA. Islamistisch...]
14. "They motivate young people, work for Islamists on the Internet, recruit there, in general, provide Islamists with all the logistics and, moreover, travel with them back and forth" [Hoever...]
15. For the motives of the returnees, see the study of the Federal Criminal Service: [BKA - Forschungsergebnisse...]
16. Islamism statistics are constantly updated on the portal of the Constitution Protection Service Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz - Zahlen und Fakten. - https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/DE/themen/islamismus-und-islamistischer-terrorismus/zahlen-und-fakten/zahlen-und-fakten_node.html;jsessionid=3C1D36B63A8A1CE20F041C42AFC16A1F.internet282
17. Coordination Department of Suspected Extremism Cases, Die Koordinierungsstelle für Extremismusverdachtsfälle (KfE). - Extremismus in der Bundeswehr: Bericht zeichnet differenziertes Bild (bmvg.de). -

<https://www.bmvg.de/de/aktuelles/extremismus-bundeswehr-bericht-zeichnet-differenziertes-bild-5035908>

18. The UN in the resolution requires the state to prevent the departure of “its” Islamists to the site of training camps of Islamic terrorists. [UN...]

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